

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE on IMAGINATION

Questions from *The Theosophical Forum*

QUESTION 180

[In: *Echoes of the Orient, the Writings of William Quan Judge*, Vol. 2, pp. 300-301 (2nd ed. 2009)]

Q. — *What is imagination, and what are its limits? Often I see mental pictures of myself and others, acting, talking, etc. Sometimes these pictures are realized, sometimes not. Where is one to draw the line?*

W.Q.J. — In my opinion *imagination* is exactly what it imports on its face, that is, the *image-making power* possessed surely by man, and inferred in brute creation. It was so defined by the ancient occultists and by the hermetic philosophers. But nowadays it is given a low place generally, yet has been raised to slightly greater eminence by the Metaphysical healers who have stumbled unknowingly on a great law. That which is often called *imagination* is, in fact, only fancy, or the idle creation of images whose tenure of life is short. But conscious exercise of this power raised to its highest degree is one of the necessities of occult art, for no occult feat can be performed without it. Experiments in mesmerism for a century, and lately those in hypnotism, show that each person has the power to create an image about himself which is perfectly objective to the inner senses of the seer. This creation is done by the use of imagination solely. If the image be indefinite, owing to the imagination not working strongly, the seer or subject will only see indefiniteness, because the subjective picture was badly constructed. But the constructor, poor or good, was the imagination. The Indian fakir makes you see the snake or other object — though you have all your senses — because through centuries of heredity and years of training his imagination has been put into such order that it sees before it the form so vividly that you perceive, as you suppose, an objective reality when none in fact exists. And turning to the letters from Adepts to Mr. Sinnett, we find them saying that in order to precipitate a note they must see (in imagination) each and every letter complete and unwavering before they can precipitate the material elements through that matrix upon the paper. So not only have we the testimony of all the mystics, but also that of those Adepts who in later days have shown those things to some.

As to drawing the line for the questioner. That can hardly be done. For if he is a clairvoyant partially or wholly, then he sometimes sees the pictures of what we improperly call the future. For there is no future; it is all now. In such seeing he does not use imagination. But where vain day-dreams interpose, then he is either using his fancy, or is bringing forgotten combinations of thought, or is being influenced for the moment by the fleeting thoughts of another. Johann Georg Gichtel once saw come out from heaven the hand of a widow who desired to marry him, and then a voice saying, "You must have her." He knew then that his stray thought and imagination had momentarily thrown a picture before his inner sense. That had but little to do with his imagination.

QUESTION 198

[In: *Echoes of the Orient, the Writings of William Quan Judge*, Vol. 2, pp. 306-307 (2nd ed. 2009)]

Q. — *In his reply to Question 180 Mr. Judge affirms the sole requisite for occult feats to be the exercise of imagination raised to high intensity by cultivation, and refers to the Indian fakir who makes one see snakes, etc., because through centuries of heredity and years of training his imagination sees the form so vividly that the bystander supposes himself to see an objective reality,*

though none exists. Now if occult feats consist in immediate formation in gross matter, and not only the means of these feats but the processes by which these means are obtained are in all instances the same, how is it possible for the fakir to fail in producing objective reality, while the feat of the Adept is a successful materialization? For since the function of a knife is to cut, it will perform that function irrespective of the hand which holds it.

W.Q.J. — I certainly never intended to say “the sole requisite for occult feats to be the exercise of the imagination raised to high intensity by high cultivation,” and a careful reference to my reply to Question 180 ought to show that I stated the above to be but one of the requisites. It is one of the absolutely necessary requisites to the performance of those feats I had in mind, and they include the greater number. But while it is an absolute prerequisite, there are other things and requisites to be taken into account if one is to perform certain feats. Any hypnotic experiment or effect needs only this imagemaking power joined with strong will to concentrate the image. But where more difficult performances are to be accomplished, such as apportionment of solid objects, precipitation upon paper, condensation of image so as to make it actually tangible, or controlling elementals, then there has to be added a knowledge of chemical, electrical, and magnetic substances and laws, together with will and high mathematics. For if the imagining power is weak, there is no possibility of forming the currents to work upon nor a matrix for certain occult chemical work. Having, then, thus declared other “requisites for occult feats,” it seems that the rest of the question must fall to the ground or be considered from other points. A “knife with a cutting function” will not cut unless some hand not only holds but also wields it. Nor do I see how a good trained, wonder-working fakir should fail to produce an objective reality if he so desired and carried his occult operation far enough for the purpose. And as, indeed, I have seen fakirs do this very thing, I cannot deny what I know has been accomplished.

