

Population Constraints on Transcendental Explanations

Population dynamics would appear to put constraints on possible transcendental explanations for a number of mysteries. I wade into this topic here as a follow-up to the introductory transcendental discussions found in my book. As a warmup to these discussions I layout a little background.

In the last chapter of that book I suggested that a transcendental dynamic “would have to be general and not species bound, with a common thread perhaps being the expression of personality.” Thus a soul could cycle lives in a variety of animal forms with the transcendental fingerprint, if you will, being personality which as touched on the book appears to display remarkable variations across a number of species.

Beneath such a interspecies transcendental dynamic there could be an underlying disembodied versus embodied dynamic. Thus a soul might have spent a very long time in a disembodied state and then have taken a detour into an embodied state. One constraint on the discussion here is that I am only considering embodied life here on Earth and also not considering the other forms of embodiment considered in a text like the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (i.e., the hell realms, the hungry ghosts realm, the demigod realms, and the god realms). In any case then a soul might take a detour into embodied life and then in accordance with some beliefs get stuck cycling through lives there with an effective glue being “grasping” or “attachment” to embodied experiences.

One constraint specific to a transcendental interspecies dynamic would appear to be a species behavioral localization. Thus if a human being were subsequently reborn as an animal then their previous human interests would be muted. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* the animal rebirth option is in some sense described as signing up for a lifetime of ignorance (which might be taken as inaccurate with regards to the intelligence available in some animals, though). In a simple example, if after a human life of really enjoying tennis a soul were then reborn as a dog then the tennis option would be eliminated (although perhaps the dog might display an unusually strong interest in tennis balls).

Before pursuing the titled population considerations, one final relevant assumption here would be that a soul is indivisible and thus can only be in one embodied or disembodied state at a time. Thus I am discarding the possibility of multiple concurrent embodiments as might be extrapolated from some discussions of “projection bodies” in the Buddhist literature. Multiple embodiments would greatly roll back population constraints and also have extraordinary philosophical implications.

So what would be a good example of a human population limitation on a transcendental explanation? I think that would be when the transcendental solution would appear to violate historical numbers. In a simple example if there were some obscure musical instrument that very few people had played throughout history then from a transcendental perspective that would put a ceiling on how many children could show up inexplicably drawn to the instrument - perhaps as prodigies. In particular, the current crop of apparent innate children devotees should not outnumber the previous deceased players.

One apparent general constraint on a human incarnation dynamic would seem to be population growth. As of 1 CE our population was about 200 million and by 1800 our population was approximately 1 billion. As of 2015 we number about 7.3 billion. A key question from a transcendental perspective here would be: does a human baby somehow require that the embodied soul had done a previous stint as a human? Perhaps without such a previous stint the baby would stand out as being too simple - possibly with a minimal personality. The prevalence across species of different personalities and the seemingly common elements of such personalities would seem to argue against this, though. Perhaps personality is an innate feature of a soul and thus a soul could make its initial embodied appearance as a human being without really standing out. Additionally, I have seen in print a couple of times estimates of the total number of human births throughout history. That figure I believe was 100 billion births. Thus conceivably all current human beings could have previously completed a human life. An unknown would be the gaps between the most recent human death and the current birth. Together these points don't seem to constrain a general transcendental explanation in which all humans lived before their current life (perhaps in some human or animal form).

The more subtle constraints offered by population dynamics appear to apply to group continuity phenomena. If as was suggested in the book there were transcendental contributions to a group's culture (or cultural adhesion) then those contributions would seem to have to obey the population dynamics of that group. In the book the apparent draw of some Korean international adoptees back to Korea was used as an example of behaviors that appeared to be consistent with a transcendental Korean connection. From that perspective these individuals had previously spent a life as a Korean and thus were being drawn back to Korea and its culture. From a this-life-only or scientific perspective such a connection is of course impossible. The relevant *New York Times* article's Readers' Picks comments given in the book displayed a strong clash between those supporting the adoptees position and others citing the scientific absurdity of it. In any case the population constraint here would imply that those genuinely experiencing a drive to return to Korea - as well as those native Koreans similarly disposed - should not outnumber deceased Ko-

reans. This should not form much of a limit, though. There has been some rapid growth in South Korea's population in recent history (doubling from about 25 million to about 50 million from 1960 to 2015, for example), but from the long history of Korea's human inhabitation there should be plenty of deceased Koreans to handle possible transcendental demands.

