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A JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH ON  
THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH

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# What Did the Dying See ?

Karlis Osis

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Dying patients insist that they have glimpses of postmortem existence: persons long dead, scenes of other-worldly beauty — as we have learned in two surveys, conducted in the United States and India. Do these visions portray something real, or only a kind of “Disneyland,” as is generally assumed in the literature about terminal states of fatal illnesses?

According to a Gallup poll, 73 per cent of Americans do accept as reality the concept of life after death. So to explore this important question further, the ASPR surveys have gathered pertinent data from physicians and nurses who are trained in careful observation and dispassionate reporting. Our findings were rich, containing the reports of 1700 medical personnel about the experiences of their patients.

## What We Did In Our Surveys

We are at present preparing a final technical report. For the present, suffice it to say that 1004 medical respondents (physicians and nurses) filled in questionnaires in the U.S. and 704 in India. Those who reported that deathbed visions had apparently been seen by their patients were then interviewed in depth. We explored minute details via various 16-page personal interview schedules, netting a total of 877 interviews. At present we have finished elaborate computer evaluations, comparing the results from both countries and finding out how various factors intertwine.

## What Did We Find Out?

As in our pilot study,\* we found two types of hallucinations: (1) “Disneyland” and (2) what seemed to be a true “mountain.” The first kind were rambling, confused hallucinations based on *this-world* concerns, such as reliving past memories (such as a quarrel with a brother). The second kind were visions consistent with the idea of *another world* of postmortem existence. Typical is a case of a 60-year-old woman, tortured by intestinal cancer: “All of a sudden (the doctor reports) she opened her eyes. She called her (deceased) husband by name and said she was coming to him. She had the most peaceful, nicest smile, just as if she were going to the arms of someone she thought a great deal of. She said, ‘Guy, I am coming.’ She didn’t seem to realize I was there. It was almost as if she were in another world. It was as if something beautiful had opened up to her; she was experiencing something so wonderful and beautiful.”

Such a case cannot stand on its own feet; any hallucination can be interpreted in many ways. However, if we now take all the cases together, and let the computer sort out their characteristics, we can see whether they support “survival” or “destruction” hypotheses.

## Imagery: Possible “This-World” Sources

Science knows a great deal more than it used to about normal sources of imagery. One set of clues comes from modern research on sleep and dreams and on drug-induced states. We know that imagery can reflect not only memories of previous experience (Freud’s day-residue) but symbolizations of inner conflicts, hopes, etc. Moreover, imagery can reflect the influence of

cultural forces such as religion, belief, educational background.

We also know that one source of hallucinatory imagery is ESP. Could visions by dying people have their roots in ESP glimpses of “another world”? If so, something consistent would emerge in such visions regardless of culture. This is why we went to India, a different, very Oriental culture. Reality we all see approximately the same – but fantasies differ with each individual and each nation (only the Irish have leprechauns, Norwegians trolls, and the Chinese flying dragons).

Another question was: Would “other-world” images appear more often to people whose brain is affected by illness or drugs – or to people whose minds are clear to the last?

So our analysis was aimed at finding out whether the visions of the dying are really a “mountain” (an interculturally consistent perception of postmortem existence), or only a fantasy conditioned by culture, desires, expectations, inner conflicts, brain disorders.

### Were Some Hallucinations Consistent With The “Other-World” Hypothesis?

There were in fact coherent death-oriented visions, some of which often ran counter to what the patients expected, as in the cases where they saw apparitions of deceased friends or relatives who they thought were still living. *A doctor reported:* “She told me she saw my grandfather beside me and told me to go home at once. I went home at 4:30 (had expected him to pick me up), and was told that he had passed away at 4. No one had expected that he would die at the time. This patient had met my grandfather.” Here the apparition appears as an intrusion from the other world – in sharp contrast to the expectations of not only the patient but the doctor, both of whom had believed the grandfather to be very much alive.

### Alternate Explanations

Were these hallucinations only *wish-fulfillment*? Are deathbed visions simply a mirage generated by unfulfilled desires? Quite often the dying do long to see once more their loved ones who are living but are far away. Can such desires conjure up apparitions? As a rule, no. In only a very small fraction of

our cases (13 out of 471) was a “desired (living) person” hallucinated. We found that such “this-world” concerns do not explain our data.

*Day’s residue?* Nor does Freud’s day-residue principle explain them. We measured this by recording the patient’s emotional/mental preoccupations on the day preceding the hallucination, but found that they were not appreciably reflected in the vision.

*Inner conflicts?* Psychiatrists tell us that hallucinations often express inner conflicts; but we did not find that kind of root in the deathbed hallucinations.

### The “Take-Away” Figure

A most interesting question was: Why did the apparition come? What did the patient indicate that the hallucinatory visitor wanted to do when it appeared in the hospital room?

The “rambling” kind of hallucinations showed no apparent purpose. And sometimes the apparition was mistaken for a normal visitor to the hospital, which is of no interest for the survival problem.

However, in two thirds of the cases where some purpose *was* indicated (by what the patient said), the apparition wanted to take the dying person away to another modus of existence: by calling, beckoning, demanding. This finding is very similar to what we had found in our pilot study. This “after-life purpose” emerges like a peak above the clouds and dominates the findings.

### Were These “Take-Away” Figures Apparitions – Or Hallucinations?

*Medical factors.* We had looked very carefully into those medical factors which are known to affect consciousness: brain damage or disease (uremic poisoning, oral temperature over 103°, a medical history of possible hallucinogenic factors, or medication affecting the mentality). But apparently the “sick brain” hypothesis does not explain our observations about the take-away figures. People with these medical factors saw fewer apparitions which wanted to take them away. People who were clear-brained saw more such figures.

Were they only *wish-fulfillment*? If so, we would find the “messengers” coming more often to patients who were expecting to die,

and less often to those who thought they would recover. But there was in fact no relationship. As a matter of fact we had cases where the patient was so violently opposed to being taken away by the “visitor” that he screamed for help, asked the doctor to protect or hide him. One young girl implored the nurse to hold her tight so she could not be taken away, and died in that position; this certainly is very different from a wish-fulfillment dream.

*Religious expectation?* Might the patient’s religion lead him to expect apparitions coming to take him away? This time, because we did part of our survey in India, we could compare radically differing religions: varieties of Christian denominations vis-a-vis all kinds of Hindu sects and some Moslem. And we found that the take-away cases were essentially similar in the U.S. and India. They had characteristics in common which neither the Bible nor the Gita suggests. Not least among these characteristics is the very evident coming of deceased relatives, apparitions who are arriving to aid transition to a postmortem existence.

### **Does the Apparition Affect the Physiological Processes of Dying?**

In the published pilot study we had found a curious pattern: In the cases of people who die within ten minutes of seeing an apparition, the “take-away” purpose predominated (76% as compared with other purposes). One doctor said that it looked as though the apparition really “did the job” and actually took the patient away quickly. This same finding was again verified in our new U.S. sample: of those patients who died within ten minutes, 87.5% saw apparitions who came to “take them away.” (In India this trend was confirmed only in cases where the patient did not want to go. We don’t claim any evidence that these ghostly visitors are meddling in American medicine, but the repeated trend is thought-provoking!)

### **Were These True Religious Experiences?**

If these deathbed visions really involved an awareness of “another world,” we would expect a specific emotional reaction — a kind of religious experiencing: serenity, and the “peace which passes all understanding.” And indeed we did find that at death many

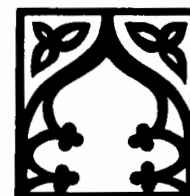
patients do “light up” even while their relatives are weeping. As expected, there were more such reactions in the patients not afflicted by the medical impairments which are known to cloud consciousness.

