

# BALANCE AND SYNTHESIS OF OPPOSITES

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Traduce: Gordon Symons

It is good to clarify from the beginning that every polarity is a relationship between two elements and that, as such, it is never absolute, but relative to that given pair of terms. Therefore, the same element can be positive with respect to a given "pole", and negative with respect to another.

An example of the relativity of "polar relationships" is given by the fundamental polarity between Spirit and Matter. According to some, the Spirit is the free and transcendent element, which stands above the various pairs of opposites existing in manifest life, and which regulates them. Such is the conception of Keyserling, which he supported in his book *De la Souffrance à la Plénitude* (see also *Buch vom persönlichen Leben* pp. 505-510-515). According to others the Spirit corresponds to the positive pole and is the dynamic and creative element of every duality. This is the idea of C.G. Jung. In other words, Keyserling considers the "tension" between the spirit and the various manifestations of life in a "vertical" direction along the dimension of intensity; while Jung conceives polarity rather as a "horizontal" relationship.

In the physical world the most general and best-known polarity is that between positive electricity and negative electricity. It is the basis of the constitution of matter, since, as is known, each atom is composed of a positive nucleus and a number of negative electrons. The more numerous these are, the denser and heavier the component is; for example, the hydrogen atom contains only one electron, while that of uranium has ninety-two. The electrical polarity is expressed in various forms that have important practical applications, for example induced currents, alternating currents, etc., of which we can find interesting psychological analogies (ambivalence, spirit of contradiction, "compensations", etc.).

In the three realms of organic life (vegetable, animal and human) one of the most important and widespread polarities is the sexual one. The positive pole is represented by the male element and the negative pole by the female element. But this should not be understood in the sense that only the first is active and that the second is only passive. Both are active, but in a different way: the male element is dynamic and propulsive, the feminine element is receptive and elaborative. This polarity transcends the purely physical polarity and extends to innumerable manifestations of life. It has been observed and deepened above all by the Chinese, who base all cosmic becoming - and at the same time every aspect of human life -

on the two Yang principles (creative male aspect, symbolized by the Father and the Sky) and Yin (receptive feminine aspect, symbolized by the Mother and from the Earth), and on their complex relationships and changes. Wisdom and well-being for man, in fact, according to Chinese philosophy, depends on the harmonious insertion of man in the cyclical becoming of the universe. (1)

Furthermore, some aspects of sexual polarity that concern humanity in particular will be mentioned.

Within the most complex living organisms, such as the human body, various polarities exist. One of the most important is that between the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic one: the first activates organic turnover, catabolism, while the second stimulates assimilation, anabolism.

In the field of emotions and feelings we find dualities well known to all: pleasure-pain; excitation-depression; attraction-repulsion; sympathy-antipathy; love hate. It can be said that all life is interwoven with these emotional reactions to things, events and people. These reactions have, within certain limits, their function and their justification, but when we let ourselves be dominated (as too often happens), so that they determine our way of thinking and our conduct, then we become slaves of it, and we cannot have lasting peace or contentment. We will see later on the path to liberation from these opposites.

Within the mind there is a clear polarity between the analytical activity of the concrete mind and the synthetic activity of the superior mind, between the inductive procedure (from the particular to the general) and the deductive one (from the general to the particular).

If we take the human personality as a whole, we find various polarities that have been extensively studied by modern psychology, thus deepening the knowledge of the human mind and laying the foundations for important psychogogical, educational and psychotherapeutic applications. The main ones are: Psyche-Body; Unconscious-Conscious; Lower Unconscious-Superconscious; passivity-sensitivity; Receptivity (pathos) - Activity, Dynamism, Will; Introversion-Extraversion; Aspiration-Inspiration; Feeling (Heart-Eros) - Reason, Mind (Logos).

If we consider the spiritual element, the divine essence of man, we find the fundamental duality between a purely human personality and Anima, the spiritual Self, which explains

the travail of awakening and inner development. In traditional religious language this same duality is considered to be the relationship between the Soul and God.

There are also inter-individual polarities, which are of the utmost importance. The first and fundamental is that between man and woman (on all human levels); second is that among adults, and children or young people, particularly in the form of the relationship between mother and children. Then there is that between individuals and the various groups with which they are connected.

First of all, there is the family understood as a "psychic entity", which is not composed only of its members but also of all the atavistic influences, traditions, the family "mentality". Such influences sometimes help the individual by offering him an ideal and a lifestyle to adapt to (noblesse oblige!); but more often they limit it and oppress it. (2)

Social groups of various kinds (caste, social class, professional class, cultural groups, nation, church, race) with which the individual can find himself in polar relationships of passive subordination, cooperation, direct action or conflict.

