Tucker, Stevenson, Weiss, and Life: Renditions of the Transcendent View From Past-Life Memories

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ABSTRACT: The work of researcher Jim Tucker and regression therapist Brian Weiss on past-life memories suggests a transcendent or non-reductionist view of human life. In this view, mental life or consciousness does not entirely reduce to the neural activity of the brain, and bodily death involves a return to a nonphysical realm. This view is also suggested from other phenomena such as near-death experiences. The transcendent view from past-life memories entails two renditions. One rendition derives from Tucker's—and late senior colleague Ian Stevenson's—empirical verifications of children's past-life claims. Weiss's psychotherapy-based rendition is more impressionistic and subject to the vulnerabilities of the hypnotic method—as noted by both Tucker and Stevenson. Both renditions must contend with the theodicic problem (intensely rendered by Harold Kushner). Many questions remain. Nonetheless, Tucker's, Stevenson's, Weiss's, and other authors' related work may suffice to support a transcendent understanding of human life.

KEY WORDS: past-life memories; Jim Tucker; Ian Stevenson; Brian Weiss; regression therapy; near-death experiences

What happens when a person dies? Physiologically, one's heart stops beating, one stops breathing, and one's eyes dilate and fix as brain function is lost (Parnia, 2006). Poetically, one's breath becomes air (Kalanithi, 2016). "The living gaze—even if the person in question was very old and that gaze was vague and flickering—goes flat" (Alexander, 2014, p. *x*). But what happens to *the person*, to one's individual self, mind, or consciousness? Does the individual continue to exist?

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Is bodily death final, or does the person transition to a nonphysical realm? Is there an afterlife? Indeed, is there a "before" life? This last question speaks to this article's focus: the view of human life derivable from work on past-life memories. What view of human existence does the evidence suggest?

The dominant answer in the scientific community to "what happens when a person dies?" has been a materialist one: that brain death means annihilation, that is, a total end to a person's self, mind, or consciousness; correspondingly, the dominant materialist perspective negates existence prior to gestation and birth. As comparative psychologist Thomas Suddendorf (2013) asserted, "Ultimately, when our brain dies, all evidence points to the conclusion that our mind does, too" (p. 8). *All* evidence? Much evidence does point at least to an intimate relationship between brain and mind. Nonetheless, an array of evidence pertaining to human death and birth points to a transcendent or non-reductionist understanding of human existence. In this view, mental life does not entirely reduce to the neural activity of the brain, and bodily death involves a return to a deeper reality or realm.

This array of evidence points, then, to a "continuity of consciousness" (van Lommel, 2010) before birth, through earthly life, and beyond death. Whereas phenomena such as near-death experiences (NDEs), terminal lucidity, and deathbed visions ("nearing death awareness") direct attention to questions of death and beyond, apparent recollections and re-experiencing of one or more supposed past lives direct attention to questions of birth and *before*. High on the current list of names of professionals whose attention has been so directed are those of three psychiatrists: Jim Tucker and Ian Stevenson, past-life memory researchers, and Brian L. Weiss, a regression psychotherapist. Their lines of work on past-life memory cases—spontaneous and hypnotically facilitated, respectively—have led to two distinguishable renditions of the transcendent view. As inclusion of their names in the title suggests, these authors' works will be featured and narratively compared throughout this article.

Tucker and Stevenson: Investigators of Apparent Past-Life Memories

Most pertinent to evidence of transcendent human existence or a continuity of consciousness are empirical investigations of past-life claims. Tucker's work has encompassed and extended from that of his late se-

nior colleague, Ian Stevenson. Thanks in good measure to Stevenson's and Tucker's combined research over the course of more than 40 years, over 2,500 cases of children who have described memories of previous lives are documented in files at their home base, the University of Virginia.

Stevenson's past-life research work began in 1958. By that year, Stevenson, already Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, had published extensively in medical journals. His interests ranged from biochemistry and psychosomatic effects to paranormal reports such as those of apparent past-life memory—especially, young children's spontaneous utterances about previous lives. He considered such statements valuable not only because they were unprompted but also because they were presumably unlearned: young children's "minds have not yet received through normal channels much information about deceased persons" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 55). Hence, he inferred that young children's past-life claims are less attributable to cultural or parental input. Furthermore, many of the details in their utterances were specific enough to investigate for accuracy.

In 1960, Stevenson (1960a, 1960b) published a two-part paper in which he identified similarities despite cultural diversity across published cases of children's past-life reports. Consequent to that publication, Stevenson learned of new cases and decided to investigate the accuracy of the reports. His approach was rigorously methodical, with "an attitude of maintaining a critical eye but also an open mind" (Tucker, 2013, p. 17). Work on the cases, in collaboration with interpreters and assistants, required trips to India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Brazil, and Lebanon. He published the results in *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Stevenson, 1974). Each case report listed the child's pertinent statements as well as the names of those who provided information or confirmation. The cases were presented "in an objective, even-handed manner," entailing discussion of "their weaknesses as well as their strengths" (Tucker, 2005, p. 19).

As others, including Tucker, joined the research endeavor in later decades, the work expanded. In 1967, Stevenson left his department chair position to devote more time to his past-life memory research. In subsequent decades, cooperation with assistants and other investigators enabled work elsewhere, including Burma, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, and the US. Interested in the topic and impressed with Stevenson's scientific approach, Tucker left his private practice in psychiatry to join Stevenson in 1996. Directly pertinent to Stevenson's—

and eventually Tucker's—interest in psychosomatic effects were cases involving not only pertinent statements and behaviors but also unusual birthmarks that "matched a wound on the deceased individual" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 21). More books (e.g., Stevenson, 1997, 2003) followed. Stevenson remained active in the field even until shortly before his death in 2007 at age 88.

Tucker has continued Stevenson's work, especially in Western countries. In Stevenson's foreword to Tucker's 2005 *Life Before Life*, he praised Tucker for granting a central role to pertinent evidence and referred readers who sought the latest advances in past-life memory research to consult Tucker's work. Tucker's most recent focus has been on American cases. After all, "Ian's [Stevenson's] best cases were all from other countries, mostly in Asia, where a general belief in reincarnation existed" (Tucker, 2005, p. 1). Some critics had wondered, in addition to translation concerns, whether the Asian past-life memory cases could somehow be an artifact of Asian cultural beliefs in reincarnation. Moreover, such cultures and lands were generally remote and unfamiliar to Westerners. Perhaps Western examples of children who reported past lives—and whose statements and behaviors matched details of someone who had died—would get attention in the West in a way that the Asian cases had not (Tucker, 2013).

A Western Case

A prime case in Tucker's Western research was that of James Leininger. Young James was apparently remembering the life of a World War II pilot shot down in the Pacific. As depicted in an ABC Primetime documentary (Taylor, 2004), James was a 4-year-old boy with a fascination for airplanes but also emotional distress. Around age 2, he had begun having nightmares about a plane crash. By the time he was 3, he had told his parents that before he was born, he was a pilot who flew from a boat: His plane was shot down by the Japanese, he crashed in the water, and that's how he died. As Tucker (2013) pointed out, the ABC television segment represents valuable evidence insofar as it was recorded *before* the identification of such a previous life—"removing the possibility that his parents' memories of those statements later conformed erroneously to details of a deceased pilot's death" (p. 64). Tucker, Stevenson, and James's parents were subsequently able to verify many of James's references to the death over 50 years prior of a World War II pilot, James Huston, who was killed as his plane was shot down near Iwo Jima.

Details such as young James's knowledge of vintage airplanes were particularly impressive. Before James had even turned 2, his father, Bruce Leininger, took him to an air museum. James kept begging to return to the World War II exhibit and persuaded his father to buy him certain toy vintage World War II fighter planes. At home and in play, James would repeatedly crash the planes into the living room coffee table, saying, "Airplane crash on fire." When James was 2 years old, his mother Andrea gave him a toy plane and commented that it had a bomb on the bottom. James corrected her, saying it was a drop tank.

The nightmares began several months after the museum visit. James's mother would find James thrashing around and kicking his legs up in the air, screaming "Airplane crash! Plane on fire! Little man can't get out!" When his father entered the bedroom and asked who shot his plane, James appeared exasperated and exclaimed, "The Japanese!" (p. 56). He would refer to the little man in the plane as "me" or James. In subsequent conversations, James explained that his plane was a Corsair—a World War II fighter plane that had *not* been on exhibit at the museum—which he had flown off a boat called the "Natoma." Upon investigation, Bruce found a WWII escort carrier named the USS *Natoma Bay* on which a Navy pilot named James Huston had been stationed. Young James mentioned that the Corsairs got flat tires —a correct statement according to a military historian: The Corsairs tended to land hard and thereby flatten a tire. When asked if anyone else was in the dream, James referred to a friend and fellow pilot, Jack Larsen. On another occasion, upon seeing an aerial photo and map of the island of Iwo Jima, James pointed to the island and exclaimed, "My airplane got shot down there, Daddy." On the advice of counseling psychologist Carol Bowman (1997, 2001), Andrea began to reassure James after his nightmares that he was "safe now." James's nightmares began to subside.

Nonetheless, James started talking more about his nightmares and engaging in symptomatic repetitive play. Following his 3rd birthday, "James began drawing pictures. He drew scenes with ships and planes over and over again—his parents report he drew hundreds of them" (Tucker, 2013, p. 73). He mentioned his plane had been hit in the propeller. Intriguingly, "none of James's toy planes still had their propellers on the nose, as James had apparently crashed them all until the propellers broke off" (p. 74).

Bruce Leininger's—and Tucker's and Stevenson's—investigation continued. Bruce discovered that a pertinent veteran pilot named

"Jack Larsen" was still alive and "remembered well the day that Huston was killed" (p. 76). Other veteran pilots from that event specifically reported seeing Huston's plane take a direct frontal hit, destroying the propeller. As 5-year-old James played with toy soldiers, Bruce asked, "Hey, how come you named your GI Joes Billy and Leon and Walter?" James replied, "Because that's who met me when I got to heaven." Billie Peeler, Leon Conner, and Walter Devlin were among James Huston's squadron mates; their deaths shortly preceded his on March 3, 1944 (Leininger & Leininger, 2009, p. 157).

