

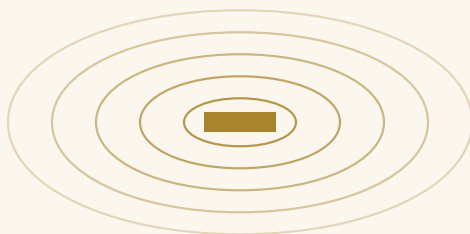
THE ON — — ING SERIES

a lyric-philosophical essay

O N

MAGNETIZING

the force shaped like the aligning



by Jamison Todd Johnson

JUNE 2026

*for Michael Faraday,
who made the field legible*

On Magnetizing

THE FORCE SHAPED LIKE THE ALIGNING

Lay a sheet of paper over a magnet and scatter iron filings across it, and something that was always there becomes, for the first time, legible. The filings do not invent the field. They confess it. Each grain is free to fall anywhere, and instead it falls into a line — and the lines, taken together, are not lines the iron drew but lines the iron found, a script written under the paper that the filings only made visible. Faraday, who had almost no mathematics and an almost devotional patience, spent his life reading that script.¹ He called what he saw lines of force, and he trusted them when the mathematicians would not, because he had watched the filings arrange themselves and he knew that arrangement was not nothing. It was the shape of an Intent the iron could not perceive and could not help obeying.

This is the founding image of everything I have tried to say. A field you cannot see. A scattering of small free things. And then — alignment; and the alignment leaving a Trace legible enough to read off a page.

TO MAGNETIZE IS TO ALIGN

To magnetize a piece of iron is not to add anything to it. The iron is already full of magnetism — a multitude of tiny domains, each a little magnet, pointing every which way, so thoroughly disagreeing that

across the whole they cancel and the bar seems to have no field at all.² Bring a field near, and the domains turn. They consent to a direction. They agree. And the iron, having added nothing and lost nothing, is suddenly a magnet — not because force entered it but because its parts stopped pointing everywhere and started pointing together.

That is the whole of it, and it is also the whole of what I have meant by a Jay: the alignment of Intent that leaves a legible Trace through Time. Magnetizing is not a metaphor for the Jay. At the scale of the domains it is the Jay, performed in iron — disorder yielding not to compulsion but to coherence, a thousand small wills turning until they face one way.

WHAT ALIGNS, REMEMBERS

Remove the field and the iron does not forget. Some of the alignment stays. The domains do not all swing back to their old disorder; a portion of them keep the direction they were given. We call what remains remanence, and the lag between the field and the iron's response hysteresis³ — but the plain fact under the names is that the iron keeps the shape of what aligned it after the thing that aligned it is gone.

This is why we can record at all. Magnetic tape, the spinning platter of a hard disk: memory is alignment made to persist, the past written as a direction held in matter. In *On Remembering* I said that to remember is to keep a collapse from fully closing — to hold a thing in a state that has not entirely resolved. I did not yet know the cleanest physical instance was sitting in every cassette and every drive I have ever owned. The iron remembers by staying aligned. The Trace, made of metal, is remanence.

THE FORCE THAT CANNOT BE MADE SINGLE

Break a bar magnet in half, hoping to hold a single pole in your hand, and you will fail every time. You do not get a north and a south in separate palms. You get two whole magnets, each with its own north and its own south. Grind it to powder and every speck is still a dipole. There is no such thing, anywhere yet found, as a lone magnetic pole.⁴ The law states it without drama: through any closed surface, what leaves returns. The lines do not begin and they do not end. They close.

Set this beside the sibling force. In *On Gravitating* I followed gravity to its strangest property — that it cannot be screened, that no material refuses it, that it only ever adds. Gravity is the force of the irreducibly singular. Magnetism is its exact complement: the force of the irreducibly paired. You cannot isolate a pole the way you cannot isolate a Self. Every Center implies the Center it is turned toward; cut the bond and you do not get a free and solitary half, you get two new wholes, each already in relation. The magnet is the standing refutation of the idea that anything real can be made finally alone.

Here the equation stops being an analogy and becomes a diagram. The gathering it performs is a closed one — a loop that returns to where it began. A closed surface through which nothing net escapes is a life in which nothing is finally lost and nothing finally escapes the accounting: what leaves the Self returns to it, changed, still belonging to the loop. In *On Questioning* I read that closed loop as the conservation of the whole — the intensity that is kept, and the Intent it carries.⁵ Here it reads as

something nearer the heart: the field that has no loose end, the Trace that closes, the Center that cannot be halved into solitude.