### **“Mountain” or “Disneyland”**

These are just small examples from the huge mass of data in which we tried to trace awareness of postmortem existence in the experiences of dying people. This of course should not be taken as a final balance of evidence for or against survival. The whole picture will be presented, carefully weighted, in a technical report. My personal impression, gained from wading through literally thousands of computer print-out-pages, is that we have been seeing the “mountain,” not “Disneyland.” The data give support to the hypothesis of survival after death. Further, such a survey provides a fresh look at the whole problem. Ideas about survival have often been slanted by data from mediums schooled in the teachings of spiritualist churches; or the ideas are in the context of certain Western or Oriental philosophies. Now we can take a look through the eyes of the dying themselves, and readjust our research goals and methods in this new light.

\*Osis, Karlis. *Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses*. N.Y.: Parapsychology Foundation, 1961. Parapsychological Monographs No. 3.

*Dr. Osis is Director of Research at The American Society for Psychical Research. His recent work includes research on out-of-body experiences and of meditative states.*



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# The Case for Survival

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## An Interview with William Roll

*PRF Director William G. Roll was among a number of researchers and scholars of the paranormal questioned recently by the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship on survival evidence. Robert H. Ashby, Director of Research and Education for the Fellowship, asked the questions.*

**Ashby:** What is your personal view of survival after death? Do you think it is certain, probable, possible, improbable, or impossible?

**Roll:** Before I can answer that question, I need to make clear what kind of survival I am talking about. There can be at least two types. There may be continuation of human personality after death and there may be continuation of consciousness. Personality includes traits, memories, and special skills. These are generally considered as “belonging to” a particular individual. That of course is not to say that there is any such private ownership. The work in ESP raises the question in which sense my emotions and thoughts belong to me if they can be directly experienced also by you, and in what sense your thoughts and emotions are yours, if some of them originated in my brain or mind. Nevertheless, there are certain temporal and spatial identification marks which enable us to say that a certain past event or current personality trait is associated with my physical organism rather than with yours (or at least associated more with mine than with yours).

Consciousness or awareness refers to experience. In our ordinary waking state, consciousness easily becomes relational and we speak of being conscious *of* something – for instance, I may be conscious of a sweet taste or of a beautiful view. But the “I” is extra: We can be aware or conscious without tagging the experience as “mine.” It is when we stop and think, when we leave the immediate stream of awareness, that we identify a segment of this as *my* experience *of* something.

In altered states of consciousness, experiences cannot always be related to any I or personality – even in retrospect. In some

dreams, in moments of absorption, and at other times, the experience is just that, without any ego or personality to reflect back on. But most of us have not paid serious attention to that aspect of ourselves.

When we think about the survival question, that activity in itself is generally the product of our ordinary waking state of consciousness. Thus we are immediately faced with an I or personality around which this state of consciousness seems to revolve. Our culture and education focus on this type of experience as representing the real me and the real world. When we recall our dreams and other forms of altered states we rarely believe they represent anything other than some kind of illusion. We therefore think of ourselves in terms of individual existence both when we consider this life and when we speculate about the next.

However, people sometimes claim that they have been conscious – indeed, optimally so – without identifying with a separate personality or self. There can be experience, then, without any particular self or personality. And vice versa, there can be evidence for an identifiable personality – or train of memories – without any (identifiable) consciousness. The Gordon Davis case and cases of psychometry, where the ESP percipient may “recall” events from the life of another person, are examples (see THETA 39-40).

In answer to your first question, finally, I must respond separately with respect to the continuation or survival of personality and of consciousness. In both cases, it happens, my reply is “probable” – but obviously for different reasons since we deal with different types of evidence.

**Ashby:** Has your position concerning survival changed appreciably over the past several years? If so, why? If not, why not?

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## The question remains: Survival of what?

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**Roll:** Yes, I consider the case for the survival of personality to have been strengthened in recent years mainly as a result of Dr. Stevenson's reincarnation studies. I also think that drop-in cases, the cross correspondences, death-bed experiences, haunting apparitions and other data contribute to the evidence. Of course much of this material is weak on scientific grounds, but collectively it becomes interesting. And there is consistency in the findings produced over many years and in many places.

**Ashby:** What about the survival of consciousness?

**Roll:** Two types of evidence have led to my belief that consciousness probably continues: research findings in parapsychology and personal experiences. In our ordinary state of awareness we have created the illusion of a private world — or rather our parents, teachers, and culture have programmed us to see the world in that way — where we define ourselves in terms of certain limitations (traits, memories, etc.), which describe a space we call “me,” and from which we seem to observe an outside world. This outside world, which may include all or some of our body, in part consists of a different substance from our “real me,” or “mind.” We say it is “material”; and in part it consists of an assemblage of “you’s” and “they’s,” similar to the “me.” To the extent that we can recognize ourself in the environment, we see other me’s, and to the extent that we cannot see ourself in the environment, we see this foreign material or inanimate substance. However, the findings of parapsychology require a revision of this way of looking at things. The research in telepathy or GESP suggests that there is no private me or you and the work in clairvoyance and PK suggests that there is no sharp distinction between this me and the so-called material world.

If in fact my consciousness does not only belong to my mind or body but to others as well, then it is difficult to suppose that this consciousness will cease when my mind or body ceases. On the contrary, it is reasonable to suppose that the loss of the brain will result in an *increase* in awareness since one of the main functions of the brain seems to be to screen out information which does not serve biological life.

I have myself had OBE's and experiences of field consciousness. These have been entirely unverified as to their objectivity, but they have left a strong subjective “feel” about unembodied existence both with a self or ego (OBE's) and without (field experiences).

**Ashby:** Has your position regarding the continuation of consciousness changed much in recent years?

**Roll:** Yes. As a result of my field experiences, the general work in parapsychology, and recent work at the PRF and elsewhere on OBE's.

**Ashby:** Do you believe the survival issue can be determined to a satisfactory degree of probability or improbability by those empirical means available to parapsychologists? If so, how do you envisage it being accomplished? If not, why not?

**Roll:** Yes. Survival of *personality* can be explored empirically following traditional lines of research. Of course it must be remembered that since there apparently is no such thing as an independent encapsulated personality *before* death, we cannot reasonably expect to find one *after* death.

To determine whether consciousness continues, as far as I am concerned, the best approach is to explore it where we are certain of finding it, that is in ourselves. Since we are concerned with the continuation or survival of consciousness, then this consciousness also exists *before* death and presumably can be studied there.

**Ashby:** What is your view of the pertinence of OBE cases to survival? Do you agree with Ducasse that any analogous conclusions about consciousness being able to operate apart from the body based on OBE's is inadmissible evidence for a post mortem survivable potential since the brain is extant in the OBE and is not in the post mortem state?

**Roll:** In the typical or traditional OBE, consciousness is experienced in terms of something closely akin to the waking, ordinary self or personality. OBE's are thus relevant both to studies of the continuation of personality and of consciousness.

