

XXV.

ON THE DISEASES OF THE AURA.

Hitherto we have for the most part, for the sake of simplicity, considered the action of a perfectly normal and healthy Aura. Such, however, is very rarely, if ever, found. And before proceeding farther, we must consider the most common variations from perfect health, in order that we may the better understand the character and actions of our fellow-men, and also make some progress in the great Science of Self-Knowledge, and be able to account for our own abnormal actions and feelings, our own deeds which so often are the exact contrary of what we resolve and desire to do or to think; and may be able to also understand the method of cure, so that our own will and effort may go along with the endeavours of the Occult Physician, or even, of the Great Physician Himself, who offers us a cure.

Occult Anatomy deals with the surface of the Aura, and with what we may term the sensitive organs there located, the connection between these and the ganglia and nerve-centres of the physical brain; and also with their connection with the automatic nerve-centres throughout the body (meaning thereby those centres governing functions that act and re-act independently of the will or the consciousness). And the Student must get an elementary idea of how these are affected by impulses from without and by impulses from within, and how these reciprocally modify each other. He should also know how the Aura appears to a Clairvoyant (meaning thereby, of course, the trained Clairvoyant), who is capable of giving a report useful for medical diagnosis. There are great numbers who see blue or green or purple clouds around a person, and think they see the Aura, but this, though interesting and amusing is scientifically useless. He must learn how appearances seen by the Clairvoyant manifest themselves in the bodily state of the patient, the moods, the character, the state of bodily health – everything, in fact, that affects the physical body – so that from the state of the body he may form an idea of what is the condition of the Aura, and from a Clairvoyant's report or his own observation he may verify and correct that idea and form a reliable diagnosis.

For the time being, then, the Student should neglect the notion of the special individual Symbols. He should consider the Aura as a globe studded all over with sensitive points, analogous to nerve-centres in the physical body. He knows that these are really distributed into groups, any one of which, being stimulated in any way, will produce definite thoughts, feelings, or sensations on the physical consciousness. But for the moment he has to consider them as a whole, as a complex system forming the basis of sensations.

Now to realise the appearance to the Clairvoyant - let him look at the sky on a clear moonless night, observing the multitude of stars, and imagining the myriads more visible to the telescope – and the myriads which the telescope cannot make manifest. Imagine that he sees that star-spangled globe from outside. He has then some sort of conception of the appearance of the Aura. Every point of light represents a sensitive point. Every group or constellation forms a symbol. Just now he disregards these, and also colour-variations, and thinks only of the points which he may look on as nerve-terminals, every one communicating with the brain by what we have called “connecting lines”.

The points will not, however, appear as steady and of comparatively equal brilliance all over the field as the stars do. Certain groups will shine brightly, others will be dim and quiescent. The Clairvoyant will know therefrom, more or less according to his advance and experience, what is occupying the mind and thought of the patient. The number that so shine out and are salient will depend on the advance of the subject. In the simple and primitive type of man comparatively few will be illumined at one time – many more in the case of the Adept. It is supposed that with the

perfected body – what is termed the Christ-body – when the pilgrimage is done, the whole Aura is equally illuminated, and resembles the starry sphere.

Now the student may thus picture these sensitive points to himself as the bulbs at the end of threads, charged with vital fluid (this term will be presently explained – it is merely popular and not scientific). When the bulb is stimulated from without, a vital thrill passes through the thread to the brain. When it is stimulated from within, a vital thrill passes from the brain to the bulb. In either case there is also a return current completing a circuit, and the bulb grows out as an electric lamp when the current is switched on. (Note. This must be taken as diagrammatic, not as an anatomical description. This will come later). We must for the present put on one side the connection between these sensitive points and the physical brain, and how the impulses pass from one to the other, and fix the attention entirely on the surface of the Aura. Now that surface must be nebulous, and must be irregular – but those qualities too we disregard for the sake of clearness, and simply think of it as a surface studded with light-points; and we look on the surface as having some analogy to the human skin. This analogy is very useful, for there is a remarkable similarity between unhealthy conditions of the skin and unhealthy conditions of the Aura; and the analogies will help the Student to understand what is very difficult to put into words.

