

**Meeting The Two Guardians,
The Lesser and the Greater
At the
Mysterious Threshold of the Spiritual World**
Unveiling the true nature of this meeting as it is experience by the human soul.

One lecture given
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In the second edition of my last lecture entitled: *The Sophian Streams, Magi and Shepherd and their unification in Anthroposophy*, I mentioned that I would further elaborate on the mystery of the two guardians and their relationship to the human being in a later lecture and this is my attempt to do so. Before I begin it is necessary that I mention a very important point. Rudolf Steiner exhorts us to remember that human language is often an inadequate tool in explaining or describing spiritual experiences. We human beings living on earth are temporal beings, this means that our normal everyday consciousness is bound to time as a linear phenomena: something happens and then another thing happens and these two things are related to each other through a frame of reference, that is, sequentially or in 'Time'. On earth Space becomes time, that is space behind, beside, ahead, is related to a beginning, middle, before, now and after - past, present and future etc. This Space into time is reflected in our language.

When we enter into the realm of the eternal there is no chronological 'time', time becomes 'spatial', and this means all that we acquire through sensory or temporal existence, all our concepts judgments etc related to beginning middle and end must be left at the threshold of this world because they are misleading. There we enter a special realm where we must think not in linear concepts but in circular ones where all is in movement, constant metamorphosis and interrelation in the Astral world and continuity in the higher spiritual worlds of Lower and Higher Devachan. In higher worlds we must think from the point of view that all things are related not sequentially but spatially - when the past and future coexist side by side, before and after lose their meaning; they occupy the same 'space'. We can liken this to the old Rosicrucian teaching concerning the symbol of the snake biting its tail - the question is asked: is the snake consuming its tail or is the tail generated from out of the snake? Is something dying or is it becoming? Or are they happening side by side? When we enter spiritual paths processes occur simultaneously, like layers, and we chose what we 'focus' on, layer-by-layer.

It becomes apparent to us then how difficult it is to discuss the meeting of the two guardians in sequential terms, that is the Lesser before the Greater so on, because this experience though it happens to a temporal being occurs supersensibly, that is in the spiritual world and is bound by spiritual laws. Inevitably the human being on having such an experience and returning to the physical world will find it difficult not to apply to it temporal concepts, however we must bear the above in mind and become flexible in these concepts so that we may come understand that when spiritual facts are imparted by a spiritual teacher he or she may chose to emphasise one particular aspect, one layer of an experience, then at another time he or she may show a different one, depending on what viewpoint he or she may wish to present; either from the realm of spirit or the realm of the physical world .

Having said this we will now try to reach an understanding of this very important and veiled mystery.

The Lesser Guardian of the Threshold and the Soul of the Human being.

Rudolf Steiner characterizes the Lesser Guardian of the threshold as that being whom we perceive at the threshold of the spiritual world, barring our way and preventing our entry into that world when we have developed faculties of clairvoyance.

He is said to be a being of Angelic nature, an Astral being that lives in close communion with the human being and carries the sum total of all the human being has made of him or herself, all the good and the evil through all his various incarnations. This being can then be said to safeguard the *memory* if you like, of the past Karma of the individual human being and the reasons for the 'blows' of destiny which he or she suffers. The human being however does not see this Guardian angel until the threads that connect thinking, feeling and willing - three aspects of the Soul that live in the finer Astral body and Etheric body - begin to loosen and become independent as a result of esoteric training. Until then whenever the human being approaches the threshold, either at death or on falling asleep he or she will not see this guardian, but will fall into a condition of sleep.

The point is that this being is there whether or not the human being perceives him.

In life this condition of sleep occurs in the evening as we fall asleep.

In the evening the Lesser guardian prevents us from entering the spiritual world, with full consciousness, because before we can do so we would have to pass through our own being, that is, what we have ennobled of our Karma during the day and what we are yet to ennoble in the future. This is a 'memory' of that which is imprinted in the Etheric body or body of memory.

Let us look at this more closely.

