

The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories  
of Former Incarnations  
*The Winning Essay of the Contest*  
*in Honor of William James*

IAN STEVENSON, M.D.<sup>1</sup>

PART I. REVIEW OF THE DATA

(Part II, "Analysis of the Data and Suggestions for Further Investigations" will appear in the next issue of the JOURNAL.)

INTRODUCTION

The idea of reincarnation appears early in the history of philosophy. References to it occur in the *Vedas* of ancient India, and it forms a central part of the doctrines of Brahmanism and Buddhism to this day. In ancient Greece a number of philosophers such as Empedocles and Pythagoras taught reincarnation, while Plato made it an important assumption in his philosophy. Numerous modern philosophers such as Hume, Goethe, Lessing, and Schopenhauer have either endorsed the idea of reincarnation or expressed sympathetic interest in it. Among contemporary philosophers, McTaggart,<sup>2</sup> Broad,<sup>3</sup> and Ducasse<sup>4</sup> have found reincarnation plausible and attractive as a hypothesis about survival. For the most part, the foregoing philosophers have interested themselves in reincarnation as a mechanism of survival, that is, as explanatory of the further fate of the deceased personality. They have assumed survival or accepted its probability from other evidence and have not drawn much or at all on the evidence for reincarnation itself.

The present paper, in two parts, offers a review of the evidence for reincarnation in memories claimed to be recollections of former

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<sup>2</sup> J. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, Edward Arnold, London, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> C. D. Broad, "Personal Identity and Survival," *The Thirteenth F. W. H. Myers Memorial Lecture*, Society for Psychical Research, London, 1958.

<sup>4</sup> C. J. Ducasse, *Is a Life after Death Possible?*, U. of California Press, Berkeley, 1948.

lives. I propose, in the first part, to survey the types of evidence adduced in favor of the reincarnation hypothesis and to describe some instances of what seem to me the most important evidences relevant to reincarnation, namely, apparent memories of former incarnations. In the second part of the paper, I shall offer a discussion of the various hypotheses which deserve attention in evaluating the data of these apparent former memories. I shall also offer in that part some proposals for further investigations and experiments which may help us to select from among the rival hypotheses.

In what follows I propose to avoid (except in the most incidental references) two aspects of the subject of reincarnation because a full discussion of them seems irrelevant to the present theme. I shall not mention possible mechanisms of reincarnation, nor shall I discuss such ethical implications of reincarnation as the theory of karma, which in the Orient forms an indissoluble part of the religious ideas of reincarnation. I shall confine myself to the discussion of evidence for the following possibilities, using the terms of Professor Broad.<sup>3</sup> Each human being may comprise a physical body and a psi-component. After the death of the physical body of a person his psi-component may continue an unembodied existence for a time. And after this time, this psi-component may become associated with another physical body usually (presumably) during its embryonic development. It follows from this hypothesis that certain aspects of the psi-component may influence the personality of the new human being in its mental contents, behavior, and physical body.

The reader may usefully remember as he reads further the possible relationships between survival and reincarnation. If survival occurs, then reincarnation may be one form it could take, for all, for many, or only for some human beings. Survival could occur without reincarnation. On the other hand, reincarnation by definition cannot occur without some preceding survival of a physical death. Thus evidence for reincarnation is *ipso facto* evidence for survival while the reverse is certainly not true.

#### TYPES OF EVIDENCE FOR WHICH REINCARNATION IS INVOKED AS AN EXPLANATION

A wide variety of data has received consideration as evidence for reincarnation. In reviewing these I shall proceed generally from the most tenuous and insufficient evidence towards evidence in the evaluation of which reincarnation becomes a very serious contender as the most plausible explanation of the empirical facts.

<sup>3</sup> Broad, *op. cit.*

#### 1. *Inequities in the Distribution of Human Talents*

Some writers have cited the occurrence of childhood geniuses such as Mozart, Sir William Hamilton, and Thomas Young as evidence of reincarnation.<sup>6</sup> They emphasize not merely the ease of learning in such precocious children, but the capacity of these rare children to surpass their teachers in learning and creativity (e.g., Mozart's early compositions, Hamilton's youthful skill in Persian) at a level far beyond that of the instruction they had apparently received. They suppose, therefore, that such children must have previously learned something of the subjects and of their skills presumably in a former life. Now such instances are compatible with the theory of reincarnation, but we can hardly say that they strengthen in any way the evidence for it. In the first place, we still know too little about the operations of inheritance to exclude the possibility of genetic factors in the occurrence of such geniuses. Secondly, we have by no means fully explored the possibilities of promoting special talents by parental influence. Dr. Boris Sidis deliberately applied such influences to the training of his son who was a childhood genius. In other instances, the influences may occur less openly, even unconsciously, on the part of the parents but nevertheless have extraordinary power. One can conceive, for example, in the cases of the Bach family and the Mozart family, that an unusual combination of hereditary factors and parental encouragements could account for the occurrence of musical genius in the children of these families.