Larsen's corroboration with the deceased squadron mates' names was not the only pertinent discovery. James also kept referring to a sister named Annie; Andrea discovered that James Huston in fact had a sister named Anne who was still alive. The sister was located, and arrangements were made for young James to talk with her. The subsequent phone conversation with Annie was remarkable, to say the least:

> He called her [James Huston's surviving sister] "Annie." Only her dead brother had called her "Annie." . . . Annie had sent a portrait that Daryl [James and Annie's mother] had made of her brother as a child.
>
> Where's the picture of you?" James asked when he got it, and the question took Annie's breath away. Only she knew that Daryl had painted twin portraits—Annie and James—and this second portrait of Annie was up in her attic. No one in the world knew about it except her. (Leininger & Leininger, 2009, pp. 236–237).

After age 5, James's apparent past-life memories faded. They were no longer evident by the time James was 12 years old, by which age he was consistently identifying himself as James Leininger (cf. Stevenson, 2000).

Hypnosis, Regression, and Brian Weiss

Besides investigations of apparent past-life memories, another line of work contributes as well to a transcendent view: namely, the experiences of patients during hypnotic past-life regression psychotherapy. Noted in this connection is the work of Brian Weiss. Tucker and Stevenson extended some qualified credence to work such as Weiss's; Tucker (2013) cited Weiss in a footnote (p. 232). "If some young children can have memories of previous lives," wrote Tucker (2005), "then logic would dictate that some adults may be able to discover such memories through the use of hypnosis just as they can pull up early childhood memories" (p. 226). Tucker noted, for example, some

instances of hypnotically induced or facilitated, and subsequently corroborated, perinatal recollections (see pp. 181–183). Stevenson (2000) noted some instances in which hypnotized and regressed subjects narrated obscure but accurate historical information and/or spoke in foreign languages they apparently had not known previously (p. 46). Coincidentally, Tucker noted that remembering a traumatic event can sometimes have beneficial effects—such as young James's traumatic nightmares in effect having provided the occasion for recovery and an ability to move on to his present life.

Overall, however, Tucker and Stevenson (cf. Rivas, Carman, Carman, & Dirven, 2015) did not endorse the use of hypnotic induction or facilitation in work on past-life memories. Tucker concluded that,

> generally, hypnosis is a very unreliable tool, whether being used to uncover memories from the present life or from past ones. Hypnosis can lead to some remarkable memories from the present life, but it can also produce fantasy material. Under hypnosis, the mind tends to fill in the blanks. If a person is being asked to give details that he or she does not remember, the mind will usually come up with some. Once this has happened, the person may then have great difficulty distinguishing actual memories from fantasy ones. (Tucker, 2005, pp. 225–226; cf. Fenwick & Fenwick, 1999; Loftus, 1993; Mills & Tucker, 2014; Rivas et al., 2015)

Stevenson (2000) suggested that an actual past-life memory mixed with fantasy could produce "a kind of historical novel." A previous life could influence a participant to

> reconstruct a life of that place and time instead of another one. Then, once committed to the erection of such a previous life, he would draw on everything his now concentrated memory could mobilize from his depots of normally acquired information. During this process a few items of memories from the real previous life might become dislodged and attracted, like iron filings in a magnetic field, to the otherwise, mainly fictional previous life. This could result in a kind of historical novel. (p. 47)

As might be expected, relative to Tucker and Stevenson's evaluations, regression therapist Weiss's evaluation of the hypnotic "tool" has, on balance, been more favorable. Weiss (Weiss & Weiss, 2012) acknowledged that past-life recall is "subject to the same distortions as any other memory that we have in our regular waking consciousness" (p. 53). Moreover, Weiss, too, referred to the hypnotically induced past-life memory as in effect a "historical novel." Nonetheless, Weiss argued that the "novel" usually depicts reality more than fiction: Although

the hypnotically induced recollection "may be filled out with fantasy, elaborations, or distortion," the "core" is "a solid, accurate memory" (Weiss, 1992, pp. 54–55).

Interestingly, through his clinical practice with adults, Weiss (1992) has also indirectly worked with children who seemed to be having a past-life memory. Such was the situation, Weiss concluded, with a young American child who, inexplicably, spontaneously started speaking French at age two. In another case, "a distraught mother, an attorney by profession, was referred to me because her four-year-old daughter was behaving 'strangely.' The mother had brought home some antique coins for play with her bright and hitherto very normal daughter. They

> had been sorting and playing with the coins when they came upon an odd, many-sided specimen. The daughter immediately grabbed the coin and said, "I know this one. Don't you remember, Mommy, when I was big and you were a boy and we had this one? Lots of them." . . . As I elicited further details about the case, I could confidently advise the family that the little girl was not psychotic; she was merely recalling a past life experience in a lifetime that she and her mother had once shared together. With reassurance and understanding, the daughter soon resumed her "normal" behavior, and the mother's anxiety disappeared. (pp. 52–53)

A Hybrid—Spontaneous and Hypnotically Facilitated—Case

How trustworthy are results from use of the hypnotic tool? Helpful in this connection may be consideration of another Western case that might be called "hybrid" insofar as it involved both spontaneous and hypnotically facilitated past-life memories. The case, described by Weiss as "convincing" (Weiss, 1996, p. 97; cf. Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 48), was that of a British woman named Jenny Cockell (Cockell, 1993).

Although most such apparent memories fade in mid- to late childhood, Jenny's memory of a past life persisted through adolescence and into her adult years. Despite retaining her current identity, Jenny felt that she had been a woman named Mary. As Mary, she had lived in a small Irish village. Although also having pleasant memories as Mary, Jenny especially remembered her untimely death and her fear for the welfare of children she was leaving behind: "It was too soon, much too soon to leave the children" (Cockell, 1993, p. 2). She had "strong" and fairly detailed memories—later corroborated—of a small cottage,

front gate, lane, and village called Malahide with its shops, railroad stations, and swampy area.

Some memories and feelings were puzzling. For example, she could not understand why she felt as a child that her skirts were too tight and short "to be comfortable" (Cockell, 1993, p. 9). Also, she would remember "waiting at dusk on a small wooden jetty for a boat to come . . . wearing a dark shawl which did not keep out the cold wind" (p. 8)—but she could not remember for whom she was waiting.

Just as vintage model aircraft figured prominently in young James's child play, Jenny's play centered around cottage work characteristic of an older era. Jenny "had no cause to doubt that these memories were real" and even "assumed that memories of this kind were normal" until learning otherwise to her "great shock" (Cockell, 1993, p. 12).

Jenny's spontaneous past-life memories were subsequently enriched, apparently, through hypnotic facilitation. As an adult, Jenny worked with a hypnotist who induced apparent past-life regressions. Under hypnosis, Jenny recalled—from multiple vantage points—more of her apparent past-life memory:

> It was as though I were a spectator, existing partly in that place I could see, and partly in the present. . . . Yet I [Jenny] was Mary, and the past had become very real. . . . Although I knew he [the hypnotist] was asking the questions, it seemed that it was my other self who answered, because now I was Mary . . . Looking down at my clothes, I heard my dissociated voice answering [a question as to what I was wearing]: "A long dark wool skirt and an apron. The apron is not so long but the skirt nearly reaches the ground." (Cockell, 1993, pp. 35–36)

To fulfill her desire to find the children she had left behind, and bolstered with additional information from the hypnotic sessions, Jenny travelled to Malahide. Most of her recollections were confirmed. Moreover, she found two of her "children," who, by that point, were adults—indeed, old enough to be Jenny's parents. Jenny's narrating of her reunion with one of her "children," named Sonny, was particularly intriguing for its corroborations:

> When we discussed Mary's waiting on the jetty, alone and at dusk, Sonny became really animated. . . . It [the jetty] had once been wooden, as I had described.
>
> "I'll tell you why you remember that jetty," said Sonny. "As a boy I used to caddy on the island for the golfers, and at dusk my mother would wait for me on the jetty so that we could walk home together. (p. 120)

Also "animating" and even shocking—in both its accuracy and its unique privacy—to Sonny was a recollection that had surfaced during Jenny's hypnotic sessions. Jenny described an incident involving a rabbit caught by one of the family snares set in the woods:

> I described the position of the snare, adding that it was early morning and that Sonny was about eleven [years old]. . . . I had thought that the hare had still been alive when it was found. Under hypnosis I had said simply: "It's still alive!" That afternoon Sonny told me that it had been. This was clearly the first piece of information that had really shocked him by its accuracy. The incident was so private to him and his family, how could anyone else know about it? (Cockell, 1993, p. 121)

Jenny's reunion visits, especially with Sonny, finally brought her some peace and closure concerning her memories. A corroborating interview of Sonny was featured in a BBC documentary. Jenny's store was depicted in a CBS made-for-television movie (Flynn, Holmes, & Dunne, 2000).

If Jenny's past-life memory was a historical novel, the "novel" seems indeed to have been more reality than fantasy. In such hybrid cases, perhaps the history of spontaneous memory enhances the accuracy of the subsequent hypnotically facilitated recollections. Mills and Tucker (2014) call for more study of such cases: "The use of hypnosis in spontaneous child cases has received little systematic attention to date" (p. 308). Even in cases not involving prior spontaneous recall, as noted, Weiss (1992) claimed a core accuracy to the typical past-life memory.

Weiss: Past-Life Memories During Regression Therapy

Whereas the Tucker/Stevenson history began in 1958, Weiss's began more than 20 years later, in 1980. In that year, his experience with a patient changed his entire professional orientation. Like Stevenson, Weiss had impressive medical credentials, including a degree from Yale University School of Medicine and positions as Chief of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami and Psychiatry Department Chair at Johns Hopkins University. During his residency at Yale, Weiss studied brain chemistry, especially, the role of neurotransmitters in brain function. Unlike Stevenson, Weiss (1988) had had no initial interest in paranormal topics; they "seemed too farfetched to me . . . I distrusted anything that could not be proved by traditional sci-

entific methods" (p. 10)—until he encountered extraordinary events while working with a patient whom he gave the pseudonym Catherine.

