

**GLOSSARY OF SPECIALIZED TERMS  
RELATED TO REINCARNATION RESEARCH AND THEORY**

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This Glossary supplies brief definitions of specialized terms related to reincarnation research, parapsychology, and memory research that many of us use in our posts and comments in the Signs of Reincarnation group on Facebook. It is an abbreviated version of the Glossary for my Signs of Reincarnation course.

Many of these terms were introduced by Ian Stevenson and have become standard in academic reincarnation research and the Glossary therefore can be helpful in reading published case reports and other reports as well.

The underlined terms used in definitions are hyperlinked to their Glossary entries, to make it easy to get additional information on those you don't understand.

You may wish to download this PDF to have it available for reference. It does not include all terms that might be puzzling to you, so if someone uses another one, please bring it up for discussion and possible inclusion in a future edition of the Glossary.

**account** In contrast to a case, an uninvestigated story or anecdote of some unusual occurrence, e.g., an apparition, or a claim to remember a previous life.

**acquaintance case** A reincarnation case in which the previous person or his family were acquainted with, but not related to, the subject or his family before the subject began to speak about the previous life. Cf. same-family case; stranger case.

**age regression** See regression.

**Akashic field** Term introduced by philosopher Ervin László for a cosmic information field similar to the Akashic Records.

**Akashic Records** In Theosophy, a chronicle of all cosmic and human activities since the dawn of time, which many psychics and mediums say they tap to retrieve information about past lives. The idea was derived from the Sanskrit *aksaha*, an etheric substance underlying the universe.

**animism** A worldview or religious outlook concerning souls and spirits and their interaction with the living, characteristic of indigenous or tribal societies around the world.

**announcing dream** A dream, often a pregnancy dream, in which a woman or related person seems to see the spirit of a deceased person stating its intention to be reborn to her. Cf. departure dream.

**anomalous-date case** Stevenson's term for a reincarnation case in which the subject was born before the previous person died. Also called *parakaya pravesha*, possession, replacement reincarnation.

**apparition** A ghost. Apparitions are usually visual but may be auditory, olfactory, tactile, or sensed in some other way.

**assisted reincarnation** Help in deciding where to be reborn by a spirit, such as a man in white, encountered during the intermission.

**astral body** A shadow body aligned with the physical body during life which parts from it at death and continues to exist in a discarnate state until its union with a new physical body. The concept derives from Theosophy but is in general usage today.

**autobiographical knowledge** Memory researcher Michael Conway's term for our abstract knowledge of our personal histories.

**autobiographical memory** In memory research, episodes recollected from an individual's life, based on a combination of episodic memory, semantic memory and autobiographical knowledge. Autobiographical memories may include past-life memories.

**behavioral memory** See behavioral signs.

**behavioral signs** Procedural memories and other behaviors reminiscent of a previous person in a reincarnation case.

**Bridey Murphy effect** The tendency for some information given in a past-life age regression to check out while the identity of the previous person does not.

**case** In the context of our group, generally a reincarnation case. In parapsychology, a spontaneous case that has been investigated, in contrast to an account. The

investigators are presumed to be independent of the phenomena studied unless it is specified to be a self-investigated case.

**case of the reincarnation type (CORT)** Stevenson's term for a reincarnation case.

**continuism** A term introduced by Karen Wehrstein, referring to the tendency of psychological processes between or across lives to resemble psychological processes within lives.

**CORT** Abbreviation for case of the reincarnation type.

**cultural construct** or **cultural construction** An idea that is socially defined or influenced. In relation to a reincarnation case, the idea that signs of reincarnation are interpreted within a cultural frame and perceived according to a society's prevailing beliefs.

**cryptomnesia** Also called source amnesia. An aberration of memory that concerns things that are read, heard, seen, etc., forgotten consciously, but retained in the subconscious and later presented to conscious awareness as if they are a personal memory.

**departure dream** A dream in which members of a deceased person's family dream that he (or occasionally another spirit) tells them where he has been reborn. Cf. announcing dream.

**dispositional karma** The largely Western idea that one's dispositions, drives, etc., carry over from life to life, helping to shape one's character (and often one's spiritual development) as a psychological force operating from within the mind or psyche. Cf. juridical (Indic) karma.

**elective reincarnation** The selection of its new parents by a spirit, without input or assistance from other spirits. See also planned reincarnation. Cf. assisted reincarnation.

**enemy case** A reincarnation case in which a member of an enemy group killed in a society is reborn in that society rather than his own.

**episodic memory** In memory research, a type of autobiographical memory relating to personal experiences with events, people, and objects at particular times and places. Cf. procedural memory, semantic memory.

**experimental birthmark** A birthmark resulting from a mark made on a body as a person nears death or shortly after death, done with the intent of tracking the spirit into its next incarnation.

**false memory** An autobiographical memory that appears to be true, but is not.

**field perspective** In memory research, an episodic memory experienced from an internal point of view, as originally observed. Cf. observer perspective.