Ducasse raised a crucial question about OBE's, which equally applies to other forms of extra-somatic experiences such as field consciousness. However, in my opinion he underestimated the possibilities of current research methods, particularly those of psychophysiology. Of course this work was not as prominent during his lifetime as it is now, only a few years after his death. Though it is still uncertain how much, say, the EEG reveals about mental life, a few correlations seem fairly stable — and there is universal agreement, I believe, to define death in terms of a flat EEG. Thus, should we find evidence of OBE's or field experiences when the person has a flat EEG, this would in my opinion be strong evidence that consciousness is not a function of the central nervous system and that awareness will continue when the brain is permanently inoperative. Of course in this example I assume that the clinically dead person revives to tell — and verify — his experiences.

**Ashby:** Do you agree with Tyrrell and Hart that post mortem apparitions are strong evidence for survival? Why?

**Roll:** As with all apparent psi phenomena, there are two questions to consider: Are the phenomena *genuine* (i.e. cases of ESP or PK)? And if so, what is their explanation?

If we accept post mortem apparitions as genuine, they suggest the survival of personality or part of it. If, as Hart claims, they furthermore in all essential respects resemble OBE's by the living, it is reasonable to suppose that these apparitions are conscious too. However, just as there are Gordon Davis communicators, so there are apparitions of the living which apparently are indistinguishable from apparitions of the dead and from OBE apparitions, but which do not involve any conscious experience by the person whose apparition is seen (see THETA 39-40). I am afraid, therefore, that Hart's argument cuts both ways.

**Ashby:** Do you consider that there is any evidence bearing on survival from any of the well-attested poltergeist (RSPK) cases?

**Roll:** Certainly in the cases I have stud-

ied, there's no evidence that *dead* people are involved. But RSPK cases suggest that the unconscious self may extend into the environment of the body and, in some cases, that this aspect of the self borders on consciousness. More importantly perhaps, RSPK cases, with all the patterns they have revealed about living agency PK, offer a comparison with haunting cases. If the latter should turn out to be quite distinct from RSPK, this would indicate a different process — perhaps one involving discarnate agency for the haunting cases.

**Ashby:** Do you feel that cases of ostensible possession are suggestive of survival?

**Roll:** Possibly suggestive of survival of personality — if we had enough good (i.e. definitely *psi*) cases.

**Ashby:** What is your opinion of Gardner Murphy's suggestion of field theory's bearing on survival?

**Roll:** I think that the notion of a field is much more consistent with the facts of parapsychology, and of science generally, than the atomistic ideas which have guided so much of our thinking and research — in parapsychology and elsewhere.

**Ashby:** What about Hornell Hart's "persona theory"?

**Roll:** I believe Hart's theory goes something like this: A deceased or living person provides the stimulus for a communication or apparition. This stimulus is then shaped by the psychological sets of, say, a medium and the investigator to provide a composite persona which then appears as an apparition or communicates through the medium. This theory — which is quite consistent with the notion of a psi field and with Murphy's inter-personal field — strikes me as quite plausible. Indeed even the living may be "personae" constructed by genetic and environmental factors.

Hart used the idea for his survival theory but I cannot follow him easily here. Thus who or what was the stimulus for the Gordon David "persona"?

**Ashby:** How impressive do you find Karlis Osis' findings of deathbed experiences among medical personnel?

**Roll:** Osis' studies are important with respect to our understanding of human consciousness as the time of death approaches. For example, it is interesting that the deterioration of the human organism is often



accompanied by mood elevations and expanded states of consciousness. This work will gain in importance as it is extended to other cultures and as the parapsychological dimensions of deathbed experiences are more deeply probed. Osis has himself just completed such a study in India, in addition to his previous survey in the States.

Ashby: Ian Stevenson has written: "In mediumistic communications we have the problem of proving that someone clearly dead still lives. In evaluating apparent memories of former incarnations, the problem consists in judging whether someone clearly living once died. This may prove the easier task and, if pursued with sufficient zeal and success, may contribute decisively to the question of survival." How do you feel about the relative fruitfulness of these two approaches?

Roll: I see the reincarnation work as complementing rather than supplanting mediumistic research. Both approaches focus on the survivability of *personality*.

Ashby: What, in your opinion, are the greatest obstacles to survival research?

Roll: The greatest obstacle to meaningful work in survival, as in parapsychology generally, consists in our unexpressed basic assumptions regarding our subject matter. A second serious obstacle is insufficient funding. But of the two, paucity of concepts and cash, the former is the more serious because it makes us look in the wrong places for the important facts. Our thinking and general research approach have come from the behavioral sciences and these, in turn, usually operate in the Newtonian universe. People and things are like billiard balls which only interact when they bump into each other. When a ball disappears from the table, we go fishing in the pockets around it — that's usually how we look for evidence of survival after death. There is an apparent conflict between our concepts and methods of research on the one hand and our subject matter on the other. In the same way as we would not get very far using Newtonian thinking and testing in exploring the electromagnetic field of the universe so it seems that the billiard ball approach is insufficient in probing the characteristics of psi. For here too we deal with interconnections rather than with discrete entities which only meet when they hit. Especially in survival research, which may deal with extended or public states of con-

## Dying: A New Approach

A new attitude towards death is emerging in America, where the subject has largely been taboo, and where dying is often suffered among strangers and machines in hospitals far from home.

In New Haven, Connecticut, the first "hospice" for the dying will soon be opened. The facility will provide a warm and secure place to die amid friends and family when further medical treatment is considered futile.

Hospice already provides home care for terminal cancer patients, furnishing doctors, nurses, counselling for the patient, and the family, and emotional support. Based on similar institutions in England, the idea has caught on with a public anxious to make dying a more humanized and natural part of life.

Another step is being taken by the Hanuman Foundation in New York, whose "Alternative Metaphors for Dying" project is aimed at introducing new institutions "for those who wish to die consciously."

Ram Dass, the former Richard Alpert of Harvard University, and the spiritual teacher behind the foundation, explains, "The existing psychological and physical spaces available in the West for passing through the transformation called 'death' seem at best unconscious and at worst barbaric."

Plans are being developed for support facilities ranging from a telephone service to bringing together "individuals who wish to work on themselves through guiding or being guided in dying, to a physical place for dying where intensive collaboration would be possible for a person with a terminal illness, his family, the medical team, and guides."

Interestingly, the euthanasia movement is flourishing, too. Membership in the New York-based Euthanasia Council jumped from 600 to 30,000 in the last five years.

Also, it's reported that thousands of Americans have signed "living wills" expressing their wish to be allowed to die when "there is no reasonable expectation of my recovery from physical or mental disability."

sciousness, it is necessary to recast our basic assumptions if our understanding is to increase.

Ashby: Do you agree with J. M. V. Wheatley's argument that since survival is non-disprovable, it is non-provable?

Roll: As far as I'm concerned any scientific hypothesis, to be that, must be falsifiable. Thus it must be possible, and indeed clearly is, to express the survival hypothesis in terms capable of scientific verification and falsification. Many experiments and observations, theoretical or actual, are designed to achieve this. For instance, this is true for the reincarnation work with respect of the survival of personality and the OBE and field consciousness work with respect to the continuation of consciousness without a functioning brain.

Ashby: Is there a "crucial" experiment which, if successful, could establish survival as fact?

Roll: The "crucial" survival (or ESP) experiment is one of the phenomena in the

field which turns out not to exist. When you "establish" (prove, etc.) something, it is always established (proven, etc.) to the satisfaction of someone. It is difficult to think of any supposed fact that people regard as established on the basis of a "crucial" experiment. Moreover, "facts" and people change. What turns out to be an obvious fact at one time (the sun moves around the earth) is patently false at another time.

