



Equilibrium

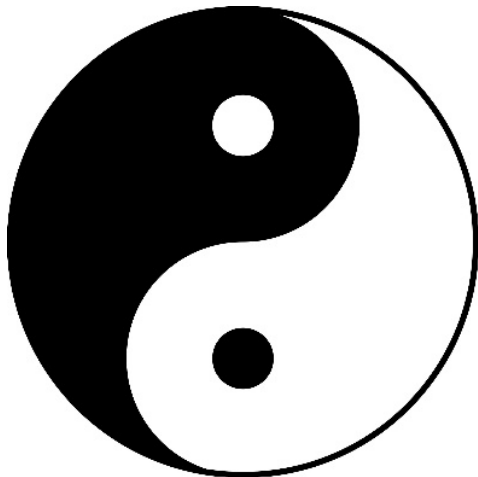
By:

Bro. Todd Connor – July 8, 2022

One of the least examined features of our Blue Lodge is that of the black and white pavement upon which our altar sits. The alternated black and white squares are said to be symbolical of the good and evil that exists in the world around us, but what does this mean to us? Albert Pike states in *Morals and Dogma*, that



whether intended or not, it is representative of the Good and Evil Principles of the Egyptian and Persian creeds. It can be considered representative of the warfare between Michael and Satan. Of the Gods and the Titans, of Balder and Lok, between light and shadow or darkness. Day and Night; freedom and despotism.¹

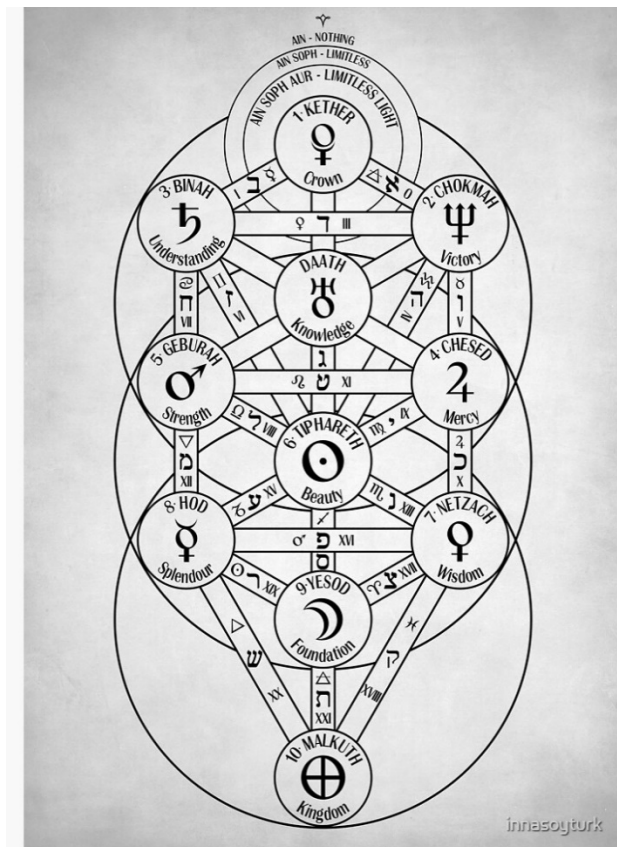


Some may see this principle represented in the Chinese symbol of Yin and Yang, where these opposing principles establish harmony within all things. I will point out here, that in the representation of Yin and Yang, you will observe that the black component contains within it a circle of white and that the white element contains within it, a circle of black, suggesting that as distinct as these two principles may be, there is a germ of its opposite within itself.

¹ Pike, Albert, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, 2nd annotated edition, 2nd printing, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016), 86.

