

Text 27. Introduction to reincarnation (doctrine of reincarnation)

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27.1. Introduction

The fact that such a serious and high-quality journal as *Zeitschrift für Religions - and Geistesgeschichte* , Cologne, Vol . 11 (1957): 2 (pp. 97/199), a special issue entirely devoted to ' Reincarnation ' , as this theme is discussed today in philosophical and religious circles, proves that even an orthodox Catholic cannot dismiss reincarnation as a figment of the imagination: both the historical overview and the epistemological exposition (on the knowability of reincarnation) aim to make this clear.

Bibliography.

The number of books and articles on reincarnation is countless. One work should be cited: *KO Schmidt, *Wij leven niet zomaar éénmaal** , Leiden, sd ., offers a good overview of the most important fundamental concepts regarding reincarnation (apart from some personal views of the author). The German edition, “ *Wir leben nicht nur ein -mal* ”, Gettenbach , dates from 1956.

Vocabulary . - 'Reincarnation' (from the Latin ' reincarnatio ' literally : re-in- fleshing) is also called, in Dutch, 're-embodiment' or ' re-embodiment ' , i.e., the fact that a soul or spirit (consciousness) re-enters a body of gross material (earthly) nature as an animating and life-giving force until that body dies. - Two terms borrowed from Greek should be mentioned here:

a/ palingenesia , rebirth or rebirth (re- or re-originating, literally), with the connotation that the being that re-originates , re-originates on the same level ;

b/ met.em.psychosis , transmigratio animae , transmigration of souls, with the added notion that the level at which one re-embodies oneself can vary (from human to animal, for example). This latter word is therefore the broadest in meaning: it encompasses palingenesis . ' met.en.somatosis ' has also been used (and is more suitable).

27.2. Historical overview of the main views on reincarnation.

It is impossible, within the scope of this article, to present all views. *RO Van Holte tot Echten*, **Reïncarnatie** , **Bussum**, 1921, pp. 7/69, is the best overview known to me. Apparently, 'reincarnation' is known from ancient times and among many peoples: in Antiquity it was known in India, Greece, Gaul (the Celtic druids), Scandinavia (Edda; the Norse ** Flateyjarbok ** (in his story about King Olaf the Holy (995/1029)); today, reincarnistic beliefs are found in cultures as diverse as those of the Zulus (Southern Africa), Greenlanders , and North American Indians, or those of the Dayak (Borneo).

Types of reincarnation

Essentially, we will:

- a/ ethical (emphasizing the formation of conscience or morals), yes, ascetic,
- b/ agogic (educational) and
- c/ meet therapeutic (human-caring) views.

Naturally, the experimental view stands apart, which we will discuss in the epistemological section: it emphasizes the knowability and provability of reincarnation. From ancient times there have been people—one need only think of the Hellenistic-Roman theosophies (these ways of thinking, especially from 200 BC, which accept extra- and supernatural experience as a source of knowledge)—who have sought methods to acquire certainty regarding past lives (pre-existence).

27.2.1. A primitive reincarnation .

Archaic (ancient) culture apparently knew reincarnation . It is impossible to go into this in further detail here, but I would like to briefly mention one model. *H. Petri*, **Kult-Totemismus in Australien **, in ** Paideuma V** (1950), pp. 44/58 (included in **C.A . Schmitz**, ed., **Religionethnologie **, Frankfurt am Main; 1964, p. 233), distinguishes :

- a/ pro- totemistic (the oldest form of totemism, the occult binding of man with animals, plants, objects, and natural or cultural phenomena),

- b/ cult or worship totemistic and
- c/ socio-totemistic forms.

He discusses primarily the cult totemism emphasized by AP Elkin (who published studies on this subject starting in 1933) : at its center are the journeys of mythical (those mentioned in the myths) ancestors (couples, individuals, groups) along a line through the original landscape of the indigenous people or Aborigines (a kind of via sacra or sacred way).

At specific places, which are still places of worship, the founding ancestors performed conceptionalist rites: a highly charged atmosphere of power hangs over those places, and the original inhabitants situate so-called 'spirit children', i.e., fluid children or, better, child souls, who were 'produced', 'begotten' there by those totemistic ancestors (= the first meaning of 'conceptionalism' or religion of procreation).

These children of a subtle nature are conceived during sexual intercourse between a primordial inhabitant couple (= second meaning of 'conceptionalism') in the womb of the mother: thus a human being arises, child of his parents, yet at the same time 'spiritual child', 'reincarnation' (thus literally Petri) of the culture-founding ancestors, who, in that 'spiritual-childlike' manner, re-embody themselves in a primordial inhabitant. This conceptual aspect forms one of the central points in cult totemism.

27.2.2. The ancient and classical reincarnations .

A. Lang, *Myth , Ritual and Religion* , London, 1887-1, 1913-5 has emphasized that in the ancient (he meant primarily the Indian and Greek) cultures many witness remnants (superstitiones , the ancient Romans would have said) of the archaic cultures live on. It risks that reincarnation is one of those witness remnants .

1. Indian Reincarnation .

Library st.