Ashby: Would you agree with the position that the most impressive veridical survival evidence, e.g., some of the cross-correspondences, can be explained satisfactorily, without subscribing to a disincarnate or reincarnated source, *only* by the Super ESP Hypothesis?

Roll: I think the term "Super ESP" has slipped into our language without our recalling who started it and what exactly he or she said. Or perhaps it's only I who am repressing my memory of the origin of what is clearly an unscientific hypothesis. If no facts can count against a hypothesis, it is

## New Books

*Theory and Experiment in Psychical Research*, the book in which PRF Director William G. Roll gives a unified explanation of ESP and PK, is the only previously unpublished title now being offered by Arno Books as part of a new Perspectives in Psychical Research series.

Perspectives in Psychical Research is described as a carefully selected set of out-of-print classics chosen to illustrate core concepts in the development of psychical research, from its roots in philosophy and natural observation to its present day computerized sophistication. Its advisory editor is Robert L. Morris, former PRF Research Coordinator and currently Eileen J. Garrett Lecturer in Parapsychology at the University of California in Santa Barbara.

Roll's book, for which he received the B. Litt from Oxford, draws on studies of English mediums, Dutch ESP sensitives, and other sources. A new foreword brings in recent research in which the theories were tested. The book includes Roll's experiments at Oxford on the relationship between ESP and personality traits, hypnosis and memory.

Included in the series are classic treatises on such stage techniques as musclereading,

mediumistic tricks, and mindreading codes; books on hypnosis and psychic phenomena (the early hypnosis work emphasized the concept of psychic fluids as responsible for ESP and PK phenomena); early spiritualist writings, in which is found the notion of spirits as mediating vehicles; scholarly works from the early days of the British Society for Psychical Research, emphasizing analyses of spontaneous cases, early controlled investigations, and the development of complex theoretical systems about the nature of mind; and, more recently, books relating to the controversies over the use of fraud in the production of physical phenomena and in the detection of ostensible psychic energies.

Of particular interest is the autobiography of Eileen Garrett, *My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship*. Mrs. Garrett was one of the most extensively tested mediums in parapsychology, and worked closely with J. B. Rhine, C. G. Jung, and many others. She was also a gifted and prolific writer. In addition, she played a significant role in supporting research and educational activities in the field through the Parapsychology Foundation which she created and which continues to play an important role in parapsychology.

unfalsifiable and thus cannot pretend to be a scientific hypothesis.

However, it also needs to be said that the evidence for the continuation of personality *after* death is usually of the same type which indicates the existence *before* death of a person's traits and memories apart from his physical organism. For instance drop-in's and reincarnation memories seem to have a definite relation to physical space (Dr. Stevenson refers to this as Francis Story's law: "All other things being equal, a person will be reincarnated at the location where he died").

Ashby: Do you consider the employment of the Super ESP Hypothesis *requisite* according to Occam's Razor\* if the only viable alternative is a discarnate or reincarnated source of veridical information?

Roll: The Super ESP Hypothesis, as used here, is not merely not requisite — it cannot be used at all.

Ashby: Is there, in your opinion, evidence *apart from* mediumship and reincarnation data supportive of the degree of psi selectivity and accuracy found in the most impressive mediumistic and/or reincarnation cases? What is it?

Roll: Yes. In so-called cases of psychometry — better called object association — there is the same type of selectivity, as far as I can see. Indeed I think we are dealing with the same psi process — and it is in a way a "survival" process, for our traits and memories seem to continue to exist in the physical systems with which we have been associated, quite independently of our comings and final going.

Ashby: Do you consider the Super ESP Hypothesis a perfectly reasonable and conservative thesis with valid evidential substantiation or what Alan Gould has termed "a myth"?

Roll: "A myth." The Super ESP Hypothesis is incapable of being scientifically valid because it is incapable of being invalid — or rather unverified.

Ashby: Are there any cases in which you consider the Super ESP Hypothesis invalid and a discarnate source or a reincarnational memory the most likely explanation for veridical material?

Roll: Discounting the Super ESP Hypothesis as "a myth," the known (and probable) characteristics of ESP, especially its apparent relation to material systems, are consistent with the evidence suggestive of the continuation of *personality* after death.

Ashby: What is your opinion of "possession" as an alternative to the Super ESP Hypothesis: more likely, less likely, does not pertain, etc.?

Roll: Again discounting Super ESP, it seems to me that cases of "possession," if adequately verified as genuine, are on a par with reincarnation data, mediumistic communicators, object association and any other material which suggests that human personality can operate apart from the body after death as well as before.

Ashby: How do you see the future of survival research?

Roll: I am more interested in the possible continuation of consciousness than in the continuation of personality. The latter, if it occurs, seems to me to be somewhat like the continuation of a person's appearance and voice in a movie taken of him. It's interesting and important if it happens but not as interesting as the continuation of conscious experience. I am not saying, mark you, that personality if it survives, is not conscious. Rather, what I question is whether our personality after death is associated with an individual consciousness. As far as I can see, the facts indicate that we do not possess a private consciousness *before* death and I see no reason why we should have one afterwards. On the contrary, we can expect a reduction in the limitations we experience when our awareness is no longer focused in the body.

For people interested in the continuation of consciousness, the first task is to probe the consciousness of the living with special emphasis on those aspects which may be capable of functioning apart from the body. Here we must join forces with psychophysicists and neurologists to determine if we can have awareness without a functioning central nervous system. And if consciousness is a characteristic of the world in general, the other sciences which describe this world, such as physics and biology, will also figure in the exploration. But the most direct route for the parapsychologists will be the deepening and the extension of conscious experience itself.

\* Occam's Razor is the rule that things should be stated as simply as possible.

# Death and Other Cures

## Sy Safransky

*Editor's Note: Dr. Lobsang Dolma, 40, is chief physician of the Tibetan Medical Center of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. She was born in Keron, Tibet and was a practicing physician for 11 years in Keron, Katmandu, and Dalhousie. She visited the United States earlier this year to exchange ideas with doctors and tour several hospitals. The following are some impressions from a talk she gave at the Meditation Center in Durham, North Carolina, on Tibetan Medicine. Dr. Jeffrey Hopkins of the Department of Religion at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, accompanied Dr. Dolma and acted as her translator.*



Her hands are graceful, forceful, certain. They move through the air like swift, impassioned birds, emphasizing her words, as she explains about medicines of flowers and fruits for craziness, diagnosing pregnancy by feeling the pulse in the ring finger, the difficulty of curing heart disease when there are evil spirits, the importance of the doctor's own dreams before the patient arrives, and, with the same matter-of-factness, about cancer. She is sitting cross-legged on the pillow, her eyes dark and active, her voice calm: why tumors grow; karma; the presence of evil spirits.

*I can't remember the exact words. Probably something trite, and overly dramatic. Doctors watch too many movies, too, wear the same mock-heroic masks as the rest of us, masks of compassion and wisdom and bravery. Upon them rests the awful obligation of making dignified sense of what they can't understand. They are the high priests of the culture, and perhaps it is the awful pomp of their office that makes them look so unhealthy. Overworked and overfed. Not to mention overpaid. Of course, I am being unfair, but as the doctor himself suggests, life is unfair — otherwise, how explain my father's suffering. Sympathy is written all over his face like a bad check, but I suspect there is a more profound forgery somewhere, back in the schools of medicine, back in the long, sterile hallways of Western thought — proud, antiseptically rational, and immunized against whatever virulent germs of intuition, faith, and plain common sense linger in the blood.*

All pleasure and pain has mental origins, she explains, and so no disease is unrelated to mind. Specifically, the balance of winds, phlegm and bile within the body determines how healthy a person is. Imbalance leads to disease. This is similar to the idea of bodily 'humours' current in the Middle Ages. In Tibetan medicine, which is faithful to Buddhist philosophy, any imbalance is a result of desire, hatred and confusion — the basic ignorance arising from false perception.

