



Beyond the Molecular-Only Vision: A Case for Religion, Reincarnation, Transcendence, and an Indian Dilemma

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Abstract

Contemporary science's fixation on a molecular-only understanding of life is complete and influential. This is apparent in the medical area and even within philosophy there appears to be little interest in substantive arguments against materialism. Yet as a recent publication by the author ("Non-Philosophical Arguments Challenging Scientific Materialism") pointed out, there are a number of credible examples - including terminal lucidity; our natural religion/dualism; the psychological import associated with some heart transplants; the extraordinary abilities found in the prodigy realm; as well as a number of para-normal reports - that are implausible from a molecular-only perspective. But the unfolding broad obstacle facing the materialist perspective is that the reliance on the DNA molecule to explain heredity (and with it confirm evolutionary logic and potentially fulfill medical promises) is facing a major impasse with the missing heritability problem. These points will be first discussed via a short followup on the aforementioned article. Then as an additional challenge and an introduction to possible religious support, consideration turns to some transcendent experiences chronicled in Jacque Lusseyran's *And There Was Light*.

Discussions then turn to a straightforward case in support of religious beliefs, and in some detail the potential explanatory fit of reincarnation. The concluding discussions touch on contemporary blindspots including the dismissal of religion/dualism; the neglect of traditional healthy lifestyles; a modern-versus-traditional dilemma facing educated Indians; and a parallel impasse in physics. An overriding point herein is that science's foundational materialist position appears to be in serious trouble, and of course that matters.

Keywords: Materialism; Religion; Terminal Lucidity; Prodigies; Heritability; Transcendence; Reincarnation; Jacque Lusseyran; Ramanujan; Yogananda

Introduction

The import of scientific materialism - entailing a complete equation-anchored, molecular-only description of life - is not subtle, although under-appreciated. In previous works the author has used quotes from the psychologist Steven Pinker, the geneticist J. Craig Venter, the physicist Richard Feynman, the biologist Ursula Goodenough, and the novelist Julian Barnes, to elaborate on that import. Of note here is that this "not mysterious at all", "thermodynamically inevitable", "relentlessly mechanical" and thus deterministic vision describes life as simply entailing molecular-only "programmed" "units of genetic obedience" [Goodenough, Barnes]. Modern medical research and practice are of course anchored to that perspective.

Two relevant books are Ernst Mayr's *What Evolution Is* and James D. Watson's *DNA: The Story of the Genetic Revolution* [Mayr; Watson 2017]. Both authors had exceptional scientific backgrounds. Mayr's work was notable both for its seemingly

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humble and non-provocative presentation, as well as its absolute confidence in materialism and science (i.e., where we turn when “we want to learn the real truth”) [Mayr, pp.4-5].

A further sense of the intellectual terrain is provided by James D. Watson with:

I was born curious. ... And so if you wanted an explanation for life, it had to be about the molecular basis for life. I never thought there was a spiritual basis for life; I was very lucky to be brought up by a father who had no religious beliefs [Watson 2003].

And further with regard to a promotional line used for the genetics-inspired movie *Gattaca* - “There is no gene for the human spirit” - Watson wrote, “[i]t remains a dangerous blind spot in our society that so many wish this were so” [Watson 2017, p.440]. This is arguably a foundational point for science, with many others in the intellectual neighborhood apparently on board (the “so many” doesn’t seem to apply therein).

Yet this write-up presents a number of behavioral phenomena that frankly appear impossible from that scientific perspective. In conjunction with the missing heritability situation these could motivate some questioning of the completeness of materialism. A further point is that this situation is suggestive of dualism/souls, and as such offers introductory support for religious views. This perspective is further suggested via the chronicle of transcendence experienced by a blind young Frenchman during World War II, as well as others along various established religious/mystical routes. Some possible explanations via a reincarnation dynamic are then discussed. Finally, observations with regard to modern pitfalls - including the intellectual dismissal of the spiritual domain; the neglect of traditional lifestyles; physics’ potentially overlapping impasse; and an associated challenge for educated Indians (can one respect modern scientific progress without writing off India’s religious achievements).

Materials and Methods

Literature covering some extraordinary behaviors was obtained and considered along with an earlier work synthesizing such challenges. These behaviors included those associated with heart transplants, end of life revitalizations, stunning intellectual abilities, and also our innate religion. Books and articles relevant to the unfolding missing heritability problem were also considered. The remarkable transcendent experiences of Jacque Lusseyran were explored via his autobiography [Lusseyran]. Likewise additional literature discussing transcendent experiences were also reviewed [Kapleau; Luk; Yogananda; MacFarquhar]. Furthermore, earlier papers presenting the potential import associated with reincarnation [Christopher 2017; Stevenson

2000; Christopher 2022] were reconsidered. Finally, that literature survey provided a basis for producing this manuscript discussing materialism’s problems; the potential for religion-resonant understandings; and some further modern weak points.

Discussions

Prodigious Mysteries

A recent article by the author touched on a number of prodigious abilities which challenge materialism/physicalism [Christopher 2026]. These included the little known Einstein Syndrome in which some young kids (usually boys) appear to show up in a very focussed, technically-oriented, and also socially-limited (including a late onset of talking) fashion. Such kids are also overwhelmingly born into technically/music-accomplished families. That review also included consideration of some stunning cases of prodigious savants from Darold Treffert’s *Islands of Genius* [Treffert]. A final prodigious phenomenon considered therein was the memory syndrome, hyperthymia. How a basis for such extraordinary abilities could have fallen out of our evolutionary journey, and then ultimately been realized in brains is difficult to imagine.

