

A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH
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REINCARNATION STUDIES PRESENTED AT P. A. CONVENTION

Two studies on reincarnation were given at the convention of the Parapsychological Association which met in New York City, September 4-6, 1969. Both were presented by Dr. Ian Stevenson, Director of the Division of Parapsychology at the School of Medicine, University of Virginia. In a paper on "The Belief in Reincarnation and Related Cases Among the Eskimos of Alaska," he compared cases from that culture with those he has collected elsewhere, including the Tlingit Indians who inhabit the Alaskan panhandle.

Stevenson found that in nearly half of the fifteen Eskimo cases he studied, the previous and present personalities were members of the same families, as compared with 85% for the Tlingits. The figures from Turkish, Ceylonese and Thai studies were lower than from the Eskimo. The two personalities were related on the mother's side in two-thirds of the Tlingit cases where there was a family connection and in about a quarter of the Eskimo cases.

Stevenson has paid special attention to birthmarks on the body of the second personality which correspond to scars or birthmarks on the previous incarnation. About half the cases from the Tlingits, Eskimos and the Alevis of Turkey showed such recurrences, much more than in the other cultures. "Announcing dreams," suggesting the identity of the personality to be reborn during pregnancy, occurred in slightly less than half of the Eskimo, Tlingit and Turkish cases, also more than in other cultures. In two Eskimo cases, the past and present personalities were of different sex. Though this is not an unusual feature in reincarnation cases, it has not been found in Turkey, Lebanon nor among the Tlingits.

In a shorter paper Stevenson outlined a

project he is conducting with Dr. J. Prasad of the Department of Education at Allahabad University, India, to discover whether personality traits are carried over from one incarnation to the next, as indicated by similarities in behavior reported for the two personalities. The test design includes a questionnaire with information about personality traits such as special likings, habits and abilities, and a five-point scale for estimating the presence and strength of character traits such as generosity versus selfishness. The questionnaires have been given to six reincarnation subjects and have also been filled out by persons familiar with the previous personalities, but the material has not yet been assessed.

During his study of reincarnation cases among the Eskimos, Stevenson found belief in reincarnation to be more widespread than in Western countries. However, a marked difference between older and younger persons indicated that the belief is diminishing: of those who were 40 years or older, 71% had heard of the belief as compared with 31% of those who were 39 years or younger. Among informants familiar with the belief, nearly two-thirds thought that reincarnation did in fact occur.

Stevenson suggests there may be a mutually supporting relationship between belief in reincarnation and actual cases: the belief allows the cases to develop and be communicated, and the cases promote the belief. He notes that it is difficult to understand how, in the absence of cases, a belief in reincarnation could arise and persist in a culture, such as the Eskimo, where the settlements are widely dispersed and which lacks a written language or a centrally organized religion.

Reviewed by Martin Ebon²

The work of Head and Cranston, in the extremely narrow area of published books in the field of reincarnation, looms large. The current volume is an extension of their *Reincarnation, An East-West Anthology* (New York: Julian Press, 1961). Considering what they regard as "the widespread current interest in the doctrine of many lives," the limited number of serious studies is truly surprising. The editors wonder whether we are witnessing, in our time, ". . . an apprehensive return to the thinking of a bygone age, a hopeless pursuit of lost securities" or "an intuitive reaching out to repossess a heritage belonging to every man, now to be recovered at the level of both critical intelligence and affirmative daring."

The editors note the scientific search for documentary evidence, notably that undertaken by Ian Stevenson, but this anthology is mainly concerned with erudite or imaginative religious, literary, or philosophical speculation concerning man's "repeated existence upon earth." Four introductory essays pose the overall problem. The first, "The Pivot of the Human Situation," by the British philosopher and educator, W. Macneile Dixon, states with militance rather than despair: "The experiences of time and of our present condition could, one feels, only be valuable in an existence not wholly unlike it; and any doctrine which insists upon a totally dissimilar existence, an indescribable spiritual life as a sequel to the present, makes of the present an insoluble enigma." Next, J. Paul Williams, Chairman of the Department of Religion at Mt. Holyoke College, answers the question, "Is There a Future Life?" with the "logically necessary assumption" that the chances of living after this life are as great as "the possibility that we have lived before this life." The late C. J. Ducasse, Brown University, dissects "Objections to Reincarnation" and concludes that what is "observable within one

life, could occur equally naturally as between the present and the subsequent bodied lives of a continuous though gradually changing self. . . ." Finally, Huston Smith, Professor of Philosophy at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, summarized "Karma as Related to Rebirth" and notes that karma implies lawful continuity and rules out the concept of fatalism as "untrue to the doctrine itself."

