

## The Heart of Thelema<sup>1</sup>

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### 0.

*Every event is a uniting of some one monad with one of the experiences possible to it.*

*"Every man and every woman is a star" - that is, an aggregate of such experiences, constantly changing with each fresh event, which affects him or her either consciously or subconsciously.*

*Each one of us has thus an universe of his own, but it is the same universe for each one as soon as it includes all possible experience. This implies the extension of consciousness to include all other consciousness.*

Crowley, introduction to Liber AL.

Thelema is often understood only in terms of the sovereignty of the individual, and of the inalienable rights springing forth. This is of course perfectly valid, leading to some valuable insights. It is an inevitable starting-point in plumbing the depths of Thelema. To dwell on it exclusively, however, is to ignore a wealth of rich resonances and subtle nuances. Curiously, there is a great deal of resistance to attempts to broaden the general understanding of Thelema. This is no doubt a reflection of the innate tendency to cling to a cherished identity - and in more personal terms, to seek refuge in the ghetto of individuality.

Thelema is a universal key, and has a much wider application than its confinement to occult circles might suggest. This essay focuses rather narrowly on the idea of True Will, the essence of which lies in Going rather than Being. Its symbol is the ankh, the crux ansata, the ankle-strap, the Egyptian symbol for going. Through existence, we partake of the Sacrament of Being in its dynamic aspect as Going. This is **maya**, the **lila**, the illusion of manifestation. It is the Divine Play which Being puts forth, in order to enjoy itself. Ultimately, manifestation occurs for its own sake, and is in essence pure joy, total abandonment, utter wantonness. Existence is at heart purposeless. Herein lies the innocence of Harpocrates, the Babe in the Egg of Blue, Hoor-paar-kraat. Manifestation is the Child spawned by the eternal, incessant interplay or coupling of Nuit and Hadit, and the height of attainment is recovering awareness of this identity.

Matter is energy. The intricate, interlocking, ecstatic whorlings and weavings of energy give rise to the illusion of Form. This process is ever dynamic, ever transformative. We are eternally forthcoming, incarnating anew at every instant. Form arises, flowers, decays, and dissolves. The energy which in-forms or incarnates is however eternal, and creates afresh new forms, new patterns. The hourglass of existence is turned again and again. Unless we awaken to this eternal play, this essence of magick or **maya**, then we shall never see beyond the seduction of form. To awake, however, is still to participate in the drama, but to participate knowingly. We weave the tapestries, knowing their place in the whole. *"But ye, O my people, rise up and awake!"*

This essay seeks to trace the golden thread of ecstasy through the various levels - from Being to Non-Being, from Two to Zero. These more subtle nuances of Thelema can be illuminated by reference to various ideas of eastern mysticism. In the final analysis, however, the richness of Thelema transcends even these traditions, and may be seen as their Western recession. Finally, by

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way of an appendix, a passage from Crowley is quoted.<sup>2</sup> This is drawn from *The Ritual of the Mark of the Beast*, and is appended to demonstrate that the interpretation of Thelema as here presented is fully in accord with its principal proponent in modern times.

## I.

*The word of the Law is Thelema.*

*Who calls us Thelemites will do no wrong, if he look but close into the word ...*

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

AL.I,39-40.

**Thelema** is the name given to a body of mystical and magical doctrine that has come to be associated with Crowley. This is in many ways understandable, since he was its prime exponent in modern times, and gave coherence, clarity and glamour to what has come to be regarded as the Cult of Thelema. However, as he often stressed, it did not originate with him, and was in no sense his invention. On the contrary, he was essentially transmitting a current that was already there. To see Thelema as being somehow Crowley's creation, and thus to focus on him as the central core of the doctrine, makes it nothing more than Crowleyanity. This serves only to belittle and obscure the deeper ramifications and subtleties. The strength of Thelema derives from its essential universality, its affinities with other traditions, and it is in this context that it can best be understood.

As is well known, Thelema is a Greek word meaning Will, and it is a very appropriate summary of the Cult and its underlying meaning and application. It is also often referred to as the 93 Current, since by virtue of the Greek Qabalah the word Thelema enumerates as 93. Again, Crowley did not arrive at this word as a summary of the doctrine. Rather, it is given as the pivotal term in *The Book of the Law* or *Liber AL*, a complex and profound text of three short chapters communicated to Crowley in April 1904 by a praeter-human intelligence called Aiwass. The word Thelema is an excellent summary of the two key phrases of that text: "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law,*" and "*Love is the law, love under will.*" Critics have demonstrated their own superficiality and lack of perception by confusing will and want, and interpreting "Do what thou wilt" as "Do whatever you like." They thus miss the point in a way that is astonishing in its supreme banality.