The earlier cited paper described hyperthymia via a notable *Scientific American* article, “Remembrance of All Things Past” [McGaugh and LePort]. That article discussed the autobiographical memories observed in some people and in particular considered the abilities and experiences of a woman, Jill Price. The article also chronicled the authors’ subsequent confirmation of similar abilities in about 50 people. Such memories were found to be “highly organized in that they are associated with a particular day and date”; including both personal and significant general events; and also occurring “naturally and without exertion”.

Switching now to Darold Treffert’s *Islands of Genius* and its discussion of exceptional memories. In his preface, Treffert mentioned that among the savants he had encountered during his 47 year research journey that they all demonstrated “incredible memory” [Treffert, p.xiv]. Among identical twin autistic savants, Flo and Kay, their memories included:

that they had pork chops, mixed vegetables, and a baked potato on January 10, 1994 and that the weather on March 13, 1993 produced the ‘no-name storm’. They also remember that the *\$10,000 Dollar Pyramid* TV program with Dick Clark, their hero, began its tenure on ABC Television on May 6, 1974. They remember the questions and answers for that first show and most of the programs that followed [Treffert, p.75].

Another savant, “remembers the weather for each day of his adult life” [Treffert, p.75]. And one man who after being hit on the head with a baseball at age 10, could then “perform calendar calculations” and “also remember the weather, along

with other autobiographical details of his life, from that time forward” in a day-by-day fashion [Treffert, p.193].

That latter example opened Treffert’s chapter on the remarkable acquired savant syndrome wherein people after a neural insult/injury demonstrated savant-like focus and skills. But that baseball-hit victim appears to have simply acquired hyperthymesia, an effortless ability which as previously mentioned would appear to require an evolutionary basis. Yet how could that have happened, including the ability to automatically calculate the day-of-the-week associated with a particular calendar date? Furthermore, calendar calculating appears to be the most common savant skill [Treffert, p.65].

Perhaps the least controversial challenges to materialism are prodigious intellectual abilities and Treffert’s book offers a fine introduction to this area.

Terminal Lucidity

The coverage in the aforementioned paper also included the very surprising terminal lucidity, a condition involving the “unexpected return of mental clarity and memory shortly before death in patients suffering from severe psychiatric and neurologic disorders” [Nahm 2009]. That paper had opened with consideration of the psychologist Jesse Bering’s 2013 *Scientific American* blog piece, “One Last Goodbye/ The Strange Case of Terminal Lucidity” [Bering], which in turn began by referencing the biologist Michael Nahm’s 2009 piece on this long marginalized topic. Bering’s piece mentioned that he had been with his dying mother as she somehow managed “five minutes of perfect communion with me when, ostensibly, all her cognitive functions were already lost”.

In returning to that topic here I simply add a couple of examples and then a bit from the 2025 *Scientific American* article by Jordan Kinard. In one example a woman whose father had been placed in a nursing home with a diagnosis of dementia which progressed to the point of being unable to recognize his daughter [Godfrey]. After a seeming breakthrough one evening following his consumption of an old favorite food (jello), the following morning:

when she visited, Ward recognized his daughter instantly. And for the next two days they spoke. “It was as if his mind had been unplugged for so many years,” she remembers, “and then all of a sudden it got plugged back in again.” Then he lost consciousness. Two days later, he died.

Now returning to a fine clinical review in the *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, “Terminal lucidity: A review and a case collection”, in which some longstanding (although officially neglected) paradoxical rejuvenations were reviewed [Nahm and Greyson 2012]. One case involved an 81-year-old Icelandic woman who had displayed symptoms of dementia while living for years in a retirement home. It was reported that despite regular visits from family members “she had

neither recognized any of them nor spoken to them” during her final year. Yet during a visit by her son Lydur, the woman “[s]uddenly sat up, looked him directly in the face, and said, ‘My Lydur, I am going to recite a verse to you’”. She then “clearly and loudly” recited the following (which was later translated “into unrhymed English”):

Oh, father of light, be adored.

Life and health you gave me.

My father and mother.

Now I sit up, for the sun is shining.

You send your light in to me.

Oh, God, how good you are.

The elderly woman then laid back on her pillow and remained unresponsive until dying about a month later. Assuming this was his mother’s work, Lydur then wrote down the verse and later found out that it was the opening stanza from a psalm written by an Icelandic poet. This case was similar to some other cases in that it was spiritually-oriented.

Recent efforts to assess the commonness of terminal lucidity were also discussed [Nahm and Greyson 2012]. In one nursing home survey it was found that “7 out of 10” caregivers reported they had observed patients during the past five years with “dementia and confusion becoming lucid a few days before death”. Additionally, a second nursing home survey found that many staff members had “first hand accounts” of confused seniors “suddenly becoming lucid enough in the last days of life to recognize and say farewell to relatives and carers”. As this mysterious phenomenon gained significant attention it resulted in a 2025 *Scientific American* article, “A Final Lucidity” [Kinard]. Therein it was reported by a gerontologist that such rejuvenations turned out to be “more common” than the “exception in dementia patients”. It was also reported there by a medical researcher that this phenomenon was in fact common knowledge among caregivers, but apparently had been suppressed since “no one ever thought anyone” would believe it.

That reports of a profound, soul-suggestive phenomenon have apparently been suppressed is a good introduction to the downside of the modern fixation on materialism.

Natural Religion

As previously reported, a significant mystery is that humans appear to show up inclined to believe in a simple religion. This phenomenon was both reported on and also rationalized within, Justin L. Barrett’s, *Born Believers - The Science of Children’s Religious Belief* [Barrett]. That natural religion includes believing in God/souls/gods and moreover “souls and spirits that survive death” [Barrett, p.120]. This tendency was uncovered via surveys of young children and its findings apparently then generally accepted including

by scholars such as Paul Bloom, professor and director of Yale University's Mind and Development Lab. Bloom in fact had written that "[t]he universal themes of religion are not learned...They are part of human nature... Creationism – and belief in God – is bred in the bone" [Wallace J.].

