

ALBERT DE ROCHAS

The Evolution of the Soul

SUCCESSIVE LIVES · NOTEBOOK 5

Objections and hypotheses



PART IV

BLUSABOOKS



The Evolution of the Soul

ALBERT DE ROCHAS · SUCCESSIVE LIVES (PARIS, 1911) · PART
IV

Every chapter — four parts

IN DE ROCHAS'S WORDS

*the complete text, checked against the
French edition of 1911*

IN PLAIN WORDS

what happens in this chapter

TERMS

the chapter concepts explained

WHAT MODERN SCIENCE SAYS

*hypnosis, memory and what is still
unexplained*

A historical text, not a manual.

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FOREWORD

Albert de Rochas (Albert de Rochas d'Aiglun, 1837–1914) was neither a mystic nor a prophet. He was an officer of the Engineers, later for many years administrator of the École Polytechnique in Paris. His free time he gave to hypnosis and to what was then called animal magnetism. He worked as an engineer does: he wrote down the dates, the names of his subjects, the effect of every pass, and in his books his bold hypotheses are always accompanied by his own doubts.

This is the **fifth and last notebook** in the "Successive Lives" series. It contains Part IV of the book, "Objections and Hypotheses", and the author's conclusions. After three parts in which de Rochas tells of ancient beliefs, of subjects who in magnetic sleep "go back" into previous lives, and of premonitions, he now puts the awkward questions to himself. Could it all be mere suggestion? How are we to explain people with several personalities? What does the case of Mireille mean, in which a dead friend, Vincent, seems to speak through her body? How did the medium Hélène Smith in Geneva live through the same kind of "previous lives" without any hypnosis at all? The notebook closes with the author's thoughts on the evolution of the soul, General Fix's "religion of the future" and de Rochas's conclusions, in which he separates what he considers certain from what remains merely possible.

How to read. The book gives de Rochas's full text word for word, including his footnotes. Each chapter is followed by three parts of our own. *In plain words* — briefly, what happens in the chapter. *Terms* — the concepts of the chapter. *What modern science says* — how these phenomena are explained today and what still remains unexplained.

In the "Successive Lives" series:

1 · Ancient Beliefs and Magnetic Sleep 2 · Back Through the Lives 3 · Eleven Lives 4 · The Astral Body and Premonitions 5 · The Evolution of the Soul

CHAPTER I

CHANGES OF PERSONALITY

IN DE ROCHAS'S WORDS

PART FOUR. OBJECTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Some years ago M. Charles Richet allowed me to witness changes of personality created by suggestion¹⁹³ in a lady who became in turn a general, the Archbishop of Paris, a cocotte, and so on.

193 With sensitive subjects suggestions may be given even in the waking state, or rather in a state very close to it, brought about by some emotion or other, which I have studied under the name of the "state of credulity".

Shortly afterwards I repeated these experiments with a young man named Benoît, and I obtained not only an extremely realistic performance of whatever personality I imposed upon him, but also handwritings that varied according to the parts played and were in perfect conformity with the rules of graphology. These specimens of handwriting will be found in my book *Les États superficiels de l'hypnose*, published in 1893 by Chamuel¹⁹⁴.

194 Chapter III, § 3.

Since one can impose upon the subject any part one pleases, even that of an animal or of an inanimate object, such as a lamp or a pat of butter¹⁹⁵, the explanation of the phenomenon is certain. By suggestion one paralyses in his mind all the ideas that do not relate to the part indicated, and this part then develops with all the greater intensity, thanks to the subject's memories and imagination, because these have a free field in his brain. Here, then, there is no room for the hypothesis of reincarnations or of possession by a foreign spirit.

195 I tell Benoît that he is a Carcel lamp, like the one on my desk. He stiffens and remains motionless; I then make the gesture of winding it up and, after a few seconds, he shows, by uttering "crr.", that it is time to stop. As for the pat of butter, the same immobility; but if I bring a candle near him, he slumps down as though he were melting.

Sometimes the subject, instead of taking on a given personality at command, is carried back, under the influence of some physiological accident, to an earlier period of his existence, with all the physical and moral symptoms that characterised him at that period of his life; then, after a longer or shorter time, he returns to his normal state without any memory of his change of character.

