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THE SUBLIMINAL CONSCIOUSNESS: F. W. H. MYERS'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL

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ABSTRACT: Frederic Myers approached the problem of survival as part of the larger problem of the nature of consciousness, especially as it relates to the question of whether consciousness is produced by the brain or is filtered and transmitted by the brain. He suggested that, since psychology and physics are increasingly showing that both mind and matter are not what they appear to be from our ordinary perspective, it is likely that the relationship between mind and matter is also radically different from what traditional dualistic as well as materialistic theories have proposed. His reviews of the subliminal capacities of mind led him to suggest that consciousness is more extensive than ordinary supraliminal awareness and that the function of the brain is to filter and limit consciousness for adaptive purposes. Survival research must proceed within the broader context of the general study of consciousness and its relationship to physical processes, using such empirical methods as hypnosis, scrying to induce hallucinations, and motor automatisms such as mediumship to elicit latent capacities of mind.

When one is invited to give a lecture, the organizers almost immediately ask for a title, which is unfortunate, because I usually find that an appropriate title does not occur to me until much later, after I have finished writing the paper. And that is what happened in this case. Many readers are probably familiar with Gaither Pratt's (1974) paper, "Notes for the Future Einstein for Parapsychology." It occurred to me while I was writing this paper that, instead of the title I submitted, a better title would have been "Notes from Frederic Myers for the Future Einstein for Survival Research." Myers's writings themselves certainly consist of much more than just notes; they are in fact a systematic and comprehensive presentation of a wide range of provocative ideas and information that I think are potentially of extreme importance, not just for survival research, and not even just for parapsychology, but for psychology and the scientific study of consciousness in general. But in this paper I will limit myself to a few notes, primarily about Myers's approach to the study of consciousness, that anyone interested in advancing survival research might want to consider.

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Most people who know anything at all about the course of research over the past century on the question of survival after death will agree that research in this area, perhaps even more than in parapsychology in general, is in desperate need of some new ideas. Much high-quality research (and, in my view, good evidence for *some* paranormal process, even if we do not yet know what) has been produced in connection with survival, particularly with some of the studies on mediumship. But the impressive results have ultimately led only to what seems to be an intractable problem—one that exists for all of parapsychology but is perhaps nowhere else so central and crucial a problem as it is for survival research—and that is the problem of the source of psi (Palmer, 1992, pp. 233–236). In a parapsychology experiment, it is often unclear whether the observed psi effects have originated with the ostensible participants (subjects or agents) in the experiment, or with the experimenter. In a spontaneous case involving ESP between two people, we cannot say whether the experience was the result primarily of the activity of the agent or the activity of the percipient: Did the agent actively send out the information to the percipient, or was it the percipient's mind that went out and retrieved the information, or was it in some sense the interaction of both minds? Similarly, given that a medium produces some information acquired by nonnormal means about a deceased person, can we say that this information came from the surviving mind of the deceased person, or did it come solely from living minds? Ordinary parapsychological research can continue without having to resolve this source-of-psi problem, although I personally doubt whether parapsychologists will ever advance much in understanding the processes involved in psi without resolving it. Survival research, in contrast, is actually defined by the question of whether the paranormal processes involved include the mental activity of a deceased person. Consequently, much of the research on mediumship has consisted of attempts to pinpoint the source of psi by obtaining from mediums information that exceeded not only the medium's normal knowledge and capacities, but also the limits of what the medium could have learned by ESP from a living person or by clairvoyance from a contemporary document, object, or event. The problem, of course, is that we know nothing about what those limits might be. We know that paranormal processes exceed normal spatial and temporal boundaries; but if we try to specify how far they might exceed them, we have only our subjective judgments about this to rely on. The result has been that equally competent, knowledgeable people have come to exactly opposite conclusions about whether the best, clearly paranormal mediumistic communications originated with a surviving

deceased person or with a more mundane source (e.g., Dodds, 1934; Hodgson, 1898, especially pp. 405–406). Survival research pretty much ground to a halt because of the inability of parapsychologists in general to find some objective means to determine the source of psi.

