

# Greater Guardian of the Threshold

The **Greater Guardian of the Threshold** prevents us from consciously entering the spiritual macrocosm as long as we have not attained the necessary spiritual maturity to do so. He spreads the veil of the sense world over the spiritual in nature and thus hides it from our view.

„There is not only one, but essentially two, a "lesser" and a "greater" "Guardian of the Threshold". Man encounters the former when the connecting threads between will, thinking and feeling within the finer bodies (the astral and etheric bodies) begin to unravel in the way indicated in the previous chapter. Man comes face to face with the 'Greater Guardian of the Threshold' when the dissolution of the connections extends also to the physical parts of the body (namely, first of all, the brain).“ (Lit.:GA 10, p. 193)

On the path of spiritual training, the first encounter is with the lesser guardian of the threshold, who opens up to the spiritual disciple the view of his true inner nature, with which only real self-knowledge shines forth and the transformation of one's own inner being can begin. The spiritual disciple becomes mature through this, so that some time later he can also meet the Greater Guardian of the Threshold.

In the 7th picture of Rudolf Steiner's mystery drama "The Guardian of the Threshold", the Guardian says to Johannes Thomasius:

What unchecked wish doth sound within mine ear?  
So storm men's souls when first approaching me  
E'er they have fully gained tranquillity.  
It is desire that really leads such men  
And not creative power which dares to speak;  
Since it in silence could itself create.  
The souls which thus comport themselves when here  
I needs must relegate again to Earth,  
For in the Spirit-realm they can but sow  
Confusion, and do but disturb the deeds  
Which cosmic powers have wisely foreordained.  
Such men can also injure their own selves  
Who form destructive passions in their hearts  
Which are mistaken for creative powers,  
Since they must take delusion for the truth  
When earthly darkness no more shelters them.

Welch ungestümes Wünschen tönt hierher;  
So stürmen Menschenseelen, die mir nahen,  
Bevor sie noch Gelassenheit sich voll errungen.  
Es treibt jedoch Begierde solche Wesen  
Und nicht die Kraft, die schaffend sprechen darf,  
Weil sie sich schweigend selber schaffen konnte.  
Die Seelen, welche hier sich so bezeugen,  
Ich muß zur Erde sie zurück verweisen.  
Sie können doch in Geistesreichen nur  
Verwirrung stiften und die Taten stören,  
Die Weltenmächte weise vorbereiten.  
Und auch dem eignen Wesen schaden sie.  
Sich selbst erzeugen sie Zerstörungstriebe,  
Die sie für Schöpferkräfte halten können,  
Weil sie den Wahn für Wahrheit nehmen müssen,  
Wenn Erdenfinsternis sie nicht mehr schützt.

(Lit.:GA 14, p. 359)

And it goes on to say:

Thou must first part with many of those powers  
Which thou hast won when in thine earthly frame.  
Out of them all thou canst alone retain  
That which by efforts, pure and spiritual,  
Thou didst achieve, and which thou hast kept pure.  
But this thou hast thyself cast off from thee  
And given as his own to Ahriman.  
What still is thine hath been by Lucifer  
Destroyed for use within the spirit-world.  
This too upon the threshold I must take  
If thou wouldst really pass this portal by.  
So nought remains to thee; a lifeless life  
Must be thy lot within the spirit-realms.

Du mußt dich trennen erst von vielen Kräften,  
Die du im Erdenleibe dir erworben.  
Behalten kannst du doch von ihnen nur,  
Was sich in geistig reinem Streben dir  
Erschlossen und auch rein verblieben ist.  
Doch dieses hast du selbst von dir geworfen  
Und Ahriman als Eigentum gegeben.  
Was dir jetzt noch erhalten, das hat dir  
Für Geisteswelten Lucifer verdorben.  
Ich muß es an der Schwelle dir benehmen,  
Wenn du gerecht sie überschreiten willst.  
So bleibt dir nichts; - ein wesenloses Wesen,  
Das wirst du sein, wenn du dich geistig findest.

The Greater Guardian of the Threshold appears as a sublime figure of light who calls upon man to no longer work only on his own perfection, but to use his powers for the redemption of all earthly beings. If he follows this path, the appearance of the greater guardian *"transforms into the Christ figure in the perception of the spiritual disciple."*

„The figure which is perceived at this stage of development shows the spiritual disciple something else than the one in which the "Guardian of the Threshold" first presented himself to him. In this double all those qualities were to be perceived which the ordinary self of man has as a result of the influence of the forces of Lucifer. In the course of human development, however, another power has entered the human soul through the influence of Lucifer. It is that which is called the power of Ahriman in earlier sections of this book. This is the power which prevents man in his physical-sensuous existence from perceiving the spiritual-soul beings of the outer world lying behind the surface of the sensuous. What has become of the human soul under the influence of this force is shown in the picture by the form which appears in the characterised experience. - He who approaches this experience suitably prepared will give it its true interpretation; and then another form will soon appear, the one which may be called the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold" in contrast to the marked " lesser guardian" [...] This one informs the student of the spirit that he must not stop at this stage, but continue to work energetically. He evokes in the observer the consciousness that the world which is conquered becomes only a truth and does not change into an illusion if the work is continued in an appropriate manner. - But whoever would approach this experience unprepared through an incorrect training of the spirit, would then, when he comes to the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold", have something poured into his soul which can only be compared to the "feeling of an immeasurable terror", a "boundless fear".

