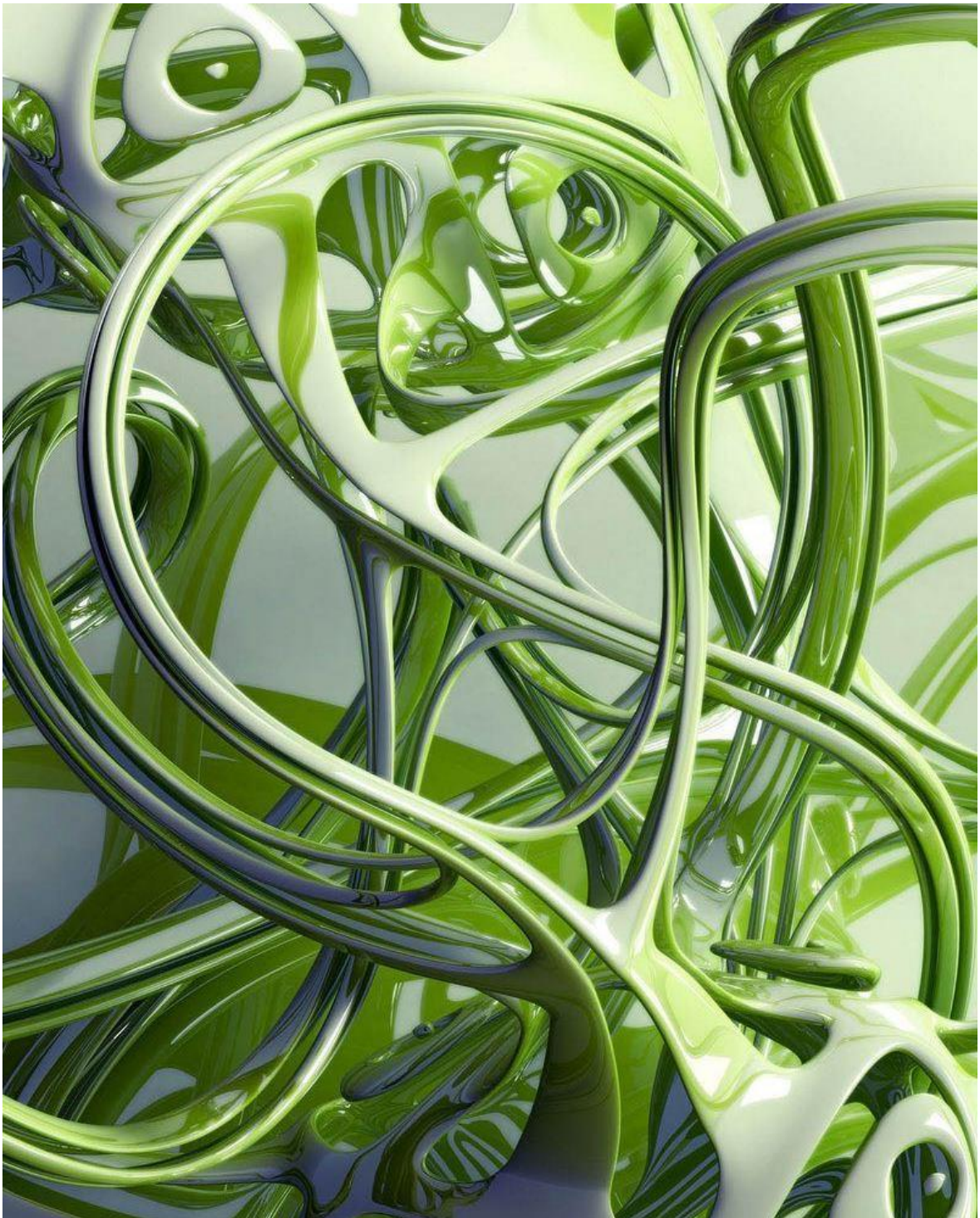


*Subba Row on
thought transference*



THE ONLY EXPLANATION we can give of the phenomena of thought-transference depends upon the existence of the astral fluid, a fluid which exists throughout the manifested solar system, but which does not extend beyond it.