#### 2. *Statements Made by Ostensible Discarnate Communicators*

Ostensible discarnate communicators have had much to say from time to time on the subject of reincarnation. However, the utterances on this subject by these personalities can obviously have no claim to our attention with regard to the problem of evidence for survival, since to assume the fact that they are indeed discarnate personalities is to assume survival, the very thing we are interested in demonstrating or disproving. Even supposing communications from discarnate personalities, we could not expect fountains of wisdom to flow from them on the subject of reincarnation. If survival is a fact, we may be reasonably certain of another fact, namely, that the process of death confers on us no greater wisdom than we possess at death. If he confines himself to his own experience, a genuine discarnate entity could probably communicate on the subject of reincarnation only the fact that he himself had so far

<sup>6</sup> G. Delanne, *Documents pour Servir à l'Étude de la Réincarnation*, Éditions de la B.P.S., Paris, 1924.

not reincarnated. For these reasons I do not propose to quote or to linger longer on the numerous communications received through mediums on this subject.

A different type of communication through mediums deserves brief mention. I refer to the foretelling of the birth of a certain person whose characteristics are described and which later match those of the person whose birth the communicator predicts. In my collection of cases, I have reports of six instances of this kind of prediction. I will summarize one of them as an example:

An ostensible communicator (through a ouija board) identified himself as Felix F..., a former servant of the family of Dr. Maurice Delarrey, author of the report of the case. The communicator announced the date of his forthcoming birth into a family who were cousins of the Delarrey family. He said he would be identified by having a slightly deformed right ear similar to one he had when previously living.

On the date named, a baby boy was born into the family named and did have a slightly deformed right ear exactly as described in the communication and as the servant had had when alive. When Dr. and Mme. Delarrey went to visit the family in question (their cousins) the baby behaved in a very affectionate manner towards Mme. Delarrey although he was otherwise noticeably hostile to strangers.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. *Statements Made by Sensitives as to the Existence of a Person as Another Person in a Previous Life.*

Many trance mediums and sensitives make statements regarding the prior lives of persons who consult them. In this country the most notable clairvoyant of this type was Edgar Cayce, who gave large numbers of so-called "life readings" in which he reviewed the salient features of prior existences of the persons for whom he gave the readings. He has had many successors. The evidence for Edgar Cayce's clairvoyance regarding current features of living persons and their affairs seems to me extremely strong and that for the veridicality of his life readings extremely weak. In the vast majority of cases it has not been possible to trace the existence of the person mentioned or identified as having been in a previous existence the person for whom the reading was given. Here I may offer a comment which bears on the general difficulty of identifying in an evidential way the persons named by sensitives such as Cayce, or persons whose existence has been supposedly remembered by themselves. The difficulty is this. If a person named or supposedly remembered had an obscure station in life,

<sup>7</sup> M. Delarrey, "Une Réincarnation Annoncée et Vérifiée," *Revue Métapsychique*, Vol. I, 1955, p. 41.

e.g., was a centurion in Trajan's army, it is exceedingly unlikely that we shall find any record to prove his existence. If a person named had a prominent station in life, e.g., Trajan himself, it is possible or probable that the sensitive or rememberer acquired in a normal way the facts allegedly learned or remembered. And if the person occupied an intermediate station in life, e.g., was a governor of a Roman province during the reign of Trajan, then the facts of his career, although not generally known, may be recorded somewhere. If they cannot be learned, then no verification can occur; and if they are discovered in some obscure book perhaps known only to scholars of Roman history, we cannot exclude completely the possibility that the percipient gathered the information from this book clairvoyantly. The difficulties on the one hand of tracing and identifying a named person and, on the other hand, of excluding normal or clairvoyant knowledge of the facts adduced make this line of inquiry generally unrewarding, although it continues to be extremely interesting and possibly susceptible of further improvement.

In some instances, the statements made by sensitives show a remarkable congruence with apparent memories of a former incarnation on the part of the person consulting the sensitive. I know of one such instance in which a person apparently recalled, when a young child, a scene from a previous existence in ancient Greece. Later in life two sensitives independently described with regard to herself details of a previous existence in ancient Greece. These two accounts matched the subject's own apparent memories and each other. In such instances, however, telepathy from the mind of the sitter becomes a plausible explanation for the statements of sensitives.

Somewhat more difficult of explanation as due to telepathy are instances (three of which have come to my attention) in which sensitives have named and described in some detail persons of obscure or intermediate renown saying that these persons had been in a former incarnation the persons for whom the statements were made. After extensive research the named persons were actually found to have existed and found to match closely the descriptions, e.g., of occupation, birthplace, etc., given by the sensitives. In these instances, both the sensitives and the subjects for whom the statements were made denied any conscious knowledge of the matching persons. The sensitives may conceivably have achieved access to the records which verified the existence of the persons they named. But as all persons concerned, including the sitters, denied any conscious knowledge of the persons named or the records prior to verification, one wonders through what steps the sensitive gained clairvoyant access to the verifying records.

Incidentally, the sensitives did not communicate the information they gave in the form of readings from books or records, i.e., in the style of the book tests such as those of Mrs. Osborne Leonard.<sup>8</sup> In some respects, however, this kind of perception constitutes a kind of proxy book test without a living original to engage the proxy. Since we cannot exclude in these instances an entirely fortuitous matching between the data given and the records found, this kind of evidence can add little weight to the theory of reincarnation.

#### 4. *Special Predilections or Fears Possibly Related to Former Incarnations.*

Many persons find themselves, during parts of their lives or throughout them, especially attracted or repelled by certain countries, people, names, food, or other objects. Sometimes such fears and attractions clearly derive from experiences in early life (or later), and psychiatric research has demonstrated the frequent long duration of such reactions, without, I may add, understanding why they last so long in some persons and quickly vanish in others. Sometimes the person who enjoys or suffers from a special liking or fear forgets its origin. When this happens, memories of the original conditioning experience can sometimes be recovered through special techniques, e.g., the use of certain drugs or hypnosis. Under certain conditions, recall of the memory of the original experience brings a marked and therapeutic modification of such reactions. In a number of instances known to me, such predilections and fears have been related to apparent memories of former incarnations. The following two examples illustrate such predilections.