- H. von Glasenapp , *Brahmanism or Hinduism* , The Hague, 1971;
- J.Gonda , *The Indian Religions* , Wassenaar , 1974,- in which Vedism (the oldest form), (strict) Hinduism and Buddhism are discussed successively (while von While Glasenapp equates Hinduism and Brahmanism, others distinguish between the older Vedism and the younger Brahmanism: apparently the technical terms are not fixed 1);

-- JJ Poortman, *Interfaces between Eastern and Western Philosophy*, Assen/Amsterdam, 1976 (especially ' *For Existence and Continuation* ', oc, p. 1/64);

-- O. Wolff, *Das Problem der wiediedergeburt nach Shri Aurobindo* , in *Zeitschr . f. Religions - und Geistesgesch .* , 9 (1957): 2, pp. 116/129 (where Aurobindo exercises sharp criticism against the classical doctrine of transmigration of souls in India: moral-cosmic, ethical-religious, mechanical-lawful, personalistic, mnemogenetic , individualistic—these are the six foundations of traditional reincarnation , which Aurobindo criticizes).

Vedism —the oldest religion since +/- 1200 in Punjab , in the Land of Five Rivers, outside India—apparently recognizes no reincarnation ; however , the Brahmins (hence Brahmanism, the second Indian religion) have interpreted the Vedas in a reincarnistic sense.

According to J. Gonda, *Les religions de l'Inde , I Védisme et hindouisme ancien* , Paris, 1962, p. 249; the conviction that the individual passes through various 'existences' or lives (in the form of an animal or, usually, in that of a human) by virtue of his ' karman ' (often also pronounced 'karma'), is supported on various grounds:

- a/ folk beliefs (dream experiences, shapeshifting, etc.),
- b/ the cyclical or cyclical idea (man undergoes the same cycle as nature in its seasons),
- c/ doubt about the rites prescribed by the Vedists (which were supposedly intended to avoid transmigration of souls),
- d/ the conviction that the rites (' karman ' in the ritual sense of that word, this world) can cause a rebirth, namely in the event of failure,
- e/ very particular, the need to reconcile the suffering of the righteous with the reward of virtue, as well as to provide an explanation for suffering that is incomprehensible.

The karmic doctrine (i.e., the concept of ' karma ') amounts, according to Gonda, oc, 48/2149, to this: the future of man does not depend (or not only) on magical formulas, on rites (which were partially interpreted magically), on sacrifices, or on a powerful being (the deity, for example), but on his own actions: "As one acts and behaves, so shall one fare after death: he who acts well is happy; he who does evil is unhappy." Karma is a subtle power that attaches itself to the ' atman ' (the physical and psychological 'self') of a person; this 'karma' persists, even when the physical and psychological components of the person in question dissolve into the physical and psychological components of nature upon his death.

Consequence : the accumulation of a person's earthly deeds, insofar as his subtle (= fluid or subtle) 'mass' has created what is called 'karma(n)', does not disappear, does not vanish; moreover, it determines that person's fate after death and the state in which he will be reborn into a new bodily-soulful existence.

Compare this 'karmic' doctrine with what the *Bible* says. The *wisdom books*, which understand life and the world in their lawfulness (*G. von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Vol. II*, Munich, 1961, p. 319), as well as the 'apocalyptic' or 'revelatory' books, which do the same but with an emphasis on evil in the world (ibid., p. 317: "the empires (of the Medes and Persians and of the Greeks) go to the full measure of their crimes and, immediately, to their end"). (*Dan 8:23*), speak a similar tune. "Since God created man in the beginning, he has left him to his own understanding. If you are willing, you can keep the commandments, and if you are wise (i.e., conscious of the lawfulness that prevails in God's universe), you will fulfill his will. Water and fire (which are mutually exclusive things) are laid out before you: stretch out your hand toward what you choose. The choice between life and death lies before man: whatever he desires is given to him." (*Jesus Sir (= Ekklesiastikus) 15:14/17*).

St. Paul warns the Galatians of the laws governing life, death, and the afterlife : "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap: whoever sows in the flesh (i.e., in wretched—sinful humanity) shall reap destruction from the flesh; but woe to whoever sows in the spirit (i.e., in divinely inspired spirit) shall reap eternal life from the spirit." (*Gal 6:7/8*).

Why do we cite these sapiential (= wisdom) and apocalyptic texts? Because we must not view the 'wisdom' proclaimed by Brahmanism solely through the eyes of the priestly (or 'historical') and prophetic books of the Bible, which unilaterally emphasize the chosenness of Israel (and the Church) with contempt for the so-called 'Gentiles'. The Bible also has a type of book that takes a universal view.

The karmic doctrine leads to samsara (Gonda, op. cit., 250). That which man desires and wills directs his imagination. That imagination directs his actions. Those actions direct his 'karma(n)'. Now, this karma(n) operates lawfully, automatically. Even the Indian gods are subject to it; they cannot prevent its effect. As long as someone forms karma(n); as long as karma(n) becomes fixed

in his atman , his physical and psychological 'self' (which emanates from others), until then he is compelled to live in this world.

Karma, which creates the wheel or cycle of rebirths, makes people slaves of this earthly life and its return (samsara): they are simply not themselves (estrangement, alienation). They are swept along by the stream of samsara and its earthly miseries.

In that Light one ought to understand yoga (Gonda, oc, 367). Yoga probably means 'methodical effort' (aimed at unity with the principle of the universe). Ancient in its origin, yoga is first and foremost the mastery of the physical and spiritual aspects (by means of turning , rapture, and concentrated attention (concentration)).

