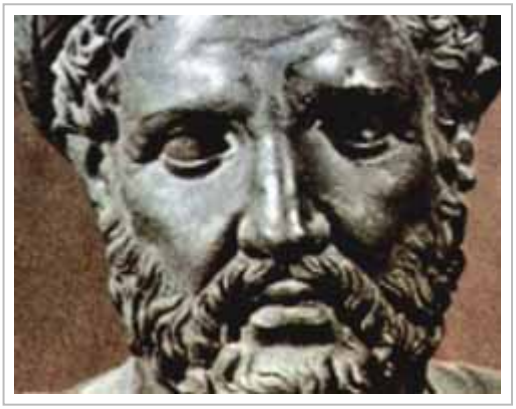
Reincarnation Beliefs, Research and Criticism (overview)



Reincarnation may be defined as the return of a nonmaterial essence (soul, mind, consciousness) to another physical body after death. Reincarnation beliefs are widespread in the world today and may be quite ancient. This article covers beliefs about reincarnation in various traditions and esoteric systems but emphasizes research with persons who claim to remember previous lives and theories that have been developed to account for the research findings. Special attention is given to criticisms of the research and to alternative explanatory frameworks.

The Concept of Reincarnation

The idea of reincarnation rests on a dualistic conception of mind and body that runs counter to reductionist materialism, which holds that consciousness is generated by the brain. From the materialist perspective, the survival of consciousness after bodily death is inconceivable and reincarnation is no more than a tenet of some religions and occult systems. Materialism has been the guiding philosophy of Western science in recent centuries but it is increasingly under assault from various directions[1] and with its weakening is coming an openness to the possibility of postmortem survival and reincarnation. In the view of physicist Henry Stapp of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Berkeley, California, 'Rational science-based opinion on this question [of the survival of consciousness after bodily death] must be based on the content and quality of the empirical data, not on a presumed incompatibility of such phenomena with our contemporary understanding of the workings of nature'.[2]

Fortunately, there is now considerable empirical data to be examined, thanks to a research program initiated by Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia in 1961.[3] Unsurprisingly, Stevenson's research and that of his colleagues and successors has come in for a fair amount of criticism, but it continues to progress and move in new directions. It seems wise to allow any final definition of reincarnation to be guided by this empirical work, but meanwhile we may take account of the various ways reincarnation has been conceived in different belief systems. According to the great religions of Asia, humans may be reborn as nonhuman animals, but that is not so elsewhere. There are also different opinions about when reincarnation occurs (at conception, at birth, or at no certain point), whether or not it is possible to change sex between lives, whether karma plays a role in the process, and other details.

For the purposes of this article, reincarnation is defined simply as the return of a nonmaterial essence associated with an entity to another physical body after bodily death. This definition is general enough to allow for the many notions of what reincarnates and how it does so. In everyday speech, the essence that reincarnates often is called the 'soul', but many traditions imagine it as a continuation of self and personality. In Buddhism, it is a stream of consciousness devoid of mental content and separate from a self and self-identity. Before taking up research on cases of past-life memory and the theoretical work that attempts to account for them, the divers ways reincarnation has been understood are reviewed. First, the terminology used to talk about reincarnation is considered.

Reincarnation Terminology

Writers on reincarnation have used several different words, often with more or less the same meaning, but sometimes with differences. Although *reincarnation* is the preferred term today, in the past it was *metempsychosis* or the *transmigration of souls*.[4]

Reincarnation is a word with a Latin root that means 'return to the flesh' or 'entering the flesh again'. It was not used in ancient times, however, but was coined in the middle of the nineteenth century as a hyphenated word.[5] *Rebirth* also came into widespread use in the mid-nineteenth century, perhaps a little earlier than re-incarnation.[6]

Transmigration, another term with a Latin root, was in use by the 1300s to refer to movement of people from one place to another. The sense of 'passage of the soul after death into another body' was first recorded in 1594.[7]

Metempsychosis is the English rendering of the Greek term *μετεμψύχωσις* that was used in ancient times to refer to the doctrine of reincarnation as promoted by Pherecydes of Syros (c. 580- c. 520 BCE) and Pythagoras (c. 570- c. 495 BCE), among others.[8] The Stoics (300s BCE) introduced *palingenesia* (παλιγγενεσία) or palingenesis to refer to the continual recreation of the universe and this also came to refer to reincarnation in antiquity.[9] The Christian Church Father Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) was the first to use the term *metensomatosis* (μετενσωμάτωσις), literally 'change of body'.[10] However, neither *palingenesis* nor *metensomatosis* came to be as widely used as *metempsychosis* and they are rarely found today.

In Judaism, the Hebrew term *gilgul* (גלגול, cycle) was paired with *neshamot* (הנשמות, souls) to refer to a "cycle of souls" by the Kabbalist Isaac Luria (1534-1572) in his *Gate of Reincarnations*, but does not appear to have been in use earlier.[11]

Islam uses the Arabic word tanasuhkh to refer to reincarnation.[12]

The Sanskrit term *samsara* (saṃsāra) may be the oldest term for reincarnation in use. It means 'wandering' or 'world', with the connotation of cyclic change, and is the fundamental premise of all Indic religions.[13] *Samsara* was taken into Hindi and Pali and has the meaning of reincarnation in both Hinduism and Buddhism.[14] When speaking English, Hindus refer to samara as *reincarnation*, but Buddhists

prefer *rebirth*, because for them reincarnation implies the recycling of a soul, the existence of which they deny. In this usage, *reincarnation* denotes the carrying forward of personhood across lives, whereas *rebirth* denotes the persistence of an individual's behaviors and karmic tendencies only after death; it is not the continuance of personhood.[15]

Belief in Reincarnation

Reincarnation in Eastern Religious Traditions

By far the best known reincarnation belief systems are those associated with the major Indic religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The first three of these traditions began to develop about the same time, around 500 BCE, and they influenced each other even as they took separate paths. There is also considerable complexity within each faith, when we realize that there is a difference between established doctrine, the elaborations of religious thinkers, and the convictions of lay individuals.[16] There are common denominators in the Indic systems, however. All include karma and embrace some form of metempsychosis, with the goal of achieving release from the cycle and reaching an end state, called moksha (mokṣa) in Hinduism and Jainism, mukti in Sikhism, and nirvana (nirvāna, Sanskrit) or nibanna (nibānna, Pali) in Buddhism.[17]

In most varieties of Hinduism, God oversees samsara and mediates karma, so that one's bad karma may be ameliorated by ritual appeals to God. Some Hindus believe that it is possible to transfer good karma to other persons (especially spouses and children) and to the spirits of the dead.[18] There is no fixed time after death that reincarnation occurs. The interval may be as short as a few months or days, and reincarnation may even occur after birth. The Sanskrit and Hindi term parakaya pravesh denotes the return of a wandering spirit in a living body; it is usually translated as (spirit) possession rather than reincarnation, however.[19]

Sikhism was not founded until the fifteenth century, long after the other Indic faiths. Its teachings on reincarnation are similar to the Hindu. The soul is subject to reincarnation until its liberation by God.[20] Jainism, by contrast, began to develop around the same time as Buddhism and many of its tenets are similar to the Buddhist, except that Jainism recognizes God. Jains hold that karma drives the soul to reincarnate immediately at death into another body then being conceived.[21]

Buddhism originated in India, but by the third century CE proselytizing monks were carrying it to different countries around eastern Asia. It was banished from India for political reasons in the thirteenth century and today has only a small presence there. Buddhism became syncretized to local traditions in each place it became established, making for a great variety of Buddhist eschatologies. Two broad branches, Theravada and Mahayana, are recognized,[22] but within each there are many local types. Tibetan Buddhism is an especially distinctive form of Mahayana Buddhism, and Japanese Buddhism is again different.[23] A key difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism is the nature of existence between lives. Theravada Buddhism stipulates that conscious awareness ceases at death, but in the Mahayana schools, not only does conscious awareness continue, the

consciousness stream is supported by a subtle body. Nevertheless, even in Tibetan Buddhism, one's karma determines the womb door one confronts in the end.[24]

Reincarnation in the Circum-Mediterranean Region

Reincarnation beliefs appear in various places around the Mediterranean Sea in ancient times, apparently independently of the development of similar beliefs in India and to some extent from each other. None of these systems have a fully developed concept of karma, but in other respects there are significant differences between them geographically and over time.

Pherecydes of Syros was the first Greek to write about reincarnation, in the 500s BCE,[25] but Greek reincarnation beliefs are more closely related to Pythagoras. Unfortunately, Pythagoras favoured oral instruction and left no writings of his own (those attributed to him are now known to be forgeries).[26] In 440 BCE, Herodotus alleged that Greek reincarnation beliefs had been acquired from Egypt. These teachings affirmed, Herodotus said, that 'when the body dies, the soul enters into another creature which chances then to be coming to the birth, and when it has gone the round of all the creatures of land and sea and of the air, it enters again into a human body as it comes to the birth; and that it makes this round in a period of three thousand years'.[27] It is not certain that these were Pythagoras' views, though, and modern scholars doubt that they originated in Egypt. It is not clear that the Egyptians believed in reincarnation; it seems more likely that the elite, at least, subscribed to some form of resurrection instead of reincarnation.[28]

Other Greeks who embraced reincarnation include the poet Pindar (c. 518-c. 438 BCE) and the philosophers Empedocles (c. 492- c. 432 BCE) and Plato (427/428-348/347 BCE). Plato's ideas are presented in his dialogues, explored through the words of his characters, and are not entirely consistent across his oeuvre. Plato drew on his predecessors but added some thoughts of his own.[29] He likened the soul to a pair of winged horses hitched to a chariot. Some souls lost their wings and became embodied in creatures on Earth. These wingless souls were freed from the body at death to be judged by the gods and might be sent to the underworld to do penance for one thousand years before resuming corporeal life. Most souls required ten such cycles (ten thousand years) before they could regain their wings and return to the gods.[30] Souls on their way to reincarnation were allowed to choose their new bodies, either human or nonhuman animal, but did so on the basis of their temperaments and characters.[31] Before resuming fleshy existence, they were made to drink from the River of Forgetfulness (Lethe) to wipe clean their memories of their previous lives.[32] The notion that the gods judged souls after death and that rebirth occurred after penance had been paid made karma superfluous as an ethical theory for the Greeks.[33]

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE-50 CE) wrote about reincarnation,[34] but whether early Jews in general believed in it is unclear. The historian Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE) reported that the Pharisees 'say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies,—but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment'.[35] Some scholars have taken this to indicate reincarnation, but others[36] insist that it refers to bodily resurrection. If the reference is to reincarnation, it comes with a twist:

only the righteous are reincarnated, but the wicked are destined to spend eternity in Hell. Philo held that perfected souls escaped the reincarnation cycle, whilst the imperfect were reborn,[37] opposite the situation described by Josephus.

