clinical psychologists. Two judges were asked to rate each suicide case while the third resolved the differences in the ratings of the two judges by picking the rating of the judge which he felt to be the most correct. The judges were asked to place the suicide into one of three categories: the suicide took place in a context of TD; the suicide took place in a context other than TD; or there is insufficient material to place the suicide in either of the above categories. There was high agreement among the judges.

Results

The results obtained showed that the hypotheses (predictions 1–4) were all confirmed: (1) More suicides were committed in a context of TD than non-TD; (2) A significant positive correlation exists between the TDS index and suicides per cult unit; (3) A significant correlation was obtained between TDS index and the number of TD-context suicides per cult unit; (4) The TDS-TD suicide case correlation exceeded the TDS-non-TD case correlation; and (5) The data was judged inadequate to produce a meaningful test of this hypothesis.

Conclusions

The authors conclude that the present study has produced results compatible with the thwarting-disorientation (TD) theory of suicide. Thus suicides were found to occur most frequently in contexts of TD. Certain societies, high TDS index societies, have higher suicide rates than low TDS index societies.

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TWENTY CASES SUGGESTIVE OF REINCARNATION, by IAN STEVENSON. Richmond: The William Byrd Press, Inc. 1966. Reviewed by K. YOUNG, Faculty of Divinity, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

The motif of death and rebirth is found throughout the drama of human history. We have only to recall the great variety of beliefs in reincarnation found among different peoples to realize, on one hand, the extensiveness of these beliefs and, on the other, the diversity

that appears in the particular expressions of how, why, and what it is that actually continues after death. The Greeks, Hindus, Australian Aborigines, Buddhists, and American Indians (to name a few random examples) have their own interpretations of the theme of reincarnation, but interest in rebirth cannot be relegated to archaic and traditional cultures: modern western thinkers like Jung and McTaggart have added their own speculations to the notion of rebirth. Included in an extensive anthology, *Reincarnation in World Thought* (Head and Cranston, 1967), which discusses examples like the above, is a brief excerpt from Dr. Ian Stevenson's 1960 prize-winning essay, "The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations." It is to the recurrent idea of reincarnation that Stevenson addresses his remarks, but he invokes a new authority to settle the question "Does reincarnation really exist?", and that is the authority of case histories of young children who claim to remember their previous lives.

Since Stevenson's early research on testimonies of rebirth, he has collected many more examples, and his recent book, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1966), documents his investigation in greater detail. From the six hundred case histories he now has collected (one-third of which he has personally investigated), about half come from South East Asia and the remainder from Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Europe, Canada, America, and Brazil. In his book twenty examples are recounted in full detail to furnish evidence for his analysis.

Because the reliability of his proof depends upon his methodology, Stevenson is extremely careful to justify each step in his procedure, weighing its weaknesses as well as its strengths. To determine the veracity of the child's memory which usually has been articulated before the child has been interviewed by an outside observer, Stevenson uses the techniques of "historian, lawyer, and psychiatrist" to reconstruct a past event through interviews with as many witnesses as possible over intervals of one to several years. To decide the accuracy of these testimonies he cross checks informants, compares when possible his results with those of other researchers who have studied the case, observes the behavior of the subject and his family, and cross checks the reports of two or three translators with his own notes written during the interview. When he is satisfied that relatively few errors have arisen in eliciting the information for the case history, Stevenson attempts to account for the following factors: the child's identification with a previous personality; his extensive information about that person, his former family, and his former environment

which usually is a nearby village; his ability to recognize spontaneously someone he knew in his previous life and address him by name; and finally, in some cases, the presence of birthmarks on the child which correspond in location to those on his former body.

Unfortunately, it is generally not Stevenson who verifies these features of the child's story, but rather the child's family who is prompted to investigate the report, perhaps because the child begs to visit his former family or perhaps because he has encountered a person he previously knew. So it generally is the child who directs his present family to this former home where they learn of the death of a member of that family who corresponds to the child's description. Other explicit knowledge which the child previously has recounted to his present family is described and the former family, acknowledging the general reliability of the "memory" or recognizing the child himself, is convinced of the child's reincarnation. Only at this point does an outside observer like Stevenson begin to study the case.

Naturally many questions arise as to the reliability of this kind of proof for reincarnation, and Stevenson is well aware of some of the problems involved. Central to the problem, of course, is the fact that the two families have visited each other "to compare notes" long before an outside observer has studied the testimony. Hence most of the members of the families concerned are already convinced of the memory of the reincarnation. However, Stevenson eliminates the possibility of fraud for the following reasons: no monetary reward is involved; the publicity is disruptive to the family; the child does not compensate for poverty or maltreatment by imagining in his previous life he was wealthy and had a kind home, for his former home is found to be economically and emotionally the same or even poorer; and finally there are no consistent apparent benefits for a family with a child claiming a memory of reincarnation. (Although in Asia such a child sometimes is said to have healing and future-telling powers, in other places like Alaska he is the subject of fear and is forbidden to talk about his previous experiences.)