"Illness," she says, "is caused by your own actions in this or a former lifetime. Killing, stealing, and lying can draw illness to yourself." In one out of ten illnesses, she continues, an evil spirit is present. "We don't attack spirits. We handle them with compassion. We give the spirit something else to feed on. When a spirit is taken out of someone's body, it dissolves like a cloud. It no longer has a reason for being."

A physician may recite a mantra, or magical chant, 100,000 times to effect an exorcism. Other rituals that are attached to the giving of medicine act as what Western science might call psychotherapy.

*He thought the pain was from intestinal gas. "Why can't they do something for the gas?" he asked, over and over. It wasn't gas; it was the tumor growing, fouling his intestines, advancing on his liver, and cruelly upsetting the delicate chemistry that we, who*



*enjoy it, take for granted. The doctors assured him they were doing all they could – except, of course, telling him the truth, which he eventually figured out for himself.*

In Tibet, she explains, there are 1,500 medicines, made of minerals, leaves, bark, earth, roots and fruits. Medicine is used before other treatments. Surgery is rare. The instruments are burning cones and needles, similar to those used in acupuncture. When a tumor is found, a needle is inserted and a cone with burning incense placed on top. The tumor dies, and is expelled.

*“Are you afraid?” I ask.*

*“Of what?”*

*“Of dying.” The word, once said, doesn’t seem so evil. Why won’t anyone else talk about it?*

*He shrugs, as if the answer is obvious – or perhaps simply impossible, as if the kind of introspection I’m demanding is worse than the pain already lacing his insides. “I’m just sorry,” he says, “we didn’t get to be together more.”*

An imbalance in the body, usually because of non-digestion of food, leads to disease, she explains. “If you avoid eating bad foods and bad combinations of foods, diseases can be avoided.” Some foods that are healthy become injurious when mixed with others. Some bad combinations, she says, are radishes and mushrooms; fish or meat, and butter; red, or black pepper, and orange juice; ice cream taken after meat. Meat and fish are not innately harmful, although mixing them is. Also, “There is great fault in eating until your stomach is full. Think of your stomach as having four sections. Fill two with food, one with drink, and leave one for the winds to circulate.”

*Thinner than I’d ever imagined I’d see him, the intravenous feeding keeping him*

*alive now. His lips are dry. My mother sends me to the grocery to buy him a soda. Years earlier, I had pleaded with him to change his diet, to stop eating foods with preservatives, to cut down on meat. He sat there, sipping a Pink Grapefruit No-Cal, challenging every statement, as I grew more shrill. Once again, we were arguing less from conviction than from that fierce, dimly understood need to change one another, to shape each other’s lives to designs more of our own choosing. Downstairs, I buy him two bottles of No-Cal, flavors I hope he’ll like.*

*“Sleep on your right side,” she says, “with your head to the north and your feet to the south. Your head should not face the south. The Lord of Death is in the south.”*

*He is lying on his right side, uncomfortable, yet too weak to move. He asks me to help him turn over. I want to help, of course, but I hesitate. His flesh is sagging and yellow,*

*As a body, man is a microcosmic but faithful reflection of the macrocosmic reality in which he is imbedded and which preserves and nourishes him every second of his life; as a mind, he is a ripple on the surface of the great ocean of consciousness. Health is the proper relationship between the microcosm which is man and the macrocosm which is the Universe. Disease is a disruption of this relationship. Unimpeded reaction of the macrocosm to such a disruption results in a cure, unless the disruption is irreversible, when death becomes the cure.”*

*—Dr. Yeshi Dhonden,  
personal physician to  
the Dalai Lama*

tattooed like hospital meat with needle marks and small bruises. It is a body mortgaged to death, and, like any animal, I would rather give it wide circle. But we have surrendered so many of our animal privileges — living naturally, dying naturally — in order to go poking among the crumbs of what we call our common humanity for other nourishment. The animal within notwithstanding, I am as hungry to help as he is for it. I lift him, the gift of whatever strength he has nurtured in me finally returned. It is, save mourning, the last thing I do for him.

After studying medicine for nine years, a Tibetan doctor spends three years studying the pulse. A diagnosis is made by placing the three middle fingers of each hand on the patient's pulse and also by sight from a urine specimen. Someone in the audience, who the doctor had diagnosed earlier, is said to have winds in his stomach, making it hard for him to digest milk and sweets. A friend who knows him whispers that this is true.

*He doesn't look any different. His eyes are half open, his mouth small and tired, the early morning sunlight bathing him. He seems almost relaxed. It takes me a few moments to realize what has happened. "Mom," I say, stepping away from the bed, "I don't think he's breathing." I reach for her, as much to steady myself. I am frightened, I think, by the sheer mystery of it. It's as if his lifeless body is a kind of vacuum sucking all meaning from the air around it, all the explanations, all the medical terms and medical excuses and medical prayers — everything, perhaps, save the medical bills. My mother calls for a doctor, who takes one look and tells us to wait outside. As we stand there, another doctor goes in. And another. It's ten minutes before one of them emerges to tell us what we already know. I can't remember the exact words. Something about how they tried their best. I believe him. Not believing sours the insides, makes you old before your time.*

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the Chapel Hill SUN, a journal of ideas edited and published by Sy Safransky.*

# Articles

## A Map of Consciousness

Kenneth Ring, A Transpersonal View of Consciousness: A Mapping of Farther Regions of Inner Space. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. Vol. 6 No. 2. 1974, 125-155.

Beginning with the notion that our Western conceptions of consciousness are extremely rudimentary (in Sanskrit, for example, there are twenty terms used to differentiate states of consciousness; in English, we distinguish merely between the conscious and the unconscious), the author says we must construct a more trustworthy map for these inner regions.

"To avoid the kind of misunderstanding that arises so often when a 'far out' experience of consciousness is utterly misconstrued or dismissed altogether as 'unreal' because the listener attempts to fit it into the procrustean bed of Western conceptions of consciousness," Ring introduces a map with eight different levels of consciousness, all of which, except for ordinary waking consciousness, and the preconscious (referring to contents which lie outside the field of immediate awareness but which could become conscious at any time), are generally regarded as "altered."

Suggesting that one view the map as a pyramidal structure, with ordinary waking consciousness at the top, and the other levels spreading out below, he sketches in the other regions: the psychodynamic unconscious (or the Freudian unconscious, the source of important memories, impulses and desires); the ontogenetic unconscious (a transitional zone between the personal and the transpersonal, not explainable in Freudian terms, in which embryonal and fetal experiences are stored); the trans-individual (the source of incarnational memories, as well as racial and archetypal experiences); the phylogenetic unconscious (a realm completely beyond human forms, in which we may



encounter our own evolutionary development and experience animal and plant consciousness); the extra-terrestrial unconscious (out-of-body experiences, including the meeting of spirit guides and travelling to other locations in the universe; also the source of ESP and mediumistic phenomena); the superconscious (an experience of the ultimate force in the universe, involving a profound spiritual ecstasy). Beyond this is the void, experienced as underlying the whole of creation. This is the Buddhist concept of nirvana, where the journey to the remote regions of consciousness comes to an end.