**FPL** Acronym for “famous past life.”

**fruit of forgetfulness** Generalized term denoting any foodstuff or substance offered to spirits during the intermission; said to induce amnesia for their previous life or lives. The idea is found in Plato, where spirits are made to drink from the river Lethe to wipe clean their memories before reincarnating. Reincarnation case subjects, especially in Asia, may credit their ability to recall previous lives to having avoided consuming it.

**geographical factor** In relation to reincarnation, any feature of geographic proximity between the death place of the previous person and the parents of the subject that could have played a role in drawing the spirit to its new family. Cf. psychological or psychic factor.

**imaged memory** A subclass of episodic autobiographical memory consisting of images or impressions.

**immediate reincarnation** The belief that rebirth occurs instantaneously upon death, as among the Druze, who hold that the soul passes from a dying person directly to the body of a newborn.

**induced past-life memory** A past-life memory arising in an induced altered state, e.g., under hypnosis or hallucinogenic drugs.

**intermission** or **intermission period** The interval between lives.

**intermission distance** The distance between the place the previous person died and the place the subject was born.

**intermission length** The length of time between the death of the previous person and the birth of the subject.

**intermission memory (IM)** Claimed memory of the intermission.

**international case** A reincarnation case in which the subject was born in a country other than the one in which the previous person died.

**juridical (Indic) karma** The classic, Indic understanding of karma as a force constructed from the moral values of actions and intentions, especially those of previous lives, that becomes attached to the soul and determines among other things where it is reborn. Cf. dispositional karma.

**karma** Juridical (Indic) karma. Cf. dispositional karma.

**life planning** In New Age metaphysics, the idea that souls decide on their goals or plan their lives during the intermission, in advance of rebirth.

**long-distance case** A reincarnation case in which the previous person died 25 or more kilometers from where the subject was born. See also international case.

**man in white (MIW)** A spirit frequently reported in near-death experiences and reincarnation cases from Asian societies, who receives and guides a spirit at death and (in assisted reincarnation) may lead it on to rebirth.

**materialism** The philosophical position that material (physical) reality is primary and the mind or consciousness secondary to it. In materialist psychology and neuroscience, consciousness is presumed to be a product of neural activity.

**maternal impression** Physical impressions, such as birthmarks and congenital deformities, believed to be caused by the influence of a mother's thoughts and feelings on her baby in utero, generally as a result of her having seen something emotionally stressful.

**metempsychosis** This term is sometimes used as a synonym for reincarnation, but it may be defined more strictly to mean a human-animal-human rebirth cycle, as in classical Greek thought and in Indic religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

**multiple reincarnation** (sometimes **multiple simultaneous reincarnation**) The belief, found in some animistic cultures as well as in New Age metaphysics, that a spirit may reincarnate in more than one person simultaneously. In animistic cultures, multiple reincarnation is often understood as soul replication, whereas in New Age metaphysics it is usually considered as soul splitting.

**observer perspective** In memory research, an episodic memory experienced from an external point of view, as another person might view it. Cf. field perspective.

**paramnesia** In psychology, a distortion of memory in which fact and fantasy comeingle.

**parental guidance** The idea that parents can shape their children's thoughts and behaviors, used in the psychosocial theory to explain reincarnation cases.

***parakaya pravesh* or *parakayapravesh*** See replacement reincarnation.

**passive xenoglossy** See xenoglossy.

**physical signs** Physical features that link a previous person and a subject in a reincarnation case. Examples include birthmarks, birth defects, and other congenital abnormalities such as internal diseases, but also features like facial structure, eye form, skin color, body shape and stature.

**PL** Abbreviation for previous life.

**planned reincarnation** A type of elective reincarnation in which the previous person states in advance of his death his intent to be reborn to a particular woman, in a particular family, or a particular place. Planned reincarnation is characteristic of animistic tribal societies.

**PLM** Abbreviation for past-life memory.

**possession** The occupation of a body by a spirit. Possession may be transient or brief, as in mediumistic possession, or it may be long-term or permanent, as in reincarnation. Some writers use possession in the sense of replacement reincarnation.

**PP** In reincarnation research, an abbreviation for previous person or previous personality.

**prebirth memory** Memory of the intrauterine period, sometimes but not necessarily generalized to include other memories of the intermission between lives (intermission memories).

**pregnancy craving** In a reincarnation case, a pregnant woman's cravings for foods of which the previous person was fond.

**previous person or previous personality (PP)** In a reincarnation case, the deceased person whose life the subject claims to recall or gives other evidence of having been.

**private case** A reincarnation case that is kept within the subject's family so that it is not widely known.

**procedural memory** In memory research, memory for the performance of certain actions, such as repetitive behaviors or learned skills, practiced to the point that they are carried out without conscious direction or conscious involvement. Many behavioral signs in reincarnation cases are procedural memories.

**psi** In parapsychology, a term that embraces both extra-sensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (mind-over-matter).