Catherine came to Weiss's office seeking help for her anxieties and fears of choking or drowning. Her symptoms had been with her since childhood but had recently worsened. Catherine agreed to try hypnotic induction:

> I [Weiss] began to regress her, asking her to recall memories of progressively earlier ages. . . . Slowly, I took Catherine back to the age of two, but she recalled no significant memories. I instructed her firmly and clearly: "Go back to the time when your symptoms arise." I was totally unprepared for what came next. (Weiss, 1988, p. 27)

What "came next" was an apparent past-life memory. Catherine described herself as an 18-year-old woman named Aronda living in an ancient village. She seemed to relive a traumatic event, namely, a sudden, choking death by drowning in a massive tidal wave that devastated her village. Weiss (1988) pondered whether Catherine had actually relived a violent death in a past life. In any event, Weiss reported that after she processed the traumatic memory in her psychotherapy, Catherine's anxieties and water phobia subsequently subsided.

In the course of searching the medical literature for an explanation, Weiss (1988) came across Stevenson's works. Weiss found Stevenson's case presentations to be "carefully complete, well-researched, and truly remarkable" (p. 40). In other words, Weiss discovered that traditional scientific methods had in fact been applied successfully to the "far-fetched" topic of reincarnation. Weiss noted Stevenson's descriptions of very young "children speaking foreign languages to which they had never been exposed" and "of having birthmarks at the site of previous mortal wounds" (p. 58). The "children also knew specific and detailed facts about towns and families hundreds or thousands of miles distant and about events that occurred a decade or more ago" (Weiss, 1992, p. 52). Crucial, of course, was Stevenson's factual corroboration (where feasible) of those details.

Although Stevenson's findings helped, Weiss (1988) was still unprepared for the next event from Catherine. In a subsequent hypnotic session conducted in 1982, Catherine, who knew very little about Weiss's personal life, spoke in medium-like fashion about Weiss's family, making explicit references to his deceased father and son. Weiss marveled: Catherine could not possibly have known any of the information by ordinary means. "There was no place even to look it up" (p. 56).

As other corroborated declarations followed, Weiss became con-

vinced that Catherine—and, subsequently, other regressed patients—actually were reliving moments from past lives. In a later publication, Weiss (2004) claimed that "hundreds of other therapists have taped thousands of past life sessions, and many of their patients' experiences have been verified. I myself have checked specific details and events" (p. 9). He also claimed that he has

> seen patients remember a name during the recall of a recent lifetime and subsequently find old records that validate the existence of that past-life person confirming the details of that memory. Some patients have even found the graves of their own previous physical bodies [and] speak portions of languages that they have never learned, or have never even heard, in their current lifetimes. (Weiss, 1996, p. 15; cf. Weiss, 2000, p. 172; Weiss, 2004, p. 9; Weiss & Weiss, 2012, pp. 43–44, 50–53)

As noted, Tucker and Stevenson also reported corroborations—through sources such as old records and still-living informants—of specific details, events, and abilities pertaining to a past life. Whereas these researchers have explicitly presented their corroborations for inspection, however, therapist Weiss has simply asserted that his corroborations—and those of other therapists and his patients—have taken place. His accounts are impressionistic and qualitative. Readers seeking to examine detailed case studies, as well as prevalence rates and other quantitative data, must go to the works of Stevenson and Tucker.

Although Weiss became convinced that his patients' hypnotic recollections were essentially genuine, he still sought to distinguish the accurate core from fantasy fill-ins. Besides corroborating or confirming the details, Weiss (2000) suggested a number of criteria for distinguishing an accurate memory from a fantasy, including, for example, that accurate memories "tend to be more vivid and oftentimes more visual" and that the "the person is more emotionally involved and finds himself or herself in the scene" (p. 109–110). Yet, according to Stevenson (2000), hypnosis can also induce spurious past-life "memories" that are quite vivid, visual, and personally emotional (pp. 44–45; see also Mills & Tucker, 2014). Perhaps more discriminative are other criteria suggested by Weiss (2000): that the memory "feels familiar" and "has a life of its own" and that "the details of remembered scenes become more and more clear with repetition" (pp. 109–110). A reality to the recall is also more likely if present-life symptoms are subsequently resolved with "life-transforming power" (p. 30; see below). Tucker and Stevenson emphasized, however, that to render the

past-life memory claim compelling, the increasingly clear, familiar, change-empowering details should be confirmed as accurate through records and/or informants.

Congruence of Past-Life Memories with End-of-Life Phenomena and Interim Memories

Although the focus of this article is before-birth memories as studied by Tucker/Stevenson and Weiss, also pertinent to the transcendent view are end-of-life phenomena that directly address the question of what happens to people when they die (see Tassell-Matamua & Steadman, 2016). Tucker and Weiss have both noted in their works the congruence of past-life memories with NDE reports (see also Rivas, Dirven, & Smit, 2016). The phenomena do seem to interlink. van Lommel (2010; cf. van Lommel, van Wees, Meyers, & Elfferich, 2001) reported that "some" NDE cases he studied seemed to involve "experience of what appear to be previous lives cut short by a violent death" (p. 334). Weiss (1988) reported that Catherine also experienced under hypnosis her death in another previous life, this time a peaceful one in which she found herself "floating" (p. 39) above her dying body of that lifetime. Similarly, Jenny Cockell (1993) remembered during a hypnotic session that upon death as Mary she "drifted to some point above and a little to one side of her now vacant body" (p. 40).

Tucker (2013) identified such near-death floating or drifting near one's body as part of the NDE (Gibbs, 1997, 1998, 2005, 2010, in press; Greyson, 2014; Moody, 1975). Analysis of case material has revealed that observations during this floating are often accurate (Hagan, 2017; Holden, 2009; Rivas et al., 2016), even under circumstances of severely compromised neural circuitry (Sabom, 1998; see also Gibbs, in press). Intriguingly, Weiss (2004) reported that some of his regressed patients described the end of a past life that involved a full NDE: They not only floated or drifted above their body—as with Catherine and Jenny—and observed the scene but also moved to a transcendent realm of light where they met deceased loved ones; in this connection, recall young James's reference to his reunions "when I got to heaven." Illustrating this comprehensive—"classic," to use Weiss's (2004) term—NDE was a patient who regressed to the life of a

> Great Plains farm woman in the nineteenth century. At the end of her long lifetime she floated above her body, watching it from afar. Then she felt she was being drawn up into a light, in her case a blue

> one, becoming distanced from her body and going toward a new life, one that was as yet unclear. This is a common, almost classic near death experience except that Andrea was describing the experience of someone in a past life—herself—who had been dead for more than one hundred years. (p. 11)

Besides NDEs, other phenomena relate to the end-of-life question of what happens to people when—and after—they die. "Terminal lucidity" refers to "the unexplained return of mental clarity and memory shortly before death in patients who had suffered years of chronic schizophrenia or dementia" (Greyson, 2010a, p. 38; cf. Nahm & Greyson, 2009; Nahm, Greyson, Kelly, & Haraldsson, 2012). Weiss (1996) cited an instance of terminal lucidity. One of his patients recounted that, as her disoriented mother neared death, her "eyes widened and she became lucid again. . . . 'I won't leave you,' her mother said in a suddenly firm voice. 'I'll always love you'" (pp. 6–7).

Another end-of-life phenomenon has been variously termed deathbed visions (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977), nearing death awareness (Callanan & Kelley, 1992), and, more broadly, approaching-death experiences (Fenwick, 2005; see also Kelly, Kelly, Crabtree, Gauld, Grosso, & Greyson, 2007). Like NDEs, terminal lucidity, and past-life memories, deathbed visions have been reported across age, gender, nationality, religious tradition, and culture (Barrett, 1926; Osis & Haraldsson, 1977). The core features of deathbed visions—of otherworldly light, vivid or bright landscapes, and deceased loved ones or other figures—resemble those of "transcendental" or comprehensive NDEs (Sabom, 1982). "It is possible to explain some of these death-bed visions as deriving from the wish of the dying person to be reunited with loved persons who died earlier" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 230). That explanation does not apply, however, to cases in which "the dying percipient had not known that the person figuring in the apparition had died, and neither had the persons around him" (p. 230; cf. Barrett, 1926; Greyson, 2010b).

Also relevant to the transcendent view or "continuity of consciousness" are interim or between-life ("intermission") memories. Tucker (2013) reported that "about twenty percent of the children say they remember either observing earthly events such as the previous person's funeral, going to another realm, or having experiences related to conception or gestation to begin their current life" (p. 198; cf. Matlock & Giesler-Peterson, 2016; Rivas et al., 2015; Wade, 1998; Weiss, 2000, pp. 11, 44–45). Interestingly, Tucker (2005) reported that "children who report intermission memories are more likely to remember the

name of the previous personality and the way that the person died than are children who do not report them." Also, "they make more statements about that life that are later verified to be accurate" (p. 169).

What is this interim or "intermission" realm? James said he met his previous-life buddies when he "got to heaven"; I will consider later the question of whether this nonphysical realm is heavenly for everyone. Stevenson (2000) speculated that communication in this realm is telepathic and takes "place mainly between persons who had a close (emotional) relationship with each other before death" (p. 229). The influence of one's earthly lifetime and mind upon one's interim experience is discussed below.

Body, Mind, and the Transcendent View

Research on past-life memories as well as nearing-death phenomena —including NDEs, terminal lucidity, and deathbed visions—have obvious relevance to the classic issue of the relationship between mind and brain or body. The pertinent questions have been asked across the ages of human philosophical history: Are humans' minds/memories/consciousness merely the epiphenomenal product or emergent property of their brains? Or is consciousness a phenomenon in its own right? As noted, the dominant answer in the scientific community—especially among neuroscientists—has been that of materialistic, or physicalistic, reductionism: In this view, consciousness is epiphenomenal, produced by and hence reducible to the brain.

Yet the survey of evidence provided above suggests otherwise. As noted, an array of evidence supports a view of human life and consciousness that extends beyond death—as implied by research on NDEs, terminal lucidity, and deathbed visions—as well as birth, as implied by research on interim and past-life memory. Cases of conscious perception despite compromised neural circuitry—as in cases of NDEs and terminal lucidity—particularly support the thesis that mental life or consciousness does not entirely reduce to neural firings of the brain. The congruence of cases across this evidential array —and, within this array, even overlapping phenomena such as NDEs reported during past-life regressions—impressively points in its own right to a transcendent or nonphysical aspect of mind or consciousness. Death and birth are seen not as final limits but instead as transitions.

