

Holistic Health Practices – Part 24

What is Kirlian Photography?

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Kirlian photography is a controversial method of photography developed by Russian electrical technician Semyon Kirlian. It allegedly reveals a corona or “aura” around living things. Occultists frequently claim this photography supplies evidence of man’s inner psychic nature related to his alleged “astral body,” “higher self,” or occult aura. Psychics also claim to see auras around people, which are said to interpret their physical, emotional, or spiritual condition. Allegedly, Kirlian photography reveals this aura that psychics claim to see. Kirlian photography is also said to offer evidence of the healing abilities of psychics and spiritists insofar as it reveals the existence of the “astral body,” “higher self,” or other psychic components to man variously related to the healing process that occultists claim to employ.

But the meaning and value of Kirlian photography are not known and New Age occultic interpretations are doubtful at best. Occult interpretations of this phenomena frequently associate it with mystical occult energies connected with spiritism which are then wrongly interpreted as divine, natural, or neutral energies.

No one denies there are weak electrical phenomena within the body or that living entities have what could be interpreted as “energy” fields. For example, the electroencephalograph can detect electrodynamic phenomena in the brain, and other instruments can detect heat energy radiating from our bodies. But to say that these supply any evidence for the occultic concept of the “aura” or the occultic energy called *prana*, *chi*, *ki*, etc., would be wrong. New Agers may speak of the thermal or electrical activity of the body as “bio-energy,” but it should not in any way be confused with the “aura,” or the *prana*, *mana*, *ki*, *chi*, etc., of New Age medicine. Comparing the scientific descriptions of known bodily phenomena to the occultic descriptions of the aura reveals that both the “fields” and “energies” are vastly different.

Exactly what the Kirlian photography reveals is still uncertain. Kirlian photography may have experimental uses, but not for New Age believers. Its phenomena are explainable by recourse to more mundane things such as human sweat or the photographing process itself. (See *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter 1989.)

As noted, New Age interpretations of Kirlian phenomena are cited as evidence of a human aura that many psychics claim to see. But first, not every psychic claims to be able to see auras. One wonders why, if everyone supposedly has an aura that can be psychically perceived.

Second, if auras are universal to man and internally generated by the human body or spirit, they should be able to be seen in the dark. But not all psychics can see them in the dark.

Third, Kirlian photography reveals auras around everything – inanimate objects such as coins and desks included – not just people, leaves, or other living things. This also suggests that the Kirlian phenomenon is related to the photographic process.

Biblically, we know that inanimate objects do not contain a spiritual essence. Thus, whatever Kirlian photography reveals, it does not appear to be something spiritual. If it reveals the same aura around dead objects that cannot have a spirit or spiritual life, why should we conclude that the aura it reveals around living objects is anything spiritual?

Fourth, whatever psychics are seeing does not appear to be genuine psychic perception of the human spirit or some universal, mystical energy field because the reports psychics give are too dissimilar and contradictory.

Finally, any known bodily energy or electricity is much too weak to become a healing power or the source of psychic abilities which occultists claim. And if everyone has an inner core of mystical divine power, then everyone should be able to develop psychic powers. But, in fact, the only ones who do so are occultists who have spirit guides.