When we fall asleep our Astral body and Ego begin to lift themselves up out of the Etheric body and the Physical body on the bed. The Astral body and Ego lift up firstly from the Etheric body and then from the Physical body. In ordinary life we perceive the world through our physical bodies, that is through our physical senses, our brain, and we are only able to remember these experiences because we have an Etheric body - life and blood. These two bodies Physical and Etheric are integral to Ego consciousness of the physical world and all its phenomena. When we fall asleep we leave these behind and if we are to perceive and remember, we need other senses.

We cannot rely on the Physical and the Etheric bodies in the spiritual world so we must build for ourselves Astral organs of sense, that is organs in the Astral body through which the Ego can experience the spiritual world. At the same time we must develop Etheric currents, which 'light' up these Astral Organs. The Ego builds these organs and harmonises these currents through moral spiritual training and insofar as these are fashioned and harmonized spiritual perception in the spiritual world can begin. This fashioning of the organs of sense occurs when the Ego works to perfect thinking, feeling and willing in the Astral body, when this is achieved these three aspects of the soul begin to loosen from each other and from the finer aspects of the Physical and Etheric bodies. It is then only the power of the Ego that can keep the human being from losing all connection between them. This means the Ego must be morally strengthened through spiritual exercises to prevent the imbalance of the human personality. Before now, spiritual beings were responsible for keeping these three aspects connected, now the Ego itself through training will need to create the thread that binds thinking, feeling and willing in everyday life. This process of building up spiritual organs, this ennobling of the Astral body by the Ego can be described in hermetic terms as a process of 'rarefaction'. When we perfect the Astral body, insofar as this is achieved, we rarefy thinking, feeling, and willing, into higher organs of sense, what is left behind from this process of rarefaction is what might be called

the condensate, the sludge, the imperfect aspects of the three soul members. The object is to rarefy, or spiritualise all of thinking feeling and willing in order to create healthy organs of spirit and therefore navigate the spiritual world with a degree of certainty, in the same way that healthy physical senses make it possible for us to navigate the physical world.

What happens to what we have not redeemed?

What we have not redeemed, the condensate becomes an obstacle to our spiritual striving. What do I mean by this? It clouds our spiritual vision, literally, like a fog.

These freed, condensed aspects of thinking, feeling and willing are a measure of how far we have to go before our Astral bodies are perfected, that is before we have 'clear and unobstructed' vision. To become cognizant of this fog, which is of our own creation, is wonderful for our progress because once we recognize it we can do two things: we can recognize what we have created that does not meet our highest ideal and this makes it possible for us to know how to go about redeeming it. This cognition of what I call the 'personal occult fog' is facilitated by the Angel guardian of each individual and in this context he is called, the Lesser Guardian of the threshold - that is the guardian that stands at the portal to the lesser spiritual world.

The moment the human being begins to rarefy his soul aspects into organs of spiritual sense and the Etheric currents begin to move somewhat harmoniously through them, the spiritual environment begins to 'light up' - literally, for the student of spiritual science. What is usually darkened or hidden behind physical existence begins to delicately show through - that is the physical layer is penetrated to what is behind it. This is the Etheric world. This Etheric world is met by our Etheric Currents, in the same way as the physical world is lit up by the sun. Our inner sun therefore meets the outer spiritual world and lights it up. What we must remember is that this world is always perceived through the spiritual organs we create and the currents that are our own, through organs that are fashioned by us (perfectly or imperfectly) and through our inner light, which is projected out clearly, or through a fog.

So, when this 'sight' begins we may perceive faint glimpses of spiritual processes, however at this stage, these glimpses are 'fogged up' by what we need to recognize and what the Guardian of the Threshold knows is obstructing our 'clear vision':

This fog has a colouring that interferes with our vision, and is made up of the three condensed aspects of our soul.

