

A Double Personality. Cagliostro and H. P. Blavatsky.¹

[Eine doppelte Persönlichkeit. Cagliostro und H. P. Blavatsky.]

Dr. Franz Hartmann

Translated from the German by Robert Hutwohl

The greatest riddle which man has to solve is man himself, and among the many human phenomena which we encounter in life, we find from time to time those whose essence appears so completely different from that of the rest, that we must describe them as particularly puzzling. First of all, we can distinguish between them which have a double nature, consisting of an individuality and a personality, whereby the individuality, i.e., the inner character of a person, is much greater than his personality, and is only imperfectly represented in the latter. The personality presents more or less personal weaknesses; but the genius of individuality so dominates them that personal weaknesses disappear in its light. What do we care if the crowing of a rooster frightens the lion; therefore the lion remains a lion after all. What do we care if Schiller loved the smell of rotting apples which promoted his poetry; his genius was made of rotten apples. Individuality is the genius, the spirit; the personality is the house in which the genius lives; both can be very different from one another, and this difference becomes ever more apparent the more the genius is revealed and dominates the personality. Petty people see in a great person only the personality with its shortcomings and weaknesses; they know nothing of genius because they have none themselves and only like can recognize like; but whoever has spirit himself can also recognize the spirit in others. Anyone who, because he has a spirit, can distinguish this spirit from his perishable personality with its weaknesses, will also have an awareness of other people's personal weaknesses, and instead of finding his task in reproaching them, he will rather strive to let his own personality permeate his immortal spirit so that it becomes a perfect image and value of the spirit which dwells and overshadows him.

Much has been written about man's "double consciousness"; and perhaps nowhere has this been described more clearly than in Goethe's "Faust", where it says:

"Two souls live, alas! in my chest;
The one wants to separate from the other;

One holds in crude lust for love
To the world with clinging organs;
The other lifts herself violently from the dust
To the creatures of high ancestors” etc.

One reads about such outpourings and ignores them; it is viewed as a kind of poetic enthusiasm which has no scientific basis and lacks practical value. And yet this “rapture” has a secure, scientific basis for anyone who knows the laws of “reincarnation” and the practical value of knowing this dual nature is infinitely greater than any other knowledge, which relates to one’s immortal self, while all other knowledge relates to incidental, strange and ephemeral things. Whoever can distinguish his own higher, eternal and immortal nature from the transitory personality, not in phantasy but in truth, knows that the spiritual individuality does not die, but appears in different successive forms of existence as different personalities. Thus, how one and the same actor can appear under different masks, may always remain as the same person. The only difference in these comparisons is that an actor’s mask is a lifeless tool with which the actor can do what he wants, while the personality of a person has its own will, its own instincts, its own thinking and opposes the work of the spirit with great obstacles which the spirit or genius often cannot overcome.

Now every earth-born person has a heavenly spirit, but not everyone has expressed great genius, and that means that not every person has achieved such a strong spiritual individuality in his previous reincarnations wherein it has become self-aware and evident in its present existence. Just as a child only attains a certain personal sense of self and self-consciousness after it has reached a certain age, so too does the mind only acquire spiritual self-consciousness and spiritual self-knowledge when its “spiritual” organization (its astral form) in the course of successive reincarnations, has obtained the necessary training and maturity. But when man has reached this stage of development, he also can distinguish between his immortal self and his personal “self”; he then knows where he was in his previous and in the previous life. Not that he “imagines” it, but he can remember his previous incarnation as well as we can remember the skirt we wore yesterday. For the spirit which has become completely self-conscious, the whole series of its incarnations is a spectacle, the events of which it remembers because it played along with it. For example, Gautama Buddha describes this state to us by saying:

“After the rejection of joys and sorrows, Brahmin, after the annihilation of the former happiness and gloom, I establish the consecration of the painless, joyless, indifferent, insightful, completely pure fourth vision.—Such a mind, intimate, purified, cleansed, solid, cleared of slag, supple, pliable, firm, inviolable,