Will is generally seen as a deeper, more underlying driving force than mere whims or fancies, which are simply transitory waves or ripples on the surface of the pool. In terms of Thelema, the True Will is the underlying dynamism which springs from the very core of the individual. *Liber AL* expresses this in a very beautiful fashion by saying that we are each of us a star in space, with our own orbit or true path. This orbit is our trajectory, our True Will, the drive or dynamism that underlies us as individuals. It should be the business of each of us to ascertain our true orbit, and seek to follow it wholeheartedly. Putting it another way, our True Will may be regarded as our natural place in the universe, our allotted course, our inherent and peculiar motion through the starry firmament of Nuit. True Will may thus be understood as destiny, as natural function. As Crowley put it, it is to bid stars to shine, vines to bear grapes, and water to seek its level.

True Will, then, may be seen as a deeper, unconscious driving-force which sometimes sings in the blood as instinct. More usually, however, it finds an imperfect, insipid, conscious refraction and diffusion in a plethora of wants and desires, a rag-bag of conflicting pulls and impulses hither and thither. When the conscious or surface will of an individual is at odds with his underlying current, his unconscious True Will, then he is swimming against the tide, and thus not only wasting his own

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<sup>2</sup> Not included. Refer to *Liber V vel Reguli*.

energies, but also getting in the way of others. We each have our True Will or natural line of development, and it is evidently in the best interests that he discovers his 'natural bent' and aligns his conscious will with it. He will then, to continue the previous analogy, be swimming with the tide rather than against it, pursuing his rightful path or orbit.

Seen in this context, Thelema is evidently a good deal deeper and more profound than Crowley's critics imagine. It does, however, beg the question: why the gap between True Will and conscious desire? If the True Will is in fact the natural will, why is it that we are not openly and consciously driven by it; and thus why do we not go, rejoicing, on our way? The reason lies primarily in social conditioning, an imposed conformity of values and ideas with which we are all infected to a greater or lesser extent. From birth we are encouraged to follow a contrived code of conduct, rather than the course or proclivity which our instincts tell us to be natural. In fact we are encouraged to distrust our instincts, and instead rely on 'logic,' 'reason,' or 'conscience' as guides to 'proper' behaviour. This has been characterised by Nietzsche and others as 'herd instinct,' which may well be natural for cows or sheep, but which hardly befits the more exalted Thelemic idea of the 'kingly man' or 'queenly woman.' The relation between the conscious, conditioned will and the True Will can perhaps best be conveyed by the image of the sun on a cloudy day, struggling to find a way through dense, blocking cloud. Daylight is, of course, sunlight; and the more that the sun is obscured by clouds, the weaker and more insipid it becomes. Similarly, our True Will is covered by a dense accretion of social conditioning, and its natural intensity is consequently weakened and distorted. It is this admixture of conditioned behaviour, seasoned with a watery dash of True Will, which forms the conscious will. We are thereby cheated of our birthright; instead of burning with the true intensity of the fiery, creative energy at our core, only a weak fraction manages to fight its way through the layers of insulation, producing a feeble, guttering glow. That this might seem more convenient from a political, economic or social view is beside the point. The practical result is that, as individuals, we are enfeebled. Alchemically, gold is turned into lead.

Expressed thus, it may seem that all we have to do is lay aside our social conditioning and bask in the radiance of our True Will. However, this is seriously to underestimate the depths to which such conditioning permeates. Rare indeed is it for someone to awaken suddenly to their True Will, and thence to proceed joyfully on their natural path. The awakening itself may seem sudden, like a thunderbolt; but it is a culmination, a climax, and glories on well-prepared soil. We have to learn to live more naturally again, to have more trust in our instincts, to pay more heed to the inner voice. More properly, it is a case of **un**-learning, of discarding the false accretions of conditioned behaviour and allowing the star within to shine forth, in its natural intensity.

