

Radical Thinking: Spirals, Souls, and Immortality

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Spirals and Souls

1. From Spirals in Prehistorical Art, To a Projection of the Eternity of the Soul

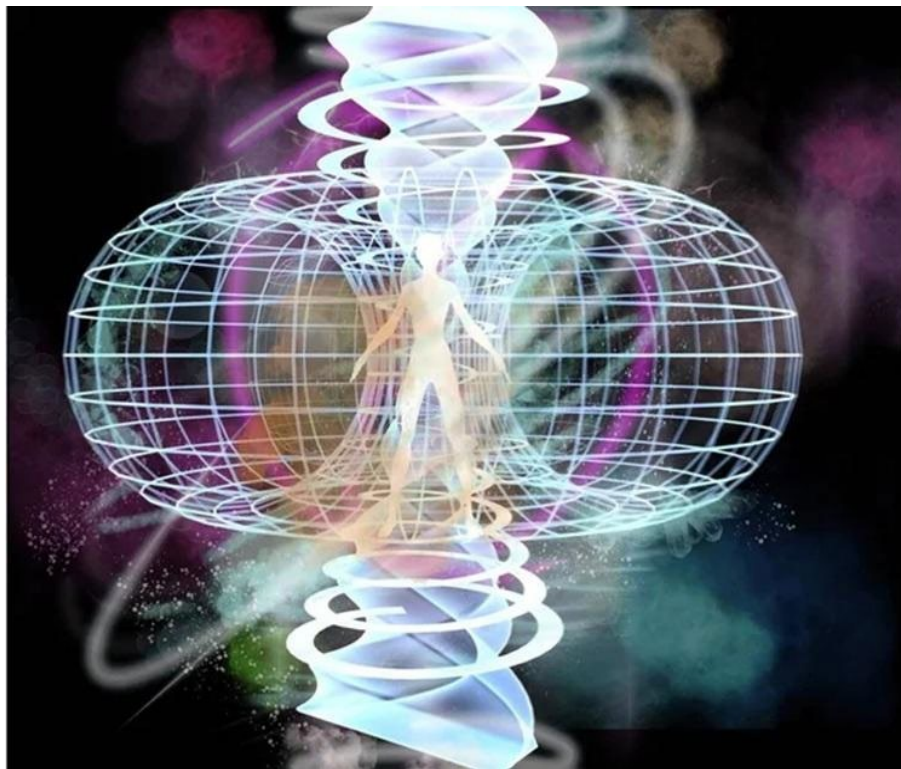
Spirals were present in the Neolithic megaliths in many places on the Earth. On the other hand, spirals are present not only in dreams but also in modern approaches to sub-consciousness, like hypnosis or psychedelic experiences that are giving us a sense of belonging to something greater and that are uniquely joining the microcosm with the macrocosm by going from small to big.

Various thinkers—for example, Marie-Louise von Franz, Carl Jung, Erwin Schrödinger, Aldous Huxley and Mircea Eliade—have postulated the existence of a collective sub-consciousness that can be a support of a kind of immortality. This possibility of the hereafter is examined by Carl Jung especially, in the chapter XI “On Life after Death” of his book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.

For those for whom Nietzsche's statement "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 1882/1974) has a profound meaning, a fundamental question would be how is it possible for a "world beyond" to have emerged? Here is an answer, not necessarily the only or a certain one. Ancient man imagined, intensely desired, practiced multimillennial rituals and above all believed in various forms of heaven. And because of this neurological need, the brain, with its amazing evolutionary powers, might have created at some point the "psychic dough" necessary for the baking of a surviving dynamic consciousness.

If the individual psyche manifests itself through an energetic spiral that transcends the standard three-dimensional space as a twisted super-dimension, then such spirals could connect in a collective unconscious, into a Oneness like some sort of the mythological "Kingdom of Souls." Such a "curled up" extra-dimension is also a theoretical concept of contemporary String Theory in physics. Correspondingly, the quantum physicists Freeman Dyson, Werner Heisenberg, Max Planck, and Erwin Schrödinger have explored the idea that a single, unified consciousness is inherently related to the quantum field. Planck warned that "science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature [because] we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve."

2. Freud: Our Unconscious Seems Immortal to Each of Us



Spirals, Consciousness, and Souls

Sigmund Freud claimed that “in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality” (Freud, 1915/1957). Jung did not believe in literal immortality, but posited that the human psyche and its experiences live on in a greater consciousness after death, thereby viewing death as a natural and final goal of life rather than an end. He saw evidence for the psyche’s timeless and non-extended state in conscious life, suggesting that something of the human soul remains after the physical body dies. Jung claimed that at death, the individual gradually detaches from the body, and the ego’s experiences continue to evolve in a larger, collective consciousness.

