

BOOK REVIEWS

European Cases of the Reincarnation Type by Ian Stevenson. McFarland and Company, 2003. 270 pp. \$49.95 (hardback). ISBN 0-786-414-588.

This is an important book primarily because in adding to the current body of literature focusing on different case studies of the reincarnation type, it provides abundant evidence that a particular objection so prominent in the early days of Ian Stevenson's work is demonstrably inadequate. That objection is that one serious problem with all these so-called reincarnation cases is simply that they are reported from foreign cultures, such as of India, where people usually are quite ignorant, uneducated, and already believe for religious reasons in reincarnation, whereas cases of this sort are not in evidence in the West where the standards of critical assessment and science are much higher. In other words, cases of the reincarnation type seem altogether too frequently the product of superstitious and ignorant societies where belief in reincarnation is largely a religious belief anyway. That was one of the pervasive objections to Stevenson's *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*.

With this book, as well as with his earlier book *Children Who Remember Previous Lives: A Question of Reincarnation*. (McFarland, 1987), Stevenson documents equally compelling cases that have occurred in the West in places such as England, Italy, France, America, Canada, and Australia. And, some of these latter cases are as compelling as some of the earlier cases Stevenson brought to us and discussed more than 40 years ago.

At any rate, by way of the contents of the book, the first section of the book provides a brief history of the belief in reincarnation among Europeans. This section also touches upon the phenomenon of the remarkable increases in belief in reincarnation in Europe, whereas Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, explicitly reject reincarnation. The second section presents and examines eight cases from the first third of the 20th century that were not independently investigated but were reported and sometimes published by the persons concerned. The third section covers 32 cases from the second half of the 20th century, and all these cases were investigated by Stevenson, who brings to the discussion his usual care and precision. As noted on the back cover of the book, many of the cases discussed in the book involve either children who exhibited unusual behavior attributable to a previous life or adults who experienced recurrent or vivid dreams attributed to previous lives. In the fourth section of the book, Stevenson compares European cases with those of other countries and cultures. This last section is especially interesting by way of focusing on the cases that seem from all of the ones discussed to be the most convincing.

I am one of those people who thinks that what Stevenson has done in these past 40 years is very exciting philosophically by way of establishing reincarnation as

a scientifically respectable belief; and that conclusion, given that it is based on so many cases now of the sort discussed in this book, should be more than enough to warrant closer attention on the part of the scientific community. Unfortunately, there seems to be a widespread and tenacious belief out there in the scientific community that under no conditions could such a belief be considered scientific.

This is not the place to go over all the cases outlined in the book. I recommend the book very strongly and regard it as an important development in the ongoing discussion and research on the nature of human nature.

ROBERT ALMEDER

Department of Philosophy
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia
 PHLRRA@langate.gsu.edu

Fenómenos Paranormales: Una Introducción a los Eventos Sorprendentes (Second Edition) by Alejandro Parra. Editorial Kier, 2003. 160 pp. \$5.00. ISBN 950-17-7004-4, rapp@fibertel.com.ar, www.alipsil.com.ar

This book is one volume in an ambitious collection of books about "the other side of reality" collated by Dario Bermudez, an Argentine writer and prize-winning playwright. It is more comprehensive than the first edition of what, in English, would be titled *Paranormal Phenomena: An Introduction to Amazing Events*. Indeed, if it were translated into English, it would be quite serviceable as an introduction to psi phenomena. Its author, Alejandro Parra, has edited a Spanish-language parapsychology journal for many years and has presented papers, many of them reports of his own experiments, at parapsychological congresses in both hemispheres.

Fenómenos Paranormales is reader-friendly; despite the technical material that such a book must cover, it is accessible to the interested layperson. Its comprehension is aided by several photographs of relevant procedures, practices, and important people in the field and by tables and diagrams that do an admirable job of summarizing data and experiments. For example, the first table portrays the basic categories of both ESP (precognition, retrocognition, telepathy, and remote viewing—a term that seems to be replacing "clairvoyance") and PK (macro-PK, micro-PK, bio-PK). The history of psi research, dating from the early psychical research societies, is briefly but accurately presented; there is an emphasis upon European events and pioneers, but the rest of the world is included as well. A distinction is made between what is "anomalous" and what is "paranormal," a differentiation that is articulate enough to prevent the terms from ever becoming synonyms. Clinical, applied, experimental, and education perspectives of parapsychology are contrasted, and case studies help readers anchor these concepts in reports of life events.

A chapter on ESP highlights the contributions of J.B. and L.E. Rhine, moving