

Beyond Attraction

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The law of attraction is a powerful force in manifestation and life-shaping. But what exactly is it? What is the law of attraction? We could sum it up by saying that “like attracts like,” but we know from experience that “opposites attract” as well. If I hold a particular thought or image in my mind, will it actually attract the physical manifestation of that thought or image to me? Maybe. Certainly we have experiences in which this is so. But we also have experiences where this does not work. And if we think about it, this is a good thing, for we may well not want to attract everything that passes through our thoughts and imaginations.

A friend of mine once said that worrying was praying for what you didn't want. If the law of attraction is as powerful as it is sometimes made out to be, then indeed I should worry about my worry thoughts, for they will likely bring to me what I'm worrying about! But a little reflection shows that this doesn't happen. In fact, I know several people who are classic worriers, but they never actually manifest or experience the things about which they are concerned or which give them fear. On the other hand, there are those whose worries really do come to pass, just as the law of attraction would suggest.

This same thing happens in a more positive vein. Sometimes, we do attract exactly what we have been imagining, visualizing, or thinking about (and when that happens, we may discover it wasn't what we really wanted!). But other times, all the positive visualizing, imagining, thinking and feeling doesn't have any effect at all.

A principle cannot be a law if it works sometimes and doesn't work at other times.

We could say that the reason for this mixed record of success and failure is that we are not using the law rightly or adequately. If I fail to attract something, the fault must lie with me, not with the law of attraction. This may be true; it's certainly worth examining. But ultimately this becomes a disempowering approach. We can waste energy blaming ourselves or blaming life for what happens and never come to a clearer, deeper understanding of why or how to make things better.

I think of the “law” of attraction as part of a broader principle which might be called the “law” of coherency. This law may be stated in this way: life tends towards coherency. It configures to what is.

So, I may wish to attract something, but it is not coherent with other aspects of my life or with my life as a whole.

In the case of my friend who was a worrier, he worried with his mind but he was very loving with his heart. He lived a generous, compassionate, loving life,

always gracious to others, always supportive and giving. What he manifested in his life—what he attracted, if you will—was coherent with that larger dimension of generosity and love rather than with his worrisome thoughts.

Another reason the “law” of attraction doesn’t always work—or works in a way we don’t understand—is that we often have too constricted a view of ourselves. Using the law of attraction, we picture ourselves as little magnets drawing stuff to us. But we are more complex beings than that. We are deeply woven through relationships and interconnections and interdependencies in a fabric of life. The pattern of my relationships is as much a “body” for me as my physical form is; it certainly is an energetic field through which I engage with the world. How I craft my relationships, both with those close to me and casually with people I meet, through my behavior, my energy, and my thoughts and feelings affect the “shape” I present to life. My mental energy may seek to attract a certain result, but usually it is my overall energetic “shape” that will determine how life configures to me and what will manifest.

Likewise, the “law” of attraction can be seen from too personal a perspective, that is, in terms of what we attract. But there is a corollary to this principle, which could be called the “law of the attracted.” This arises because we are not always the ones doing the attracting. Sometimes we are or are part of what is being attracted.

For example, I was in a bookstore once and had a strong impulse to buy a particular book, not at all an unusual occurrence for me! But in this instance, I already owned the book. Why would I want to get a second copy? But I obeyed my intuition, bought the book and put it in my car. I then went off to a group gathering I was scheduled to attend. There I met a woman who told me she’d been trying to manifest a book but just couldn’t find it. As it turned out, it was the very book I had just purchased for the second time. I had been an instrument in her manifestation, but had I not heeded my intuition, I could have broken the chain of her attraction. In effect, I was attracted into that chain, becoming a link in her successful manifestation.

If we think about it, we are all links in many chains of manifestation and attraction. That is what life is about. If I focus only on my own needs and wants, I can diminish my participation in this great community of life. If I am concerned only with attracting, I end up presenting a very small shape around which life can configure.

The law of attraction taken by itself can become a very transactional, very linear relationship with life. It lacks the participatory breadth and depth of a more holistic view, one that thinks in terms of coherency and wholeness more than attraction and getting. It is true, we attract what we are, but what we are is more than just the power of attraction.

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