



RNG is an electronic circuit that creates sequences of "heads" and "tales" by repeatedly flipping an electronic coin and recording the result. A participant in a typical experiment is asked to mentally influence that RNG output so that in a sequence of predefined length it produces, say, more "heads" than "tales" (p. 138).

The 108 participants were consistently able to beat chance and have a mean 51% hit rate in 1,268 studies. In 1987 Princeton University psychologist Roger Nelson reviewed the studies done by Bell Labs and Princeton and found that the result defined chance over a trillion to one.

Radn responds to parapsychology's arch critics well. For example, in professional debunker Mark Hansel's 1980 book, his "strategy was to suggest possible flaws that might have accounted for the experimental results without demonstrating that flaws actually existed and then assumes that such flaws must have occurred" (p. 222).

Irvin Child, chairman of the psychology department at Yale University, reviewed the Maimonides dream telepathy experiments and "found that Hansel's descriptions of the methods used in the Maimonides studies were crafted in such a way to lead unwitting readers to assume that fraud was a likely explanation, whereas in fact it was extremely unlikely given the controls employed by the researchers" (p. 222).

Those who dismiss evidence for psychic phenomena point to the December 3, 1987, press conference report of the National Research Council (NRC) with its negative conclusion. "The Committee finds no scientific justification from research conducted over a period of 130 years" (p. 215). The press did not pick up that the two main evaluators of the NRC committee report, psychologists Ray Hyman and James Alcock, both had long histories of skeptical publications accusing parapsychology of not being a legitimate science (p. 216). Hyman and Alcock ignored Harvard psychologists Monica Harris and Robert Rosenthal's NRC Committee reviews affirming the validity of Maimonides telepathy studies.

ASA members should take note that the arch critics of psychic phenomena are also arch critics of the validity of evidence for the power of prayer, miracles, and Intelligent Design. Most critics are members of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICP), which was founded by atheist professor emeritus of Buffalo University, Paul Kurtz. He also founded the Council for Secular Humanism and the National Center for Science Education. As PSI (parapsychology) may support the idea that there is something more to mind than just the mind-body system (p. 295), no wonder naturalists like the CSICP fight it vigorously.

Radn admits that the existence of PSI does not prove life after death. However, its very existence does discredit naturalism and shows that naturalists have made up their mind and do not want to be confused by the facts.

This reviewer would recommend this book to all ASA members, as it was recommended to me by William Dembski.

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Phenomenological Language in Ancient Revealed Narrative

Eshelbrenner¹ suggests that my restriction of "souls" to "higher animals"² is incompatible with the creation narrative's "swarms of living creatures,"³ pointing to Cambrian invertebrates. But I used the term in a phenomenological way appropriate for an ancient text.

What would the ancient formulation imply in our modern way of speaking? Not that the writer knew, or that God teaches, modern science! But taking the creation story as narrative rather than myth is based on the premise that God revealed it to an ancient prophet. Surprisingly, a plausible reading is compatible with Earth's history, although God certainly used the prophet's own thought and vocabulary.

In the fifth "day" (or epoch) of the creation narrative, we have the first mention of animals, called "living souls," some of them dangerous, a host of swarming ones, all in the water, as well as "winged flyers" (including insects). What is common to these animals is their macroscopic size and their rapid, well-controlled movements. The ancients could not know microorganisms, which are therefore not expected to occur in this story. Each "day's" characteristics extend into all subsequent ones. That water and flying animals were created in the fifth "day" only implies that their first representatives appeared in that period.

In the late Precambrian, multicellular animals evolved, but only in its last part, the Ediacaran, did they reach macroscopic sizes. This became possible by the increased availability of free oxygen needed by each living animal cell. An enhancement of gas exchange was achieved with the evolution of a blood (or hemolymph) circulation, which made three-dimensionally extended body plans feasible, being no longer dependent on diffusion alone.

Nutritional benefits of predation grew, and evasion from predators improved, with fast movements. These faster movements required an active blood circulation and nerves linking sensory organs with muscles. Increased sophistication of nervous control systems in a brain allowed "deliberate" choices between alternative behavioral routines (e.g., feeding, flight, fight, courting), directed by a sentient functionality.

As stated,⁴ the biblical "living souls" appear to be animals large enough to need an inner circulation and having a nervous system of sufficient complexity to allow fast movements. This would include many Cambrian and some Ediacaran invertebrates. For lack of a better biological term, I called them "higher animals." The only macroscopic pre-Ediacaran species were seaweed-like plants, in accordance with plants arising in the third "day."