For the Romans, reincarnation beliefs vied with traditional ideas of the afterlife in a subterranean inferno and it is not known how widely held they were.[38] Several Latin writers, including Virgil (70-19 BCE) and Cicero (106-43 BCE), dealt with reincarnation, however.[39] This period saw a resurgence of Pythagorean and Platonic ideas, but also some new developments. The first of the Neoplatonists whose work has come down to us, Plotinus (c. 204–270), rejected resurrection in favor of reincarnation. He acknowledged that some people believe they may be reborn as animals as a result of 'sin', but follows Plato in teaching that one is reborn in a form consistent with one's character.[40]

Reincarnation ideas were so much a part of the intellectual climate of Jesus's time and place that it is hard to imagine that he was not acquainted with them, but his stance on the subject is uncertain. There are passages in the New Testament that can be read as allusions to reincarnation on the part of Jesus's disciples, at least, but these passages may refer to pre-existence of the soul without prior incarnation, rather than to reincarnation.[41] There was a good deal of controversy on this point even in antiquity.[42] It was the possibility of the soul's pre-existence rather than its reincarnation that got Origen (185-254) into trouble later.[43]

Several second-century Christian Gnostics, including Carpocrates (d. 138), Basilides (d. 140), and Valentinus (100-160) espoused reincarnation. The belief was clearly widespread among the general population throughout the Levant during this period, as evidenced by the energy other Christians invested in disputing it. Theophilus of Antioch (d. c. 181), Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 202), Tertullian of Carthage (160-222), and Marcus Minucius Felix (d. 260) all condemned the idea of reincarnation[44] and the Church soon took steps to combat it.

In 325, Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (274-337) convened the First Council of Nicaea for the purpose of resolving disagreements over Christian doctrine and deciding what books should be included in the New Testament. The Council ruled against reincarnation and Constantine set about a recreation of Church history, so that the writings of early fathers who favored reincarnation were expunged from the record. Then, at the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical Council of the Church) in 553, Origen's speculations about pre-existence were judged to be heretical, shutting down discussion on that topic as well.[45] Although reincarnation beliefs were suppressed in Christian lands, they did not altogether disappear, however. St. Thomas Aquinas (1224/1225-1274) found it necessary to inveigh against them.[46] Reincarnation was a central tenet of the Cathars, whose religion was brutally suppressed in the 1200s.[47] Later, Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was burnt at the stake for teaching reincarnation, among other heresies.[48] Reincarnation beliefs also held on in areas dominated by the Greek and Russian Orthodoxy, continuing there after the separation of the Eastern Orthodox Church from Roman Catholicism in the eleventh century.[49]

Judaism did not take a doctrinaire stand against reincarnation. Reincarnation figures in the eighth-century Karaite movement and then in the twelvth-century

Bahir. The *Bahir*, written in Spain and now recognized as the first work of the Kabbalah, is popularly attributed to the first-century Rabbi Nehunia ben HaKana.[50] Reincarnation beliefs were elaborated in the twelfth-century *Zohar*, by fifteenth century Italian Kabbalists,[51] and by the German Yitzhak (Isaac) Luria (1534-1572), whose *Gate of Reincarnations* is a principal text of the Ultra-Orthodox Hasidim today.[52]

Early Islam may not have rejected reincarnation, although opposition soon developed, and the belief is represented today only among the esoteric Sufis and heterodox Shia sects such as the Alevi, Alawites and Druze.[53] The details of the beliefs vary from one sect to another. Historically, one stream of thought held that souls progressed from inanimate objects, such as stones, to nonhuman animals, then to humans, from which condition it was possible to attain transcendence.[54] The idea that actions in one life might influence the conditions of the afterlife or the next embodied life is found in Sufism and among the Turkish Alevi, but the idea is not universal or well-developed, as is the doctrine of karma in Eastern religions, and may reflect a borrowing from them.[55] Alawites hold that they were originally stars or divine lights that were cast out of heaven through disobedience and must undergo repeated reincarnation before returning there.[56] The Alevi and Druze believe that God assigns souls to new bodies immediately upon death, then at the end of time judges them on the basis of all their lives in toto.[57] The Druze hold that Druze are always reborn as Druze.[58]

Reincarnation beliefs have been documented in Europe not only among Christians and Jews, and not only in the circum-Mediterranean region. When Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE) led the Roman army into what is now France in 50 BCE, he discovered that the Gauls (a Celtic people) believed in reincarnation, and he opined that for this reason, they were unafraid to die.[59] Reincarnation beliefs have been documented for Celts in Great Britain, up to the early twentieth century,[60] and for Nordic peoples as well.[61] They figure in the *Poetic Edda*, a thirteenth-century Icelandic saga.[62]

Reincarnation in the Modern Western World

Most modern Western notions of reincarnation are derived from two major streams of influence—Christian and Jewish esotericism, plus a purported Egyptian occultism and Neoplatonism, on the one hand; and concepts imported from Hinduism and Buddhism on the other.[63]

An early and important movement, Hermeticism, is thought to have had its genesis in the first centuries of the Common Era as an amalgamation of Christian and Jewish mysticism, Neoplatonism and Egyptian occultism. Reincarnation beliefs are basic to Hermeticism, although rarely stressed.[64] Hermetic teachings informed alchemy, Western magic and witchcraft, and Rosicrucianism. Reincarnation has a central place in witchcraft and Rosicrucianism, which originated in the 1600s,[65] and in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1888.[66]

Freemasonry is another secret society with reincarnation beliefs.[67] Although it has roots in Egyptian and Western esoteric traditions, including Pythagoreanism, Freemasonry developed separately from Hermeticism and Rosicrucianism. Masonic

lodges first became organized in England under King Athelstan (reigned 924–940), but they were exclusively professional organizations for stone masons and it was not until the seventeenth century that the 'speculative' aspect of the society moved to the fore with the acceptance of non-masons into the lodges.[68] Thereafter, the society spread widely through Europe and was carried to America by colonists.

Along with Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, witchcraft and magic, as well as the Kabbalah, made their way to America, where they found many new adherents and helped to inform American culture from its earliest days.[69] Reincarnation beliefs accompanied them but ironically the British and European colonizers were largely unaware of Native American traditions of reincarnation.[70] In the 1820s and 1830s, reincarnation was taken up by the American Transcendentalists, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.[71] With the Transcendentalists, for the first time, there was a synthesis of ideas about reincarnation that included then-newly-translated texts of Eastern religions, and an emphasis on spiritual development and karma, especially in the works of Emerson.[72] Asian ideas, first Hindu and later Buddhist, claimed increasing attention from the 1840s onward.[73]

Indic ideas of reincarnation, including karma and the concept of the Akashic Records as an etheric medium on which information has been recorded since the beginning of time, play an even larger role in the teachings of the Theosophical Society, which was founded in upstate New York in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky. Rudolf Steiner broke with Blavatsky to form Anthroposophy in Germany in the early twentieth century, but retained certain essential Theosophical teachings, such as reincarnation, karma and the Akashic Records. These ideas also shaped the life readings of Edgar Cayce[74] and have had an enduring effect on the way reincarnation is conceived in the West. They are central to the understanding of reincarnation in the New Age movement that began to dominate the American metaphysical scene in the 1970s and has since come to global prominence.[75] Paganism and Wicca – terms used today to refer to what was formerly called witchcraft – have in general adopted the New Age belief system regarding reincarnation.

Other new religious movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries embraced reincarnation without an explicit commitment to karma or other Eastern ideas. These include Spiritism, as promulgated by Allan Kardec; the Unity Church, part of the American New Thought movement; and, in the twentieth century, Eckankar, the Church of Scientology, and the channeled teachings of Seth and Michael.

Public opinion polls have found the belief in reincarnation to have increased both in Europe and America in recent decades. A 1968 survey of religious beliefs in Europe found that although the percentage varied by country, overall some 18% of respondents said they believed in reincarnation. A similar survey in 1986 found 21% of respondents reported believing in reincarnation.[76] In the United Kingdom, 29% of respondents to a European Values Survey conducted between 1990 and 1993 said they believed in reincarnation. National surveys conducted in continental Europe, mostly from 1999 to 2002, found an average incidence of 22% for the countries of Western Europe and 27% for the countries of Eastern Europe, with as many as 41%

of Icelanders saying that they believed in reincarnation.[77] A 2013 Harris Poll found a similar upward trend in reincarnation belief among Americans, from 21% in 2005 to 24% in 2013. Younger age groups tended to have a greater level of belief, with only 11% of those over 68 believing in reincarnation in 2013. Interestingly, the rise in reincarnation beliefs between 2005 and 2013 came while beliefs in God, Heaven, angels, and other traditional religious ideas declined.[78]

Reincarnation in Tribal Society

Reincarnation beliefs have been documented for indigenous tribal societies throughout the world. Many American Indians believe in reincarnation.[79] The belief is especially common in the northwestern part of the continent, in Alaska and British Columbia, and among the Eskimos and Inuit as far as Greenland.[80] It has also been reported from the Lapps (Sämi), a Finno-Ugric-speaking people living mainly in Norway, Sweden, and Finland.[81] Reincarnation beliefs are also found throughout Africa, Oceania, Australia, and the tribal societies of India and mainland Asia—on every inhabited continent, and in the majority of culture areas in all but Europe.[82] Cross-cultural studies using samples of 30,[83] 50[84] and 60[85] small-scale societies have found reincarnation beliefs in between a third and a half of them.