Similar relations also exist between groups; both among the coordinated ones, that is of the same nature and extension (between families and families, between classes and classes, between nations and nations, etc.), as among those sub and superordinate (between family and state, between class and nation, between mass and elite, between State and Federation of States).

Two types of collective polarity of particular interest are those between northern and southern (both in each Continent as well as within the same Nation), and between Western and Eastern countries.

(1) Many Chinese texts deal with it. One of the most interesting is the I Ching or Book of Transformations, which in the form of a method of divination contains treasures of wisdom. The Jung in *The Mystery of the Golden Flower* and the Keyserling talk about it with great appreciation.

For each of these numerous polarities the problem of balancing them arises. Of course here we can only indicate the general principles and methods of balancing opposites, and give some illustrative examples.

The main outcomes and the main solutions of a "polar tension" can be:

1. Fusion of the two poles, with the consequent neutralization of their energy charges.
2. Reabsorption of one of the poles into the other through the action of an "intermediate center", or of a principle superior to both.
3. The creation of a new being, of a new reality.
4. The regulation of opposite poles through the action of an "intermediate center". This regulatory action can take place in two ways:
  - a) By decreasing the amplitude of the oscillations, sometimes even to nullify them, thus producing a more or less complete neutralization.
  - b) By directing the alternatives in a conscious and wise way, so that they have appropriate and constructive effects, in harmony with the cyclic alternations of the particular and general conditions, human and cosmic. (This is the method taught by Chinese philosophy and particularly by the I Ching, already mentioned).
5. Synthesis, through the work of a higher element or principle that transforms, sublimates and reabsorbs the two poles in a higher and wider reality.

According to the very different kinds of polarity, it is easier to arrive at one or the other type of solution. The important thing is that man often has the freedom - and therefore the responsibility - to choose between one way and the other of balancing.

(2) This problem of ancestral influences and how to get rid of it has been partly treated - in an original and effective way, although not without exaggeration - by Léon Daudet in Hérédo.

It should be noted, however, that the solutions indicated are not always quite distinct, as appears from their schematic listing. Sometimes, as will appear from the following examples, they can intertwine and associate in various ways.

In the field of electricity, the simplest solution is that of neutralization through the fusion of the positive charge with the negative one. Depending on the conditions in which it occurs, the effects can be quite different. When the poles are brought into contact, when their potential exceeds the resistance of the means between them, a discharge occurs with the production of a spark; the natural example is lightning and thunderbolts. When instead the poles are far away, but united by a medium, a good conductor of electricity, an electric current is formed that goes from the positive to the negative pole gradually producing neutralization and balancing, provided the positive pole is not reloaded. But if resistances are interposed along the wire, then the electrical energy can undergo various transformations. This fact is used in ever more ingenious ways by man to transform electrical energy into light and heat.

As for the electrical constitution of matter, the most recent studies have shown that the nucleus of the atom has a complex constitution and contains elements of a particular nature, neither positive nor negative.

In the sexual polarity the fusion of the two elements in the physical field has a creative effect, promotes the development of a new organism similar to that of the progenitors.

But in humanity this wonderful creative function is complicated in various ways, causing painful conflicts and difficult problems.

The first and most serious is that of the great exuberance of sexual energies in comparison to those necessary and usable for the normal procreative function. In this regard, unilateral and extreme attitudes are mostly taken. In the West the traditional attitude was to consider the sexual instinct as something impure, sinful and guilty that had to be repressed, inhibited and hidden. This attitude has provoked, on various occasions, more or less violent and lasting reactions, conflicts that have had various results. In the past the most important of these reactions and struggles occurred in the Renaissance and culminated in the dramatic conflict between the hedonism of Lorenzo the Magnificent and the uncompromising asceticism of Gerolamo Savonarola.

In our time, a general and intense reaction against the traditional attitude that has led to the current license, exhibitionism and the unbridled search for "experiences" by young people has been in full swing for several decades; but also to a frank and open approach to the problem. This last fact lays the foundations and opens the way for a balanced solution.

This solution is made possible by two facts of fundamental importance: the first is that in man sexuality has aspects that are not only physical, but also psychological and spiritual; the second is that transformations of psychosexual energies are possible, indeed they occur continuously in a spontaneous way.

These transformations are of three main kinds:

1. Transformation of sexual energies into affectivity and spiritual love.
2. Expression of psychosexual energies in creative activities of another nature (artistic, intellectual, practical).
3. Regeneration of the individual through the sublimation of his creative energies and other psychophysical energies. This is a process of "spiritual alchemy".

