THE PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE

Chapter 2 from Transcendental Magic:
ITS DOCTRINE
Part I

By Eliphas Levi

A Translation of
Dogme Et Rituel De La Haute Magie
By Arthur Edward Waite

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II. The Pillars of the Temple

SCIENCE is the absolute and complete possession of Truth.

Hence have the sages of all the centuries trembled before such an absolute and terrible word; they have hesitated to arrogate to themselves the first privilege of divinity by assuming the possession of science, and have been contented, instead of the verb to know, with that which expresses cognisance, while, instead of the word science, they have adopted that of gnosis, which represents simply the notion of learning by intuition.

What, in fact, does man know?

Nothing, and at the same time he is allowed to ignore nothing.

Devoid of knowledge, he is called upon to know all.

Now, knowledge supposes the duad:

a being who knows, and an object known.

“A strong faith and a powerful imagination are the two pillars supporting the door to the temple of magic.” – Paracelsus (1493 – 1541)

Here, Levi is discussing the perceived polarity between scientists and sages (or the religious, the magi, the witches, etc.): The magus has been too afraid, too insecure to own the word “science” but by not claiming ownership over the word “science,” you’re also not fully pursuing one of the key directives of the magus, which is “To Know.” Why, Levi asks, are you content with calling your truth “personal gnosis” instead of owning the word “science”? He implies in this chapter that your “personal gnosis” is futile if it is not also scientific.
The duad is the generator of society and of law; it is also the number of the gnosis.

The duad is unity multiplying itself in order to create, and hence in sacred symbolism Eve issues from the inmost bosom of Adam.

Adam is the human tetragram, summed up in the mysterious Yod, type of the Kabbalistic phallus.

By adding to this Yod the triadic name of Eve, the name of Yehova is formed, which is eminently the Kabbalistic and magical word:

לוהו

which the high-priest in the temple pronounced Yodcheva.

So unity complete in the fruitfulness of the triad forms therewith the tetrad, which is the key of all numbers, of all movements, and of all forms.

By a revolution about its own centre, the square produces a circle equal to itself, and this is the quadrature of the circle, the circular movement of four equal angles around the same point.

"That which is above equals that which is below," says Hermes.

Here then is the duad serving as the measure of unity, and the relation of equality between above and below forms with these the triad.

The created principle is the ideal phallus;
The created principle is the formal cteis.

The insertion of the vertical phallus into the horizontal cteis forms the stauros of the Gnostics, or the philosophical cross of masons.

Thus, the intersection of two produces four, which, by its movement, defines the circle with all degrees thereof.

Revisiting the Biblical Adam and Eve as figurative, the duad arises from the monad, and only then can there be multiplication: from Reason (Key 1) comes Science (Key 2).

Levi: “The Bible is not a history; it is a collection of poems, a book of allegories and images.”

From La Clef Des Grands Mysteres
м is man; в is woman;  א is the principle;  ב is the word;  כ is the active;  ד is the passive;  א is the monad; ו is the duad. The monad is Boaz; the duad is Jachim.

In the trigrams of Fohi, unity is the yang and the duad is the yin.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Yang} \\
\text{Yin}
\end{array}
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Boaz and Jachim are the names of the two symbolical pillars without the chief door of Solomon's Kabbalistic temple.

In the Kabbalah these pillars explain all mysteries of antagonism, whether natural, political, or religious, and they explain also the procreative struggle between the man and the woman, for, according to the law of nature, the woman must resist the man, and he must entice or overcome her.

The active principle seeks the passive principle, the plenum desires the void, the serpent's jaw attracts the serpent's tail, and in turning upon himself, he, at the same time, flies and pursues himself. Woman is the creation of man, and universal creation is the bride of the First Principle.

When the Supreme Being became a creator, he erected a Yod or a phallus, and to provide a place in the fullness of the uncreated light, it was necessary to hollow out a cteis or trench of shadow equivalent to the dimension determined by his creative desire, and attributed by him to the ideal jod of the radiating light.

Such is the mysterious language of the Kabbalists in the Talmud, and on account of vulgar ignorance and malignity, it is impossible for us to explain or simplify it further.

Levi's text would imply that the pillar Boaz would be the Light and the pillar Jachim would be the Dark, though Waite's depiction of the pillars in Key II of the RWS Tarot shows the reverse, i.e., B for Boaz is the dark pillar and J for Jachim is the light pillar.
What then, is the creation? It is the mansion of the creative Word.