The reincarnation beliefs of tribal peoples are a feature of their animistic world view. Animism was first identified by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) in his book *Primitive Culture*, originally published in 1871. Tylor drew his portrait of animism from the reports of travelers, missionaries and amateur ethnographers among indigenous peoples. He showed that animism had an experiential and empirical basis, in dreams in which human figures appeared, ghosts and apparitions, and what today are called out-of-body and near-death experiences, mediumistic trance and shamanic journeying. Similarly, he pointed to phenomena such as dreams of expectant mothers, birthmarks on newborn babies, and the behaviors of toddlers, as having inspired the belief in reincarnation.[86]

The specifics of animistic reincarnation beliefs vary from society to society, though they are characterized by the absence of karma and, except for some in the Indic sphere, a rebirth cycle that includes animal lives.[87] In general, animistic peoples believe that if nonhuman animals reincarnate, it is in their own species lines.[88] Reincarnation is expected in family lines[89] and an individual may declare before death the relative whom he intends to have as his new mother.[90]

Reincarnation beliefs are linked to social practices in tribal societies. The dead may be buried beneath the floor of the house to facilitate the return in the family or at crossroads in order to confuse the spirit and deter it from returning among its kin.[91]Attempts are made to identify children with deceased relatives so that they can be given the same name.[92] Since names are linked to status and property, this allows people to reincarnate in such a way as to inherit positions and possessions from their previous lives.[93] The association of reincarnation beliefs and social practices is a characteristic feature of animism but absent in the world religions, in which beliefs tend to be more elaborated philosophically.[94]

Origin of the Belief in Reincarnation

There have been many suggestions about where the belief in reincarnation originated. The most common view among scholars is that it was first conceived in India.[95] In antiquity, it was thought to have entered Greece from Egypt, and at least one commentator has suggested that it travelled from Egypt to India.[96] Some have proposed that it originated with the Proto-Indo-European ancestors of the Greeks, Indians, Celts, and Germanic peoples.[97] Another suggestion is that the belief arose in Tibet and Mongolia, whence it found its way independently to Greece, India, and North America.[98]

More rarely, scholars have considered the possibility that the belief had multiple points of origin in different cultural and linguistic groups.[99] Those who take this position sometimes suggest that reincarnation was inspired by the cyclical patterns of nature.[100] Tylor's position – that it was a conclusion drawn from pregnancy dreams and observations of things like physical and behavioural correspondences between children and deceased persons – has received little attention and yet would appear to have much in its favour. As Tylor noted, these signs are mentioned frequently in connection with reincarnation beliefs in tribal societies.[101] For example, the Gilyak (Nivkh) of northeastern Siberia have a legend 'which tells that after the death of a Gilyak who had on his face distinctive scars from wounds received in a fight with a bear, a boy was born to another Gilyak with the very scars on his face as the deceased had'.[102] Signs like birthmarks are of a pan-human nature and so could have led to the belief wherever a resemblance was distinct enough to be noticed.

If the belief in reincarnation had multiple points of origin, it is easier to understand the great diversity of ways the process is conceived to operate today.[103] Moreover, if the belief was grounded initially in signs of the sort Tylor identified, it could be very old. Anthropologists suspect that Indian beliefs were borrowed from indigenous tribes.[104]

Evidence for Reincarnation

Past-Life Readings

Of the several types of evidence that have been adduced for reincarnation, past-life identification by psychic practitioners is considered by researchers to be the weakest. The information comes from third parties and even when it is accurate, its source is uncertain and so is the person to which it refers. Because psychics use extra-sensory perception to gain information, their source could be the minds of their clients or it could be written documents or even a hypothetical etheric repository such as the Akashic Records.[105] Psychic Edgar Cayce said that he sometimes obtained information for his 'life readings' from the minds of his clients and sometimes retrieved it from the Akashic Records.[106] However, information not gleaned from a client's mind would not necessarily refer to the client, but might belong to someone else, or could be imaginary. There is no way to know for sure.[107]

Additionally, the information relayed by psychics may be coloured by their own convictions. Historian of religion J. Gordon Melton has shown how Cayce's life readings were influenced by the Theosophy to which he was introduced by a client. A typical reading from Cayce included a series of lives, beginning in Atlantis and

Egypt, following the Theosophical account of history, and he put great emphasis on karma and other principles of the Theosophical concept of reincarnation.[108] Cayce's life readings are very popular and have been emulated by other psychics, but few of them include verifiable information, and of those few, only a small fraction have been confirmed upon investigation.[109]

Past Life Regression (PLR)

Regressions to previous lives under hypnosis (past life regressions) have become immensely popular for purposes of therapy, where psychological rather than factual truth is what matters,[110] but Stevenson found them of little value for research. He attempted to regress thirteen children with past-life memories to see if he could elicit additional verifiable details but did not succeed with any of them.[111] More importantly, there are many problems associated with using hypnosis to learn about past lives.

Hypnosis was once thought to enhance memory, but this is now known not to be true, which is why testimony based on hypnosis is no longer allowed in courts of law. Hypnosis encourages memory distortions such as confabulation and paramnesia, in which fantasy and objective experience are confused, and cryptomnesia (source amnesia), in which a person imagines himself in the midst of events he has read or heard about, but has consciously forgotten. Moreover, hypnosis is a very suggestible state; even the instruction to go back to a previous life is enough to make a person imagine one. Nor does the instruction merely to return to the source of a trauma guarantee that a past life will be recalled as it occurred.[112]

Occasionally, veridical (factually correct) information that is not cryptomnesia-based emerges in past life regressions, but the identity of the previous person given is much more rarely confirmed. An example of veridical memories in a regression in which the previous person could not be identified is the famous case of Bridey Murphy, which is sometimes mistakenly said to have been completely debunked.[113] This partial accuracy may be due to the subconscious mind blocking memories from coming to conscious awareness fully because it is trying to shield the person from learning his past-life identity.[114] In one celebrated regression case, Indianapolis police detective Robert Snow was able to identity his previous self by locating a canvas he saw himself painting under hypnosis, but the names he gave for both his past-life self and his past-life wife turned out incorrect.[115]

Déjà Vu and Child Prodigies

Déjà vu – the sense that one has been in a place before – often is no more than a memory distortion.[116] However, when experiencers are able to lead their way around places they have never been, as happens on occasion, it is hard to ascribe them to fantasy. Child prodigies are children under the age of ten who have skills – generally mathematical, artistic, or sports skills – at the level of an expert adult performer. Because the skills manifest in children so young, they naturally lead to the suspicion that they were acquired in an earlier life. Déjà vu and child prodigies are classic lines of evidence for reincarnation, but the most that modern researchers are willing to say about them is that they are consistent with

reincarnation. In and of themselves, neither supplies any significant support for it.[117]

Announcing Dreams, Birthmarks and Behaviours

Many tribal peoples rely on pregnancy dreams and a newborn child's birthmarks and behaviours to determine its previous identity.[118] Although these signs may be quite striking, they can easily be over-interpreted, and by themselves do not claim much attention from researchers.

Involuntary Memories of Previous Lives

Involuntary memories of previous lives, which arise spontaneously in the waking state or dreams, are of much greater research interest. Involuntary past-life memories closely resemble involuntary memories of the present life. Past- and present-life memories may be triggered by the same sorts of associations and they are susceptible to the same sorts of errors and distortions. They may be analyzed with the same concepts and terminology.[119]

Past-life memory research is concerned chiefly with involuntary autobiographical memories. These memories may be reported by adults as well as children, but they tend to come most naturally to young children. Children's past-life memories more often include verifiable information than do the products of hypnosis or the readings of psychics and, upon investigation, are much more likely to be confirmed. This is in part because the recalled lives typically lie in close temporal and spatial proximity to the present life. The children clamor to be taken back to the places they remember having lived, and when their parents oblige, they experience déjà vu. They show their way around, recognize people and behave toward them as the persons they recall having been behaved when alive.[120]

When the previous person is identified, behavioural and physical signs the child has displayed may be recognized as corresponding to that person. The child's mother may have had announcing dreams during her pregnancy, or she may have experienced cravings for foods of which the previous person was fond.[121] These past-life memory cases thus include the sorts of signs that have long been recognized as suggestive of reincarnation, but in an integrated, demonstrably veridical manner that make them harder to explain except as genuine expressions of reincarnation.

Research on Reincarnation

Ian Stevenson and his Successors

Ian Stevenson completed his MD degree at McGill University in Montreal in 1943 and worked in different areas of medicine before entering psychiatric training in the 1950s. He was hired as Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia in 1957. Dissatisfied with medicine's understanding of human personality and the roots of individual difference, he became interested in parapsychology, although he was out of step with the experimental parapsychology then in vogue in America. He was more in sympathy with an older style of research

(psychical research) that focused on spontaneous experiences and the evidence for the survival of consciousness after death.[122]

In his reading during this period, Stevenson came across numerous accounts of past-life memory. Before this time, psychical research had concentrated on mediumship and apparitions, with little attention to past-life memory. When the American Society for Psychical Research announced a contest for the best paper on the topic of postmortem survival, he brought his cases together and analyzed them in a contribution that won the contest. In that paper, 'The evidence for survival from claimed memories of former incarnations,' published in 1960, Stevenson reported having found 44 cases in which the past-life memories were associated with a specific previous person. In 28 of the cases, the subjects had made at least six correct statements about the previous life. [123]

In 1961, Stevenson received a grant from the Parapsychology Foundation to study new cases in India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). As a pioneer in this research, he had to develop an appropriate methodology, for which he drew on the practices of psychical researchers in studying apparitions and other apparently paranormal spontaneous events. He concentrated on the case subject and first-hand witnesses to what the subject had said or done, and if the previous person had been identified, did the same on the previous person's side. If the previous person had not yet been identified, he sought to do so himself. Stevenson collected supporting written documents such as death certificates and autopsy reports whenever possible. His was a case study approach, but his techniques elevated it above the collection of mere anecdotes. He realized the significance of what he was doing and made every effort to follow all leads and document the cases as well as he could.[124]

Over the next few years Stevenson studied additional cases of past-life memory in Lebanon, Brazil and Alaska. By 1966, he was acquainted with over 200 cases, from which he selected twenty for his now-classic *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. This was only the beginning of his research programme, however. A second edition of the book with follow-up information on eighteen of the twenty child subjects was issued by the University Press of Virginia in 1974.[125] Stevenson went on to publish nine other books about reincarnation, one in two volumes, along with numerous journal papers.[126] Altogether, he reported over 300 cases, many at the length of thirty pages or more. Over the years, he was joined by colleagues, most notably clinical psychologist Satwant Pasricha, research psychologists Erlendur Haraldsson and Jürgen Keil, anthropologist Antonia Mills, and child psychiatrist Jim B Tucker, all of whom investigated and reported their own cases. The case collection at Stevenson's research division, now named the Division of Perceptual Studies, has continued to grow, even as some less-developed cases have been purged. As of 2013, it included about 2500 cases, of which 68% or 1700 had identified previous persons.[127] Stevenson and his colleagues call these 'solved' cases.

Universal, Near-Universal and Culture-Linked Patterns

From the start, Stevenson realized that he was learning about far more cases than he could study competently and write about in detail, but he set about collecting basic information on as many as possible so that he could search for patterns across

large groups of cases. Some of the patterns he identified may be regarded as universal or near-universal, whereas others are more closely culture-linked. Of the former group, some relate to the case subject, whereas others concern the previous person.[128]

One of the strongest universal patterns is the young age at which children speak about previous lives. The majority of children in every culture begin between the ages of two and five years, although the first reference to the previous life may be made as early as eighteen months. Most children stop speaking about their memories after a few years, and they seem to have faded from conscious awareness.[129] The fading of the memories, which generally occurs between ages five and eight, was once assumed to be a near-universal feature of the cases. However, in follow-up studies in Sri Lanka[130] and Lebanon[131], Haraldsson found that as many as a third of children retained memories past that age, at least into young adulthood, when they were interviewed.

