

On Life and Meaning

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Episode 59 – Amy Aussieker – Many Lives Many Masters

Reincarnation Once Again

And now a personal word,

Amy Aussieker is pursuing big ideas in this lifetime sensing she might yet have another go. She is not alone. Millions of people take comfort that we have more than one life to live.

There is something incredibly attractive about reincarnation. We get to travel through time trying again. We get to renew love affairs. We get to live forever.

Belief in reincarnation goes way back. The idea of transmigration – the continuation of a person's soul in one human body after another – appears in the earliest recorded religious texts. In the East every major Indian religion tells us that an aspect of every human being dies and is reborn in an interconnected cycle of existence. Jains believe in an eternal soul that passes through cycles of death and rebirth into higher or lower bodily forms based on accumulated karma. The Hindu Upanishads speak of reincarnation as a journey of self-knowledge. Buddhism sees the nature of existence as a cycle of life, death and rebirth. Chinese Daoism says that birth is not a beginning and death is not an end.

Reincarnation is an ancient theme in the West as well. Pythagoras formed societies in Greece to share the idea. Virgil wrote about souls who are reborn. Celts and Vikings believed in souls that returned. So do African Yoruba, Native American Algonquin, Cherokee and Inuit tribes and modern-day Scientologists. Although the dominant religions of the West – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – reject reincarnation as heresy, believing that a soul is either damned or saved forever in the afterlife, each has esoteric traditions (Jewish Kabbalists, Christian Gnostics and Muslim Ghulats) that embrace the idea of past lives and an individual soul entering a new existence after the death of the body.

Reincarnation has long been explored in popular culture, in literature, music and movies: from the poem 'Metempsychosis' written by John Donne ('the progress of the Soule') to the song 'Cosmic Dancer' by T-Rex to films such as 'What Dreams May Come' and 'Cloud Atlas.' Reincarnation is central to the New Age movement: mediums and therapists claim lessons learned from past lives can clear fears and insecurities in one's current life. Scientists have weighed in, investigating reports of young children who

claimed to have remembered past lives and matched them to the facts of a deceased person's life that the children would seem to not otherwise be able to know.

Amy and I share this common: in this life we have led many lives and met many masters. We have lived in many places, encountered many people, launched new careers, started many ventures, pursued many interests. We have learned a few lessons along the way.

Have I met people who I have felt that I have met before? Yes. In at least one instance the feeling was overwhelming. The moment I met her I felt I knew her and the relationship over two years was a montage of scenes and emotions I felt I had experienced before. A parapsychologist would have had a field day measuring everything that I felt: from premonitions to déjà vu to telepathy. What was it about? Who knows. I have had similar if not as intense feelings with other people I've met. Is reincarnation an explanation? I don't think it needs to be.

There are so many memory archetypes we carry with us that can explain how we respond to people.

But what if we are traveling through life encountering souls we have met before and will meet again? What if karma is a thing? Then how awesome would that be. We would have more reason than we do to practice compassion: to show kindness to every life form. We would have more reason than we do to be brave: ready to take risks for causes greater than ourselves.

Here is what I do believe: the great task in life is to be true to ourselves, to show compassion to all life forms, and to be brave, whether we have an eternal soul or not, whether we reincarnate or not.

Amy Aussieker reminded me of that lesson once again.

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