

Thought-Forms: Visualizing the Invisible

As knowledge increases, science's attitude towards the invisible world is undergoing considerable modification. No longer solely focused on the physical realm, it now explores the nature of matter and force beyond the reach of instruments. This book examines how thoughts and emotions create distinct forms in the subtle planes of existence, visible to those with clairvoyant sight. Through careful observation and artistic reproduction, Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater present a groundbreaking study of these thought-forms, demonstrating how our mental and emotional states generate specific colors, shapes, and vibrations that influence both ourselves and others.

The wise person, knowing the hidden side of life, orders their existence accordingly, taking account of the whole world in which they live, not just its outer husk. This knowledge saves infinite trouble and makes life both happier and more useful to humanity. As the authors conclude: "Let us waste no more time in the dark dungeons of ignorance, but come forth boldly into the glorious sunshine of that divine wisdom which in these modern days men call Theosophy."



by OL booksummary

The Nature of Thought-Forms

Thoughts are indeed things, though few understand what kind of things they are. When we attempt to represent these forms, we face serious difficulties, as our conception of space is limited to three dimensions, while thought-forms exist in higher dimensions. Any illustration can only show a section or partial view of these complex structures.

Every definite thought produces a double effect: a radiating vibration and a floating form. The thought first appears as a vibration in the mental body, which may be simple or complex depending on the nature of the thought. The mental body is composed of matter of several degrees of density, and each type has its own characteristic rate of vibration.

These radiating vibrations, like all others in nature, become less powerful with distance but tend to reproduce themselves when they strike another mental body. This is how thoughts can influence others at a distance, stimulating similar thoughts without necessarily conveying the specific subject matter.



Thought Generation

A thought arises in the mental body, creating vibrations in mental matter

Vibration Emission

These vibrations radiate outward, affecting similar matter in the environment

Form Creation

The thought simultaneously creates a distinct form in subtle matter

Influence on Others

Both the vibration and form can affect other people's mental bodies

The Form and Its Effect

The second effect of thought is the creation of a definite form. This occurs when thought or impulse clothes itself in a temporary vehicle of "elemental essence" - the strange half-intelligent life that surrounds us, vivifying the matter of the mental and astral planes. Such a thought-form becomes a kind of living creature, with the thought-force as its soul and the vivified matter as its body.

The variety in color and shape of these thought-forms is infinite, as each thought draws around it the matter appropriate for its expression. The character of the thought determines its color, while the nature of the thought determines its form, and the definiteness of thought determines the clarity of its outline.

These thought-forms may be compared to Chladni's sound figures, where grains of sand arrange themselves into geometric patterns when a metal plate is vibrated. Similarly, the vibrations of thought create distinct patterns in subtle matter. The relationship between vibration and form is fundamental in nature, as demonstrated by pendulum experiments that produce complex geometric patterns similar to some thought-forms.

When a thought-form is directed toward another person, it travels to them and discharges itself upon their astral and mental bodies. If the thought is about oneself or based on personal feeling, it hovers around its creator, ready to react upon them whenever they are momentarily passive. Each person moves through life surrounded by a mass of forms created by their habitual thoughts, which colors their perception of the world.

The Meaning of Colors in Thought-Forms

The colors manifested in thought-forms have specific meanings that reveal the nature of the thoughts and emotions that created them. These colors are consistent whether appearing in the aura or in separate thought-forms, providing a reliable guide to the emotional and mental states they represent.

Red Shades	Brown and Grey Shades	Green, Blue and Yellow
Black indicates hatred and malice. Red, from lurid brick-red to brilliant scarlet, shows anger; brutal anger appears as flashes of lurid red from dark brown clouds, while "noble indignation" manifests as vivid scarlet. Dark dragon's blood red reveals animal passion and sensual desire.	Clear brown (burnt sienna) shows avarice; hard dull brown-grey signifies selfishness. Deep heavy grey indicates depression, while livid pale grey is associated with fear. Grey-green signals deceit, while brownish-green (often flecked with scarlet) betokens jealousy.	Green always denotes adaptability, ranging from deceitful lower green to the divine power of sympathy in its higher aspects. Blue indicates religious feeling, from dark brown-blue of selfish devotion to beautiful pale azure of highest devotion. Yellow denotes intellect, from dull ochre of selfish purposes to luminous primrose of spiritual intellect.

The brilliancy and depth of the colors are usually a measure of the strength and activity of the feeling. Additionally, the type of matter in which these forms are generated affects their appearance and influence. Purely intellectual thoughts remain on the mental plane, while spiritual thoughts rise to the buddhic level, gaining splendor and power. Thoughts tinged with selfishness or desire draw astral matter around them, enabling them to affect others' emotions as well as their thoughts.

Three Classes of Thought-Forms

From the perspective of the forms they produce, thoughts can be classified into three distinct categories, each with unique characteristics and effects.

Class 1: Image of the Thinker

When a person thinks of themselves in a distant place or wishes to be there, they create a thought-form in their own image that appears in that location. Such forms have occasionally been seen by others and mistaken for the astral body or apparition of the person. These forms are created by strong thoughts that employ a large proportion of the mental body's matter, drawing around themselves considerable astral matter and often expanding to life-size before appearing at their destination.