In line with this "blood-and-nerves" specification of the first "living souls," the Old Testament correlates blood and "soul."⁵ Significantly, God spoke to these creatures and blessed them.⁶ For ancient Hebrews, organisms not conforming to this characterization would not be "living souls."

That the “living souls” were specially created does not deny their biological evolution. But a new dimension was created in them, sentient or psychological functionality, whose physical substrate had evolved. Science has not yet found a convincing explanation of the sentient (as distinct from behavioral) aspect.

Eshelbrenner’s remark notwithstanding, I dealt with the spiritual dimension.⁷ Humans alone are created in God’s image, which provides a spiritual mode inaccessible to science. Furthermore, those accepting God’s salvation are “born again” into a new, spiritual, eternal life. Thus, four “life dimensions” are shared by all such believers, three by all humans, two by “higher animals,” while “lower” organisms and plants have the dimension of biological life only.

Eshelbrenner alludes to problems of a separation of body, soul, and spirit at death; of its reversal at resurrection; and even of a speculative intermediate state (unknown in the Bible). A plausible solution may be a “God-time,” which is not collinear with physical time, but something like a second time dimension, allowing for an immediate shunt over large physical time periods for those “asleep.”⁸ God would keep the dead alive as hidden “seeds,”⁹ like information in a mental database.

I agree with Eshelbrenner that Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection are absolutely unique. Nevertheless, Christ’s assuming common human body-soul-spirit dimensions provides for the cross and the resurrection, and thus for all believers’ justification and transformation into eternal life. Although we have a foretaste through the Holy Spirit, we cannot yet conceive what we shall be as multidimensional body-soul-spirit-eternity persons after Christ’s image.¹⁰

Notes

- ¹D. Eshelbrenner, “Soul-Doctrine,” *PSCF* 57 (December 2005): 342–3.
- ²P. Rüst, “Dimensions of the Human Being and of Divine Action,” *PSCF* 57 (September 2005): 191–201.
- ³Gen. 1:20.
- ⁴P. Rüst, “Dimensions of the Human Being and of Divine Action,” endnotes 21 and 24.
- ⁵Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11–14.
- ⁶Gen. 1:22.
- ⁷P. Rüst, “Dimensions of the Human Being and of Divine Action,” 195–7.
- ⁸Luke 23:43; 1 Thess. 4:13–17.
- ⁹1 Cor. 15:37–42; Matt. 22:31–32; Ps. 139:16.
- ¹⁰1 Cor. 15:47–54.

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On Freedom and Incarnation in Nonreductionistic Materialism

P. G. Nelson (*PSCF* 58, no. 1 [March 2006]: 86f) responds to my challenge to nonreductionistic materialism [*PSCF* 57, no. 3 [Sept. 2005]: 187–90]. He first attempts to defend human freedom, claiming that disturbing a balanced quantum mechanical state represents personal choice. For it to be a personal decision, the individual must be at least rudimentarily aware of the alternatives and make a conscious decision between them. What mechanism or process sets up the balanced state, produces awareness of it in the decider (awareness by the superscientist does not count), and then consciously switches it? How does the evanescent quantum state persist long enough to allow the decision? To be sure, Nelson introduces an “I” to decide, but the entity is without minimum, let alone effective, connection to the required awareness.

Secondly, if personality is a function of brain—with social interactions, of course—how does a nonphysical spiritual being have a personality? Furthermore, how does a nonphysical spirit “fuse” with a nonspiritual body in the hypostatic union? We are back to the Cartesian dualism that spawned Malebranche’s occasionalism and Spinoza’s neutral monism. I think of only two possible solutions. One may deny spirit by following Hobbes, the only philosopher I know of who is a materialistic theist, insisting God has a body. Alternatively, one may have an analog of monotheletism, but more like demon possession than incarnation. However, I cannot exclude either additional unpalatable possibilities I have not recognized, or a more subtle solution that meets biblical requirements.

I fail to see that Nelson has moved toward a solution to the problem that I posed at Trinity Western University in 2004. Thus, the only viable resolution for the Christian remains the recognition that science cannot detect spirit, whether human or divine. This does not diminish the relevance of neuroscience. It merely underscores the recognition that no natural science determines ultimate metaphysical answers. Consequently, the original challenge remains: “... they need to produce a clearly stated Christology ...”

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