

*Madame Blavatsky on the  
introversion of mental vision*



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**The thought-reading sensitive obtains only an inverted mental picture of the object given him to read.**

Some interesting experiments have recently been tried by Mr. F.W.H. Myers<sup>1</sup> and his colleagues of the Psychic Research Society of London, which, if properly examined are capable of yielding highly important results. The experiments referred to were on their publication widely commented upon by the newspaper Press. With the details of these we are not at present concerned; it will suffice for our purpose to state for the benefit of readers unacquainted with the experiments, that in a very large majority of cases, too numerous to be the result of mere chance, it was found that the thought-reading sensitive obtained but an inverted mental picture of the object given him to read. A piece of paper, containing the representation of an arrow, was held before a carefully blind-folded thought-reader and its position constantly changed, the thought-reader being requested to mentally see the arrow at each turn. In these circumstances it was found that when the arrow-head pointed to the right, it was read off as pointing to the left, and so on. This led some sapient journalists to imagine that there was a mirage in the inner as well as the outer plane of optical sensation. But the real explanation of the phenomenon lies deeper.

It is well known that an object as seen by us and its image on the retina of the eye, are not exactly the same in position, but quite the reverse. How the image of an object on the retina is inverted in sensation, is a mystery which physical science is admittedly incapable of solving. Western metaphysics too, without regard to this point, hardly fares any better; there are as many theories as there are metaphysicians. Reid, Hamilton and others of that school but flounder in a bog of speculation. The only philosopher who has obtained a glimpse of the truth is the idealist Berkeley, who, to the extreme regret of all students of the true philosophy, could not get beyond theological Christianity, in spite of all his brilliant intuitions. A child, says Berkeley, does really see a thing inverted from our stand-point; to touch its head it stretches out its hands in the same direction of its body as we do of ours to reach our feet. Repeated failures in this direction give experience and lead to the correction of the notions born of one sense by those derived through another; the sensations of distance and solidity are produced in the same way.

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<sup>1</sup> [Elsewhere referred to as "An English F.T.S." i.e., Fellow of the Theosophical Society. See endnote by Boris de Zirkoff.]

The application of this knowledge to the above mentioned experiments of the Psychic Research Society will lead to very striking results. If the trained adept is a person who has developed all his interior faculties, and is on the psychic plane in the full possession of his senses the individual, who accidentally, that is without occult training, gains the inner sight, is in the position of a helpless child — a sport of the freaks of one isolated inner sense. This will throw a flood of light on the untrustworthy character of the ordinary untrained seer. Such was the case with the sensitives with whom Mr. Myers and his colleagues experimented. There are instances, however, when the correction of one sense by another takes place involuntarily and accurate results are brought out. When the sensitive reads the thoughts in a man's mind, this correction is not required, for the will of the thinker shoots the thoughts, as it were, straight into the mind of the sensitive. The introversion under notice will, moreover, be found to take place only in the instance of such images which cannot be affected by the ordinary sense-experience of the sensitive. To take the image of a dog for instance; when the sensitive perceives it as existing in the mind of a person or on a piece of paper, it may appear distorted to the inner perception of the sensitive, but his physical experience would always correct it. But this introversion is sure to take place when the direction faced by the dog is the subject of investigation. A difficulty may here suggest itself with regard to the names of persons or the words, thought of for the sensitive's reading. But allowance must in such cases be made for the operation of the thinker's will, which forces the thought into the sensitive's mind, and thereby renders the process of introversion unnecessary. It is abundantly clear from this that the best way of studying these phenomena is when only one set of will-power, that of the sensitive, is in play. This takes place always when the object the sensitive is to read, is independent of the will of any other person, as in the case of its being represented on paper or any other thing of the kind.

**The popular belief that facts are generally inverted in dreams can be explained by the same law of introverted mental vision.**

Applying the same law to dreams, we can find the rationale of the popular superstition that facts are generally inverted in dreams. To dream of something good is generally taken to be the precursor of something evil. In the exceptional cases in which dreams have been found to be prophetic, the dreamer was either affected by another's will or under the operation of some disturbing forces, which cannot be calculated except for each particular case.

In this connection another very important psychic phenomenon may be noticed. Instances are too numerous and too well-authenticated to be amenable to dispute, in which an occurrence at a distance, for instance the death of a person, has pictured itself to the mental vision of one interested in the occurrence. In such cases the double of the dying man appears even at a great distance and becomes visible usually to his friend only, but instances are not rare when the double is seen by a number of persons. The former case comes within the class of cases under consideration, as the concentrated thought of the dying man is clairvoyantly seen by the friend and the erect image is produced by the operation of the dying man's will-energy, while the latter is the appearance of the genuine *māyāvi-rūpa*, and therefore not governed by the law under discussion.

