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A COMMON OBJECTION TO REINCARNATION¹

“How can reincarnation be true in light of the world’s population explosion?” People sometimes raise this question based on the assumption that we are reborn immediately after dying. Since the earth’s population has gone from one billion to over six billion in 200 years, what accounts for all the new souls being born?

First, the belief that our planet’s population will continue to grow unchecked—an idea that gained acceptance in the 1960s—is being questioned by current world census studies. In many developed countries, the fertility rates have dropped to the point where populations are shrinking. Russia and France now offer financial incentives for young women to have more children. In underdeveloped countries, the population continues to grow but the rate of growth is dropping. Recent estimates now predict the global population will reach a plateau around 2050.

Irrespective of prognostications by world census takers, how *does* one reconcile the idea of reincarnation with the population explosion? Theosophy indicates the time between death and rebirth varies from a few hundred years to a thousand or more. If the pool of available souls for our globe is, say, sixty billion, roughly ten percent are incarnated at this time. Therefore the population growth of the past 200 years would not have had to depend on the arrival of “new” souls. The question then becomes, “Why are so many souls taking rebirth in these modern times?”

Here’s a possible answer. In centuries past, life moved at a slower pace. Perhaps you lived in ancient Egypt and were reborn there again after a few hundred years. A new pyramid might have been erected, a new dynasty perhaps, yet life in general would not have dramatically changed. But with the advance of modern science, the advent of the industrial revolution, and now the arrival of the information age, life moves at a pace unimaginable to those ancient Egyptians. At the level of the personal self, it can be very stressful to live in such times. On the other hand, periods of dramatic political, cultural, and social upheavals may translate into tremendous opportunities of evolutionary growth for the immortal Soul.

The increase in global population is, therefore, a phenomenon that is not necessarily incompatible with the Theosophical view of reincarnation.

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¹ <http://www.questbooks.net/title.cfm?bookid=695>