Most children remember having died close to where they were born. Long-distance cases (with distances greater than fifty kilometers, or 31 miles, from the place of death to the place of birth) occur in larger countries such as India, Turkey and the United States, but cases that cross international boundaries are unusual, and solved international cases are rare.[132] Most children who recall previous lives do so in the waking state, with no apparent alteration of consciousness. Sometimes memories come in dreams or nightmares, but there are usually waking memories as well. With older subjects, dreams and other altered states become more important in connection to past-life memories.[133]

Of universal and near-universal patterns related to the previous person of a case, one of the most important is the manner in which that person died. Violent deaths —by accident, murder, suicide, during war, and so on—figured in 51% of solved cases and were claimed in 61% of unsolved cases according to a 1983 study.[134] With natural deaths, age at death is important: The younger a person is when he dies a natural death, the more likely his life is to be recalled later.[135] This does not necessarily mean that those who die young are more likely to reincarnate quickly, however. Premature deaths – by violence or illness – are lives cut short, and might produce the sense of things left undone, an effect Stevenson termed 'unfinished' or 'continuing business.' He noted some sort of continuing business in the great majority of his cases.[136]

Several other case features, although not exactly culture-bound, have been found to be closely culture-linked. These features include how often cases occur and are solved; the rate of sex change between lives; the relationship between the subject and the previous person and the length of the period between lives. The latter three variables are related to beliefs about the reincarnation process in the cultures in question. One of the strongest is the relation between beliefs in the possibility of changing sex and cases in which there is a reported change of sex. This topic is covered at greater length in Patterns in Reincarnation Cases.

Unlearned Languages and Other Skills

Children who recall previous lives not only talk about what they remember. Some express their memories in their play[137] or display behaviours characteristic of the persons they claim to have been before. In the most dramatic cases, there are constellations of behaviour that may be described as behavioural syndromes (see Behavioural Memories in Reincarnation Cases). At the extreme, children exhibit skills they have not acquired in the present lives. Corliss Chotkin, Jr, a Tlingit Indian boy, had a knack with boat engines,[138] and Paulo Lorenz, a Brazilian boy, was adept at using his deceased sister's sewing machine.[139] To date, there have been reports of only two children with past-life memories who may be described as prodigies, both in sports: Hunter (pseudonym) in golf,[140] and Christian Haupt in American baseball.[141]

Children's unlearned skills may include language skills, or xenoglossy. Researchers recognize three types of xenoglossy: responsive, recitative, and passive. Responsive xenoglossy is the ability to comprehend and converse in an unlearned language; recitative xenoglossy is the rote use of unlearned words; and passive xenoglossy is the unconscious influence of an unlearned language on speech production. Responsive xenoglossy has been claimed for regressions under hypnosis as well as involuntary memories of previous lives, but it manifests more clearly in spontaneous cases. For discussion of the three types of xenoglossy, with examples, see Xenoglossy in Reincarnation Cases.

Physical Signs of Reincarnation

Perhaps surprisingly, there are many ways in which reincarnation may be expressed physically. One is through birthmarks. Many birthmarks in reincarnation cases reflect fatal wounds,[142] but they may also commemorate the scars of healed wounds, as in the Gilyak example cited earlier, and many other things, among them rope indentations, tattoos, styes, and ulcers.[143] There are several instances of birthmarks on the lobes or helixes of the ears in the locations of earring holes.[144] Apparently anything of significance to the previous person can be imprinted on the new body in the form of a birthmark.[145]

Birthmarks are not the only physical features involved in reincarnation. Many cases have birth defects that correspond to injuries to the previous person's body. These defects may be internal as well as external. An American boy who recalled being a policeman who died after being shot in the chest was born with severe heart disease.[146] Other physical signs relate to what may be regarded as the previous person's core identity. Girls who remember being boys or men may be of relatively large stature and their menarche may be delayed.[147] Asian children who claim to have been British or American are often physically larger than other children in their families, have eyes of the European shape, and in their complexion are virtual if not actual albinos.[148] Equally striking are physical differences between monozygotic twins. Gillian and Jennifer Pollock closely resembled each other when young, but only Jennifer had birthmarks. One matched a scar that had marked the sister whose life she recalled, the result of an accident when she was three (two years before her death) and another was a mole on her waist where she had had a mole.[149]

Birthmarks and birth defects may be planned and deliberately induced. A Tlingit man said before his death that he would be recognized by certain marks on his next body and these appeared on Corliss Chotkin, Jr, who recalled events from his life.[150] Throughout eastern Asia, from India to Japan, cadavers may be marked with the intent of stimulating birthmarks on the body of the next life. The birthmarks that correspond to these marks are called experimental birthmarks. In West Africa, a family that has lost several children in a row sometimes mutilate the body of the last to die in order to prevent it from dying young again and corresponding defects turn up on the body of the next child born into the family, which often lives into adulthood. More information on these practices is contained in Experimental Birthmarks and Birth Defects.

The Intermission between Lives

About 20% of children who recall previous lives talk about events they say occurred between lives, the period researchers call the intermission. Intermission memories have a similar structure cross-culturally, but there are both similarities and differences in content.

The intermission may be broken down into five stages, the first three of which are similar to the stages of the near-death experience.[151] The first stage is a transitional stage following death, generally lasting until the body is buried, cremated, or disposed of in some fashion. The second stage is more stable and often passes in a fixed location. The third stage involves choosing parents for the new life. The fourth stage covers the period of gestation in the womb, and the fifth, birth and its immediate aftermath.[152]

Although most of what is said about the intermission cannot be confirmed, there may be veridical perceptions of the material world at every stage. Case subjects everywhere talk about seeing and interacting with other spirit entities, who are identified in cultural terms, for instance, as angels in Western countries but as devas or other religious figures in Asian countries. The most striking difference, however, is in where the intermission transpires. Whereas Westerners imagine it taking place in a Heaven above, Asians describe it as passing in realistic terrestrial setting.[153] In tribal societies, the afterlife tends to pass in a place across a barrier, such as a river, on the terrestrial plane, or beneath the surface of the earth.[154]

The Psychology of Past-Life Memory

Researchers have examined the psychology of children with past-life memories in comparison with their peers without past-life memories and looked at how the memories change as the case subjects age. Factors on the sides of both the previous person and the case subject come into play in past-life memory.

Psychological studies using standard psychological testing instruments have found that children with past-life memories are no more suggestible than their peers and although they have some dissociative tendencies (they tend to have rapid changes in personality and daydream more), these are not pathological. Children with past-life memories have a higher level of cognitive functioning and do better than their peers in school; as a group, they are gifted children.

These results have emerged from studies in the United States[155] as well as in Sri Lanka[156] and Lebanon.[157] However, children in Sri Lanka and among the Druze in Lebanon are reported by their families to have more behavioural problems than their peers. They are more nervous and stubborn, argue more, and tend to be more perfectionistic. Erlendur Haraldsson, who conducted these studies, observes that many of these traits are symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, consistent with the fact of a large number of violent-death cases in these cultures. In Lebanon, 80% of the children recalled lives that ended suddenly and violently (mostly accidents, but also war-related deaths and murder).[158] The same psychological problems were not observed in the United States, where there would have been a much lower incidence of deaths from war and murder.[159] There may, however, be phobias associated with violent deaths in all societies.[160]

As they grow older, children with past-life memories become better adjusted. Teachers do not report the same social difficulties parents do. Although these issues need to be clarified in future research, it appears that the problems may recede as the children grow older, leaving longer-term benefits.[161]

Subjects begin speaking about previous lives at different ages, most often at two to three years, but developmental factors are involved in their expression. Past-life memories at all ages may be triggered by things the subject sees or hears, but these cues are more evident and appear to play a bigger role with older subjects.[162] The older subjects are when they start speaking of the past life, the less well developed the memories tend to be, and the more likely they are to arise in dreams or other altered states of consciousness.[163]

Factors affecting past-life memory besides the manner of death of the previous person include the sense of unfinished business, such as women who die leaving young children in need of care, businessmen who die with unpaid or uncollected debts, and persons who die without having told others where valuables are hidden.[164] The latter category, called buried treasure by researchers, is especially interesting, because these valuables are sometimes still hidden when children show where they may be found.[165] Other factors on the previous persons' side are mental ones. Natural deaths in old age are often associated with meditation.[166] Birthmarks are less likely to appear on a case subject when the previous person was inebriated at the time he died.[167]

Criticisms of Reincarnation Research

Subjective Illusion of Significance / Patternicity

Sceptical philosopher Leonard Angel maintains that Stevenson and other researchers 'have not even attempted to show that there is anything that needs to be explained' in the reincarnation cases they have studied.[168] 'One should try to determine whether the sorts of correspondences found between a living person's verbal memory claims and the facts about a purportedly reincarnated deceased person defy chance expectations. If they do, there is something that needs to be explained. But if they don't, then there is nothing to be explained'.[169] Angel would like to see 'controlled experimental work' designed to rule out what he calls the 'subjective illusion of significance'.

Angel illustrates the subjective illusion of significance by noting that he found no fewer than 21 facts about Stevenson's life mentioned in his obituary in the *New York Times*.[170] that are true for him as well as for Stevenson: Both were born in Montreal, both attended McGill as undergraduates, both were married twice, and so forth. The 'controlled experimental work' Angel has in mind would contrast results of this sort of comparison with the results of comparisons of a subject's statements and the deceased person identified as his predecessor. One would have shown that there was something to be explained only if blind judges rated the correspondences of the former group as 'at least as good as' the correspondences of the latter group and if the judges tended 'to ask for special explanations of the correspondences' in the latter group more often than in the former group.[171]

Angel's subjective illusion of significance is akin to Michael Shermer's patternicity —'the tendency to find meaningful patterns in both meaningful and random noise.'[172] This is a real psychological phenomenon, and Angel is right to demand that it be ruled out. However, he does not appear to appreciate that a case subject's statements must be considered as a totality, along with any errors, and not in isolation from each other. Antonia Mills attempted to assign probabilities to several statements made by an Indian boy, Ajendra Singh Chauhan, but gave up the task when she realized that she needed to estimate not only the probability of individual statements, but all of them in combination.[173]

Additionally, a child's behaviours and physical features must be taken into account. The entire constellation of evidence must show a good fit for a case to be considered solved. In a review of *Reincarnation and Biology*, Angel spends a lot of time discussing problems he has identified with Stevenson's many tables, but he does not pause to consider any of the 225 cases in the book in their entirety. Rather, he accuses Stevenson of 'backwards reasoning' in all of his cases, because he admits to having reasoned backwards from birthmarks in a few instances.[174].Shermer's observation that one is sure to find a correspondence somewhere if one examines a large enough sample[175] misses the mark entirely: In the research of Stevenson and his colleagues, the sample has already been narrowed to one person on the basis of statements and behaviours before correspondences between wounds and birthmarks are assessed. Shermer states that 'one does not need to read deep into the literature to see [the process of identifying the previous person] as a classic case of *patternicity*',[176] but therein lies the problem for critics: One cannot properly evaluate the reincarnation case data unless one reads past a superficial level and takes all the facts into consideration. The patternicity appears to Shermer precisely because he has not read deeply. In general, sceptical charges against Stevenson fail not because they have no foundation, but because they are exaggerated and over-generalized and do not take into account the full range of his research methods and findings.[177]

Researcher Ineptitude

The first sustained critique of Stevenson's methods was made in a private assessment prepared for him by a research assistant, Champe Ransom, in the early 1970s. An abbreviated version of the Ransom Report, as it has come to be called in skeptical circles,[178] has now been published,[179] and we can see what it says.