In the beginning this may not be experienced in the 'present', with it consciously before our eyes, but only as a memory. In the morning when we wake up we may have the feeling that at night we have encountered something and we have participated in goings-on that bring impulses into our will. We feel inspired to do something or fix a wrong etc. Later in the day we may experience it more in the realm of thought - from out of nowhere thoughts, desires and will forces rise up which seem to have an independent, even an alien nature to us. These are usually accompanied by our feeling of shame and perhaps we may notice that such thoughts have counterparts in our will in that they may modify our physical body such as we may notice physical gestures that we have adopted in our external form that conform to these thoughts: we slouch, we grin with cynicism, we observe others without warmth but with coldness etc. This is shattering and real experience, because we would like to believe we are good and kind and always well meaning. However we begin to realize what lurks behind the veil that for our own protection has been drawn over our inner selves. Self-deception keeps us from seeing all of the evil that we are capable of. Otherwise it would be like living with a rapist, a murderer a pedophile, a thief, a liar, etc. Literature has often portrayed this penetration of our lower unredeemed nature into

everyday life, the werewolf, Dr Jeckil and Mr Hide, Frankenstein's monster, etc, are examples.¹ But we must pass through this test, even though it may seem to us that the more we perfect ourselves the hungrier and bolder and louder these beasts inside us become. In fact at first they are like an animal that becomes hungrier and bolder because we are not feeding it.

At this point there is a deep feeling of powerlessness. This must be experienced by the lesser ego before it can begin to make the transition.

These intrusions of the Guardian of the Threshold happen as a result of our having undergone a meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold in a way that is not conscious or only partly so and the experiences spill over into our thought life in the day. In some respects the 'neurotic nature' of our society, is due to the fact that human beings are not experiencing their Lesser Guardians consciously and in full knowledge: in sleep, or else by crossing the threshold to the spiritual world in a manner that leads to distortions, and soul disorders - for instance through drug abuse, hypnotherapy, and spiriticism. Rudolf Steiner tells us that in the future The Lesser Guardian who reflects our innermost selves, and so what karma is still unredeemed within us, will be the unbidden constant companion in every day life of those who did not work spiritually in their previous lives. It will be an abnormal experience of the Guardian of the Threshold because this experience should occur in clear consciousness and with the free will and full consent of the spiritual student.

So let us look at the experiences that must be borne in full consciousness?

In the evening when we are about to fall asleep we are poised over a threshold between ordinary consciousness that uses the organs of physical sense, and sleep consciousness which extinguishes the ability to use these organs.

Lets look at this more closely.

As we fall asleep our Astral body and Ego are lifted out firstly from out of the Etheric body, which Rudolf Steiner describes as an experience of expansion or of facing a great abyss of nothingness. It is in the Etheric body in the region of the human pineal gland where exists the threshold that divides physical substance from spiritual substance. It is in this region that all that we have done during the day towards redeeming our karma, all that is imprinted on our Etheric bodies and etherized from our blood in the Etheric heart meets our Guardian Angel who guards the portal in and out of our Etheric bodies and the pineal gland. The human being who has thus, come so far in his or her esoteric training that he or she has built up rudimentary organs of spiritual perception and harmonised the Etheric currents running through them can, if he or she remains more or less conscious at the moment of 'passing through' the Etheric body have an experience of this meeting which in the beginning feels like a warm star raying out between the eyes at the root of the nose.

It is the Guardian's task to take note of what we have done in the day to atone for the karma we carry from life to life, that is he sees how much we have redeemed of your Astral body - which has been imprinted in the body of memory the Etheric body and subsequently which passes upwards from the Etheric heart as Etherised blood. And he prevents us from crossing the abyss of the Etheric body in full consciousness before we have redeemed enough karma and thereby developed rudimentary organs of spirit. For those who have earned consciousness here at this Lesser stage of self development, the guardian presents himself as a spectral being, a horrible conglomerate of all that the human being has not yet rarefied or ennobled of his or her thinking, feeling and willing. This meeting is a struggle between what the human being still carries as a condensate, refuse, if you like, a meeting of that which has not yet been rarefied and the Cosmic image of Goodness which the Guardian Angel knows is

¹ These experiences occur most profoundly in winter when we are thrown more into our physical and Etheric bodies.

seeking to descend into the human being. The Lesser Guardian shows the spiritual seeker at this stage the struggle between inner Karma and Cosmic Image.

But why does the Guardian present himself as a spectral being, why is he indistinguishable from our imperfections?

This is because at this stage the Lesser Guardian, our Guardian angel, acts like a mirror for all that that crowds around our Ego, our propensities, loves, hates, desires, past evil doings so on. The Guardian reflects our Ego surrounded by these specters. This image is a double, or picture of the human being, that is why the Lesser Guardian at this stage is often referred to as the 'double'.