Within the opening apartment of the 18th Degree of the Scottish Rite, we are asked, “where can we look for the eternal base of the law of mercy and love when the poisonous snake kills the harmless bird that only sings its prayers to the very God who made the serpent?”² Ponderance of this question might cause an inquisitive mind to wonder why there is evil and darkness in the world in the first place? If God is all-loving and omnipotent, then why would he create evil? Albert Pike considers this notion of duality, commenting “take away suffering, and there is no longer any resignation or humanity, no more self-sacrifice, no more devotedness, no more heroic virtues, no more sublime morality. If there were no physical evil, there would be no possible virtue.”³ The Jewish esoteric mystic philosophy known as the Kabbalah provides a perspective from which the question of existential duality may be approached if not fully understood. The Tree of Life is a prominent glyph that is featured within the Kabbalah which breaks the process of Creation (that’s “creation” with a capital “C”) into ten Sefirah, connected by twenty-two Paths.

From Ain Soph Aur or eternal “nothing” burst “something” – and that “something” is known as Kether, which sits at the crown of the Tree. Kether can be considered the “All” from which creation flows. As the creative process extends down the tree from Kether to Chokmah, Binah, Chesed, Geburah, Tiphareth, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and finally Malkuth, it flows through alternating currents or forces, characterized on the right-hand column of the Tree as “Mercy” and on the left-hand column, “Severity.” The middle column is the balance or equilibrium between the left and right columns.



As the all-powerful Divine force works its way down the tree, it becomes increasingly dense, definite and material, until it finally reaches Malkuth. Malkuth is the physical realm where we live: The Kingdom. All of the stages of creation that have taken place in the spheres above us have progressively crystallized the Divine force into this material world.

Masonry adheres to this model of the Kabbala however the names have been changed to protect the innocent. A Mason will use the term “Boaz” or “Strength” to identify one pillar instead of “Mercy” and “Jachin” or “Establishment” to identify the other, instead of “Severity” – but these trifling differences in names really boil down to the same underlying meaning. You might ask why “Severity” would be considered equivalent to “Establishment,” and “Strength” equivalent to “Mercy,”? Think of it this way: at the Sephirah of Chokmah, the Divine force is pure strength, unbound by formative stricture. It is capable of all forms. It is limitless, timeless and without constraint. And then it encounters Binah, the first Sephirah of Severity. It is within Binah where form begins to “Establish” itself. Establishment is the forming of rules and form that govern existence. It is here that “Life” as we understand it begins to take shape. Of course, anything that “lives” must die. The hourglass and scythe are prominent emblems in our 3rd Degree; other Degrees in our Rites also reinforce this notion by the most expressive means. A Mason cannot forget the fact that he is born to die. Dion Fortune in her book, *“The Mystical Qabala,”* reconciles this truth with a quote that reads:

“It has been said that good is that which is constructive, which builds up, and evil is that which is destructive, which breaks down. How false this philosophy is we see when we try to classify, according to this principle, a cancer and a disinfectant. Geburah, (sometimes referred to as “The Destroyer”) is therefore as necessary to the equilibrium of the Tree as Chesed (sometimes referred to as “The Lord of Love”). Geburah is the celestial surgeon; the knight in shining armor, the dragon slayer – beautiful as a bridegroom in strength to the maiden in distress, though, no doubt, the dragon might have preferred a little love.”⁴

There is another interesting feature to point out here on the Tree of life: notice that Malkuth is characterized as “Kingdom.” Now consider that the word “power,” would fit into the pillar of “mercy,” or “strength.” Similarly, “glory” would fit into the pillar of “establishment,” or “severity.” Put this all together and it might suggest that the Lord’s Prayer asserts this esoteric wisdom when we say “For Thine is the Kingdom, The Power and The Glory, forever. Amen”

² DeHoyos, Arturo, *Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide*, 3rd edition, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016), 455

³ Pike, Albert, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, 2nd annotated edition, 2nd printing, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016)

⁴ Fortune, Dion, *The Mystical Qabalah*, (Weiser Books, San Francisco, CA and Newburyport, MA 1935), 162