It was in the hope of gaining some new insights into how to approach the survival problem that I decided several years ago to go back and study more carefully the writings of psychical research's founders, and particularly those of Frederic Myers, since it was he, among all the early psychical researchers, who was the most intensely interested in and concerned with the survival question. The intensity of his concern comes through, for me anyway, in one particularly poignant sentence in which he says that, if death marks the end of an individual, then "we are shut in land-locked pools; why speak to us of an infinite sea?" (Myers, 1900a, p. 121). I was surprised, though, to find that Myers did not discuss the survival problem or survival research as frequently or as directly as I had thought he would. When he did, it was often simply to say how important a problem it is or to lament the poor quality of most of the evidence put forward by Spiritualists in support of their belief in survival. Understanding why Myers did not refer directly to survival very often gave me my first insight into approaching the survival problem; and that was that the issue will probably never be resolved only by finding the perfect case or even by coming up with some new and ingenious research design that can pinpoint the source of psi. Most survival researchers have taken, almost exclusively, what might be described as the direct, more narrow approach to the survival question: They have looked for better and better cases—say, of well-documented crisis apparitions—or they have tried, primarily with mediums, to produce better and better evidence suggesting the activity of a surviving deceased person. But Myers understood clearly that such evidence, no matter how good, will be of little value as long as it stands alone, cut off from other areas of knowledge. Evidence suggesting the survival of human personality must be shown to fit, somehow, with what we already know about the functioning of human personality; and it also must be able to help us understand aspects of what we still do *not* know about the functioning of human personality. Myers explained, therefore, in the early pages of his book *Human Personality*, that research on the survival question requires, not only a direct approach, but equally importantly, a broader, indirect approach: He said that after pursuing for some years the task of collecting and analyzing evidence pointing directly to the survival of man's spirit, he felt that:

> the step from the action of embodied to the action of disembodied spirits would still seem too sudden if taken in this direct way. . . . [I]t became gradually plain to me that before we could safely mark off any group of manifestations as definitely implying an influence from beyond the grave, there was need of a more searching review of the capacities of man's incarnate personality than psychologists . . . had thought it worth their while to undertake. (Myers, 1903, Vol. 1, pp. 8–9)

In other words, Myers thought that we first have to ask the basic question whether mind, or consciousness, is of such a nature that we can even *conceivably* consider whether it can survive the destruction of the body. The survival question is really just the most extreme form of the question about the nature of the relationship between mental processes and physical processes in general. Is consciousness, like matter, a primary and fundamental characteristic of nature? Or is it a secondary phenomenon, an evolved, emergent, epiphenomenal, or otherwise derivative characteristic of matter? As William James succinctly put it, is consciousness a product or a principle of nature (James, 1898/1906, p. vi)? Is it "an elementary force in nature" or instead "the resultant of the really elementary forces" (James, 1902/1958, p. 105)? In short, is consciousness caused or causal?

Such questions as these are at the theoretical heart of psychology and should provide the basic orientation for psychological research in general. Unfortunately, they have not done so. During scientific psychology's formative period, from about 1860-1900, such questions were almost unanimously dismissed by psychologists and other scientists as totally inappropriate for a scientific psychology. There were a variety of reasons for this rejection, but the primary one was that the history of science seemed to show that modern science had progressed specifically by rejecting the concept of mental causality in nature as a vestige of the supernatural, teleological thinking that had previously held science back. As a result, the assumption that mind is a secondary, and not a primary, phenomenon of nature has become firmly entrenched in modern psychology. Even today, when the psychology of consciousness is making a comeback and consciousness has again become a legitimate topic for reputable psychologists to consider, the basic assumption that it is nonetheless somehow secondary or derivative in nature is rarely seriously questioned. Much of contemporary research in psychology or the neurosciences on what is said to be the mind-brain problem is limited to observations in which, essentially, the brain is the independent variable and mind is the dependent variable. The observer in such research

creates or looks for a condition of damage or other alteration to the brain or nervous system and then describes the effects on mental functioning. Thus, much of contemporary mind-brain research involves the clinical observation of the relationship between neurological damage and psychological changes, or the experimental destruction or stimulation of neural systems. But such research procedures, designed, in principle, with the brain as the independent, initially altered variable, are guaranteed simply to confirm the assumption that mind is wholly dependent on the brain. And correlational studies, which simply describe the observed relationship between neural and behavioral or mental events, similarly get no closer to the heart of the problem.

