

# Guardian of the Threshold

The **guardian of the threshold** encounters the spiritual disciple on the path of initiation. There is essentially not only one, but two different "guardians of the threshold" who, if the human being is not yet mature enough for this, deny him direct insight into the spiritual world:

„There is not only one, but essentially two, a "lesser" and a "greater" "guardian of the threshold". Man meets the former when the connecting threads between will, thinking and feeling within the finer bodies (the astral and etheric bodies) begin to unravel as described 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)

If we seek to explore our own being, the microcosm, we are confronted with the lesser guardian of the threshold, without being aware of it at first. Within, the human being does experience spiritual and mental things, namely his thoughts, feelings, impulses of will etc. But these do not show him his own spiritual being in its true form, but veil it in such a way that man cannot face his own being unprepared. To see one's own being with all its weaknesses and failings is a shattering experience. But it is the indispensable prerequisite for seeing the spiritual world objectively and without error as it really is. This can only be achieved if one can clearly distinguish one's own being from the beings of the outer spiritual world.

„In all secret teachings there are initiates. Today they experience exactly the same as then, in that they grow beyond their lower self, develop the spiritual core of being within themselves and become citizens of a higher world already in this life. At the same time, however, it is made clear to us that in a certain hour the whole lower nature comes before them. In every human being there is a sum of passions, desires and wishes which cling to his lower nature. Man must first come out of all this. Then it appears before him like a being. This detached being is called the guardian of the threshold. His lower nature stands beside him as a being, and he must say to himself: "That is you! You must discard it! - In all initiations this is called the journey to hell. One has to become a comrade of the infernal powers, to descend into the depths of the world, because man is simply stuck inside and his higher nature only half lives in him.

This being is called the guardian of the threshold, because people who do not acquire courage and presence of mind cannot get beyond it. Those who have crossed the threshold are called initiates.“ (Lit.:GA 54, p. 377)

The doppelgänger or double is an abnormal appearance 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 confronts the spiritual disciple when he dives into 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 manifesta-

tions 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.

## **Future incarnation and the guardian of the threshold**

„In the course of human evolution, this guardian of the threshold into the spiritual world has appeared before human consciousness in the most manifold ways. Many a legend, many a saga - for it is in this form that the most important things are preserved, not in the form of historical tradition - many a legend, many a saga points to the fact that in older times this or that personality met the guardian of the threshold and received from him instruction as to how he should enter the spiritual world and again return to the physical world. For all correct entry into the spiritual world must be accompanied by the possibility of being able to return to the physical world at any moment and to really stand on both feet in it as a thoroughly practical, prudent human being, not as a raving mystic.

This was basically what was demanded of the guardian of the threshold through all the millennia of human striving into the spiritual world. But especially in the last third of the 19th century, one hardly saw people who approached the guardian of the threshold in an awake state. But all the more in our time, when it is historically imposed upon all humanity to pass the guardian of the threshold in some form or other, one finds, as I have said, during corresponding wanderings in the spiritual world, how the sleeping souls approach the guardian of the threshold as I's and astral bodies. These are the significant images that one can get today: the serious guardian of the threshold, around him groups of sleeping human souls who in the waking state do not have the strength to approach this guardian of the threshold, who approach him while they are asleep.

Then, when you see the scene that is taking place, you get a thought that is just connected with what I would like to call the rising of a necessary great responsibility. The souls which thus approach the guardian of the threshold in a sleeping state, they demand with that consciousness - for the awake it remains unconscious or subconscious - which man has in sleep, the entrance into the spiritual world, the crossing over of the threshold. And in countless cases one hears the voice of the serious guardian of the threshold: You must not cross the threshold for your own salvation. You must not gain entrance into the spiritual world. You must go back. - For if the guardian of the threshold were to grant such souls entrance into the spiritual world without further ado, they would cross over the threshold, they would enter the spiritual world with the concepts handed down to them by today's school, today's education, today's civilisation, with the concepts and ideas with which man today has to grow up between the age of six and basically the end of his earthly life.

These concepts and ideas have the peculiarity that if one enters the spiritual world with them, as one has become with them through the present civilisation and school, one becomes paralysed in soul. And one would return to the physical world in emptiness of thought and ideas. If the guardian of the threshold did not seriously push back these souls, push back many souls of the present people, if he let them pass over into the spiritual world, then when they again come back awake, when they come back decisively awake, they would have the feeling: I cannot think, my thoughts do not take hold of my brain, I must go thoughtlessly through the world. - For such is the world of abstract ideas which man today attaches to everything: one can enter the spiritual world with them, but cannot leave with them again. And when one sees this scene, which is really experienced by more souls in sleep today than is usually believed, then one says to oneself: Oh, if only it were possible to protect these souls from having to experience in death what they experience in sleep. - For if the state thus experienced before the guardian of the threshold were to continue long enough, that is to say, if human civilisation were to remain long below that which can now be received in the schools and handed down through civilisation, then sleep would

become life. Human souls would pass through the gate of death into the spiritual world, but would not again be able to bring a force of ideas into the next earthly life. For one can go into the spiritual world with present thoughts, but not come out with them again. One can only come out again paralysed in soul.

You see, the civilisation of the present day can be justified by this form of spiritual life which has just been cultivated for so long, but life cannot be justified by it. This civilisation could go on for a time. The souls would not suspect anything of the guardian of the threshold while they were awake, they would be rejected by him while they were asleep, so that they would not be paralysed, and in the end the result would be that a human race would be born in the future which would show no intellect, no possibility of applying ideas in life, in this future life on Earth, and thinking, life in ideas, would disappear from the Earth. A morbid, merely instinctive human race would have to populate the Earth. Bad feelings and emotions alone, without the orienting power of ideas, would take hold in the development of humanity.“ (Lit.:GA 233, p. 150ff)

## Literature

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