**psychic identification** The determination of past-life identities by shamans, mediums or other psychic practitioners.

**psychological or psychic factor** In relation to reincarnation, family ties or bonds of affection or animosity between a previous person and a subject's family that appear to have played a role in drawing a spirit to its new parents. Cf. geographical factor.

**psychophore** Stevenson's term for a subtle or astral body that would carry consciousness between lives and serve as a template for a new physical body.

**psychosocial theory** The theory that reincarnation cases are the results of parents unconsciously shaping their children's behavior in conformity with their belief in reincarnation.

**recitative xenoglossy** See xenoglossy.

**regression or age regression** The practice of regressing subjects to earlier ages under hypnosis. In past-life regression, the subject is guided back to what are ostensibly earlier lives.

**regret case** A reincarnation case in which the previous person stated his intention to be reborn under circumstances which the subject regrets or rejects.

**reincarnation** Reincarnation has different meanings in different belief traditions. In reincarnation research we are concerned with signs of reincarnation that indicate the rebirth of human beings as human beings, so we may define reincarnation as the

transfer after bodily death of the mind or consciousness of a human being to the body of another human being. Cf. metempsychosis; transmigration.

**reincarnation case** A case suggestive of reincarnation. Also reincarnation-type case or case of the reincarnation type (CORT). Reincarnation cases may be solved or unsolved.

**reincarnation signs** See signs of reincarnation.

**replacement reincarnation** or **replacement case** Reincarnation in which one spirit replaces another without the host body dying. In India, this is called *parakaya pravesh*. It may also be referred to as possession or an anomalous date case. It is similar to what in popular terminology is called a walk-in.

**responsive xenoglossy** See xenoglossy.

**retributive karma** Stevenson's term for juridical karma.

**S** In psychology and parapsychology, abbreviation for subject.

**same-family case** A reincarnation case in which the previous person and subject are related. Cf. acquaintance case; stranger case.

**self-investigated case** A case, often a reincarnation case, which has been investigated by the subject himself or herself, rather than an independent researcher.

**semantic memory** In memory research, a type of autobiographical memory that includes general knowledge and facts about the world. Cf. episodic memory.

**sex-change case** A reincarnation case in which the previous person and the subject are of opposite sexes.

**signs of reincarnation** Any phenomena taken to be indicative of reincarnation, generally grouped into three classes: episodic memories and claims to remember previous lives; procedural memories and other behavioral signs; and physical signs like birthmarks, birth defects and other congenital abnormalities. Other common reincarnation signs are announcing dreams, departure dreams, and pregnancy cravings.

**silent case** A reincarnation case in which the subject makes no claims to remember a previous life.

**solved case** A reincarnation case with an identified previous person.

**spontaneous case** In psychical research and parapsychology, an apparently paranormal event such as a reincarnation case that occurs naturally as opposed to being produced in the laboratory or induced, e.g. under hypnosis. Cf. induced past-life memory.

**stranger case** A reincarnation case in which the previous person and his family were unknown to the subject and his family before. Cf. acquaintance case; same-family case.

**strong case** A case, e.g. a reincarnation case, that is evidentially strong. An example of a strong case would be a stranger case with a variety of signs of reincarnation. Cf. weak case.

**subject (S)** In a reincarnation case, the person who remembers or otherwise gives evidence of having lived a previous life.

**super-ESP** or **super-psi** In parapsychology, a hypothetical ability requiring the acquisition of information through ESP by more than a single step, or requiring integration of ESP information from multiple sources, sometimes accompanied by psychokinetic (PK) actions on the physical world, used as a way of explaining survival and reincarnation signs and cases without assuming survival of death.

**terminal lucidity** A sudden return of mental clarity and memory in seriously ill patients (some suffering organic brain disorders) shortly before they die.

**transmigration** The transfer after bodily death of some spiritual aspect of a human being to the body of a nonhuman animal (or other entity). Cf. reincarnation.

**unfinished business** or **continuing business** In a reincarnation case, things left incomplete by a previous person at death.

**unsolved case** A reincarnation case in which no previous person has been identified. Cf. solved case.

**verbal memory** Memory for names and other words. Verbal memory is often used in a personal context and is aligned more closely with episodic memory than with semantic memory within the category of autobiographical memory.

**veridical** Having basis in fact. In a reincarnation case, memories that have been confirmed to relate to a previous life or a previous person.

**walk-in** See replacement reincarnation.

**weak case** A case, e.g. a reincarnation case, that is evidentially weak. A same-family case is considered weak because the subject could have learned about the previous person normally. Cf. strong case.

**written-record case** A reincarnation case with a record of a subject's statements (and sometimes behaviors, etc.) was made in writing before the previous person was identified.

**xenoglossy** The spoken use of language not learned in the present life. Xenoglossy may be responsive, involving an interactive use of the language; recitative, involving only a rote use of an unlearned language; or passive, involving a subliminal awareness of the language that nonetheless affects one's speech performance, language learning, reading, etc.