As potentially significant as these findings are, the author can report that even within religious studies they appear to be neglected. Of note here if there is something deeper going on with life, as claimed by religions, then that might show up as an innate understanding.

Aligned with the above comment on religious studies, even a religious person employed as an academic like Justin Barrett, apparently felt obliged to simply conclude that the relevant evolutionary analysis makes "belief in some kind of god almost inevitable" [Barrett, p.20]. How many contemporary academics would even consider alternative explanations?

If scientists have an interest in investigating dualistic possibilities then they should look to investigate this innate religion. That religion also appears to contain moral components and a belief in free will.

Unexpected Psychological Fallout From Heart Transplants

As previously considered there have been claims for over 50 years of surprising psychological impacts associated with some heart transplants [Leister; Verny; Pearsall et al]. Such reports include descriptions of "(1) changes in preferences, (2) alterations in emotions/temperament, (3) modifications of identity, and (4) memories from the donor's life" found among transplant recipients [Leister]. Herein only one additional case will be discussed from the article, "Organ Transplants and Cellular Memories" by Paul Pearsall, Gary E. Schwarz, and Linda G. Russek.

The Case 6 (among 10) donor was a 14-year-old girl who had died as a result of a gymnastics accident. The mother of the donor spoke at length about how fit and energetic her daughter had been. She purportedly was "so excited about life that she would just hop and jump all the time like a kitten". She did, though, have an apparent (perhaps anorexic-like) difficulty with eating. Despite an active life supplemented with therapy efforts, the girl "just wasn't much into food" and for "a while she was purging". Additionally, the mother reported a peculiarity in which her daughter when embarrassed emitted a "silly little giggle" which "sounded like a little bird".

The corresponding Case 6 recipient was a 47-year-old man. The recipient's brother reported that after his surgery the recipient seemed like "a teenager". He added that "[h]e's a kid or at least thinks he is a kid", and that when they go bowling "he yells and jumps around like a fool". The brother also added that the recipient somehow obtained a "weird" laugh, one sounding like "a girl's laugh". In a final point of

concern the recipient's brother pointed out that his 47-year-old brother after surgery "was pretty much nauseous almost all the time" and as a result there were concerns, including "[h]is doctor" being "concerned about his weight".

The 47-year-old recipient himself reported that after surgery he felt "like a teenager" and felt "giddy". He also acknowledged that he "had this annoying tendency to giggle that drives my wife nuts". He additionally mentioned his subsequent difficulty with eating and feeling nauseous, and further feeling "that it would help if he could throw up".

As reported earlier a number of the cases reported in "Organ Transplants and Cellular Memories" are truly amazing [Christopher 2026]. Specific interests, sexual-orientation, dietary preferences, and other characteristics were seemingly transferred. Perhaps the most remarkable were ones in which there seemed to be some psychic connection or communication between the donor and recipient.

Pearsall et al offered a (materialist) hypothesis involving the heart being capable of storing memories and thus being a basis for the implied transferences. But this hypothesis doesn't seem possible, certainly for the cases with claimed high level transferences (including with regard to music). Additionally, how could such memories be made available in a new body and why didn't the loss of the recipient's own heart leave an analogous gap in memory? It is also worth noting that a number of the case descriptions included the recipient's doctor offering modern explanations along the lines of 'it must be caused by side effects from the medications'.

The obvious alternative explanation would involve a transference of a soul from the donor. Additionally, if the terminal lucidity phenomenon was in part suppressed because medical personnel and civilians thought it was too incredible, this would very likely have also been the case with the transplant phenomena. Some of the recipients, though, did speak confidently about the possibility of a heart providing a basis for the transferences.

Meaningful rebuttal of such phenomena would seem have to assert that the claims were fraudulent. Mysteries such as this are remarkable and deserve more attention.

Great Expectations Floundering - The Genetic Impasse

The earlier article highlighted some of the modern hubris associated with genetic expectations. For science, genetics was supposed to provide the molecular blueprints responsible for "[e]verything that living things can do"; as well as uniting "the tree of life"; and of course banishing "the life force from biology" [Fromme and Spence; Kaku]. The late biologist, E. O. Wilson, even went so far as to suggest that a "full and correct" understanding of this materialist evolutionary vision is "[t]he key to the long-term survival of humanity" [Wilson, p.17]. The aforementioned life force is synonymous with

the “ghost in the machine” (or dualism) that authorities like Steven Pinker have regularly derided [Pinker 2002]. Recently developed DNA deciphering capabilities were to have provided profound insight into life; beginning with perhaps the unspoken holy grail, that expressed by humans [Venter 2007].

The difficulty facing the “DNA-driven biological” machine model is that after over 20 years of searching for the presumed genetic connections to clear health and behavioral differences, those searches have largely followed their initial (common variants hypothesis’) “absolutely beyond belief” disappointing trajectory. One example involved the search for a genetic basis for the tendency to experience homosexual sex. The particular effort involved a large polygenic search for DNA sequences correlated with the occurrence of homosexual sex. That study was described in a *New York Times* 2019 article by Sandra Bullock [Bullock] and also an accompanying article by two researchers, biologist Steven M. Phelps, and the geneticist and sociologist Robbee Wedow [Phelps and Wedow].

The researchers’ article mentioned that the study had been, “conducted by first-rate scientists” and necessarily had involved extensive efforts to identify ties between individuals’ DNA specifics and their homosexual experiences. Additionally, the study team had gone to considerable lengths to put together a sensitive presentation of their findings. Although, the investigation was billed as successful, contrary takes showed up in the Readers’ Picks comments for the Phelps and Wedow article. One commenter pointed out:

[t]his research clearly shows that there is no straight answer - pun unintended. If looking into the DNA of 500,000 people didn’t help, what will?