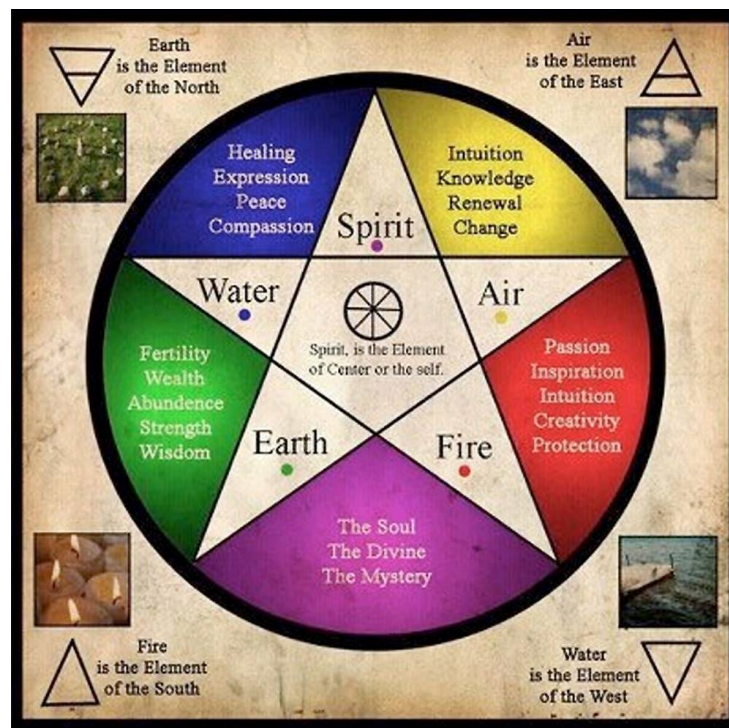
Equilibrium has since time immemorial been a cornerstone to a number of esoteric schools and practices. This can be expressed by means of several colorful examples, citing how equilibrium plays a role in the invocation of divine forces to affect change in the world. High magic is that which involves purely wholistic intentions and means: a beneficent divine force is called upon to provide some boon – think of prayer as such an example. Prayer however, does not provide a guarantee of Divine favor, as there is no offsetting balance to the equilibrium. Think of the old anecdote: “when I was a child, I prayed that the Lord would give me a bicycle. I prayed for months that He would bring me a bicycle, but still no bicycles appeared. Then I thought to myself: ‘you ninny – God doesn’t work in that way!’ So, I stole a bicycle and then prayed for forgiveness.”

On the other side of the coin: dark magic, a practitioner will appeal directly to an infernal force, requesting favors or services – but the expense of these favors is invariably extracted by the infernal force in some way, shape or form. As an example, think about the rock star who “sold his soul to the Devil.” Someone always has to pay the Piper. Reflect back on the pillars of Mercy and Severity for a moment: the pillar of Mercy provides the power, but is incapable of effecting action without the forces from the pillar of Severity to direct that power.

In the magical practice known as theurgy, a practitioner will attempt to effect change in the world by harnessing the strengths of darkness with the reconciling virtue of light. The theurgist will achieve his means by calling on the assistance of higher, “good” forces to control and offset the equilibrium needed to balance infernal or dark forces called on to perform services. In this manner, balance is maintained by the light and dark divine forces working at levels above Malkuth.

In many esoteric schools, the elements are personified by creatures who characterize the inherent qualities of the elements of Alchemy. To wit:

- The element of earth represents foundation. This would be our earthly desires, ambitions and passions, and is represented by Gnomes
- The element of water represents emotions and sensual feelings. It is represented by undines (think of undines as water pixies or mermaids).
- Air is represented by sylphs which are air spirits. They characterize the intellect; intuition; knowledge.
- And lastly, salamanders personify the element of fire and represent will, passion, spirit, and determination.



The following passage is taken from a text on spiritual alchemy that warns of the hazards of injudicious appeals to affect these elementals for the purposes of achieving one's desires and the consequential disruption of equilibrium:

Learn first that true Equilibrium is the basis of the soul. If thou has not a sure foundation, whereon wilt thou stand to direct the forces of Nature?

Know then that Man is born into this world amidst the darkness of Nature and the strife of contending forces, so must his first endeavor be to seek the Light through their reconciliation. Let thy mental equilibrium be above disturbances of material events. Restrain the animal passions and nourish the higher aspirations; the emotions are purified by suffering.

Remember that unbalanced force is evil, that unbalanced severity is but cruelty and oppression, but that also unbalanced Mercy is but weakness which would allow and abet evil.