We have indicated in an earlier paper of this series the condition called “Flickering of the Aura”. This should now be very carefully studied, for upon it depend a large range of more or less serious diseases of the Aura. In itself it is so common that it can hardly be said that any human being is free from it. Only when it develops and becomes excessive can it rightly be termed a diseased or even an unhealthy condition; and it is herein that its danger and insidiousness lie, for the advances are almost imperceptible. So long as it is merely flickering, even though very pronounced and almost chronic, it may be cured with care. But when it becomes chronic, there is always the liability to the sequelae, or resulting conditions, some of which are exceedingly grave, attacking the physical, moral and spiritual natures. The Student therefore cannot give too close attention to this state of Flickering and its various symptoms.

First – how it looks to the trained clairvoyant watching the Aura. Normally, in a healthy Aura, he will see certain groups of points glowing steadily for a time, the remainder being quiescent, visible, but not salient. Then other groups will, as it were, be lighted from these, and the original groups pass into quiescence, as the train of thought develops itself. Perhaps a group may suddenly become bright for a moment, as some external stimulus excites them, but this will be with difficulty and reluctantly, and the Clairvoyant will probably see also the exciting cause. If the Clairvoyant be also the physician, or acting under the physician’s direction, he may apply a stimulus to some quiescent centres to note how quick the response is. The strength of the stimulus needed to produce a response, and the time taken to produce it, are as certain indications to the occult physician as the pulse and the temperature.

Often however, the glow on one set of points lasts a very short time – then there occurs a flash, and a wholly different group flash up – and so, like summer lightning, unconnected groups flash and fade. This is a simple and very usual type of Flickering which may be observed in almost every one, but it contains within itself symptoms that, if not attended to in time, may develop disastrously, and should therefore be closely studied.

The cause is this: what we have termed the “bulb” at the end of a thread might (if we used the language of material anatomy) be said to consist of a fibrous capsule enclosing a core which is the vehicle of the vital forces. This capsule in health is practically a non-conductor of those forces, or only conducts very slowly. Consequently, when a group of points is stimulated from within or without, the vital forces pass to and fro, the current is set running, and if there were no interference, would continue to run until the core-vehicle gradually grew wearied, when it would subside. But,

before this happens, the brain by will-action turns to current to some allied group, the transition of the vital force from one group to another being through the brain, which operates either consciously or unconsciously.

But there are two kinds of weakness that affect the bulb or terminal-cell. Sometimes the core (which is analogous to protoplasm) is soft and undeveloped, or it may be degenerated, and is unable to function for any length of time under the action of the vital force. Sometimes the capsule is weak and unable to withstand the strain of the tension, and allows vital force to escape. This is the most usual cause of Flickering, though both may, and often do, combine. The current, instead of passing in an orderly way through the brain, and being directed by the will to an allied group, breaks from its vehicle and leaps to the next group that automatically attracts it, thus exciting this from without. It is very obvious that in this action there must occur considerable leakage of vitality. And for this reason persons of strong and robust body who have Flickering of the Aura to any extent, will constantly feel tired and exhausted. Not is any treatment of the physical body of much service in this condition.

The student will readily imagine how this condition of Aura manifests itself psychically. The patient will never hold any train of thought long, will dart from subject to subject with no seeming relevance. In actions, will start to do something, and almost before it is well begun will start on to something else, will be incapable of sustained study or effort in any direction. The Clairvoyant watching will see the gleams of vital force flashing about the surface of the Aura. This is the physical symptom of the simplest form of Flickering, and arises from weakness of the capsules at the terminals. At the same time there will usually come a sense of fatigue, a sense of great pressure, of having an enormous amount of work that must be done. This is the invariable symptom of leakage in the short-circuited flashes, and loss of vitality, similar to that which would have occurred from heavy work, and which therefore deludes the brain.

