

Thought forms

Annie Besant | Summary | Visualizing the Invisible

"Thought-Forms" by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, explores the nature of thought and its effects on the unseen astral and mental planes. The authors argue that thoughts have a dual nature, producing both radiating vibrations and distinct forms. These forms, visible to clairvoyants, are composed of "elemental essence" and are influenced by the thinker's emotions and intentions. The text describes various thought-forms created by different emotions, such as affection, devotion, and anger, as well as the forms generated by intellectual activity and meditation. The authors also explore the relationship between music and thought-forms, arguing that musical vibrations can create visible and persistent forms in the astral plane. Throughout the book, the authors use illustrations and scientific analogies to make their ideas about the invisible world more understandable to the reader.

The **main themes and key ideas** from Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater's book, "Thought-Forms" explores the nature of thought-forms, their creation, characteristics, and influence, and highlights the moral implications of understanding these concepts.

Introduction

The book begins by acknowledging the shifting attitude of science towards the invisible world, with concepts like ether, hypnotism, and telepathy gaining traction. It posits the study of thought as a bridge between the physical and astral planes, citing Dr. Baraduc's attempts to photograph "astro-mental images." The authors affirm that the human aura, often perceived by clairvoyants, is now being studied by scientists for its colour changes reflecting emotional states.

The Nature and Creation of Thought-Forms

The authors define thought-forms as "things" with real existence. They explain that every thought produces two effects: a radiating vibration and a floating form. These forms are temporary "living creatures" composed of

“elemental essence” (vitalized matter of the mental and astral planes) shaped and animated by the originating thought or feeling.

Key points about thought-forms

- **Origination:** They originate from the mental and astral bodies, fuelled by the energy of thought and emotion.
- **Composition:** They are composed of "elemental essence," a type of semi-intelligent life that permeates the mental and astral planes.
- **Appearance:** The form, colour, and clarity of a thought-form are determined by the nature, quality, and definiteness of the thought.
- **Influence:** They radiate vibrations that can influence the thoughts and feelings of others, and their impact depends on the strength, clarity, and direction of the originating thought.

Colour Symbolism

The authors present a detailed table correlating colours with specific thoughts and emotions. Some key examples include:

- **Black:** Hatred and malice.
- **Red:** Anger (shades vary from lurid brick-red for brutal anger to vivid scarlet for “noble indignation”).
- **Brown:** Avarice (burnt sienna) and selfishness (dull brown-grey).
- **Grey:** Depression (deep heavy grey), fear (livid pale grey), and deceit (grey-green).
- **Green:** Adaptability (ranging from deceitful to sympathetic).
- **Crimson and Rose:** Affection (from selfish to unselfish love).
- **Orange:** Pride or ambition.
- **Yellow:** Intellect (dull yellow ochre for selfish, clear gamboge for higher, and luminous primrose yellow for the most unselfish use).
- **Blue:** Religious feeling (from dark brown-blue of selfish devotion to pale azure of self-renunciation).
- **Violet:** Mixture of affection and devotion.

Three Categories of Thought-Forms

1. **Image of the Thinker:** Created when someone strongly focuses on being in a distant place, often perceived as an apparition.
2. **Image of a Material Object:** Generated when thinking of a person, place, or object. These are used by artists and novelists to create their works.
3. **Forms Expressing Inherent Qualities:** These forms, often seen on the astral plane, represent the inherent nature of thoughts and emotions, rather than physical objects. The book focuses on illustrating this category.

Illustrative Examples

The book provides various examples of thought-forms based on their originating thoughts and emotions:

- **Affection:** Ranging from vague, rosy clouds of pure affection to more defined shapes tinged with selfishness (brown-grey).
- **Devotion:** Shown as blue clouds varying in shade and form based on the quality and focus of the devotion.
- **Intellect:** Depicted as yellow clouds, with brighter shades indicating higher and unselfish intellectual pursuits.
- **Ambition:** Illustrated as orange forms with pointed, arrow-like shapes.
- **Anger:** Vivid scarlet and red thought-forms, with jagged and explosive shapes.
- **Sympathy:** Represented with green, often in combination with other colors reflecting the specific nature of the sympathy.
- **Fear:** Manifesting as grey, often with an undefined and wavering form.
- **Greed:** Depicted as brown, with claw-like protrusions reflecting the grasping nature of the desire.

The book also includes examples of:

- **Meditation Thought-Forms:** Complex and beautiful forms generated during focused meditation, often with intricate geometric patterns.
- **Thought-Forms Created by Music:** Large, vibrant forms that reflect the style, composer, and quality of the music being played.

Moral Implications

The authors emphasize the **ethical implications** of understanding thought-forms:

“Surely the study of these thought-forms should be a most impressive object-lesson, since from it we may see both what to avoid and what to cultivate, and may learn by degrees to appreciate how tremendous is our responsibility for the exercise of this mighty power.”

They highlight the potential of using thought-forms for good, particularly sending help and healing to those in need.

The book concludes by urging readers to recognize the hidden side of life and the power of thought, encouraging them to study Theosophy for greater knowledge and understanding.

Quotes

- "Each definite thought produces a double effect - a radiating vibration and a floating form."
- "Quality of thought determines colour. Nature of thought determines form. Definiteness of thought determines clearness of outline."
- "Each man travels through space enclosed within a cage of his own building, surrounded by a mass of the forms created by his habitual thoughts."
- "If two forces on the physical plane bearing a certain ratio one to the other can draw a form which exactly corresponds to that produced on the mental plane by a complex thought, we may infer that that thought sets in motion on its own plane two forces which are in the same ratio one to the other."
- "Thus 'curses [and blessings] come home to roost.'"
- "It is thus evident that every man who thinks along high lines is doing missionary work, even though he may be entirely unconscious of it."
- "Thoughts are things, and puissant things; and it behoves us to remember that every one of us is generating them unceasingly night and day."
- "It is well for us ever to bear in mind that there is a hidden side to life - that each act and word and thought has its consequence in the unseen world which is always so near to us, and that usually these unseen results are of infinitely greater importance than those which are visible to all upon the physical plane."

Conclusion

“Thought-Forms” presents a compelling exploration of the nature and power of thought. By visually depicting thought-forms, the authors aim to make the abstract concrete and to inspire readers to cultivate positive thoughts and emotions for personal and collective well-being.

Glossary of Key Terms

Astral Body: A subtle body composed of astral matter, interpenetrating the physical body and extending beyond it. It is associated with emotions, desires, and passions.

Aura: The luminous cloud-like envelope surrounding all living beings, composed of the interpenetrating subtle bodies. It reflects the individual's emotional, mental, and spiritual state through its colours and vibrations.

Clairvoyance: The ability to perceive things beyond the range of ordinary senses, including subtle bodies, thought-forms, and events on other planes of existence.

Desire Body: Another term for the astral body, emphasizing its role in expressing desires and passions.

Elemental Essence: The vitalized matter of the mental and astral planes, responsive to human thought and forming the temporary vehicles of thought-forms.

Mental Body: A subtle body composed of mental matter, interpenetrating the physical and astral bodies. It is associated with thought, intellect, and higher mental faculties.

Thought-Form: A temporary, living entity created by the energy of thought and emotion. It takes shape in the matter of the mental and astral planes, radiating vibrations and impacting other individuals and the environment.

Vibration: The energetic pulsation or oscillation associated with thoughts, emotions, and all phenomena on various planes of existence. Vibrations shape thought-forms and impact other subtle bodies.