In his essay, “The Psychology of Life After Death,” Ronald K. Siegel says that “Jung took the position that the concept of immortality, universally present in the individual's unconscious, plays an important role in ‘psychic hygiene’” (Siegel, 1980, p. 915). So for those who do not believe in any religious form of afterlife the only possibility for achieving this “psychic hygiene,” with its harmony between our conscious and unconscious lives, remains the belief in a kind of surviving consciousness that is also consistent with belief in Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Nietzsche’s famous remark, “God is dead, remains dead! And we have killed him!” (Nietzsche, 1882), signifies the decline of religious belief as the foundation for Western morality, and reflects the Enlightenment’s scientific progress undermining faith, creating a crisis of nihilism whereby humanity must find new values, potentially through the, to replace divine authority and create their own purpose, rather than relying on old comforts or collapsing into meaninglessness. Nietzsche warned that the decline of traditional religious and metaphysical beliefs—would plunge Western civilization into a severe crisis of nihilism. He feared this loss of shared, objective meaning would lead to widespread despair, cynicism, and a devaluation of life.

3. The First Living Cell: A Fundamental Miracle

A fundamental miracle is the very appearance of the first living cell in conditions in which organic substances must have aligned extraordinarily favorably, for the emergence of life.

So why hasn’t another miracle of the same magnitude happened? This question raises the problem of the belief in an afterlife that’s consistent with the theory of evolution. Some clues might come from Neolithic spirals.

Let’s say there is only one in a thousand billion chances of the immortality of the soul; but on what basis can you say with absolute certainty that some kind of afterlife based on the laws of evolution has not or will never appear?

Modern thinkers have glimpsed a possibility of the individual soul's "imprinting" of a great universal consciousness, transcending time. Nikola Tesla said:

My brain is just a receptor, in the Universe there is a nucleus from which we obtain knowledge, power and inspiration. I have not penetrated the secrets of this nucleus, but I know that it exists. (ER, 2019)

Aldous Huxley emphasized the "collective unconscious" in his book *The Doors of Perception*, which he concludes by making a plea for the survival of individual souls in a "congregation" of all souls (Huxley, 1954). Rupert Sheldrake was a supporter of the idea of a collective unconscious, as well as the famous Jung, the father of the tradition of analytical psychology based on the notion of a collective unconscious. The basic idea is that maintaining an imprint of the individual soul on the horizon of a collective unconscious independent of temporal boundaries would practically ensure a kind of immortality.

4. A Fundamental Question and a Possible Answer

A fundamental question would be how is it possible, consistently with the constraints of Darwin's theory of evolution, for a "world beyond" to have emerged?

As I mentioned above, one possible answer is that ancient humanity imagined, intensely desired, and practiced multimillennial rituals, and above all believed in various forms of heaven. And because of this neurological need, the brain, with its amazing possibilities, may have created at some point the "psychic dough" necessary for the baking of a surviving consciousness, just as the ancestral biological brain designed and made each new organ: eye, nose, ear, and so-on,

Such an idea seems particularly bold and speculative, so I appeal, in support of it, to the chapter, "Science and the Unconscious," in Carl Jung's and Marie-Louise von Franz's book, *Man and His Symbols*. von Franz writes:

Physicist Wolfgang Pauli has pointed out that, due to new discoveries, our idea of the evolution of life requires a revision that could take into account an area of interrelation between the unconscious psyche and biological processes. Until recently, it was assumed that the mutation of species occurred randomly and that a selection took place by which the 'significant', well-adapted species survived and the others disappeared. But modern evolutionists have pointed out that the selection of such mutations by pure chance would have lasted much longer than the known age of our planet allows. Jung's concept of "synchronicity" could be helpful here, because it sheds light on some rarer, "limit"

phenomena, some exceptional events, in this way, it is therefore possible to explain how “significant” adaptations and mutations occurred in a shorter time than would have been necessary in the case of random mutations.... [As Jung points out,] “[i]t seems, therefore, that such anomalous accidental phenomena occur when there is a need or a vital need, this fact could further explain why a certain species of animal, under great pressure or in urgent need, could produce significant (but acausal) changes in its external material structure.” (Jung and von Franz, 1964: p. 360)

These would be the neurological premises of the emergence of a possible afterlife, as a spiral survival of energetic consciousness. In the same book, we also find these remarks:

That the Holy Ghost is the power that works for the further development of our religious understanding is not a new idea, of course, but its symbolic representation in the form of a spiral is new.... In the dreamer’s life these two pictures became real in a way that does not concern us here, but it is obvious that they also contain a collective meaning that reaches beyond the personal. They may prophesy the descent of a divine darkness upon the Christian hemisphere, a darkness that points, however, toward the possibility of further evolution. Since the axis of the spiral does not move upward but into the background of the picture, the further evolution will lead neither to greater spiritual height nor down into the realm of matter, but to another dimension, probably into the background of these divine figures. And that means into the unconscious. (Jung and von Franz, 1964: p. 226)

5. Neolithic Spirals Symbolizing Immortality

Spirals are found in many Neolithic megaliths such as Newgrange and Knowth-County Meath (both in Ireland), Achnabreck and Pierowall (both in Scotland) and Barclodiad y Gawres (Wales), Cairn Gavrinis (France), Tarxien (Malta), Castelluccio (Sicily), Piodao/Chaz D'Egua (Portugal), Bardal (Norway), La Zarza-La Zarcita (Canary Islands), Galicia (Spain), etc. or on the pottery of Neolithic Cucuteni culture—for instance, the Goddess “Venus of Draguseni” statue. It is implausible to think that people moved and carved huge blocks of stone just for some random ornaments so that the spirals must have had a close connection with their consciousness. A provocative explanation was offered by D. Lewis-Williams and David Pearce, in their book *Inside the Neolithic Mind: Consciousness, Cosmos and the Realm of the Gods* (Lewis-Williams and Pearce, 2005). According to this book, the spiral is closely associated with a stage of altered consciousness that leads to visionary experiences.

There are also other authors who see spirals as a symbol of the passage of souls to immortality. Looking at the ancient megaliths scattered throughout the world, there is a general perception that the carved spirals would have reflected eternity. It is also

remarkable that in regressive hypnosis experiences, when you come to stand in front of the essence of your own consciousness-soul, perceptions of spiral vortexes are frequent. The brain does an interesting job. Under certain conditions it produces electro-chemical stimuli that cause us pleasure or vice versa. It is very difficult to say what value a strictly energetic-informational afterlife has in which joy is missing. But we have nothing to do, if this is the inheritance from our ancestors. Just as we are not asked whether we want to be born or not. But we live our lives as a result of the decision of our parents.

Louis Lagana, in his essay, "The Spiral and The Goddess as a Symbol of Life and Regeneration," notes:

This type of burial is found not just in Malta but also in other cultures and countries. In a logical sense the dead needed possessions to survive in the afterlife. Such funerary customs had some form of connection with their thoughts about afterlife and so their psychic and spiritual attitudes were reflected in their burial rituals. (Lagana, 2023: p.18)

So the concern for the afterlife is clear. Lagana also says:

One of the first Maltese female artists, who experimented for a long time with these ancient images and symbols, is Josette Caruana. During the nineties, the artist experimented with prehistoric motifs in most of her works. The "spiral" motif and "the ancient goddesses" were important aspects of her earlier works and shown in her personal art exhibition entitled *Frameless*, held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta in 1992. Some of the works in this exhibition were references to Malta's Neolithic past. The artist relates to the Neolithic temples of Malta as a source of inspiration to make "contact with humanity." For instance the spiral as a Neolithic symbol, suggests for the artist the continuation of life. (Lagana, 2023: p.19)

Finally, I'll conclude with some comments on the following abstract of an article by Claudia Infurchia:

The article presents a case study from the clinical psychopathological angle, a collection of elements from psychotherapeutic encounters comprising two settings, a drawing-painting workshop for free self-expression, and face-to-face interviews, in a mental health unit. The patient, (in her fifties), painter and writer before her decompensation, is convinced that she is dead and eternal at the same time. The psychiatric diagnosis given is Cotard's syndrome. The mediation care setting based on the drawing-painting workshop, allows this patient, reluctant to speak, frozen by her illness, to deposit on the canvas, a representation, a spiral. This recurring representation endured for many months will gradually evolve from a deadly repetition compulsion to a representation of life itself. It seems that the constraint to create, theorized by R. Roussillon, present in many artists, allowed this woman, for many years, to avoid the pitfall of psychotic decompensation.

But it is possible to think that her creativity and her artistic production were defeated in the face of traumas of great intensity (separation, death). Melancholy recedes when this same representation linked to eternal torment is transformed into a symbol of life. (Infurchia, 2024)

For those who are bold enough, there are methods to understand the deep symbolism of the spirals. The spiritual power of the spiral is a profound and timeless concept in many shamanic practices. And many psychologists can induce deep hypnosis using the imagery of spirals. Therefore, Neolithic beliefs were closer to the true nature of the human soul and without the prejudices that appeared in later religions, although spirals are still present in Buddhism, Shintoism, and Hinduism.¹

¹ For two views contrary to the ideas expressed in this essay, see (Kant, 1766/1992; Rao, 2025).

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