The first thing to be noted is that Ransom's comments are confined to a reading of the first edition of *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*,[180] so they are more properly a critique of Stevenson's write-up than of his field technique.[181] For instance,'often the case reports are lacking in the details of when the statements (of a subject or witness) were made and in what context and to whom'.[182] Other points turn on hypotheticals, e.g., 'Leading questions may have been used'.[183] Ransom raises some serious concerns, including subtle distortions of memory over time, the need to work through interpreters and problems attendant with spending only brief periods with witnesses. However, these issues would carry more weight if they were ones Stevenson had not previously considered, yet he acknowledged and addressed these and many other potential pitfalls in the opening chapter of *Twenty Cases,* well before Ransom brought them to his attention.[184]

The force of Ransom's charges is reduced also by their generality.[185] It would have been more helpful had he cited places in the book where the deficiencies were evident. In this, Rogo does a better job than Ransom. Drawing on four additional volumes of case reports Stevenson had published by 1983, Rogo centers his attention on four cases in which he has detected problems.[186] The first of these is the case of Mounzer Haïdar.[187] In investigating this case, Stevenson first sketched the location of a birthmark on the right side of the subject's abdomen. When he subsequently interviewed the previous person's mother, he asked her where he had been shot, and she pointed to the right side of her abdomen. Stevenson then showed her his sketch, and the woman said that the wound was in the place marked. This indicates to Rogo that Stevenson sometimes leads his witnesses, because he did not ask the woman to sketch the place the bullet had entered her son's body before showing her his sketch.[188]

The second case criticized by Rogo is the case of Mallika Aroumougam from *Twenty Cases*. Rogo charges that this case indicates that Stevenson 'sometimes deletes important information when writing his reports' because Stevenson does not mention that the subject's father and grandfather publicly refuted a reincarnation interpretation of the case, or that he used one informant (the previous person's brother-in-law) as an interpreter to interview another informant (the subject's father) without stating clearly that he had done so.[189] Stevenson admitted that the investigation and reporting could have been better handled, but pointed out that neither the father nor the grandfather were witness to any of Mallika's statements or behaviours, so their opinions were irrelevant in judging the facts of the case.[190]

Rogo's other complaints, referring to the cases of Imad Elawar and Uttara Huddar (Sharada) are similarly insignificant and Rogo admits that his criticisms are 'very trivial'.[191] Another of Stevenson's early critics, Ian Wilson raises the question of whether Stevenson could have been fooled by his subjects and informants. He notes that Stevenson is sensitive to this possibility, but considers that he has been too quick to dismiss dissident witnesses. Dissident witnesses appear in very few of Stevenson's cases, however, and Wilson is forced to conclude that there are 'considerable numbers of his cases where such an interpretation cannot be justified'.[192]

More recently, Angel has severely criticized Stevenson for his handling of the Imad Elawar case.[193] This case was unsolved when Stevenson reached it but Imad's

parents, in an effort to make sense of what he was saying, had strung his statements together in a way that turned out to be mistaken. What should be a strength of the case – the written record made before verification – is problematic for Angel, who believes that Stevenson selected which information to credit and which not. Nonetheless, in a careful re-evaluation of Imad's early statements, Julio Barros shows that the things Imad said before Stevenson began his investigation are sufficient to identify the previous person and supports Stevenson's interpretation of the case over Angel's.[194]

Cultural Conditioning

According to American sceptic Keith Augustine, 'The fact that the vast majority of Stevenson's cases come from countries where a religious belief in reincarnation is strong, and rarely elsewhere, seems to indicate that cultural conditioning (rather than reincarnation) generates claims of spontaneous past-life memories'.[195] This common conclusion reveals how superficial an acquaintance most critics have with the case data. There are fewer strong reincarnation cases reported from Western than Asian countries, but it would be wrong to call Western cases rare. Muller,[196] Stevenson,[197] and Tucker,[198] have reported solved Western cases. Furthermore, in the West, cases do not occur only among sub-cultures with a belief in reincarnation, as is sometimes alleged.[199]

A more sophisticated version of the cultural conditioning argument holds that because certain features of the cases, such as sex-change, are correlated with beliefs in a given culture, the cases must be a product of cultural demands.[200] However, a closer inspection of the data finds this idea wanting also. The Druze believe that one is reborn immediately upon death, into the body of a child born at that moment, but although the median intermission length in solved Druze cases is shorter than most other cultures – six to eight months long – it is not immediate. No cases of immediate reincarnation have been reported among the Druze. The Druze response to this awkward situation is to assert that there must have been brief lives that were not recalled.[201] The Druze harmonize their beliefs to their cases, not their cases to their beliefs.[202]

In a survey in northern India, Satwant Pasricha and David Barker discovered that information about cases rarely travelled far and therefore could not serve as a model for other cases. Many cases had unique characteristics that could not be explained on the diffusion hypothesis, in any event.[203] In a separate study, Pasricha found that Indians unfamiliar with cases held expectations about case characteristics that differed from what those of actual cases.[204]

Stevenson proposed a different way of understanding why case features sometimes reflect cultural ideals. If the mind survives death, it would be natural for the beliefs and expectations held in life to be carried into death. A person who died believing he could not change sex in his next life might avoid doing so.[205] The same principle could explain certain other patterns, such as the tendency for cases to occur in family lines much more often in tribal cultures than elsewhere.[206]

Social Construction

Social construction has to do with the way witnesses interpret case features in line with their beliefs. There is no doubt that this happens sometimes, as Stevenson showed in a series of cases demonstrating delusion and self-delusion. Antonia Mills has supplied another example. A thirty-month-old India boy, Sakte Lal, mispronounced some crucial names when he first spoke them. He said he had been named Avari rather than Itwari, that Avari had been murdered by Vishnu rather than Kishnu, and that he was from Amalpur rather than Jamalpur. His mispronunciations might have been baby talk, but a less charitable view would be that the social construction of his case began with a re-interpretation of the names to make them fit a locally well-known murder.[207]

Social construction can figure at later stages of a case as well, especially at the point at which a child's past-life identity is verified in a meeting with the previous person's family. Mills demonstrates this in an analysis of a videotaped series of recognition tests with Satke Lal. Although the boy made a few spontaneous recognitions on tape, more often he was either mistaken or led to the correct answer by onlookers. Despite the obvious coaching, he was judged to have passed the tests, and his past-life identity was considered confirmed. Mills comments on the emotional involvement of all concerned and says that Sakte Lal was consistently addressed as if he were the reincarnation of the putative previous person, reinforcing the identification.[208]

Sceptics have often used the case of Rakesh Gaur as an example of social construction processes, but the evidence is less clear-cut here. Satwant Pasricha and David Barker investigated this case together, but came to different conclusions about it. Barker thought that the identification of the previous person was made by chance, and once made, the memories of informants changed to support this identification. Barker, however, assumes that Rakesh did not use the previous person's name, an issue on which there was some dispute. Had Rakash not used the name when he first met a visitor from the previous person's village, there is no explanation for why the visitor went directly to the family upon returning the village.[209] Even if Rakesh did not use the name, however, Pasricha points out that there are three things that all informants agreed he said before he made contact with the previous family (that he was from a certain town, that had been a carpenter, and that he had been electrocuted), and these were sufficient to identify the previous person even without a name.[210]

Ian Wilson has suggested that children who speak about having lived in better socioeconomic circumstances in their present lives might be imagining better lives for themselves or 'poor families may have tried to pass off their offspring as reincarnations of dead offspring of the rich'[211] but this makes little sense in cultural terms. Most cases with great disparities between lives are in India and Sri Lanka, where according to Hindu and Buddhist reincarnation beliefs, a previous life in better circumstances would imply a karmic demotion into the present life. It seems unlikely that children would reap much benefit from such a claim, much less that their parents would encourage it.[212]

Cryptomnesia and Paramnesia

American psychologist David Lester counts cryptomnesia as a possible explanation for past-life memory,[213] but elsewhere acknowledges that 'when the two families are widely separated and not known to each other, this seems unlikely'.[214] Another reason cryptomnesia seems unlikely with spontaneous reincarnation cases is that the majority of subjects are young children, who have normally been kept close to home and have not had the exposure to 'normal' sources of information about the people they claim to have been.[215]

Nonetheless, Stevenson regularly considered cryptomnesia as a possibility and looked for links, not at first obvious, between the present and previous families. Sometimes he discovered that there had been contacts, even when the two families denied knowing each other, and certainly were not well acquainted. But could these casual contacts—perhaps an overheard conversation—have furnished enough information for a child to develop detailed and accurate memories of a deceased person's life? Stevenson doubted that they could have. Also, he noted, some children demonstrated knowledge of intimate family affairs, or even knew where 'buried treasure' had been hidden. Moreover, as always, it was necessary to explain not only a child's statements about the previous life, but also any behavioural or physical signs matching the previous person.[216] In the end, it did not seem to Stevenson that cryptomnesia was a factor in any of his reincarnation cases, although it clearly played a role in hypnotic regressions and other areas of parapsychology.[217]

It was not so with other memory disturbances, such as paramnesia, a term often used loosely to indicate any distortion and inaccuracy in memory. Stevenson considered paramnesia to be of great potential importance. He wrote: 'If I were going to coach a critic of these cases, I should advise him to concentrate on whatever evidence he can find of the unreliability of the informants' memories.'[218] Many critics have in fact done this, but with references to the allegations of Ransom, Rogo, or other critics such as the Indian philosopher CTK Chari,[219] rather than to Stevenson.[220]

Stevenson showed that memory distortions may occur both with the case subjects and with the adult witnesses to what a child has said. Imad Elawar seems to have partially merged the memory of the truck accident which led to the death of his previous person's cousin and friend with that of a bus accident in which the previous person himself was involved.[221] Swarnlata Mishra at first conflated two past lives she recalled and they only gradually became distinct in her mind.[222] Rakesh Gaur, also, confused memories of two houses in which the previous person lived and made other mistakes.[223]

