

# Review of: "Quantum Theory of Soul"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

Zhigang Sha, Rulin Xiu's "Quantum Theory of Soul," is a comprehensive, engaging, well-written paper proposing quantum principles as an explanatory framework for a 'scientific' study of the 'soul.' From the very outset, the author's hypothesis is laid out in this statement: "Observed quantum phenomena and conscious experience occur when the observer absorbs and receives the vibrations, including the information, energy, and matter carried in one's quantum vibrational field. With this definition and using quantum physics, one can make seven predictions about the soul." The author then presents seven characteristics of what are commonly thought of as 'spiritual' and extrasensory expressions of the human 'mind,' residing in its biological cranium, the brain.

As a theoretical psychoanalyst who has also written about Dream Telepathy in the clinical setting using quantum physics (with rudimentary knowledge of it), I was immediately intrigued to read what this author had to say. So, whereas I have no quarrel with new theoretical propositions and am not qualified to object to any of the quantum principles mentioned, I am attuned to the language and definitions adopted in this paper, what these connote, and to its overall goal. I may also question the utility of 'mathematizing' the soul and, especially, of adopting a hard science experimental model and ideal (hypothesis, prediction, verification or disprove) for what is being proposed as a *new* methodology!

The etymology of the word "soul" comes to us through old German, Dutch, and English, existing only in Germanic languages, whereas the more traditional definition of the 'soul' returns us to its Greek etymology - *psyche*. In either case, to move its spiritual theological immaterial attributes into a quantum paradigm requires that one no longer think in linguistic terms of "nouns," i.e., of content, carrying, matter, qualities of arousal, *the* total 'self,' sentiments, or a moral 'force,' all continuing into an "afterlife." These words objectify and reify what are by definition 'attributes' of a metaphor - the soul - reiterating descriptive metaphors that already exist to grasp something immaterial that is nevertheless attributed to a "person," and hence is tied to biology! The author briefly mentions Penrose and Pribram contemplating consciousness from neuroscience, and Bohm's coined term 'implicit order.' But there has now passed over a century of intense research in the neurosciences and the use of quantum principles that require a more specific definition of an even trickier word, "consciousness." For indeed, to this day, this word can refer to so many fuzzy meanings, i.e., being awake, responding, perceiving, becoming aware, understanding, acting with intent, etc., that without specific qualification, it means almost nothing!

However, although the author devalues the need to invoke Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, he makes really good use of it in his concept of a "detector." This is described as an "instrument" that can "absorb vibrations" related to phenomena or objects. As the author enters into this 'informational paradigm' terrain, where the quantum theoretical framework could be most useful, we lose the subjective "person/instrument" in its biological essence! If, as the premise of this paper

aspires, we are to translate into secular scientific terms what has previously belonged to the esoteric and world religions, then we cannot lose sight of the essential fact that *we and the author* are all biological creatures using words (i.e., symbols) to describe aspects of human experience and what we think we know! And this means that if “everything at its deepest level is a vibrational field” carrying information consisting of ‘energy’ and ‘matter,’ then we cannot leave behind the human nervous system, arguably the keenest detecting “instrument,” receiver, and interpreter of the vibrational energy in question. In this, we are obliged to include the “intent” of the observer as quintessentially relevant to what is observed. Here, there is an agenda, namely, to see and understand the soul’s “functional attributes” in the terms of quantum physics.

I close with just a few words regarding what psychoanalysis has done with the concepts of ‘soul’ and, more specifically, “mind”: acknowledging that neither is ‘material,’ objectively tangible “things,” and given that Freud, our founder, was an avowed atheist, we ground both in what *are* observables, namely, people’s emotional expressions, reactions, behaviors, and actions, using an interpretive research method based on listening to what they “say” and observing what they do. This is not frivolous superficiality but a recognition that the only way to reach unconscious phenomena, meanings, and intent (or the implicit order, vibrational field, or people’s psyche/soul) is via *their manifestations*, more precisely their emotional responses, behaviors, unconscious actions, and predominantly their dreams, the singular mostly pictorial expression of the deeply unconscious human mind. For their interpretation, one needs to be a ‘detector’ armed with a vocabulary or method, and a dictionary taken directly from the subjective experiences woven through the words of the dreamer.

This brief excursion into the secular, biologically-grounded, psychoanalytic world of the ‘soul,’ was designed simply to underscore the validity of the concepts of ‘resonance’ and ‘detectors’ proposed in this bold and courageously written paper. That the argument provided circles back to the “observer’s perceptual semantic and intent” is less a criticism than an observation. I close by invoking Shakespeare’s wisdom, here, in commending that, “The intent and not the deed is in our power, and therefore who dares greatly does greatly.”

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