Even the new mentalists in psychology, who stress the importance of making mental processes central to psychological research, are in fact materialists in the way that the 19th-century physician Henry Maudsley defined materialists: as "those who maintain that mind is an outcome and function of matter in a certain state of organization" (Maudsley, 1879, p. 667). For example, Ulric Neisser, a leader in the new cognitive psychology, probably speaks for most psychologists when he says: "I do not doubt that human behavior and consciousness depend *entirely* on the activity of the brain, in interaction with other physical systems" (Neisser, 1967, p. 5; my emphasis). Roger Sperry, who has long argued that mind is an active, causal agent, nevertheless assumes that mind is an emergent property of matter and that it is no longer "a question of whether conscious experience is tied to the living brain, but rather to what particular parts of the brain, or to which neural systems and under what physiological conditions" (Sperry, 1977, p. 241). And at least one parapsychologist shares in this assumption: Susan Blackmore has written that "materialism, in one form or another, is here to stay. . . . [W]e need courage to accept what has been learned in other sciences, that probably conscious experience is *totally* dependent on our brains" (Blackmore, 1988, pp. 56, 58; my emphasis). "Courage," though, does not seem to me the appropriate word to characterize the evasion or abandonment of a major theoretical problem that has never been adequately addressed empirically, either in psychology or elsewhere.

What is at issue is *not* whether mind is in some sense dependent on brain; this seems so obvious and well established that it could almost be said to be a truism. What is at issue is what this observed correlation signifies. As Myers put it:

> However exactly the parallelism between psychical and cerebral energies may be established, the exacter correlation can tell us little more than the vaguer told us—little more than we had always known. . . . But as to the

> origin or essential significance of this close connection . . . we avowedly know nothing at all. We do not know whether the mental energy precedes or follows on the cerebral change, nor whether the two are, somehow, but different aspects of the same fact. (Myers, 1891, p. 635)

Today, one hundred years after Myers, few scientists and philosophers seem aware that ever more detailed descriptions of the correlation of mental and physical states do not amount to real progress on resolving the underlying basic problem. (One exception is J. R. Smythies; see, e.g., Smythies, 1989, p. 101.) Even if we could exactly identify the specific neural processes associated with specific mental processes, we would still be no closer to understanding the nature of the correlation than we were when we could simply observe that a blow to the head results in loss of conscious awareness.

William James described the central mind-brain problem somewhat more specifically than Myers had: He insisted that we do not yet know whether the brain is, in his words, "productive" or "transmissive" (James, 1898/1900, p. 15). Does the brain produce consciousness (in which case consciousness is totally dependent on the brain and cannot conceivably survive), or does it simply filter and limit consciousness (in which case the dependence may be only partial and survival is at least conceivable)?

Psychical research was founded specifically to address this major theoretical problem of the nature of the relationship between mind and matter at a time when most other scientists were abandoning the problem *en masse.* In Myers's words,

> The whole problem of the relation of the psychical to the physical—of thought and will to space and matter—is forced upon our attention with startling vividness from the very beginning of this inquiry. . . . Dilemmas which the metaphysician can evade, and the physicist ignore, [the psychical researcher cannot]. (Myers, 1886b, p. 290)

Myers's work in particular was largely an attempt, first, to undertake the "searching review of the capacities of man's incarnate personality" that he had called for; second, to try to systematize the results of that review in a new and more comprehensive view of consciousness; and third, to suggest how this new view of consciousness might bear on the survival problem and how it might lead to new research relevant—both directly and indirectly—to the question of survival.

I will not try here to summarize the findings of Myers's review of the capacities of mind, except to make two points about the nature of his review. First, he concentrated primarily on subconscious phenomena because in many of them both physical and mental processes seemed to

be operating in unusual and unaccustomed ways. In particular, many subconscious phenomena such as those associated with hysteria, hypnosis, or trance states, suggested, in ways not apparent during normal psychological functioning, that a change in mental state could result directly in a change in physiological state, or that mental functioning could otherwise exceed its normal physical limits. Myers believed that it would be only by studying such phenomena, in which normal psychophysical functioning had been altered, that we would get any new insights into mind-body relations.

Second, Myers's review relied heavily on classification methods analogous to those that Darwin had recently applied so successfully to biological phenomena. That is, Myers attempted to show that even the most rare or extreme abnormal or paranormal phenomena are simply at the end of a continuum that begins with commonly occurring, normal psychological phenomena. His intent was to show that normal, abnormal, and paranormal phenomena are related and are simply different manifestations or variations of these same basic processes. For example, the images of dreams, drug-induced hallucinations, hypnotically induced hallucinations, and veridical apparitions are probably all the result of the same basic psychological mechanism, even if the stimuli setting the mechanism in motion may differ in each case; and no explanation of one of these phenomena will be adequate until it can be extended to the others as well. Myers's comparative methodology was recognized by James (1901) as a major contribution to psychology.