This management , according to Gonda, is aimed at liberating (i.e., from the grip of karma and samsara) 'knowledge' (comparable to the 'gnosis' of Hellenistic-Roman antiquity) or, even, at liberation itself. This self consists in the yogi(ni) directly perceiving and 'seeing', with extra- and supernatural knowledge, undisturbed by this earthly sphere, the imperishable and eternal side of life and the world, namely the Universal Principle, with which he is, fundamentally, also eternal. Yoga is practiced without priests, but under the guidance of a guru or wisdom teacher , who serves as a model and leader for the student. The reason: building a religious experience without the involvement of priests is always a risky undertaking, which one undertakes slowly and over a prolonged period under the guidance of someone who is advanced.

It is claimed that pessimism permeates the karmic doctrine : this is true. And yet: only this earth offers the way out of the chain of rebirths. The earth is therefore usable. An asceticism is also connected to it: 'desire' (which creates karma(n) in wish and will, through deeds) ought to die out (mortification) during this earthly life.

Compared to the cult totemistic Unlike the reincarnation of the Australian indigenous peoples, ancient-classical Indian reincarnation is not (or not entirely) ancestor-bound. It is the individual—and not merely the ancestor—who returns to earth. There is, however, a similarity: just as the founding deeds of the cult-totemistic ancestors create a fluid (= subtle, fine-material) corporeality (namely, in the spirit- children, who 'float' where they have performed deeds), so the deeds of individual humans create fluid layers in and

around their bodily-soul -skilled 'I', which are called 'karma(n)' and which remain.

Buddhism, developed from Vedism and Brahmanism by Siddart (-560/-480), who is the 'Buddha' ('enlightened one'), "aims at liberation from the suffering of life through true insight" (*CJ Bleeker, *Het geheim van de religie** , Wassenaar, 1973, p. 50). "The remedy preached by the Buddha is, in his own way, already a yoga course" (J. Gonda, oc, 367). One point requires emphasis:

"Characteristic of the Buddhist conception of sansara is (...) that it is not the soul that survives death, but only karma , the result of a person's actions, persists there, from which a new form of existence arises. Buddhism holds that the idea of the continuity of the soul, the identity of the 'I', is an illusion that stands in the way of salvation. The spiritual life of man is a bundle of strivings, a stream of emotions." Thus, one sees that Buddhism further develops the atman conception of Brahmanism: the atman was the bodily-soulish 'I' that perishes with death; here, that 'I' is a bundle of strivings and emotions that perish with death. In both cases, the fluid result remains, namely karma.

One does not forget that the Indian religions are strongly 'monistic', that there is, fundamentally, only one (monos = alone, only) reality (called ' sat '), namely an impersonal Universal Principle, of which a person is merely a kind of (separation and) emanation that wishes to return to its Origin;

A person consists of three aspects: his deeper, 'divine' 'I', an emanation of the Universe Principle, and, furthermore, the ' atman ' (the bodily and psychological 'form' into which the deeper 'I' dissolves upon its emanation); as well as the ' kerma (n)', the fluid attainment of one earthly life. Only the deeper-divine 'I' is co-eternal with the supratemporal Universe Principle—and thus pre-existent (pre-existing) and also post-existent (continuing to exist) in the true sense, whereas the karma is actually only post-existent, and the ' atman ', the superficial 'I', is neither (neither pre- nor post-existent), merely impermanent.

This differs, of course, fundamentally from the Biblical view of revelation: God is indeed a Universal Principle, yet personal (even three-personal in Christianity; man consists of an immortal soul that is not co-eternal with God, but created in time with a beginning (and not flowed out and/or split off through a fall within the Universal Principle: for God creates from His abundance and in all freedom).

A portion of the Church Fathers (and, in their line, of the Scholastics and Catholic theologians) assumes that, besides a purely spiritual, immaterial soul and gross material body, man also possesses a fluid 'soul' (cf. *J.J. Poortman, Ochêma (History and Meaning of Hyllic Pluralism)*, Assen, 1954 ; *J. Feldmann, Occulte verschijnselen*, Brussels, 1938, on pp. 297/307 (S. Augustine, S. Thomas teaches with Aristotle that the (immortal-spiritual) soul moves the coarser parts of the body through the finer parts and that the first instrument of that moving force is 'spirit' (which, according to Thomas himself, is something that is 'quoddam corpus subtile', a certain subtle body); which proves that even the very spiritualist theologian that Thomas is, still assumes fluid aspects in man; oc, 202)); *J.D. Pearce-Higgins* /

G. Stanley Whitby, ed., life, Death and Psychical Research, (Studies on behalf of The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies), London, 1973, especially *Hobert Crookall, *Out-of-the-body-Experiences and Survival**, oc, pp. 66/88; this is, incidentally, one of the most solid studies I have personally read regarding the attitude that philosophy (oc, 195/209) and theology—here conceived from an Anglican yet broad Christian standpoint (oc, 240/257)—can adopt. From this latter work it appears that, also from a Biblical-theological standpoint, something like a subtle (as the former Mechelen Catechism stated) or ethereal or fine-material intermediate body or intermediate instrument (as Thomas broadly chooses) can be called a serious working hypothesis, which enables us, Biblical Christians, to understand, with an understanding of matters, conceptions of other faiths such as those of the archaic or ancient-classical and medieval religions.

