

Éliphas Lévi

*On the power of mind,
unruffled by desire*

Translated by Arthur Edward Waite

MAGICAL operations are the exercise of a natural power, but one superior to the ordinary forces of nature. They are the result of a science and a practice which exalt human will beyond its normal limits. The supernatural is only the natural in an extraordinary grade, or it is the exalted natural; a miracle is a phenomenon which strikes the multitude because it is unexpected; the astonishing is that which astonishes; miracles are effects which surprise those who are ignorant of their causes, or assign them causes which are not in proportion to such effects. Miracles exist only for the ignorant, but, as there is scarcely any absolute science among men, the supernatural can still obtain, and does so indeed for the whole world. Let us set out by saying that we believe in all miracles because we are convinced and certain, even from our own experience, of their entire possibility. There are some which we do not explain, though we regard them as no less explicable. From the greater to the lesser, from the lesser to the greater, the consequences are identically related and the proportions progressively rigorous. But in order to work miracles we must be outside the ordinary conditions of humanity; we must either be abstracted by wisdom or exalted by madness, either superior to all passions or beyond them through ecstasy or frenzy. Such is the first and most indispensable preparation of the operator. Hence, by a providential or fatal law, the magician can only exercise omnipotence in inverse proportion to his material interest; the alchemist makes so much the more gold as he is the more resigned to privations, and the more esteems that poverty which protects the secrets of the *magnum opus*. Only the adept whose heart is passionless will dispose of the love and hate of those whom he would make instruments of his science;

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The magus must hence be impassible, sober and chaste, disinterested, impenetrable, and inaccessible to any kind of prejudice or terror. He must be without bodily defects, and proof against all contradictions and all difficulties. The first and most important of magical operations is the attainment of this rare pre-eminence.

We have said that impassioned ecstasy may produce the same results as absolute superiority, and this is true as to the issue, but not as to the direction of magical operations. Passion forcibly projects the astral light and impresses unforeseen movements on the universal agent, but it cannot check with the facility that it impels, and its destiny then resembles Hippolytus dragged by his own horses, or Phalaris himself victimised by the instrument of torture which he had invented for others. Human volition realised by action is like a cannon-ball, and recedes before no obstacle. It either passes through it or is buried in it, but if it advance with patience and perseverance, it is never lost; it is like the wave which returns incessantly and wears away iron in the end.¹



Lévi levitates a stone fish by James C Christensen

¹ *Transcendental Magic*, (PREPARATIONS) pp. 192, 193