Tucker/Stevenson, Weiss, and Life: The Transcendent View and Its Renditions

The importance of end-of-life phenomena notwithstanding, the focus in this article on the mind-body issue and the transcendent view has been on human past-life memories and reincarnation. The evidence would suggest that "a human personality (or a component of it) may survive death, and later—perhaps after an interval in some nonphysical realm—become associated with another physical body" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 10). This transcendent personality "component" can entail physical effects as well as "emotions, attachments, fears, addictions, likes and dislikes, and even identification with a particular country and with a gender" (Tucker, 2005, p. 123). After some interim interval, one enters into and exits from a physical lifetime—perhaps more than once.

In this transcendent view, the brain serves the mind: "Our brains serve as vehicles for consciousness during our lifetimes"; moreover, "consciousness existed before our births and can continue after our deaths" (Stevenson, 2000, pp. 212–213). The essential role of the brain during a physical lifetime does not preclude such a continuity of consciousness in a deeper reality. As Cambridge University philosopher John McTaggart (1906) over a century ago analogized: "If a man is shut up in a house, the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky." But it would not follow that, if he were to walk "out of the house, he could not see the sky because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it" (p. 105).

The theme of this article has concerned the work of psychiatrists who for decades have focused on past-life memory: Tucker, Stevenson, and Weiss. The more compelling evidence is that provided by Tucker/Stevenson; their work and conclusions are so well aligned that the contraction does not seem inappropriate. These researchers presented their spontaneous-memory investigations in systematic detail, whereas Weiss anecdotally conveyed his recollections and impressions from his hypnotic regressions of his patients. The vulnerabilities of data from hypnotic induction were emphasized by Tucker/Stevenson and acknowledged by Weiss; both used the term "historical novel." Weiss argued, however, that the so-called "novel" typically entails a substantial core of accuracy, and even Tucker and Stevenson regarded hypnotic induction data as having some potential value.

Accordingly, it is worthwhile to consider together these two lines of

work on past-life memory. Both Tucker/Stevenson's case investigations and Weiss's regression therapy anecdotes, along with congruent work such as that on NDEs, support a transcendent view of life: again, that mind does not reduce to brain and that consciousness continues across physical lifetimes. In this view, "each of us is more than just a physical body" (Tucker, 2005, p. 229). As Teilhard de Chardin is reputed to have declared, we are not human beings having a spiritual experience as much as we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

Regarding particular questions pertaining to the transcendent view of human life, two renditions appear to emerge from the two lines of work. As noted, the Tucker/Stevenson rendition is generally more cautious and quantitative, whereas the Weiss rendition is more impressionistic and qualitative. This differentiation is evident across their respective positions on eight questions (see Table 1).

Table 1 *Two Renditions of the Transcendent View from Past-Life Memories*

Questions	Tucker/Stevenson's Rendition	Weiss's Rendition
1. Do all humans reincarnate?	Unanswerable; possible that everyone reincarnates but most do not remember; spontaneous past-life memories usually singular and of the same gender and geographic region.	Yes; hundreds and even thousands of times; humans have reincarnated across gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality.
2. Who is more likely to remember a past life?	Those whose death was violent or untimely (70% of past-life memory cases); carryover of trauma or sense of incompleteness.	Those whose death was violent or untimely, leaving an emotional block or scar.
3. Is having a past-life memory beneficial?	Depends on case. Not beneficial in cases of identity confusion (unless issue resolved); but can prompt sense of equanimity or spirituality, reduced fear of death, resolve to do better.	Yes. Greater perspective on life; dramatic cures, including physical healings, can occur through regression therapy.

Questions	Tucker/Stevenson's Rendition	Weiss's Rendition
4. Why aren't spontaneous past-life memories more common?	Total accumulated recall would be overwhelming; memory effects may be more common than is apparent; carry-over of emotional connections.	Memory effects more common than is widely known. People find across lifetimes those with whom they are emotionally connected.
5. Do human relationships continue across lifetimes?	Yes, although the respective roles in the relationships may change.	Yes, although the respective roles in the relationships may change. Repeated reincarnation in groups. Relationships serve as the primary vehicle of psychospiritual growth.
6. Do humans repay karmic debts?	Very little evidence for karmic debt repayment; "karma" should not be used as excuse to avoid personal responsibility. One life does impact the next.	Yes. Karma as opportunity for recompense and learning lessons "from all sides" through perspective-taking in this earthly "school."
7. Do humans necessarily progress from one lifetime to the next? What is the state of existence between lifetimes?	Progress not automatic; inner growth up to the individual. People are the makers of their own souls—and for that matter their states of existence between lifetimes.	Eventually, yes. Regression therapy helpful. Souls who have advanced further can help others. Primary reality of love; evil or hell as darkness or ignorance, mistake, illusory.
8. Does the transcendent view imply that all is well? Does everything happen for a (benign) reason under theistic guidance?	Not necessarily; mainly naturalistic position, some random negative events occur. Synchronicity sometimes operative, but no external being guides events. Emphasis on personal responsibility, but reference to ultimate Mind.	Yes, all is well in an ultimate sense; reference to guiding theistic "Masters"; everything happens for a benign reason.

Question 1: Do All Humans Reincarnate?

The distinct renditions are evident even in terms of the initial question of whether reincarnation is universal. Stevenson (2000) wrote cautiously that "we have no evidence that everyone has had a previous life," and, indeed, that the question is in a strict sense unanswerable (p. 210). Tucker (2005), distinguishing between a past life and the memory of it, suggested that "we may all have had previous lives even though most of us do not remember them" (p. 214; cf. Stevenson, 2000, p. 216). Even among children who do remember past lives, few remember more than one previous personality (Stevenson, 2000), usually of the same gender (Tucker, 2013, p. 135) and geographical region—perhaps attributable to "emotional connections" to that area (Tucker, 2005, p. 219).

Weiss's position has been more universalist and emphatic: He declared that all humans have reincarnated, and more than once; indeed, "we have lived hundreds and even thousands of lifetimes" (p. 28) and across these lifetimes "have been all races, all religions, all colors, both sexes, and many nationalities" (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 115).

Question 2: Who Is More Likely to Remember a Past Life?

With specific reference to the researchable question of past-life *memory*, a response becomes possible to this second question concerning memory likelihood. Here, a greater convergence is discernible: Both Tucker/Stevenson and Weiss noticed that past-life memories often entail a recollection of an "unnatural" death—from such causes as murder, suicide, accident, or drowning. It is Tucker and Stevenson, however, who quantify "often": "70 percent of the previous personalities died by unnatural means . . . in cases where the mode of death is known" (Tucker, 2005, p. 92; cf. Stevenson, 2000, pp. 162, 210–212).

Tucker and Stevenson, as well as Weiss suggested that unnatural deaths may leave the personality with a traumatic issue in need of resolution. Even deaths that are non-traumatic but still untimely may leave the personality with a "sense of incompleteness" or "unfinished business" (Stevenson, 2000, pp. 212–213). Examples of unnatural and/or untimely deaths are the earlier-noted cases of James—whose previous personality suffered a violent death in combat—and Jenny—whose previous personality died with regret and even guilt

from leaving children still in need of care. Tucker (2005) suggested that unnatural, difficult, or untimely deaths can keep those individuals "connected to their earthly experiences" (p. 213). These individuals may "have trouble putting the trauma immediately behind them" and hence are more likely to "carry over" their issues "from one life to the next" (p. 123). In the case of James's apparent past-life memory, his repetitive plane-crash play and nightmares may have indicated a carry-over of post-traumatic stress.

Phobias may also indicate a traumatic carry-over. Weiss (1988) reported the link between his patient Catherine's intense fear of choking and drowning and her apparent past-life trauma of having drowned in a tidal wave. Again, it is Stevenson and Tucker who quantified the relationship between a violent prior death and a pertinent phobia. In Stevenson's subsample of 252 cases in which the previous personality suffered a violent death, approximately half of the children evidenced a relevant phobia. "If the previous personality died of drowning, the subject may have a phobia of water; if he died from being shot, the subject may have one of firearms" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 116; cf. Tucker, 2005, p. 118).

In this connection, Stevenson (2000) found in their sample that boys outnumbered girls by a ratio of about three to two (pp. 217–218). Tucker attributed the gender difference to the greater rate of violent deaths among males. After all, men

> engage more in high-risk behaviors such as driving too fast, getting into drunken knife fights, and so on. . . . The percentage of males [73 percent among the unnatural death cases] matches perfectly with the general population [males accounting for 72 percent of the unnatural deaths]. (Tucker, 2013, pp. 136–137; cf. Stevenson, 2000, pp. 217–218.)

Tucker (2013) took this "match . . . as further evidence that the children's memories may well be valid" (p. 137).

Question 3: Is Having a Past-Life Memory Beneficial?

Tucker and Stevenson have been more equivocal than Weiss has been regarding the beneficial value of remembering a past life. In the spontaneous cases investigated by Stevenson and Tucker, the identity confusion initially was not beneficial. Although generally not evidencing "significant clinical problems" (Mills & Tucker, 2014, p. 310), many of these children suffered "miserably" because they felt "separated from

families to which they think they really belong" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 217; cf. Tucker, 2005, pp. 133–134). Children who remembered violent deaths were at risk for the "clinical problem" of post-traumatic stress in their present lives, including such symptoms as flash-back nightmares, phobias, and repetitive play. These children were in need of resolving their past-life issues. The counseling young James received probably contributed to the subsiding of his nightmares. Regarding other difficult past-life deaths, Cockell's (1993) discovery that her past-life "children" had subsequently fared well imparted to her a sense of peace and closure.

Stevenson (2000) did note two benefits of experiencing a past-life memory, at least in some of his cases at later (when the children were older) interviews. First, some "used their memories as a means for improving present conduct, rather as one may study the questions on an examination one has failed in order to pass the next test" (p. 217). Second, some children evidenced equanimity or "a sense of detachment from present troubles that only a longer view of an individual's destiny can confer" (p. 217). In particular, he noticed a much diminished fear of bodily death—also seen among NDE survivors—owing to the anticipation of survival and a prospective new life. In this connection, Tucker (2005) observed that "being aware of the possibility of reincarnation may make people more appreciative of the spiritual aspects of life and of the spiritual components of others" (p. 225). Spiritual awareness was evident in a past-life-remembering child's reply to a grieving adult who had expressed a lament that "the dead never return:" "Don't say that. I died also and look, I am living again" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 217).