Adult witnesses may have faulty memories as well, which is one reason that Stevenson interviewed as many first-hand witnesses to a case he could find and went back to them repeatedly over periods of years in order to check for consistency. He reported and evaluated all inconsistencies carefully. Although he acknowledged the possibility of social construction in some cases, he judged this an inadequate explanation for his stronger cases. He was confident that faulty memory and social construction could be ruled out with those cases in which child's statements were recorded in writing before they were verified. A study comparing cases with and without such written records found that more statements were

recorded, yet the percentage of correct statements was equally high, in cases with prior written records as in cases without them.[224] In another study, Stevenson and Keil compared cases investigated by Stevenson with the same cases reinvestigated twenty years later by Keil, and found there had been very little change in witness's memories.[225]

Philosophical Objections to Reincarnation

The early Christian theologian Tertullian was the first person to raise one of the most common philosophical objections to reincarnation, that of reconciling it with population growth. It is manifest, Tertullian said, that the dead are formed from the living, but it does not follow therefrom that the living are formed from the dead; if they were, there should be a constant number of people on earth, but then why was the population increasing?[226] Tertullian's assumption that there are a fixed number of souls in circulation may be unwarranted. New human souls might enter the system in several different ways, including being promoted up to human form from nonhuman animals.[227] Even if there were a fixed number of souls, however, population growth would not necessarily be a problem unless the time between intermissions was also fixed, and it is clear from the case data that it is not.[228] David Bishai has shown that merely tightening up the time between lives is sufficient to allow for population growth[229] and it is interesting to note that the intermission is much shorter in Asian societies with great population density than in Western societies.[230]

Tertullian also asked, Why do people die at different stages of life, yet always return as infants? Would not those who died in old age pick up where they left off in their next lives?[231] Paul Edwards labels this question 'Tertullian's Objection.'[232] Robert Almeder points out that it is not really an objection, unless it is an objection to a particular idea of what reincarnation entails.[233] There is no logical reason that reincarnated persons in new bodies should not have to start anew in those bodies, unless one assumes that reincarnation means the carrying over of one's entire psychology into one's new life. In any event, case studies provide numerous examples of children behaving as if they were the adults they recalled having been. Stevenson referred to this as exhibiting an 'adult attitude'.[234] Examples are Bongkuch Promsin and Suleyman Andary. Not all child subjects show adult attitudes to the same extent, but it is common for them to be judged more mature than their siblings in their overall bearing.[235] Thus, the answer to Tertullian's question is that its premise is wrong: some children do apparently pick up where they left off.

Tertullian set up a straw-man version of reincarnation, to which he addressed his questions. The same is true of Paul Edwards. As Almeder observes, Edwards attacks a conception of reincarnation that does not match any particular belief system, but appears to be constructed solely for the purpose of ridicule. Edwards assumes that karma is an intrinsic part of reincarnation and that some sort of subtle body is required to convey the 'soul' from one life to another. He finds logical problems with both and thinks that he has thereby disposed of the possibility of reincarnation. However, neither karma nor subtle bodies are required by reincarnation, as evidenced by the many belief systems that make do with neither.

A minimalist concept of reincarnation that does not involve these ideas, moreover, receives good support from the case data.[236]

Explaining the Reincarnation Evidence

Parental Guidance

Psychiatrist Eugene Brody proposed 'culturally influenced unconscious parental selection' as an alternative way to understand Stevenson's reincarnation cases.[237] From this perspective, children's past-life memories reflect a compromised relationship between mother and child that begins in early infancy. Frequent crying and 'feeding difficulties' signal 'partially repressed impulses, wishes or ideas', the expression of unmet needs. In trying to come to terms with her perceived inadequacies at parenting, a mother turns to her culture's belief in reincarnation. Her beliefs shape the way she treats her child and are conveyed to him, so that he grows up imagining he has lived before.[238]

Psychological studies with children have found no indication of such mother-child tensions, nor can Brody's scenario explain how children can say true things about people neither they nor their parents have met, or even know exist, before they are tracked down in response to the child's memory claims.[239] Moreover, parental guidance seems highly unlikely in many cases. Antonia Mills studied 26 cases of what she called 'half-Moslem' cases – Hindu children who recalled lives as Muslims or Muslim children who recalled lives as Hindus.[240] Stevenson and Keil studied 24 Burmese children who claimed to have been Japanese soldiers who died in Burma during the Second World War.[241] It seems doubtful that Indian parents would impose another religion on their child or that Burmese parents would want their children to identify with despised occupiers of their country. Satwant Pasricha examined the possibility of parental guidance in two studies, finding support for it in neither.[242] Far from encouraging the development of the cases, many Asian parents attempt to suppress their children's memories, out of fear that they will lose them to the previous families.[243]

Parental guidance is assumed by many critics to be an important factor[244] in the cases but it is most likely to come into play when the purported previous person is well-known, as in two cases exposed by Stevenson and his colleagues. In one of these, a Turkish Alevi child was identified by his parents as the reincarnation of John F. Kennedy on the basis of a dream and a birthmark. The boy was named Kenedi and grew up hearing that he was Kennedy reborn. He came to believe it, although he never claimed to have memories of Kennedy's life. In another case, an Indian child was told by his parents that he was Mahatma Gandhi reborn. He began to speak of events in Gandhi's life only in his teens, around the time a teacher caught him reading a book about Gandhi in his school library.[245]

Psi and Super-Psi

The veridicality of many children's past-life memories presents a problem for socio-psychological explanations such as social construction and parental guidance. Recognizing this, Stevenson considered the possibility that the children might be using extra-sensory perception (ESP) to learn about deceased persons. He could not

see how ESP alone could account for the behavioural correspondences in many cases and so considered ESP plus personation, the internalization and mobilization of ESP impressions necessary to impersonate the previous person. Even this was not enough to explain the psychological continuity children felt with the previous persons or their use of the first person in narrating their memories. In many cases, the information the children produced did not reside in the mind of any single living person and so would have had to have been assembled from multiple sources. There was also the question of motivation – why did the child zero in psychically on this particular deceased person rather than another?[246]

Another problem with the ESP (or psi) explanation is that when and how children express their memories more closely resembles memory than psi. Children's memories are often triggered by things they encounter, as occurs often with memory of the present life. Many children have an easier time recognizing people in old photographs than they do people and places that have changed substantially since the previous person's death. Moreover, the children's mistakes suggest memory more than they do psi: It is hard to understand why children should make more errors when deaths are violent if they were employing psi, nor would one expect to find unsolved cases, if psi were at play.[247]

These difficulties have not kept some parapsychologically-oriented critics from favoring a psi explanation of the cases. Chari thought that psi might become involved in paramnesia as well as less distorted memories.[248] Roll, similarly, believed that he could discern psychic conduits for information in some reincarnation cases.[249] However, in order to account for the behavioural and physical features of the cases, psi would have to be not only unusually extensive, but unusually complex. Unusually extensive or complex psi is called super-psi, because it is beyond anything that has been reported in spontaneous cases or demonstrated in laboratory experiments.[250]

Stephen Braude, especially, has been keen on arguing for the possibility of a complex super-psi as a way of explaining reincarnation case phenomena. Braude believes that super-psi deployed in altered states of consciousness could explain not only how children are accessing information about deceased persons but also how they are acquiring language and other skills.[251] He explains physical features in the following way: After they see the birthmarks on a newborn, members of its family reach out through psi to find a deceased person with bodily features matching those marks, acquire information about that life, and pass it on psychically to the child, shaping his behaviours in the process. Alternatively, a member of the previous person's family psychically locates a child with the appropriate birthmarks, then psychically transfers information about the previous person to him or her.[252] These conjectures go well beyond anything that psi is known to achieve and are purely hypothetical.

Maternal Impression

Maternal impression is the idea that the thoughts and feelings of a pregnant woman can affect the development of the child in her womb. This possibility is dismissed by most modern embryologists, but there appears to be some evidence that a mother's mental images may be imposed on her unborn child.[253] Jürgen Keil,

among others, takes maternal impression seriously as an explanation for birthmarks and birth defects in reincarnation cases.[254] Ian Wilson goes further; he considers it possible that 'a mother's mental traumas, of whatever origin, may be unconsciously transmitted to the unborn child, so that the child takes on what is merely the illusion of past-life memories by identifying itself as the victim of the traumas'.[255]

This explanation works best when the mother was aware of a wound or other scar on the previous person and was shocked by it. There are numerous cases in which the subject's mother had no knowledge of the previous person's wounds, much less had she seen them.[256] Unless the mother was acquainted with the previous person's circumstances, she would have had to have become aware of them through psi, so this explanation tends to be combined with super-psi to explain physical signs in reincarnation cases.[257]

Genetic Memory

Genetic memory is 'a memory present at birth that exists in the absence of sensory experience, and is incorporated into the genome over long spans of time'.[258] Genetic memory is sometimes proposed as an explanation for past-life memory, but that is not tenable for many reasons. One is that past-life memories are typically autobiographical memories about a specific previous person, not the sort of instinctive actions that may be encoded in the genome of a species, presumably for the survival advantages they confer. Moreover, in many cases, there are no genetic connections between the children and the persons whose life they remember. Also, genetic memory could not account for memories of deaths, which are very common, nor could it account for memories of persons who died without progeny.[259]

Caringtonian Models of Postmortem Survival

Whately Carington was a psychical researcher who studied mediums and wrote theoretical works on telepathy and postmortem survival. He developed a theory of mind as an associative network of ideas and sensa he called 'psychons', linked through psychological forces. Psychon systems survived the death of the body and might connect with other psychon systems through processes of affinity, rather as in psychometry.[260]

Carington used his theory to explain various sorts of psychic and survival phenomena, including mind-to-mind communication, mediumship, and apparitions, but he wrote before Stevenson had begun his research with reincarnation cases and so did not attempt to relate it to past-life memory. Psychologist Gardner Murphy was the first to apply Carington's psychon theory to Stevenson's cases, based on his reading of *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. Murphy emphasized elements in the cases that he thought were consistent with Carington's theory, including what he saw as a less than full persistence of personality, with little evidence of the carryover of desires and purposes, 'the characteristic "unfinished business" of life'.[261] In his reply, Stevenson noted that this was largely a deficiency in the way he had presented his material. In fact, he said, the cases provided plenty of evidence of a more robust survival of personality,

behaviours, and emotions, for which he had been unprepared when he began his research.[262]