Another commenter got rather animated in claiming the inadequacy of the finding:

Less than 1% of variation is risible, not even the beginnings of understanding the phenomenon.

Dudes, get back to us if and when you have something to report.

Bullock’s article in fact had stated that:

[r]esearchers specifically identified five genetic variants present in people’s genomes that appear to be involved. Those five comprise less than 1 percent of the [inferred] genetic influences, they said.

And when the scientists tried to use genetic markers to predict how people in unrelated data sets reported their sexual behavior, it turned out to be too little genetic information to allow prediction.

Of particular note here is that this was presented as a success. This situation appears to be representative of

contemporary genetic news and it certainly doesn’t confirm David Watson’s claim that we “can find genes for behaviors” [Watson 2003] or Steven Pinker’s general belief “that life depends on a molecule that carries information, directs metabolism, and replicates itself” [Pinker 2013]. Additionally other big polygenic search efforts - including the much-trumpeted findings in topics like educational attainment - were subsequently drawn into questioning [Cepelewicz].

Superficially, science’s materialist vision - along with its evolution - make straightforward sense and this vision has been promoted as such. But the inherent complexity of brains; the very far-reaching expectations placed on DNA (in particular with regard to instincts); and moreover a number of behavioral conundrums suggest a different picture. Perhaps some attention to such conundrums would have limited the modern confidence in genetic and neural models.

It really isn’t hard to challenge scientific materialism, beginning with the genetic model [Christopher 2020; Christopher 2026].

Transcendence and Meaning

Since the scientific vision is questionable alternative visions of life might then apply. Note here that even with physicists’ absolute confidence in the materialist implications of physical laws [Carroll; Fromme; Kaku], it is worth noting that much of the inferable universe is still unidentified [Hossenfeld and McGaugh]. Continuing, a prominent class of alternative visions is of course found among religions. Writing here gets started, though, not with religions, but with a common feature of religions, transcendence. Transcendence herein implies a significant break from our normal ego-oriented, strife-prone, and unstable conscious existence. Such an experience could also be relevant to meaning, in particular for the spiritually-inclined.

In order to offer some support for transcendence, commentary on a memoir involving the experiences of a young blind Frenchman during the Second World War is introduced. In that autobiography, *And There Was Light*, Jacque Lusseyran described his experiences and critically provided a minimally theology-connected description of transcendence and its potential [Lusseyran].

Lusseyran opened the book with a big picture motivation:

[w]hen you said to me: “Tell me the story of your life,” I was a not eager to begin. But when you added, “What I care most about is learning your reasons for loving life,” then I became eager, for that was a real subject [Lusseyran, opening page].

He then went on to bolster that subject by pointing out that his positive outlook was somehow maintained “through everything: through infirmity, the terrors of war, and even in Nazi prisons.” Additionally, he pointed out that this

uncovered love of life did not fail, even, “in misfortune nor in good times, which may seem easier but is not”; and further that such reasons were not intellectual in nature thus making his position as a university professor somewhat of a hinderance in writing the memoir [Lusseyran, opening page]. The self-awareness found in Lusseyran’s book, including its reflections on adulthood and ego success, is impressive.

That key development or revelation in Lusseyran’s life was that he had somehow encountered an inner light, which shifted his experience of life, and even left him with a simple form of vision. This encounter occurred in the aftermath of an accident which had left him blind at age eight. In his subsequent sightless circumstances he “began to look more closely, not at things but at a world closer to myself, looking from an inner place to one further within”.

That self awareness somehow facilitated his encounter with an inner light. Lusseyran found that encounter to be an:

indescribable relief, and happiness so great it almost made me laugh. Confidence and gratitude came as if a prayer had been answered. I found light and joy at the same moment, and can say without hesitation that from that time on light and joy have never been separated in my experience. I have had them or lost them together [Lusseyran, p.11].

Somehow he had crossed a threshold and was then able to experiment and extend this inner light connection. At times Jacques Lusseyran interpreted this revelation as an unearned gift from God and for years considered it to be his secret. As someone who has been around meditational/religious efforts for a number of years, the author suggests that such transformational experiences or breakthroughs are rare and usually involve years of religious/mystical commitment and practices (and thus the rigors of traditional monastic training). One Japanese Zen Buddhist teacher replied on this subject, “[t]here have been a few rare souls whose minds were so pure that they could gain genuine [transformation] without [training]” [Kapleau, p.256].

In discussing his wide-ranging talks with his close friend, Jean, Lusseyran described the shift in his perspective that followed the revelation:

I explained to him that it was a preconceived idea which made the process [rebounding from introversion] hard for him - an idea, by the way, which almost everyone shares - that there are two worlds - one without, the other within. I kept having to explain all over again because Jean wanted to believe me but couldn’t. The preconceived idea always stood in the way.

We talked about this at least once a week in the frame of mind of people going to Mass on Sunday. After all, it was a religious subject. The reality - the oneness of the world - left me in the lurch, incapable of explaining it, because it seemed obvious. I could only repeat: “there is only one world. Things

outside only exist if you go to meet them with everything you carry in yourself. As to the things inside, you will never see them well unless you allow those outside to enter in.”[Lusseyran, p.76-7].

He claimed his perspective shift was not a gross one, more akin to “turning one’s head a hundredth part of a circle” - but nonetheless it had a profound impact. Lusseyran continued:

To convince Jean (which mattered terribly to me) I assembled all my arguments. If he wanted to be completely happy, there must be only one world, for this was the indispensable condition.

This joy was well known to me. It was the Grace of my state of being. When I read in the gospels that the Word was made Flesh, I told myself that this was indeed true. At the same time I was aware that I had done nothing to deserve it. It had simply been given to me, and I prayed God that Jean, too, should receive it [Lusseyran, p.76-7].