Establish thyself firmly in the Equilibrium of Forces in the center of the cross of the elements that Cross from whose center the creative word issued in the dawning of the Universe. Be thou, therefore prompt and active as the Sylphs, but avoid frivolity and caprice. Be energetic and strong like the Salamanders, but avoid irritability and ferocity. Be flexible and attentive to images like the Undines, but avoid idleness and changeability. Be laborious and patient like the Gnomes, but avoid grossness and avarice. So shalt thou gradually develop the powers of thy Soul and fit thyself to command the spirits of the elements.

For wert thou to summon the Gnomes to pander to thy avarice, thou wouldst no longer command them, but they would command thee. Wouldst thou abuse the pure creatures of God's creation to fill thy coffers and to satisfy thou lust for Gold? Wouldst thou defile the spirits of driving Fire to serve thy wrath and hatred? Wouldst thou violate the purity of the Souls of the Water to pander to thy lust and debauchery? Wouldst thou force the Spirits of the evening breeze to minister to thy folly and caprice? Know that with such desires thou canst but attract the evil and not the good, and in that can the evil will have power over thee.⁵

Further expression of the relativity of good and evil is propounded in the Kybalion, where we read that everything is dual. Everything has poles. Everything has its pair of opposites – like and unlike are the same. Opposites are identical in nature, but are different in degree. Extremes meet. All truths are but half-truths. All paradoxes may be reconciled.⁶ This notion on its face seems rather stark however, such is the reality of creation. A portion of Albert Pike's closing thoughts on Morals and Dogma states:

⁵ Chic Cicero, Tabitha Cicero, *Self-Initiation into the Golden Dawn Tradition*, (Llewellyn Publications, Woodbury, MN, 2019), 439

⁶ Ma'ati Smith, Dr. Jane, *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes and The Kyballion*, (Mockingbird Press, Lexington, KY, 2008), 39

“The philosopher forgets all the laws of equilibrium, and seeks to absorb the light in a splendor without shadow, and movement in an absolute repose that would be the cessation of life. So long as there shall be a visible light, there will be a shadow proportional to this Light, and whatever is illuminated will cast its cone of shadow. Repose will never be happiness, if it is not balanced by an analogous and contrary movement. This is the immutable law of Nature, the Eternal Will of the Justice which is God.”⁷

Pike reinforces this thought, saying that,

“There is an equilibrium between necessity and liberty, between the action of the Divine omnipotence and the free-will of man, by which vices and base actions cannot be done contrary to the will of God. Without the coexistence of liberty and necessity, of free-will in the creature and omnipotence in the Creator, there could be no religion, nor any law of right and wrong. Sympathy and antipathy are not antagonists of each other. The force which repels a planet from the Sun is no more an evil force than that which attracts the planet toward the central luminary, for each is created and exerted by the Deity.”⁸

In conclusion, we can agree that as Masons, we strive to circumscribe our passions within due bounds. Surmount our Squares of earthly passions and desires with our Compasses of spiritual fortitude. Our Fellowcraft degree admonishes us to enjoy frequent opportunities to adore our great Creator, thus affording us the wisdom to contrive in accordance with the plans drawn for us on the Divine trestleboard so we may walk in equilibrium with Creation.

⁷ Pike, Albert, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, 2nd annotated edition, 2nd printing, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016), 959

⁸ Pike, Albert, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, 2nd annotated edition, 2nd printing, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016). 968-969

Bibliography

Cicero Chic, Tabitha Cicero, *Self-Initiation into the Golden Dawn Tradition*, (Llewellyn Publications, Woodbury, MN, 2019)

DeHoyos, Arturo, *Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide*, 3rd edition, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016)

Fortune, Dion, *The Mystical Qabalah*, (Weiser Books, San Francisco, CA and Newburyport, MA 1935)

Ma'ati Smith, Dr. Jane, *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes and The Kyballion*, (Mockingbird Press, Lexington, KY, 2008)

Pike, Albert, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, 2nd annotated edition, 2nd printing, (Supreme Council, AASR SMJ, Washington, DC, 2016)