Although most systems of spiritual growth require being able to function in any region, likewise being stuck in any particular level is like being in prison, Ring reminds us. Most teachers, in fact, warn against becoming attached to those outer regions that nourish such powers as out-of-body projection or telepathy. To get stuck at any point is to be distracted from the final goal.

To show how the map can be useful, the author relates to it four seemingly disparate, altered states: drug-induced states, meditation, psychosis, and dying. Some of his conclusions:

*Drugs:* The trip is likely to be uncontrolled, as the chemical flings the individual awareness to an unfamiliar realm. In principle, there is no limit to the number of regions which drugs may help one to enter. But a trip is of limited duration. One always comes down.

*Meditation:* The journey seems to encompass the same spaces as drugs, but is more gradual and under the control of the meditator. Since there are no chemicals involved, this is generally regarded as providing a purer experience, less likely to be colored by perceptual changes due to chemical side-effects from impurities in the drug.

*Psychosis:* Psychotic functions are said to be located in the transpersonal. The traditional symptoms — hearing voices, having visions, claiming god-like powers — are explainable as transpersonal phenomena. Cases of alleged possession “can be easily understood as manifestations of consciousness which can occur when an individual’s awareness has tripped out to the extraterrestrial region.” Psychosis can be viewed as a path, Ring says, like drug-taking and meditation, though with obvious drawbacks: it is invol-

untarily taken, for one; the maps for this trip are practically non-existent, for another; the psychotic individual, unlike the mystic who is prepared for his journey, is thrust into these regions without any warning; and finally he is labeled as sick and ostracized by society.

*Death and Dying:* The findings of researchers on near-death experiences closely coincide with religious tradition and the visions of mediums and clairvoyants, suggesting that consciousness continues after the death of the physical body, and that it travels to another plane, where it encounters spiritual entities. “To cast this journey . . . within the framework of our map . . . the individual’s consciousness is freed from its customary waking center and, instead of ceasing, is propelled out to the extra-terrestrial region of inner space.”

Ring says that his map is “not merely an abstract diagram of the geography of consciousness” but refers to the voyage we are all destined to take to the farther regions of inner space. As such, it is a map worth knowing how to read.

—Safransky

## The Experience of Dying

Russell Noyes, Jr. The Experience of Dying. *Psychiatry*. Vol. 35. May, 1972. 174-184.

Russell Noyes, Jr. Dying and Mystical Consciousness. *Journal of Thanatology*. Vol. 1. January-February 1971. 25-41.

Russell Noyes, Jr. and Roy Kletti. The Experience of Dying from Falls. *Omega*. Vol. 3. 1972. 45-52. (a translation of Albert von St. Gallen Heim’s study, “Remarks on Fatal Fall,” first published 1892).

Although — with the possible exception of mediumistic communications — no one has

returned from the dead to give an account of his experience, reports of people who have nearly died suggest that it is a profoundly transcendent experience.

These articles are an overview of accounts of mystical dying experiences from persons who, in a state of good health, were suddenly threatened with death. Victims of drownings, falls, automobile accidents, even suicides, regularly have these experiences. The only prerequisite seems to be the perception of imminent death; as long as escape is possible, energy will be devoted to survival.

The accounts are divided into successive phases: resistance, life review, and transcendence. Where even a slight possibility of survival remains, there is enhanced alertness. Physical and mental activity may be enormously increased.

But this upsurge is countered by a powerful urge to surrender — hence, a violent inner struggle. At the point of surrender, fear subsides and the event of death is faced with calm. Poe relates this to the losing of hope. In “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” a drowning sailor recounts, “having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned me at first.”

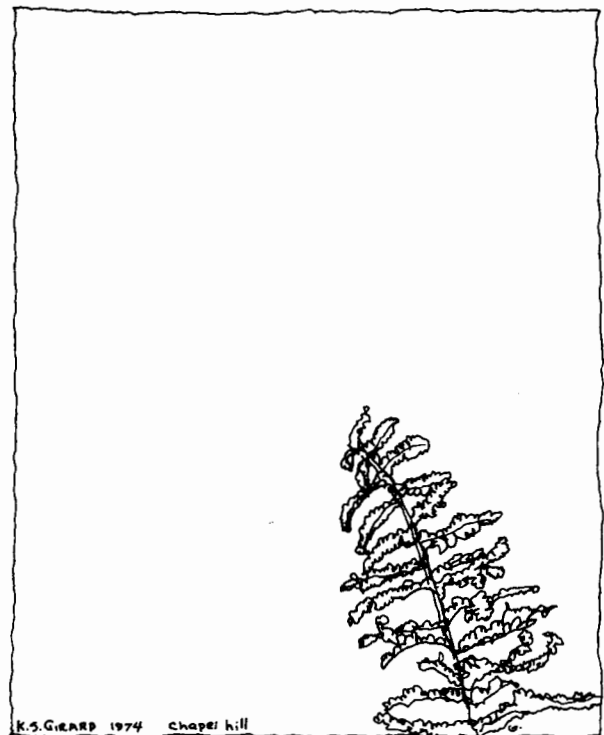
The next phase, review of life, often encompasses the entire past. “Unusually vivid scenes of some or many of the events of his life flash through his mind in rapid succession. Occasionally, he will gain the impression that all his memories are laid out at once before him.” Because of this unique perspective, Noyes says, “a man’s existence becomes complete and unalterable with his death — not before it. At this moment a life, while stripped of potentialities, is rescued into the actuality of the past. In the existential sense, it is saved from being transitory. Once an actuality it remains one forever. Through the ages, death has been recognized as a climactic moment for this very reason — it represented a last opportunity to attain or defend the aim held highest. In a final judgement review the dying man, in a passionate affirmation of the transcendent meaning to his existence, thoroughly integrates it into the universal order which he embraces.”

A typical review phenomena is the split of the self from its body representation, and fantasies of events which might follow death.

The subject may view his body as near death but, being outside of it, witnesses the scene with detached interest. Albert Heim, a Zurich geology professor who collected the accounts of survivors of mountain climbing accidents — after having nearly fallen to his own death off a cliff — found that in 95 per cent of the cases “no grief was felt . . . There was no anxiety, no trace of despair, no pain; but rather calm seriousness, profound acceptance. . . . In many cases there followed a sudden review of the individual’s entire past; and finally, the person falling often heard beautiful music and fell in a superbly blue heaven containing roseate cloudlets.”

Finally, the individual moves beyond this perspective, and experiences himself in a new manner, entering a region he finds foreign. He may feel outside of time, in eternity. A related characteristic is transcendence of space and individual identity. A sense of unity with the entire universe develops.

The transcendent phase is typified by Jung’s account of how he “hung on the edge of death” after a heart attack.





## Reincarnation? Of What?

"It is impossible to convey the beauty and intensity of emotion during these visions. They were the most tremendous things I have ever experienced. I can describe the experience only as the ecstasy of a nontemporal state in which present, past and future are one. Everything that happens in time had been brought together into a concrete whole."

The author notes that the complete LSD experience is similar to the mystical dying experience, and that mystical consciousness is generally expressed in terms of death and rebirth. In fact, LSD has been administered to dying cancer patients, with the result that the overwhelming majority experienced changes in their attitude about dying — including a reduction in fear and depression, and greater tranquility.

Dying, the author finally suggests, may offer an enormous opportunity for personality growth. If, in our last hour, we are able to take a more detached and humble view of our lives, and see the futility of what we once thought to be important, we might become more tolerant and achieve a harmony never before realized.

