

INDIZIENBEWEISE FÜR EIN LEBEN NACH DEM TOD UND DIE WIEDERGEURT - BAND 2A UND 2B: RÜCKFÜHRUNGEN IN "FRÜHERE LEBEN" UND DEREN NACHPRÜFUNG by Dieter Hassler. Shaker Media, Aachen, 2015. 957 pp. ISBN 978-3-95631-359-2 and 360-8

It is true that most of the scientific literature on the possibility or probability of 'life after death' and reincarnation comes from USA and Britain, and is in English. To present these sources of information in German is one of Dieter Hassler's aim in his two volumes on reincarnation which analyse its cases and perspectives. However, he sees the main purpose in having collected this considerable amount of material to be an invitation to further scientific studies of convincing indications of the human mind continuing in some form after physical death.

Hassler has put impressive energy into his research of this perhaps most vital field of our existence. Four years ago he published a first volume with the same title, but dealing with young children spontaneously recollecting a 'previous life' (reviewed in Albano-Müller, 2012). In that book he eventually followed Ian Stevenson's conclusion that reincarnation has not been finally proved, but in view of the studied phenomena seemed to be the best explanation.

In his new books Hassler investigates what indications for survival can be derived from what patients report when being hypnotised and asked to regress to previous lives of their own. The available literature, though, does not have a scientific origin but is based on the experiences of practitioners who want to help and cure their patients, and who rarely deal with the question of whether information given by patients during regression represents the realities of a previous life. And even when there have been efforts to research the reality, they were not undertaken by independent scientists. In spite of such difficulty, Hassler suggests the need to take seriously the findings in this kind of literature and evaluate it honestly. He excludes esoteric literature as lacking logic and/or an empirical foundation.

The two books total 957 pages, including three prefaces, a glossary, a biographical note (Hassler is a retired engineer), his motivation, the aim of his books and answers to 51 'frequently asked questions'. Across more than 100 pages he offers the history, technique and dangers of how regression is practised, employing 33 cases as examples, of which he considers 18 cases 'solved', meaning that statements of patients during regression were in accordance with facts that were established afterwards. There are, of course, also cases of cryptomnesia and symbolic drama.

Hassler examines in detail 12 cases that he finds the best among those reported in books and commentaries, such as the famous cases of 'Bridey Murphy' (hypnotised by Morey Bernstein), Grace Doze (by Bruce Goldberg), Laurel Dilmen (by Linda Tarazi), etc. Very interesting is the description of the regression of two clients 18 months apart, independently of each other: each described exactly the same happening in the 12th century but from opposing perspectives (pp. 406–414).

Whereas Hassler investigates in the first of the two volumes an impressive number of cases of regression, he deals in the second with the characteristics

to be found in these cases where they are discussed in the literature he has studied. As examples of such characteristics he mentions xenoglossy and xenography, karma (for which he finds insufficient research as yet), life in a next world between two incarnations (here he finds remarkable similarity with the reports of small children as described in his first volume), therapy and successful healing.

Hassler deals extensively with alternative explanations. He regards it as an important obstacle to the acceptance of the reincarnation hypothesis that a *modus operandi* has not been found; that is, a generally agreed theory explaining how reincarnation might be achieved. There are so-called normal explanations for memories of past lives, such as coincidence, cheating, self-deception, or symbolic dramas which enable the patient to transfer his problems to others and thus obtain relief for himself.

Among explanations which could be called ‘paranormal’ he mentions:

- Super-ESP and Super-psi (avoiding the idea of a soul existing beyond death; all phenomena are thought to be produced in an animistic way by telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, unconsciously identifying with a previous person, etc.)
- Fields of knowledge (with relevance to Akashic records, morphic fields (Sheldrake) and collective unconsciousness (C.G. Jung)
- Reincarnation (which presupposes some kind of non-physical dimension (Fontana, 2009, p. 162)

Excepting one case from Japan, regressions from non-western countries – and therefore the variety of worldwide existing belief systems that accept reincarnation more readily – are missing. Hassler anyway pleads for the acknowledgment of reincarnation as the best hypothesis (similarly Haraldsson (2012, p. 236). To call the paranormal experiences karma (including the frequency and inevitability of reincarnation) “is only one possible interpretation of available material .... as in science in general when we have been observing certain facts and then search for a theory to explain them“ (Grof, 2003, p. 246, translated).

To support the aim of his books in offering material for further study he also presents three voluminous tables

- Basic statements about “the other world“ (pp. 808–817);
- Healing of somatic symptoms (pp. 841–866);
- Healing of psychic symptoms (pp. 867–892).

Two volumes encompassing 957 pages contain a great deal of scientific work. Admittedly, they might have been shortened (e.g. 74 identical pages are contained in both volumes: a list of literature [548 titles], glossary and the list of contents, and there are other repetitions) and thus enabled easier reading, but these books are an admirable achievement by the author and a valuable source for further research.

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