As I said earlier, however, I am not going to try here to summarize the vast range of psychological functioning that Myers reviewed. What I want to do instead is to describe the view of consciousness that Myers developed out of his observations of subconscious functioning. Then I will explain briefly why Myers thought that this conception of consciousness makes the idea of survival not only conceivable, but perhaps even probable. And then I will close with a few remarks about the kind of research that he thought would be necessary to advance survival research, not just theoretically but also empirically.

First, however, I want to preface all this with what is perhaps Myers's most important note for the future Einstein for survival research. Myers believed that ultimately we would have to break through, and not remain trapped in, the old dichotomy of materialism versus dualism. He fully recognized, as dualists do, that experience presents itself to us in two radically different forms, and that "the gulf between the objective and the subjective side of our experience remains unbridged" (Myers, c. 1884, pp. 29–30). He even suggested that "our intellects, as at present

constituted, are in fact unable to transcend" dualism (1886a, p. 1) and that therefore "for practical purposes we have to regard [mind and matter] as distinct and treat them separately" (1903, Vol. 1, p. 13n). On the other hand, Myers also fully subscribed to the belief in the ultimate continuity of the universe. As he put it, "[I] adopt the ancient belief . . . that the world as a whole, spiritual [or mental] and material together, has in some way a systematic unity" (1900a, p. 117); and he cautioned that in modern times we have perhaps come to regard the gulf between mind and matter as "too unbridgeable" (1903, Vol. 2, p. 252).

Faced with this dilemma, that our present perception of the universe suggests both dualism and monism, Myers reminded us that our present perception of both mind and matter is inadequate and that our traditional categories of dualism and materialism, derived from them, are therefore probably inadequate also. The study of subconscious phenomena, which had become a widespread pursuit during the latter decades of the 19th century, was seriously challenging old assumptions about the nature and, especially, the extent of mind. Similarly, perhaps the greatest accomplishment of 19th-century physical science was in beginning to reveal just how limited our perception of matter is; Myers observed that "Science, while perpetually denying an unseen world, is perpetually revealing it" (1881, p. 103). Astronomy, chemistry, and biology were beginning to show how vastly larger and also how vastly smaller the universe is, compared with what our unaided senses tell us. Most importantly, with the discovery of electromagnetic radiation, physics was beginning to show totally unsuspected *kinds* of matter. In short, even matter was beginning to be seen as much more extensive—and even of a different nature—than it was previously thought to be. As Myers put it, "Our knowledge of the visible solar spectrum is but an introduction to the knowledge which we hope ultimately to attain of the sun's rays. The limits of our spectrum do not inhere in the sun that shines, but in the eye that marks his shining" (1903, Vol. 1, p. 17). Thus, since neither mind nor matter is what it had long been assumed to be, Myers suggested that old ideas about the relationship between the two—dualistic as well as materialistic—were also likely to be inadequate. The existence of previously undetected mental phenomena and previously undetected physical phenomena suggested that the correlation of mind and brain might not be so straightforward as many scientists assumed. Furthermore, since neither mind nor matter is limited to the forms that we ordinarily perceive, then psychophysical entities—such as human personalities—might likewise not be limited to the forms we ordinarily perceive.

Myers believed in particular that it would be the study of the phenomena of psychical research, such as telepathy, that would "supply us with some hint" as to a new view of mind-matter relations (1900b, p. 410). On the one hand, he believed that a purely physical account of telepathy, such as a brain-wave hypothesis or some variant of that, was unlikely (1890, p. 317–318; 1900b, p. 408–410). On the other hand, he believed also that telepathy, like any psychological phenomenon, is not only mental but also physical, inasmuch as it takes some kind of phenomenal, detectable form. As he put it, "Like all influences which touch and modify man's living, material brain, telepathy must needs have a physical side to it as well as a psychical. . . . In however complex and latent a form, there must somewhere be a physical structure, a physical concomitance for all these things" (1894, p. 422). Elsewhere, he suggested that:

> telepathy forces us into a position where it is no longer safe to assume any sharply-defined distinction of mind and matter. . . . We are now pretty well agreed that such concomitance [of mind and matter] does always and inevitably exist within us. . . . But I think it possible that the facts of telepathy may compel us to extend our conceptions of physico-psychical concomitance, and to face the supposition that though forces may exist, and agencies operate, which the ordinary materialistic view altogether denies, yet these also may be correlated . . . with the force and matter with which our mathematical science already deals. . . . Our notions of mind and matter must pass through many a phase as yet unimagined. (1886c, pp. 178–179)

Myers left the new notions of matter up to the physicists; but he did believe that he could offer some preliminary new ideas about the nature of mind. His view of consciousness grew directly out of his attempt to reconcile or resolve the conflict between the two diametrically opposed views of mind that clashed particularly violently during the 19th century. One of these views, supported by our own experience of consciousness, said that mind is an indivisible whole or unity to which sensations and thoughts belong; the other view, supported by the scientific analysis of psychological phenomena, said that mind is a multiplicity, an aggregate structure built up from innumerable psychological elements. In essence, therefore, psychological theory remained polarized between a wave and a particle view of mind, just as in 19th-century physics theories about light remained polarized between a wave and a particle view.