The major part of the anthology is divided into six sections dealing successively with reincarnation in myth and symbol, in the world's religions, theosophy and masonry, among peoples of the world, including Africans and American Indians, among Western thinkers, and as considered by scientists, psychologists and philosophers. By far the largest section is given over to Western ideas; it should be noted that this volume incorporates key selections from the earlier *East-West* anthology but represents a far more comprehensive view.

The myth-and-symbol section is rather on the thin side. The editors have thrown their net rather wide: they actually mention the metamorphosis of the butterfly to catch distant poetic allusions to rebirth. The section on religions contains excerpts from the doctrines of Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Egyptian thought, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Manicheism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The single reference to Confucianism is scandalously fourth-hand; why not just dismiss K'ung Fu-tse in one sentence, in the introduction? The quotations from Christian sources are adequate, and the crucial Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople is summarized competently. Modern Christian spokesmen, clerics as well as laymen (Weatherhead, Schweitzer, *et al.*) are also quoted.

In the third section, unavoidably, Blavatsky is quoted at length. Considering the dubious authenticity of her autobiographical claims, her sources ("When, years ago, we first travelled over the East, exploring the penetralia of its deserted

sanctuaries . . .") sound, shall we say, remote. At any rate, the reader gets his quota of theosophical writings, including some paragraphs by Annie Besant. The next section, taken from anthropological sources, deals, at jet speed, with Africans, Australians, Oceanians and Malaysians, Asians (ten lines), American Indians and Europeans; there is a good deal of white space on these pages.

By page 188 we really get to the substance of the book. The Greeks and Romans are well represented, including Socrates, Aristotle and Virgil. There is Ovid, in the Dryden translation: "The immortal soul flies out in empty space;/To seek her fortune in some other place." The Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Reformation supply quotations, some mere echoes of Asian and Hellenic ideas. The names begin to sound neighborly: Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton—and so on, to Swedenborg, Hume and Voltaire (casually tolerant: rebirth is "neither absurd nor useless," and it really is "not more surprising to be born twice than once.") The impact of the classics on the 18th and 19th centuries was, of course, substantial, and the writings of such men as Shelley, Carlyle and Heine reflect it. Yet, quite obviously, these were often peripheral thoughts in the minds of men given to wide-ranging speculation; one Tennyson poem is not so much concerned with reincarnation as with a romantically-tinted *déjà vu*.

The value of this book lies in its wide range. Richard Wagner's letters, with their underlying rebirth theme (that he must return to finish his task), are intriguing. The English and continental poets all have their metaphorical flings in the direction of afterlife and rebirth; at times, the link is too thin to be detected at first reading, but the editors were right to include the suggested as well as the firmly stated conviction. The men of affairs were more direct. David Lloyd George wrote firmly: "My opinion is that we shall be reincarnated. . . ." Winston Churchill told C. L. Sulzburger that he "might well be reborn as a Chinese coolie," which would prompt him to "lodge a protest."

The closing section, less flippant, quotes from such men as Thomas H. Huxley, William James, Gandhi and, eventually, Rhine and Stevenson.

It is a unique job of scholarship. As Stevenson has said on these pages,³ ". . . one is impressed by the wide range of peoples, both temporally and geographically," who have spoken favorably of reincarnation. Head and Cranston have gone far beyond their previous pioneer task to produce a most valuable source book. We shall all be quoting from it, with or without attribution, for years to come.

