

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

Does a Theosophist believe in superstitions? was asked one of a party of friends not long ago.

A Theosophist accepts all facts, and never loses his reason. But a Theosophist does not stop and rest content with the fact; he endeavors to trace it to its origin and see its consequences. Superstition is the belief in or the practice of some thing without actually knowing why. In a broader light, superstition is a consent of the mind to an instinct or tendency concerning some practice without other reason for belief. The superstitions of a people are the dim reflections of forgotten knowledge. The knowledge gone, and those who had the knowledge, the people continue the practice of the forms; and so the forms and beliefs are handed down by tradition from generation to generation. As they become farther removed from knowledge they cling the closer to their superstitions and may even become fanatic. The practice without the knowledge is superstition. Visit the churches in a large city on a Sunday morning. See the formalities of worship; watch the procession of choristers; notice the insignia of office of those who conduct the service; observe the statues, sacred ornaments, instruments, and symbols; listen to the repetition and formula of worship to—what? Could we blame one unfamiliar with all this for calling it superstition, and saying that we were a superstitious people? We are thus inclined to regard the beliefs of others which are seldom more superstitious than our own people. The superstitions held by those whom we call “the ignorant” and “the credulous,” must have had an origin. Those who would know must trace the traditions or superstitions to their origin. If they will do this they will get knowledge, which is the opposite of its unintelligent reflection—superstition. An unprejudiced study of one’s own superstitions will reveal a woeful ignorance of one’s self. Continue the study and it will lead to the knowledge of self.

What basis is there for the superstition that one born with a “caul” may possess some psychic faculty or occult power?

This belief comes down through the ages from antiquity, when humanity held intercourse with beings within and around the earth. Then man’s sight, hearing and other inner occult senses, were clouded

over by growing into a more sensuous and material life. There is no part of man's body that is not related to some force and power in one or more of the invisible worlds of nature. That which is called the "caul" is related to the astral world. If, when man is born into this physical world, the caul remains with him it stamps or impresses the astral body with certain tendencies and attunes it to the astral world. In later life these tendencies may be overcome, but never entirely effaced, as the *linga sharira*, the astral design body, is attuned to receive impressions from the astral light. The superstition which seafaring men attach to this relic, as to its being an omen of "good luck" or as a preservative against drowning, is based on the fact that as it was a protection to the embryo from adverse elements in the pre-natal world, so it may now in the physical world protect from the dangers of the water which corresponds with the astral light and the elements which, though they are called physical, are none the less occult and originates in the astral world.

If a thought may be transmitted to the mind of another, why is this not done as accurately and with as much intelligence as ordinary conversation is carried on?

It is not done because we do not "talk" in thought; nor have we yet learned the language of thought. But still, our thoughts are transferred to the minds of others more often than we suppose, though it is not done as intelligently as we would converse because we have not been compelled by necessity to communicate with each other through thought only, and, because we will not take the trouble to educate the mind and the senses to do it. One born among cultured people is cared for, trained, disciplined and educated into the ways of the parents or the circle into which he is born. Stop but to think, and it will at once be seen that it requires long years of patience on the part of the teacher and persistent effort on the part of the pupil to learn the art of speaking and reading and writing a language, and to learn the habits, customs and the modes of thought in that language. If it requires such effort and training in this physical world to learn one language, it is not strange that few persons are able to transfer thoughts correctly without the use of words. It is no more occult to transfer thought without words than it is to transfer thought by the use of words. The difference is that we have learned how to do it in the world of talk, but still remain as ignorant as speechless children in the world of thought. Transference of thought by word requires two factors: the one who speaks, and the one who listens; the transmission is the result. This we know how to do, but the actual manner in which we speak and understand is as occult to us as is the transference of thought

without words. We do not know how and in what manner the different organs in the body operate in order to produce the sound uttered; we do not know by what process the sound uttered is transmitted through space; we do not know how the sound is received by the tympanum and the auditory nerve; nor by what process it is interpreted to the intelligence within who understands the thought conveyed by the sound. But we do know that all this is done, and that we do understand each other after some such fashion.

Have we anything which is analogous to the process of thought transference?

Yes. The telegraphic and photographic processes are very similar to that of thought transference. There must be the operator who transmits his message, there must be the receiver who understands it. So then there must be two persons who are disciplined, trained or educated to transmit and receive each other's thoughts if they would do so intelligently and with the same accuracy with which ordinary intelligent conversation is carried on, just as two persons must be able to speak the same language if they would converse. It is said that many people are able to do this, but they do it only in a very unintelligent manner, because they are not willing to submit the mind to a rigid course of training. This training of the mind should be as orderly, and conducted with as much care, as is the life of the scholar in a well-disciplined school.

How can we converse by thought intelligently?

If one will carefully observe his own mind and the minds of others, he will come to realize that his thoughts are conveyed to others by some mysterious process. The one who would converse by thought without the use of words must learn to control the functions of his mind. As the functions of the mind are controlled, and one is able to hold the mind steadily on any one subject, it will be perceived that the mind carves out the form, takes the shape and character of the subject which is under consideration, and at once conveys this subject or thought to the object to which it is directed, by willing it there. If this is done properly, the person to whom the thought is directed, will surely receive it. If it is not done properly there will be an indistinct impression as to what is intended. As to reading or knowing of thoughts, the functions of the mind must also be controlled if the thought of another is to be received and understood. This is done in the same manner that an ordinarily intelligent person listens to the words of another. To understand properly one must listen attentively to the words uttered. To listen attentively the

mind should be held as still as possible. If irrelevant thoughts enter the mind of the listener the necessary attention is not given, and the words, even though heard, are not understood. If one would read the thought of another his mind must be held in an attentive blank so that the impression of the thought transmitted may be preserved clearly and distinctly. Then if that thought is clear and distinct there will be no difficulty whatever in the understanding of it. We thus see that the mind of the transmitter of the thought and the mind of the receiver of the thought must both be trained to the practice, if thought transference is to be conducted accurately and intelligently.

Is it right to read the thoughts of others whether they would that we should or not?

Certainly not. To do this is as unpardonable and dishonest as it is to enter another's study and ransack and read his private papers. Whenever one sends out a thought it is stamped with the individuality of the sender and bears an impress or signature. If the thought is of a nature that the sender does not desire it to be known, the impress or signature of the sender marks it much the same as we would mark an envelope "private" or "personal." This causes it to be invisible to the would-be dishonest meddler unless the thought is loose in its formation and is related to the meddler. By the true occultist, such a thought would not be read or interfered with. Were it not for this barrier all the would-be teachers of occult powers would be able to become millionaires over night, and, perhaps, they would do away with the necessity of earning money at so much per lesson or sitting. They would upset the stock market, form an occult trust with the markets of the world, then attack each other and come to a timely end, such as that of the "Kilkenny cats."

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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