2. Greek Reincarnation .

*Herbert Jennings Rose, * Transmigration **, in ** The Oxford Classical Dictionary**, Oxford, 1950-2, p. 921, claims that the doctrine of transmigration of souls was widespread, yet apparently as a non-popular and therefore philosophical and theological 'doctrine'.

3. Three doctrines proclaimed reincarnation

a/ *Orphism*, which, according to Pindar (-518/-438) fragment 127, assumes a distinction between the 'poor (understand: wretched)' souls, who have their guilt to atone for, and the 'noble' souls, who enjoy a tearless existence with the highly revered gods ; very particularly the poor souls who three times, here on earth and in the hereafter, keep themselves completely free from evil, end up at the 'fortress' (i.e. the realm) of Kronos, where bliss

reigns; cf. H. Rüdiger, *Griechische Lyrik (Greek and Deutsch)*, Zurich, 1949, S. 170/173; -

Regarding Orphism cf. J. Pollard, *Seers, Shrines and Sirens (The Greek Religious evolution in the Sixth Century BC.)*, London, 195, pp. 93/105 where the so-called older Orphism of the 7th and 6th centuries is briefly discussed in the context of the so-called Religious Revolution of the 6th century); E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1966, pp. 135/178: *The Greek Shamans and Puritanism* -- the Orphists propagated the doctrine that the (material) body is a 'grave' (sêma), -- which implies that this earthly life is inferior to the afterlife; guilt and penance (moralism, asceticism) are central; whether the older Orphists explicitly advocated transmigration of souls as a proposition is not so clear from the surviving documents;

b/ *Pythagoreanism* certainly taught transmigration as a doctrine; Pindar, *Empedocles*, and later Horace consider it one of the most characteristic tenets of Pythagoreanism; cf. E.R. Dodds, op. cit., pp. 147ff. (*Orpheus, Orphism*), 143ff, p. 8. *Pythagoras*);

History of Philosophy, Munich, 1976, Vol. I (*Von Thales bis Demokrit*), 53ff. ("With Pythagoras, the belief in immortality appeared, just as with the Orphists and representatives of related doctrines, in the form of the doctrine of transmigration of souls. The soul passes through (...) a series of embodiments (...").

According to Dodds, the conception of the soul held by the Orphists and Pythagoreans is connected with shamanism from the North. To fully understand the innovation this brought about in Greece, one notes what W.G. De Burgh, **Nalatenschap der Oudheid**, Utrecht/Antwerp, 159, p. 127, says:

a/ The ancient Greek, since Homer (9th century BC) and earlier, saw in the word 'psuchè' (which we translate as 'soul') what ancient Hebrew tradition also saw in it, namely the 'principle of life' (i.e., that which makes something physical 'alive'); this continues to exist after death in the underworld, though not as we Christians understand it now, but rather as a phantom without consciousness; it was considered senseless, says De Burgh, to 'care' for such a soul, as, for example, the Orphists and the Pythagoreans advocated;

b/ The Orphic and Pythagorean Greeks, on the other hand, made a new (and sharper) distinction between the 'soul', which was 'divine' (i.e., higher in

the rank of beings than humans of ordinary standard of giftedness—paranormally gifted) and, at the same time, immortal, and the body, which was the 'prison' of that soul, in which it atoned for the sins it had committed in its previous life; 'prison' means that the actual giftedness of the soul 'slumbered' in the body: from this imprisoned, i.e., stagnant state of its giftedness, the soul awoke, for example, when it had prophetic dreams and the like; the awareness (or awakening) of the soul thus became a task of 'caring' for the soul; 'Cleansing' (catharsis) of the soul meant that the slumbering or prison state of the true ('divine') giftedness of the soul was worked away, even to such an extent that one could escape reincarnation or re-imprisonment (with the renewed slumbering of the faculties).

In this way, we understand the ascetic-moral Puritanism of the Orphists and Pythagoreans somewhat better: the soul is thereby disenfranchised and 'awakened'. For bodily functions descend as 'supernatural' (divine or paranormal) functions ascend, namely in ecstasy or trance (transitionio , transition from the slumbering to the awakened paranormal state).

The shaman, according to Dodds , oc, 140, specializes in this: in shamanic ecstasy he is not seized by a spirit like the Pythia of Delphi (and thus medial or mediumistic); no, his *own soul* leaves his body ('steps out') and 'travels' through the universe, usually the universe of 'spirits'.

In that state, his dormant 'divine' (understand: paranormal) gifts surface: bilocation (multi- location: being visible and tangible in two or more places at the same time), divination, magical healing, religious poetry, etc. One immediately understands why, from the Orphic and Pythagorean Greeks onwards, the (i) osis , deificatio , deification, stands so central; indeed, it is called the goal of earthly life.

That deification is, after all, the development of the slumbering ('imprisoned') faculties of man, who, if he does not do so, acquires a soul that, once it has died, is merely a phantom 'without consciousness', that is, without developed paranormal gifts, as the ancient Greeks (and through Homer) had experienced during their contacts with the 'pathetic' phantoms in Hades (the underworld). What the older Greeks had seen were 'slumbering', non-deified souls.