Despite Stevenson's clarifications, other writers have adopted models of survival similar to Carington's. One of these is WG Roll, whose theory of spatial and temporal relations acting to channel information by ESP is very Caringtonian.[263] Another is D Scott Rogo, who despite his criticisms of Stevenson's methods, in the end accepted his data and devised his own Caringtonian interpretation of them.[264] The most recent effort along these lines is by Jürgen Keil, who proposed that in 'the last phase of life' bodies might 'emit' 'thought bundles' which could 'independently persist for periods of time and may occasionally be absorbed by a very young child who is not as yet encapsulated within his or her own personality' when the child came into its vicinity.[265] There are many problems with Keil's proposal, however, including the fact that many children would not have had the opportunity to come into contact with the previous person's 'thought bundle' and not all people who remember previous lives are young children.[266]

Reincarnation via a Subtle Body

Stevenson proposed that memories, behaviours and form were conveyed from one life to another via a sort of subtle or astral body he called a 'psychophore', a term which means 'soul-bearing'. Physical impressions carried on the psychophore would help shape an embryo or fetus through a field effect when the psychophore moved into 'topical alignment' with it, he thought.[267] Memories, behaviours, and physical impressions were reduced in the psychophore and passed on to the new body in a shrunken way, so that memories became fragmentary, skills became aptitudes, wounds no longer bled but might be replaced by birthmarks or other congenital abnormalities.[268]

Apparently Stevenson was persuaded for philosophical reasons that he had to provide a subtle body to support consciousness between lives. 'A disembodied existence is difficult to conceive, and for me the task has proven close to impossible, as it has for some philosophers who have considered the problem'.[269] However, other philosophers have found the subtle body concept problematical,[270] and it is not clear what happens to the psychophore when reincarnation occurs after conception.[271] Stevenson thought it a matter of 'personal preference' whether one classified cases with intermissions of less than nine months as cases of reincarnation or possession[272] and was inconsistent about how he characterized the rare cases in which the body is joined after birth. In his volumes of case reports, he treated these last as variations of reincarnation,[273] and once referred to them as 'exchange incarnation'.[274] At other times, he called them examples of possession.[275]

Reincarnation as Possession

James Matlock has suggested an alternative conception of how reincarnation works. Reincarnation is possession by its nature, in Matlock's view. The reincarnating mind's possession of a body in the womb might occur at any point during gestation but would not necessarily involve the replacement of another mind already associated with the body. When the incoming mind does displace another mind,

and remains in control of the body thereafter, Matlock calls this replacement reincarnation. Replacement reincarnation may occur either before or after birth. If the possession is not permanent but transient or temporary, as in mediumistic or spirit possession or the thirteen-week possession of Lurancy Vennum, Matlock calls this possession. The difference between whether a given case is one of possession or reincarnation is a matter of whether the possession is temporary or long-term.[276]

Matlock's concept of reincarnation as possession provides a straightforward way of explaining past-life memories as well as the behavioural and physical features of reincarnation cases. Matlock understands memory to be preserved in the subconscious part of the mind, from which, following reincarnation, it can present itself to conscious awareness as past-life memory. He explains the conveyance from one body to another of behavioural and physical features as the products of the mind acting on its new body through psychokinesis, as occurs in psychic healing or what parapsychologists call 'distant mental interactions with living systems' (DMILS). Stevenson marshalled a great deal of evidence that a mind could directly influence its body,[277] which it should be able to do without the mediation of a psychophore, Matlock points out, and if there is no psychophore, one does not have to explain what happens to it when the mind joins the body after conception.[278]

James G Matlock

Psi Encyclopedia Articles on Reincarnation

General and Introductory Articles

Adult Past-Life Memories Research

Children Who Remember a Previous Life

Dreams and Past-Life Memory

Past-Life Memories Illustrated

Past Life Memories Research (overview)

Patterns in Reincarnation Cases

Psychological Studies of Children Claiming Past-Life Memories

Case Features

Announcing Dreams and Related Experiences

Behavioural Memories in Reincarnation Cases

Birthmarks

Experimental Birthmarks and Birth Defects

Physical Signs in Reincarnation Cases

Reincarnation and Phobias

Reincarnation Intermission Memories

Xenoglossy in Reincarnation Cases

Case Types

Famous Past Life Claims

Hidden Treasure in Reincarnation Cases

International Reincarnation Cases

Past Life Memories of the Holocaust

People Who Knew Each Other in Past Lives

Reincarnation Cases with Sex Changes

Replacement Reincarnation

Suicide and Reincarnation

Tibetan Lamas Reincarnated in the West

Twins Reincarnation Research

Cultural and Historical Overviews

American Children Who Remember Previous Lives

Brazilian Children Who Remember Previous Lives

Dutch Children Who Remember a Previous Life

European Children Who Rememeber Previous Lives

Native North American Children Who Recall Previous Lives

Reincarnation Accounts From Before 1900

Case Studies

Bishen Chand Kapoor

Bongkuch Promsin

Dorothy Eady / Omm Sety

Dilukshi Nassanka

Duminda Ratnayake

Gnanatilleka Baddewithana

Imad Elawar

İsmail Altınkılıç and Cevriye Bayrı

Jagdish Chandra

James Leininger

Jasbir Lal Jat

Jenny Cockell

Jenny Cockell / Mary Sutton

Mary Sutton/Jenny Cockell

Kumkum Verma

Ma Tin Aung Myo

Marta Lorenz

Nazih Al-Danaf

Pollock Twins

Pretiba Gunawardana

Purnima Ekanayake

Rakesh Gaur

Shiva-Sumitra

Suleyman Andary

Sunil Dutt Saxena

Thusita Silva

Titu (Toran Singh)

Uttara Huddar/Sharada

Wael Kiwan

Past-Life Regression (PLR)

Past Life Regression

Antonia (Case Study Analysis)

Gretchen

Researchers

Erlendur Haraldsson

James G Matlock

Antonia Mills

Satwant Pasricha

Titus Rivas

Ian Stevenson

Jim B Tucker

Further Reading

Online Articles

Many academic studies describing reincarnation cases or other aspects of reincarnation research are available online in full text without paywalls, most of them in PDF files. Go here for a PDF document listing of these items (with hyperlinks) under four headings: Reincarnation Case Studies; Pattern Analyses and Discursive Contributions; Critical Commentary and Response; and Anthropology & Sociology / Reincarnation Beliefs.

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Endnotes

Footnotes

1.^ Materialism is under assault from philosophy (e.g., Koons & Bealer, 2010), psychology (e.g., Barušs & Mossbridge, 2017), neuroscience (e.g., Wollacott, 2015), quantum mechanics (e.g., Stapp, 2011), and other disciplines (e.g., Kastrup, 2014; Kelly, Crabtree, & Marshall, 2015).
2.^ Stapp (2009), 9.
3.^ Stevenson (2006), 15.
4.^ Matlock (2019).
5.^ https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=reincarnation. *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1977, 2475), cites the first usage of *re-incarnation* in 1858.
6.^ https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=reincarnation. *Compact Edition* (1977, 2434), says that *rebirth* was in common use to refer to reincarnation by c. 1850.
7.^ https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=transmigration. *Compact Edition* (1977, 3382), cites the first mention of transmigration of souls in 1594.
8.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metempsychosis
9.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palingenesis
10.^ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/metensomatosis
11.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilgul
12.^ Waugh (1999), 56.
13.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%E1%B9%83s%C4%81ra
14.^ https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-hindi/samsara
15.^ https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-between-rebirth-and-reincarnation.
16.^ Matlock (2019).
17.^ Krishan (1997); O'Flaherty (1980).
18.^ O'Flaherty (1980), 28-37.
19.^ This term, which appears also as parakayapravesh, parkaya pravesh and parakaya pravesha may denote the willful movement of the spirit of a living person into another body as well as a discarnate spirit of a deceased person into a living body. Either instance is represented as 'possession' in English.

20.^ Mandair (2013), 145-47, 176.
21.^ Krishan (1997); Stevenson (1974b), 372 n4.
22.^ Less commonly, four branches are recognized. In addition to Theravada and Mahayana, these include Vajrayana and Zen Buddhism. See http://www.findingdulcinea.com/guides/Religion-and-Spirituality/Buddhism.pg_00.html
23.^ Becker (1993); Thondup (2005).
24.^ Thondup (2005).
25.^ Schibli (1990).By this time, the mystery school known as Orphism had developed a myth about the dismemberment and reconstitution of Dionysus (Johnson, 2013, 73-80), but this sort of 'reincarnation' is very different from the personal reincarnation taught by Pherecydes of Syros and Pythagoras.
26.^ Burkert (1972).
27.^ *History of Herodotus* 2.123, trans. G. C. Macaulay.
28.^ Matlock (2019).
29.^ Matlock (2019).
30.^ Phaedrus, 246a-249c.
31.^ Republic 10.617e-620c,
32.^ Republic 10.621a.
33.^ Matlock (2019).
34.^ Yli-Karjanmaa (2015).
35.^ Josephus, *The War of the Jews*, II.8.14.
36.^ For instance, Cohn-Sherbok (1991), 191.
37.^ Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), 158.
38.^ Cumont (1922), cited in Matlock (2019).
39.^ Matlock (2019).
40.^ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, translated by MacKenna & Page, cited in Matlock (2019).
41.^ Hamerton-Kelly (1973).
42.^ Trumbower (2016).
43.^ MacGregor (1978), 48-62.
44.^ Matlock (2019).
45.^ MacGregor (1978), 48-62.
46.^ St. Thomas of Aquinas took a stand against reincarnation in several works, including *Summa contra Gentiles, Book 2,* chap. 83 (George, 1996).
47.^ A. P. Smith (2015).
48.^ Singer (1950), cited in Stevenson (2003), 7.
49.^ Alexakis (2001).
50.^ Kaplan (1979), xi.
51.^ Ogren (2008).
52.^ Pinson (1999); Trugman (2008).
53.^ Waugh (1999).
54.^ Waugh (1999).
55.^ Matlock (2019).
56.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alawites
57.^ Stevenson (1980).
58.^ Stevenson (1980).