Myers, however, believed that both views of mind were in fact correct and that they only seemed contradictory because they were both incomplete. On the one hand, he agreed with those who held the particle view of mind that "the old-fashioned conception of human personality as a

unitary consciousness known with practical completeness to the waking self need[s] complete revision" (1903, Vol. 2, p. 81). The rapidly multiplying observations of experimental psychology, neurology, psychopathology, and hypnotism clearly showed that higher mental processes had evolved from lower ones; that the human mind is far more extensive than ordinary awareness reveals, inasmuch as much of our psychological functioning remains outside the range of our conscious mental life; and that under certain conditions, consciousness could fragment into multiple parts. On the other hand, he also believed that the psychological analysis of mind was only just beginning, and that when it had been pushed far enough, it would in fact reveal an underlying unity behind "the shifting elements" (1889, p. 343). Myers found it particularly significant that in many hypnotic and psychopathological cases in which there seem to be multiple personalities or states of consciousness, the personalities will often not be totally isolated and, indeed, that one may have a more or less complete awareness of the others. In more recent years, Hilgard has called attention to the same phenomenon, which he calls the "Hidden Observer" (Hilgard, 1977). According to Myers, however, "the full significance of this fact . . . has hardly yet, I think, been realised in any quarter" (Myers, 1892a, p. 303). The significance, he believed, was that there may in fact be an underlying unity to consciousness.

In short, Myers was facing the problem of whether mind can best be understood if viewed as a whole or if viewed as an aggregate of parts, and he argued that any psychological theory that viewed it as either one or the other alone was misleadingly incomplete. In an attempt to resolve the paradoxical suggestion that mind is both divisible and indivisible, he suggested that the part of mind that we are ordinarily aware or conscious of might simply be those relatively few psychological elements that have been filtered out of and segregated from a larger consciousness by a process of natural selection and adaptation in response to environmental demands. The biological organism, specifically the brain, seemed to him better described as a mechanism that limits and shapes the manifest, waking, or supraliminal consciousness out of a larger, latent, subliminal consciousness, rather than a mechanism that produces consciousness. Myers's view was clearly an example of what James would later call the "transmission" theory of mind, as opposed to the "production" theory. Schiller (1894), Bergson (1913), and Aldous Huxley (1954) held similar views. Huxley, for example, called the larger, latent consciousness "Mind at Large," and he described the theory behind it as follows: "To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system.

What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet" (Huxley, 1954, p. 23). This description by Huxley is in fact identical to Myers's view.

To try to make his conception of consciousness clearer, Myers frequently used the metaphor of light. In particular, he suggested that the larger consciousness, which he called the individuality, be thought of as a beam of light which, when filtered through a physical object or prism, becomes visible as a continuum, or spectrum, of multiple colors extending in each direction. The part of our mental life of which we are ordinarily consciously aware corresponds only to that small segment of the electromagnetic spectrum that is visible to the naked eye; but just as the electromagnetic spectrum continues in either direction beyond the small visible portion, so human consciousness might extend beyond the small portion of which we are normally aware. The visible portion—both of the electromagnetic spectrum and of the mental spectrum—is in no way either superior or inferior to the rest, but is simply that portion which, in evolutionary terms, best meets the needs of the organism in its immediate environment. Furthermore, the visible or supraliminal portion is in no way fixed, but is continually shifting, expanding, or contracting, not only during the life of an individual, but also over the course of evolution. Just as sensory detection of the electromagnetic spectrum has evolved from a simple irritability to highly complex visual systems, so the supraliminal portion of the mental spectrum has evolved from simple reflex responses of primitive nervous systems to the highest human cognitive processes.

Myers developed his ideas about the structure and evolution of consciousness further by applying to mind the influential model of nervous system functioning that had been proposed by the neurologist Hughlings Jackson (1884). Jackson had described the nervous system as a hierarchy of three general levels, ranging from the oldest and most basic biochemical processes, to the mid-level sensorimotor processes, to the most recently evolved cerebral centers with which the higher mental processes are associated. Evolution occurs as the older mental processes, by repeated functioning, become more organized, automatic, unconscious, and stable. Receding, as it were, from center stage and into the background of consciousness, these processes nevertheless continue to function automatically, providing the basis on which higher and more complex processes develop.