I directed the mind to the remembering of knowledge of earlier forms of existence. I remembered many different earlier forms of existence, as if like one life, then two lives, then three lives, then four lives, then five lives, then ten lives, then twenty lives, then thirty lives, then to forty lives, then to fifty lives, then to a hundred lives, then to a thousand lives, then to a hundred thousand lives, then to the period during some world emerges, then to the times of some world failure, then to the times during some world formation—world failure. ‘There I was, I had that name, I belonged to that family, that was my class, that of my profession, I experienced such weal and woe, that was my end of life; different there, I re-emerged elsewhere. There I was now, I had this name, I belonged to this family, this was my class, this my profession, I have experienced such weal and woe; so was the end of my life; because different, I came back into existence.’ So, I remembered various earlier forms of existence, each with its own peculiar relationships. This knowledge, Brahmin, I had now gained first in the first hours of the night, divided the judicial knowledge, gained the knowledge, divided the darkness, gained the light, as I was there with a serious mind, eager, tireless.”²

In order to attain to this level of omniscience, one would have to be a Buddha, i.e., a completely enlightened one. There are few of them; on the other hand there are some who remember all the details of their previous existence just as well as we remember today what we did yesterday. In this case we have the spectacle of a double personality, or even a multiple one, as we find, for example, in Count Cagliostro, externally known as Giuseppe Balsamo, and in perhaps the same Cagliostro, externally known as H. P. Blavatsky. To the inexperienced this may sound ridiculous because it is something new, and it cannot be scientifically demonstrated that it is so; philosophically, however, it can be explained, and the author’s conviction that it is so is based on his experience. Whoever has never come out of the house in which he was born and has not lived in another knows only one thing; but whoever has moved from one house to another can provide information about both houses. For an ordinary person, the long time between the two last reincarnations, averaging 1,500 years, may contribute somewhat to making the memory of the last incarnation more difficult, because the conditions under which the personality appears are so completely different from one another. For example, it may be difficult for a modern muscle man to familiarize himself with the idea that he died as a Roman gladiator 1,500 years ago, and if the memory of it dawned darkly in him he would probably reject it. An occultist, on the other hand, who has achieved a certain degree of spiritual self-awareness and the freedom of action associated with it, can under certain circumstances, as soon as he says goodbye to [one] life, can immediately incarnate again in another personality; be it in a newborn child or in an adult who is dying. In this case the soul of the occultist takes the place of the soul of the dying person and the revived body comes to life again. A

multitude of such examples could be cited here, such as the repeated incarnations of the great Lama in Tibet, as observed and described by well-known world travelers and emissaries from European countries³; then known cases where an “exchange of souls” in the “boldest sense” of the word, namely an exchange of individualities between two persons, has taken place,⁴ etc.; but for the unbelieving skeptic such a silly smile, but the mystic familiar with the laws of reincarnation does not need immortal “proofs.”

Let us assume for example, that in my current incarnation I was fully aware of who I was in my previous incarnation, under what circumstances I lived and how I died, there would certainly be no room for me to doubt this; but I couldn't prove it to anyone else and if he didn't know anything about these laws, if I let them go, he would at most consider me insane. In such circumstances, silence would be the most sensible thing for me.

Who was Cagliostro?—*The Conversation Lexicon*⁵ says that he was a charlatan and a cheat, and all those who are used to drawing their wisdom from the *Conversation Lexicon* believe it and pray for it. Of all the books which deal with Cagliostro, almost all of them are diatribes about him, and the lies they tell are so obvious that it takes a great deal of ignorance to believe them; but it does show that he was lied to, robbed and deprived by his opponents in the most irresponsible way.⁶ The “necklace story” is like the story of the ritual murder of the Jews; no matter how often it is refuted, it keeps reappearing. The books which were written in favor of Cagliostro, such as the defense written by himself, have become extremely rare; the dark men have done their utmost to cast them aside. All that could possibly be rightly said of Cagliostro was that the person in whom he appeared on the stage of life was called Giuseppe Balsamo and was born in Italy, while Cagliostro claimed to be from India and received support from his relatives living there in his youth. If we assume that the body of Cagliostro was really G. Balsamo, this does not prevent us from recognizing the Cagliostro in him. Balsamo was the house, Cagliostro was the resident; the house was built in Palermo, and Cagliostro, who came from India, moved into it. But how could Cagliostro have made this understandable to the scribes and pharisees of his time, and how should the learned writers of the *Conversation Lexicon* know something about the laws of reincarnation, and had they wrote it, who would believe and understand it? If only the author of these lines would consider to mention the matter if he cared the least about the opinion of the conservatives as to his common sense.