However as the student of spiritual science progresses, and thinking and feeling and willing completely loosen from Astral body and Etheric body and become objective then a different experience of the Guardian of the threshold can be expected. This is a morning experience, that is, it is experienced on waking. This experience is similar to the evening experience only more, we will call it, 'well-defined'. That is why the Lesser Guardian is usually associated with the morning and the waking experience.

As the human being returns with the Ego and Astral body and begins to enter into the Etheric body, there is an objective experience of Karma as it is found in the Etheric body. Now the spiritual student can see objectively what he or she has left behind on the bed, the Guardian now stands objectively and shows us what has been separated out and made independent, those aspects of the soul which are seen imaginatively as 'beasts' and correspond with real independent beings that have a colour and gesture of their own. We are looking from the aspect of the spiritual world at the product of the unredeemed condensate of thinking feeling and willing, the result of the intrusion of Lucifer and Ahriman and Asuras in the human soul. They are the beasts that have, so to speak, been created and fed and nurtured through the doubt in the thinking life, hate in the feeling life, and fear in the willing life.

The Lesser ego now realizes that it must work during the day to develop faith in the spirit - selfless thought, love for the spiritual work - selfless feeling, and courage from which springs hope in spiritual striving - selfless willing. For only these refined aspects of the soul will allow the greater Ego, the higher Ego to be born into the purified Astral body.

Therefore we can say that the Lesser Guardian is perceived in two ways²:

Evening Experience - on Falling Asleep: The Lesser Guardian as a 'double', an imaginative mirror of the conglomerate of imperfect thoughts, feelings and will impulses.

Morning Experience - on waking: The Lesser Guardian as an objective being who points to the imaginative picture of the three independent beasts created from imperfect thoughts, feelings and will.

It may be that due to abilities carried over from previous lives the evening meeting is not experienced but the student may immediately proceed to the morning experience. Other times the student may remain many years in the first experience the evening experience.

Now, this practice can be carried over into the day³ and it can be experienced in the present moment. And this signifies a higher level of development than the above experience, which is only a 'memory'.

² Here we must bear in mind that as the student progresses he or she achieves continuity of consciousness and these experiences are no longer related to time, but to space, that is not related to morning and evening but more to being in or out of the spiritual world through the power of human will.

³ Here mention must be made that the separation of thinking feeling and willing must not occur during everyday life only during supersensible perception that is in meditation and during sleep. The Ego must be in complete control of these

Inner Meditation:

When the human being meditates, there is an attempt to remain conscious while the Astral body and Ego enter into the Etheric Body. This is a conscious attempt to induce in the waking human being the condition of waking up only it stops at the point of the Etheric body. In this case the Astral body is the 'awakener' of the Etheric body. When this is achieved the human being encounters the Lesser Guardian consciously in the present moment. This is like bringing the night into the day - or achieving a form of Moon Consciousness or dream Consciousness. This is sometimes also referred to as a meeting with Lucifer because the meditant is seeing his effects, and the beings related to him in the soul.

But what do we see of what the Lesser Guardian shows us?

He shows us colours.

What do I mean by this?

Rudolf Steiner has depicted these on the etched glass windows at the Goetheanum:

The condensate or unrefined and unredeemed aspects of Thinking, the beast we have created in our thinking life, has a red colour.

The condensate of Feeling, that is the beast we have created in our feeling life, has a yellow/grey Colour

The condensate of Will, that is the beast we have created in our willing life has a dull blue colour.

The Guardian wishes us to become acquainted with the colours, he wishes us to see how the colours relate to our spiritual state at any given time, that is, how they 'fog up' and distort everything we see. He wants us to learn how these colours form a veil (fog), like sunglasses over our spiritual eyes which prevent us from crossing the abyss into the Astral world with certainty and orientation.

Why does seeing these colours prevent us from orienting ourselves in the spiritual world?

Because if we do not know our own 'colours' we cannot know what belongs to the self and what belongs to the spiritual world. What the Guardian tells us at this point is, the veil is too thick and you will not be able to have an experience without it. So acknowledge it and begin work to make it thinner! That is, perfect thinking, feeling and willing and the more you do, the more clearly you will behold the spiritual world.