It must be borne in mind that there is a difference between Ākāśa and the Astral Light, though the two terms have often been used as being synonymous. Ākāśa is a much higher kind of cosmic ether which exists as a link between one solar system and another, and is as infinite as the original cosmic matter. It is the result of motion in that very cosmic matter. Astral light is not Ākāśa, but a different form of cosmic ether. It is simply that entity in the manifested solar system which corresponds to what we have called the 4th principle in man. It is a manifestation of undifferentiated matter. It is a kind of matter far more ethereal than any with which we are acquainted. Perhaps matter in its ultra-gaseous condition — radiant matter — may help us to a conception of the astral fluid. Though it exists uniformly throughout space in the solar system, it is yet more dense around certain objects by reason of their molecular action, this is especially the case around the brain and spinal cord of human beings, where it forms what is called the aura. It is this aura round the nerve cells and nerve tubes which enables a man to catch the impressions made upon the Astral Light in the Cosmos.

If we divide mental phenomena into the three branches of modern psychologists; intellectual images, emotions and volition, we find that volition always makes itself felt by an increase of vibration in the astral aura. The intellectual image makes itself felt by the impression of the image on the aura; and in other cases there is a change of colour which also corresponds to change of spiritual feelings. It is asserted that each colour corresponds to a certain emotion, but I am not prepared to say occultists agree with phrenologists in their arrangement.

If I have the idea of a circle, the figure of a circle is formed in the sensitive's odic aura. All mental ideas have their pictures in Astral Light which are almost similar to the images that afterwards rise in the brain, but the intermediate link between the two, the nerve current in the brain, does not actually describe the picture in the mind. If there were in space, no medium to serve as a means of communication between one human being and another, all thought-transference would be impossible, it is impossible to conceive of communication without a medium.

The existence of this Astral Light can be proved from the fact that certain phenomena can only be explained upon the assumption of such existence, and it is moreover an object of direct perception to Adepts. Once let its existence be granted, and also the fact that it concentrates itself more thickly around the brain and nervous system than elsewhere, and you will see that nature has made provision to enable a person to catch the impressions made by others on the Astral Light.

In thought-reading experiments the best results have generally been obtained from children. The reason of this is that the aura of a child is passive, because it has not generated any active tendencies of its own. This fact can be inferred from the difference in colour between the aura of a child and that of an adult. The aura of a child is milk-white, but in the case of a grown-up person there is always upon this basic colour, another colour as green, yellow, red, etc. These colours denote a particular peculiarity of mental or spiritual organization. Whenever one of these colours is present and shows an absence of sympathy with the characteristics indicated by the colour of the aura of the operator, then a repulsion will be set up; but when there is no such repulsion — whenever the mind is passive — thought-transference is possible.

Every thought is accompanied by another physical phenomenon which may be described as an alteration in the nervous fluid. There is intimate connection between nerve-fluid, properly so-called, and the aura surrounding it. Nerve-fluid has its own aura like every congregation of molecules in nature, even prime ether has its own aura which is Ākāśa. Nerve-fluid has its own aura, called the odic aura of the man. All auras have one base, they are all akin to the magnetic fluid in the Cosmos. For every thought there is an affection of the nerve currents of the brain or nerve. This implies vibration which is caught up by the astral aura which communicates with the astral fluid with which it is in contact. This vibration affects the odic aura round the thinker's brain, and is immediately transmitted to the brain to which the thought is transferred; it is converted into a particular kind of motion in his aura and then into action in the nerve-fluid, and is thus immediately transmitted to his brain.

If the will-power of the operator is not strong enough to give a direction to the vibration generated in the astral fluid, touch is generally required; and where there is magnetic sympathy or at least absence of repulsive tendencies, the vibration immediately reaches its destination and is transferred into a thought in the mind of the sensitive, which will be the same thought first generated in the mind of the operator. If a particular sort of motion in nerve-fluid means a certain thing in the mind of one man, it means the same thing in another man's mind.

The ideas of modern scientists about luminiferous ether are hardly sufficiently definite to enable us to express an opinion about their resemblance to our views, but from the manner in which the conclusions have been arrived at, we see certain differences. First, we see light coming to us from the fixed stars, and they say, admitting the undulatory theory of optics, there must be a medium through which the vibrations pass. Secondly, they have ascertained from minute mathematical calculations that, owing to friction in this ether, there is a certain amount of retardation in the path of the planets. Admitting the two premises, it will be plain that the ether exists throughout space; now the astral fluid does not exist throughout space, but Ākāśa does, and the latter is more likely to correspond with the ether of the scientists.

Their cosmic ether is not peculiarly permanent in connection with any particular organism and does not appear to have any special connection with nerve force, but we hold that whenever there is a specially sensitive organization, the astral fluid is there concentrated, and in other places it exists more or less uniformly diffused, but its uniformity is never continuous like that of the ether of the scientists. The fact is that

the astral fluid only comes into existence when certain kinds of differentiation take place in the original Mūlaprakriti.