This model of a hierarchical system that is in a constant state of change in response to the demands of the organism's environment became the

model for Myers's conception of consciousness. Reverting to the metaphor of the electromagnetic spectrum, Myers suggested that in the invisible "infrared" direction of the mental spectrum are those older, more primitive processes, information, or behavior that, he suggested, were once conscious (either at the individual or at the evolutionary level) but are now unconscious and automatic. Corresponding to the small visible portion of the electromagnetic spectrum are our conscious, aware thoughts and behavior. And finally, in the invisible "ultraviolet" direction of the mental spectrum are those mental capacities that remain for the most part latent because they have not yet been elicited or activated by the adaptive evolutionary process. This is the region from which, as consciousness evolves, the newer, higher mental processes emerge; and this is the region that includes the paranormal processes that we occasionally get hints of.

In sum, Myers's thesis was that our ordinary waking or supraliminal consciousness is actually only a small segment that results from the filtering or narrowing of a larger Self, much of which remains latent and capable of emerging only under the appropriate conditions. The evolution of consciousness involves the gradual shifting of this visible, or supraliminal, segment up the spectrum in the direction of the ultraviolet region, as more and more psychological processes are mastered and become automatic and are thus relegated to the infrared region, while more and more new, latent capacities are drawn out of the ultraviolet region and into the visible segment. The evolution of consciousness is thus a general process, in Myers's words, of "gaining a completer control over innate but latent faculty" (Myers, 1895a, p. 6).

What does all this have to do with the survival question? In general, if a model of mind such as Myers's, in which the brain is the filter rather than the producer of consciousness, can be supported by future research, then the notion of survival becomes less implausible. More specifically, though, Myers offered two lines of argument in support of the idea that mind is of such a nature that it can survive the death of the body. First, as I mentioned earlier, Myers thought the mind-matter problem could best be approached empirically by studying subconscious phenomena in which normal psychophysical processes have been altered. He suggested studying, for example, phenomena such as stigmata (1903, Vol. 1, pp. 188, 492–499) or the hypnotic production of blisters and other physiological effects (see, e.g., 1892b). What was interesting about such cases was that a change in mental state (whether spontaneous or deliberately induced) seemed to have resulted directly in a change in the body. Ultimately, as Myers pointed out (1892b, p. 333), such mentally

induced changes are no more unexplained than are normal volitional effects, such as thinking about picking up a pen and then doing it. But because such changes as hypnotic blisters are so unusual and are not under our conscious control, they confront us more directly with our ignorance about the relationship between mental and physical processes. Even more challenging are phenomena in which a change in mental state seems to result in a change in a physical system *other* than one's own body. Along these lines, Myers encouraged the study of maternal impressions, in which an idea in a pregnant woman's mind seems to have been translated into a birthmark or a birth defect on her child's body (1892b, p. 335n; see also Stevenson, 1992), and of course he also encouraged the study of what we now call psychokinesis, or PK. The jump from volitional effects on one's own brain to volitional effects on a distant object is admittedly a large one; but as Myers pointed out, because we have no idea yet how even ordinary volition works, "we have no right to take for granted that the problem, when more closely approached, will keep within its ancient limits, or that Mind . . . must needs always be powerless upon aught but the grey matter of the brain" (1894, p. 421). In fact, Myers was proposing here an idea similar to the "Shin" theory proposed fifty years later by Thouless (Thouless & Wiesner, 1946–1949), which holds that the paranormal processes of ESP and PK are simply extensions of normal sensory input and motor output processes. But Myers's larger point was that the study of volition, and especially of those volitional effects that occur in spite of physical barriers, is important because such evidence for mind's causal efficacy suggests that consciousness is a fundamental feature of nature and as such may not be wholly dependent on matter.