Lusseyran had somehow stumbled onto what might be called a Unity state and that novel perspective apparently facilitated his remarkable life. Quite a bit of *And There Was Light* chronicled his efforts to integrate that transformation into his increasingly challenged life.

Additionally, Lusseyran suggested that there was a fragile aspect to the inner light-connection, and he even experimented to confirm that fragility. He found that detours into impatience, jealousy, anger, or fear, weaken the connection - as if by “fog or smoke” [Lusseyran, p.15]. His maintenance of morality might then have been aided by feedback from the inner light. He claimed this situation left him routinely looking for “friendship and harmony” [Lusseyran, p.15].

A bit more is added here to highlight a possible connection between transcendence and some of the deeper claims found in religious literature. While in the Buchenwald concentration camp Lusseyran was tested to an extreme degree, both physically and psychically. Yet he also encountered more of a positive force therein:

[h]ave I said that death was already there? If I have I was wrong. Sickness and pain, yes, but not death. Quite the opposite, life, and that was the unbelievable thing that had taken possession of me. I had never lived so fully before.

Life had become a substance within me. It broke into my cage, pushed by a force a thousand times stronger than I. It was certainly not made of flesh and blood, not even ideas. It came toward me like a shimmering wave, like the caress of light. I could see it beyond my eyes and my forehead and above my head. It touched me and lifted me to overflowing. I let myself float upon it.

There came names which I mumbled from my depths of my astonishment. No doubt my lips did not speak them, but

they had their own song: “Providence, the Guardian Angel, Jesus Christ, God”. I didn’t try to turn it over in my mind. It was just not the time for metaphysics. I drew my strength from the spring [Lusseyran, pp.252-3].

Lusseyran later provided a synopsis for his subsequent experience at Buchenwald:

[b]ut there was one thing left which I could do: not refuse God’s help, the breath he was blowing upon me. That was the one battle I had to fight, hard and wonderful all at once: not to let my body be taken by fear. For fear kills, and joy maintains life [Lusseyran, p.253].

Lusseyran’s final eleven months at Buchenwald appeared to have been bolstered by his inner empowerment. He claimed that he was somehow “carried by a hand”, and was thus free “to help the others; not always, not much, but in my own way I could help”. Specifically, he could, “try to show other people how to go about holding on to life” and “turn them toward the flow of light and joy which had grown so abundant in me” [Lusseyran, p.254]. The subsequent text elaborated on that final period and some of its heart-wrenching experiences. But his graceful presence somehow communicated itself within a very crowded and desperate camp barracks, and many came to confide in him. Lusseyran said of this:

I did the best I could to understand them all. That is how I lived, how I survived. The rest I cannot describe [Lusseyran, p.254].

The messages put forth in *And There Was Light* included both that of inward spiritual potential and also tangibly, its large impact. Lusseyran accomplished extraordinary things during World War II. The book’s final paragraph summarized his experiences with two claims:

The first of these is that joy does not come from outside, for whatever happens to us is within. The second truth is that light does not come to us from without. Light is in us, even if we have no eyes [Lusseyran, p.280].

I think Lusseyran’s revelations about an inner light and associated unity provide corroboration for the type of transformations that some religions and mystical traditions have focused on. From my knowledge of Buddhism, Lusseyran’s revelation appears to have been roughly consistent with an enlightenment experience. Consistent with this in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* it is suggested that this underlying “mind of yours is inseparable luminosity and emptiness in the form of a great mass of light, it has no birth or death” [Fremantle and Trungpa, p.87]. Lusseyran’s revelation perhaps then reflected a close encounter with his underlying soul and its perspective, and his writing offered some associated insights into life and death.

Additional writings by the author detail some other breakthrough or enlightenment experiences, largely

from Buddhist literature where the author has familiarity [Christopher 2024]. Although such published accounts appear to be rare, a few more were recently encountered including [Luk, Yogananda, MacFarquhar]. Those cases involve adults and perhaps because our adult psyches tend to be quite removed from our innate spirituality, the adult Unity revelations tended to be more explosive than that of the eight-year-old Lusseyran. After one such revelation a Japanese businessman implored another “to vow to attain enlightenment though it takes the infinite, the boundless, the incalculable future” [Kapleau, p.217]. Such revelations provide a different take on life and meaning.

Another point here is that Lusseyran eventually became a follower of the German mystic/educator Rudolf Steiner [Lusseyran F.]. His parents were as well and this point was raised in an earlier version of Lusseyran’s book (the author lost this earlier copy), but then was apparently deleted in later editions (like the one referenced here). Perhaps because of the obscurity of Steiner and also his belief in reincarnation, the publisher perhaps decided to remove that material (as they did any religion-resonant appraisals of the book). In any case perhaps it is best for those interested in a spiritual/religious path to find one that seems most fitting and then try to live it.

A Brief Look at Religion and Reincarnation

Religions typically posit a deeper reality including an existence beyond death. They in turn offer strategies for the underlying soul to help itself - and possibly others - to achieve a good post-death outcome, as well as potentially improving their current life. Our natural religion appears consistent with some prior exposure to a souls/God(s)/disembodied realm. Some of the aforementioned phenomena are also suggestive of the existence of souls. Our natural religion was also observed to contain beliefs in disembodied souls (or Barrett’s “superhuman beings”) that possess “character, good, or bad” and further that “[m]oral norms are unchangeable, even by superhumans” [Barrett, pp.138-9]. From that innate perspective, the disciplines commonly prescribed by religions might then in part reflect strategies designed to best navigate towards a positive return to the “superhuman” realm.

