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Synesthesia May Explain Healers Claims of Seeing People's 'Aura'

TEHRAN (FNA)- Researchers in Spain have found that at least some of the individuals claiming to see the so-called aura of people actually have the neuropsychological phenomenon known as "synesthesia" (specifically, "emotional synesthesia"). This might be a scientific explanation of their alleged ability.



In synesthetes, the brain regions responsible for the processing of each type of stimuli are intensely interconnected. Synesthetes can see or taste a sound, or associate people or letters with a particular color.

The study was conducted by the University of Granada Department of Experimental Psychology by Oscar Iborra, Luis Pastor and Emilio Gomez Milan, and has been published in the journal *Consciousness and Cognition*. This is the first time that a scientific explanation has been provided for the esoteric phenomenon of the aura, a subtle energy field of luminous radiation surrounding a person as a halo, which is impenetrable to most human beings.

In basic neurological terms, synesthesia is thought to be due to cross-wiring of some people (synesthetes); in other words, synesthetes present more synaptic connections than "normal" people. "These extra connections cause them to establish associations between brain areas that are not normally interconnected," professor Gomez Milan explains. New research suggests that many healers who claim to see the aura of people might have this condition.

The case of the "Santon de Baza"

One of the University of Granada researchers remarked that "not all healers are synesthetes, but there is a higher prevalence of this phenomenon among them. The same occurs among painters and artists, for example." To carry out this study, the researchers interviewed some synesthetes including a 'healer' from Granada, Sanchez Casas, known as "El Santon de Baza".

Many local people attribute "paranormal powers" to El Santon, because of his ability to see the aura of people "but, in fact, it is a clear case of synesthesia," the researchers explained. According to the researchers, El Santon has face-color synesthesia (the brain region responsible for face recognition is associated with the color-processing region); touch-mirror synesthesia (when the synesthete touches a person who is being touched or is experiencing pain, s/he experiences the same pain); empathy (the ability to feel what other person is feeling), and schizotypy (certain personality traits in healthy people involving slight paranoia and delusions). "These capacities make synesthetes have the ability to make people feel understood and provide them with special emotion and pain reading skills," the researchers explained.

In the light of the results obtained, the researchers remarked on the significant effect that healers have on people, "though some healers really have the ability to see people's 'auras' and feel the pain in others due to synesthesia." Some healers' abilities and attitudes that make them believe in their ability to heal other people is actually a case of self-deception, as synesthesia is not an extrasensory perception but a subjective and 'adorned' perception of reality," the researchers state.

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