## Boris de Zirkoff on Frederick W.H. Myers

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (NOTES BY BORIS DE ZIRKOFF) V pp. 263-64.

Frederick William Henry Myers was born in 1843 at Keswick in Cumberland, England. His father was the Rev. Frederick Myers, perpetual curate of St. John's, Keswick. His mother was Susan Harriet, youngest daughter of John Marshall of Hallstead. He was educated at Cheltenham College. He had a brilliant mind from early youth, and had learnt Virgil by heart before he passed his school age. He won the senior classical scholarship in his first year in College. In 1859, he entered for the national "Robert Burns Centenary" competition with a poem, and won second prize. Later he went to Cambridge. There he won various honours, including two scholarships, graduating in 1864.

After graduation, he toured the European continent and spent a year in the United States. In the years 1865-69 he was classical lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge. From 1872 to within a few weeks of his death, he served on the staff of School Inspectors. Outwardly, his life was uneventful, the earlier years being devoted to poetical work in which he achieved considerable fame, and the last twenty years of his life being spent mainly in psychical research.

At Trinity College he established close relations with Professor Henry Sidgwick who became his valued friend. The early religious views of Frederick Myers underwent great modification, owing to disillusionment caused by wider knowledge. In 1882, he became one of the co-founders of the Society for Psychical Research, others being Prof. Balfour Stewart, Prof. W. F. Barrett (University of Dublin), Prof. Henry Sidgwick, Stainton Moses, Edmund Gurney, Dr. G. Wyld. The Society was formed as a result of a conference convoked by Prof. Barrett, for the purpose of making "an organized and systematic attempt to investigate that large group of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical and spiritualistic."

In 1886, Myers published a work entitled *Phantasms of the Living* (London: Trübner & Co.), the two bulky volumes of which were the combined production of Myers himself, Frank Podmore and Edmund Gurney. This work was devoted to the establishment of the claim that telepathy, *i.e.*, the transference of thought and feeling from one individual to another, by other than the recognized sense channels, is a proved fact of nature; and that phantasms (or impressions) of persons, especially undergoing a crisis, such as death, are perceived with a frequency inexplicable by chance, and are probably telepathic.

One of the great pioneer-theorists of modern parapsychology, Frederick Myers published a valuable series of papers on what he termed the "Subliminal Self" in the Society's *Proceedings*. His purpose, certainly the first of its kind to be found in Western academic research, was, as William James describes it in his *Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897), "to consider the phenomena of hallucinations, hypnotism, automatism, double personality, and mediumship, as connected parts of one whole subject." This inquiry, after fifteen years of critical examination, was ably concluded by Myers in his posthumous *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (London: Longmans, Green & G., 1903). These two volumes, extensively documented, repre-

sent the conviction that the waking consciousness of man is but a small part of a greater consciousness, and that this unseen self, manifesting in every form of normal and supernormal mental phenomena, is the source and origin of much, if not most, of the remarkable evidence generally attributed to the agency of disembodied spirits. Myers maintains that, instead of making the possibility of human survival less likely, the mere possession by the living of such remarkable and potential, but little-used, faculties evidences a purpose and program beyond the physical body and its death.

Myers became interested in Theosophy and the work of the Founders, and joined the Theosophical Society on the 3rd of June, 1883. It was largely through his interest and instrumentality that the Society for Psychological Research, in 1884, undertook an inquiry into the phenomena connected with Madame Blavatsky. History records that the preliminary conclusion of the investigating Committee was, on the whole, favourable; but that the final decision, as based on the personal Report of Dr. Richard Hodgson, was utterly inimical. In later years Myers spoke bitterly of the claims for H.P. Blavatsky and classed them among the hoaxes of the age, an attitude greatly to be deplored, when contrasted with his earlier sympathetic attitude.

Myers died in 1901 in Rome, and was buried in Keswick churchyard, within sight of his old home. He was a man of "rare intellectual gifts, original, acute and thoughtful, subtle in insight, abundant in ideas, vivid and eloquent in expression. A person at once forcible, ardent and intense." It was his intuition and intellectual courage that had attracted to him in the early days the attention of the Teachers; and it must be said, in spite of his later change of heart, that he did a great deal of useful work for the Movement.