What is the cteis? It is the mansion of the phallus.

What is the nature of the active principle? To diffuse.

What is that of the passive? To gather in and to fructify.

What is man? He who initiates, who bruises, who labours, who sows.

What is woman? She who forms, reunites, irrigates, and harvests.

Man wagers war, woman brings peace about; man destroys to create, woman builds up to preserve; man is revolution, woman is conciliation; man is the father of Cain, woman the mother of Abel.

What, moreover, is wisdom? It is the agreement and union of two principles, the mildness of Abel directing the activity of Cain, man guided by the sweet inspirations of woman, debauchery conquered by lawful marriage, revolutionary energy softened and subdued by the gentleness of order and peace, pride subjugated by love, science acknowledging the inspirations of faith. Then human science becomes wise, and submits itself to the infallibility of universal reason, instructed by love or universal charity. Then it can take the name of gnosis, because it knows at least that as yet it cannot boast of knowing perfectly.

The monad can only manifest by the duad; unity itself and the notion of unity at once constitute two.

The unity of the Macrocosm reveals itself by the two opposite points of two triangles. Human unity fulfills itself to right and left. Primitive man is androgynous.

All organs of the human body are disposed in pairs, excepting the nose, the tongue, the umbilicus, and the Kabbalistic Yod.
Divinity, one in its essence, has two essential conditions as the fundamental grounds of its being necessity and liberty. The laws of supreme reason necessitate and rule liberty in God, who is of necessity wise and reasonable.

To make light visible God has merely hypothecated the shadow.

To manifest the truth He has permitted the possibility of doubt. The shadow bodies forth the light, and the possibility of error is requisite for the temporal manifestation of truth. If the buckler of Satan did not intercept the spear of Michael, the might of the angel would be lost in the void or manifested by infinite destruction launched below from above. Did not the heel of Michael restrain Satan in his ascent, Satan would dethrone God, or rather he would lose himself in the abysses of the altitude.

Hence Satan is needful to Michael as the pedestal to the statue, and Michael is necessary to Satan as the brake to the locomotive.

In analogical and universal dynamics one leans only on that which resists. Furthermore, the universe is balanced by two forces which maintain it in equilibrium, the force which attracts and that which repels. They exist alike in physics, in philosophy, and in religion; in physics they produce equilibrium, in philosophy criticism, in religion progressive revelation. The ancients represented this mystery in the conflict between Eros and Anteros, the struggle between Jacob and the angel, and by the equilibrium of the golden mountain, which gods on the one side and demons on the other hold bound by the symbolic serpent of India. It is also typified by the caduceus of Hermanubis, by the two cherubim of the ark, by the twofold sphinx of the chariot of Osiris, and by the two seraphim, respectively black and white. Its scientific reality is demonstrated by the phenomena of polarity, and by the universal law of sympathies or antipathies.

The undiscerning disciples of Zoroaster divided the duad without referring it to unity, thus separating the pillars of the temple, and endeavouring to halve God. Conceive the absolute as two, and you must immediately conceive it as

The very human question presented: “If there really is a God, then why is there evil and suffering in this world?”

Levi’s answer: Experiencing evil and suffering is the only way to witness Light and attain knowledge of the Truth.
three to recover the unity principle. For this reason, the material elements, analogous to the divine elements, are understood firstly as four, explained as two, and exist ultimately as three.

**Revelation is the duad; every word is double, and supposes two.** The ethic which results from revelation is founded on antagonism, which results from the duad. **Spirit and form attract and repel one another, like sign and idea, fiction and truth.** **Supreme reason necessitates dogma when communicating to finite intelligences,** and dogma, by its passage from the domain of ideas to that of forms, participates in two worlds, and has inevitably two senses speaking in succession or simultaneously, that is, to the spirit and the flesh. So are there two forces in the moral region, one which assaults and one which curbs and expiates.

They are represented in the mythos of Genesis by the typical personalities of Cain and Abel. Abel oppresses Cain by reason of his moral superiority; Cain to get free immortalises his brother by slaying him, and becomes the victim of his own crime. Cain could not suffer the life of Abel, and the blood of Abel suffers not the sleep of Cain. In the Gospel the type of Cain is replaced by that of the Prodigal Son, whom his father fully forgives because he returns after having endured much.