One religious framework posits existence as a cyclical affair - embodied followed by disembodied, etc - and it potentially offers insight into some of life’s mysteries. According to some sources such a reincarnation model was prevalent in the premodern world. In *M’Clintock and Strong’s Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* it is claimed that, “[t]ransmigration ... being spread all over the world, seems to be anthropologically innate” [Head and Cranston, p.170]. Readers can look at some modern investigations into reincarnation, beginning with the extensive case studies and analysis of Ian Stevenson and also his more readable successor, Jim Tucker [Stevenson

1997; Tucker]. This author finds such work notable and very significant, but on the other hand also rather limited. On the latter point, it is noteworthy that such cases are very rare and thus do not appear to offer much insight into this possible general phenomenon. Additionally, independent of those very dedicated efforts arose a stunning case chronicled in the book, *Soul Survivor* [Leininger et al].

Additionally, a significant gap in such case-oriented work (a gap shared with other paranormal research efforts), is the lack of addressing how reincarnation (along with other surprising phenomena) could have arisen out of a material-only evolution? The absolute confidence of scientists in a molecular-based evolution likely bolsters their tendency to dismiss any paranormal reports. Thus, to make some general sense of reincarnation it would seem important to find a way to suggest an evolutionary path to a non-physical, transcendent soul. It would also seem important to suggest how such souls could in turn have influenced the evolutionary process. The physical and non-physical realms would seem best coupled in an alternative evolutionary model.

Moving along to some mostly-human based evidence for reincarnation. An earlier article by the author introduced some possible big picture support for reincarnation, after first reviewing some of Stevenson's and Tucker's points [Christopher 2017]. Those points included its potential support for a number of unusual behaviors; the existence of differences between monozygotic twins; and of course inexplicable knowledge associated with a deceased person's life. Additionally, a focus in Stevenson's work was trying to connect some birthmarks and birth defects with the means of the claimed previous incarnation's death.

Stevenson also concluded at the end of one of his books, "[w]e may, after all, be engaged in a dual evolution - of our bodies and of our minds or souls" [Stevenson 1997, p.187]. Again the question here is - how might that occur? The foundation of the contemporary materialist understanding of life is of course individual-specifying DNA molecules, which in turn are presumed to be shaped over time by natural selection (along with mutations and environmental variations).

From some of the earlier given examples, though, it is apparent that it is not hard to challenge that vision. Beyond such conundrums, though, a broad opening comes through the inability to identify a genetic basis for many individual human behavioral tendencies. Behaviors aren't just interesting details of life, they are also assumed to have been big factors in the dynamics of evolution. Ernst Mayr in his *What Evolution Is* captured some of this:

[t]here are reasons to believe that behavioral shifts have been involved in most evolutionary innovations, hence the

saying "behavior is the pacemaker of evolution." Any behavior that turns out to be of evolutionary significance is likely to be reinforced by the selection of genetic determinants for such behavior (known as the *Baldwin effect*). [Mayr, p.137].

Innate behaviors should have DNA origins and moreover such origins likely had resonances within natural selection. Thus helpful behaviors should have tended to spread within a species across generations.

Continuing, some speciations (or species-creating) events are believed to have been driven by behavioral differentiation. As an example, among the Hawaiian genus of crickets, *Laupala*, there appear to be 38 separate species and the distinguishing aspect amongst them appears to be the males' mating song along with the corresponding female song preferences [Herron and Freeman, pp.625-6]. Those songs consists of simple series of pulses and the distinguishing aspect seems to be the pulse rate. Amazingly then the collection of *Laupala* crickets during their history apparently segregated themselves off into sister species (a common dynamic in nature [Mayr, p.167]) on the basis of mating call frequencies. Of note here is that this simple behavioral dynamic has "astonishing[ly]" evaded efforts to isolate its genetic basis.

Instead of the materialist's model of biochemical-only individuals (from one species) simply producing variants of themselves via conception-beget DNA (discussions here are bracketed down to sexually-reproducing species, although sources like the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* also posit additional rebirth scenarios), an alternative reincarnation dynamic might begin, as traditionally believed, with an incarnating soul being drawn to their parents-to-be. That process could then piggy-back on some specifics obtained via the conception's DNA product - including both species-specific body plans and parental appearance input - but the underlying trajectory of the incarnating soul could largely be independent of a DNA basis. This could be consistent with the unfolding missing heritability problem. An underlying draw to future parents (for rebirth) was suggested repeatedly in Stevenson's work by some phenomena, including discussions of mothers having dreams in which their coming offspring identified themselves (traditionally called announcing dreams), and also of cases in which living individuals made statements predicting their future parents [Stevenson 1997]. Such a draw dynamic might reflect past relations, similar behavioral trajectories, and also locality. Jim Tucker pointed out that among (human-to-human) cases (involving reports of a previous life), "the vast majority of the children report past lives in the same country of the current life, and many of them say they have lived in the same village or even the same family" [Tucker, p.219]. Note that such a dynamic of course could play out elsewhere in the animal kingdom.

A basic point here is that reincarnation's import could overlap with, as well as be complementary to, the conception-based DNA. If an incarnating soul was in fact drawn to its future parents, then that soul could find some continuity in the DNA specifics produced by conception. This might include DNA-determined unusual conditions as well as appearance details, species default codes, and sex codes. Of note here is that if such a parental-draw dynamic grossly represented a draw between similar beings - analogous to the phenomena of assortative mating [Baron-Cohen] - then that dynamic should produce its own crude heredity pattern. For example, if an incarnating relatively aggressive soul were drawn to similarly-inclined future parents, then that dynamic should produce an apparent inheritance of the tendency to be aggressive. This would be true even in the absence of any confirmed DNA basis for that tendency (as appears to be the case for many other behavioral genetics's topics). Such a dynamic might also account for the behavioral dynamic associated with selective breeding.