An American couple cruising around the world stopped at Bombay. Walking around the city, they both found themselves extraordinarily familiar with parts of it so that they had no need of a guide and could tell each other in advance of coming to a place, say around a corner, what they would see. They tested this knowledge by going to a particular quarter they thought they remembered and looking for a house and a banyan tree they remembered standing in the garden of the house. When they reached the place where they expected to find the house and tree, they did not find them. They then noticed a policeman who happened to be there and asked him if the house and tree had formerly stood there. He recalled having heard from his father

<sup>8</sup> C. D. Thomas, *Some New Evidence for Human Survival*, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, n.d.

that they had been there as this couple described them. He added an additional item of information. The house had belonged to a family named Bhan. This couple had, for some reason unknown to them, liked the name Bhan and given this name as first name to their son.<sup>9</sup>

A second instance which has not hitherto been published deserves a slightly longer summary.

A Dutch portrait painter named Henriette Roos married a man called Weisz whom she subsequently divorced. Although it is the custom in Holland for women to resume their maiden names after a divorce, Mrs. Weisz for an unaccountable reason liked her married name and did not want to give it up. When her mother reproached her with not resuming her maiden name, she replied: "I don't know, it is a strange feeling, I can't explain, that name somehow suits me. I feel *one* with it, it is more *me* than my own name, Roos. Each time I call myself that way I have the feeling I'm talking about someone else." So she decided to call herself Mrs. Weisz-Roos.

Some time after her divorce she was in Paris working hard to support herself by her painting. One evening she went to bed extremely fatigued hoping to benefit from a good sleep. She then heard a voice say, or was impressed by the thought: "Don't be so lazy, get up and work." After further importuning which she at first resisted, she did get up and went to her easel. She was impressed to paint in the dark and did so with feverish haste and hardly knowing what she was doing. After a time she felt better, naturally sleepy and returned to bed and to sleep. Upon awakening the next morning, she discovered that she had painted a beautiful little portrait of a young woman.

Puzzled by this experience, she described it to a friend who persuaded her to consult a sensitive who practiced psychometry. Mrs. Weisz-Roos took her portrait to the sensitive and without saying anything to her, placed it on a table from which the sensitive picked it up. The sensitive went into a trance and after a time said, "I see very large golden letters. A name is spelled to me.... G - O - Y - A now he speaks to me. He says: He was a great Spanish painter. He had to fly from his country from his enemies and it was you who received him in your home in a big southern city in France—until the end of his life. He still is so thankful for this that he wants to guide you—but he is not satisfied, you resist too much, you are too much tied up in your academic education—you never relax and let him guide you, you make it very difficult for him—he therefore made you paint in the dark so you couldn't see what you were doing...."

At the time of this communication, Mrs. Weisz-Roos had never read anything about Goya. However, that same evening, she went to a home where her host owned a copy of a life of Goya. She borrowed

<sup>9</sup> W. C. White, "Cruise Memory," *Beyond the Five Senses*, ed., E. J. Garrett, J. B. Lippincott, New York, 1957.

this and was astonished to find in it an account of Leocadia Weisz, in whose home Goya had lived during his exile from Spain at the end of his life.<sup>10</sup>

#### APPARENT MEMORIES OF FORMER INCARNATIONS

The types of evidence mentioned so far derive their value from inferences made about certain experiences or from statements made about a person by another person such as a sensitive. They do not include identifiable apparent memories, taking these to refer to discrete images rather than to certain aptitudes which may form a kind of memory. The cases which do include such imaged memories provide a much more interesting and important group of evidence because in a small number of them at least, the information adduced has been checked against known or discovered facts.

A wide variety of apparent memories of supposed incarnations has been reported or published. I have studied altogether several hundred accounts of such claimed memories. In the majority of these cases the claimed memory either could not be verified, e.g., because the named person could not be traced or it did not contain any definite paranormal feature, i.e., information which the person having the alleged memory could not normally acquire.

In Table I, I have listed the varieties of apparent memories of former incarnations with the total number for the last two types of cases, with the records of which I am acquainted. I shall next review some examples of the more important types of these apparent memories.

Regarding Types 1a and 1b included in Table I, I need say nothing further, having already explained that although some of these may contain paranormal features, we cannot evaluate them with regard to these either because the person named was too well known or disappeared without trace.

Type 1c occurs very commonly and consists of a sense of familiarity with a place never seen before. Psychiatrists and neurologists have interested themselves in this experience, usually called the experience of *déjà vu*. They have devised a number of physiological theories to account for it, none of them entirely satisfactory, in my opinion. On the other hand, we must require something more than a mere sense of familiarity with a place before we seriously consider paranormal knowledge or previous knowledge as having contributed to the sense of familiarity. From the many accounts of these experiences left by writers I have

<sup>10</sup> H. Roos, Personal Communication.