If the scientists recognize a distinction between “bound ether” and “free ether,” it amounts to the same kind of distinction as that between astral fluid and Ākāśa, but even as it exists in point of space without any organisms, it differs in its constitution from real cosmic ether.

In the course of ordinary thought-transference there is no mediation of any elemental whatever.

In certain cases we find that a sense of calamity is felt by a person at a distance when his friend is dying; in such instances the impression is actually a picture of the person and sometimes the image is very distinct. But we believe that somehow our mental ideas are connected with the emotions of pleasure and pain; therefore, admitting that some currents are accompanied by feelings without images, we may conceive a case in which the image, being indistinct, is accompanied by a nerve current which is only expressed by an emotion. Sometimes there are variations. It may be that a portion of the picture is lost, or some new elements are introduced, but when there is no picture, but only a kind of vibration, there will be nothing but a vague idea of grief or calamity.

Again, we sometimes find that the recipient has some token transferred to him, such as, for instance, a coffin when a person is dying. I believe if we take into consideration the results likely to be produced by the laws of psychological association, the case is that particular groups of ideas are connected, as death with a coffin in the mind of a Christian, etc.

One idea has the effect of recalling other ideas which are associated with it. Any of these ideas may be pictured in the brain and be followed by other ideas, and sometimes it happens that the associations become more prominent than the main idea.

A case is mentioned in which a soldier’s wife, travelling with the regiment, one night, while her husband was present and seated on a chair, declared she saw her mother appear, that her mother pressed her shoulders and said: “And I have left you the cream-jug, mind you get it.” The husband heard and saw nothing. The figure then vanished, and it was afterwards found that the mother had died and left a cream-jug to her daughter.

This was a case of thought-transference. The woman must have been very anxious to give her daughter this information before her death, anxiety must have increased; when she was dying the thought connected itself with her aura, that thought carried with it, at the time of dissolution, the odic aura of the person herself; but it is not a case of the astral body going to a distance. In all cases except those where Adepts are concerned it is the energy of thought-transference which sometimes- takes a portion of a person’s aura. Generally this takes place in cases of death; in other cases, unless the person is clairvoyant, it will not be possible for the astral body to be seen.

Sometimes it happens that when a portion of the aura is thus brought, it will be visible only to the man to whom the thought refers. When the thought is transferred, the

image is transferred. From a more distinct mental subjective image an objective figure, there may be infinite gradations of clearness and visibility.

Another case was as follows: A lady was going to India to her brother, she died on the voyage, and was seen clad, as at the moment of death, by the *brother's wife* three hours after the death occurred.

Here there must either have been strong sympathy between the two, or else the sister must have been a seer, or there must have been some other agency, such as an elemental at work. It is a case of thought-transference, but, in the absence of further particulars a detailed explanation cannot be given. The impression could not have been transferred from the husband to the wife if the former did not see the apparition. As to the difference of three hours between time of death and of the appearance, generally speaking, the shell may wander about for a time, unless it is a case of a death at which all the principles are immediately separated. If this was so, if the dead body had these two persons in her mind, there is every likelihood that the shell would travel to the place, and not finding the person to whom she wished to communicate sufficiently sensitive, she communicated with the more sensitive person who was present.

There cannot be any delay in the mere transmission of the image. The mind may be sometimes active in cases of insensibility. You may have read accounts of persons under chloroform where the internal man was feeling peculiar sensations though apparently insensible. The delay might be accounted for by supposing the person to whom the image is transmitted did receive the image by means of his odic aura, but his brain being at work at the time did not cognize the impression; it will be some time before the impression is effaced, so the image may make itself felt at some future time.

The following instance differs in many ways from the previous ones. A man willed his own appearance at a distance to two ladies on a certain occasion. He went to bed and woke up unconscious of anything having taken place, but was afterwards told that on a certain night he had appeared to them and acted in accordance which details previously written down. They had seen him as if in life.

This may be accounted for in various ways. He may have dreamt though ignorant of having done so, and again the astral man may have states of consciousness of his own, of which the physical man is ignorant and which last for some time. Again, it may be possible that this will-power that he should go at a particular time had the effect of producing a particular nerve current in his brain, and it might actually have emanated from his brain at the time he had willed. In such cases I do not know of any instances in which the time set has varied. There are many cases to be disposed of on that supposition, the only way in which we can account for it is, that the astral man generated the impression at a particular moment without the knowledge of the physical brain, or else it was generated in the physical brain according to the impression left by the first determination.¹



¹ *Esoteric Writings*, § II (2) pp. 129-38