Many would fear this as anarchy, as kicking over the traces, mistaking lack of external restraint for license. In a sense this **is** anarchy - the anarchy of the oak, which flowers in its season in accord with its natural rhythm. It is anarchy in the sense of absence of artificial restraint, of discipline imposed by external 'authority.' It could be sad that *Liber AL* is addressed to the kingly man, the individual who is engaged in the pursuit of discovering his True Will and fulfilling it. "*But ye, O my people, rise up and awake!*" Once an individual does this, and operates with the intensity of the awesome power-house within - rather than the pathetic, spluttering candle-flame that we are apt to call 'living' - then his Will cannot fail of fulfillment, for he is fully aware of his natural function in the universe and the necessity - indeed, the inevitability - of fulfilling it. *Liber AL*, that potent flowering and summation of Thelema, sings passionately and sensuously to "every heart of man," that we should awaken to our true identity and live our life to the full. At present Thelema is elitist, but only in the sense that few are listening to its message and fewer still are understanding it. "*The slaves shall serve*" - but only for so long as they are content to remain bound in serfdom, and in ignorance of their splendrous, regal identity.

Thelema is a lustrous flame, a potent call to arms, and may be seen as the next step for humankind. Crowley supposed that with the transmission of *Liber AL* we had entered upon a new age - the Aeon of Horus, the Child. This had, he explained, been preceded by the Aeon of Osiris, the Father - itself following the Aeon of Isis, the Mother. Horus is to some extent the product of both, and partakes of their essence, but becomes ever more aware of his nature as an entity independent of them both. Crowley made some connection here between these succeeding aeons and the Precession of the Equinoxes, thus assigning to each a period of approximately 2,000 years. However, these aeons relate primarily to phases in the evolution of human awareness or consciousness, as well as the development of awareness on an individual level from birth onwards. There is a pointer to this - that the succession of the aeons is not bound to the Precession of the Equinoxes in Crowley's 'Old Comment' to *Liber AL* III, verse 34. Here he states, **apropos** the Aeon of Horus: "*Following him will arise the Equinox of Ma, the Goddess of Justice, it may be a hundred or ten thousand years from now; for the Computation of Time is not here as There.*" The growth of the Child is ever a rather painful affair, and Crowley supposed that the New Aeon would be ushered in with chaos and bloodshed as its baptism. This is not difficult to see. The chains that bind the slaves are forged by false gods - those of consumerism, material acquisitiveness, deference to political authority, and the like. These gods will not be content to melt away like the snow, and the onset of the Aeon of the Child will seem dark and disruptive to the remnants of the patriarchal Aeon of Osiris. Centuries of repression, of the damming of natural forces and instincts, will in all probability result in an explosion in the outer, and the collapse of society as founded on the present pattern.

However, it is for the patterns of the New Aeon to emerge as they will. Thelema is addressed to the individual, and seeks to awaken him or her to regality, creativity and genius. Establishment of the Law of Thelema is not meant in the sense of establishing a political kingdom of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, or launching a **coup d'état** against the present centres of power in society. Rather, it is a case of bringing the Law of Thelema to more general awareness; and this is best served by applying it to ourselves, by discovering our True Will and fulfilling it. There is an analogy with the Law of Gravity, where 'establishment' is in the sense of acknowledgement, of its acceptance and use as a universal principle.

Thelema is the key to the transformation of consciousness, both individually and racially. Its real beauty, however, lies in its universality, its applicability on all levels. Taken at its most exoteric, it asserts the sovereignty of the individual, and exhorts us all to become more regal folk, masters of ourselves and our destinies, triumphant in the Aeon of the Crowned and Conquering Child. On a more subtle, esoteric level, however, it is also a key for the transcending of individuality - for at deeper levels the individual merges into the collective, the All. One is reminded here of the 'two truths' principle of Buddhism. There is little doubt that the key to propagating Thelema as a principle lies in stressing its application to the sovereignty of the individual, our identity as the glorious star in space, rejoicing in our orbit. That star shines forth as creative genius, and it is the birthright of every individual, did they but know it, to partake of the lustre of that starry nature. Magick is a system of initiation, whereby the veils dissolve and the Hidden God is released to go on his way unhindered, to do as he wilt, as only a god can. Paradoxically, though, as we journey ever deeper to the core of our being, we discover that ultimately there is neither individual nor collective, neither inner nor outer, neither esoteric nor exoteric. Thelema is the starting-point for this journey, commencing as the apotheosis of individuality, as also its dissolution.