TABLE I  
CLASSIFICATION OF VARIOUS APPARENT MEMORIES CITED AS EVIDENCE OF REINCARNATION

Information Included in Memory	Number of Cases
1. No paranormal feature in apparent memories.	Several hundred cases published.
a) Person named could not be found definitely to have existed.	
b) Person named was a well known historical person of whom the subject might easily have acquired knowledge through normal channels, e.g., Marie Antoinette.	
c) No unusual knowledge of time or place recalled; a sense of familiarity only. <i>Déjà vu</i> experiences.	
2. Unusual knowledge of a place or time apparently not acquired normally.	
a) Apparent paranormal knowledge of places.	19 cases
b) Apparent paranormal knowledge of past events or people.	8 cases
Total:	27 cases
3. Apparent recollections of specific people, places or events in the life of a definitely identified other person who had died prior to the birth of the subject.	
a) Less than six items of information matched between memories and verified facts.	11 cases
b) The two persons were born into the same family, or families who were neighbors, so that normal communication of details in the life of the first person might have been possible.	5 cases
c) Six or more items of information matched between memories and verified facts; two persons in families unrelated, usually in different towns or countries.	28 cases
Total:	44 cases

chosen as an example one which Charles Dickens described in his *Pictures from Italy*:

At sunset, when I was walking on alone, while the horses rested, I arrived upon a little scene, which, by one of those singular mental operations of which we are all conscious, seemed perfectly familiar to me, and which I see distinctly now. There was not much in it. In the blood-red light, there was a mournful sheet of water, just

stirred by the evening wind; upon its margin a few trees. In the foreground (of a view of Ferrara) was a group of silent peasant girls leaning over the parapet of a little bridge, looking now up at the sky, now down into the water. In the distance a deep dell; the shadow of approaching night on everything. If I had been murdered there in some former life I could not have seemed to remember the place more thoroughly or with more emphatic chilling of the blood; and the real remembrance of it acquired in that minute is so strengthened by the imaginary recollection, that I hardly think I could forget it.<sup>11</sup>

The apparent memories which I have included as Type 2 pass beyond the experience of *déjà vu* and include a description of details of some place or events of which the narrator apparently had no previous knowledge. In the typical case of this kind, a person visiting with friends some foreign land, suddenly senses that the town they are in is well known to himself. He tells the others what they will come to as they go through the town and acts as a guide for the tour. Well authenticated cases of this Type 2a case (in contrast to the *déjà vu* phenomenon) seem to me to be rather rare, although I am familiar with accounts of nineteen such cases. Two will suffice to illustrate this kind of experience.

I give the first of these in the words of the percipient:

When I was at Heidelberg, Germany... in company with some friends, I paid my first visit to the ruined Heidelberg Castle. As I approached it, I was impressed with the existence of a peculiar room in an inaccessible portion of the building. A paper and pencil were provided me, and I drew a diagram of the room even to its peculiar floor. My diagram and description were perfect, when we afterwards visited the room.... Still another impression came to me with regard to a book, which I was made to feel was in the old library of Heidelberg University. I not only knew what the book was, but even felt that a certain name of an old German professor would be found written in it.... A search was made for the volume but it was not found. Still the impression clung to me, and another effort was made to find the book; this time we were rewarded for our pains. Sure enough, there on the margin of one of the leaves was the very name I had been given in such a strange manner.<sup>12</sup>

Instances in which the apparent paranormal familiarity related to events rather than places are even rarer than the Type 2a cases mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. The writings through Mrs. Curran of "Patience Worth"<sup>13</sup> and *The Soul of Nyria*<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> C. Dickens, *Pictures From Italy*, Chapman and Hall, London, n.d.

<sup>12</sup> E. D. Walker, *Reincarnation*, The Theosophical Publishing Co., New York, 1911.

<sup>13</sup> W. F. Prince, *The Case of Patience Worth*, B.S.P.R., Boston, 1927.

<sup>14</sup> R. C. Campbell-Praed, *The Soul of Nyria*, Rider & Co., London, 1951.

by Mrs. Campbell-Praed provide examples of Type 2b. "Patience Worth" wrote stories and novels of considerable length and speed of dictation which showed a remarkable knowledge of early English quite beyond the capacity of Mrs. Curran's ordinary personality. In *The Soul of Nyria* the narrator revealed a remarkable familiarity with events in Rome during the first century A.D. The narrator described events in Rome during this period which were (in many instances) not only unknown to herself in her ordinary consciousness, but unknown also to all but a few scholars of Roman history. For example, the narrator mentioned three wives of Pliny the Younger. The first checking of this point showed that most historians of the period refer to Pliny as having married only twice. But a few scholars are familiar with the evidence that Pliny had three wives.<sup>15</sup>

The cases which I have grouped together as Type 3 are instances in which a person apparently recalled details about himself during a previous existence as another identified person. I am familiar with accounts of 44 such cases.<sup>16</sup> These vary greatly in the number of details matched and in the investigations conducted into the cases, as well as with regard to a number of other features.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> R. Shirley, *The Problem of Rebirth*, Rider & Co., London, n.d.

<sup>16</sup> In the following pages I give for each case cited only the major references I have myself consulted. I have read as many different accounts of each case as I could and have tried to study contemporaneous newspaper accounts whenever I could do so. The cases have been reported in a number of different books and pamphlets, most now out of print. Correspondents have written about a few apparently well-studied cases which have not been published yet. Delanne (Reference 6) provides the richest anthology of cases with the most complete detail. I infer that Shirley (Reference 15) may have used Delanne in his compilation because his book contains many of the same cases, but some additional cases also. Other important sources for me have been: Hall, F. *The Soul of a People*, London: Macmillan & Co., 4th ed., 1902 (which contains five of the Burmese cases) and a rare pamphlet entitled *Reincarnation: Verified Cases of Rebirth after Death*, Krishna Kekai Nandan Sahay, Bareilly, India, ca. 1927, which contains detailed accounts of seven Indian cases.