Sometimes also the patient will be very quick to grasp an idea superficially, but will soon weary of precise and detailed explanations, and consequently will never attain any special excellence in any subject: an impatience of the laborious repetition necessary for mastery of anything always forming a barrier to success. The cause of this lies in the soft and undeveloped condition of the core of the terminals. When the vital force begins to act on these, with the inception of the current there is tension and friction within the capsule – this is vastly increased by the softness of the interior, and becomes, rapidly painful. The cause being unrecognised, it is met with impatience, and the current is switched off from that group of points.

In fact, here lies much of the difficulty in dealing with these conditions – that what is really nothing but an unhealthy condition of a purely physical part of the physical body (for such, properly understood, the Aura is) is looked upon by the patient and his friends as a mental or moral characteristic, a part of his personality, pleasant or the reverse, and usually something which he can do or not do at will. It would really be wise to say that we could have or not have toothache at will, or that a cold in the head was part of his character.

The mischief caused by Flickering is not confined to leakage of vitality; two physical results flow therefrom (physical, that is, in the sense in which the Aura itself is physical), namely:

- (1) The constant breaking-down of the resistance of the capsules of the terminals causes similar symptoms to those caused by the continued scratching of a point on the surface of the skin, that is, an irritation growing to inflammation:- and
- (2) The leakage of vital force at the surface of the Aura has much the same effect as exposure of the skin to the action of radium or of Rontgen rays, increasing the inflammation to the point of disease, and if continued, of acute disease which spreads over the whole surface,

involving every group of points, over the whole globe of the Aura. This does not occur at once, but wherever there is marked Flickering, we are sure to find the Aura extremely sensitive, and we naturally diagnose a diseased condition if this sensitiveness is involuntary. For in absolutely the healthy and developed Aura – as, say, that of the Adept, the sensitiveness producing Clairvoyance, intuition, and the like, should be a condition produced at will for a particular purpose. But the sensitiveness resulting from constant Flickering is a diseased condition giving no Occult powers. The physical manifestation of this condition on the material body is usually extreme but irregular irritability. The patient will at certain intervals be causelessly angry and annoyed at trifles, will often resent even kindness, the characteristic of this state being that it does not last, nor does it come at regular intervals, or for any material ascertainable cause. The analogy is to certain forms of neuritis which render the lightest and most caressing touch painful; or to some forms of erysipelas when the skin is inflamed and very painful to the touch. But whereas these are known to be diseased conditions, and the patient seeks a cure, and his friends are compassionate, recognising that he is ill – when it is the Aura that is affected, the patient usually seeks to justify his conduct, and find external reasons and excuses for it, and his friends resent it and ascribe it to bad temper, or to something within his own control; and thus no cure is attempted for what is really a disease and curable, until perhaps it has gone too far for cure.

When this type of inflammation of the Aura is established and becomes chronic, it is apt to produce what in occult medicine is termed “reaction of symbols”, the effect of the Aura being that, if an external stimulus is applied to any group of points, the response, instead of being normal and that which would be naturally produced in a healthy Aura, is precisely the contrary. To this also there is a physical analogy, for if, say, a nurse should gently stroke a tired or aching limb, the effect is soothing and grateful; but in a condition of acute neuritis, the same action gives a shock of pain and resentment. So if one should stroke or pat a pet dog caught in a trap, it will often try to bite the hand that tries to feed it, and that quite involuntarily. All know that these are disease-conditions, and they are equally so in the case of the Aura. The physical manifestations of this are obvious – the patient, as it said, takes everything amiss, and quarrels with his own shadow.