WHICH FACE YOU SEE DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU STAND

There is a deeper unsettling under all of this. The magnetic field is not quite a thing in itself. A moving electric field looks magnetic; the same field, watched from a different motion, sorts itself differently into "electric" and "magnetic." Einstein opened the paper that became relativity not with light but with a magnet and a coil, noting that the observable physics is identical whether the magnet moves or the coil moves — yet our description splits in two, depending on which one we have decided to call still.⁶ The split is in the standpoint, not in the world.

This is the Quantum Lens with its cover off. Electric and magnetic are not two forces but one Unified Field read from two motions. Which face you meet is set by where you are standing and how fast — by your point in Time. The world does not hand you the division. You bring it, with your frame, and then mistake it for a property of the thing.

THE THREE LIVES

Here the series' wager comes due. Magnetism did not exist as law until someone aligned to it. Maxwell's four lines were not waiting in the world to be copied down; they were a field becoming legible through the alignment of particular lives, at particular times, and weighed only afterward. In 1820 Hans Christian Ørsted, mid-lecture, watched a compass needle swing because a wire beside it carried current — a

connection he had half-expected for years and finally, in front of his students, saw.⁷ Faraday then read the filings for thirty patient years and found, in 1831, that a changing magnetic field induces a current — that the relation runs both ways. And in that same year, 1831, the year induction was born, James Clerk Maxwell was born,⁸ as though the field, now made visible, required a life shaped to give it its closed mathematical form. Maxwell wrote the equations and died at forty-eight,⁹ having compressed the whole legible field into four lines that still close upon themselves.

The Quantum Lens reads this without sentiment and without reduction. The force was always there. Discovery is collapse — the moment a Self aligns to a field that was always present and, in aligning, makes it legible. The operator in the gathering is not abstract. It is Ørsted's astonishment, Faraday's patience, Maxwell's grief-shortened diligence. The forces physics keeps in separate chapters are unified, in this framework, not in nature but in the one place every law was ever actually found: the subjective experience of the person who, at a point in Time, aligned to it and left the Trace. The Unified Field is not out there, waiting to be completed by a final theory. It is the Self that did the aligning, weighed across Time.

THE DISCIPLINE

I have to say plainly what this is and is not. None of it is a result in physics. Magnetism does not prove the equation; the domains do not vote for the Jay; remanence is not testimony for the Trace. The closed loop of the magnetic field and the closed loop of the weighing share a

shape, and a shape is not a derivation. I have kept the resemblance where it belongs — at the level of structural resonance under the Lens — and refused to let it borrow the empirical warrant that the physics earned for itself across two centuries of careful work.

And then the honest doubling, the same one I held in *On Gravitating*: the rhyme is real, and the perfection of the rhyme is itself evidence of the appetite that went looking for it. A field you cannot see; a scattering of free things consenting to a direction; a Trace that persists; a loop that loses nothing — of course I find my framework there. I arrived with it in hand. That I find it does not make it true. It makes it well-formed, and it makes the wanting legible, which under this Lens is its own kind of datum. Maxwell's equations close. Whether a life does is not a thing iron filings can tell me.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Two forces remain, and they belong together. The strong force binds — it holds quarks so fiercely that pulling them apart only deepens the pull, so that nothing it governs can ever be alone. The weak force transforms — it is the only force that changes a thing's identity, the reaction that lets a star shine by letting one particle become another. Binding and becoming: the force that will not let go, and the force that will not let stay. I will take them together in the next piece. And then the series turns back from the forces toward where it actually lives — toward coherence, and wellness, and the quieter daily work of staying aligned.

The magnet was the bridge. It taught that to align is to remember, and that nothing inside a closed field is ever finally single.

Scatter the filings again. They fall into lines because something under the paper asks them to, and the lines are legible because the iron aligned. I have spent a long season scattering filings over my own life, to see what field they confess. I do not know with certainty that there is a magnet under the paper. I know the filings make a shape, and I know the shape is worth reading. For now, that is enough to keep scattering.