But we might point out to Stevenson in regard to this last point that when an unnatural event occurs to a religious man, it often represents "power" to him and he may be ambivalent towards the occurrence, on one hand, attracted, and on the other, repulsed or afraid. Consequently, this ambivalence towards a phenomenon of "power" may be positive or auspicious in one culture as in India but negative or inauspicious in another, such as the Eskimos have. Even within a culture the ambivalency towards "power" may account

for the different reactions within a family towards a child's memory of reincarnation, for some members are unwilling to recognize the child's claim and, in fact, take repressive measures to quiet him "so he won't die young," while others may encourage his behavior. Therefore, when Stevenson recounts a family's unwillingness to accept at once the memory of reincarnation, we must realize it is not necessarily their desire to be logical, rational, and fully convinced there is sufficient proof, but rather their reaction to something extraordinary and unusual which indicates *power* and hence brings forth contradictory reactions.

Then again a child's imagination does not have to be wish fulfillment; his story does not have to have any purpose (like wanting to be rich or wanting attention) other than its simple creation. We have only to remember the nature of children's play to realize that all kinds of daily events are reinacted, and the occasion of play is just as real to the very young child as the other events in his life. Consequently, we can expect the child to be convinced of his "memories": like his play, his imaginative stories are real to him. Naturally the child's behavior will be "normal," for Stevenson observes as further evidence for the veracity of the memory: "They talk about their past lives sporadically here and there without interrupting their ordinary play or work." It is as though a child has an imaginary brother: his continual presence is real to the child and the child will talk with him sporadically throughout the day. One cannot convince the child his "brother" does not exist; similarly a parent could not convince a child that he was making up a false story about his previous life. Thus when Stevenson places much emphasis on the normality of behavioral features as evidence for the authenticity of this "memory," we must keep in mind the nature of the young child, and how his imagination defines reality for him.

Similarly, for the adults of the family we need not assume a dichotomy of reality versus fiction in their approach to the child's memory. The cases of reincarnation presented in Stevenson's book all arise in a religious milieu which defines reincarnation as a dictum of life. It is a "given" that rebirth occurs; what is questionable and must be proved to the family is whether or not the child's *memory* itself is possible and whether it corresponds to the situation of the other family involved. Consequently, it seems that the family who is responsible for verifying the claim and the impartial observer are asking two radically different questions: the former is wondering if the *memory* itself is possible or correct while the latter is asking

if the memory proves *that reincarnation really happened.* Rebirth is a presupposition with the former, but it is a conclusion with the latter. With the families the question of reality versus fraud does not arise in regard to reincarnation. For example, in the Hindu cases it was not a question of rejecting the notions of karma, samsara, and rebirth that was the issue with the families, but whether the child could actually remember his previous life and whether his report could be verified. Stevenson dismisses religion from playing a major role in these cases, but he forgets that it is usually religion that defines reality in a given culture like that of the Indians or the Eskimos. Furthermore, notions of rebirth frequently appear in myths, proverbs, or chants narrated and sung in the household, and so are a model for the child's thoughts as well as the parent's beliefs. Although the case histories that Stevenson present in his book are all from families whose religion asserts reincarnation, he does mention he has a few other examples from England, Canada, and America "in families which have never heard of reincarnation or given it credence." It seems a serious omission that he has not presented several such examples for comparison.

Aside from certain methodological problems such as those discussed above, we find other relevant questions to the study unanswered. Unfortunately, Stevenson is so intent on presenting his data, justifying his methodology, and weighing different paranormal hypotheses to explain the phenomenon, that he never gives a definitive critique of the pattern of characteristics that appear in the memories. Aside from the common memory of rebirth, what aspects are recurrent in all cases and how are they related to form the structure of this kind of religio-psychic event? As we noted in our introduction, rebirth in different cultures expresses radically different conceptions of how, why, and what it is that actually continues after death. Do the memories provide an answer to this essential question of what continues? Rather than analyzing his data to suggest an answer, Stevenson has presented a rather arbitrary definition of reincarnation as "a personality, having shed one physical body at death, after an interval activates another body and develops further in it. The second personality of the reincarnating entity thus develops as a 'layer' around the previous personality which itself contained earlier layers." Because this definition certainly is not characteristic of all the various religious approaches nor of all the case histories, we must realize it is Stevenson's personal theory. On closer analysis he admits it is difficult to know exactly what continues after death, whether

the personality remains unchanged, is reduced, or becomes a mere collection of disposition and aptitudes rather than actual habits and skills. If we reduce that which is reborn to innate aptitudes and instincts, how do we account for the exact details that appear in the memory of the child, details of character, physical features, and skills?

Although we have found points of disagreement in Stevenson's book, we will be interested in following his further research, especially if he has more opportunities to examine directly the memory of reincarnation before the family itself verifies the description, for only then will the case histories be objective reports and perhaps furnish data to answer the question, "Does reincarnation really exist and if it does what is its structure?".

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