

Doppelgänger

The **doppelgänger** (a loanword from German: *Doppelgänger*, literally "double-walker", also spelled *doppel-ganger* or *doppelgaenger*) or **double** is an abnormal vision of the lesser guardian of the threshold. While the normal encounter with the lesser guardian happens in the course of a regular training of the spirit, the doppelgänger experience often occurs spontaneously, usually triggered by a preceding strong mental shock. In the doppelgänger, the karmic guilt, which is woven into the astral body as a dark shadow, appears in objective form as an etheric image of the physical body before the spiritual eye.

The greater guardian of the threshold appears to the spiritual disciple when he immerses himself in that which works spiritually in the outer sensual world, which lays itself like a veil over the spiritual that is at work in nature. It is the greater guardian of the threshold who at first prevents us from consciously entering the spiritual macrocosm as long as we are not yet sufficiently prepared to do so.

Rudolf Steiner called his third mystery drama "The Guardian of the Threshold", in which he also has two guardian figures appear. The lesser guardian meets the spiritual disciple Johannes Thomasius as a double and accompanies him in his further spiritual development. The second guardian figure, referred to in the drama as the guardian of the threshold, is the master of the double, who is not yet quite identical with the sublime light figure of the greater guardian, but who nevertheless represents a step on the way to meeting him. In fact, there is not only a lesser guardian and a greater guardian of the threshold, but both guardians can reveal themselves in several manifestations that reflect the respective degree of development of the spiritual disciple. Hermann Keimeyer also spoke from his meditative experience of three guardians of the threshold who can reveal themselves to the human being on the path of spiritual training.

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The appearance of the double

„It is - relatively - an elementary phenomenon, this encounter with the double, and it can occur through special subconscious impressions and impulses of the human soul, even if the human being is not clairvoyant. The following may occur: Some man may be a schemer, may have done evil to many a man by his intrigues. He may have gone out once more and contrived some intrigue. He may come back to his home, enter his writing-room, on his desk may be papers containing things with which he has contrived intrigues, and it may happen to him, although he may be cynical in his upper consciousness, that his subconscious is seized by those impulses of intrigue. He enters his writing room, looks at his desk and behold: he is sitting there himself. It is an unpleasant encounter when one enters the room through one's own door and sees oneself sitting at the desk. But such things belong to the realm of what happens very often and what can easily happen when such scheming takes place. That which one encounters there is by all means the double, which I have again tried to portray with other tasks in the "Guardian of the Threshold" and in "The Awakening of Souls". We know that this double is experienced

by Johannes Thomasius, and it is connected with the peculiar development of Johannes Thomasius that he has the encounter with the double at the places where it is shown, because through the peculiar experiences which he has had, Ahriman can form a part of his soul according to shape in such a way that this part of the soul is substantially filled as part of the etheric body with selfish soul elements.“ (Lit.:GA 147, p. 119f)

„In the course of the stage which in Christian initiation is called the crowning with thorns, a fearsome phenomenon appears which bears the designation "guardian of the threshold" and which might also be called the appearance of the double. The spiritual being of man, formed from his will currents, his wishes and his intellectual abilities, then appears to the initiate as an image in the dream consciousness. And this image is sometimes repulsive and terrifying, for it is a result of his good and bad qualities and his Karma; of all this it is the pictorial personification on the astral plan. This is the terrible ferryman in the Book of the Dead of the Egyptians. Man must conquer him in order to find his higher self. The guardian of the threshold, a phenomenon of clairvoyant seeing down to the most ancient times, is the actual origin of all the myths about the battle of the hero with the monster, of Perseus and Heracles with the Hydra, of St. George and Siegfried with the dragon.

The premature onset of clairvoyance and the sudden appearance of the double or the guardian of the threshold may lead to madness the one who has not followed all the preparations and perceived all the precautions imposed on the disciple.“ (Lit.:GA 94, p. 56f)

„Through this double we get to know thoroughly everything that we have to put out of ourselves. He shows it to us again and again. All the insincerity, unkindness, egoism and other bad qualities that are in us come to us through the experience of this double. And the fact that we still carry these qualities around with us, that we cannot yet shake them off, causes the feeling of unease that the double gives us. As long as we still had these bad qualities within us, in our subconscious, as it were in the depths of the sea of our soul, we did not yet become aware of them in all their strength. But when the spiritual man develops and grows more and more, when he looks admonishingly at these qualities of our soul, they have a tormenting effect through their presence, which this spiritual man can no longer tolerate. And therefore it is very good when the feeling of tormenting uneasiness arises very strongly, for by this means we get rid of this double most quickly.“ (Lit.:GA 266b, p. 279f)