W.Q. JUDGE ‘IMAGINATION AND OCCULT PHENOMENA’

[*The Path*, Vol. VII, December 1892, pp. 289-93]

[In: *Echoes of the Orient, the Writings of William Quan Judge*, Vol. 1, pp. 307-309 (2nd ed. 2009)]

The faculty of imagination has been reduced to a very low level by modern western theorizers upon mental philosophy. It is “only the making of pictures, day-dreaming, fancy, and the like”; thus they have said about one of the noblest faculties in man. In Occultism it is well known to be of the highest importance that one should have the imagination under such control as to be able to make a picture of anything at any time, and if this power has not been so trained the possession of other sorts of knowledge will not enable one to perform certain classes of occult phenomena.

(...)

The Adepts who consciously send messages from a distance or who impress thoughts or sentences on the mind of another at a distance are able to do so because their imagination has been fully trained.

The wonder-worker of the East who makes you see a snake where there is none, or who causes you to see a number of things done in your presence which were not done in fact, is able to so impress you with his trained imagination, which, indeed, is also often in his case an inheritance, and when inherited it is all the stronger when trained and the easier to put into training. In the same way but to a much smaller degree the modern western hypnotizer influences his subject by the picture he makes with his imagination in those cases where he causes the patient to see or not to see at will,

and if that power were stronger in the West than it is, the experiments of the hypnotizing schools would be more wonderful than they are.

‘OCCULT ARTS’ No. III Disintegration – Reintegration

[*The Path*, Vol. 8, No. 9, December, 1893, pp. 265; 268; 269-70]

[In: *Echoes of the Orient, the Writings of William Quan Judge*, Vol. 1, pp. 398-9; 401; 402-3 (2nd ed. 2009)]

p. 398-99

Just as we have seen that precipitation is known to material science in electroplating and other arts, so also is it true that in most departments of applied science disintegration is understood, and that here and there reintegration of such substances as diamonds has been successfully accomplished. But these are all by mechanical or chemical processes. The question here is, whether — as in respect to precipitation — the occult powers of man and nature can bring about the results. Has any one ever reduced a solid object to impalpable powder and then at a distant place restored the object to its former state? And, if so, how is it done? As to the first, I can only say that I have seen this done, and that many testimonies have been offered by others at various times for the same thing. In the records of Spiritualism there are a great many witnesses to this effect, and accepting all cases in that field which are free from fraud the same remarks as were made about precipitation apply.

p. 401

We can analyse the phenomenon of disintegration and transport of mass of matter and reintegration in this way: There is the operator who must know how to use his will, mind, and imagination. Next is the object to be dealt with. Then there is the resisting obstacle through which it may have to pass; and the air, ether, and astral light through which it travels. Lastly is the question whether or not there is the force called cohesion, by means of which masses of matter are held together within limits of form.

p. 402-3

Next we have the intelligent part of the matter to look at. Here the inner senses have to act under the guidance of a mind free from the illusions of matter, able to see into the occult cosmos behind the veil of objectivity. The will acts with immense force, exerting the powers both of attraction and repulsion as desired; knowledge of occult chemistry comes into use; the currents in the astral light or ether have to be known, as also how to make new currents. Those who have seen into the astral light and looked at the currents moving to and fro will understand this, others will either doubt, deny, or suspend judgment. The imagination as in the case of precipitation, is of prime importance; for in these things imagination is the sight and the hand of the mind and the will, without which the latter can accomplish nothing, just as the will and brain of a man whose arms are cut off can do nothing unless others aid him. But mind, will, and imagination do not re-construct the disintegrated object, for as soon as the dispersing force is slackened from its hold on the mass of molecules, the imagination having held the image of the object, the atoms obediently and automatically rearrange themselves as before.

All this may seem fanciful, but there are those who know of their own knowledge that it is all according to fact. And it is doubtless true that in no long time modern science will begin, as it is even now slowly starting, to admit all these things by admitting in full the ideal nature of the cosmos, thus removing at once the materialistic notions of man and nature which mostly prevail at the present day.