Weiss has been more emphatic regarding the benefits of remembering a past life—perhaps in part because his adult patients at least did not suffer from the identity confusions that afflicted the children studied by Stevenson and Tucker. Weiss has acknowledged that "the remembering of one's prior lifetimes is not essential or necessary for everyone," given that "not everyone has carried over blocks or scars that are significant in the current lifetime" (Weiss, 1992, p. 170). Even in relatively unscarred lives, however, Weiss suggested that past-life recall can be beneficial. Like the equanimity noted by Stevenson, the "greater perspective" noted by Weiss has shown benefits among the latter's patients:

> This shift in perspective from identifying with the body to identifying with the soul, is a fundamental step in our journey. . . . An ego or mun-

> dane mind can be easily afflicted by daily events and problems. But at the soul level, our deep calm is not affected by the mini-catastrophes of everyday life or by outer conflicts. A greater perspective allows peace to prevail and our hearts to remain open and loving. (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 68)

According to Weiss, past-life recall benefits can be particularly impressive for those who do have "blocks or scars" that have carried over and need psychological resolution and/or physical healing. Beyond moderate improvement, Weiss (1988) reported dramatic benefits for Catherine, at least partly from her "reliving the [traumatic] experiences" (p. 92) and receiving help in "reintegrat[ing] the feelings, insights, and information the session has elicited" into her present life (Weiss, 1992, p. 30). Catherine's

> phobias and panic attacks had just about disappeared. She had no fear of death or dying. She was no longer afraid of losing control. . . . This was not just the suppression of symptoms nor the gritting of teeth and living through it, a life racked by fears. This was a cure, the absence of symptoms. And she was radiant, serene, and happy beyond my wildest hopes. (Weiss, 1988, p. 92)

Weiss has claimed similar dramatic benefits in other cases in which he had used past-life regression therapy. Noting that "past physical trauma seems to leave present physical residue" (cf. birthmarks reflecting "wounds that were so profound to the previous individuals that they affected the consciousness as it went on to the next life"; Tucker, 2005, p. 48; cf. Tucker, 2013, p. 11), Weiss (1992) has claimed healings "of chronic allergies or respiratory problems [such as asthma] through recall of a death experience that included the searing of the lungs or suffocation" (p. 69; cf. Weiss, 2004). Such therapy "also seems to develop those traits of hardiness that seem to correlate with good health, including increased resistance to the debilitating effects of chronic illnesses and with strong immune functioning" (Weiss, 1992, p. 65; cf. p. 132).

If documented with medical records, such biological and psychological improvements would in their own right constitute evidence implying an authenticity—beyond fantasy—of the relived experience: "Merely fantasizing about a simpler life" would not remove sadness, depression, obsession, or chronic illness. But in an actual memory, "our deeper minds observe the past-life dramas and say, 'Oh, that's where this obsession or fear or affinity or talent or relationship or symptom comes from. I get it. I don't need it any longer. I will let it go'"

(Weiss & Weiss, 2012, pp. 83–84). Mills and Tucker (2014), however, cited research indicating some cases of positive therapeutic outcome even where all or part of the "remembered" past-life event was not veridical.

Despite Stevenson's and Tucker's caveats, Weiss has encouraged past-life memory exploration through hypnosis. The claimed benefits can be achieved as hypnosis "accesses the wisdom of the subconscious in a focused way" (Weiss, 1992, p. 25). He asserted that "there is no danger in hypnosis" (p. 26) because the subconscious or deeper mind is protective and "will not provide the conscious mind with a memory it is not capable of assimilating" (p. 31) "Not one person I have ever hypnotized has become 'stuck' in the hypnotic state" (p. 26). Weiss even claimed that "experiencing a past life regression alone at home . . . is beneficial and relaxing in most cases" (p. 31). Weiss would presumably acknowledge, however, that *reliving* a *traumatic* past *death* (as did young James) can overwhelm the protective capabilities of the subconscious or deeper mind and leave the individual in identity confusion and distress.

Question 4: Why Aren't Spontaneous Past-Life Memories More Common?

If most or all people have lived before, and if past-life memories are generally such a good thing—at least according to Weiss—why don't most people have them spontaneously? Wouldn't everyone benefit from a more detached perspective and greater resolve for better conduct—and perhaps even, with therapeutic help, a dramatic cure or healing?

Although remembering a past life *can* be beneficial, it may not on balance be so in all cases. As noted, past-life memories powerful enough to induce identity confusion can create at least initial misery—perhaps signaling a need for help in resolving a past-life traumatic issue. Potentially maladaptive would be the conscious recall of one or more entire previous lifetimes: "The mere accumulation of knowledge, if memory never ceased, would soon become overwhelming, and worse than useless" (McTaggart, 1906, p. 133). Referring to the work of F. W. H. Myers (see Kelley et al., 2012), Tucker (2013) suggested that we may have "some sort of barrier or psychic membrane [in the mind] so that the ordinary self could function in the physical world without being flooded by. . . . past-life memories" (p. 62). As did Stevenson, Tucker (2005) warned: "We do not benefit from focusing on past lives to the detriment of the current life" (p. 225). Real or purported past-

life memories may "deter the individual from grappling with the actual causes and factors surrounding present-day concerns" (Mills & Tucker, 2014, p. 308).

Both Tucker/Stevenson and Weiss have suggested that, in a broader sense, past-life memory—and the impact thereof—may be more common than most people realize. Writers in both renditions have pointed out that "memory" involves more than spontaneous explicit recall. Memory in a deeper sense—the recognitory memory of people's "deeper minds"—can refer to implicit or subtle influences of one lifetime upon a subsequent mental life. Young James's remarkable knowledge of vintage airplanes and emotional involvement with the Corsair may be one example. One is reminded of a famous passage in Wordsworth's classic "Intimations of Immortality": "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;/The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,/Hath had elsewhere its setting/And cometh from afar;/*Not in entire forgetfulness*" (italics added).

Such intimations—"not in entire" memories—may include strong emotions or reactions to places or people. Older past-life memory children may still fear water, for example, "even though they apparently no longer have [conscious] memories of the events from the previous life [such as a fatal drowning] that seemed to be connected to it" (Tucker, 2005, p. 119). "The origin of a . . . marked aversion" or "strong positive connection" upon visiting a foreign city "may lie" in the implicit negative or positive experiences there in a past life (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 52). Similarly, instances of "deja vu" or even "love at first sight" might be explained by a not entirely forgotten familiarity and intimacy or emotional connection with the other person in a previous life. A past-life love might "strengthen our present love" of that person (McTaggart, 1906, pp. 121, 132–133). A "strong attraction . . . on first or slight acquaintance" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 32) may indicate the discovery of a soulmate, defined by Weiss (1992; cf. Weiss, 1996, pp. 161–162) as someone "whom we meet and feel an instant connection, as though we have known that person for a long time. In fact," added Weiss in characteristically sanguine fashion, "we probably have" (p. 91).

Question 5: Do Human Relationships Continue Across Lifetimes?

As noted, both Tucker/Stevenson and Weiss suggested that many human relationships continue between and across lifetimes. Tucker

(2005) concluded "that the relationships that we have in one lifetime may be capable of continuing to the next" (p. 49). Role and other changes do seem to occur. Tucker acknowledged that "to go from," for example, "grandmother to daughter [in the next lifetime] is quite a change," but he pointed out that, after all, it "mirrors what can often happen in a single lifetime when elderly parents eventually come to depend on the children who previously depended on them" (p. 223). In a correlational analysis, Tucker (2013) concluded that "one aspect of greater carry-over from a past life seems to be a continued emotional connection" (p. 55). He (2005) mused: "Perhaps the question of who is taking care of whom is not so important as the connection that the individuals share. That connection is one that may continue across lifetimes" (pp. 223–224).

As usual, Weiss (2000) has been more emphatic, declaring that "we come around in groups, over and over" and that "relationships are the soil of our growth while we are in physical state" (p. 62). This growth entails learning "to express and receive love, to forgive, to help, and to serve" (Weiss, 1992, p. 86). It is important to note that particular configurations and circumstances within these emotionally close connections, relationships, or "groups" may change in substantive ways. A negative relationship may spiritually terminate if one leaves that connection "with love, empathy, and compassion" (Weiss, 2004, p. 125)—or, if not terminated, may grow toward health. Like Tucker/Stevenson, Weiss suggested that roles and gender may change. Noted earlier was the exclamation, according to Weiss, of a young girl to her mother upon recognizing an ancient coin: "You remember, Mommy, when I was big *and you were a boy* and we had this one? Lots of them" (Weiss, 1992, p. 53; italics added).

Question 6: Do Humans Repay Karmic Debts During Subsequent Lives?

To say the least, human social interactions and relationships are not always harmonious. Are there next-life "carry over" ramifications from having wronged or harmed others? In other words, is an injustice to another individual or group in one life "paid for" in the next? Hindu or Buddhist conceptions of karma hold "that the conditions into which a person is born are determined by his or her conduct in previous lives" (Tucker, 2005, p. 73). Better or worse conduct is thought to beget, in subsequent lives, obligations and better or worse conditions. Further, if one's conduct in a previous life entails a wrong or harmful act to an-

other individual or group, one must, according to karma, recompense that individual or group in a subsequent life.

The renditions diverge on this question. Tucker and Stevenson found very little evidence for karmic ramifications or debt repayment among their spontaneous past-life memory cases. Tucker (2005) did note three cases in which a child with a past-life memory interpreted a birth defect—a deformed right hand—as retribution for a misdeed in a past life—a fatal stabbing using the right hand. Further, he noted several cases of children whose "trapped" feelings in their present lives could be interpreted retributively (pp. 220–222). Stevenson (2000) noted that "a few subjects born in materially poor circumstances who have remembered previous lives in prosperous ones have brooded over the difference and concluded that they had earned demotion by the sins or crimes of the previous life they remembered" (pp. 251–252). Stevenson pointed out, however, that the subjects' karmic conclusions could represent nothing more than "a rationalization" (p. 252). In general, Tucker and Stevenson concluded that their evidence provided at best modest support for traditional karmic justice concepts.