When we achieve the above and the veil is made thinner we begin to see what lies behind it. We may not have redeemed everything but we have been able to become so familiar with what we have not redeemed that we can understand - 'this is a process and this is how I see it because part of me is colouring it'. There is a point in which the Ego must become so strengthened that it can take hold of the colours that belong to the self and deny the observance of them altogether.

members in everyday life and must observe for any deviation from normal behaviour. If these members were to separate in everyday life, then neurosis and finally madness would be the result.

How does this happen?

In ordinary vision the eye denies itself. It sacrifices its own vision so that vision can be experienced by the brain and the Ego. In diseased states the eye becomes selfish such as when cataracts are formed or when floaters appear in the line of vision. In the same way the Ego must sacrifice seeing itself and must look beyond itself, beyond what is in front of it towards the spiritual world if it is to see 'healthily' and without obstruction. This is a kind of focusing in an out.

In = the self.

Out = the spiritual world.

This comes with training in selfless thinking, selfless feeling and selfless willing. Training to focus out and away from the self.⁴

This takes practice and concentration and self-knowledge. To pretend that what you are seeing in the beginning is the spiritual world is the same as the eye perceiving itself and thinking it is seeing the world around it.

There is a further step.

Outer Meditation

Inner meditation is only useful when it is a tool for finally achieving outer sight. What do I mean by 'tool'? Inner meditation teaches control, poise, and understanding, which is not possible to achieve in an outer way at first due to the distractions of physical colour, light, shadow etc. Inner Meditation allows one to come to a meeting with the Lesser Guardian in the 'darkness' that is away from the physical world. We build up pictures in the 'dark' and we dissolve them. We learn how to do this with our own colours.

Later this can be done in the 'light' that is with the eyes open - this is outer meditation.

How does outer Meditation work?

The colours and gestures we have learnt to know during inner meditation we take with us during outer meditation because they are always with us, and they remain so when we cross the threshold. The Guardian admonishes us not to pass until we have come to know them and to know that everything we are seeing in the Etheric world including the Etheric bodies of others, is coloured by our own Etheric body. We have to learn to distinguish between our own inner processes and spiritual processes in others and in the outer world. Once we have achieved this we can then begin to have glimpses of the Astral world that is to the Astral beings that engender the processes and are related to the elemental beings of the Etheric world and to the Physical world. These are Astral beings that experience themselves in the Etheric world. This is another 'layer'.

In the Astral world all is flux, movement and metamorphoses; everything penetrates everything else. In the Astral world it is not only the colours that get in the way, but also gestures. To see these gestures or forms is like wooing that stage of sleep consciousness into the day, this is related to Sun Consciousness.

⁴ There are good exercises for this Dennis Klocek's book 'The Seer's Handbook' chapter 3

These are the soul gestures or forms that belong to the three beasts:

Thinking - cold, doubtful gesture - doubt

Feeling - gesture of derision and hatred - hatred

Willing - gesture of immobility, frozen with fear of change - fear

These gestures that are the spectral counterparts of soul forces are related to what we think feel and will when we observe spiritual beings, and we imprint these forms and gestures on them. It then becomes difficult to discern how we have changed these beings and this world, for as we are perceiving them, they become what we have thought, felt and willed about them and they present themselves as facts to us.

Imagine this:

You are looking at an island and thinking that it has the shape of a sleeping lion and it becomes a sleeping lion, right before your eyes.

This is sometimes characterized as a meeting with Ahriman, the great spirit of deception. We must realize that what we are seeing is not only colour- 'lighted' by Luciferic beings but also form 'imprinted' by Ahrimanic beings that are within us and which we have not yet ennobled.

At this higher stage Ahrimanic beings do not wish us to see through to the beings that exist behind the Etheric processes and elemental beings that belong to sense phenomena.

At this stage what we are experiencing may still not be true to its 'colour', quality, direction, form etc.