Well, according to Dodds , oc, 140ff., have

1/ early contacts with Thrace (in Northern Greece) and

2/ During the 7th century, through contacts via trade and colonization around the Black Sea (Scythia), the Greeks became acquainted with shamanism (Meuli , in Hermes, 1936). Iatromanteis (medicine men, literally: healers-seers) then emerge, such as Abaris , Aristeas , Hermotimos , and Epimenides. They were considered theioi. Andres , 'divine' people, who could leave their bodies. Pythagoras follows in this line. He and Epimenides had heard of the belief 'from the North' (Thrace, Scythia) that the 'soul' of a former shaman can enter a living shaman as a kind of 'guiding spirit', in order to strengthen his dormant gifts.

Epimenides, for example, claimed that he was a reincarnation (was it a re-entry for reinforcement?) of Aiakos . Pythagoras regarded himself as identical (as truly reincarnated or, merely, as re-entered?) with Hermotimos .

Empedocles appeared along the same lines , calling himself a ' theos ', a 'god' (a word to be understood as paranormally awakened) (who could still winds and raise the dead).

For example, there is said to be a double meaning in reincarnation.

(a) the reappearance in a new shaman (who then becomes his medium) of a deceased shaman - which is merely a reincarnation in the broad, figurative sense -;

(b) the full re-embodiment of a soul in a new body after its death. So far, at least, Dodds ' remarks on the matter .

W. Röd , oc, points out the connection between the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis and the (totemistic-sounding) doctrine concerning the coherence and likeness of all living things: "the individual soul belongs to the omnipresent life of the animate universe and it ought, by means of overcoming the impurity incurred by the individual embodiment, to be reunited with the Universal Soul (Universal Soul): This, in turn, bears some resemblance to the monism (see p. 6 above) of India; although Pythagoreanism was much more monotheistic .

However, there is a more sensible way to interpret that so-called 'monism', namely the totemistic one: 'totemism' means that there is a connection and resemblance between man and animal, plant, object of nature or culture, or event of nature or culture.

The core is apparently, as *Ambelain states in *Le vampirisme (De la légende au réel *)*, Paris, 1977, pp. 233/234, ' soul-exchange ' (passation d' âme):

man exchanges—often with animals, though by no means exclusively—a subtle or ethereal body with a natural or cultural phenomenon, and conversely, draws a soul-body of the natural or cultural phenomenon into the 'totemized' man, who, if this totemization or exchange of soul-bodies is not skillfully performed, degrades in standard and begins to exhibit animalistic, vegetal, or objective behaviors; just as, conversely, animals, plants, and things begin to exhibit 'human' behaviors.

Ambelain gives modern voodoo as an example, which, because it is not permitted to perform human sacrifices, sacrifices an animal instead of a girl or a child, for instance. However, this seemingly 'human' form of sacrifice only takes place after the subtle soul, in one of its fluid images, has been exchanged with that of the animal being sacrificed.

The consequence, according to Ambelain, is that the child or girl will have difficulty learning to speak or walk and often remains an 'idiot' because he has donated his speaking or walking soul-body to an animal, which then becomes 'human' (in his gaze).

Now, *Aristotle* (*De anima* 1:3) says that Pythagorean myths (the religious stories) claim that any souls enter any body. That 'any' is typically totemistic, and is connected with the exchange of the soul-body .

Let us pause for a moment at Empedocles of Akragas (-493/-433). According to him, the 'souls' are daimones , 'spirits' (our word 'demons' is too heavily laden with the theological hatred of the devil), who incarnated on earth, especially for the sake of 'murder' (which is very broad, namely all killing of life; cf. W. Röd , *oc*, p. 159) and perjury.

Such sins are atoned for through a long period of penance in a series of rebirths, especially in the form of purification rites (holy gifts, sacrifices (but no bloody sacrifices, of course), fasting, dietary prescriptions (e.g., beans in bay leaves), sexual abstinence, etc.).

Now note what Empedocles asserts: “(In the sense of metempsychosis) he claimed to have been reborn, already as boy and girl, as plant, bird, and fish”. (*Röd*, *oc*, 159, *J. Zafiropulo, Empedocle d' Agrigente* , Paris, 1953 (Coll. Budé), p. 292 (*fragm.* . 117).

Leibniz (1648/1716) assumed metamorphosis, or change of form, in animals; well, something of that nature is present among the Pythagoreans

and indeed among Empedocles (as, incidentally, in all reincarnation).

Empedocles sees in animals a shape-shifted human being and opposes animal sacrifices, because this is 'eating one's own flesh' (*fragm . 137; Zafiropulo* , oc. 300), when, after the sacrifice, one eats the sacrificial flesh and drinks the sacrificial blood, as black magic does.

Conclusion: in both India and Hellas (Greece), transmigration of souls is extended to animals (and even plants or so-called inorganic beings) (which, occultly speaking, are by no means 'lifeless' beings but 'animated' matter roughly in the sense of the primitive animists or also in the sense of Teilhard de Chardin's 'consciousness' which, according to him, matter (newly informed energy in a precipitated state) was present just as much as in organic matter); this extension to non-human nature is not totemism in the strict sense, but becomes more understandable from a totemistic mentality. That is what I intended to demonstrate with that digression on totemism.

So far, we have briefly discussed the first two reincarnations in Hellas , namely the Orphic and the Pythagorean. Now the third reincarnation (see page 8 above).

c/ Platonism , in the line of either one, the two, Orphism or Pythagoreanism , or both together, was reincarnistically oriented. However, before we briefly touch upon this, we refer back to De Burgh, * *Nalatenschap der Oudheid* * , I, pp. 127ff. (see upper p. 8 regarding the three conceptions of the soul in Hellas).