## II.

*I am the flame that burns in every heart of man, and in the core of every star. I am Life, and the giver of Life, yet therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death.*

AL.II,6.

We have seen that the conscious will - more commonly experienced as an echo of Choronzon, the pull of a multiplicity of diverse wills, whims, impulses and desires - is to some extent a refraction of the deeper True Will, albeit distorted, weakened, atrophied. In fact, the True Will manifests on many different levels, springing forth from the secret depths of being, the hidden seed. Thus we can perhaps conceive of the individual as something like an onion, layer upon layer, peeling upon peeling. Such an image suggests a core. At the core of the star is Hadit, and this is the seat and the fulcrum of the True Will.

The cosmology of *Liber AL* gives us Nuit and Hadit, the two basic polarities, from the interaction of which manifestation arises. Nuit can be considered as the sum total of possibilities, and Hadit as any point that has experience of these possibilities. Nuit is the circle of infinite circumference, Hadit the infinitesimal point which has position but no size. "*Yet she shall be known and I never,*" because Hadit is the point from which we spring, and the eye or 'I' cannot see itself. It is the core and genesis of being, the concealed bindu, which can only realise or become aware of itself by uniting with the possibilities of experience. The core of the star is essentially unknown and unknowable, because in order to have any sort of manifestation or awareness it has already had to partake of the Body of Nuit. We can never go back to the source, but must go on, ever on, ever journeying forth.

Nuit, Hadit, and their conjunction and child Ra-Hoor-Khuit, are abstract principles clothed in more concrete symbols. They are thus clad in order that they might be more intelligible to us. The rational mind understands by expressing and perceiving in a dualist fashion. On this rational level, the best that can be aimed for is to express things symbolically. The hope is that intuition can work on the elusive, suggestive, fleeting insights that contemplation of such imagery affords. In fact, these symbols are to some extent interchangeable, and retain their usefulness only so long as they are not analysed too much or too deeply. They speak to intuition, to dream and imagination, and not - on anything other than a superficial level - to reason or logic. They are at their best when penetrating awareness directly in this fashion, avoiding the intercession of reason.

Mind, body and spirit are often seen as separate things, rigid divisions, entities in their own right. Commonly, it is as if a spirit wears his mind and his body much as a suit of clothing, eventually flying off to trade his old rags for new. This conception, which arises from dualism - the philosophy of opposites that are irreconcilable - becomes questionable upon closer examination, and soon breaks down. For instance, even the most hardened "chalk and cheese, and ne'er the twain shall meet" dualist will, at the barrel of a gun, admit of the principle of psychosomaticism, or interaction between the mental and the physical. In this context, mental and emotional states such as stress, anxiety and so forth can manifest as physical illness. One obvious example would be a stomach ulcer produced by stress. Not surprisingly, the principle also operates in the other direction, with physical states affecting the mental or emotional equilibrium. A bad cold, for instance, seems to drain us of energy, and may render us very sensitive. It would seem from all this, therefore, that there is at the very least a degree of mutual influence, with the mental and the physical planes affecting each other, interpenetrating and interacting. Thinking about this, one wonders where the mental stops and the physical begins, and vice versa. Psychological moods, to give another example, seem to have a biochemical correlation; hormonal activity has a profound effect on consciousness. The more such points are considered, the more arbitrary becomes the line between mind and body,

between the mental and the physical, between spirit and matter. The practices of hatha yoga, for instance, when properly and assiduously undertaken, seem to lead to a greater awareness of a holity - a mind/body unity, a sense of a field or continuity of awareness rather than a multiplicity of parts. It seems that what we have, in fact, is a continuum, upon which we impose arbitrary and conceptual classifications or divisions, such as mind, body, soul, etc. Essentially there is a merging or blending, and it matters not whether we see mind as more solid mind, or whatever.

The star, then, is essentially undivided, a continuum; and at the core of every star is Hadit, seat of the True Will, the driving force or dynamic impulse. Essentially, everything that we are is an expression, development, materialisation or concretisation of this essence, this True Will, this flame which burns "*in the core of every star.*" Just as the mushroom is the denser fruiting body - an intricate, finely-woven pattern or expression of the underlying mycelium - similarly is each individual essentially an expression, fruiting or flowering of the True Will, the flame that burns at the core of the star, at the kernel of being. From considerations such as these, it is evident that the True Will is not merely some sort of profound desire lurking within the depths of the individual, waiting to be discovered and brought into awareness by appropriate rituals and meditations. Rather, it is a case of the individual being on all levels an expression of the True Will - and levels, as we have seen, are arbitrary classifications. The True Will, therefore, is not something that is possessed by the individual, like some sort of buried treasure. It is in fact the very seed or essence of the individual, the source from which he or she springs. The conscious will is thus a reflection, refraction or distortion of the True Will, no matter how obscured. Hadit is a deeper, more essential identity.

