

More than Double

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There is a large literature of 'doubleness' — *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Poe's *William Wilson*, Dostoevsky's *The Double*, James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, among many others. The idea that we are all split is an attractive explanation of our conflicting impulses.

The Rabbis speak about a good and an evil inclination, but they do not propose any sort of simple minded split. "Were it not for the evil inclination, man would not care to build, would not marry and beget children or attend to the affairs of human existence." One Talmudic legend tells of the evil inclination being captured. As a result no house was built and no egg was laid. In other words, our drives are inextricable; our energies pour out in ways that are sometimes harmful, sometimes helpful, and usually a bit of both.

In *Kaddish* Leon Wieseltier wrote, "But goodness and badness are almost never unmixed, since the heart is hungry and the will is free." We are less split than swirled, our characters marbled with drives. Nudging ourselves a bit closer to goodness, an effort requiring both humility and wisdom, is the deeper, daily nobility of we commingled creatures.