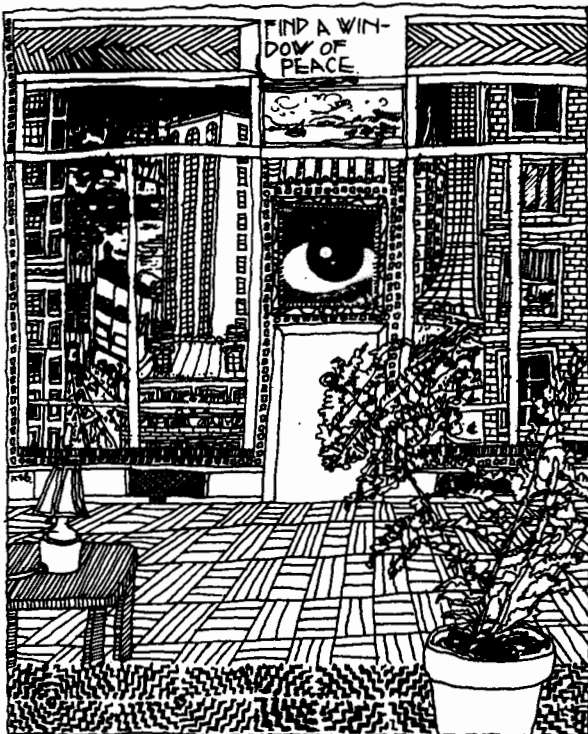
—Safransky

Ian Stevenson. Some Questions Related to Cases of the Reincarnation Type. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*. Vol. 68, No. 4. October 1974. 395-416.

With undue modesty, Ian Stevenson, perhaps the foremost authority on the reincarnation question, says he does not answer the eight typical questions about reincarnation put forth here. Still, his discussion throws light on many confusions surrounding the topic, including karma, just what it is that reincarnates, and why everyone doesn't remember a previous life.

To the question, "If reincarnation does occur, what is it that reincarnates?" Stevenson explains that while most people who believe in reincarnation also believe in a soul that reincarnates, this isn't necessary to such a belief (the Buddhists of the Theravada school subscribe, for example, to the doctrine of anatta or no-soul, suggesting that there exists only a grouping of constantly changing mental processes, but no enduring self or soul). Still, based on attributes in subjects which informants say were also observed in the related previous personality, three components are identified: (1) both have imaged memories of the same events as apparently perceived by the same person, (2) both share feelings, phobias, interests, and habits, (3) both may share physical qualities, such as diseases, birthmarks, and deformities. Stevenson suggests the possible existence of a non-physical body — which acts as a template for the production of the new physical body — existing in a state "of which we know almost nothing."

"Can reincarnation," he continues, "occur without a causal link between conduct in one life and the circumstances of another?" He says he has found very little evidence to support the idea of retributive karma in the cases he has studied. This, he says, "should provide some check against the fantasies of those persons who seek to attribute all their fortunes and misfortunes to the workings of karma from some previous life." Just as it is possible to believe in reincarnation without believing in a soul, so is it possible to believe in reincarnation without a concept



similar to the Hindu-Buddhist idea of karma. Other concepts of reincarnation include the notion that moral conduct doesn't influence later lives but ultimately is summed up for final judgement (a belief held by certain Turkish and Middle Eastern peoples); the West African idea that though lives occur successively, there is no causal connection or ultimate judgement based on moral conduct; and finally, Plato's concept that wishes, including voluntary selection, influence the circumstance of successive lives. "If reincarnation occurs karma may also occur," Stevenson concludes, "but it may also not occur, or not occur in the ways that have been popularly taught."

As to "Why does not everyone remember a previous life?" Stevenson asks, in turn, why anyone should want to? Not only suggesting that such memories might interfere with the present life, he comments that "if we examine the kinds of persons whose lives the subjects remember we see at once that they are from a deviant group." What characterizes them is a high proportion of violent death, and Stevenson wonders if this provides an intense experience which preserves the memories of the subject. Two other circumstances are common in persons who remember a previous life. Many of those who die naturally do so when young. Second, many who reach adulthood have young children to care for at the time of death. Stevenson refers to this "unfinished business" as another possible reason for these lives being remembered.

—Safransky

## New Journal

The first issue of "Psychoenergetic Systems," a new journal edited by Stanley Krippner, includes articles on Kirlian photography, acupuncture, and healing.

The magazine is published by Gordon and Breach, One Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016 and will regularly include papers on ESP, healing, brain research, and related topics.

Krippner is Senior Research Associate at the Maimonides Medical Center's Division of Parapsychology in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The magazine is described as an international journal, which will present articles from many nations, including China and the Soviet Union.

# Reviews

## Suppressed Child, Permitted Child

Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation  
Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged<sup>1</sup>  
By Ian Stevenson

Reviewed by Nils O. Jacobson

*Dr. Jacobson is a psychiatrist working in Lund, Sweden. He has been active in parapsychology, mainly investigating spontaneous cases and is author of the book Life Without Death? (reviewed in THETA 43-44)*

This book is already a classic in the field of survival research. With the publication of the first edition in 1966,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Stevenson opened a new field for parapsychological research. There had been some studies of isolated similar cases and even some case collections published by other authors. Stevenson himself published a 40-page paper in 1960,<sup>3</sup> but his 1966 monograph marked the beginning of systematic research of what is now referred to as "cases of the reincarnation type."

What are the characteristics of such a case? The subject may be an adult or a child. In the typical adult case, a person has a vision or a dream with a content that he cannot derive from the experiences of his present life. The historical setting may be distinct and belong to an earlier period of history. The subject may be unable to define which period, until he later happens to see a picture that resembles the setting. He may then believe that he has a memory of an earlier life in that period. Or he may have a sudden feeling of recognition when reading a book or seeing an old building or a picture of some historical personage.

Whatever the original experience is, it may initiate a wish to know more about the period, setting or person. The subject may start to think about it, to read about the period, or to try to identify more exactly who he was. In this process, new memories and experiences may appear, which tend to

further convince the subject that he has lived before.

The typical child case is quite different. Here a child begins talking about an earlier life very early, perhaps as soon as he starts saying anything. Among the first words may be names of people not belonging to the present family, who are claimed by the child to have existed in his former family or to exist in what he names his "real" family. If the present parents of the child do not know or like the concept of reincarnation, it is likely that they will either ignore or actively suppress such utterances. Then we may, several years later, have an adult who claims to have had, as a child, memories of a former life that are now largely forgotten. The parents may then even admit that "he did talk about this, but we did not understand it." This would be a case of the "suppressed child" type.

But if the present parents know about the concept of reincarnation and do not oppose it, then there is a third possibility. They may show some interest in what the child says, make notes of the statements and ask questions. They may find that the child seems to be describing a definite now-deceased personality about whom they do not know anything, but the description may be detailed enough to initiate a search for him. Sometimes the parents or someone else also find a person, who died some years before the birth of the child, but who seems to correspond to the child's description. (In some cases, this former personality is more or less known to the parents.) The child may also show behavioral features, such as specific phobias or skills, which seem to be related to the former personality. Such a case becomes clearly interesting from a parapsychological viewpoint.

Of the twenty cases in Stevenson's book, most belong to this third "permitted child" type. In some cases one of the parents did not like the child's talking about a former life and tried to suppress him even by punishing him, but the child found someone else in the family who was willing to listen.