Everything that we have, and everything that we are, springs from this core. As individuals, as entities manifested in this "concrete" universe, we are projections, densely woven, flashing forth from this diamond within, this secret seed. "*Be thou Hadit, my secret centre, my heart & my tongue.*" This is a deeper ramification of Thelema; and it is important to understand this, because many people seem to interpret Thelema merely in a comparatively superficial sense: that of discovering one's right code of conduct in what might loosely be described as the Outer, and following it inexorably, without deviation. This is true at its own level, but it does not penetrate anywhere close to the heart of the matter - which is, of course, from where the scintillating and glamorous flashings and coilings of maya spring. For in truth we are an expression of our core, our True Will; we are its vehicle, and thus we can do no other than our True Will. We are 93 million miles away from Sir Peter Pendragon, who In Crowley's *Diary of a Drug Fiend* realises that his True Will is to be an aeroplane engineer. And yet perhaps not so far away, because exalted though our conception of True Will may have become, yet it must find adequate and worthy fulfillment in the Outer, or else frustration is our lot.

Here is a paradox. If everything that we have, and everything that we are, are expressions of our True Will, then one wonders why anyone should go to the bother of the blood, sweat and tears of striving to attain to the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, when in fact he was not only chatting to the fellow all along, but **is** that fellow in essence. The important distinction, however, lies in realising or awakening to this identity. There is a parallel here with such traditions as Ch'an Buddhism, where it is emphasised that the key to it all is simply awakening to reality, and realising or remembering who one actually is. One of the more famous koans from Zen, the better-known Japanese degeneration of Ch'an, is about remembering one's face before birth, one's original face. The dreamer awakens, and realises that he has all along been dreaming. Consciousness was restricted, obscured, muddied, but is so no longer. Now it burns in all its glorious intensity, its natural lustre. In truth, there is nothing other than consciousness. Everything that is, is a

manifestation of consciousness, exactly as the mushroom is a more densely woven manifestation of the mycelium.

The True Will, then, is not a static thing buried within us, and somehow remaining apart. It is dynamic. It is not Being, but Going, and may be glyphed by the ankh, crux ansata or ankle-strap, the Egyptian symbol for going. Stars, after all, do not hang about motionless in space, but are in a state of velocity, of dynamism, of motion. Crowley's definition of magick as energy tending to change is relevant here, bringing to mind as it does the idea of motion, of a succession of states, of perpetual transformation. The essence of starry consciousness, which lies at the core of every star, is a continuing explosion of energy, ever changing, ever dynamic. The whole universe is in a perpetual, dynamic state of arising and falling, of birth and death, of eternal and infinite transformation, of creation and destruction. We as individuals have a tendency to think of ourselves as not being subject to this change, but in fact we are as much a part of the seething, cascading torrent as anything else. As energy tending to change, we too are incarnated afresh every instant. As magicians we should welcome this ever-changing current, this eternal transmogrification, rather than cling desperately to some imagined and illusory persona - which, after all, is only a mask worn at the ball. The bubble is a transient expression of the stream, a form thrown forth in the midst of the whirling and eddying, and enjoying a fleeting and capricious existence before its transformation, its reincarnation into another spontaneous form. We are outward expressions of an underlying driving-force, bubbles on the stream, transient restrictions of consciousness. *"For I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union."* The apparent diversity of being has its roots in a deeper, more underlying Being; and that itself is an appearance springing from Going, a pattern of energy tending to change.

The key to awakening from the dream of restricted consciousness is the identification with this stream, which springs from the core of every star, and hence from Hadit. And the application of that key consists of seeing phenomenal manifestations as the transient shadows that they are, and seeking to penetrate to the core within, to the essence of starry consciousness. Thus we tunnel deeper, ever deeper, and hope to emerge into the light of day.