Two comments by Stevenson (2000) concerning karma are pertinent. First, he warned against using "karma" as an excuse to escape from moral reform "by attributing a current misfortune or misconduct" to the behavior of "a remote predecessor personality" (p. 232). Second, he noted that his skepticism concerning karma "does not mean that conduct in one life cannot have effects in another" (p. 253). Indeed, it can—and typically does in a "naturalistic" process, as I discuss further below.

In contrast, Weiss's rendition of the transcendent view entails a prominent role for karma. In Weiss's (Weiss & Weiss, 2012) handling, "karma" becomes "not punishment but rather the opportunity for growth," not recompense or retribution but "simply the avenue for learning" lessons such as love and nonviolence (p. 71). Yet debt and obligatory recompense do seem to be involved. An individual with severe knee and leg pain discovered in regression therapy that she was paying "a heavy price" for having destroyed the knees and legs of prisoners in a past life as a prison warden in pre-Roman times. Her physical condition improved as she forgave herself, "sent thoughts of light and healing to the prisoners or, rather, to their higher selves, their souls," and "supported organizations that advocate for the abolition of land mines (which often cause crippling leg injuries)" (Weiss, 2004, pp. 54–55). Individuals who recalled having murdered or enslaved others in past lives were said to incur an obligation to "repay"

(Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 71) or "make it up to" (p. 119) their victims in subsequent lifetimes—as well as to learn to love. An individual who recalled in a previous life having committed suicide while still in a healthy body incurred a spiritual "debt," and, as a consequence, was "assigned" to help souls who had died from a physically devastating illness: "What better way . . . to learn the value of a healthy body, the gift of life?" (p. 19).

Beyond karmic debt and recompense, particularly important for this learning and growth is the opportunity to take the perspectives of outgroup others and thereby to make moral and spiritual progress, as I discuss further below). A person may become in the next life a member of a "side" or outgroup one had hated and wronged or harmed in a past life. In this connection, "the surest way to reincarnate in a particular race or religion," Weiss (2000) suggested, "is to be manifestly prejudiced against that group" (p. 55).

Question 7: Do Humans Necessarily Progress From One Life to the Next—and What Is the State of Existence Between Lifetimes?

Neither Tucker/Stevenson nor Weiss have considered moral and spiritual progress from one life to the next as assured, although Weiss has been more sanguine—especially when psychotherapy is involved—concerning eventual progress across (and between) lifetimes. Tucker/Stevenson evaluated the prospect of progress through the issue of how one lifetime might impact the next. *Between* lives, as noted earlier, Stevenson suggested that the interim "postmortem realm" derives "much of its content from the [person's] premortem thoughts" (pp. 228–229). These thoughts are shaped by then-current circumstances as well as by the person's culture, behavior, and accumulated "personal experiences and attitudes" in the previous life/lives: "It appears that [one's] expectations and experiences [as well as decisions and actions] play a role in the next reality that a person encounters (or helps create)" (Tucker, 2013, p. 198). Perhaps "the state of mind you are in at the moment of death—your last thoughts and emotions—are critical in determining the existence you have next" (p. 204). A past physical trauma can even leave, as Weiss put it, "a physical residue"—as in cases of matching birth marks or defects. Accordingly, a person's interim postmortem existence

> would be pleasant or painful according to the kind of life that the inhabitant had lived before dying. . . . The [telepathic] communications

> and associations would take place mainly between persons who had a close (emotional) relationship with each other before death. . . . If we have been loving, we might find ourselves among loving persons, particularly those we have especially loved ourselves; if we have been odious, we might find ourselves among other hateful persons. (Stevenson, 2000, pp. 228–229)

This speculation harks back to an opening question of this article regarding what happens when—and immediately after—people die. What is the state of existence between lifetimes? Do people, during their lifetimes, in a sense create their own heavenly or hellish afterlife? Young James may have recollected his interim postmortem experience as heavenly owing to a life of predominantly loving relationships with family and military buddies—and despite his military activity against the Japanese. In contrast, those whose behavior had seemingly been odious and hateful—even, one might say, evil—as I discuss further below—may then experience a hellish postmortem realm in the presumably less-than-pleasant company of other hateful persons. Perhaps, then, those who live hateful lives of evil create for themselves an interim hell. Consider Raymond Moody's (1977) reflection upon his study of NDE life reviews (noted also in connection with past-life memories by Weiss, 2000, 2004):

> Those who engineered the Nazi atrocities seem to have been people whose lack of love was so complete that they willed the deaths of millions of innocent persons. This resulted in countless individual tragedies of separation of parent from child, of husband from wife, of friend from friend. It resulted in innumerable long, lingering deaths and fast brutal ones. It resulted in awful degradations, in years of hunger, tears, and torment for their victims. If what happened to my subjects happened to these men, they would see all these things and many others come alive, vividly portrayed before them. In my wildest fantasies, I am totally unable to imagine a hell more horrible, more ultimately unbearable than this. (p. 171)

One's life may impact not only one's interim existence but one's next life as well. Beyond the traditionally recognized factors of heredity and environment—or nature and nurture—an individual's particular pronounced present-life talents, aptitudes, knowledge, or attitudes may derive from this "third factor" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 12) of past lifetime residuals, specifically, "differences . . . caused by what the consciousness brings to a new life" (Tucker, 2005, p. 128). The impact may be particularly strong in past-life memory cases. Among Stevenson's past-life memory cases,

> one child counts every rupee he can grasp, like the acquisitive businessman he remembers, but another gives generously to beggars, just as the pious woman whose life she remembers did. One young boy aims a stick at passing policemen, as if to shoot them as did the bandit whose life he remembers, but another solicitously offers medical help to his playmates in the manner of the doctor whose life *he* remembers. (2000, p. 253; emphasis added)

Stevenson was not totally fatalistic and static on this point, however. Recall his warning that "karma" should not be used as an excuse to avoid accepting moral responsibility for one's actions. Even for the persistent "bandit," moral progress through "inner growth" is possible:

> We also see the inner growth of personalities, accomplished only by the self working on itself. . . . There is then—if we judge by the evidence of the cases—no external judge of our conduct and no being who shifts us from life to life according to our deserts [karma]. If this world is (in Keats's phrase) "a vale of soul-making," we are the makers of our own souls. (p. 253)

Like Stevenson, Tucker viewed soul-making or spiritual progress as "ultimately made in a naturalistic way" (Tucker, 2013, p. 211; see below). A "person who focuses on hoarding his wealth in one lifetime" and in the next is poor may, "over the course of several lifetimes . . . come to see that wealth is not critical to having a satisfying life, so it will fade away as an issue for him" (p. 210).

Not unexpectedly, Weiss (2004) offered a more robust rendition of spiritual progress across lifetimes, declaring—while neglecting to note his own counter-examples—that "the soul *always, at all times, evolves toward health*" (p. 13). He has contended that humans are all in a transcendently inspired and earthly mediated "school":

> in the course of our lifetimes, we change sexes, religions, and races in order to learn from all sides. We are all in school here. . . . We keep returning in order to learn certain lessons, or traits, such as love . . . forgiveness . . . understanding . . . patience . . . awareness . . . nonviolence . . . We have to unlearn other traits, such as fear . . . anger . . . greed . . . hatred . . . pride . . . ego . . . which result from old conditioning. Then we can graduate and leave this school. (Weiss, 1996, p. 98; cf. Weiss, 2000, pp. 66, 190)

Changes across lifetimes by gender, religion, ethnicity, economic advantage, and so forth take place, then, so that people can learn "from all sides" or perspectives certain lessons or traits—and unlearn others—in order to progress and ultimately "graduate."

To be sure, difficulties are acknowledged. Weiss (1992) recounted

his own loss of a beatific and transcendent mindset as he returned to work at his medical center and encountered ethically questionable proposals:

> The luminosity and transparency of objects continued as I drove to the hospital. So did the state of detached loving-kindness and great peace and joy. So did the feelings of patience and happiness and interconnectedness with everything else. . . . This state stayed with me as I began my workday. . . . I knew that there was no such thing as danger, no need to fear. Everything was one.
>
> This experience lasted until I attended an administrative meeting later in the day. The subject of the meeting—How to Increase Hospital Profits—angered me. . . . Immediately there was a profound shift. I was back to my "normal self," analytical and "down to earth." Afterwards, I was unable to bring back the wonderful, peaceful state. It was gone, no matter how hard I tried to remember, recall, recreate. (p. 167)

In general, learning "in this school we call earth" is challenging because "it is so difficult to remember that we are souls and not just physical bodies." In the course of day-to-day life, people are constantly distracted by "illusions and delusions" such as "money, power, prestige, material possessions, and other tangible accumulations and creature comforts" (Weiss, 2000, p. 112). Other delusions or distractions include denial, fatigue, rationalizations, mental escape, "and all the other businesses of the mind" (Weiss, 1996, p. 147). Apparently, ethically questionable practices and even evil or hell are seen as illusory or delusional, as I discuss further below.

To overcome these difficulties and facilitate progress on an individual and global scale, Weiss has seen a major role for past-life memory and regression therapy. Without explicit past-life memory—if not spontaneously, then through therapy—one may not learn but instead merely replace a hatred in one life with another hatred—perhaps with a counter-referent—in the next. Weiss (2004) recollected an anxious and depressed patient, Evelyn, who had "an intense pro-Israel stance" (p. 43). In her regression, Evelyn relived her life as a German SS officer during World War II. In that life, she perceived Jews as "vermin" and shot to death anyone who attempted to escape from her supervision. Her regression entailed a curious complexity. Belying Evelyn's cold-blooded recounting was "the horror in her tone and a slight trembling that possessed her body"; although in her past life "she might have felt nothing for the people she killed," from the vantage point of her present self in the regression, "she was in agony" (p. 42). In her

present life, however, Evelyn was still hateful. "The hatred she had felt for the Jews had been transformed into an equal hatred for Arabs. No wonder she felt anxious, frustrated, and depressed. She had not moved very far on her journey toward health" (p. 43).