There are other possible subtle constraints with regards to a possible transcendental group-culture contribution. First, there are incarnation gap dynamics to consider. With some recent rapid growth in Korea's population, the Korean incarnation dynamic might entail going quite far back in Korean history to acquire (human-experienced) Korean souls for contemporary births. In general to maintain a significant cultural (or simply group identity) innateness in a growing population, there would seem to be a need to go further back in that group's history to acquire souls from their history. From that perspective, would a baby born in Korea now have much Korean innateness to draw on from a previous Korean experience of say 200 years ago? At the least such gap dynamics would seem to imply that contemporary Korean kids would have a variety of different Korean cultural experiences to draw on for their own particular innate sense of Korean-ness.

Another somewhat subtle constraint on transcendental explanations would seem to be with possible contributions to the Flynn Effect (the surprising historical rises in intelligence scores). If a transcendental explanation assumed a strong dependence on exposure to the modern Western educational system this could be a real hurdle. In particular how could the rising intelligence scores of a growing Western population be tied to an underlying growth in per-capita cumulative (transcendental) exposure to such modern educational systems? As mentioned earlier, in order to facilitate a transcendental dynamic in a growing human population there would be a need to reach further back in time to acquire human-experienced (and educated) souls. Thus the previous century's rising intelligence scores would seem to have to have happened despite reaching further back into previous less ambitious educational eras. The kind of established explanation of investigators like James Flynn is that these modern educational systems have simply ramped up their efficacy and thus we appear to be getting smarter. As discussed in the book this explanation route faces hurdles too (and thus its "kind of" acceptance).

An alternative approach here could consist of viewing human life in general as contributing to a transcendental boost in innate intelligence. From that perspective simply doing a stint as a human being would ramp up a soul's abstract intelligence slightly and thus the Flynn Effect. Remember that the traditional topics of education - and in particular modern education - are not displaying a long term rise on the intelligence tests. It is the abstract reasoning portion that is the center of the Flynn Effect and that abstract reasoning capability somehow is steadily ramping up.

One possibly consistent example can be found in an article “Dalai Lama Pushes Tibetan Monks to Tackle Science in the Indian Hills” by Tim Sullivan (appeared in Huffington Post on 7/3/2012). That article described some observations of Tibetan monks and nuns in an introductory science program run by Emory University. Those monastics appeared to be very sharp at picking up challenging concepts despite little apparent relevant educational background. As pointed out:

[t]hough most studied only religious subjects after the eight grade, they regularly traverse highly complex subjects: “They really understand how neurocircuits work at level that is comparable to what we see at a senior (undergraduate) neuroscience classroom in the United States”, said [Larry] Young.

Although the article described the monastics in the Emory program as the “best and the brightest” from their respective monasteries, the article also pointed out that watching them at times is “astonishing” and they can leave Professors “stunned” with their questions. They simply listened (without taking notes) and responded to what for them were very novel topics. The point here is that perhaps human beings in a variety of premodern manners can sharpen their underlying abstract reasoning capabilities and that from a transcendental perspective could contribute to the mysterious rise in intelligence scores. An alternative take on this here is that the rise in abstract intelligence reflects not an acquiring of more abstract reasoning strength but an equivalent rollback in the limitations imposed on a soul by human embodiment (as consistent with some of my suggestions on savants and prodigies).

Any transcendental explanation is going to raise novel questions and considerations. Superficially, human population considerations might seem to greatly constrain transcendental explanations. Alternatively, such constraints appear to highlight the complexity of consistent transcendental solutions and of course raise further questions.