Another related example here is the apparent inheritance of the tendency to smoke tobacco and also drink alcohol [Nurenburger et al]. The apparent inheritance import associated with being an alcoholic - "more than 50 percent of the overall risk for alcoholism is attributable to inherited factors" - for example, could then reflect a transcendental dynamic and not some elusive DNA specifics. As with the Einstein syndrome cases in which remarkably nerd-inclined children have been found to be born to almost exclusively analytically- or musically-connected parents, this might reflect a significant rebirth dynamic or resonance [Christopher 2023].

Stevenson in fact generalized with regard to habitual behaviors in suggesting that investigated cases suggest that "[p]hobias also occur often" and these include "cravings for addicting substances, such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs that the previous personality was known to have used" [Stevenson 1997, p.7]. Thus, from a reincarnation perspective problematic habits in a person's life could represent habits from previous (human) lives, and along similar reasoning the resolution of such habits could be helpful with regard to future lives.

A basic point here is that the likelihood of the crapshoot-like conception delivering a variable DNA match for a soul's overall trajectory is zero. If reincarnation were happening in a general and significant way then the conception's DNA definition would have to be breached in a number of ways. This is a collision point between reincarnation and the scientific (gene-an-chored) model. Thus if science can show that nature-plus-nurture roughly defines individuals, then this would markedly limit the possible import associated with reincarnation. On this point it would seem that the efforts to grossly confirm the expectations of behavioral genetics,

and perhaps particularly the differences observed between monozygotic twins, are of interest.

Continuing, one description of Buddhist views on a possible human incarnation dynamic was found in a passage in B. Alan Wallace's *Meditations of a Buddhist Skeptic*:

According to the Buddha, three things are necessary for the emergence of a human psyche and the formation of a human embryo: ovulation on the part of the mother, the parent's sexual intercourse, and the presence of a being in the intermediate state (between lives) who has the karma to be reborn to specific parents at a particular time.

Such beings in the intermediate state are certainly influenced by their karma, or actions in their past lives, but their own inclinations also influence the selection of the parents to whom they will be reborn [Wallace B., p.103].

Further Wallace claimed that Buddhism suggests that "sentient beings are driven by desire to take rebirth, and when desire is accompanied by craving, hostility, and delusion, the results are painful" [Wallace B., p.103]. And thus perhaps Buddhism's focus on expanding our window-of-concern to that of "all beings". Buddhism also posits a number of other possible rebirth realms and that human rebirths are rare. Since the belief in reincarnation was common it is likely that many other groups had their own understanding of how a reincarnation dynamic might happen.

Additionally, a reincarnation dynamic would be consistent with our innate dualism/religion. One basic question here would be why we don't remember earlier embodied lives? Justin Barrett in his *Born Believers* quoted an Indian man's reincarnation-based explanation for our natural religion. This included that infants tend to eventually become "confused and distracted by the world" and thus lose their pre-birth disembodied memories (and with it their recollection of God) [Barrett, p.3]. On this point, and with regard to further back memory loss, the author is reminded of the some background for a novel (and later a movie), *The Sweet Hereafter*. That author, Russell Banks, in an interview had pointed out how his own mother's life had seemingly been partitioned in two by the death of one of her children. Thus, profound changes might tend to impose a moving on from earlier context, and going from embodied to disembodied, or vice-versa, might qualify.

Continuing, reincarnation could shed some light on individual differences (including personality) and also provide the beginnings of an alternative evolutionary vision by suggesting soul-based influences on behavioral dynamics (and also more subtly, health dynamics). One example might be the Flynn effect in which intelligence test scores for humans have very surprisingly increased [Flynn; Pinker 2011; Christopher 2023]. In addition to that bottom-up form of influence, there might also be some top-down or God(s)

influence as suggested by our natural religion. That type of influence, though, appears difficult to argue. Another possible evolutionary connection involves the phenomenon of kin bias (a bias favoring genetic relatives observed in many species). The suggested draw-to-your-parents rebirth dynamic could help establish kin bias, and further shed light on the stubborn differences observed in the very many (human) cultures present [Christopher 2022]. An underlying challenge for individuals then might be learning their own particular lessons, and from a religious perspective moving towards a form of transcendence. Also of note is that from a soul-based perspective our underlying ultimate potential would likely be generic. The author's understanding of historical experiences with religious/mystical efforts, though, suggest this march towards transcendence is likely to be a long journey [Christopher 2024].

Concluding Discussions

Contradicting science's "biochemistry and biophysics"-only model turns out to be straightforward. The certainty surrounding that model, though, unfortunately has derailed much of the intellectual realm from questioning it. If the materialist model of life continues to flounder - beginning with the heritability impasse - then some academics might consider alternatives. Behind all of this is that premodern/pre-science people may have stumbled onto profound connections which have since become taboo.

The modern denial with regard to soul-suggestive phenomena like terminal lucidity, heart transplant psyche transfers, and also our innate religious instincts is readily apparent. Steven Pinker's work such as his 2013 *The New Republic* essay, "Science Is Not Your Enemy: An impassioned plea to neglected novelists, embattled professors, and tenure-less historians" and also parts of his 2018 book, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, exemplify the associated scientific overreach or scientism. Pinker pointed out that:

our minds are prone to illusions, fallacies, and superstitions. Most of the traditional causes of belief - faith, revelation, dogma, authority, charisma, conventional wisdom, the invigorating glow of subjective certainty - are generators of error and should be dismissed as sources of knowledge.

So what are we left with? Pinker provides an answer with:

we must cultivate work-arounds for our cognitive limitations, including skepticism, open debate, formal precision, and empirical tests, often requiring feats of ingenuity [Pinker 2013].