It is not our intention to rehabilitate Cagliostro's standing before public opinion; he and we do not care at all about this opinion; we only intend here to cite him as an example of a double personality. The lies which, for example, a certain collaborator of the “Narrator on the Spree” has collected about Cagliostro surpass in impertinence the lies of a Solovyoff in relation to H. P. Blavatsky; the dear public is

amused and therefore its purpose is fulfilled. Such lies are based partly on malice, envy, jealousy, offended vanity, etc., and partly on lack of understanding. If, for example, Cagliostro is accused of “lying terribly” when he said that he “was one of the guests at the wedding of Cana, that he lived before the flood and went into the ark with Noah,” every occultist knows what to make of this statement, especially if he knows the *Bhagavad Gita* (Chap. II. 12) or the *Bible* (Psalm 90. 2.). There is no true mystic who was not present at the “Wedding of Cana”; because it is only through this wedding that one can become a mystic. The whole life story of Cagliostro as well as that of H. P. Blavatsky proves nothing else other than that it is dangerous to speak of spiritual things in front of people who have no understanding of spiritual things, and that the desecration of sacred mysteries is self-punishable; as it is written in Matthew VII, verse 6: “You shall not give that which is holy to the dogs, etc.!”

Anyone who is only somewhat familiar with occult phenomena and its causes and all the accusations made against Cagliostro and H. P. Blavatsky in relation to them are glared at by sheer nonsense. The semi-scholarly public, from which the feature writers of the daily newspapers are recruited, is on the same level of ignorance and narrow-mindedness with regard to these phenomena as the witch-seekers and inquisitors of the Middle Ages. “The most terrible of horrors” among them are those who parade in front of the audience as “experts” and who want to “enlighten” people about things of which they themselves understand next to nothing. They then imagine that this or that “incomprehensible” thing might have been done one way or another, fall in love with their self-created theory and in the next instant declare with certainty that it was done the way they hatched it out to be. But that which does not fit into their self-invented “explanation” is presented without further ado as an impossibility and therefore a lie.⁷ If such an ignorant person is even a “scholar,” the dear public imagines that because he is familiar with the initial principles of external natural science, he is also an “expert” in occult matters without even considering that one is can be a very good house painter, for example, without understanding the slightest thing about painting.

Anyone who has some experience of his own and knows how to read between the lines from the books written against Cagliostro and H. P. Blavatsky will find that these books prove exactly the opposite of what the authors intended to prove. One cannot read the files of the trial of Cagliostro in front of the inquisition tribunal without marveling at the incredible stupidity of the inquisitors, and one can also easily see how V. S. Solovyoff refutes himself on every page in his book directed against H. P. Blavatsky, and turns out to be partly a villain and a cheat, and partly a fool.⁸ How petty and pathetic do all these suspicions and accusations appear as soon as one realizes what is behind them; but just as in order to recognize this, one must have solved the human riddle, it is a riddle which anyone is able to solve for

himself. And precisely because the possibility of justifying these people is based on the solution of this human riddle, these suspicions and defamations cannot be refuted, since the refutation is not understandable even for those for whom the dual nature of man is an inexplicable riddle.