Myers's second line of argument when considering the possibility of survival was essentially a functional one in that he looked at the latent, now subliminal, capacities of mind and asked what they are for, what functional purpose they might serve (Gauld, 1992, p. 403). Myers thought that the process of evolution has been primarily one of expanding the perceptual capacities of living organisms so that, as organisms have moved up the evolutionary ladder, they have become increasingly aware of aspects of their environment that have existed all along but were unperceived and unsuspected by lower organisms (1903, Vol. 1, p. 95). The fact that consciousness is far greater both in extent and in ability than we ordinarily realize suggested to Myers that it is capable of operating in an environment wider than we presently perceive. The existence of latent capacities for (say) increased memory, for telepathy, or for mental control over physical systems suggested to him that these

capacities may ultimately become more fully activated and operational, either over the course of evolution or upon the removal of the filtering mechanism of the brain, so that consciousness will continue to expand and become aware of a wider environment that has been there all along, though undetected by our limited perceptual capacities. Related to this argument was Myers's belief, which I discussed earlier, that since matter is much more complex than our unaided senses tell us, mind-matter relations may likewise be much more complex; and consciousness, with all its latent, unused capacities, may be capable of operating in connection with some form of matter other than the present biological one.

All of this is, obviously, quite speculative, and Myers himself insisted that his ideas were simply intended to be hints for future investigators of the survival problem to consider (1892c, p. 534), the central hint being that since matter goes far beyond what we ordinarily perceive, and consciousness goes far beyond what we ordinarily perceive, the relationship between the two of them may also be something other than what we ordinarily perceive. As I mentioned earlier, however, I want to close with a few remarks about the empirical approach to the survival problem. I certainly do not want to leave the impression that Myers thought the survival problem could be solved theoretically alone, from the armchair. Quite the contrary: His primary purpose was to offer a theoretical framework that could stimulate the prediction and production of new observations relevant to the problem. His goal, in fact, was ultimately to bring survival research within the framework of experimental science (1891, p. 644)—broadly conceived as the deliberate production of relevant phenomena. Myers did emphasize that, until we have learned how to produce the phenomena we are interested in studying, we have to continue making systematic observations of relevant spontaneous phenomena. In his words, it remains "important to take stock, so to say, of the whole range of *spontaneous* phenomena corresponding to the phenomena which we are endeavouring to produce. We shall thus learn how far we are likely to be able to go, and we may get hints as to the quickest line of progress" (1892b, p. 333). But in Myers's view, evidence from spontaneous cases clearly was evidence of "a lower rank" (Barrett, Gurney, & Myers, 1882, p. 30). What was ultimately needed, he thought, was an experimental method. Again, in Myers's words:

> As I have often urged, the first discovery of an actual method of *experiment*—however difficult and uncertain—in such an enquiry as this brings it at once out of a region where we can never count on advance into a region where, if sufficient diligence be used, progress must in time follow. (1895b, p. 335)

More specifically, if we are ever going to produce phenomena that can extend our understanding of mind-matter relations, or even phenomena more directly suggesting the survival of a deceased person, we have to find some means of bringing latent subliminal psychological processes to the surface where we can observe them. Just as the physical sciences have developed methods and means for extending our observation of the physical world far beyond the range of our unaided senses, so the task of psychologists now is to develop methods for extending our observations of consciousness beyond the range of our everyday awareness. As Myers put it, "The artifices of the modern physicist have extended far in each direction the visible spectrum known to Newton. It is for the modern psychologist to discover artifices which may extend in each direction the conscious spectrum as known to Plato or to Kant" (1903, Vol. 1, p. 18).

Myers described those artifices, or experimental methods, as anything that "inhibit[s] normal perception, obliterate[s] normal memory, so that in this temporary freedom from preoccupation by accustomed stimuli [the person's] mind may reveal those latent and delicate capacities of which his ordinary conscious self is unaware" (1886a, p. xliii). In this connection, he thought that hypnosis could become an important experimental method in psychology. Hypnosis has certainly been used widely in a clinical context, both in Myers's day and now; but, as Myers pointed out and as is still largely true today, hypnosis has been underutilized as a means of attacking basic theoretical questions in psychology. Myers thought that hypnosis might be a means of eliciting certain latent mental capacities; and modern reviews of parapsychological experiments in which hypnosis was used have shown that hypnosis does seem to facilitate psi functioning (Honorton & Krippner, 1969; Schechter, 1984; Stanford, 1992; Van de Castle, 1969). Myers also thought that hypnosis could be an important tool for studying memory and, by extension, questions about the relationship between conscious and subconscious states and about the unity of consciousness. And he particularly thought that hypnosis might help us toward a better understanding of the relationship between mental and physical functioning if we studied some of the physiological phenomena associated with hypnosis, such as the hypnotic induction of anaesthesia or analgesia, of alterations in heart rate, body temperature, or other autonomic functions, and of bleeding, blisters, and other skin reactions. (For a review of some such experiments conducted since Myers's time, see Barber, 1984.)

