

Éliphas Lévi
On the two opposing forces

Translated by Arthur Edward Waite



EQUILIBRIUM is the consequence of two forces. If two forces are absolutely and invariably equal, the equilibrium will be immobility, and therefore the negation of life. Movement is the result of an alternate preponderance. The impulsion given to one of the sides of a balance necessarily determines the motion of the other. Thus contraries act on one another, throughout all nature, by correspondence and analogical connection. All life is composed of an aspiration and a respiration; creation is the assumption of a shadow to serve as a bound to light, of a void to serve as space for the plenitude, of a passive fructified principle to sustain and realise the power of the active generating principle. All nature is bisexual, and the movement which produces the appearances of death and life is a continual generation.

God loves the void which he made in order to fill it;
Science loves the ignorance which it enlightens;
Strength loves the weakness which it supports;
Good loves the apparent evil which glorifies it;
Day is desirous of night, and pursues it unceasingly round the world;
Love is at once a thirst and a plenitude which must diffuse itself;
He who gives receives, and he who receives gives;
Movement is a continual interchange.

To know the law of this change, to be acquainted with the alternative or simultaneous proportion of these forces, is to possess the first principles of the great magical arcanum, which constitutes true human divinity. Scientifically, we can appreciate the various manifestations of the universal movement through electric or magnetic phenomena. Electrical apparatuses above all materially and positively reveal the affinities and antipathies of certain substances. The marriage of copper with zinc, the action of all metals in the galvanic pile, are perpetual and unmistakable revelations. Let physicists seek and find out; ever will the kabbalists explain the discoveries of science!

The human body is subject, like the earth, to a dual law; it attracts and it radiates; it is magnetised by an androgynous magnetism, and reacts on the two powers of the soul, the intellectual and the sensitive, inversely, but in proportion to the alternating preponderances of the two sexes in their physical organism. The art of the magnetiser consists wholly in the knowledge and use of this law. To polarise the action and impart to the agent a bisexual and alternated force is the method still unknown and sought vainly for directing the phenomena of magnetism at will, but tact most experienced and great precision in the interior movements are required to prevent the confusion of the signs of magnetic aspiration with those of respiration; we must also be perfectly acquainted with occult anatomy and the special temperament of the persons on whom we are operating. Bad faith and bad will in subjects constitute the gravest hindrance to the direction of magnetism. Women above all — who are essentially and invariably actresses, who take pleasure in impressing others so that they may impress themselves, and are themselves the first to be deceived when playing

their neurotic melodramas — are the true black magic of magnetism. So is it for ever impossible that magnetisers who are uninitiated in the supreme secrets, and unassisted by the lights of the Kabbalah, should govern this refractory and fugitive element. To be master of woman, we must distract and deceive her skilfully by allowing her to suppose that it is she who is deceiving us. This advice, which we offer chiefly to magnetising physicians, might also find its place and application in conjugal polity.

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The alternate use of contrary forces, warmth after cold, mildness after severity, love after anger, &c., is the secret of perpetual motion and the permanence of power; coquettes feel this instinctively, and hence they make their admirers pass from hope to fear, from joy to despondency. To operate always on the same side and in the same manner is to overweigh one plate of the balance, and the complete destruction of equilibrium is the speedy result. Continual caressings beget satiety, disgust, and antipathy, just as constant coldness and severity in the long run alienate and discourage affection. An unvarying and ardent fire in alchemy calcines the first matter and not seldom explodes the hermetic vessel; the heat of lime and mineral manure must be substituted at regular intervals for the heat of flame. And so also in magic; the works of wrath or severity must be tempered by those of beneficence and love, and if the will of the operator be always at the same tension and directed along the same line, great weariness will ensue, together with a species of moral impotence.

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Nothing induces us towards joy so effectually as sorrow; nothing is nearer to sorrow than joy. Hence the uninstructed operator is astounded by attaining the very opposite of his proposed results, because he does not know how to cross or alternate his action; he seeks to bewitch his enemy, and himself becomes ill and miserable; he desires to make himself loved, and he consumes himself for women who deride him; he endeavours to make gold, and he exhausts all his resources; his torture is that of Tantalus eternally; ever does the water flow back when he stoops down to drink.¹



¹ *Transcendental Magic*, (MAGICAL EQUILIBRIUM) pp. 200-1, 203, 204