Another and broader problem is that of individual and collective relations between the two sexes. The harmonious completion and fruitful cooperation between men and women is hampered by various causes of conflicts. The main ones are the difficulty of satisfactory sexual adjustment; the great differences in psychological constitution between the two sexes (greater than is generally believed) and the consequent misunderstandings; the struggles provoked by the natural selfishness of every "normal" human being, struggles that have numerous opportunities to occur in continuous cohabitation.

In the collective field it can be observed that there was a varied prevalence of one or the other sex in various places and at various times. As is known, there have been civilizations with a clear female prevalence (matriarchy) which they have followed - after periods of struggle (the echo of one of these comes from the legend of the Amazons and the war waged by Hercules on them) - cycles of predominantly male civilization, like the Roman one.

Modern civilization has had a distinctly, indeed exaggeratedly masculine stamp, and the predominantly male passions, above all the lust for power and domination, have contributed to unleashing the two great world wars. However, since the beginning of this century, women have increasingly and consciously entered into social life. This at first had some not-so-good effects, since it led to the "masculinization" of many women (who took from the men more of the defects than the qualities) and engendered a harmful conflict

between the sexes. But the beneficial effects, that is the enrichment and completion of the female personality, the awakening and maturing of the best women, have counterbalanced and will increasingly overcome those drawbacks.

The solution of the problem consists in the conscious and unanimous agreement by both sexes to create a new type of civilization, in which the excessive prevalence of both sexes is replaced by a just and appropriate distribution of functions and tasks in family and social life, so as to establish a harmonious collaboration, a mutual completion, and a social and cultural psychosynthesis. The balancing of opposing qualities in the field of emotions and feelings requires the intervention of a superior regulatory principle of a mental and spiritual nature. The first task in this case is to prevent the passions from overwhelming the whole personality, reason and will. It is a matter of not identifying with them, of maintaining the "I", the center of consciousness above their level, in order to be able to observe them, evaluate them, and then appropriately to dominating them.

It should be noted that "dominating" does not mean "suppressing", which means that it is not aimed at creating insensitivity, aridity. Take for example the fundamental pleasure-pain polarity. As long as we are slaves of this duality, always searching frantically for the first and fearfully escaping the second, we can never find peace or true fulfillment. On the other hand, a forced inhibition, an artificial impassibility, are certainly not a satisfactory solution, which can instead be attained with the use of the enlightened mind. With the help of this it is in fact possible to understand the causes, the nature and the functions of pleasure and pain; it is recognized that by welcoming one without seeking it and without attaching it, and the other without fear of it and without rebelling against it, one can receive valuable lessons in life from both, and "distil its essence".

As one does this, the type and level of opposites gradually rises, passing from physical pleasures to the joys of feeling and to intellectual ones, to the point of ascending to spiritual gladness; we pass from physical suffering to emotional pain, mental travail, to compassion for the evils of others, for great human pain, and we learn lessons of wisdom from everything. Above all one learns to maintain one's Inner Spiritual Center, one's spiritual Self-consciousness, until this too comes to identify itself with Universal Life, with the super-individual Self, transcending the two opposites in an ineffable bliss.

Looking at other polarities of the emotional field, we can clearly distinguish two types of solution. One at the same level, which can be called "intermediate solution" or compromise,

and which consists in the "neutralization" of the two poles; the other at a higher level, which implies, according to the case, a regulation or a synthesis.

