

Action-Equilibrium

“Equilibrium is the basis of the Great Work”, says an ancient occult maxim. This might also be termed the doctrine behind all of the meanings of Key 11. Consider the number itself for a few moments. Note that its digits equal each other. It is, in itself, a glyph of balance, of equilibrium. Thus the number typifies equality, balance, poise, etc.

The number 11 is somewhat similar to the sign of the zodiacal sign Gemini (II) and the Roman numeral II. The idea of equilibration must have, for its root, the idea of duality. Balance is the result of equalizing two opposing forces or activities. Key 11 stands for that which the Hindus call “KARMA.” This word is translated as “action (or work) and the fruit of action.” Thus it invariably manifests itself as absolute, undeviating justice. Note well that equilibrium is not the cessation of action, not something static, but the constant, balanced, reciprocal action between pairs of opposites.

The Law of Equilibration, then, is the same as the Law of Polarity. Its application consists in the alternate use of contrary forces. Eliphas Levi says, “Equilibrium is the result of two forces, but if these were absolutely and permanently equal, equilibrium would be immobility, and consequently the negation of life. Movement is the result of alternated preponderance – warmth after cold, mildness after severity, affection after anger – is the secret of perpetual motion and the prolongation of power. To operate always on the same side and in the same manner is to overload one side of a balance, and the complete destruction of equilibrium will soon result. Everlasting caressing quickly engenders disgust and antipathy, in the same way that constant coldness or severity alienates and discourages affection in the end.”

The same law is also stated in *The Kybalion* thus, “To destroy an undesirable rate of vibration, put in operation the Principle of Polarity and concentrate upon the opposite pole to that which you desire to suppress.” The same book gives an excellent summary of the Principle of Polarity. It says, “Everything is dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites; like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature,

but different in degree, extremes meet; all truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may be reconciled.” Give a great deal of thought to these quotations because they set forth some very basic principles. They will do much to give you a clearer insight into the meaning of this Key.

Lay out your Tarot tableau as directed in Lesson two. Note the position of Key 11 in relation to the others. It is the pivot, the point where all the others balance. It is the very center of the Keys, the basis or hub of the wheel. So placed, it shows certain relationships which might ordinarily escape your notice. In the arrangement the Keys in the upper left-hand and lower right-hand corners are respectively 1 and 21. Their sum is 22, and since 11 is $\frac{1}{2}$ of 22 it is mathematically the mean term, or middle number, between these extremes. In like manner 11 halfway between 2 and 20, and in the spatial arrangement of the tableau these two Keys occupy complementary positions with reference to the 11 Key. This is true of every pair of Keys the sum of which is 22.

At the present stage of your studies this fact is chiefly valuable to establish the fundamental meaning of Key 11 in your consciousness. But if you desire to work with these correspondences, it will be well to know that the Key bearing the lowest number is always the active term, the highest number is always the passive term, and Key 11 is always the relationship term; that is, the law or agency through and by means of which the active is directed upon the passive principle. Thus in Key 1 the active term is attention. In Key 21 the passive term is limitation. The relationship between them is balance. Thus attention directed upon a definite limited field of conscious activity through the agency of poised, balanced mind, emotions and body, brings about the state that enables us to affect the contact or union with the Inner Self which is the object of our work with Tarot.

The Hebrew letter Lamed (pronounced “law-med”) means “Ox-goad.” Thus it suggests the idea of control. The man who understands and applies the Law of Equilibrium has perfect control over all natural forces.

An Ox-goad is that which urges or incites an ox to action, and keeps him on the road chosen by his driver. In Tarot the Ox is the letter Aleph, and, although it is not really true that we incite the super-consciousness Life Power to enter into activity, nor true that we in any sense control or determine its perfectly free activity, nevertheless we seem to do both of

these things. What really happens is that the Life Power directs itself through the functions of personal consciousness which are represented by the letter Lamed; but so far as we are concerned those functions appear to originate within us, and thus all but those who are properly instructed naturally suppose these activities to be something peculiar to themselves. Control over the Life Force consists in attaining a state of equilibration where it can find free expression through our personalities. So, for all practical purposes, even those who understand the truth of the matter act just as if they were directing the Life Power, just as a man who knows that the sun does not revolve around the earth may, nevertheless, reckon the hour by its apparent position in the sky.

The shape of the letter Lamed is that of a serpent, so that it contains more than a hint that the force represented by this letter is the same as that discussed in Key 8. Note well, however, that while the letter Teth represents a coiled serpent, Lamed represents it uncoiled and active.

The zodiacal sign Libra is attributed to this Key. Libra means “the Balance” so that its attribution to Justice is obvious. It implies equilibration resulting from the action and reaction of opposites. In this sign Venus is the ruler and Saturn is in exaltation.

Venus, the Empress, you will recall stands for imagination. All books of Yoga instruct their readers in the use of imagination. The books of the alchemists abound in similar elaborate imagery, which has the same use. Modern metaphysical and advanced thought teachers have made extended use of the same principle. It is the foundation of all of the practical benefits of the Tarot.

Imagination builds faith. True imagination, and not mere fancy, rests on the firm foundation of science. The Arabian Nights gives us a fanciful idea of the idea of flying in the story of the Magic Carpet. But from Leonardo de Vinci to the Wright Brothers, true creative imagination has been busy with the problem of aviation. With every advance in exact knowledge, clearer imagery became possible, and with clearer imagery came firmer faith that human beings would eventually fly. Leonardo had his faith, although he never succeeded in flying. So he collected facts and classified them, and made a real contribution to the science of aviation. But the Arabian spinner

of fairy tales was content with mere fancy. Therefore he had no service to give along the lines of scientific aviation, for he had no real faith in the idea of human flight.

