

of cosmology by the Vietnamese astrophysicist, Trinh Xuan Thuan, who does not believe our universe could have occurred by chance.

I recommend *L'Esprit de le Nouvelle Science* to all French readers of this journal. Even physicists, familiar as they are with "the facts," may find themselves stimulated to think again about the assumptions they have held.

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**Die Idee der Reinkarnation in Ost und West**, edited by Perry Schmidt-Leukel. Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1996, 240 pp. DM28.00 (\$16.50). SBN 3-424-01335-8.

This work is part of a series published by the Gesellschaft für europäisch-asiatische Kulturbeziehungen (Society for Cultural Relations between Europe and Asia). It consists of nine essays divided into three sections.

The first three chapters (comprising the first section) provide an excellent introduction to the belief in reincarnation expounded in Hinduism and Buddhism. In Chapter 3 Hans-Peter Muller describes at length the teachings of the Western-educated Indian sage, Sri Aurobindo.

The three chapters of section two describe the history and present state of the belief in reincarnation in the West. In the first of these chapters, Norbert Bischofberger reviews the belief in reincarnation among ancient Greeks and early Christians. In discussing passages of the New Testament that are often cited as supporting the idea of reincarnation, Bischofberger shows that all of these are open to other interpretations; they are not necessarily allusions to reincarnation. In a later section of this chapter he discusses the concepts held by theosophists and the derivative anthroposophists. In the following chapter, Wolfgang Seelig reminds us that many Europeans showed an interest in reincarnation long before the advent of theosophy and "New Age" teachings. The writings of Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner in the 19th century did much to stimulate such interest. In the last chapter of this section Christoph Bochinger reviews ideas about reincarnation among adherents of "New Age" doctrines. Bochinger points out that, although almost all such teachings imply or explicitly assert reincarnation as if it were factually established, they have almost nothing to say about it in detail. There is, to put it mildly, no theological faculty studying the concept. "New Age" writers promulgate reincarnation, but they do not examine it; nor are its processes even conjectured, apart from naive endorsements of *karma*, regarded as a universal solvent of all possible questions about misfortune and misconduct.

The third section, entitled "Perspectives about Research and Discussion"

will perhaps be of most interest to readers of this journal. Peter Graf discusses the idea of reincarnation as an important place where the cultures of East and West meet and, as we might say, rub off on each other. In the following chapter Eberhard Bauer asks whether reincarnation is susceptible to scientific investigation; he then gives an even-handed account of research on the cases of children who seem to remember previous lives. He concludes that the subject needs much more research. (No one can quarrel with that.) In the final chapter, Perry Schmidt-Leukel discusses the idea of reincarnation as a challenge to Christian theology. Surveys have shown that about 30% of Westerners questioned believe in reincarnation, although it has no place in the Western religions to which they at least nominally adhere. Obviously, scientists and scholars need to take the subject seriously. In his text and notes, Schmidt-Leukel shows an impressive acquaintance with the writings of philosophers who have grappled with the question of what constitutes personal identity and with those of the theologians who have grappled with that of theodicy.

This book is well-written and with one exception, well-produced. The references are adequate and, so far as I can judge, accurate. There is, however, no index, which I consider deplorable in a work of such excellent scholarship. I hope that its readership can be increased by translations into other languages. I recommend it to philosophers interested in the definition of personal identity, to scientists and scholars who take the subject of reincarnation seriously, and to any theologians who are complacently satisfied with Christian teachings about life after death.

Here I may mention another book, also recently published in Germany, which focuses on a particular aspect of reincarnation. This is *Wiedergeburt der Ahnen: Eine Religionsethnographische und Religionsphänomenologische Untersuchung zur Reinkarnationsvorstellung* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1994). The author, Michael Bergunder, is with the theological faculty of the University of Halle. His work is exclusively concerned with the belief in the reincarnation of ancestors within a family; he is well aware of empirical research on this matter.

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**Riding With The Lion** by Kyriacos Markides. New York: Penguin Books, 1996, 368 pages, (p) \$13.95, ISBN 0-14-019481-9.

This book is an account by a sociologist from the University of Maine of his visit to a monastery in Cyprus. Indirectly, it is concerned with the present paradigm in physics and the implications for this of the paranormal happenings