After the slumbering consciousness and the paranormally awakened consciousness (the former was the state after the death of the soul in the eyes of the archaic Greek; the latter was the state before and especially after the death of the soul in the eyes of the Orphic or the Pythagorean), now comes, with Socrates of Athens (-469/-399), the earthly—intellectual and—rational consciousness:

Socrates, Plato 's teacher, identified 'soul' with conscious personality insofar as it is rationally and intellectually active in word and deed, especially in the conscientious or 'ethical' (= moral) act of obedience to the laws of the polis (i.e., the Greek city-state).

Socrates saw purely intellectual and rational understanding (conceptualism) as the foundation of conscientious action within the city-

state. Socrates is the first thinker in Greece to make the concept of 'understanding' the subject of reflection .

In clear concepts (the good, the just, the venerable, etc.), he saw the core of a new science : ethics or moral theory. This could overcome the narrow individual viewpoint in which his contemporaries had become entangled, and render a general (= universal, valid for all people of all times and all countries) judgment regarding matters of conscience and adopt it as a course of action.

One measures the newness that Socrates introduced in Greece by definitively pushing both the archaic and the Orphic -Pythagorean concept of the soul into the background—or so he thought at times, in his Athenian earthly mentality and civic spirit.

This is understandable when one knows that Socrates, in the Athenian midst, had to contend with the Sophists, who prioritized intellectually and rationally considered self-interest as a life principle and, thereby, reaped success, especially among the youth.

On the Other Conceptions of the Soul, by *Dodds* , *The Greeks and the Irrational* , p. 179; listed and explained in his previous book, we cannot elaborate.

1/ the remains, insofar as they are alive in the grave (think of the 'vampires', who do not decompose, not even after years, in their grave)

2/ the ephemeral breath, which is either expelled into the air or absorbed into the ' aither ' (a higher type of air).

Platonic reincarnation is best understood from what *Dodds* , oc, 207/235, says about Plato 's mode(s) of thought.

a/ Plato is a 'rationalist' (in the sense of an 'enlightened mind' in the Athenian sense).

b / However, the deep crisis that the Greek world was experiencing in his day forced him to broaden both Sophistics (with Socrates) and even Socrates, his teacher, into a 'metaphysical' system (i.e., a view of the world and life that encompasses the universe as a whole, including its invisible part, in a rational explanation).

Contact with the Pythagoreans in Southern Italy and Sicily provided him with a model for such a broadening: they had a shamanistic basis with a mathematical-ethical and social elaboration added to it.

This 'syncretism' (the mixing of different kinds of elements) becomes Paton's model, yet in an original way: he identifies the 'soul' or 'daimon' of the Pythagorean tradition with its 'divine' dormant faculties with the intellectual-rational 'soul' of Socrates with its conscientious consciousness.

This culminates in a complete reinterpretation of the shamanistic fundamental pattern, according to Dodds: the ecstasy of the shaman becomes mental concentration; his occult knowledge becomes the metaphysical 'seeing' ('contemplation') of eternal truths (embodied in the so-called ideas (these concepts, yet at home in a suprasensory world)); the social role of the shaman becomes that of the 'guardians' in Plato's city-state; reincarnation is also retained, but the remembering of previous (earthly) lives now becomes the remembering (anamnēsis) of the ideas, which become the core of a new epistemology.

A. Gödeckemeyer, *Platon*, Munich, 1922 points out that pre-existence and after-existence, in Platon, have two meanings:

a/ to provide a basis for remembering the ideas that one once contemplated in another, higher, intellectual-rational existence;

b/ to 'prove that the soul of the one who 'beholds' the ideas is related to (has the same nature as) the eternal ideas, which escape arising and passing away (which the eternal soul also does). Which does not mean that Platon does not also assume retribution after death for virtue or vice in this life. But the emphasis has shifted to the theory of ideas.

Bibliographical note.

Regarding the concept of 'totemism', for those who wish to know more about it, reference is made to, for example, M. Besson, **Le totemisme**, Paris, 1929 (vrl . pp. 69/70: J. Frazer) . (*Totemism* , Edinburgh, 1887) was 'conceptionalist' regarding totemism; that means that the Australian belief regarding birth and 'reincarnation' (the word, as determined above on p. 2, of course), offers, for Frazer, the key to that curious identification of humans with non-human realities; - which represents but one of the many 'theories' regarding totemism);

Cl. Levi-Strauss, *Le totémisme aujourd'hui* , 1962-1, 1969-3 (the booklet by the notorious French structuralist claims that, apart from a minimal logistic classification, the so-called 'totemistic' facts do not yet possess coherence – the real 'theory'; – which is understandable from his structuralist standpoint, of course);

M. Augé / J. Middleton, Anthropologie religieuse (Texts fondamentaux), Paris, 1974 (translation of *J. Middleton , ed., Gods and Rituals (Readings in Religious Beliefs and Practices)*, Austin/London, 1967), in which pp. 20/22 (discussion of Elkin 's views, especially by Levi-Strauss), pp. 97ss (*AP Elkin , La nature du totemisme australien*) concerning totemism; two works provide an overview of contemporary theories of religion: *A. Lemonnyer , trad./ PW Schmidt, Origine et évolution de la religion (Les théories et les faits)*, Paris 1931 (*totemic theories* : pp. 139/156 (Mac Lennan / J. Frazer , W. Robertson Smith, S. Freud, E Durkheim) despite its age, this Catholic work remains very useful -;

M. Meslin , Pour une science des religions , Paris 1973 (supplements previous work on theories; on totemism at pp. 115ss.(S. Freud,)).