Someone may, for instance, have deeply hidden inclinations, held in check by dint of education or force of character; they will nevertheless be making their impression on the world of soul and spirit. That world receives its coloring according to the entire being of the man, irrespective of how much or how little he himself may know of his own nature and character.⁵

And

With the images of the world of soul and spirit this is, at the outset, not the case. They alter according to what the human being feels or thinks. In this way he gives them form that depends upon his own nature. Let us imagine that a certain picture appears before man in the world of imagination. If, at first, he remains indifferent to it in his soul, it then shows itself in a certain form. At the moment, however, when pleasure or displeasure is felt in regard to the picture, it changes its form. The pictures therefore, in the first instance, express not only what they are, independent of man, but they reflect what man is himself. They are permeated through and through by his own nature. The latter spreads like a veil over the supersensible beings. Although real beings confront him, he does not see them, but instead, his own creation.⁶

⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science Knowledge of Greater Worlds*.

⁶ *ibid*

This is the stage of imagination and cannot be considered initiation because we have not yet completely extinguished the world of colour and form, which is within us. We are still observing as if through a coloured and formed veil.

In order to tear away the veil and enter into conversation with the spiritual world the human being must have learnt through selflessness and self-knowledge to extinguish not only the world of colours but also of gestures and forms completely through the power of the Ego. When this is achieved it signifies the move from Temporal to Eternal, from Lesser Ego to higher Ego.

If the pupil is to be capable of going forward from this stage of development, he must learn to make a clear distinction between himself and the surrounding spiritual world. To this end he has to learn to put a stop to any kind of influence that he himself might exert upon the world of soul and spirit that is around him. The only way to ensure this is to be fully cognizant of what it is that he is taking with him into the new world. In other words, it is a matter of acquiring, first and foremost, genuine and searching self-knowledge. Once he has that, he will be able to see with clear, unclouded vision that world of soul and spirit by which he is surrounded.⁷

At this point we are at the threshold of Inspiration and we are approaching a meeting with the Greater Guardian of the Threshold.

The Greater Guardian of the threshold and the Higher Ego

The important thing to consider when speaking of the meeting between the human being and the Greater Guardian of the Threshold is to bear in mind that the Lesser Guardian does not leave us but continues with us on our journey, as a guide, he is now able to communicate to us and works as a medium between the human being and the spiritual world.

Who is this Greater Guardian?

The Greater Guardian is characterized as a being of Archangelic nature and Rudolf Steiner tells us that we encounter this Guardian when there is a loosening of the connection between the Astral body and Ego and the Physical body, the physical brain. This occurs twice: in the morning as we leave the macrocosm and prepare to enter into the Etheric and physical bodies - the Microcosm, and in the evening when the human being falls asleep and leaves the physical body and the Etheric body on the bed and move through the Astral world towards the threshold of Devachan and the Macrocosm.

Therefore we can say:

The Lesser Guardian guards the portal of the Microcosm.

- **In the evening - the portal that leads out of the Etheric body and into the Astral world or Lower Spiritual World.**
- **In the morning - the portal that leads out of the Astral world or Lower Spiritual World and into the Etheric body. This can also be called the portal of *Individual Karma*.**

⁷ ibid

The Greater Guardian guards the portal of the Macrocosm.

- In the evening - the portal that leads out of the Lower Spiritual world or the Astral world and into the Higher Spiritual world or Devachan
- In the morning - the portal that leads out of the Higher Spiritual World and Devachan and into the Lower Spiritual world or the Astral World. This can also be called the portal of *Objective Karma*.

Night

Higher Ego

Devachan

//////////////////////////////////**Greater Guardian of the Threshold**//////////////////////////////////
Objective Karma

Lower Ego

Astral body

Supersensible Consciousness

Astral World

-----**Lesser Guardian of the Threshold of Consciousness**-----

Lower Ego

Individual Karma

Physical Consciousness

Astral Body
Etheric body

Physical body

Physical World

Day

When the human being has so progressed that he or she is able to experience the Astral world through the Etheric world in the day this is what happens: when the spiritual student looks at the blue sky, he or she at first sees the Etheric streams and currents and elemental beings, then another

experience meets him or her, the sky changes colour to a red/purple and in this sky there appear beings that are related to those Etheric streams and currents and elemental beings.

This is the night entering into the day.

Conversely this experience is called Sun Consciousness because its counterpart at night is the experience of the Sun at midnight.

