

Articles & Essays

Genetics & Beyond: Metagenetics - An Update



Genetics & Beyond

Metagenetics - An Update

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Back in the early 1980's, I wrote a short article in The Runestone called "Metagenetics." The shock wave from those three pages has caused more controversy than anything else I have ever written. The mere mention of metagenetics causes some people to go into a rage and a rant - so, both to inform my friends and infuriate my enemies, I decided it was time for an update on the subject!

In the original piece, metagenetics was presented as the idea that "ancestry matters - that there are spiritual and metaphysical implications to heredity." I tied together such varied topics as Jung's theories of archetypes, rebirth in the family line, psychic links between twins, and the Norse concept of the soul to support that statement.

The basic outlines remain the same. However, I have made refinements, added information from British biologist Rupert Sheldrake as well as other writers in psychology and the life sciences, and generally thought a great deal about just what metagenetics means in the long run.

If I had to modify the definition of metagenetics after all these years, I'd say that it was "the hypothesis that there are spiritual or metaphysical implications to physical relatedness among humans which correlate with, but go beyond, the known limits of genetics." This is more complicated than the simple sentence from the 1980's, but it is somewhat more exact - and it opens the possibility that the mechanism involved might not be as simple as information stored in the DNA molecule.

The evidence in support of metagenetics is drawn from several disciplines, and I won't go into it here. I am writing a book which will set it out in great detail. In this article, instead, I will mention some of the main features of the hypothesis, and then list a number of implications.

Features of the Metagenetic Hypothesis

Metagenetics is characterized by:

Relatedness - It describes a connection, independent of time and space, which links human beings. (The general principles governing metagenetics also apply to the animals, plants, other organic kingdoms, and indeed all self-organizing systems to include crystals and molecules. Metagenetics, though, is a subset of this grander scheme and applies specifically to humans and their spirituality.)

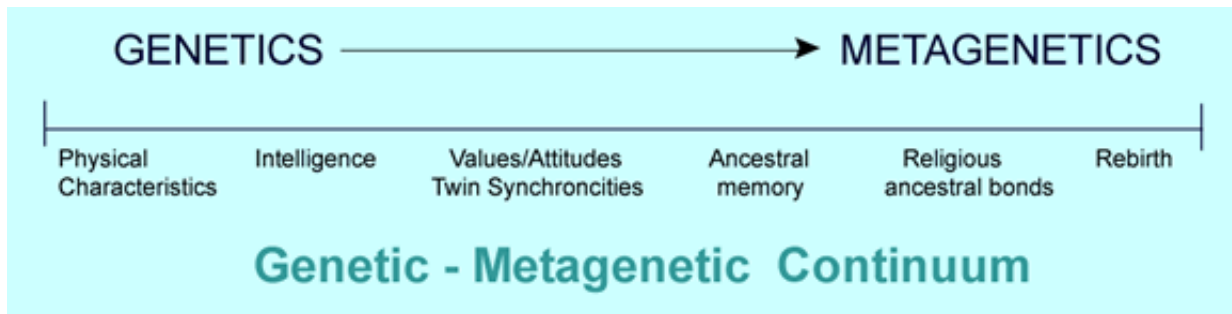
Similarity - We are used to things being related in time and space, but this is not essential to the operation of metagenetics. Instead, metagenetics says that people who are genetically related to each other share a non-physical bond that is not dependent on location or time, and that the closeness of that bond is determined by the degree of similarity. Our language unconsciously expresses that idea, as we talk about being "close" or "distant" relatives.

Hierarchy - This is implied by the idea of similarity, described above. All humans are related, and for that matter it is true

that we are "kin to all life," as some folks are fond of saying. However, we are not equally related to all. Within the broad circle that is the human family there is a collection of concentric circles representing the many Folksouls - and even this is no neat and tidy arrangement. Individual families, clans and tribes have their own subdivisions or "mini-Folksouls," and the whole is dynamic and shifting.

Holism - The components that make up the individual human being are best seen as comprising a whole. This is typically represented as body, mind, and spirit, though the psychosomatic (mind-body) complex in traditional Germanic lore is considerably more complicated than this. People commonly acknowledge that the body and mind affect each other, but fewer of them understand that the body (to include the brain, the nervous system, and the apparatus of heredity) is also connected to the spiritual or religious.

Spirituality - Relatedness and similarity influence the temperament, values, psychic connection, probable reincarnation, and the general tone of spirituality or religion. Some of these things - temperament and values, in particular - may have their origin in the actual coding of DNA, but the mechanism for the other connections may not be within the realm of the physical sciences as they are presently understood. There seems to be a continuum at work, and it may be represented like this:



Implications of Metagenetics

Several things quickly become obvious.

Ancestry matters. Most Asatruar will agree with that statement, but fewer will understand that the ancestors are with us, now and always, because of the time-transcending nature of the metagenetic bond. To the extent that rebirth occurs within the family line, we are those ancestors, manifested again in Midgard! Furthermore, that bond is special - it is closer than our bond to non-ancestors.

We are not "one." Although there is a level on which every person is connected through the collective unconscious of humanity as a whole, the closeness of the connections varies immensely. Indeed, to some extent we are linked to all life - but that hardly causes us to value protozoa, goldfish, and camels as much as we do our brother or our father! The degree of connection is determined by similarity.

There are no solitary rituals. All our deeds feed back into the collective unconscious (C.G. Jung) or the morphic field (Rupert Sheldrake) - or in traditional Asatru terms, the Well of Urth. It seems to be that the more intense the emotion accompanying the deed, or the more symbolically alive an action is, the more it will affect all those who are members of the group in question. Our blots, our oaths of might, and our other exchanges with our Gods and Goddesses, then, can be expected to influence all Asatruar, and all our brothers and sisters of European descent, in a fairly immediate way. A whole nest of hierarchies are jostled by all our significant acts.

Our religion is a function of who we are, not just what we believe. Since the human being is a holistic entity, our spirituality cannot be considered something apart from our physical ancestry. In terms of both genetics and metagenetics, our ancestors are encoded into our very beings. From values and temperament - which have been shown to correlate statistically with heredity - to the deeper issues of spirit, our forefathers and foremothers continue to influence us. It seems reasonable, then, to predict that people will tend to be most fulfilled by the religious and spiritual paths of their ancestors. Properly presented, the ancient ways of one's people should exert a powerful draw on the individual.

The beliefs of our ancestors are largely confirmed by modern psychology and the biological sciences. Most especially, the

Jungian collective unconscious and Sheldrake's hypotheses concerning "morphic fields" and "morphic resonance" are very close to the Germanic ideas surrounding the Well of Urth, in which orlog or "fate" is laid.

Metagenetics - an Evolving Concept

Metagenetics, then, continues to mature as new information becomes available. Far from remaining static over the last decade and a half, it has incorporated new evidence and has found validation in the writings of other scientists as time has gone by.

The transcendental importance of the ancestral bond has always been sensed by Asatru, and by other native religions around the world. We who acknowledge that bond now have striking validation of what our inner voice has told us all along!