With regard to the concept of 'shamanism' see *CA Schmitz, Hrsg ., Religions-ethnologie* , Frankfurt aM , 1964, S. 265/295 (*L.Vajda , Zur phaseological Stellung des Schamanismus*), 296/334 (*D. Schröder, Zur Struktur des Schamanismus*); *M. Eliade , Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* , Paris 1951 (discusses Asian, Indonesian, Oceanic, North and South American shamanism, - which proves that shamanism is a world phenomenon); *R. Boyer / E. Lot - Falck , les religions de l'Europe du Nord (Eddas , Sagas , Hymnes chamaniques)*, Paris 1974, fl . pp. 524ss. (black magic shamanism in the Eddas), pp. 614ss. (Siberian shamanism in its Eurasian style), always with texts; *Vilmos Mo' szegi , Tracing Shamans in Siberia (The Story of an ethnographical expedition)*, Oosterhout, 1968) (the Hungarian original: 1960); *M. Bouteilen , Chamanisme et guérison magique* , Paris, 1950 (primarily discusses North American Indian shamanism as magical medicine, compared with the French 'healers').

So much for a brief selection from a mass of books on reincarnation.

27.3. Overview of anamnesis methods

Epistemology for a brief overview of the main recollections or anamnesis methods. (Encausse , Lancelin , experimental view, apocalypticism)

Introduction: There are many descriptions of methods for recalling memories. One of the best overviews is *J.H. Brennan , *Five Keys to Past Lives **, **Wellingborough** , 1971-1; 1978-4. Reason: The author knows what occultism is. Therefore, a brief overview.

27.3.1. Indirect methods.

Another 'sees' in place of the one consulting.

1. The yes-no board (ouija) of spiritualists is a method: a medium, guided by a guiding spirit, receives insights regarding past lives (via 'entities').

Gerda Walther, *Reincarnation und Parapsychologie* , in *Zeitschr . f. Religions - und Gesietsgeschichte* , 1957: 2, pp. 191-199, points out the confusion that can arise between the memories of the deceased communicating and those of the person consulting them.

2. The mediumistic 'seeing' of a consultant's past lives, performed by, for example, a gifted clairvoyant or (psycho)therapist. As long as there is no verification regarding the consultant, one does not know whether what he 'sees' is correct. Everything depends on the accuracy of the 'seer' himself if he uses a contact object (psychometric). This will now be discussed briefly.

27.3.2. Direct methods.

These provide the interested party with a direct memory of their own past lives, without a mediumistic intermediary.

Mention can be made first of all the spontaneous memories of past existences noted by G. Walther, oc, 195, in a number of people: they have the impression, suddenly, in a flash, of reliving experiences from past lives, and this with full awareness .

Two types of methodically acquired memories can be mentioned here: the hypnotic and the fully conscious.

(1) The hypnotic, or self-hypnotic method

This one is supported

a/ on shutting out the everyday world,

b/ in favour of a suggestion or manipulated 'sleep' (to the degree of 'deep trance or ecstasy') in which heightened attention to past existences evokes it.

1/ The criticism states that hypnotic sleep has a clouding effect and that the test subject experiences too little self-conscious reliving,

2/ She also claims that the fusion of the hypnotist with the hypnotized can lead to a mixing of the two series of past lives.

Sutphen (collective), Netherton (individual) incorporate hypnosis into their past lives. Therapy , mentioned above, applied, apparently with therapeutic result.

Helena Wambach, *La vie avant la vie* , Paris, 1979 (// *Life before Life*, New York, 1979) by USA psychologist .

(2) Three methods

a . Brennan mentions three methods which, however, on closer inspection, rather complement each other.

(2) a.1. The symbol-contemplative method.

This contemplative concentration, based on C.G. Jung, on symbols that are archetypal (which lie ready in the collective unconscious of us all like a pilot light), is primarily of energetic importance.

One pretends to exist without a body, indeed, without personality, purely and nothing more, and one directs that pure consciousness

1. on non-abstract symbols (the father, the mother, that madman, the old wise man, the slave, the sorcerer, the book of life, etc.) or

2. on abstract symbols (the circle, the number, the sun, the point, yin and yang, etc.). These symbols, once objects of contemplative attention, supply no material or fluid energy to the contemplator , which suddenly makes possible flashes of scenes he once experienced himself; just as one suddenly remembers a name one could not find at first.

(2) a.2 . The deep meditative method:

This rather Eastern contemplative attention, directed directly and from the outset at past lives,

1/ has redundancy (= superfluous) forms, such as those practiced by the Indian maharajas with their rather eccentric practices - nose-point gazing, for example;

2/ it also has more efficient shapes

a) always choose the same place, time and seat; start by simply meditating, i.e. keep attention steadily focused on something,

b) once one is accustomed to meditating, read something about reincarnation to acquire a theoretical foundation, and then delve into past lives through meditation: flashes will come through, sooner or later.

