

INDIZIENBEWEISE FÜR EIN LEBEN NACH DEM TOD UND DIE WIEDERGEBURT —
BAND 1: SPONTANERINNERUNGEN KLEINER KINDER AN IHR FRÜHERES
LEBEN by Dieter Hassler. Shaker Media, Aachen, 2011. 459 pp. €26.90.
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The title of this German book means in English “circumstantial evidence for a life after death and for reincarnation”. Hassler’s remarkable voluminous study presents some of the best-documented cases of children claiming to have lived before. He relies mostly on the famous research work of Ian Stevenson, but is indebted among others also to Erlendur Haraldsson, who wrote a preface to the book.

Hassler, by profession a telecommunications engineer, approaches the topic in a systematic way. He outlines different religious and scientific theories (and criticisms) concerning about 3,000 cases of varying evidential quality. His aim is—in a ‘bottom-up’ method as he calls it—to analyse each reported case in detail and only then find the best fitting explanation, i.e. theory, for it. For this purpose he evaluates the details of ten examples (from seven countries on four continents), for which it was possible to check positively the information given by children about their previous lives—with the families and surroundings they claimed to have lived with at that time.

It is astonishing for our normal way of thinking to read how many characteristics and memories of a previous life may come up in a present one. Among the vast number of such characteristics are dreams, birthmarks, physical deformities and similarities, recognizing names, persons, places and objects, describing the way of their previous (mostly dramatic) deaths, unusual behaviour and abilities as well as many subdivisions of these items. Hassler cites an example that even identical twins show obvious differences in behaviour and also in birthmarks which could not be explained by circumstances (p.306).

According to Hassler, Stevenson reports that the time between death and reincarnation varies a lot; for example, nine cases took more than 20 years. But it looks as if this interim period is much shorter if the person dies by force—as if the ‘soul’ wants to make up for early and unexpected death (pp.194, 226, 236).

Among the very interesting aspects of this research into reincarnation is the medical consequence. If one has to accept the connection of birthmarks of the living person with those of the previous person he or she claims to have been, then—besides genetics and environmental influences—there must be a psychical influence of the ‘soul’ on the physical development of the (reincarnated) child. Hassler gives many examples and photos for such connecting birthmarks.

He also discusses meticulously what critics say about these reports, for example concerning the research work of Stevenson and possible errors, cheating by the people concerned, etc. He presents different theories opposing the relevance of these cases, discussing monism, dualism, the ideas of modern brain research, possession and all other possible theories and objections.

Finally Hassler demonstrates that the best explanation for all reported phenomena is reincarnation, presupposing living beyond death. According to him, even Stephen Braude, though inclined to the Super-Psi Hypothesis, admits that there are fewer arguments against reincarnation than against all

the other theories. A little bit of doubt about the reality of rebirth remains, Hassler writes (p.373), because the phenomena are that much more unusual and by present knowledge unexplainable; but that it is easy to overcome this last doubt if one really deals with the experimental knowledge collected worldwide by reincarnation research. Overcoming the last doubt is being confirmed by Near-Death Experiences (Osis & Haraldsson, 1997, p.220) and by the experiences of mediumistic and Instrumental Transcommunication (Senkowski, 1995, p.119)

There is some form of an existence of consciousness beyond death. In a most interesting collection, Hassler, as an appendix, compiles from different sources in four chapters what a great number of children have expressed about the 'other world': memories of the period from death to rebirth, time shortly after death, conditions in the 'other world' and of the time just before rebirth, from people in both eastern and western cultures.

The book is well equipped with lists of keywords and a bibliography, suggestions for parents whose children are hinting at having had a previous life as well as a glossary for important terms in connection with themes of the book (like Holism, Karma, Instrumental Transcommunication).

Hassler's work is the most comprehensive handbook on reincarnation memories of small children in German, as Professor Haraldsson in his preface rightly says. Its great advantage is a well-structured presentation of available facts and opinions on vital aspects of the course of human existence.

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