The life story of Cagliostro and that of H. P. Blavatsky are parallel in many respects. We encounter one and the same character in two different personalities. In both people we find the aforementioned dual nature. Both persons do not find what they seem outwardly to be; both lead an eventful life and travel to countries which Europeans rarely set foot on; both claim to have their true home in India and their “master” there; both are persecuted and slandered by ignorance in the guise of scholarship; both make bitter enemies of the semi-scholars because they perform occult phenomena for which the semi-scholars have no understanding; both are declared “charlatans” and “cheaters” because they are too high above the level of everyday life; Cagliostro is convicted by the inquisition tribunal for being a Freemason (nothing else could be proven against him); H. P. Blavatsky narrowly escaped a modern inquisition tribunal in Madras, which would not have had any competence to judge the origin of occult phenomena. Had H. P. Blavatsky faced a report whose task it was to judge whether or not the “occult phenomena” produced by her were sleight of hand, she would have been condemned before the inquisitorial tribunal just as surely as Cagliostro, because English law knows as little of occult phenomena as the Inquisition knew of the nature of Freemasonry, and because the mere occurrence of such things was taken as self-evident proof of fraud. The wisdom of the world holds such things, when there is no cheating involved, to be “supernatural” and anything “supernatural” does not exist under the law. Consequently, anything “unexplained” is nothing but fraud.—Finally, we find an approach to similar personal weaknesses in H. P. Blavatsky and in Giuseppe Balsamo. Both take personal insults to heart more than necessary. Both speak more than when it would have been better to remain silent. Both make mistakes as to their choice of friends and thereby suffer disappointments and inconveniences. Both proclaim to the world a science for which the world is not yet ripe and are therefore mocked. Both are idolized in a superstitious way by their followers and pelted with filth by envious and incomprehensible people. Both are misunderstood and the most false things are told about both of them.

It is usually said that Cagliostro died on August 26th, 1795 in his prison in Castel Sant’Angelo in Rome. The fact is, he disappeared from that prison about this time, but nothing reliable is known about his death. On the other hand, it is asserted by very reliable sources that Cagliostro stayed in the house of H. P. Blavatsky’s grandparents in Russia for a long time after this alleged day of death, and that strange things took place during his stay there. For example, once in the middle of

winter he mysteriously brought out a plate full of strawberries for a sick person who wanted them.

Whether H. P. Blavatsky was actually a reincarnation of Cagliostro, who had previously incarnated in G. Balsamo, every reader may think as he likes. I don't want to make any assertion here either, but only to mention that when I once asked H. P. Blavatsky for her portrait, she gave me Cagliostro's portrait instead of hers.⁹ I didn't question her further about it. But it is possible that Cagliostro will soon appear among us again in a new personal appearance and under a new name. Hopefully next time it will be better understood.

Dr. Franz Hartmann.

Two images, below, which are not from this original German article by Dr. Hartmann.

Below are two photos side by side for the reader to compare and consider. The translator.



Giuseppe Balsamo, "Conte di Cagliostro," marble, 1786. Jean-Antoine Houdon. French, 1741–1828. Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. Photo credit, Robert Hutwohl



Mme. Blavatsky (painted by Hermann Schmiechen)

Notes

¹ Eine doppelte Persönlichkeit. Cagliostro und H. P. Blavatsky. Dr. Franz Hartmann. *Sphinx* 22, no. 122 (April 1896), 207-14. {This article was reformatted from the original, which was originally typeset in the old German black letter script. Translated from German to English by Robert Hutwohl, ©2025}

² “The speeches of Gotamo Buddha”, translated by Karl Engen Neumann. Part I, page 33. (Leipzig, W. Friedrich. 1896.)

³ See: Abbé Huc [Évariste Régis Huc], “Voyages en Tibet”.

{R.H.—See: *La Mission du Tibet, de 1855 à 1870, comprenant l'exposé des Affaires religieuses et divers documents sur ce pays, d'après les lettres de l'abbé [Auguste] Desgodins*, Verdun, Ch. Laurent (1872) and *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet, et la Chine pendant les années 1844, 1845 et 1846*, 2 vols., Paris, A. LeClère & Co. (1850)}

⁴ “Lucifer”, February 1895. “Two Houses”.

⁵ {A German Encyclopaedia, begun in 1796 by Renatus Gotthelf Löbel and C.W. Franke.}

⁶ Memorial for the Count of Cagliostro. 1786.

⁷ See the infamous “Report” by Dr. Hodgson to the Soc. for Psychic Research. London.

⁸ A side piece to this are the attacks against Wm. Q. Judge. You only need to read for yourself the one against the so-called “Prayag Letter” and do not read anything else into it other than what is written there, then everything which is written against it will collapse into nothing.

⁹ A reproduction of this image is occasionally reported.