(a) a.3. The Akashic memory:

' Akasha ' is a Sanskrit word for 'book of life', i.e., the collection of all actual events of the universe, as these are recorded invisibly in the fine matter (called 'astral' matter, in a Theosophical term), which is omnipresent, in the universe, as in a fluid memory;

The meditator (see previous method) imagines this general source of information as an immeasurable library in which everything, including the meditator's past lives, is recorded; the meditator 'rummages' through it until flashes from past lives surface.

All clairvoyants looking to the past, when they 'see', draw from this source of information. It should be noted that

1) the symbol-contemplative method places the energetic substrate of 'seeing', 'remembering' in the foreground;

2) The deep meditator favors the introspection necessary to 'remember';

3) The Akashic or subtle-material is directed directly at the object of memory; they complement each other.

(2) b . The smooth (meditation-free) method

The smooth direct method. Cf. Denys Kelsey, Joan Grant, *Many Lifetimes* . (*Dutch: More than one life* , Deventer. Isola Pizani, *Dying is no die* (Mourir n'est pas Mourir (Mémoires des vies antérieures)), Paris, 1978.

Conclusion : There are real dangers to physical or mental health associated with memories of past lives. The three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) have clearly realized these risks. Therefore, they have always viewed paranormal phenomena with suspicion and have banned reincarnation from the orthodox religion.

(1) Indeed, paranormal phenomena only occur when one possesses the necessary subtle energy (= fluid). Fluidly exhausted people

a) run the risk of harming themselves and making their earthly activities impossible due to a lack of that subtle ('astral') energy,

b) or they extract these from the objects, plants, animals, or fellow human beings, who then, in turn, begin to have an adverse effect.

(2) Memories of past lives—whether spontaneous or methodically sought—are particularly unfavorable, indeed disastrous, if, by chance, the event that appears in a flash, fluidly speaking, is stronger than the fluid potential that the remembering person has at the moment of the reclassification.

1. In previous lives, accidents of all kinds occurred (illnesses, injuries, enmities, etc.);

2. Earlier centuries, in particular, engaged much more in - black - magic (i.e., the unscrupulous use of subtle energy): reliving such events can be overwhelming, throwing one off the healthy balance.

Depth psychologists already warn against the unwanted breakthrough of unconscious or subconscious forces into the unprepared conscious soul life: memories of past lives most certainly belong to these unconscious and subconscious data.

Consequence: one must be 'psychically' strong (understood: from the perspective of personal energy potential) to be able to process 1. Paranormal and 2. **in** particular - reincarnistic experiences and phenomena undamaged.

A. T'Jampens , Phil. Lic.

Let us add to this text what was said about reincarnation in text 44, 'Dis net die oorties van die seekoei ' under the chapter section on p. 74:

27.4. Reincarnation: Is he Elias?

To many people, the belief in reincarnation or re-embodiment may seem absurd. Yet it is commonplace in many cultures and occult movements. The Bible mentions it indirectly, including in *John 9:6*, where the healing of the man born blind is discussed. The Jews ask Christ : “Rabbi, who sinned? He or his parents? So that he was born blind?” If this text is representative of the mentality of the time, it shows that the Jews at least believed in an existence that precedes the present life, and that, moreover, can have an impact on the present. Jesus answered that the man was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him. Adherents of the doctrine of reincarnation conclude from this evasive answer by Jesus that he does not really disapprove of the doctrine of reincarnation. He had ample opportunity to do so. Possibly, He did not want to bring up the subject publicly.

“With regard to John the Baptist, too, the Jews wonder whether he is Elijah. Let us read *John 1:19* . “The Jews had sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John the Baptist with the question: ‘Who are you?’ He openly admitted: ‘I am not the Messiah.’ ‘Who then are you? Are you Elijah?’ they asked. ‘I am not him either,’ he answered. In other words, the Jews ask him whether he is a rebirth of a prophet who died long ago.”

In *Mark 6:14* we read: King Herod heard about Jesus , for his name had become known, and they said: “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. Therefore those powers are at work in Him.” But others said, “It is Elijah ,” and still others, “It is a prophet like other prophets.” When Herod heard that, he said: “That John, whom I had beheaded, has been raised from the dead.”

And *Matt. 16:14* mentions that Jesus asked his followers: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” to which they replied: “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah ; still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” But these too were already dead.

You can deny reincarnation because it cannot be strictly scientifically proven. But may you then conclude from this that it does not exist? Or should you rather say that science cannot make a statement about this? If science relies on data from the ordinary senses, then it can only make meaningful statements about data perceptible by the senses. But then its domain is not the whole of reality, but only that part that can be experienced sensually in one way or another. It cannot make statements about the other part.

Whoever limits reality to the sensually perceptible simply finds nothing that transcends this sensually perceptible. For instance, a child may be convinced that his or her parents love him or her, and that they love each other. But how to truly prove such a thing? In the same way, one can reason away the miracles of Jesus, or his descent into hell, his resurrection, his ascension, the power of prayer, and all clairvoyance and magic... But then nothing remains of the dynamism inherent in every true religion. All that remains is an empty shell, perhaps containing some psychological, sociological, and folkloric elements.

So much for this piece of text from text 44.

Finally, we refer to chapter 5.2.2. of the book 'De Homo Religiosus ' on this site, which delves deeper into the theme of 'Reincarnation'.

The webmaster