**There is mercy and there is justice in God; to the just He dispenses justice and to sinners mercy. In the soul of the world, which is the universal agent, there is a current of love and a current of wrath.**

This ambient and all-penetrating fluid; this ray loosened from the sun's splendour, and fixed by the weight of the atmosphere and the power of central attraction; **this body of the Holy Spirit, which we term the universal agent, while it was typified by the ancients under the symbol of a serpent devouring his tail; this electro-magnetic ether,** this vital and luminous caloric, is depicted in archaic monuments by the girdle of Isis, twice-folded in a love-knot round two poles, as well as by the serpent devouring his own tail, **emblematic of prudence and of Saturn.**

Motion and life consist in the extreme tension of two forces.
"I would thou wert cold or hot," said the Master. As a fact, a great sinner is more really alive than is a tepid, effeminate man, and the fullness of his return to virtue will be in proportion to the extent of his errors. She who is destined to crush the serpent's head is intelligence, which ever rises above the stream of blind forces. The Kabbalists call her the virgin of the sea, whose dripping feet the infernal dragon, stupefied by delight, crawls forward to lick with his fiery tongues. These are the hieratic mysteries of the duad. But there is one, and the last of all, which must not be made known, the reason, according to Hermes Trismegistus, being the malcomprehension of the vulgar, who would ascribe to the necessities of science the immoral aspect of blind fatality.

"By the fear of the unknown must the crowd be restrained," he observes in another place, and Christ also said: "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest, trampling them under their feet, they turn and rend you."

The Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil, of which the fruits are death, is the type of this hieratic secret of the duad, which could only be misconstrued if divulged, and would lead commonly to the unholy denial of free will, which is the principle of moral life. It is hence in the essence of things that the revelation of this secret means death, and it is not at the same time the great secret of magic; but the arcanum of the duad leads up to that of the tetrad, or more correctly proceeds therefrom, and is resolved by the triad, which contains the word of the enigma propounded by the sphinx, as it was required to have been found in order to save the life, atone for the unconscious crime, and establish the Kingdom of Oedipus.

In the hieroglyphic work of Hermes, the Tarot, called also the book of Thoth, the duad is represented either by the Horns of Isis, having her head veiled and an open book partially concealed under her mantle, or otherwise by a sovereign lady, Juno, the Greek goddess, having one hand uplifted towards heaven and the other pointed to earth, as if formulating by this gesture the one and twofold dogma which is the foundation of magic, and begins the marvellous symbols of the Emerald Table of Hermes.
In the Apocalypse of St. John there is a reference to two witnesses or martyrs on whom prophetic tradition confers the names of Elias and Enoch Elias [Elijah], man of faith, enthusiasm, miracle; Enoch one with him who is called Hermes by the Egyptians, honoured by the Phoenicians as Cadmus, author of the sacred alphabet, and the universal key to the initiations of the Logos, father of the Kabbalah, he who, according to the sacred allegories, did not die like other men, but was transported to heaven, to return at the end of time.

Much the same statement is made of St. John himself, who recovered and explained in his Apocalypse the symbolism of the word of Enoch. This resurrection of St. John and Enoch, expected at the close of the ages of ignorance, will be the restitution of their doctrine by the comprehension of the Kabbalistic keys which unlock the temple of unity and universal philosophy, too long occult, and reserved solely for the elect, who perish at the hands of the world.

But we have said that the reproduction of the monad by the duad leads of necessity to the conception and dogma of the triad, so we come now to this great number, which is the fullness and perfect word of unity.

**SETTING UP YOUR ALTAR**

Your altar begins with the Pillars of the Temple. You will need one relic of “Yod,” which Levi calls the “ideal phallus” and one relic of “Eve,” or the “formal cteis.” This is the representation of Aleph, the active Yang principle, and Beth, the passive Yin principle, which are the dark and the light pillars of Key II: The Priestess.

How will you represent these two Pillars? One approach is by way of a patron god and a patron goddess to stand in for a divine masculine and a divine feminine principle. However, that definition of the binary, while popular, is not necessary, and not exclusive. The binary isn’t necessarily gendered.

The binary is between the light and the dark, the active and the passive, the giver and the receiver. A minimalist representation for your altar could be two prominent pillar candles, one white and one black. Work with mythology as metaphor, or work in the abstract: the choice is determined by what best expresses your truth, or Gnosis.