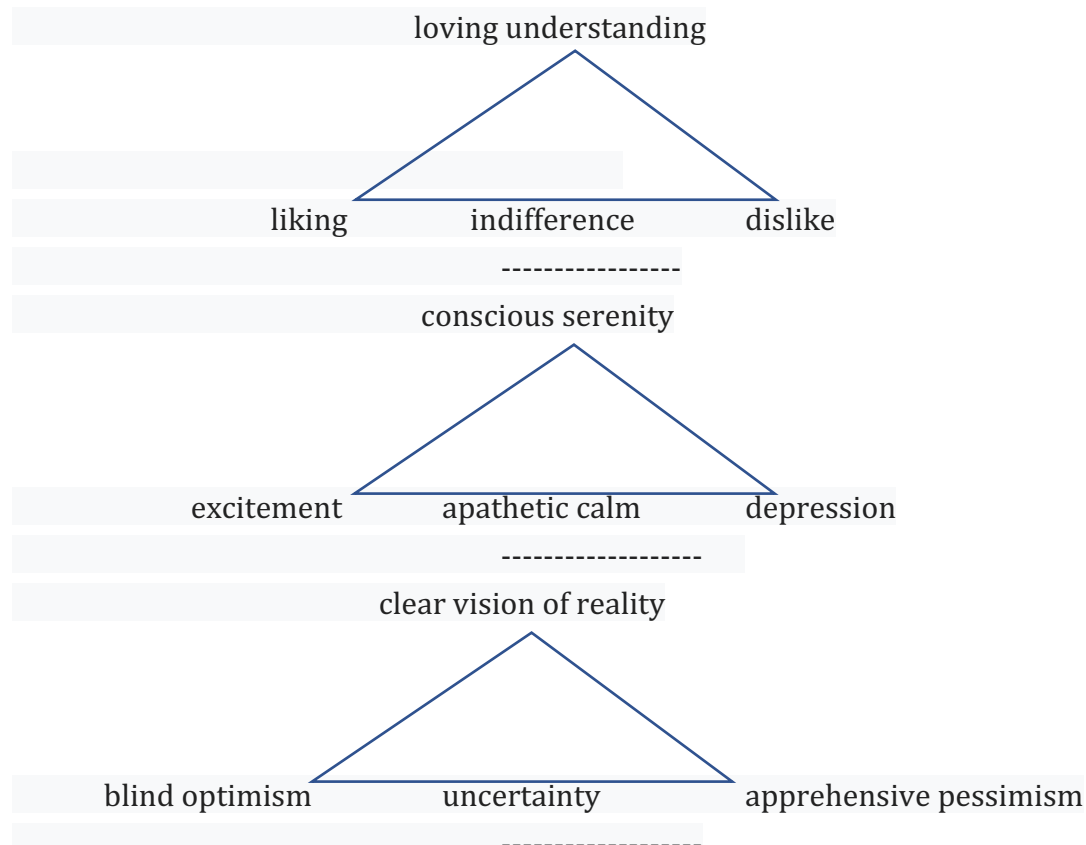
Through regulation, one makes intelligent use of opposites, so as to achieve the desired effects. This was clearly expressed by Eliphas Levi:

*“Pour équilibrer les forces, il faut les maintenir simultanément. Plus vous serez doux et calme, plus votre colère aura de puissance; plus vous serez énergique, plus votre douceur aura de prix... plus vous serez indifférent, plus il vous sera facile de vous faire aimer”.*

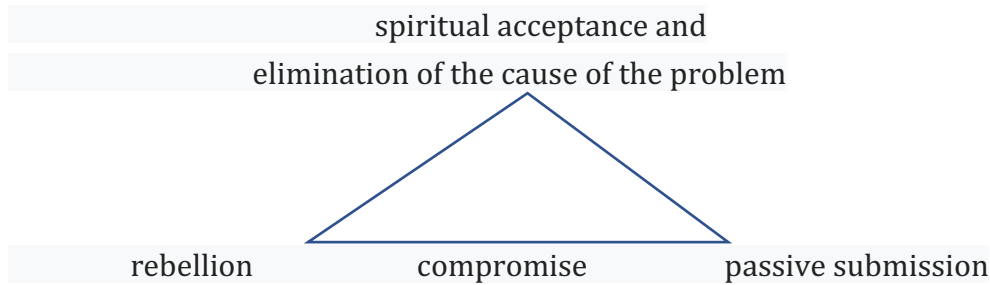
Naturally the constructive use of this method presupposes rectitude and purity of intent. Synthesis on the other hand, similar in a certain sense to a chemical combination, reabsorbs the two elements in a higher entity that has different qualities from each of them.

The difference between the compromise solution and synthesis is evident from a triangular graphic representation.

Here are some examples:







The polarity between "heart" and "mind", between feeling and reason, between Eros and Logos, is resolved in the first place through the recognition of the respective functions, of the field of action of each of the two principles, so that the one does not overwhelm the other. In other words, through their wise regulation and integration, up to the synthesis expressed admirably by Dante: "Intellectual light full of love".

