

mehitabel is a believer
in the pythagorean
theory of the transmigration
of the soul and she claims
that formerly her spirit
was incarnated in the body
of cleopatra

-archy and mehitabel¹
(Marquis 1973:19)

35. REINCARNATION AGAIN

¹ archy is a cockroach who is a vers libre poet he cannot operate the shift key on the old manual typewriter that he types his poetry on for his boss that is why there are no caps or quotation marks mehitabel is his friend a foreign female alley cat you need to read this book it is lots of fun it takes a while to get the hang of no caps or punctuation good luck this is how the greeks wrote their stuff including some new testament stuff so you see how ambiguous things can be who is the rock peter or revelation

CHAPTER CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	393
ATHAPASKAN REINCARNATION AND FISH-WHEELS	393
TIBETAN REINCARNATION	394
MECHANICAL MODEL CONCEPT	395
CONCLUSION	395

INTRODUCTION:

Reincarnation is not a doctrine that Christians accept, doubtless because Christ did not hint at such.² In fact, the structure of His doctrine focuses on the development and advancement of individuals, based on what they do here, with the final outcome, judgment, being a permanent one. There is no place for a cyclic pattern of lives on this world in His plan, whether as animals or humans or anything else. Nothing He said implies reincarnation.

However, the concept that we live on this earth more than one time is accepted in various other religions, among them some Amerindian religions, some eastern religions, etc.³ Since some of these religions do incorporate a belief in reincarnation, it is interesting in light of this model to look at the doctrine for a moment.⁴

² A fascinating reference from Grof deserves inclusion here for two reasons: first, it suggests something about a(n alleged) belief of the primitive church that was attacked in 543 A.D., and 2) it suggests that the interpretation of that belief may have been a misinterpretation that was based on a lost understanding of the PE. The quote:

"Since it is generally assumed that the belief in reincarnation is incompatible with Christianity and alien to it, it seems appropriate to elaborate on the above statement. The concept of reincarnation existed in Christianity until it was attacked in 543 A.D. by the Byzantine emperor, Justinian, together with other teachings of the learned father, Origen, and finally condemned by the Second Council in Constantinople in 553 A.D. Origen, considered the most prominent of all Church Fathers, with the exception of Augustine, stated explicitly in his work *De Principiis*: 'The soul has neither beginning nor end...Every soul comes to this world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life. Its place in this world as a vessel appointed to honor or dishonor is determined by its previous merits or demerits. Its work in this world determines its place in the world which is to follow'." (1977:3)

To us, it appears that Grof has been led astray by the actions of these two Councils. We will assume that the translation given here of Origen's work is an accurate one, and then will argue that since it refers to only ONE previous life, and to ONE following world, he was merely stating what the POS endorses, as it was promulgated by the Christ. Justinian et al didn't understand Origen, probably because the basic doctrines were distorted so completely during the Apostasy.

We do not believe that Christianity ever espoused reincarnation. And we are just discussing it here to show that it is possible to construe the three phases of the metamorphosis as a special case of reincarnation. Whether or not the doctrine of reincarnation will accommodate such a limited, three-step version depends on its definition. Caterpillars don't undergo reincarnation.

³ The belief in reincarnation is called a "special variation" of the belief in life after death. The range of cultures and religions that espoused it is summarized by Grof:

"The belief in reincarnation occurs in such diverse cultural and religious frameworks as philosophies and religions of India, cosmologies of various North American Indian tribes, Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy, the Orphic cult and other mystery religions of ancient Greece, and early Christianity. In Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism this belief is connected with the law of karma, according to which the quality of individual incarnations is specifically determined by the person's merits and debts from preceding lifetimes." (1977:3)

⁴ Grof notes the consequence on his patients of their experiences under LSD:

"They [Ed. the experiences] usually do not result in an irrefutable conviction about the existence of the law of karma, and the fact of reincarnation, but rather in the acceptance of this possibility as a very plausible alternative to nihilistic and pessimistic Western concepts." (1977:59)

Whatever the experiences are, they persuade the individuals that there is in fact a next-life. Some interpreted it as evidence that:

"...they have existed many times prior to the present lifetime, and also that their karma will require further incarnations in the future." (1977:58)

We don't particularly accept the latter interpretation, unless, of course, the person refers to the three

ATHAPASKAN REINCARNATION AND FISH-WHEELS:

My own introduction to reincarnation occurred on the Yukon River in 1956. My family was making a 700 miles canoe trip down-river. We floated from Nenana on the Tanana River to the confluence of the two rivers at Tanana and on down to Holy Cross. Along the way we encountered fish wheels that were catching salmon and shee fish primarily. The law of the river, at that time at least, allowed travelers to help themselves to one of the fish in the catchment basket as a means of eking out their meager rations.

We noted, as we approached the wheels, that there were often large black crows or ravens inside the basket with the dead fish. They picked their eyes out, and then ruined the rest of the bodies as well. At one of the Athapaskan (not Athabascan) Indian villages, we asked about this problem. We suggested something in the way of shooting the birds to protect the catch since there would be up to 24 hours between their visits to collect the fish. This suggestion met with polite resistance because they believed that their ancestors returned in some cases in the form of these black birds. This meant two things. First, the ancestors needed nourishment so allowing them access to the fish was actually the bestowal of gift on them. And second, to kill the birds would be to commit parricide, a highly taboo act. It could not be done.⁵

They believed, then, that after death human spirits could return to this earth, or remain on this earth, in the form or body of a bird. The question, then: does the present model allow for there to be a cyclic pattern for spirits during their evolution? But before addressing it, let's look in some detail at a highly evolved doctrine of reincarnation.

TIBETAN REINCARNATION:

The indigenous religion of Tibet and Sikkim, called Bon, did not formally espouse reincarnation. However, as Buddhism spread into that region of the Himalayas from India, a form of Buddhism developed, termed today Tantrism.⁶ The central doctrine of this form of Buddhism, indeed of all Buddhist sects, be they Red Hat or Yellow Hat, Mahayana, Hinayana, Zen, etc., is a belief that Buddahood and Nirvana are the target for mankind. And more

metamorphic phases.

⁵Thanks, mom and dad, for showing respect for this foreign religious belief when I was so young. It means a lot to have been able to meet new ideas in an accepting environment. The example, and many others like it, panned out as true religious tolerance and respect.

⁶In the usual fashion, these competing religions resolved their differences by one becoming dominant, it absorbing some of the traits of the other. In this case, the Bon funeral rituals for handling cadavers were modified and incorporated into the victorious Buddhism which was then practiced in that region. But Buddhism in other regions did not take on these funereal rites.

In its transcendentalism, the Bon practices closely resemble Taoism. (Evans-Wentz 1960:23)

importantly, it is held that the only manner for a mortal to achieve that blessed state is through a series of reincarnations during which one's karma is developed and accumulated, which karma helps determine when an individual qualifies for buddahood.⁷

Tantrism evolved with a variety of rites and a highly complex theology, most of which is irrelevant to this particular discussion. However, Tantrism believes that after death a soul enters an intermediate state termed "bardo".⁸ In this condition, there are three phases. If a soul fails to qualify for buddahood in any phase, it enters a womb, after searching for a satisfactory one, to be reborn as a mortal. The state or condition that the newborn achieves is one earned by his karma. He basically earns this next (e)state, and in a few cases, it is believed that a soul who has behaved very poorly during mortality can possibly even return in a subhuman form. As he succeeds in living a proper life, karma accumulates until perfection can be attained.

The length of time required for most souls is believed to be possibly thousands of years, depending on the actual performance of the individual in question.⁹ The return is either a judgment of some sort, a sort of punishment or a time to do penance, or else it is a reward for previously successful penance. In both case, the next iteration of the cycle is predicated somehow on the previous life of the subject spirit. The purpose of the cycle is to allow the spirit to eventually achieve some state of blessedness or peace that is the ultimate objective of existence.

