

Reincarnation

Reincarnation is the belief that at death a person's soul doesn't go to heaven or hell as the Bible teaches, but is consecutively moved from one human life to another.

Some people believe in reincarnation because subjects under hypnosis can supposedly recall events from a previous life. The details of these "past lives" are usually vague and lacking details, but occasionally someone will "recall" an ancient custom or a historical detail that was presumably unknown by the hypnotized subject. Does this mean they were reincarnated, or are there other explanations for these "recollections"?

Melvin Harris, an investigative journalist specializing in the unexplained, says that the recall of "past lives" can be explained through cryptomnesia, or forgotten memory. "This information (forgotten memories) comes from books, newspapers, lectures, films, television, radio, and overheard scraps of conversation." Harris refers to Helen Keller, who wrote a tale called "The Frost King" in 1892. A few months later, it was discovered that her story was a modified version of Margaret Canby's story "The Frost Fairies," published 29 years earlier. Helen had forgotten that four years earlier a friend had read the original story to her.

Dr. Reima Kampman of the University of Oulu in Finland also researched cryptomnesia to explain "past lives." Kampman was especially intrigued by one schoolgirl singing a tune in medieval English while under hypnosis. She told him she had learned it in a previous life as a thirteenth century innkeeper's daughter. Later it was discovered that she had learned the song by paging through a Finnish book on music history several years before, which contained the English words in question.

Hypnotized persons often explain past, future, or extraterrestrial lives by drawing from childhood memories or fleeting, forgotten experiences. Even the perplexing details of the famous "Bridey Murphy" turned out to stem from the family experiences of Virginia Tighe.

Cryptomnesia isn't the only explanation for reincarnation. Here are a few other reasons why people seem to recall previous lives:

Auto-suggestion: A suggestion to oneself which arises within one's own mind. This would be a mild case of *deja vu*, or thinking, "I've seen this place before." From there, imaginations take over, causing a person to wrongly believe that "I know this place because, in a past life, I was here." Although the person hasn't been there before, he convinces himself that he has.

Group think: This can be stronger than auto-suggestion because people can unconsciously validate each other's' interpretations of events and experiences.

Demonic influence: A demon, or fallen angel, creates the imagination in a person's mind that he or she has lived in a previous life. The entire concept of reincarnation is demonic, leading people away from the truth that there is a heaven and a hell on the other side of the grave. What better way to deceive people concerning the Day of Judgment than the illusion of reincarnation?

Fraud: The researcher, hypnotist, medium, or subject deliberately manufactures past-life experiences for financial gain, notoriety, or attention.

SOURCE NOTES:

(Special thanks to Eric Pement for his research on reincarnation, *Cornerstone Magazine*, Vol. 17, Issue 88) Melvin Harris, "Past-Life Regression: the Grand Illusion," in *Not Necessarily the New Age*, Robert Basil, ed., (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1988). 2. See Martin Gardner, *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (NY: Dover, 1957). 315-321; Paul Edwards, "The Case Against Karma and Reincarnation," Robert Basil, ed., in *Not Necessarily the New Age*, 101-102; Melvin Harris, "Past-Life Regression" 136-138.