At this stage the human being has left the three beasts behind and up ahead can see the Greater Guardian. This occurs in the evening and during outer meditation in the day when the 'illuminated' human being enters the Astral World and begins to approach the threshold of Devachan. In the morning there is an experience of the Greater Guardian as the human being leaves the Macrocosm, when he or she are about to enter into the Etheric body. Then the Greater Guardian is behind the human being, not ahead of him for the human being is descending once again into the Etheric and Physical Bodies.

What is the Greater Guardian's task?

It is the Lesser Guardian that introduces us to the Greater Guardian so to speak and he is always present even though we leave him behind we can still experience him. He tells us that the Greater Guardian is the Cosmic Image of what we must become when we have so purified our Etheric bodies. That is, when the Astral body is able to imprint the Higher Ego, the Spirit Self onto the Etheric body, to light up or bring consciousness to the Etheric body. We see him as a beautiful, resplendent figure of light.

To see this being is to know that we have successfully overcome the delusions of Lucifer and of Ahriman.

Having reached this stage in no way guarantees that the next time you will be able to achieve the same level. Each time one begins anew.

Now the human being must be able to conjure forth again at will what he or she has left at the threshold of the spiritual world. The three beasts, colours, gestures, we must bring them back into focus, back to the foreground, so to speak, and focus out of them towards the Greater Guardian that stands ahead of us, so that we can compare the two.

Now we know how much we still need to accomplish.

The Greater Guardian reminds the student that he must keep moving forward, keep progressing in order to become like him. The Student must not be satisfied with remaining in the Astral world but must forge ahead with his/her development in order to some day enter into Devachan.

When we have reached the stage of approaching the Threshold of Devachan this Greater Guardian transforms Himself into the being of Christ.

These are the steps, which we must undergo in order to come to an experience of the Being of Christ as he is seen through the Etheric world in Astral raiment and to experience him in the human Astral body. This is the stage of seeing Christ in the Etheric. What we had seen prior to this was the being of the Nathan Soul who provides Christ with a garment of light. Now we see behind the light to the *being* of Christ. This is at the level of Inspiration.

At this point Christ asks us a question:

Will you chose to remain here in the Astral world or will you descend with all that you know into the realm of the earth in order to work for the betterment of humanity by taking on the objective karma of the world?

This is the question that we are asked as we are descending into the Etheric body in the morning. Do we want to remain in the lower spiritual world, that is, progress no more or do we wish to return again work hard in order to try to enter Devachan?

That is why this is called the threshold of life and death.

Thou must now share with thy fellows the powers which, together with them, thou didst acquire. I shall therefore bar thine entry into the higher regions of the supersensible world so long as thou hast not applied all the powers thou hast acquired to the liberation of thy companions. With the powers already at thy disposal thou may sojourn in the Lesser regions of the supersensible world; but I stand before the portal of the higher regions as the Cherub with the fiery sword before Paradise, and I bar thine entrance as long as powers unused in the sense-world still remain in thee. And if thou dost refuse to apply thy powers in this world, others will come who will not refuse; and a higher supersensible world will receive all the fruits of the sense-world, while thou wilt lose from under thy feet the very ground in which thou wert rooted. The purified world will develop above and beyond thee, and thou shalt be excluded from it. Thus thou wouldst tread the *black path*, while the others from whom thou didst sever thyself tread the *white path*.⁸

If we choose to remain in the Astral world we may never progress further, we 'die' to the physical world - this is called the black path.

If we choose to return to the physical world and work on objective karma - this is 'life' that is, the white path. When we have so perfected ourselves along the white path we are then allowed to unite with Christ and move across this threshold.

There is freedom in choice.

If we chose to return then the Greater Guardian 'hands us' over again to the Lesser Guardian in the morning.

Beyond the Greater Guardian is the realm of Devachan where we learn not only to see and hear but to know and become one with all the beings and the interrelationships between the spiritual and the physical world, this takes us through Imagination, Inspiration to the level of Intuition.

At this point the human being not only knows his karma but also can consciously work on his karma and on the karma of his folk, and of the world.

In conclusion the meetings with the guardians can be seen in a circular manner.

⁸ Rudolf Steiner Knowledge of Greater Worlds