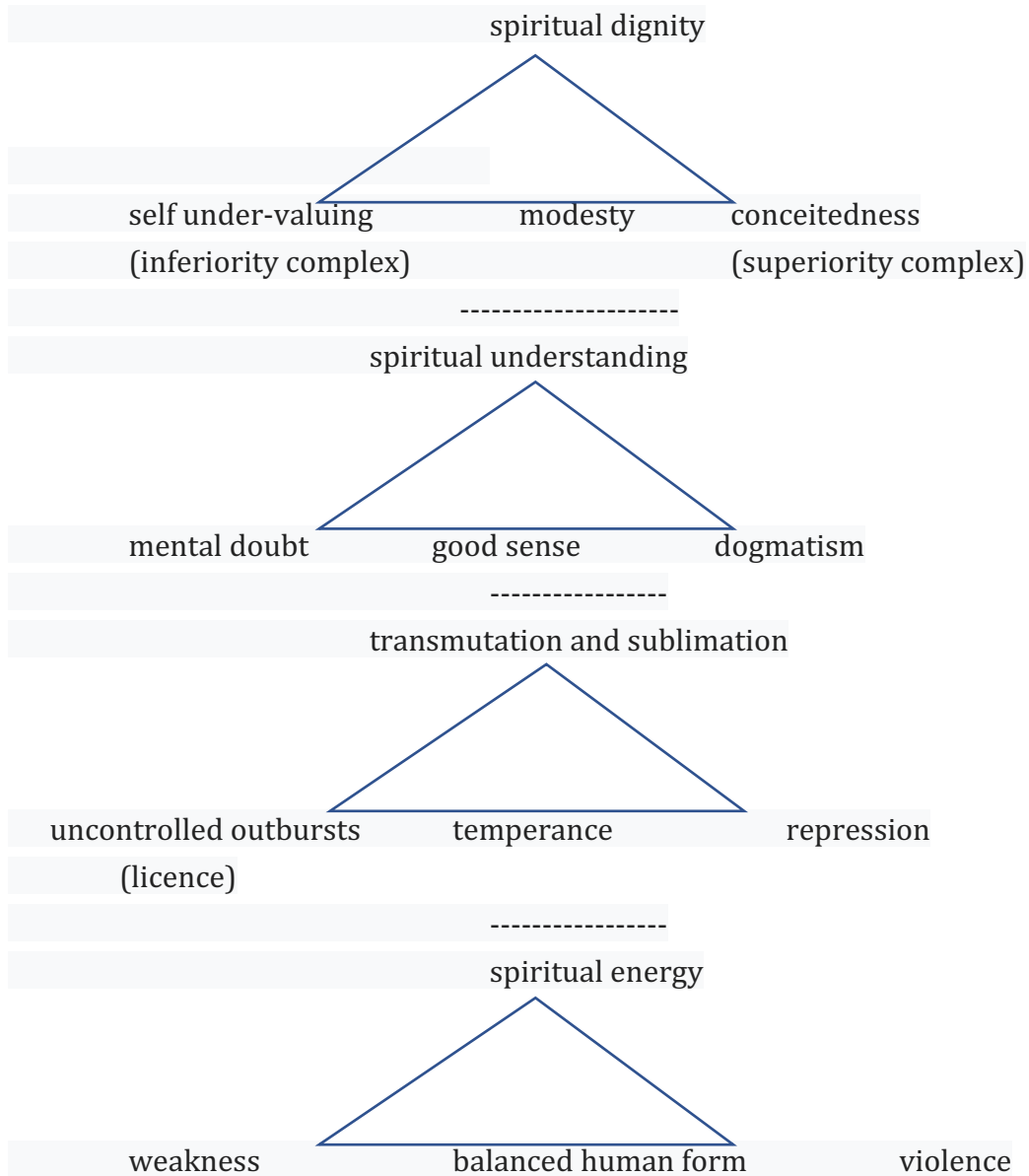
The polarity between sensitivity / receptivity (pathos) and dynamism / will (ethos) - which could be included in the psycho-sexual sense in a broader sense, since the first pole is "feminine" and the second pole is "masculine" - it can also be solved in the first instance through a balanced regulation, and then in a creative synthesis. The regulating principle is wisdom, the unifying one is the Spirit in its fullness.

The fundamental relationship between personality and soul has for its ultimate goal their complete unification, which can be considered as the complete reabsorption of the personality in the soul, or the full pervasion of the personality by the soul.

But this can only happen gradually, through a long process of transmutation, through a series of struggles, approaches, contacts and partial and more-or-less lasting mergers. This spiritual psychosynthesis constitutes the noble travail, the central drama of man, who, consciously or not - aspires to that high goal and cannot find lasting satisfaction, nor true peace, until he has achieved it.

The phases and methods of this psychosynthesis, which have been expounded in various writings (3), cannot be explained here. We will only say that the influence of the soul on the personality produces a series of "triangular" synthesis balances, of the kind that are performed in the field of emotions.

Here are some of them:



A clear understanding of the nature and value of this psychosynthesis and a vigilant and firm will can facilitate the work. The most effective way to implement it is to resolutely detach our Center of consciousness from both poles and to keep it firm and constant in the highest point of balance and mastery.