

Most of the twenty-six chapters in these later books by Stevenson are case histories of various sorts illustrating the effects on a new body of memories from old lives. But two chapters (15 and 26) are especially interesting as considering the interpretation and implications of the phenomena. A reader pressed for time can gain much by skimming the case histories (which are the evidence) and reading carefully these chapters (which are the conclusions).

Ian Stevenson's work is impressive partly because it is not credulous. He considers the evidence critically. First, he is concerned with the authenticity of the reports. That is, do they "describe events with satisfactory closeness to the events as they really happened"? Second, are there "normal" explanations for the correspondences between birthmarks and the wounds of a deceased person? Could they be the result of fraud or of chance, perhaps augmented by fantasy or suggestion? Are there "paranormal" explanations, such as extrasensory perception, possession of a child by a discarnate personality, or maternal impressions on a fetus? Stevenson concludes: "I accept reincarnation as the best explanation for a case only after I have excluded all others — normal and paranormal. I conclude, however, that all the other interpretations may apply to a few cases, but to no more than a few. I believe, therefore, that reincarnation is the best explanation for the stronger cases, by which I mean those in which the two families were unacquainted before the case developed. It may well be the best explanation for many other cases also. ... Each reader should study the evidence carefully — preferably in the monograph [the two-volume work] — and then reach his or her own conclusion (*Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect*, pp. 112-3).

In arriving at his conclusion, Stevenson does not reject the influence of genetics and environmental factors on our lives. He recognizes nature and nurture as powerful forces in molding our minds and bodies. What he proposes is that there is also a third factor, an additional powerful force, namely the effect of past lives on our present existence. The reality of that third factor has some significant implications for one's worldview.

1. To begin with, "the most important consequence would be acknowledgment of the duality of mind and body" (p. 181). By "duality" Stevenson does not mean moral or metaphysical dualism, but rather that the mind is a reality independent of, though interactive with, the brain: "Proponents