When you have chosen your binary representation of the Temple Pillars, set them atop your altar cloth, the space you have begun to designate as sacred and connective to the Divine.
EQUAL AND OPPOSITE FORCES

There is no avoiding both the physical and metaphysical law of equal and opposite forces. For every action there will be an equal and opposite reaction.

When you intend to exert a force onto an object, know that the object will automatically exert an equal and opposite force back at you. This is the action-reaction principle, a law of thermodynamics credited to Isaac Newton, who himself would be a fascinating character to occultists.

Newton was a physicist, natural philosopher, and theologian, who is a widely acclaimed figure in the scientific revolution, for advancing calculus, for his laws of motion and universal gravitation, and lauded by many as one of the greatest scientific and mathematical geniuses who ever lived.

And yet he’s also recognized for his occult studies. Not only would most of his theological views be considered heretical (were considered heretical), he dabbled in alchemy, prophecy (like Levi, Newton was keenly interested in the Book of Revelations and apocalyptic literature), and was fixated on the Temple of Solomon (and by extension, sacred geometry).

The following exercise will help you to understand an important principle of magic. Push your open palm gently against a tabletop or wall. As you push, feel the force you are exerting from your arm, pressing in to the tabletop or wall. Now switch focus and feel the force exerted back at you, despite that table or wall being stationary, and even passive. Forces always occur in pairs. You cannot affect another without being affected yourself. Furthermore, when you exert a force on an object and it exerts a force back at you, if you cause change in that object (i.e. you overpower that object), then you in turn cause a third force to happen.

Let’s explain what that last statement means. Now find a light object, something you can pick up and move with ease. Push and slide that object across a tabletop. As you push on that object, sliding it, that object is pushing back at you. Yes, the forces are equal and opposite, and yet you’re probably confounded by that principle, because from your vantage point, you’re overtaking the object. It’s moving because you’re forcing it to move. If it’s “equal and opposite,” shouldn’t the object remain immobile?

The object is also exerting a force on the tabletop, so it’s a “third-party force,” or at least it helps to conceive of this external force in such a way. Even though you and the object have a two-way thing going on, this two-way thing you and the object have created will produce a third force exerted out and beyond. The tabletop then exerts a force back onto your object, as you exert your own force onto the object, and that is why it moves, or accelerates.

Repeat pressing your hand against a tabletop and intuiting that equal and opposite force back at you multiple times, each time trying to understand this physical and metaphysical principle. Repeat pushing and moving objects across that tabletop, each time trying to grasp this principle of how an inadvertent third-party force is produced when you cause a two-way forceful relationship to occur. Persist with these simple physical activities until you understand how magic works through equal and opposite forces.
YOUR ACTIVE HAND AND YOUR PASSIVE HAND

**Active, or Dominant Hand:** The hand that you intuit as being stronger at sending out forceful energy is your dominant hand.

**Passive, or Receiving Hand:** The hand that you intuit as being more conducive for receiving and absorbing energy is your receiving hand.

As the magus, one of your hands will be your dominant hand and the other will be your passive or receiving hand. If you have only one functional hand, then the discernment process is even easier: that one hand will serve dual purposes, as both dominant and receiving.

When I point out that one of your hands is “active” and the other is “passive,” you should know immediately for yourself which is which. If, however, you are unsure, then you might be ambidextrous. Some discernment and self-reflection will then be necessary.

I write with my right hand, but in my early childhood, I exhibited attempts to write and draw with my left hand. It was still back in the times when being left handed was severely discouraged, so I was trained to write and draw with only my right. Thus, I became right-handed. However, I still throw a ball better with my left than with my right, and I prefer to start a cartwheel with my left hand down first. When wiping down the kitchen table or countertops, I prefer to wipe with my left. If a ball is speeding through the air headed fast and furiously for my face, the hand that pops up to catch that ball is my left. Likewise, in magical operations, I have found that my left hand is dominant while my right is the passive, receiving hand.

The dominant, active hand will be the hand that a ritual tool, such as a wand, feels most comfortable in. The dominant, active hand is the hand that feels stronger at pushing out energy, while your receiving, passive hand is the one that absorbs energy inward. At this time, determine for yourself which hand is dominant and which is the receiving.