<sup>17</sup> Few of these cases have received the complete investigations which modern psychical research would require. The following defects in the investigations occur quite frequently:

a) Failure of investigators to question the percipient (usually a child) directly, with reliance on information given by the parents or other persons as to what the percipient actually said.

b) Failure to make a written record of what the child said before attempting verification. In some instances parents resisted attempts at verification or had little interest in it. Few of the parents had sufficient education to appreciate the importance of written records.

c) Failure to attempt verification through an independent person. In a number of instances, verification was attempted through an independent inquirer or by mail. However, in others the percipient and family went along for the verification. This sometimes added new items of apparent memories as the percipient's memory became stimulated by apparently familiar places and people. However, it also added the possibility that the percipient could have received cues from movements or murmurs of the expectant crowd following him (or her) to the house where he (or she) claimed to have lived.

It has seemed to me that cases in which less than six items (an arbitrary number) have been matched between the apparent memories and the subsequently verified facts should be omitted or at least considered much less important on the ground that if only a few items are matched the possibility of some chance coincidence remains considerable. With larger numbers of matched items, the chances of a coincidental matching between the apparent memories and the facts becomes geometrically reduced and this factor needs little attention in the best of these cases.

I have also segregated five instances in which the supposed reincarnation occurred in the same family or among close neighbors of the former family. Two reasons seem to make this wise. First, we know how powerfully parents can shape the behavior of their children along lines of their own wishes and expectations. Thus parents frustrated in their wish for a boy have been known to influence the social and sexual behavior of a girl in masculine directions with ultimately resulting homosexual behavior on the part of the (usually unhappy) girl. Grief-stricken parents who have lost a child may easily hope that the next child will bring them the happiness they had with the first which (they may think) it can best do by closely resembling the first child. Such parents could quite unconsciously influence a child to behave in a manner which they could then identify as belonging only to the dead child now believed to have been reborn. I do not think this objection can apply to instances in which the similarity between the first and second child includes not only behavioral duplications, but similarities of physical characteristics, as for example, in the case of Alexandrina Samona.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, when the second child is born into the family of a first child who has died (or a family of close neighbors) the possibility exists that the second child can acquire information about the first child. Such information may be communicated by the parents either unconsciously or with subsequent amnesia, or it may be communicated by other people while the parents remain genuinely ignorant that the child has had access to such information.

After these exclusions there remain, nevertheless, in this collection 28 cases (Type 3c) which are not open to these two important criticisms. My examples and further remarks will chiefly relate to these cases. I will first describe some important features of the group as a whole and then offer some examples of specific cases so that the reader may understand better the kind of data which I shall analyze in the second part of this paper.

The cases are about equally divided between males and females.

<sup>6</sup> Delanne, *op. cit.*

In 25 of the cases the exact or reasonably approximate age of the rememberer is known. Of these instances, in 22 the memories<sup>18</sup> first occurred in children under the age of ten. In 8 instances the children were three or under. If we include in the total the other 16 cases of Types 3a and 3b, the great preponderance of young children among the rememberers remains. In keeping with the high incidence of children among these rememberers is the frequent observation among the reporters of the cases that the memories tended to fade with time.

Of the 44 cases, 18 came from India; 5 from Burma; 6 from Italy; 3 from the United States; 3 from England; 2 from Belgium; and 1 each from Greece, Cuba, Mauritius, Japan, France, Syria, and Canada. In most instances, the person whose life was supposedly remembered lived in a different town, occasionally in a different country. In a few instances he lived in the same town as the rememberer. In all instances the parents (or in the case of adults, the rememberer himself) denied that the rememberer had ever visited the home of the second person or had any access to knowledge about him. In all but 2 of the 28 cases not occurring in the same family, the person remembered was completely unknown to the parents of the remembering child. In one of the exceptional instances the parents did know of the existence of the apparently remembered persons (in this case two twin children each claimed to remember a former life when they had been husband and wife), but they had moved from the village where these persons had lived soon after the birth of the two children who claimed to remember these lives. The children had not returned to the village where they were born between leaving it in infancy and returning for the verification of the statements they made about the previous lives.<sup>6</sup> In the other exception to this ignorance on the part of the family of the deceased and apparently reborn person, the family knew something about the first person and merely testified regarding their certainty that the rememberer (a child of three) had not heard about this person through ordinary means.

Of the 44 cases, 38 of the rememberers recalled a life as a person of the same sex, 6 as a person of the opposite sex. In most instances the memories occurred during the ordinary waking state. However, in 1 case the recollection occurred in dreams only and in 1 during hypnosis only. In most instances no precipitating circumstance stimulating the memories was identified. In the cases of the children,

<sup>18</sup> For convenience, I propose to omit in much of the following, qualifying words such as "apparent," "purported," etc. before such terms as "memories," "rememberer," and "communicators." I make this abridgment without commitment to any particular hypothesis at this time.