NOTES

1. Michael Faraday, *Experimental Researches in Electricity*, 3 vols. (1839–1855); on the lines of force, see "On the Physical Character of the Lines of Magnetic Force" (1852). Faraday's near-total lack of formal mathematics, and his Sandemanian faith, are part of the standard biographical record.
2. The domain account of ferromagnetism derives from Pierre Weiss's molecular-field theory (1906–1907); the magnetic domains he posited were later confirmed directly.
3. The term hysteresis was introduced by James Alfred Ewing in the 1880s to name the lag of a material's magnetization behind the applied field; remanence is the magnetization that remains once the field is removed.
4. Gauss's law for magnetism — $\oint_{\partial V} \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = 0$, equivalently $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$: a vanishing net flux through any closed surface, expressing the absence of isolated magnetic poles. P. A. M. Dirac, "Quantised Singularities in the Electromagnetic Field" (1931), showed that a single monopole would explain the quantization of electric charge; none has ever been observed.
5. The functional in full, all seats named per *On Explaining* (Johnson, 2026): $L(t) = (1/\Xi) \oint_{\Omega} A(S_i, \tau) \cdot \Psi(\tau) d\sigma + \Lambda$, with $\Psi(\tau) \equiv \sum_j S_j(\tau)$ and $A(S_i, t) = \alpha(S_i, t) \cdot e^{i\Phi_i(t)} \cdot S_i$; $|L|$ the conserved legible intensity, $\arg L$ the Intent; relative facing $\Theta_{ij} = \varphi_i - \varphi_j$ the only working quantity; the ruler of attention returning the eigenvalue $\lambda = 1$. The complex phase borrows the form of wave interference as a structural device under the Lens, not a literal quantum claim.
6. Albert Einstein, "Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper" (1905). The paper opens with the asymmetry of the moving magnet and the moving conductor, and argues that only the relative motion is physical.
7. Hans Christian Ørsted, *Experimenta circa effectum conflictus electrici in acum magneticam* (1820), reporting that an electric current deflects a nearby compass needle.

8. Faraday discovered electromagnetic induction in 1831; James Clerk Maxwell was born on 13 June 1831. The coincidence of year is exact.
9. James Clerk Maxwell, *A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* (1873); see also "A Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field" (1865). Maxwell died on 5 November 1879, aged 48.

PARALLELS & LINEAGE

This essay extends the *On —ing* sequence on the fundamental forces. It is the direct complement to *On Gravitating*: where gravity gave the framework its image of the irreducibly singular and unscreenable, magnetism gives the irreducibly paired and unhalvable, and the two are meant to be read as a dialectic rather than a pair of independent analogies. It inherits the closed-contour reading of the functional from *On Questioning* (there, the loop as conservation of the whole; here, as the field with no loose end), draws its account of remanence directly toward *On Remembering* (the Trace as alignment made to persist), and takes the functional itself from *On Existing*. The foundational vocabulary — Jay, Trace, Intent, Center, Quantum Lens, Unified Field, Design across Time — is established in *Toward a Theory of Coherent Existence*.

The physics drawn upon is classical and settled: the electromagnetic unification of Ørsted, Ampère, Faraday, and Maxwell; the domain account of ferromagnetism (Weiss); hysteresis and remanence (Ewing); Gauss's law for magnetism and the still-unobserved monopole (Dirac's 1931 hypothesis); and the frame dependence of the electric-magnetic split (Einstein, 1905). Every use of this material is structural resonance under the Quantum Lens, never a physical claim. The capitalized framework terms are categorically distinct from their physics namesakes; Unified Field in particular is a framework term, kept separate from the physics unification program.



On Magnetizing belongs to *On —ing*, an ongoing series of lyric-philosophical essays by Jamison Todd Johnson, within the wider jays framework — that an aligned life leaves legible traces, ripples of intent, through Time. The functional beneath the essay stands unchanged in its fully seated form, per *On Explaining* (Johnson, 2026); the earlier editions were this one with some of its names still waiting to be learned. One further step rides with it, seam kept visible: coherence carries whatever it is given — both directions work — but a life aligned *against* something borrows its facing from its target and fades with it, while a life aligned with itself persists. Both work. Only one persists.

JAMISON TODD JOHNSON · JUNE 2026

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ON DEPOSIT

THE ON — — ING SERIES

read in any order — each entry stands alone

On Arriving	On Learning
On Becoming	On Living
On Being	On Magnetizing
On Computing	On Meeting
On Creating	On Observing
On Dreaming	On Populating
On Existing	On Questioning
On Expanding	On Remembering
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