Such is the case related in 1882 by M. Camuset in the *Annales médico-psychologiques*. In 1880 M. L., aged 17, enters the asylum at Bonneval; he is hysterical and the son of a hysterical mother. One day, while working in the fields, he is seized with a great fright caused by the sight of a viper and has a violent attack of hysteria. When he comes to himself he is quite another man; his character has changed completely: from quarrelsome and thieving he has become gentle and obliging; he is in the second condition; he has completely lost the memory of the past and believes himself still at Saint-Urbain, the penal colony from which he had been sent to Bonneval. He recognises nothing of what he sees at Bonneval, and not only has he forgotten everything that has happened, but he no longer knows the tailor's trade he had learned. This second condition lasts a year, after which, following a violent attack of hysteria, he becomes again what he was before: vicious, greedy and arrogant; in the end he escaped. When he was caught again he showed similar phases.

An analogous case was studied by Dr Azam of Bordeaux, from whom I borrow the following details¹⁹⁶: "In 1858 I was called to attend a young girl, Félicité X..., whom her parents believed to be mad. She was then fifteen. She was a hysteric with convulsions, industrious and intelligent, of a serious and almost melancholy character. Here is the principal phenomenon which presented itself and which had frightened her family and those about her.

¹⁹⁶ *Hypnotisme et double conscience*, p. 149.

Almost every day, without any known cause or under the sway of the slightest emotion, she is seized with what she calls 'her crisis'. In fact she passes into her second state. This is how it happens: she is sitting with her needlework in her hand. All at once, after a pain in the temples, she falls into a deep sleep from

which nothing can rouse her and which lasts two or three minutes; then she wakes. But she is different from what she was before: she is gay and laughing, goes on humming with the work she had begun, jokes with those around her; her intelligence is livelier, and she does not suffer from the many neuralgic pains of her ordinary state. In this state, which I have named her second condition, Félicité has perfect knowledge of her whole life, remembering not only her ordinary existence but also the states similar to the one in which she finds herself.

After a variable time Félicité's gaiety suddenly vanishes, her head sinks on her breast and she falls back into a state of torpor. Three or four minutes pass and she opens her eyes to return to her ordinary existence. One scarcely notices it, for she goes on with her work eagerly, almost fiercely; most often it is a piece of sewing begun in the preceding period; she does not recognise it, and it costs her an effort of mind to understand it. She has forgotten everything that took place in the second condition, but she has kept all her other memories relating to her normal life."

The second conditions gradually grew longer, and after 30 years of observation by Dr Azam they take up almost the whole of Félicité's life. The passage from the first condition to the second has become shorter and shorter, and today it is almost instantaneous.

Dr Prince¹⁹⁷ had occasion, as a physician, to study a certain Miss Beauchamp, who presented four different personalities.

¹⁹⁷ Dr Morton Prince. *The Dissociation of a Personality*. New York, 1906.

When he was called in by Miss Beauchamp in 1898 to treat serious neurasthenic troubles, this young lady was a very serious, reserved, deeply religious person, diligent in her studies and scrupulous to excess, in short a sort of saint; this was state B1.

Hypnotised, she was the same, with less inhibition, more ease and a wider memory. This was state B2.

It was in the course of the hypnotic treatment that Prince saw her suddenly give way to an entirely different nature, B3, extremely lively and mischievous, a sort of rebellious and almost diabolical urchin of a girl, who called herself Sally and spoke of Miss Beauchamp in the third person, with an undisguised aversion for her over-serious and timorous character. A prolonged examination led Dr Morton to suppose that Sally was none other than Miss Beauchamp's subconsciousness, a subconsciousness abnormally developed through morbid dissociation and little by little emancipated to the point of forming a genuine second personality, coexisting with the ordinary personality, all of whose thoughts it knew, but differing from it in its own consciousness and its particular temperament.

Later still, finally, in 1899, after a strong emotion, there suddenly appeared a third individuality, B4, which in point of character was a sort of intermediate between the two preceding ones, neither saint nor devil, but more essentially a woman, or rather a young girl; in point of memory she remembered the whole of Miss Beauchamp's childhood and youth, but showed complete ignorance of the last six years, from a violent emotional shock dating back to 1893.

Dr Prince asks himself whether this latest arrival was not the real Miss Beauchamp, whom the shock in question had suppressed and who had suddenly reappeared, after an eclipse of six years, under the blow of an emotion recalling the original shock. Several examples of this kind are indeed known. In that case the treatment was to consist in re-establishing this original personality in a lasting way, substituting it, by appropriate suggestion, for the pathological sub-personalities that had issued from its disintegration.

Dr Prince has described in detail in his book how, by suggestion aided by etherisation, and through a series of skilfully combined hypnotic phases comparable to the successive stages of a chemical preparation, he succeeded, by a sort of artificial synthesis, in recreating the normal personality which existed virtually, if you will, beneath these morbid dissociations, but which a fatal chain of adverse circumstances had, from childhood on, always prevented from actually