Fortunately, therapy helped Evelyn—and could help worldwide. In the course of subsequent sessions, Evelyn came to realize her need "to replace hatred with understanding" (p. 44). She grew beyond her stagnating hatreds and toward spiritual health and moral maturity. What about others? Weiss (Weiss & Weiss, 2012) approvingly quoted a patient's suggestion—one with considerable contemporary relevance: "If people were trained to do hypnotism and regression as part of a treatment for terrorists [to resolve carried-over past-life issues], it would create a shift on a massive scale" (p. 319). In this connection, Weiss (Weiss & Weiss, 2012) noted his work "for many years" if not with terrorists, at least "with politicians and leaders from all over the planet. We work confidentially. Progress is slow, but it is steady. There is hope" (p. 319). A more than minor caveat to this "slow and steady" global progress is the convergent impression from Weiss's (2004) "progression" therapy cases that, for as yet unspecified reasons, Earth in 300 years or so will host a "vastly diminished [human] population" (p. 225).

On balance, however, Weiss's rendition of the transcendent view has been optimistic regarding eventual progress toward love and health. Rates of progress vary widely across persons. In the human journey toward the reality of light and love, some individual souls progress at a faster rate than do others. One might say that Weiss's patient Evelyn was fixated in oscillating dark hatreds, remedied finally through regression therapy. Instead of learning or growing, she was perseverating in the "mistake" of hatred against other groups.

The so-called "mistakes" can be substantial and immoral, wronging and harming many others. In Weiss's sanguine rendition, however, even monstrous acts of evil are but the temporary learning failures or "mistakes" of slower souls. Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are cited as souls that "failed miserably" in "their learning opportunities" on Earth (Weiss, 2004, p. 15). When some of his patients have expressed shock at their violence to others in ancient lives, Weiss (2004) has reassured them that "we have all passed through barbaric times" as humanity has "evolved" but we "can act humanely now" (pp. 54–55; cf. Pinker, 2012). One couple in Weiss's (1992) therapeutic practice ostensibly "discovered they had been homicidally connected in four previous lives together" (p. 29)! Interestingly, Weiss (2000) suggested

that one mission of more enlightened or advanced souls is to provide guidance or help, "with compassion and with love," to more failing, "mistake"-prone or slower-learning souls (p. 66).

Question 8: Does the Transcendent View Imply That All Is Well? Does Everything Happen for a (Benign) Reason Under Theistic Guidance?

Not surprisingly, Weiss's rendition of the transcendent view is more theistic than it is in Tucker's and Stevenson's rendition with its naturalistic emphasis. As noted, Stevenson (2000) emphasized individual responsibility for progressive "soul-making" and saw in his data no basis for positing an "external judge of our conduct" or "being who shifts us from life to life" (p. 253). Tucker (2013) asserted that the impact of "your life experiences. . . . would not involve a Judgment Day of any kind. You could experience a 'good' afterlife or a 'bad' one based on your life now, in what would be a purely naturalistic process" (p. 204).

Tucker (2013) contrasted his and Stevenson's mainly naturalistic position to a primarily theistic one, perhaps referring to Weiss (e.g., Weiss, 2000, p. 161; 2004, pp. 151–152): "I don't believe that between lives, individuals meet with guides or some sort of council to learn what issues they will work on in their upcoming lives (as some hypnotic regression proponents suggest)" (Tucker, 2013, p. 210). Weiss's more theistic stance is further discussed below.

In the context of his and Stevenson's mainly naturalistic rendition of the transcendent view, Tucker (2013) discerned Jungian synchronicity or "meaningful coincidences" in human affairs (p. 212; cf. Greyson, 2011b). He provided an example of a time of fortunate synchronicity in his own life, resulting in the publication of *Return to Life* (2013): "You can decide if I was simply lucky. But if you consider that consciousness may be involved in apparent luck, these events demonstrate what a complex process it can be" (p. 215). Perhaps "our thoughts—the images in our minds, our wishes, our goals—are linked to each other's and to outcomes in the physical world" and even collectively derive "ultimately from one Mind" (p. 215).

Tucker's reference to an ultimate "Mind" suggests that—despite his and Stevenson's rejection of an external and controlling judge, guides, or other spiritual agencies—their naturalism does not reduce to a materialistic atheism. In an allusion to the theodicic problem considered below, Tucker pondered the complex process of synchronicity in life and human events: "This [positive outcome] doesn't necessarily

mean that everything that happens is planned or intended by this Mind. . . . reality may include painful or negative events that happen randomly or without any conscious intent or control" (p. 215). Accordingly, Tucker acknowledged: "I have no idea why my wish to get a publisher might have effected that outcome when similar goals in other circumstances do not" (p. 216).

Worse than failing to achieve a publishing goal is the suffering involved in the theodicic problem, which I address below. Tucker remained cautiously hopeful that progress is possible by working through pain and suffering:

> Working through issues may involve difficult experiences, and certainly some people endure terrible pain and suffering in this life [see below]. On a smaller scale, we experience difficult events in nightmares as our minds attempt to process various emotions in our unconscious. Likewise, I hope that the traumas people suffer in life are part of a working-through process that across lifetimes may ultimately lead to resolution and progress. (p. 211)

Tucker's hopeful hint of positive theism—ultimate Mind—in his otherwise naturalistic position becomes explicit and emphatic in Weiss's (2000) rendition of the transcendent view. In contrast to Tucker's "complexity" of life with allowance for unplanned and random events, for Weiss nothing that happens is random or by chance; every event has an ultimately benign purpose. "I know," asserted Weiss (1988), "that there is a reason for everything. Perhaps at the moment that an event occurs we have neither the insight nor the foresight to comprehend the reason, but with time and patience it will come to light" (p. 9). Behind this purpose or reason is a loving energy, a divine agency, that supports and guides human moral and spiritual progress: "Everything is part of a master plan for the soul's growth" (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 238).

Weiss's theism is broadly inclusive. Regarding the source of the medium-like communication Weiss received from Catherine, Weiss referred to "The Masters" (see Weiss, 1998, 2000). Many terms are serviceable in Weiss's generic and panentheistic—immanent and transcendent—conceptualization of a divinely supportive God or "Buddha nature":

> You can substitute, instead of "Buddha nature," if you feel more comfortable, the word *love*, or *God*, or *Jesus*, or *higher power*, or any other spiritual figure. It does not matter. It simply means a kind, wise, and loving energy, perhaps with attributes beyond which we cannot comprehend, that fills the atoms and molecules and energetic particles of

> the whole universe—an energy from which we are made and precipitated, in a sense. (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 9; cf. p. 234.)

The immanent implication of this panentheistic view, then, is the primacy of the good in reality and human nature. If humans are precipitates of loving energy, then, in theistic terms, "we are all created in the image of God, and God is within us all. Our basic underlying nature is loving, peaceful, balanced, and harmonious. We are innately compassionate, caring, and kind" (Weiss, 2000, p. 86). Anger, hatred, fear, and other "negative thoughts and emotions" are but "outer layers" or "dirt and debris" that accrue "over the course of our lifetimes" (Weiss, 2000, p. 87).

Needless to say, an interim hell falls short of reality status in this rendition. "I have never found hell, only different levels of ignorance," reported Weiss (2000, p. 156). Hell or evil is but "a profound ignorance and a nearly complete absence of light" (p. 156; cf. Weiss & Weiss, 2012, pp. 201–203)—a dark mistake or failure to learn that must be remedied, perhaps in a future lifetime. In *Only Love is Real,* Weiss (1996) described a patient who had been regressed to "a lifetime filled with greed, violence, and deceit" and who re-experienced in that death

> a hell-like environment, amidst fires and devils. . . . Finally a spiritual figure, whom he identified as Jesus, appeared and walked over to him. 'Don't you realize that this is all illusion?' Jesus said to him 'Only love is real!' And then the fires and the devils instantly disappeared, revealing the beautiful light that had been there, unseen, behind the illusion. (p. 50)

Despite the ontological primacy of light and love in Weiss's rendition, each person does experience consequences for the choices one makes. Although Weiss—unlike Tucker—denied the existence of accidents or chance events, he did see a role for free will and the impact of existential choice upon one's theistically supported or guided spiritual journey. "Advanced souls can point the way and illuminate the path, but they cannot decide for us" (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 238). Consistent with Stevenson's emphasis on personal responsibility, Weiss (2004) contended that our "destiny" interacts with the choices we make: "Our free will sometimes leads us to evil, not good; to selfishness, not selflessness; to insularity, not compassion; to hate, not love" (p. 162).

Even though individuals sometimes make choices that lead to evil, selfishness, insularity, or hate, Weiss declared that, in some ultimate sense, all is well. "At the cosmic level everything is perfect and as it

is meant to be" (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 163). Phenomena at variance with this declaration Weiss minimized if not dismissed altogether. He considered distressing NDEs, for example, to be "very few" and sometimes "not valid" (Weiss, 2000, p. 156). Weiss (Weiss & Weiss, 2012) did note that he has often been asked

> why we are here in this difficult dimension at all. Why don't we just stay on the other side, in the heavenly dimension, and learn there, where we do not have all the burden, all the pain, of physical existence? (p. 64)

Weiss's answer—which he acknowledges to be "incomplete" (p. 64)—has emphasized the positive aspects of life on earth—"incredible beauty, physical love, unconditional love, soul mates, pleasure for all our senses, kind and compassionate people" (p. 18)—and the opportunity afforded for spiritual and moral growth.

"All is well" does not mean "everything is 'peachy'" (Alexander, 2014, p. 106). That, in the view of many people, is an understatement. If God or "The Masters" are loving and the good is primary, that condition seems fundamentally contradictory to the unspeakably tragic human events—where "tragedy" is defined as "an apparently unnecessary, senseless, or unfair event, such as an accident, victimization, physical handicap, illness, or natural disaster, that results in grievous human suffering or death" (Gibbs, 1998, p. 224)—reported around the world every day and often resulting in the violent and untimely deaths evident in past-life memories. This is the classic theodicic problem, depicted in the title of Harold Kushner's classic (1981) bestseller *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Intensely and personally rendering the theodicic problem, Kushner (1981) described his shock and distress upon learning that his young son Aaron had a fatal illness:

> How does one handle news like that? . . . It didn't make sense. . . . If God existed, if He was minimally fair, let alone loving and forgiving, how could He do this to me? . . . On what grounds did Aaron have to suffer? He was an innocent child, a happy, outgoing three-year-old. Why should he have to suffer physical and psychological pain every day of his life?" (p. 2)

Consideration of the theodicic problem in relation to the transcendent view is beyond the scope of this article (see Gibbs, 1998). Suggestions by Weiss (e.g., Weiss, 1992, p. 152; Weiss, 2000, pp. 57–58, 60–61; Weiss & Weiss, 2012, 74–75; cf. Alexander & Newell, 2017, pp. 185–188) that an interim soul, for the sake of greater growth for self or others, chooses to enter into a prospectively tragic—severely

impaired, debilitated, painful—lifetime seem to me to be dubious. I would argue that, in the face of the facts of continuing massive personal and collective tragedies, strong claims such as Weiss's that everything happens for a (benign) reason, that all is well or even perfect, become untenable. Tucker's/Stevenson's mainly naturalistic rendition seems more defensible. Intriguingly, in a theistic (ultimate "Mind") tilt in his otherwise naturalistic position, Tucker (2015) offered this consoling suggestion regarding "painful or negative events that happen randomly without any conscious intent or control": "We may be able to reduce them by appealing to the benign aspect of this larger Mind" (p. 215).

