

Articles & Essays

Metagenetics



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One of the most controversial tenets of Asatru is our insistence that ancestry matters- that there are spiritual and metaphysical implications to heredity, and that we are thus a religion not for all of humanity, but rather one that calls only its own. This belief of ours has led to much misunderstanding, and as a result some have attempted to label us as "racist", or have accused us of fronting for totalitarian political forms.

In this article we will discuss, fully and at length, a science for the next century which we have named "metagenetics". For while that science deals with genetics, it also transcends the present boundaries of that discipline and touches on religion, metaphysics, and (among other things) the hereditary nature of Jungian archetypes. The foundations of metagenetics lie not in totalitarian dogma of the 19th and 20th centuries, but rather in intuitive insights as old as our people. It is only in the last decades that experimental evidence has begun to verify these age-old beliefs.

Anyone familiar with Asatru knows that the clan or family line holds a special place in our religion. Kinship is prized for both practical and spiritual reasons, and the chain of generations is seen as a time-transcending unity, something not limited by our narrow perceptions of the past, present, and future. What findings of modern science make this more than a pious conviction? Is there anything special about the genetic bond from a psychic or spiritual standpoint?

Consider for a moment the curious connection between twins. Identical twins, of course, have identical genetic endowment. Hence it comes as no surprise to find that patterns of brain current activity are remarkably similar in twins, nor is it unexpected that Danish scientist, Dr. N. Jule-Nielson, has found that twins raised seperately have similar aptitudes and personalities. One step beyond these findings we run across the fact that in many cultures twins are credited with extra-sensory perception in regard to each other. In fact, Dr. J. B. Rhine, famous ESP researcher at Duke University, is on record as stating that, "Cases have been reported to us from time to time of what would appear to be exceptional telepathic rapport between identical twins".

A study of ESP cases will show that other family members are likely to have this rapport as well. How many mothers during wartime have known with uncanny accuracy the exact instant that their sons have been injured or killed? Countless other anecdotes can be collected which might be interpreted as having a genetic basis. Such a psychic resonance could be explained by other hypotheses, to be sure- but when placed in the context of other information that we have, they tend to buttress the heredity connection. And a biological (or partly biological) rationale for psychic phenomena should make the subject more palatable to "hard-headed rationalists".

Going a step further, let's look at reincarnation memories. One does not have to "believe" in reincarnation as it is commonly presented to accept the reality of the phenomenon; there seems to be evidence that people sometimes have memories that don't belong to them- or at least not to the "them" that they normally consider themselves to be. One is free to accept or reject the literal explanations for reincarnation as it is vulgarly expressed, but there are other explanations for the reports. There is the possibility that these memories, or many of them, are genetic memories. Timothy Leary- who, whether or not one agrees with his drug philosophy, is no small intellect- is only one person who suspects this to be the case. Leary wrote that whether one called it the akashic records, the collective unconscious, or the "phylogenetic unconscious", it could all be ascribed to the "nuerogenetic circuit", or what he calls signals from the DNA-RNA dialogue. In other words, these memories are carried in the DNA itself.

It's interesting to note that in many cultures- in our own Norse tradition and in the Tlingit Indian lore, among others- rebirth is seen occurring specifically in the family line. A person did not come back as a bug or a rabbit, or as a person of another race or tribe, but as a member of their own clan. Olaf the Holy, the Norwegian king largely responsible for Christianizing that country, was named after his ancestor Olaf Geirstadaalfr, and was believed to be the ancient king reborn. Naturally the Christian Olaf could not tolerate such a suggestion, and the sagas relate how he harshly discouraged this belief.

The Tlingits, though, have preserved their native religious beliefs into our own time, and thus they are subject to scholarly examination at a much closer range than are our own ancestors. Dr. Ian Stevenson is the alumni professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia Medical School, and he also has an interest in reincarnation phenomena. In fact, he authored

a volume titled, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, the conservative title of which indicates his scientific approach to the subject. One of the cases he investigated dealt with a modern-day occurrence of apparent rebirth into the clan line in a modern Tlingit family. While the story is too long to be included here, suffice to say that the evidence, while circumstantial, is still impressive. It may not be possible to prove, in strictly scientific fashion, that a Tlingit was literally reborn as his own grandson- nor does it matter. The point is simply that there are metaphysical implications to the bond of genetic kinship.

One wonders, as an aside, if rebirth (whether literal rebirth of the individual personality, or the rebirth of some spiritual essence beyond the "merely" biological) might not be some sort of evolutionary bonus for the clan and tribe, whereby the best, wisest, most spiritually "in tune" characteristics are conserved in the family line.

So far we've worked on the idea that there is a link between heredity and the clan concept on one hand, and psychism and rebirth on the other. Let's try a different tack now, and look at Dr. Carl Jung's archetypes.