Faith is a prime requisite for the accomplishment of the Great Work. Without faith you can do nothing. You must have confidence in the principles by which you operate. You must have faith in *yourself*. This is one reason why it is customary in occult schools to make the pupil familiar with the lives of the Adepts who have achieved success in the Great Work. There are few better uses of your time than in the study of the lives of Jesus and Buddha, for in what they said and did we may find all the principles of the Great Work explained and exemplified.

Saturn, the planet which is exalted in Libra, is the power of limitation which produces all form. It is the active power at work in Karma, which expresses itself to us as undeviating justice. Hence it is the power which has its highest manifestation in the Great Work which enables us to control Karma. Man can make full and complete conquest of his future; he can make whatever Karma he chooses.

There is a lot of silly talk about Karma, and some people are so afraid of “making bad Karma” that they do nothing at all to improve the conditions under which they live. Others are afraid of interfering with Karma. It can’t be done. They can generate fresh Karma, but they cannot change an immutable law, or interfere with it. Then there is the type of person who “invites his Karma,” and immediately thereafter has all sorts of unpleasant things happen to him. The truth of the matter is that he has suggested the unpleasant consequences, and his sub-consciousness faithfully reproduces them in his environment. He has not called down his Karma; he has simply made some nice fresh Karma for himself.

As a matter of fact there is no escape from Karma. There is really no such thing as inaction in all of the universe. The fruit of what we call inaction is loss of faculty and function, for that which is not used atrophies. But that very loss of power is action in the wrong direction. Madame Blavatsky says, “Inaction in a deed of mercy is action in a deadly sin.” The truth of the whole matter is found in the admonition, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.” This does not mean that you should exert as much force in picking up a pin as you would use to lift a crow-bar. “With all

thy might” means that you must apply your whole power to whatever you do, whether the degree of power be small or great. To do this takes concentration, and concentration is basically limitation, or the elimination of every distraction which take force away from the work you have at hand. This is why the Great Work is connected with the sign which represents the exaltation of Saturn, since it is the saturnine power of concentration that is used in all stages of the operation.

“Justice,” said Omar Khayyam, “is the soul of the universe.” The Woman in Key 11 is identical with the Empress, who is indeed the “soul of the universe.” She is creative imagination, and the power of sub-consciousness to produce perfect equilibration throughout the organism. She also represents the rulership of Venus in Libra.

Her crown is surmounted with a triple ornament, which is in accordance with the esoteric version of this key. It represents the serpent-power in its highest manifestation, which releases human consciousness from its three dimensional interpretation of the universe. The circle and square on the front of the crown refer to the movement of Spirit within matter. Thus it is similar to the symbolism of Key 10, which shows the wheel surrounded by the four cherubs.

The ornament on the breasts of the woman is an ellipse encircling a T-cross, thus containing the mathematical elements that enter into the construction of Key 21. Key 21 represents Saturn, the measuring power, so that the T, which is a measuring tool, is colored blue-violet, color of Saturn in our color scale.

The pointed blade of the sword has the same basic meaning as the ox-goad. It is of steel, metal ruled by Mars, and this is a reference to the fact that wherever the Venus activity which rules Libra is called into play, the Mars force is active also, because these two are complementary and the operation of one invariably excites the operation of the other. The sword handle is in the form of the letter Tau, so that the uplifted sword is a symbol of the exaltation of Saturn in Libra.

The cape is green, referring to Venus, and also to the color of the sign Libra. The robe is red, complementary to green, symbolizing the Mars force mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

The scales represent weighing and measuring. They are, of course, closely related to the basic meanings of this Key. Note that as an instrument for measuring they again refer to the influence of Saturn in this Key.

The background and curtains illustrate the Law of Polarity by their contrasting colors. The background is yellow, the color attributed to Air. The curtains are violet, which is complementary to yellow. Violet is the color attributed to Jupiter, and the curtains refer to the mechanism of cosmic activity represented by the Wheel of Fortune, because that mechanism to some extent veils the operation of the Life Breath. The symmetrical arrangement signifies balance. Their folds are reminiscent of the drapery of the robe of the High Priestess, and have the same meaning.

The throne repeats the symbolism of the pillars and veil of the High Priestess on a smaller scale. Here the pillars are part of the throne, and are surmounted by pomegranates instead of lotus buds, to show that in Key 11 the activity represented has arrived at fruition.

This week consider your actions more carefully than you have ever done before. Try to keep in mind that your present actions are the basis of your future conditions. Go about your daily tasks earnestly, no matter how trivial they may seem. It is not the size or importance of the action that counts, but the manner of its accomplishment. No one ever did great things well who had not first done small things well. Do not misinterpret this to mean that you should drive yourself unmercifully. To do so is a wrong action, for you place a strain upon your mind and body, whereas you should care for them as diligently as you would any other fine animal that you expected to serve you faithfully and well. But the beginning of the solution of your problems is to understand the meaning of right action, and then to act rightly.

Go about your duties in a poised, quiet manner. When you sit down to study, sit quietly and perfectly still. Teach your body the meaning of balance. This is not only highly necessary training for an occultist, but it is the most potent suggestion you can give to subconsciousness that you wish it to set to work to equilibrate your entire organism.

Fear not. Be free from anxiety. Do not yield to the mood of haste. Whatever you have to do, try as best you can to realize that every activity is a particular expression of the perfect action of the Life Force. Look upon your desires as present realities. Thus counsel the Wise Ones.