Class 2: Image of Material Objects

When someone thinks of a friend, room, landscape, or any physical object, they form within their mental body a minute image that often passes outward and floats before them. This is equally true when exercising imagination; painters build conceptions of future pictures out of mental matter and project them into space, while novelists build images of characters that act out their stories. These mental images are objective enough to be seen by clairvoyants and can even be rearranged by others.

Class 3: Independent Forms

These thought-forms take shapes entirely their own, expressing inherent qualities in the matter they draw around them. Only these forms can be usefully illustrated, as they reveal the forms natural to the astral or mental planes rather than imitations of physical objects. They almost invariably manifest on the astral plane, as most are expressions of feeling as well as thought. They include the beautiful forms created in meditation and the expressive forms of emotional states.

Thought-forms directed toward individuals produce marked effects, either being partially reproduced in the recipient's aura or repelled from it. A thought of love and protection creates a form that remains in the person's aura as a shielding agent, strengthening friendly forces and weakening unfriendly ones. This is how we can create "guardian angels" around those we love, and how a mother's prayer surrounds a distant child.

Illustrative Thought-Forms: Emotions and Feelings

The thought-forms presented in this section are not imaginary creations but actual observations of forms generated by ordinary people, carefully reproduced by those who have seen them or by artists working from detailed descriptions. For ease of comparison, similar types are grouped together.

Affection	Devotion	Anger and Fear
Vague pure affection appears as a revolving cloud of rose-colored energy, representing a gentle feeling of well-being and unselfish delight in the proximity of loved ones. More definite affection creates clear, crimson coils or vortices that are ejected toward the object of feeling. Radiating affection, intentionally generated as love for all beings, appears as a steadily widening star-like form with clear, precise rays.	Vague religious feeling manifests as a deep blue cloud, often seen floating over congregations. Higher devotion creates a magnificent spire of blue energy, showing clarity of conception and purity of feeling. Self-renunciation produces exquisite pale azure forms resembling partially opened flower-buds, shells, or leaves - suggesting a profound connection between thought-forms and natural patterns.	Anger produces striking forms: murderous rage appears as lurid flashes from dark clouds, while sustained anger creates sharp, stiletto-like darts. Fear generates explosive fragments like masses of rock hurled out in blasting, while sudden fright produces an eruption of crescent-shaped forms lined with the livid grey of terror.

Other emotional states produce equally distinctive forms. Intellectual pleasure creates yellow clouds; ambition manifests as orange forms with hook-like extensions; jealousy appears as brownish-green shapes resembling snakes with raised heads; and greed forms claw-like projections reaching toward desired objects. Each thought-form faithfully records the exact process of its construction, registering even the errors and fluctuations in the emotional state that created it.

Forms Seen in Meditation and Music

Some of the most beautiful and significant thought-forms are those created during meditation or in response to music. These forms are typically more regular, precise, and geometrically complex than those produced by ordinary emotional reactions, reflecting the disciplined and elevated nature of the thoughts that generate them.



In meditation, forms such as "Sympathy and Love for All" create graceful lines of luminous green with rose-colored glow, while "An Aspiration to Enfold All" produces intricate violet lines with inner golden light. Conceptions of the Logos generate magnificent structures of radiating light, often with specific symbolic patterns like the five-pointed star or concentric spheres.

Musical forms are particularly fascinating, as each piece creates a distinctive shape that persists for hours, radiating its characteristic vibrations. Different composers produce recognizable styles: Mendelssohn's music creates delicate filigree-work forms; Gounod's compositions generate brilliant, massive spheroids of color; and Wagner builds vast bell-shaped structures resembling mountain ranges. The instrument, quality of performance, and accuracy of rendering all affect the resulting form, making each musical creation unique.

The Power and Responsibility of Thought

The study of thought-forms provides a striking moral lesson, making us realize the nature and power of our thoughts. Every thought and feeling we generate has consequences in the unseen world that are often far more important than those visible on the physical plane. We are constantly creating these forms, and they affect both ourselves and others in profound ways.

When we understand that "thoughts are things" - real, living entities with the power to influence - we recognize our responsibility for using this power wisely. Negative thoughts return to their creator, while unselfish thoughts pierce through to higher planes and can draw down spiritual forces that benefit many. We can use thought to help others even when physical assistance is impossible, creating guardian forms of protection and healing.



Protection Through Thought

Pure thoughts create a shield against negative influences, as harmful thoughts cannot affect those whose mental bodies vibrate at higher frequencies



Healing Through Compassion

Thoughts of love and healing can reach those in distress, providing comfort and strength even at a distance



Elevation of Consciousness

High thoughts contribute to the collective mental atmosphere, elevating the consciousness of humanity as a whole



Karmic Responsibility

Understanding that every thought has consequences encourages mindfulness and ethical mental discipline

Through this understanding, we recognize that we are not merely passive observers but active creators in the subtle realms. Every thought is a chisel that shapes not only our own character but the very fabric of the collective consciousness. With this power comes the sacred responsibility to direct our mental energy toward that which uplifts, heals, and illuminates.