Jung spoke of the collective unconscious- a level of the psyche not dependent upon personal experience. The collective unconscious is a reservoir of primordial images called archetypes. They are not exactly memories, but are rather predispositions and potentialities. As Jung said, "There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution, not in the forms of images filled with content, but at first only as forms without content (emphasis in the original), representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action".

Most modern students of Jung miss a very key fact. Jung stated explicitly that the archetypes were not culturally transmitted but were in fact inherited- that is to say, genetic. He linked them with the physiological urges of instincts and went so far as to say that, "Because the brain is the principal organ of the mind, the collective unconscious depends directly upon the evolution of the brain". A more precise statement of the mind/body/spirit link, and of the religious implications of biological kinship, would be hard to find.

But Jung was not satisfied to make this connection. He went on to say that because of this biological factor there were differences in the collective unconscious of the races of mankind. Boldly he asserted that Thus it is a quite unpardonable mistake to accept the conclusions of a Jewish psychology as generally valid. (This statement must be taken in context. It is not some irrelevant anti-Jewish remark, but instead stems from the growing rift between Jung and his Jewish teacher, Freud.) Nobody would dream of taking Chinese or Indian psychology as binding upon ourselves. The cheap accusation of anti-Semitism that has been levelled at me on the ground of this criticism is about as intelligent as accusing me of an anti-Chinese prejudice. No doubt, on an earlier and deeper level of psychic development, where it is still impossible to distinguish between an Aryan, Semitic, Hamitic, or Mongolian mentality, all human races have a common collective psyche. But with the beginning of racial differentiation, essential differences are developed in the collective psyche as well. For this reason, we cannot transplant the spirit of a foreign religion 'in globo' into our own mentality without sensible injury to the latter.

Thus the link between religion, which expresses itself in terms of archetypes in the collective unconscious, and biology- and hence race- is complete.

Jung is substantiated by more recent research as well. Perhaps the most important such study was conducted by Dr. Daniel G. Freedman, professor of behavioral sciences at the University of Chicago. His results were published in an article in the January 1979 issue of *Human Nature* entitled, "Ethnic Differences in Babies." Freedman and his associates subjected Caucasian, Asian, Black, and Native American newborn infants to identical stimuli, and consistently received different responses from babies of each race. Furthermore, these differences matched the traditionally-ascribed characteristics of each race- the Asian babies were in fact less excitable and more passive, etc. Native American and Mongolian babies behaved similarly, apparently due to their relatively close biological kinship. It is only a small step from inborn temperament to inborn attitudes to inborn religious predispositions, which is only a restating in different words of Dr. Jung's theory.

Let's look again at how the clan mystique, the expression of which in the physical world is a genetic one, relates to the Vanir in particular, and the ancient beliefs of Asatru in general.

The goddess Freya is strongly linked to the clan concept for she is the leader of the female tutelary spirits called the "disir". Of the disir we read, in *The Viking Achievement* (P.G. Foote and D.M. Wilson) that: It is sometimes difficult to keep the disir distinct from valkyries or harsh Norns on the one hand, and spirits called 'fylgjur', 'accompaniers', on the other; and it is probable that the Norsemen themselves had notions about these beings that varied from time to time and place to place. Fylgjur were attached to families or individuals, but had no local habitation or individual name. They appear to have represented the inherent faculty for achievement that existed in a family's offspring. Everyday observation of consonant or discrepant facts of heredity would confirm that it was possible for a fylgja to desert an individual or to be rejected by him."

Ancient wisdom meets modern science.

The idea of metagenetics may be threatening to many who have been taught that there are no differences between the branches of humanity. But in reflecting, it is plain that metagenetics is in keeping with the most modern ways of seeing the world. A holistic view of the human entity requires that mind, matter, and spirit are not separate things but represent a spectrum or continuum. It should not be surprising, then, that genetics is seen as a factor in spiritual or psychic matters. And the ideas put forth by those who see consciousness as a product of chemistry fit into metagenetics as well- for biochemistry is a function of organic structure which in turn depends upon our biological heritage.

We of Asatru are concerned about our ancestral heritage, and we consider our religion to be an expression of the whole of what we are, not something that we arbitrarily assume from without. It also explains why those who do not understand us accuse us of extreme ethnocentrism or even racism- for it is clear from metagenetics that if we, as a people, cease to exist, then Asatru also dies forever. We are intimately tied up with the fate of our whole people, for Asatru is an expression of the soul of our race.

This does not mean that we are to behave negatively toward other peoples who have not harmed us. On the contrary, only by understanding who we are, only by coming from our racial "center", can we interact justly and with wisdom with other peoples on this planet. We must know ourselves before we can know others. Our differences are great, but we who love human diversity and variation must learn to see these differences as ablessing to be treasured, not barriers to be dissolved.