Just as the encounter with the "lesser guardian of the threshold" gives the spiritual disciple the opportunity to test himself whether he is protected against illusions which can arise through the carrying of his being into the supersensible world, so he can test himself by the experiences which finally lead to the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold" whether he is equal to those illusions which have been traced back above to the second source indicated. If he is able to offer resistance to the powerful illusion which makes him believe that the world of images he has attained is a rich possession, while he is only a prisoner, then in the further course of his development he is also protected from taking appearances for reality.

The "Guardian of the Threshold" will take on an individual form to a certain extent for every single person. The encounter with him corresponds precisely to that experience through which the personal character of the supersensible observations is overcome and the possibility is given to enter into a region of experience which is free from personal colouring and is valid for every human being.

When the spiritual disciple has had the experiences described, then he is able to distinguish in the soul-spiritual environment that which is himself from that which is outside him. He will then recognise how the understanding of the world process described in this book is necessary in order to understand the human being and his life itself. One only understands the physical body when one recognises how it has built itself up through the development of Saturn, Sun, Moon and Earth. One understands the etheric body when one follows its formation through solar, lunar and terrestrial development, etc. But one also understands that which is at present connected with the development of the Earth, when one recognises how everything has gradually unfolded. Through spiritual training one is enabled to recognise the relationship of all that is in the human being to the corresponding facts and entities of the world outside the human being. For this is how it is: every member of the human being stands in a relationship to the whole of the rest of the world. In this book we have only been able to give a sketchy outline of this. It must be borne in mind, however, that during the development of Saturn, for example, the physical human body was only present in the first stage. Its organs: the heart, the lungs, the brain, developed later, during the solar, lunar and terrestrial periods, from the first systems. Thus the heart, lungs, etc., are related to the development of the Sun, the Moon and the Earth. It is quite the same with the members of the etheric body, the sentient body, the sentient soul, etc. Man is formed out of the whole world which lies before him, and every detail of him corresponds to a process, to a being of the outer world. The spiritual disciple, at the appropriate stage of his development, comes to recognise this relation of his own being to the great world. And one can call this stage of cognition the realisation of the correspondence between the "small world", the microcosm, which is the human being himself, and the "great world", the macrocosm. When the student of the spirit has come to this realisation, then a new experience can occur for him. He begins to feel as if he were one with the whole structure of the world, even though he feels himself to be fully independent. This sensation is an absorption into the whole world, a becoming one with it, but without losing one's own beingness. This stage of development can be called "becoming one with the macrocosm". It is significant that this becoming one is not to be thought of as if through it the special consciousness would cease and the human being would flow out into the universe. Such a thought would only be the expression of an opinion flowing from untrained power of judgement. The individual stages of higher knowledge in the sense of the initiation process described here can now be described in the following way:

1. The study of spiritual science, whereby one first makes use of the power of judgement which one has gained in the physical-sensual world.
2. The acquisition of imaginative knowledge.
3. The reading of the hidden scripture (corresponding to inspiration).
4. The living into the spiritual environment (according to intuition).
5. The realisation of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm.
6. Becoming one with the macrocosm.
7. The overall experience of the previous experiences as a basic mood of the soul.