MECHANICAL MODEL CONCEPT:

(Finish working this from here on = read back to make it match)

In this model, if one takes a broad view of the chapter on NESTED OR CRISS-CROSSED DEPENDENCIES, it is evident that there is, in fact, a cyclic nature to the progression of our spirits as they go from the point of their birth to the point of resurrection. During the pre-existence, a spirit lives out a life after which a death occurs, followed by a rebirth as a mortal. Then the mortal life proceeds through its natural course to a death that is followed by a birth into a post-mortal state where spirits live

⁷ As noted elsewhere, it should be particularly interesting to LDS that the objective for all mankind in Buddhism is the attainment of this Buddahood. Buddahood or Nirvana are perfected states of being in which the soul becomes transparent and without any volition or wishes or actions. It sounds to occidentals like a form of voidness, and is practically incomprehensible to us, with our rigid image of a postmortal state where we live in some sort of bodies. However, regardless of how well we comprehend it, this state must be regarded as a form of perfection, a state tantamount to godhood. This obviously means that in this narrow sense, SMD and Buddhism share a belief in the perfectibility of souls and the possibility of every person attaining godhood.

⁸ An excellent discussion of Tantric mortuary customs, and the Bardo Thodol is that of Evans-Wentz. (1960:23 et seq)

⁹ Note how comparable, again, Buddhism is with SMD. The succeeding state a soul gains is predicated in his behavior in the previous state. He earns his next condition by his actions, recognizing that there is also a major role for mercy in both cases.

until the resurrection.

This sounds suspiciously like reincarnation. The only substantive difference is that in this model each phase applies directly to the spirit, with the mortal body being irrelevant overall. The mortal body is essential for the mortal phase but it doesn't appear that bodies, other than the spirit body itself, are essential in the other two phases. Obviously, the location of the different phases may be different while in classical reincarnation, all phases occur on this earth. If we turn the emphasis, then, from the reuse of mortal bodies, to the recycling of spirits through testing phases, we have reincarnation in this model.

However, this model doesn't provide for any phases in animal/bird bodies, so in that respect it definitely does not accommodate reincarnation. To cycle a human spirit through an animal body seems like a violation of some important principles, both for animal and for humans.¹⁰

CONCLUSION:

The only way a life as an animal might fit into this model would be to have those experiences as Type 1 through 4 spirits to occur prior to becoming a Type 5, a la TE White's Wart.¹¹ If that were the case, then perhaps the experiences as birds and beasts would be useful in the development of the spirit. This does have a certain logic to it, but I am puzzled about what the real value of such experiences would be. If the difference, as I noted in CONSCIOUSNESS,¹² between the different classes of spirits is basically the differences in the degree of agency allowed each Type, then there really is no advantage to each higher level to apprentice as lower types.

Animals are not imbued with a fully developed and unfettered capacity to exercise agency as humans are. During spirit birth or formation, the quality of obedience inherent in each type is different. Animals actually resemble rocks and water in their type of obedience to law, and in a sense are practically little more than notational variants of the natural resources of the earth. Life, then, as an animal would not be advantageous to a human spirit because the type of law in effect for that class is closer to that governing the raw materials of our body.

The last comment to make here about reincarnation is to say that I believe that this earth is probably the site for post-mortal

¹⁰ However, Hinduism, though not Buddhism, does provide for reincarnation of man in a variety of non-human forms. Evans-Wentz (1960:lxxxii) indicates that

"Hinduism speaks of 8,400,000 graded kinds of births culminating in man...As plants, aquatic animals, reptiles, birds, quadrupeds, simian forms and man. See *Brihad Vishnu Purana*."

¹¹ See his *THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING* for a delightful recounting of the Arthurian legend, with insight into the human condition.

¹² See Chapter 15. CONSCIOUSNESS - COGITO, ERGO SUM for the details.

spirit prison, and we know it is part of the post- resurrection (celestial) world as well. So is it also possible that earth is the location for the pre-existence but in a different set of dimensions?

I do not think that reincarnation is part of this model. There is a cyclic nature to the phases of our metamorphosis but outside of that similarity, there is no way to fit a sequence of stages, based on karma, in different types of bodies. One asks whether the concept of reincarnation is perhaps some sort of understanding about the limited cyclic sequence we do go through?