True self-knowledge makes the double visible

What we learn about our true nature with our everyday consciousness consists largely of illusions we make about ourselves. These cover our true nature like a veil. Depending on our temperament, we estimate ourselves as too high or too low, but only rarely correctly. In particular, with our normal consciousness we do not see through the forces that are at work in our destiny. But it is precisely in these forces of fate that an essential part of our self lies. Real self-knowledge can only be achieved through consistent spiritual training and, since the illusions we have made about ourselves are now disintegrating, it is definitely connected with painful experiences. We must first have gained sufficient spiritual stability to be able to bear these experiences at all. But only when we have advanced to real self-knowledge can we consciously distinguish ourselves from the rest of the spiritual world, and only then does it appear to us as an objective phenomenon before the inner spiritual eye. As long as we are not yet mature enough to get to know ourselves and the spiritual world in its true form, the double acts as a hidden guardian of the threshold, preventing us from consciously entering the spiritual world:

„And what is the other inevitable experience which man undergoes inwardly, - inevitable because it is the result of faithfully following the esoteric exercises? This is the splitting of the personality that occurs. Man will gradually feel as if something were walking beside him, something that thinks with him, listens with him, even speaks with him if he is not very strong inwardly. It is a second self that emerges, a double that one has put outside oneself. The more seriously a person has followed the esoteric path, the more of his old self he puts out of himself, that is, like the snake he sheds one skin after the other. These skins - comparatively speaking - become a second body, a double that never leaves one in life. In the ancient Egyptian mysteries, the person who has put his dou-

ble out of himself was called the "Kha-man". The double is chained to the Kha-man to constantly remind him of how his former life was or how he still is. This is not always a pleasant sensation. But the consciousness of always carrying this double with him will make him aware of his faults, so that he should mend his ways. He should constantly feel this presence, otherwise it would become dangerous and he would forget, above all his high ideals and intentions, what his inner life actually is and what his faults are. It would be life-threatening under certain circumstances even for a high initiate, in spite of his high aspirations, if he were to forget this double for even a moment. He would actually be liable to lose his physical body by death, in much the same way as one who, absorbed in a sublime problem, would forget to pay attention to his body and, as a result of this inattention, would be run over. The stronger the double appears, the better it is for our development, for otherwise we would give ourselves over to great illusions about ourselves.“ (Lit.:GA 266b, p. 274f)

„Through this double we get to know thoroughly everything that we have to put out of ourselves. He shows it to us again and again. All the insincerity, unkindness, egoism and other bad qualities that are in us come to us through the experience of this double. And the fact that we still carry these qualities around with us, that we cannot yet shake them off, causes the feeling of unease that the double gives us. As long as we still had these bad qualities within us, in our subconscious, as it were in the depths of the sea of our soul, we did not yet become aware of them in all their strength. But when the spiritual man develops and grows more and more, when he looks admonishingly at these qualities of our soul, they have a tormenting effect through their presence, which this spiritual man can no longer tolerate. And therefore it is very good when the feeling of tormenting uneasiness arises very strongly, for by this means we get rid of this double most quickly.“ (Lit.:GA 266b, p. 279f)

The luciferic Samael and the appearance of the doppelgänger

It is the luciferic Samael with his hordes who makes the double visible in the course of the esoteric training. In a record of an estoteric lesson given by Rudolf Steiner in Hanover on January 1, 1912, it is said (Record A):

„We have heard that it is Samael, one of the luciferic beings with his hordes, who brings the double out of us. We see from this that the luciferic beings do not always bring about evil, but also good. If we were always unconscious of our faults, we could never become aware of the destructive, corrupting forces which they produce both in our bodies and in the whole cosmic substance. As long as Samael has not brought out our faults from within us, as long as we do not see them objectively as our double before us, so long is the corrupting, destructive power of all our emotions - such as jealousy, hatred, envy - and of our passions in general, which we pour out into our surroundings, mercifully kept hidden from us by the Godhead. The clairvoyant sees how these passions destroy something, break down something in our physical body and also in the substance of the cosmos, while the good awakens constructive forces. So Samael is basically a blessing for development. He shows us our inner being all the more correctly the more seriously we take our training in hand. We then see ourselves objectively with our faults, to which we have hitherto paid no attention.“ (Lit.:GA 266b, p. 283)

Record B thereby explicitly refers to Samael as a good luciferic being:

„We saw yesterday in our esoteric consideration how the esotericist must, by right meditation and concentration, attain to develop consciously through the world of illusion up to the reality of the spiritual world, and that good luciferic beings, of which Samael is the leader, are helpful to him on this path.“ (S. 288)

The doppelgänger as the remnant of the astral body of a previous incarnation

The doppelgänger is often the residue of the astral body of the previous incarnation that has remained in the kamaloka and has not been dissolved, and which is interwoven with the astral body in the present earthly embodiment. This astral remnant can very easily detach itself and appear as an independent entity.