59.^ Julius Caesar, *Gallic Wars* 6.14. 'by this tenet [they] are in a great degree excited to valor, the fear of death being disregarded' (Gallic Wars Book 6, Chapter 14, trans. by W.A. McDevitte & W.S. Bohn.
60.^ Dillon & Chadwick (2003), 152-53; Evans-Wentz (1911/2007), 365-80.
61.^ Osred (2011).
62.^ Larrington (2014).
63.^ Matlock (2019).
64.^ http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hermeticism
65.^ Lewis (1956).
66.^ https://www.golden-dawn.com/eu/displaycontent.aspx?pageid=115-hermetic-tradition
67.^ http://www.masonicworld.com/education/files/artaug04/masonry_and_the_doctrine_of_reincarnation.htm
68.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Freemasonry
69.^ Iriwn (2017a, 2017b).
70.^ Irwin (2017b), 120.
71.^ http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/reincar/re-tran.htm. For some of Thoreau's comments on reincarnation, see https://www.azquotes.com/author/14637-Henry_David_Thoreau/tag/reincarnation.
72.^ Irwin (2017b), 130-34.
73.^ Irwin (2017b), 209-54.
74.^ Melton (1994).
75.^ Matlock (2019).
76.^ Stevenson (2003), 9.
77.^ Haraldsson (2006).
78.^ http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NewsRoom/HarrisPolls/tabid/447/ctl/ReadCustom%20Default/mid/1508/ArticleId/1353/Default.aspx
79.^ Jefferson (2008); Mills & Slobodin (1994).
80.^ Matlock & Mills (1994).
81.^ Matlock (1993), 123.
82.^ Davis (1971); Matlock (1993); Somersan (1981); Swanson (1960).
83.^ Matlock (1993).
84.^ Swanton (1960).
85.^ Davis (1971); Somersan (1981, 1984); Matlock (1995).
86.^ Tylor (1958).
87.^ Matlock (1993); Matlock (2019).
88.^ Matlock (1993), 129-30.
89.^ Matlock (1993), 156.
90.^ Stevenson (2001) 98-99; Matlock (2019).
91.^ Matlock (1993), 87-89.
92.^ Matlock (1993), 94-96.
93.^ Matlock (1990a).
94.^ Matlock (2019).
95.^ One who assumes this is Alexakis (2001).
96.^ McEvilley (2013).

97.^ For example, Toynbee (1959), 55.
98.^ Kingsley (2010), 147.
99.^ Matlock (2019).
100.^ For example, Irwin (2017b), xiii.
101.^ Matlock (1993), 12, 44.
102.^ Quoted in Matlock (1993), 45.
103.^ Matlock (2019).
104.^ Fürer-Haimendorf (1953); Obeyesekere (1980), cited in Matlock (2019) [./fn] If that is so, then what spread from India may not have been the belief in reincarnation as such, but the idea that it was associated with certain conceptions of karma.Matlock (2019).
105.^ Matlock (2019).
106.^ Cerminara (1950), 44.
107.^ Matlock (2019).
108.^ Melton (1994).
109.^ Cerminara (1963), 69.
110.^ Matlock (2019).
111.^ Stevenson (2001), 47.
112.^ Matlock (2019).
113.^ Sceptics have tried hard to debunk the Bridey Murphy case, but their charges themselves have been debunked. See Ducasse (1961), chap. 25. However, despite the correct details, no one Bridey Murphy named has ever been traced (Matlock, 2019).
114.^ Matlock (2019).
115.^ Snow (1999), cited in Matlock (2019).
116.^ Baker (1992), 103-7.
117.^ Stevenson (2001), 48-49.
118.^ Matlock (2013).
119.^ Matlock (2019).
120.^ Matlock (2019); Stevenson (2001), 26-27.
121.^ Stevenson (2001), 99-101, 197-99.
122.^ Stevenson (2006).
123.^ Stevenson (1960). See also Pre-1900 reincarnation accounts.
124.^ Stevenson (2006).
125.^ Stevenson (1974b).
126.^ See Kelly (2013) for a comprehensive list of Stevenson's publications.
127.^ Mills & Tucker (2013), 314, 318.
128.^ See Patterns in Reincarnation Cases.
129.^ Stevenson (2001), 108, 123; Matlock (1990b), 199.
130.^ Haraldsson 2008).
131.^ Haraldsson & Abu-Izzeddin (2012).
132.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), chap. 27.
133.^ Matlock (2019).
134.^ Cook et al. (1983), 121.
135.^ Tucker (2013), 200-2.
136.^ Stevenson (2001), 212.
137.^ Stevenson (2000).
138.^ Stevenson (1974b), 262-63.

139.^ Stevenson (1974b), 205.
140.^ Tucker (2013), 130-35.
141.^ Byrd (2017).
142.^ Stevenson (1993).
143.^ Stevenson (1997).
144.^ Mills (1994); Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 589-636.
145.^ Matlock (2019).
146.^ Pasricha, Keil, Tucker, & Stevenson (2005), 379-81. For a longer account of this case, see Tucker (2013, chap. 1), under the name Patrick.
147.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 2, 1663, 1873.
148.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 2, 1757-1846.
149.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 2, 2045, 2053-56.
150.^ Stevenson (1974b), 259.
151.^ Sharma & Tucker (2004).
152.^ For illustrations of these five stages, see Intermission Memories.
153.^ Matlock & Gieslser-Petersen (2016).
154.^ Matlock (2017).
155.^ Tucker & Niddifer (2014).
156.^ Haraldsson (1997); Haraldsson, Fowler, & Periyannanpillai (2000).
157.^ Haraldsson (2003).
158.^ Haraldsson (2003).
159.^ Tucker & Niddifer (2014).
160.^ Stevenson (1990).
161.^ Matlock (2019).
162.^ Matlock (1989).
163.^ Matlock (2019). See also Adult Past Life Memories Research.
164.^ Stevenson (2001), 212.
165.^ See Buried Treasure in Reincarnation Cases.
166.^ Matlock (2019).
167.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 1102-3.
168.^ Angel (2015), 578.
169.^ Angel (2015), 575-76. Angel presumably means: 'One should try to determine whether the sorts of correspondences found between a living person's verbal memory claims and the facts about a deceased person defy chance expectations.' The living person with the memory claims and the 'purportedly reincarnated deceased person' are one and the same, so as written, the sentence is meaningless.
170.^ Stevenson's obituary may be found at http:///www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/health/psychology/18stevenson.html.
171.^ Angel (2015), 576. See also Angel (2008).
172.^ Shermer (2018), 100.
173.^ Mills (2004).
174.^ Matlock (2019), commenting on Angel (2002).
175.^ Shermer (2018), 102.
176.^ Shermer (2018), 100.
177.^ Matlock (2019).
178.^ Edwards (1996, 275) was the first to use this name.

179.^ Ransom (2015). In introducing this contribution, the editors of the volume, Michael Martin and Keith Augustine, note that Stevenson asked that his reply be circulated along with Ransom's comments, but they chose to publish the summary of Ransom's comments without a similar summary of Stevenson's reply.
180.^ Stevenson (1966).
181.^ Matlock (2019).
182.^ Ransom (2015), 640.
183.^ Ransom (2015), 641.
184.^ Matlock (2019).
185.^ Matlock (2019).
186.^ Rogo (1985),73-86.
187.^ Stevenson (1980), 17-51.
188.^ Rogo (1985),73, cited in Matlock (1990b), 249.
189.^ Rogo (1985), 73.
190.^ Stevenson (1986), cited in Matlock (1990b),249.
191.^ Rogo (1985), 77, cited in Matlock (1990b), 249-50.
192.^ Wilson (1982), 23, cited in Matlock (1990b), 248.
193.^ Angel first published his comments on this case in 1994 but repeated them as late as 2015 (Angel, 1994, 2015).
194.^ Barros (2004), cited in Matlock (2019).
195.^ Augustine (n.d.).
196.^ Muller (1970).
197.^ Stevenson (2003).
198.^ Tucker (2013)./fn] among others,Haraldsson & Matlock (2016); Hassler (2013); Matlock (2019).
199.^ Matlock (2019).
200.^ Augustine (2015), 25, among others, draws this inference.
201.^ Stevenson (1980), 9-10.
202.^ Matlock (2019).
203.^ Barker & Pasricha (1979).
204.^ Pasricha (1990).
205.^ Stevenson (2001), 180.
206.^ Matlock (2019).
207.^ Mills (2003), 76-77.
208.^ Mills (2003).
209.^ Pasricha & Barker (1983).
210.^ Pasricha (1983).
211.^ Wilson (1981), 21, 22.
212.^ Matlock (2019).
213.^ Lester (2015), 642.
214.^ Lester (2005), 129.
215.^ Stevenson (2001), 153.
216.^ Stevenson (2001), 153-54.
217.^ Stevenson (1983b).
218.^ Stevenson (2001), 154.
219.^ Chari (1962a).
220.^ See, for instance, Augustine (2015).

221.^ Stevenson (1974), 303-4.
222.^ Stevenson (1974), 72.
223.^ Pasricha & Barker (1983).
224.^ Schouten & Stevenson (1998).
225.^ Stevenson & Keil (2000).
226.^ Tertullian, *A Treatise On the Soul*, chap. 30.
227.^ Stevenson (2001), 207-9.
228.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 224-25.
229.^ Bishai (2000).
230.^ See Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 224-25; Matlock (2019.
231.^ Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul*, chap. 31.
232.^ Edwards (2016), 223-24.
233.^ Almeder (1996), 512.
234.^ Stevenson (2001), 66-68, 70-71, 92, 96, 120, 194, 283 n27, 298 n23.
235.^ Matlock (2019).
236.^ Almeder (1996).
237.^ Brody (1979), 75.
238.^ Brody (1979).
239.^ Matlock (2019).
240.^ Mills (1990).
241.^ Stevenson & Keil (2005).
242.^ Pasricha (1992, 2011).
243.^ Stevenson &vChadha (1990); Pasricha (2011).
244.^ For example, Augustine (2015), 25.
245.^ Steveson, Pasricha, and Samararatne (1988), 10-15, 22-26.
246.^ Stevenson (1974b),343-48.
247.^ Matlock (2019).
248.^ Chari (1962a, 1962b, 1967).
249.^ Roll (1982), 197-98.
250.^ Matlock (2019).
251.^ Braude (2003), 114-27.
252.^ Braude (2003), 181.
253.^ Stevenson (1992).
254.^ Keil (2010), 82.
255.^ Wilson (1981), 25-26.
256.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 1142-45. On p.1144, Stevenson presents a table listing cases in which mothers had no awareness of the previous person's wounds.
257.^ Matlock (2019).
258.^ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_memory_(psychology)
259.^ Stevenson (2001), 158-59.
260.^ Carington (1945).
261.^ Murphy (1973), 122.
262.^ Stevenson (1973), 139-41.
263.^ Roll (1982), 197-200; Matlock (1990b), 253.
264.^ Rogo (1985), 215-18.
265.^ Keil (2010), 96.
266.^ Matlock (2019).

267.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 2, 2084-88. See also Stevenson (2001), 234-35, 251.
268.^ Stevenson (2001),234-35.
269.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 2, 2083, citing Flew (1973) and Wheatley (1979).
270.^ For example, Edwards (1996), chap. 9.
271.^ Matlock (2019).
272.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 1142.
273.^ See Jasbir Jat in Stevenson (1974b), 34- 52; Chaokhun Rajsuthajarn in Stevenson (1983a), 171-90; and Ruprecht Schulz in Stevenson (2003), 210-22.
274.^ Stevenson (1974b), 2.
275.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 1142; Stevenson, Pasricha, & McLean-Rice (1989).
276.^ Matlock (2019).
277.^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, chaps. 1-3.
278.^ Matlock (2019).