Letters to the Editor

A Theory of Death

To the Editor:

In his Guest Editorial, "A Theory of Death," published in this Journal, Roger Cook (1989) wrote, on the basis of the out-of-body experience and one of his dreams, that nothing leaves the body at death and therefore there can be no entity to survive after death. But some other phenomena seem to cast doubt on his view. To cite only one such phenomenon, Ian Stevenson, who has found from investigating hundreds of reports of reincarnation that some children remember a previous life, has brought to light the following interesting facts (Stevenson, 1987).

More often than not, the subject of reincarnation was born near where the alleged previous personality died. The subject's father or mother had often visited the previous personality's place of death shortly before or soon after the subject was conceived. A significant percentage of subjects remembered that their previous life had ended violently or they had died with "unfinished business." Reincarnation memories tended to be sketchy if the interval between death and rebirth was long.

These findings seem to indicate that when a person dies, something may leave the body carrying information of varied nature about him or her, and that the information is impressed in the area where he or she died. The chances of this process taking place seem to depend, to a great extent, on the manner or circumstances of death. The information seems to be "retrievable" by some persons, and it seems to fade over time.

The above interpretation of Stevenson's findings is not a far-fetched one, considering the facts that information of certain kinds can be electromagnetically "written" into environmental water such as that retained in the bricks of a building, and that some people are sensitive to such information (Slawinski, 1987; Smith and Best, 1989). This interpretation implies that reincarnation involves processes that are purely physical and therefore amenable to empirical investigation.

Journal of Near-Death Studies, 9(2), Winter 1990
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