Conclusion

I began this article by posing the question of what happens when people die—especially, what happens *to each of us individual* humans when we die. I provided an array of evidence suggesting that the currently dominant answer in the scientific community—annihilation upon brain death—is challenged by this evidence and that the cessation of brain function does not necessarily mean a final limit. Phenomena pertaining to the birth and death—the entrance and exit—of the human life span point to a continuity of consciousness that transcends and contextualizes human bodily existence in this physical realm. This evidence for the transcendent view includes end-of-life phenomena such as NDEs, deathbed visions, and terminal lucidity. My focus has been on *before*-life phenomena, in particular, past-life memories. I conclude that the broad array of evidence—especially, the congruence between before-life and end-of-life literatures—may suffice to refute the current reductionistic answer and to compellingly support a transcendent understanding of human existence.

Remaining are many questions—but also some convergences. In my depiction of the transcendent view from past-life memories, I surveyed—in terms of eight questions—two renditions from the works of three psychiatrists. An evidence-based rendition derives from research by Tucker and Stevenson, who investigated and confirmed the accuracy of the claims of children who spontaneously remember past lives. A more impressionistic and emphatically positive clinical rendition is found in the work of Weiss, who went beyond empirical investigations to proclaim a spiritual and ontological view featuring, across lifetimes: universal reincarnation; dramatic benefits from past-life regression therapy; repeated reincarnation in groups; the repayment of

debts and perspective-taking growth through karmic principles; and theistically guided moral and spiritual progress. Indeed, in Weiss's rendition, despite free will, there are no accidents; all is well and attributable to a benign guidance. Although this more emphatic rendition derives from the controversial tool of hypnotic induction, its proclamations are in a loose sense empirical in that they are extrapolated from clinical impressions. The more evidence-based rendition of the transcendent rendition deriving from the investigative work of Tucker and Stevenson moderates—but on most questions does not necessarily contradict—Weiss's proclamations. In Tucker's/Stevenson's rendition, "universal" reincarnation is possible but of course undemonstrable; past-life memories may or may not be beneficial and may be uncommon for good reason; relationships with loved ones may continue but not necessarily in groups; random negative events or accidents do happen; moral and spiritual progress is far from assured; and the processes of life (or lifetimes) are better characterized as naturalistic than theistic. I also noted that Weiss's sanguine assurance that all is well seems dubious in light of the sobering theodicic problem intensely depicted by Kushner (1981).

Although Weiss's more emphatic rendition is questionable, it is not entirely dismissible. Hybrid cases involving both spontaneous and hypnotically induced past-life memories, such as that of Jenny Cockell, suggest the usefulness of the hypnotic tool at least in some cases. Although the investigative work of Tucker and Stevenson is more evidentially compelling, Weiss's more impressionistic work contributes as well to the transcendent view.

Tucker, Stevenson, and Weiss converge on the core of a transcendent understanding, namely, the irreducibility of mind and continuity of self or consciousness. They also converge on three elaborations: a larger aspect or component of self, interconnectedness across individual selves, and past-life memories as not necessarily beyond the realm of science.

First, if we as individual humans are not annihilated at bodily death but instead continue to exist—and possibly grow—who exactly *are* we? Who is the "I" who existed before and may exist on this earth again? Did a past personality provide the "dissociated voice" mentally heard by Jenny Cockell in regression therapy? Perhaps we are not restricted to the unique identities of our current lifetimes. Personally, the "I" given the name John Clark Gibbs never existed before this, my current lifetime, and never will exist again. Yet is there a component of my personality that existed before, that may survive my bodily

death, and that may bodily exist again? Tucker (2013) suggested that "some part of us" may "transcend the worlds we experience," that we may have a "larger aspect" or self that continues and grows across our earthly lives. Tucker analogized:

> I suspect our roles in life are much like an actor's roles in movies. As we go from one life to another . . . our characters in each life may vary quite a bit. We have different traits in each life, affected in this world by our genetic makeup and our upbringing. But a larger aspect of each of us would also carry over from one life to the next. Jimmy Stewart played many characters during his long acting career—most of them nice, some not nice, some simple, some complex—but regardless of the character, it was always unmistakably Jimmy Stewart who was playing the role. . . . Jimmy Stewart brought something that informed and shaped each character he played. . . .

Regarding the question of moral and spiritual progress, Tucker—although less optimistic than Weiss—suspected

> that not only does the individual bring something to each life but that each life also informs the individual, just as our experiences shape our development in this life. This larger self is not static but can change or grow. In this way, each individual does make progress (or at times may fall back) in what can be called spiritual development. (p. 210)

The second elaboration further clarifies the meaning of "each individual" or "I." As suggested in both renditions, we are not isolated individuals. A key theme across Tucker/Stevenson and Weiss (e.g., 1996, pp. 128–129; 2004, pp. 38–39; Weiss & Weiss, 2012, pp. 9–10) is that individual souls are interconnected; hence, to harm another is ultimately to harm ourselves. As Tucker (2013) put it: "I think the unique consciousness in each of us must be part of a larger whole. Each of us is contributing to a tapestry of existence rather than creating our own individual work" (p. 211). A temporal version of the tapestry metaphor prompts further reflection regarding pain and suffering: "What looks from our individual, close-up perspectives like negative sensation we wish we could avoid—such as pain or disappointment—might help us make progress in the long run, just as an aching muscle during a workout becomes bigger and stronger over time" (p. 216; but cf. Kushner, 1981).

Drawing upon an analogy—islands in the ocean—introduced by William James, Tucker (2013) elaborated on the thesis that each of us relates to a larger wholeness—"cosmic consciousness"; the "Mind of God"; "the Ultimate":

> Each of us may be like a single trait or thought in one large Mind. We seem to be like a chain of islands as William James suggested, separate when seen above the water but connected at the ocean floor. . . . This is not to deny our individualism; each island in the sea is an individual thing. But it is also part of something bigger. (p. 217)

Consistent with Tucker's (or James') islands analogy, Weiss offered two others: leaves on a tree, and ice cubes in water. The leaves on a tree are separate, yet intimately connected to one another and commonly connected to the underground root system (Weiss, 1996, pp. 128–129). Weiss (2000) also offered the analogy of ice cubes in water: Although like each individual personality each floating ice cube is apparently "distinct, with fixed and definite boundaries" they all become water or steam given higher temperatures (p. 230).

Finally, the three names in this article's title, Tucker/Stevenson and Weiss, urged an open mind regarding past-life memories. Their disparate lines of work and renditions notwithstanding, both Tucker and Weiss suggested that science in its understanding of human mental life may be due for a new paradigmatic advance. After all, "the most fundamental findings of physics have now disproven materialism" (Tucker, 2013, p. 167; cf. Tart, 2009; Fenwick & Fenwick, 1999; see Greyson's comments below). Tucker reminded us of "unfortunate examples in which mainstream science turned its back on large amounts of evidence that challenged conventional wisdom" (p. 195). Scorn was endured by courageous scientists who were eventually proven right regarding, for example, continental drift, infectious contaminants, and meteorites. As with past emergent anomalies, the mechanisms or underlying processes of past-life memory, NDEs, terminal lucidity, and deathbed visions are still not understood: "We are still awaiting our Newton" (Weiss & Weiss, 2012, p. 49)—to say nothing of our Einstein (see below). In this connection, the prominent psychiatrist and NDE researcher and psychiatrist Bruce Greyson (2010, September; cf. Greyson, 2010a, 2011a; Tucker, 2013, pp. 167–168, 176), in an address to the International Association for Near-Death Studies, explicated the need for a new paradigm in psychological science (cf. Kelly et al., 2007):

> Given all this information [from this array of evidence] . . . , how can anyone believe that the mind is produced by the brain? Well, of course there is evidence for such a position. There is common sense evidence from our everyday life. When you get drunk, or you get a hard knock on the head, your thinking gets clouded. Scientists have more sophisticated evidence of this type. They can manipulate the electrical activ-

> ity in your brain, when you are doing different activities, and identify correlations between different parts of the brain and different activities. They can stimulate parts of the brain and observe what you experience and report, and they can remove parts of the brain, and see what the effect is on your behavior. And all these evidence lines point to the fact that the brain is involved in the process of thinking and perception and memory. . . .
>
> Now this materialistic idea that the brain produces the mind is a reasonably good model for everyday life. . . . Likewise, classical Newtonian mechanics is a reasonably good model for our everyday lives of everyday objects moving at everyday speeds. It is only when physicists started investigating extraordinary circumstances involving objects approaching the speed of light or the behavior of microscopic wave particles that [we saw] the limitations of the classical Newtonian model and the need for a new paradigm. So, too, with the question of mind-brain relationships. It is only when you approach death and extraordinary circumstances . . . that you see the limitations of the materialistic model and the need for a new paradigm.

Emergent in this prospective paradigm is a transcendent understanding and awareness of the continuity and interconnectedness of human life. Tucker (2013) pondered the enriching value of becoming aware that

> we are not separate, we are all in this together. And just as our experiences in life can enrich our individual minds, if this awareness that we are all part of the Ultimate helps us be a little more patient, a little more accepting, a little more loving, if it helps us to focus more on our shared experiences and less on our differences, then perhaps in some small way, we will be better able to enrich the Ultimate and, with it, all of existence. (p. 219)

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