<sup>6</sup> Delanne, *op. cit.*

they were frequently overheard by their parents to make some reference during play to unknown persons and places. The parents would then inquire and the child would tell more, sometimes recalling at that time all he knew and sometimes seeming to recall more later. In 4 instances the first burst of memories was precipitated apparently by some life stress. These stresses included the death of the child's mother, an illness, an operation the child feared, and harsh treatment of the child by a parent. One of the rememberers was a medium, but of the other percipients only 1 gave other evidence of any capacity for paranormal communications or claims to it. The rememberer, who recalled under hypnosis, entered into a state in which she seemed to be again the entire personality of the person whose life she claimed to remember. Thus accent and language of speech changed as did attitudes and behavior. In varying degrees this kind of transformation has occurred in a number of other cases of apparent memories of former incarnations not in this collection, e.g., in the cases of "Nyria,"<sup>14</sup> "Bridey Murphy"<sup>19</sup> and "Rosemary."<sup>20</sup> These all belong to Type 1a in my classification. It did not occur, however, in any other of the 44 cases of the type now under discussion. In all but the 1 case mentioned, the rememberer claimed to recall what he had done in a previous life but did not resume the personality of that former existence.

The details apparently remembered differed in number and in character. In most instances, but not in all, the name of the former person was recalled. The town and usually the site of residence in the former life was recalled. Often details of the house (e.g., numbers and descriptions of rooms), and its surroundings (e.g., trees, neighboring houses), were recalled. In a number of instances the child was taken to the town where he said he had lived and asked to find his way to his former home unguided. This was considered a further test of the paranormality of his knowledge, along the lines of the cases I have grouped as Type 2a (but see 17c). In addition to recalling people and places, the rememberers sometimes recalled events which had occurred during the former lives. Of particular importance, I believe, was the recall by a number of the percipients of houses, buildings or other places as they had been and were remembered by others to have been, rather than as they were at the time of the verification.

The following details of particular cases will illustrate some of these features of the cases further. I have selected them to provide

<sup>14</sup> Campbell-Praed, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> M. Bernstein, *The Search for Bridey Murphy*, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1956.

<sup>20</sup> F. Wood, *This Egyptian Miracle*, J. M. Watkins, London, 1955.

samples of different types of the experiences in question. I have included 5 of the Type 3c cases, and also 2 cases in which both persons belonged to the same family (Type 3b).

#### *The Case of Katsugoro*<sup>21</sup>

A Japanese boy called Katsugoro, when about eight years of age, stated that he had been called Tozo in a preceding life a few years earlier. He claimed to have then been the son of a farmer called Kyubei and his wife Shidzu and to have lived in a village called Hodokubo. He further stated that Kyubei had died and that his mother had then married a man called Hanshiro. He said that he himself, Tozo, had died of smallpox at the age of six, a year after his father had died. He gave details of his burial and described the appearance of his former parents and their house. Katsugoro was eventually taken to the village he named and the persons he named were found or identified as having lived there. In the village (unaccompanied by anyone from the village) he led the way to his former parents' house and recognized it and them. He pointed to a shop and a tree in the vicinity, saying that they had not been there before, which was true. Altogether, Katsugoro's statements provided sixteen items correctly matched with the verified facts. Responsible witnesses made numerous affidavits respecting the facts of this case. The child's grandmother accompanied him to the village of Hudokubo and testified to his statements about the house and its surroundings.

#### *The Case of Laura Raynaud*<sup>6,15</sup>

The percipient in this case was a French medium who reportedly possessed definite clairvoyant powers which she exhibited from time to time to the satisfaction of Dr. Gaston Durville with whom she worked as an assistant in the early years of this century. Madame Raynaud claimed to have experienced from childhood vivid, but partial recollections of a former life in which she lived on a country estate in a sunny climate. She said she had been wealthy but consumptive, and died young. She possessed a particularly clear image of the house in which she claimed to have lived before. On a trip to northern Italy when she was 45 years old (her first), Madame Raynaud believed she recognized the countryside of the area between Turin and Genoa. She provided a friend

<sup>21</sup> L. Hearn, "The Rebirth of Katsugoro," *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1897.

<sup>6</sup> Delanne, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Shirley, *op. cit.*



in Genoa with a full description of the house she claimed to recall. He tentatively identified it as a house with which he was familiar in the area and they went to it. However, Madame Raynaud stated that this was not the house in question which was, she believed, not far off. They followed her directions until they came to a house exactly answering her description. After this, Madame Raynaud added further recollections of the previous life she claimed to have lived in this house. She said: "I am quite sure that I was not buried, like the generality, in the cemetery. My body rests in the church." Inquiries regarding the family to whom the house belonged uncovered records of the deaths of its members. Among these records occurred one "of which the following is a translation (the name of her own family and that into which she married being alone omitted):

'23rd October, 1809, the Lady Jeanne S...., widow of B...., who lived for a number of years in her house in Albaro, for a long time an invalid and whose state of health was aggravated during her last days by a severe chill. Died on the 21st instant, fortified by all the sacraments of the Church, and now, with our permission in writing and with the authorization of the Mayor, also in writing, her body has been removed privately and buried in the Church of Notre Dame du Mont.'

"There followed the signatures of the officials concerned.

"The description of the lady in question, the conditions under which she lived, and the circumstances of her illness and death, as also the approximate date, correspond accurately with the recollections of Madame Raynaud with regard to her past life."<sup>15</sup>

#### *The Case of Shanti Devi*<sup>22, 23, 24</sup>

Shanti Devi, a girl living in Delhi (born in 1926), began from the age of about three to recall and state details of a former life in the town of Muttra, about eighty miles away. She stated that her name had been Lugdi, that she had been born in 1902, was a Choban by caste and had married a cloth merchant named Kedar Nath Chaubey. She said that she had given birth to a son and had died ten days later.