„That the guardian of the threshold appears in an abnormal way happens when man has such a strong attraction to the one life between birth and death that he cannot remain long enough in the Devachan because of the small amount of inner activity. When man has become too accustomed to looking outward, he has nothing to see within. He then soon returns to physical life. The structure of his former desires is still present in the Kamaloka; he then still encounters it. Then the old astral body is added to his new one; that is the previous karma, the guardian of the threshold. He then has his previous karma continually before him; this becomes a peculiar kind of double. Many of the popes of the infamous papal age, such as Alexander VI, have had such doubles in the next incarnation. There are people, and not at all infrequently now, who have their former lower nature perpetually beside them. This is a specific kind of madness. This will become stronger and stronger, because life in the material world is becoming more and more widespread. Many people who are now entirely absorbed in the material life will have the abnormal form of the guardian of the threshold beside them in the next incarnation. All the nervous ones of today will be rushed by the guardian of the threshold in the next incarnation. They will be hurried into too early an incarnation, a kind of cosmic prematurity.“ (Lit.:GA 93a, p. 28f)

„The astral body of a highly developed man who has worked on his lower instincts dissolves quickly; but the dissolution proceeds slowly in lowly men who have given free rein to their inclinations and passions. It may even happen that the old astral body left behind has not yet dissolved when the original bearer goes to a new birth. And that is then a difficult fate. It may also happen that a man, through special circumstances, soon returns and finds his old astral body still present; this then has a strong attraction to him and slips into the new astral body with him. The human being thus forms a new astral body, but his old one is united with it, and he then drags both of them with him through life. The old astral body then appears before him in evil dreams or visions as his second self and deceives, torments and torments him. This is the unauthorised, false "guardian of the threshold"^[1]. This old astral body easily emerges from the human being because it is not firmly attached to the other members of the being, and then appears as a double.“ (Lit.:GA 95, p. 50f)

Basically, the double or the lesser guardian of the threshold is the appearance of an astral elementary being:

„Before, man himself was an elementary being. Not everything physical about the human being is destined to be redeemed. A dross remains from the human being. This dross that remains is constantly present in man, therefore he is under the influence of the astral elementary beings; the corresponding elementary being is attached to him. Man is therefore in constant contact with that which is an impeding enemy, a disturber of his development. In German mythology, the entities that attach themselves to the human being are called the albs. They appear in an undefined form in the so-called nightmare. These dreams manifest themselves in such a way that one believes a being is sitting on one's chest. When one becomes astrally sighted, one first sees these beings (The Dweller on the Threshold in Bulwer's "Zanoni"). It is the reflection of man's astral acquaintance with his alb, a

man's fighting back against his enemy. The being is the projection of an astral being in ourselves. It is the [lesser] guardian of the threshold. The man who cannot overcome the fear of the inner enemy usually turns back at the gate of initiation.“ (Lit.:GA 89, p. 134)

Ahrimanic and luciferic doubles

Substantially, the double is a large part of the etheric body, and partly also of the astral body, which are seen from without and fashioned by Ahriman after our physical appearance.

„Now, for the clairvoyant soul, the following turns out to be true. Man always has some things in his soul which he does not, so to speak, fully control, for which he has special affects. Towards such things, which are of such a nature that man is connected with his inner being in a quite peculiar way, Ahriman unfolds a special activity. There are parts of the human soul which can be detached, so to speak, from the whole of this human soul. Because the human being does not exercise complete dominion over such inclusions, Ahriman makes himself over them. And there, through Ahriman's activity, which is unjustified, which arises through Ahriman overstepping his bounds, the tendency then asserts itself that such parts of the human etheric entity and also of the human astral entity, which have the tendency to detach themselves from the rest of the soul-life and to become independent, allow themselves to be moulded by Ahriman, so that he gives them the human form. Basically, all kinds of thoughts that sit within us can take on human form. When man confronts these thoughts as thought beings, when Ahriman then has the opportunity to make such a part of the human soul independent, to give it human form, and one lives into the elementary world, then one is confronted with this independent part of one's being as its double. It is always a part of the human soul to which Ahriman gives the form of human shape. One must only realise that when one enters the elementary world, when one is outside one's physical body, many things change in the whole relationship. When one is in one's physical body, one cannot confront oneself; but when one enters the elementary world in one's etheric body, one can be in it and yet see it from the outside, as one sees the double. This is what is meant by the double. He is basically, if one speaks substantially, a large part of the etheric body itself. While one retains a part of it, a part separates itself, becomes objective. One looks at it, it is a part of one's own being, to which Ahriman has given the form that one has oneself. For Ahriman tries to force everything, so to speak, into the laws of the physical world. In the physical world the Spirits of Form rule, and they share this rule with Ahriman, so that Ahriman is quite able to carry out with a part of the human entity what may be called the fashioning of a part of the human entity into a double.“ (Lit.:GA 147, p. 118f)

The ahrimanic double seizes our body shortly before birth and is connected with the electrical forces in our organism. Shortly before death it is forced to leave the body.

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1. Text variant in the transcript of Alice Kinkel: There are these beings known under the name of "unauthorised guardians of the threshold", as for example in "Zanoni" by Bulwer, where they appear as horrific tormentors of the people concerned.

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