This second edition is, to my knowledge, the first long-term follow-up study of subjects who as children had memories suggestive of reincarnation. Stevenson states in the preface that no major flaw in his reporting of the cases has been detected by the interpreters, subjects, and family members who

read the first edition. The general revision could have been limited to corrections of minor errors in spelling of names and other details. But in almost all the case reports, a section on the later development of the subject has been added. This contains reports of one or several interviews with the subjects and, in several cases, family members and other informants. The latest interviews were held eight or more years after the accounts reported in the first edition. Only two cases could not be contacted for follow-up interviews. In some cases, important new information had emerged in the meantime that increases the understanding of the case. Stevenson has also added a chapter on "Discussion of Results Obtained in Follow-up Interviews." With these additions, the size of the book has increased from 362 to 396 pages despite a larger page size.

Mainly three aspects are discussed in the added chapter: the reliability of the witnesses, the personalities of the subjects, and the fading or preservation of apparent memories of former lives when the subjects grew up.

Cases of the "permitted child" type are obviously the most promising for parapsychological study. Despite great variation, they show striking similarities in their pattern. When it comes to cases of the adult or "suppressed child" type, the evaluation of the memories as presented by the adult subject is, of course, extremely difficult. It may be impossible to evaluate how much of the contents of the alleged memories the subject may have got in normal ways during this lifetime, or how much is the result of pure fantasy. At least the first part of the problem is much easier when the subject, say, is a three-year-old child.

Stevenson doubts whether memories of a previous life hinder the child's maturation. Most of the subjects were completely "normal." Only a small minority seem to have become so absorbed in the memories that they had difficulties at school or in other ways. Three children developed mental disease in later life; one of them committed suicide which his former personality also did. For all three, Stevenson finds relevant connections between the remembered previous life and the mental illness. But he stresses that they did not become ill because they had these memories. To have alleged memories of former lives is not a symptom of mental illness.

Among parapsychologists Stevenson is rather alone in this work, and opinions about it have varied greatly. Some prominent parapsychologists have said that reincarnation research does not belong within parapsychology, or that it is at a pre-scientific stage. But any scientific work must begin with the collection of data. Stevenson has begun to collect data in a hitherto largely neglected field, and in his case studies in this book and several papers he has presented them in a very systematic and clear way and presented alternative hypotheses. It is difficult to imagine how research in this field could be carried on except by case studies. The book is admirably well written.

The book is necessary for everyone seriously interested in survival research. I can only hope that Stevenson will receive the reward which he refers to following his guarded evaluation of the cases in the preface: "I would only here reiterate that I consider these cases *suggestive* of reincarnation and nothing more . . . Neither any case individually nor all of them collectively offers anything like a proof of reincarnation. My most important single conclusion about them is of the need for further study of similar cases. If anyone takes up this task I shall consider my efforts amply rewarded."

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<sup>1</sup> Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1974. 396 pp.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 26, 1966, pp. 1-362.

<sup>3</sup> "The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations," part I-II. *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 54, 1960, pp. 51-71 and 95-117.



# Correspondence

Dear Sirs:

In his review of Gaither Pratt's *ESP Research Today* (*THETA*, Fall 1974), Ian Stevenson does a disservice to his readers when he mentions two "mercenary writers" who allegedly stole material from the book. Why doesn't he name the writers, if their offense is clear-cut? Instead, he makes a sweeping indictment of writers who "make their living by adapting the material of honest writers for their own purposes."

Lifting material verbatim is dishonest, of course, if it goes well beyond the boundaries of fair use. To discuss the material or even quote brief passages from it, however, is the prerogative of all writers who are doing research in a particular area, parapsychology or otherwise. (The source should be credited, of course.) Parapsychologists themselves must consult the work of others in the field as well as their own research. Those who write for an audience of laymen must necessarily "delete tiresome details" in order to keep the attention of their readers. At the same time they must conscientiously present the experimenter's viewpoint. This is no easy matter, and I have sometimes spent hours reading and reworking such material to make it both interesting and accurate.

More power to the parapsychologists if they can write interestingly of their own research. Many if not most of them, unfortunately, do not have this ability, and the professional writers perform a valuable service by presenting the material in a readable style. I do not defend writers who use the material for sensational purposes, but I wish Dr. Stevenson would not imply that no one but a bona fide experimenter is qualified to write about parapsychology. As for "mercenary writers," I don't know of any parapsychologist who is less concerned about being paid for his books than those who write for a living.

The central issue may be whether the layman should be informed about the research.

Many parapsychologists take the elitist stand that their material should be classified and available only to others working in this area or related disciplines. I believe, however, that there is a legitimate need for millions of intelligent and concerned laymen to know what is happening in parapsychology. This need can be met by both professional writers and parapsychologists who learn how to put their concepts in readable form.

Herbert B. Greenhouse  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sirs:

I am quite unrepentant about the remarks concerning plagiarism included in my review of Dr. Pratt's book, *ESP Research Today*. In fact, there is more to be said.

Clinically considered, Dr. Pratt's condition is grave. He suffers from a severe case of plagiarism-proneness. Since I wrote my review of his book a third and even more outrageous instance of stealing from his book has come to our attention. The three guilty authors did not merely "quote brief passages" from Dr. Pratt's book. They lifted bodily whole paragraphs without quotation marks or attribution and set them down in their "own" books; here and there a word or phrase of the stolen passages was altered, but colleagues to whom we have shown both Dr. Pratt's text and those of the "borrowers" have uniformly agreed that flagrant plagiarism occurred in each instance.

It is not necessary to name the miscreants publicly. They have been privately rebuked. . . .

Mr. Greenhouse refers to the doctrine of "fair use" by one author of another author's work. He correctly points out that the source of cited passages should be credited. He neglects to mention, however, that cited passages should be placed in quotation marks so that the reader knows what is taken from other authors and what is original in the book he is reading. If extensive material is quoted from an author's work, permission must be sought and obtained. It is not enough to print pseudo-acknowledgements implying that permissions were sought and obtained when they were not. (Two of the plagiarists of Dr. Pratt's work used this trick.) Mr. Greenhouse also fails to mention the even more important point that the concept of "fair use" was worked out to

reduce the correspondence of permissions departments in publishers' offices so that scientists and scholars could help each other more easily. The idea of "fair use" is not a license for raids by authors of popular books.

I used the word "mercenary" with reference to its military application. Soldiers of a volunteer army are paid, but their primary motive for fighting is usually the defense of territory or liberty. In contrast, the primary motive of the mercenary soldier is financial gain since he sells his services to any nation or would-be nation that will pay his price. And so it is with books. Certainly scientists like to be paid for their books, but if one said that he expected to make a living from his writings a psychiatrist should be called.

I am sorry to see Mr. Greenhouse repeating the canard that the public has to be rescued by professional writers from the turgid prose and opaque jargon of the scientists. We do not need the services of professional writers as our interpreters. In my opinion, most of the authors of popular books in the field of parapsychology can barely read a book, much less write one. To increase sales they follow the basic principles: simplify and sensationalize. This is not educating the public, but crassly exploiting the uneducated portion of it.

There is fortunately a small aristocracy of professional science writers, who have become constructively interested in parapsychology in recent years. They can help us, and it is a pleasure to cooperate with them. May their number increase and may all the other writers of popular books and articles about parapsychology go away and leave us alone.

In recent correspondence in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research* (April, 1975), Diana Robinson suggested that the writers of popular books on parapsychology share their earnings with the research centers that generate the material for their writings. Any checks to me in response to her appeal should be made payable to the University of Virginia, and they are tax-deductible.

Ian Stevenson, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry  
University of Virginia

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