WILLIAM McDUGALL LECTURE IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

As a memorial to the man who initiated scientific work in psychical research or parapsychology at Duke University, the P.R.F. has initiated a series of public lectures at Duke in the name of William McDougall. It is planned to have one such lecture each semester on a topic in psychical research.

McDougall was educated in England and taught at Oxford and Cambridge. After seven years as Professor of Psychology at Harvard, he was invited to form the Department of Psychology at Duke University in 1927 by Duke's first President, William Preston Few. Few was himself deeply interested in psychical research and gave it his full support.

McDougall's interest in psychical research had been stimulated by the work of another psychologist, William James, with the American medium, Mrs. Leonore Piper. One of McDougall's main interests was the question whether human personality survives the death of the body, and it was in order to explore the problem of mediumship and survival that McDougall, during his second year at Duke, invited Dr. J. B. Rhine to join his Department and to conduct scientific studies in this area.

The first William McDougall Lecture in Psychical Research was given by Dr. J. G. Pratt on October 20, 1969, under the title, "William McDougall and Present-Day Psychical Research." Dr. Pratt is President

¹New York: Julian Press, 1967, 461 pp., \$8.50.

²Mr. Ebon is advisory editor of *New American Library* and editor of *Spiritual Frontiers*.

of the Board of Directors of the P.R.F. and a member of the Division of Parapsychology at the School of Medicine, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. The address was cosponsored by the Duke University Union Special Projects Committee.

In his talk, Pratt saw McDougall's lecture at Clark University, "Psychical Research as a University Study," published in 1926, as pointing the way to integration of this field into academic research. He recalled McDougall's words that "our Western civilization has definitely repudiated the old way of authority, has committed itself irrevocably to live by knowledge, such knowledge as the methods of science can attain. . . . The inclusion of Psychical Research in the scientific studies of our Universities is the inevitable last step in this advance from a social state founded on instinct and tradition to one that relies upon knowledge and reason."

Following the talk, there was a discussion introduced by three panelists: Dr. Donald K. Adams, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Duke, recalled a mediumistic study McDougall was involved in; Rev. Howard Wilkinson, Chaplain of the University, thought that parapsychology should be explored within the universities and described a striking instance of telepathy; Dr. John Altrocchi, Professor of Medical Psychology, felt that parapsychology is valuable to the student both as an example of history of science in the making and for what it suggests about human nature.

In response to interest by students present at the lecture, five seminars were arranged by members of the P.R.F. research group during November, December and January. Dr. Robert L. Morris discussed studies of the relation between ESP and psychophysiological patterns. Dr. William T. Joines spoke about investigations of so-called haunted houses; Mr. W. G. Roll described poltergeist cases; and Dr. John L. Artley outlined a program for investigations of such cases using electronic instruments.

ROBERT L. MORRIS OFFERS SEMINAR IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Dr. Robert L. Morris, Research Associate at the P.R.F., and Postdoctoral Fellow in Psychiatry at Duke University, is presenting an honors seminar at the Department of Psychology in the 1970 Spring Semester on "Parapsychology: Where Has It Been and Where Is It Going?" He is also directing a preceptorial seminar on "Dissociated States and the Concept of Intact Personality," as related to parapsychology. The seminar is part of a course in psychology given by Dr. Altrocchi.

C. J. DUCASSE

1881-1969

The Psychological Research Foundation announces with deep regret the death on September 4, 1969, of Dr. C. J. Ducasse, a member of its Advisory Committee and Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Brown University.

Ducasse's main interest in parapsychology was the survival question and his main work, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life After Death* (Charles C. Thomas, 1961). He was concerned with the question, how to provide evidence for survival as against the view that the material produced by a reincarnation subject or a medium might be due to the ordinary ESP abilities of this person. In his opinion material suggestive of mental skills ("knowledge how to") could not be explained in terms of simple ESP of items of information ("knowledge that") by the subject. For instance, if the ostensible communicator can converse in a language unknown to the medium, this would be evidence of survival but not the mere fact that he can say some words in that language. Ducasse was convinced that there was evidence of survival both in the form of reincarnation and as a discarnate continuation of the human mind.

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Managing Editor: Muriel Roll