He might well have added, "an allegiance to science", as his gist is that we need the scientific method (along with of course materialist assumptions) to learn about the world and life. But what about limitations associated with that approach,

starting with the simple self-evident facts that a good chunk of life is inherently subjective and also non-repeatable?

Pinker's work is not unusual, though. Readers can see any of the prominent physicists authors like Michio Kaku or Sean Carroll. In fact the hubris surrounding modern physics is likely a big contributor to the aurora of indestructibility surrounding materialism.

Continuing, a potential overlap with physics is dark matter which has eluded significant detection efforts and is apparently woven into much of the universe's galactic space (although not in some dwarf galaxies [Buzzo]). Dark matter is also believed to have played a big role in the dynamics of galaxies. If that search stalemate continues that would be consistent with a physically inferable mystery paralleling a genetic one. Some geneticists have coincidentally joked about the 'dark matter' associated with the missing heritability problem [Hall]. Furthermore, if our innate religion accurately reflects deeper phenomena then dark matter should possess two properties - have an influence on galactic evolution (as it is believed to) and also operate outside the norms of math-driven physics. The former could be consistent with our innate sense of creationism and the latter with our sense of the existence of free will [Barrett]. Of note here is that the existence of free will requires a break from math-directed determinism.

A basic point here is that given the big questions unfolding for both biology and physics, investigators should consider thinking outside the proverbial box. In the past, physicists seem to have been comfortable doing this. The earlier suggested evolutionary behavioral contributions of souls and reincarnation could be paired then on a bigger galactic scale with dark matter's possible steerage towards an astronomical runway for life. These would of course contradict the modern intellectual position of ultimate meaninglessness [Scharf; Haisch].

Returning to the religion versus science front, one place that could offer a good sample of the associated modern standoff is India. There are of course a number of traditional religions in India, and some of which got their start there. The author's religion of Buddhism was started in India although it currently has only a minimal presence there. As the author started to read Hindu literature it helped him question some of the all-too-human excesses associated with Buddhism. He couldn't see evidence that Buddhism's big historical competitor, Hinduism, was any less of a transformational/transcendence facilitator than Buddhism. And to their credit Hinduism also has supported a number of religious paths [Smith] and furthermore some Hindus have made serious efforts to tie together different religious visions [Gritz; Yogananda]. How many followers of other religions have attempted something like this?

One question for educated Indians is - can you take traditional Indian religious efforts and their underlying beliefs seriously (although not uncritically)? As an outsider to Hinduism I am very impressed with books such as *I AM THAT* [Nisargadatta] and *Autobiography of a Yogi* [Yogananda]. Nisargadatta's work is amazingly lucid with its multi-faceted, dialogue-based exposition on our seemingly endless conscious dead-ends and on the other hand our deeper spiritual potential. And Yogananda's book reflected a full blown religious commitment, elaborating on everything from miracles to a complementary spiritual/physical reality. If as suggested herein there is some objective evidence-based support for such purviews - including reincarnation - then that could significantly bolster the importance of such extensive works.

On the other hand an Indian who leaped successfully from the presumed backwards ways of traditional India was the mathematician S. Ramanujan [Kanigal]. Ramanujan's work has received huge intellectual accolades and apparently was quite influential among educated Indians. Yet his efforts were in pure mathematics where many, including with pride his advisor, have characterized the field as meaningless. Ironically, I am reminded of a saying I once read which was attributed to a notable Englishman, 'something not worth with doing is not worth doing well'. What did he actually achieve - beyond intellectual accolades - during his short and unhealthy life? Perhaps the attention surrounding efforts like his own reflect the modern educated rejection of traditional efforts addressing deeper perspectives and meaning.

And for some additional perspective on the apparent nihilism-bend in modern intellectualism, in 2014 *New York Times* had an article on work by a prominent mathematician. In particular, on February 14, 2014 they published an Op-Ed piece by a University of California at Berkeley mathematician, Edward Frenkel, entitled "Is the Universe a Simulation?" [Frenkel]. Apparently a serious topic amongst some academics - including a cited Oxford philosopher and a follow-up team of University of Washington physicists - is that we might "be in someone else's computer simulation", a simulation "based on the laws of mathematics". As is not unusual for such science contributions it ended on solemn notes - "[t]he jury is still out on the simulation hypothesis" but even with a not guilty verdict such work "may hold the key to understanding our reality". Also, of note was the publication date and the fact it achieved "Most Viewed" and "Most Shared on Facebook" status.

Continuing with some pragmatic comments pertaining to the modern drift away from traditional ways, some observations are offered from the author's work with refugees in Rochester, New York. A generic observation is that many of these refugees put on excessive weight which appears to be symptomatic of the modern drift towards over-eating and

sedentary (and screen-viewing) norms. Another relates to a basic problem which is minimized in modern societies - posture. Some of the refugee ladies I have met can seemingly sit cross-legged for long periods on the floor and maintain excellent posture all the while. Apparently if you were raised to sit up (which seems like a good way to enhance attention) you have a good shot at maintaining good core strength and vertebral alignment. The opposite of this scenario, involving a norm of slouching onto furniture or to view devices, appears to beget a modern hallmark - the progressive and problematic loss of posture.

Finally, some comments are added based on a recent visit to a refugee patient in a hospital. The entire medical discourse expressed with regard to that patient was blame-free. Perhaps from the perspective of physicists (i.e. an 'atoms and the void' purview) that might make sense. But as cognizant humans we can sense that our health challenges are frequently tied to our selves and our routines (as appeared to be the case with regard to the patient). One of the patient's relatives was upset about the official uncritical take on the situation. And personally, I vividly recalled a regular scene from a college course I had in computer programming. The professor, Robert M. Graham, would routinely punctuate his lectures with a reminder, 'you are going to make plenty of mistakes, try to learn from them'. Good point.

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