Myers also stressed the importance of studying induced hallucinations, not only to help us better understand spontaneous hallucinations, especially crisis and collective apparitions, but also with the specific

intent of inducing paranormal perceptions. He thought that the general technique of crystal-gazing or scrying, long associated with occult practices, could be adapted for laboratory use (see also Kelly & Locke, 1981); and, indeed, it has now been used to some degree, in the ganzfeld technique. It could perhaps also be extended to try to obtain phenomena more directly relevant to the survival question, so that the subject tries, not to see a target picture down the hall, but, like a medium, to become aware of a specific deceased person. Along these lines, Raymond Moody has recently described his apparent success with a technique, also derived directly from crystal-gazing practices, that he has developed to induce hallucinations of deceased persons (Moody, 1992, 1993). It seems to me that, as Myers suggested, such a technique could and should become an important method for studying the physiological and psychological mechanisms behind hallucinations in general and for producing paranormal and survival-related phenomena in particular.

Probably the most important method for survival research, in Myers's estimation, was what he called motor automatisms, the primary forms of which are automatic writing and trance mediumship. Myers knew better than anyone how rare it is to find anything in automatic writing or mediumship other than what Thomas Huxley called "twaddle" (Huxley, 1900, Vol. 1, p. 452). Nevertheless, he believed that important phenomena could be obtained, first, if experimenters took promising subjects in hand early on and encouraged them to participate in serious research and, second, if the research were sustained over a long period of time (1896). Mrs. Piper, for example, had been discovered early in her career and had immediately been steered into cooperating with serious researchers. Similarly, Myers himself had met Mrs. Thompson just as she was beginning to discover her mediumistic abilities, and he steered her away from the physical mediumship toward which she seemed to be heading and instead into the much more promising (for survival research) line of mental mediumship (Gauld, 1968, pp. 268–269; Myers, 1902). Good mediums—or, as Myers preferred to call them, automatists—are not simply going to walk into our labs ready-made but will probably have to be sought out and deliberately developed by researchers.

When good automatists are found, however, they will not advance our understanding of the survival problem if we simply try to repeat what was done in the past. Past studies of mediumship were very much focused on the goal of obtaining some direct, clearcut evidence for the continuing activity of a deceased person; and, as I said in the beginning, in the course of this research, mediums produced some remarkable evidence

for psi. But the study of mediumship reached an impasse because it was carried out too much in isolation. If we are going to make headway again on the study of mediumship, on the study of survival, and, I might add, on the study of psi, we will have to tie our research much more closely with other lines of research attacking the same basic problems. The study of trance mediumship should, for example, be carried out in close conjunction with studies of multiple personality, not because one necessarily can be subsumed under the other, but because together they can provide a broader perspective on the nature of these alternate personalities. Efforts to determine the nature of the relationship between the normal and the trance personalities in mediums, or the primary and the alternate personalities in multiple personality cases (e.g., Carington, 1934, 1935, 1937; Putnam, 1991, pp. 491–495) will benefit, not only from the use of improved psychological and physiological measurements, but also by comparing the findings from the two types of phenomena. Also, there have been anecdotal reports from some contemporary multiple personality researchers about paranormal phenomena in connection with their patients (e.g., Ross & Joshi, 1992). These raise the possibility that both parapsychological research and the clinical treatment of multiple personality patients might benefit from the combined efforts of parapsychologists and researchers on multiple personality to confirm and extend these anecdotal reports. Certain alternate personalities of multiple personality patients might, for example, be encouraged to emerge for the specific purpose of attempting to serve as a liaison between deceased and living persons, just as the controls of mediums have done. In this way, multiple personality patients might begin to learn to bring their capacity for dissociation under a certain amount of control (again, as mediums apparently have); and parapsychologists might thus discover and develop new "mediums" capable of producing the kinds of phenomena necessary to improve and extend survival-related research.

Mediumship studies should also, I think, be renewed as part of a larger effort in parapsychology to attack the source-of-psi problem in general, which I discussed earlier in this paper. If we can combine studies ostensibly involving deceased agents with more traditional psi experiments involving living agents, we might begin to find ways to identify markers—psychological and physiological—that can help us pinpoint the source of psi. Whatever research we do, though, we need to remember the final hint from Myers that I want to stress: the early psychical researchers understood—far more clearly, I think, than many present-day parapsychologists do—that survival research, and psi research in general, are not isolated problems, and that we will make

headway only if we consciously and constantly situate them within a broader context of research in general on the relationship of consciousness to the physical world.

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