It is plain that, when reaction of Symbols has markedly set in, it must operate to reverse to a large extent the natural character of the man, causing him often to do the exact contrary of what one expects and what he himself resolves and desires to do. We have spoken before of the influence of one Aura on another, and we have seen that, when the Symbol of one Aura is super-vitalised, the effect is to vitalise the corresponding Symbol on the Aura of another. This is generally termed sympathy, and is a condition of health to be encouraged, and is in accordance with the principles and system of the Master. But the half-vitalised Symbol tends to deplete the other, and thus the man who is only half in earnest will not have great influence over others, or will most often rouse contradictory feelings. This must not be confounded with reaction. It is a perfectly normal action of healthy Auras, but reaction as above described is abnormal and unhealthy.

One physical manifestation of this re-active tendency is the unreasoning impulse to inflict pain. This is far more common than is generally supposed, for the instinct is to hide it carefully even while indulging it. It develops in Auras that are less strong and toughly organised than the average. It may be traced very commonly in children, especially if the body is sickly. It is more frequent in women than in men, and among men is found in the worn-out and degenerate races. (Here too we must distinguish between the pleasure in inflicting pain for its own sake from the fierce savage sentiment of retribution for an injury, which belongs to undisciplined strength).

Now this tendency is always clear evidence that reaction is going on in the Aura. The process is that, the whole Aura being inflamed from flickering or some other cause, the balance of the vital currents is thrown out, and they work in the reverse direction to the usual and normal. For it is the

nature of man (if no special force move him otherwise) to desire to give pleasure. This results from the ultimate unity of the whole race, and that, in the ultimate, “every soul is his own Soul”. (This, of course, is also the Master’s teaching). If therefore, he desire to inflict causeless pain, there must be a reversal of the natural movements of the Aura. This undoubtedly affects more or less seriously the physical brain. We see it very commonly in what is called “the tendency to say nasty things, things that hurt.” It is unfortunate that this is commonly regarded as merely a defect of character. If it were recognised for what it really is, a diseased condition of the Aura affecting the physical brain, the sufferer would be no more blamed for it than for an attack of hysteria or epilepsy, but would himself eagerly seek a cure.

When the tendency develops from words into acts of cruelty, as it may very readily and imperceptibly, the condition becomes grave, and the cure, though still possible, vastly more difficult.

Yet even in these advanced and difficult disease-conditions, the physician should endeavour above all to deal with and control the flickering of the Aura, and for this purpose should by all means enlist the co-operation of the patient. For, as we have seen, the transfer of vital forces from one group to another should pass through the brain and be directed by the will. The strength of the patient’s will is therefore the physician’s most powerful assistant, but it must be directed according to the principles of the healing art.

The causes of these abnormal conditions and the methods of cure must be reserved to another paper. We may say here, however, that precisely as in the disorders of the physical body the vast number, if not all, may be attributed to the action of micro-organisms, exactly so is it with the Aura, and these are so imperceptible physically or physiologically that it has become customary to think of them as spiritual forces. This is a great error. They are as material as, say the cholera microbe, and as susceptible of accurate knowledge. Call them devils if you will, but remember they are personal devils.

Another thing must be borne in mind in this condition, emphasising again the analogy of the Aura with the physical life of the body. We know that the balance of the various types of micro-organisms to which his body is, as it were, a host, makes for bodily health, and that it is only the excess of certain types that constitute disease, and that ultimately destroys the individual life of the man – so exactly is it in the Aura. For a modified and permitted flickering is necessary to rapidity and suppleness of the mental processes: slight inflammatory, alternated with slight phlegmatic, conditions are evidence of vitality; reaction may oft-times be a very essential provision for the automatic protection of the Aura from the intrusion of hostile and alien elements.

Neither the human body nor the Aura can in the present conditions exist in a state of mechanical perfection. The Occult Physician, therefore, needs great experience to know how far the play of health may go, and the exact point at which the limit is passed and they may become diseased conditions.

To all our Companions, however, who have followed thus far, the lessons must be clear – of charity and love in their judgements of others lest they blame sufferers for the disease that afflict them; - and, in regard to themselves to watch for the approaches of disease of the Aura, and to seek a cure – not to palliate or excuse to themselves the symptoms that ought to be warning notes, but to take heed while there is yet time.