However, these stages need not be thought of as being passed through one after the other. The training can rather proceed in such a way that, depending on the individuality of the spiritual disciple, a preceding stage is only passed through to a certain degree when he begins to do exercises which correspond to the following stage. It is quite possible, for example, that one has only gained a few safe imaginations and yet is already doing exercises which draw inspiration, intuition or the realisation of the interrelation of the microcosm and macrocosm into the realm of one's own experience. When the spiritual student has acquired an experience of intuition, he not only knows the images of the soul-spiritual world, he cannot only read their relationships in the "hidden script": he comes to the knowledge of the beings themselves, through whose interaction the world comes into being to which the human being belongs. And through this he learns to know himself in that form which he has as a spiritual being in the soul-spiritual world. He has come to a perception of his higher self, and he has noticed how he must continue to work in order to master his double, the "guardian of the threshold". But he has also had the encounter with the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold" who stands before him like a constant summoner to continue working. This "Greater Guardian of the Threshold" now becomes his role model, whom he wants to aspire to. When this feeling arises in the spiritual disciple, then he has attained the possibility of recognising who actually stands before him as the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold". In the perception of the spiritual disciple, this guardian transforms into the figure of Christ, whose essence and intervention in the development of the earth is evident from the previous chapters of this book. The student of the spirit is thereby initiated into the sublime mystery itself, which is connected with the Christ name. The Christ shows Himself to him as the "great human earth model". - If in this way the Christ is recognised in the spiritual world through intuition, then it also becomes understandable what took place historically on earth in the fourth post-Atlantean period of the earth's development (in the Greco-Latin period). How the high Sun Being, the Christ Being, intervened in the Earth's development at this time, and how it now continues to work within this Earth development, becomes a self-experienced realisation for the spiritual student. It is therefore an insight into the meaning and significance of the earth's development, which the spiritual disciple receives through intuition.“ (Lit.:GA 13, p. 389ff)

The Greater Guardian of the Threshold also presents a picture of the original human being as he was before he descended to the first earthly incarnation through the Fall of man:

„Let us suppose that someone, having acquired the ability to cross the marked boundary, passes from the sense world into the supersensible world. At the border he asks himself: What must I now leave behind if I want to know my way around the supersensible world? I have to leave behind - he can say to himself with good introspection - actually everything that I have experienced, learned and acquired in the various incarnations from the beginning of the earth up to the present time on earth. I must discard that here, for I am entering a world in which what one can learn within incarnations no longer has any meaning. It is easy, I would say, to speak such things; it is easy to listen to such things; it is easy to grasp them in conceptual abstractions. But it is a whole inner world to feel, to sense, to experience something like this: to lay aside everything there, like one's clothes, that one has acquired in all the incarnations in being sensual, in order to enter into a world within which all this no longer makes sense. If one has this feeling alive, then one also has a living experience - really nothing that is connected with any theory - such as one has when one comes face to face with a real person in the real world, whom one gets to know by his speaking to one, by his relating to one, whom one does not get to know by constructing concepts of him, but by his living with one. Thus, at the border between being sensual and being spiritual, one is not confronted with a system of concepts, but with a reality that only acts as a supersensual reality, but as concrete, as alive as a human being: that is the guardian of the threshold. He is there as a concrete, real being. And if you get to know him, you also get to know him as a being who belongs to the category of beings who in a certain way have participated in the life from the beginning of the earth, but then have not participated in that which is experienced as a soul being. This is the being that was to be dramatised in the mystery drama "The Guardian of the Threshold" with the words:

Thou knowest well, who hast been guardian  
Of this realm's threshold since the world began,  
What beings need to cross the threshold o'er

Bekannt ist dir, der dieses Reiches Schwelle  
Behüten muß seit Erdenurbeginn,  
Was, um es zu betreten, Wesen brauchen,

Who to thy kind and to thy time belong.

Die deiner Zeit und deiner Art gehören.  
(Lit.:GA 14, p. 362)

This "of thy time and of thy kind" is something that follows from the nature of the thing. People have other times and other ways - beings have other ways and other times, which in a certain way have gone their separate ways from the ways of humanity since the beginning of the earth. There we meet a being to whom one says: I have a being before me that experiences and experiences many things in the world; but it does not concern itself with what one can experience on earth in love, in pain and suffering, but also in mistakes and immoral things; it knows nothing and wants to know nothing of what has taken place in the basic human beinghood up to now. Christian tradition expresses this fact by saying: "Before the mystery of the Incarnation, these beings covered their faces. A whole world is expressed in the difference between these beings and the human beings.

And now there comes a sensation which one has immediately, which arises as when one has the immediate sensation towards a person who has blond hair: he has blond hair. This is how the sensation arises: Through having passed through the earth cultures, you have necessarily acquired imperfections, but you must come back to the original state, must find your way back again on earth, and this being can show you that, because it has not accepted your faults. Now you face a being like a real reproach, great and grandiose, like an incentive to what you are not. This being shows you this in the most vivid way, and there you can feel completely filled before the being with the knowledge of what you are or are not. There one is confronted with the living reproach. This being belongs to the class of the archangels, the Archangeloi, as we say. It is a very real encounter, and it causes one to suddenly realise what one has become as an earthly human being in the senses. At the same time, it is self-knowledge in the truest, most comprehensive sense. One sees oneself as one is, and one sees oneself as one is now to become!" (Lit.:GA 138, p. 61ff)

One can identify this archangel being with Phanuel, the guardian spirit of the initiates.

## See also

- Guardian of the Threshold
- Lesser Guardian of the Threshold
- Initiation
- Rosicrucian initiation

## Literature

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