As Shanti Devi continued to make such statements, her family finally wrote when she was nine years old to see if such a person as her claimed husband actually existed in Muttra. This person

<sup>15</sup> Shirley, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> J. Manas, *Metempsychosis*, Pythagorean Society, New York, 1941.

<sup>23</sup> S. Bose, *A Case of Reincarnation*, Ligate, Satsang, S. P., 1952.

<sup>24</sup> L. D. Gupta, N. R. Sharma and T. C. Mathur, *An Inquiry into the Case of Shanti Devi*, International Aryan League, Delhi, 1936.

answered the letter and confirmed the girl's statements. He then sent a relative to the girl's home and afterwards came unannounced himself. She immediately identified both of these persons. The following year (1936), after it had been established that the girl had never left Delhi, a committee was appointed to witness a visit by the girl to Muttra with a view to noting her recognition of people and places. At the railway station of Muttra she recognized another relative of Kedar Nath Chaubey amid a large crowd of persons. She was then put in a carriage the driver of which was instructed to follow her directions. These led to the district and the house of Kedar Nath Chaubey which she recognized even though it had been repainted a different color. In the area of the house an old Brahmin appeared and she identified him correctly as Chedar Nath Chaubey's father (i.e., her previous father-in-law). Upon entering the house she answered correctly a number of questions put to her regarding the arrangement of the rooms, closets, etc. She also went to the house of her (claimed) previous parents whom she correctly identified out of a crowd of more than fifty persons and correctly called them by name.

Shanti Devi claimed to have hidden some money in another house, the one which was the home of Kedar Nath Chaubey's family. In this house she pointed to a corner of one of the rooms as the place where she had buried the money. When a hole was dug, the witnesses came to an arrangement for keeping valuables but found it empty. Shanti Devi insisted she had left money there and eventually Kedar Nath Chaubey acknowledged that he had found and removed the money after his wife's death.

Shanti Devi used idioms of speech familiar in Muttra before she had been there, her use of this dialect being a further feature of the case impressive to the witnesses.

The accounts available to me indicate that Shanti Devi made at least 24 statements of her memories which matched the verified facts. The reports indicate other verified statements, the particulars of which are not given. No instances of incorrect statements are recorded.

#### *The Case of Eduardo Esplugus-Cabrera*<sup>6, 15</sup>

A four year old boy who lived in Havana told his parents about a home and different parents he claimed to have had in a previous life. His statements taken together gave the following items of information:

<sup>6</sup> Delanne, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Shirley, *op. cit.*

When I lived at 69 Rue Campanario, my father's name was Pierro Seco, and my mother's Amparo. I recollect that I had two little brothers with whom I used to play, and whose names were Mercedes and Jean. The last time that I went out of this house was Sunday, 28th February, 1903, and my mother then cried a great deal while I was leaving the house. This other mother of mine had a very clear complexion and black hair. She used to make hats. I was then thirteen and I bought drugs at the American chemist's because they were cheaper than the other shops. I left my little bicycle in the room below when I came back from my walk. I was not called Eduardo as I am now, but Pancho.

The parents were sure the boy had never been to the house he named. To test the matter they made a long detour to reach the street where the house was, this house being quite unfamiliar to them and, so they firmly believed, should have been to the boy also. On arrival at the street, the boy immediately recognized the house as the one about which he had been talking. They encouraged the boy to enter the house, but he found it occupied by strangers whom he did not recognize. The parents then made further inquiries about the previous occupants of the house and uncovered the following facts. Number 69 Rue Campanario was occupied until a short time after the month of February, 1903, by Antonio Seco who had by then (1907) left Havana. Señor Seco had a wife called Amparo and three sons called Mercedes, Jean, and Pancho. Pancho had died in the month of February, 1903, just prior to the departure of the Seco family. Near the house in question was a druggist's shop corresponding to the boy's statements.

Of the eight statements made by the boy which it was possible to verify, seven correctly matched the facts and one (his father's Christian name) did not.

#### *Case of Prabhu Khairti*<sup>25</sup>

A four year old Indian boy named Prabhu Khairti claimed (in 1923) to recall a previous life in a different town of India. The boy's statements were recorded and included the following items:

In my past life I was Harbux Braham of the village of Hatyori in Bharatpur. I had three brothers and one died before me. I had two sons, Ghure and Sham Lal, and two daughters, Kokila and Bholi, who were married respectively to Rhamet of Kherli and Godhal of Navar. I had taken some money in consideration of the marriage of the former, but gave away the latter without any money. I had a home in Hatyori. There was Swarupa Jat's house adjoining mine. Swarupa Jat had a son and daughter. There was a raised pathway

paved with stones leading to my house. There was a pukka tank and in it a building and over the building there was a domed cenotaph. There were two houses in the tank, one over the other. In Hatyori there were drinking water wells as follows: a) Panhariwali, which had two pipal trees; b) Kankarwala, which had plum trees; c) Moolia-wala, which had mango trees. I had as my yajman a man named Gujar of the village of Bhore. There is an inscription on a fortress at Hatyori with a serpent on it. In the famine year of Sambat 1934 I was in my village of Hatyori and I had a pair of bullocks with which I cultivated my fields. I died in my father's lifetime in a bungalow outside my village. My wife's name was Ganjo (which means bald-headed). My father's name was Munde. My maternal uncle was in Bargawan. My father-in-law was in Burhiwan. Moola Jat once fell into my well and I managed to bring him out alive, saving his life.

An inquiry into these statements was conducted by officials of the state government of Bharatpur. The boy's statements included some 36 items, of which two could not be checked. Of the remaining 34, 29 were found to match correctly the facts and five did not match. Several of the verified statements included unusual details. For example, the boy has stated that his wife's name had been Ganjo. Inquiries showed that her real name had been Gaura, but that as she was slightly bald, she had been nicknamed Ganjo which means "baldheaded."

#### *Case of Robert*<sup>26</sup>

A six year old Belgian boy insisted that a portrait of his Uncle Albert (who had been killed in the First World War in 1915) was a portrait of himself. This boy was especially devoted to his paternal grandmother in contrast to her other grandchildren who largely ignored her. He was happy and healthy when with her, sullen and disobedient when with his own parents. Albert, the boy's uncle and claimed previous incarnation, had been the marked favorite of the grandmother and had meant far more to her than her other son, the father of Robert. When Robert was three and first saw a swimming pool, he ran along the diving board and dived in. Albert had been a fine diver. When a visitor pointed a moving picture camera at Robert and turned the handle with a clicking noise, he protested, saying, "Don't! Don't! They killed me that way the last time!" Albert had been killed by machine gun fire while trying to destroy a German emplacement. Robert, his grandmother reported, had used to her pet names Albert had used and told her of likes and dislikes which Albert and she had privately shared.

<sup>25</sup> E. Wood, *Ancient Wisdom*, Vol. 22, 1956, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> J. Grant, *Far Memory*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1956.

*The Case of Alexandrina Samona*<sup>6</sup>

On March 15th, 1910, Alexandrina Samona, five year old daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Carmelo Samona, of Palermo, Sicily, died of meningitis to the great grief of her parents. Three days later, Mrs. Samona had a dream in which Alexandrina seemed to appear to her and say, "Mother, do not cry any more. I have not left you for good; I shall come back again little, like this." In the dream the child gestured with her hand to indicate a small baby. The same dream recurred three days later. Communications along the same line were obtained by the Samonas in séances with a medium through whom the deceased Alexandrina purported to foretell her return as a new baby. The communicators announced the forthcoming birth of twins. A pregnancy, much less twins, seemed improbable because of a previous operation on Mrs. Samona which was thought to have reduced or abolished her fertility. However, within a year Mrs. Samona did give birth to twin girls. One of these proved to bear an extraordinary physical resemblance to the first Alexandrina and was given the same name. Alexandrina II resembled Alexandrina I not only in appearance but also in disposition and likes and dislikes. The two Alexandrinas shared the following similarities of physical form and function: left-handedness (none of the other children of the Samonas were left-handed); hyperaemia of the left eye; slight seborrhea of the right ear; and slight facial asymmetry. With regard to the similarities between the two Alexandrinas Dr. Samona stated:

I can affirm in the most positive manner that in every way, except for the hair and eyes, which are actually a little lighter than those of the first Alexandrina at the same age, the resemblance continues to be perfect. But even more than on the physical side, the psychological similarity developing in the child gives the case in question further and greater interest. Alexandrina is indifferent to dolls and prefers to play with children of her own age, a preference which was equally noticeable with the other Alexandrina. Like her, too, she is always anxious that her little hands should be clean and insists on having them washed if they are in the least degree dirty. Like her predecessor again, she shows a singular repugnance for cheese and will not touch soup if it has the least taste of cheese in it.... When she has a chance of opening the chest of drawers in the bedroom it is a great amusement to her to pull out the stockings and to play with them. This was also a passion of the other Alexandrina.

Dr. Samona cited other examples of small but characteristic traits of behavior which the two Alexandrinas shared. Both liked to put on adult stockings much too large for them and walk around

the room in them. Both enjoyed playfully altering people's names, such as changing Angelina into Angellanna or Angelona, or Caterina into Caterana.

When Alexandrina II was eight, her parents told her they planned to take her to visit Monreale and see the sights there. At this Alexandrina II interjected: "But, Mother, I know Monreale, I have seen it already." Mrs. Samona told the child she had never been to Monreale, but the child replied: "Oh, yes, I went there. Do you not recollect that there was a great church with a very large statue of a man with his arms held open, on the roof? And don't you remember that we went there with a lady who had horns, and that we met with some little red priests in the town?" At this Mrs. Samona recollected that the last time she went to Monreale she had gone there with Alexandrina I some months before her death. They had taken with them a lady friend who had come to Palermo for a medical consultation as she suffered from disfiguring excrescences on her forehead. As they were going into the church, the Samonas' party had met a group of young Greek priests with blue robes decorated with red ornamentation. As the child apparently recalled incidents and not merely scenes at Monreale, she could not have derived the statements from a picture or photograph of the place. Mrs. Samona only with difficulty recalled the episode when Alexandrina II mentioned it, and so it is unlikely that she had previously told Alexandrina II about it. It is not, however, impossible for her to have done this and subsequently forgotten both the episode and its narration to Alexandrina II.

Department of Psychiatry  
School of Medicine  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia

<sup>6</sup> Delanne, *op. cit.*