### III.

*I am the secret Serpent coiled about to spring: in my coiling there is joy. If I lift up my head, I and my Nuit are one. If I droop down mine head, and shoot forth venom, then is rapture of the earth, and I and the earth are one.*

AL.II.26.

Thelema on an individual level is concerned with reaching this secret centre, this True Will which lies at the core of every star. Once these depths have been plumbed, and reintegrated into full consciousness, then the star can shine forth in its full natural intensity, and proceed to flower, to fulfill itself. As a system of magical and mystical attainment, Thelema lays great emphasis on attaining to the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. There is some confusion as to just what is meant by both the term 'Holy Guardian Angel' and the nature of the fruits of its Knowledge and Conversation. This is in part a consequence of Crowley himself giving conflicting accounts of what the experience meant, and from where it arose. It is my belief that stripped of jargon, however, it implies penetrating to the core of the star, with the entire being operating at reintegrated or restored awareness of its true nature and destiny. There are, outwardly, some difficulties with this interpretation.

There are some passages in his writings where Crowley depicts the Holy Guardian Angel as being a deeper, more essential, more real aspect of the starry nature at the core. This sounds a little on the lines of that venerable occult term 'The Higher Self', except that it does not carry the same whiff of moral overtones. We can also find other passages, however, where he states that the Angel is an entity in its own right - completely and utterly distinct from the individual, to whom the Angel has been assigned in some sort of benevolent assistant role. In *Magick Without Tears*, which was one of his last works, he went so far as to refer to the notion of the Angel being a deeper aspect of the individual as being a "damnable heresy." It must be said, however, that if we are to take his last views as being necessarily more correct, then the notion of a 'separate' Angel does not sit easily with the deeper ramifications of Thelema, and nor with the metaphysics - both magical and mystical - that he explores elsewhere. We learn from *The Confessions* that he considered it his mission in life to teach the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, which he saw as the Next Step for humankind. Since actually getting on and doing things is often preferable to sitting around and chewing the metaphysical niceties, it can perhaps be surmised that Crowley was trying to be pragmatic - putting over the stage in simple, readily comprehensible language, shorn of high-flown considerations, and leaving the deeper, more profound implications to sort themselves out later. At a deeper level this may all be by the by, since nothing exists outside consciousness.

In the relevant passages in his writings, the Holy Guardian Angel is identified with the Dwarf-Self, the Silent Self, the Babe In the Egg, Harpocrates, Hadit. In this context they indicate the True Will, the core, the secret sanctuary within. That this is so can be established by the following two extracts from *Magical and Philosophical Commentaries*:

... Hoor-paar-Kraat or Harpocrates, the "Babe in the Egg of Blue", is not merely the God of Silence in a conventional sense. He represents the Higher Self, the Holy Guardian Angel. The connection is with the symbolism of the Dwarf in mythology. He contains everything within himself, but is unmanifested.

... But the "Small Person" of Hindu Mysticism, the Dwarf insane yet crafty, of many legends in many lands, is also this same "Holy Ghost" or Silent Self of a man, or his Holy Guardian Angel.

The Dwarf-Self is the Silent Self within, Hadit, which normally remains veiled in its hidden sanctuary - thus, the Hidden God. Crowley also identified this with what he referred to as the Phallic or Racial Consciousness, the force underlying manifestation, whose representative or vice-regent without is the phallus - the transmitter of the life-force, the vital, animating energy. This identification with the Phallic Consciousness affords a vital clue to the intuition, for the sexual impulse seems often to spring from obscure depths within the individual, in some cases seeming to have a will of its own. This is not to assert a simple identity between the sexual current and the True Will. Rather, sex is the final veil, the ultimate mask, the vital thread in the pattern. It is no accident that Nuit and Hadit, and their Child or conjunction Ra-Hoor-Khuit, are clothed in sexual symbolism - for the vital seed lies deep at the heart of the sexual current. Creativity on all levels, on all planes, is inextricably bound up with sex. Because external conditioning authority has an inkling of this, it has always attempted to fence the use of the sexual current around with taboos and repressions, seeing the taming and harnessing of this powerful, cascading torrent being a useful tool in the enslavement of individuals.

This Phallic Consciousness - which underlies the sexual current, and may be said to be a deeper, more, primeval instinct - is the basic force of life, the life-instinct, the vital life-force, and is that



which lies at the core of every star. The less in tune with the instincts a person is, the more is this force experienced as an alien, anarchic, threatening and volcanic energy. At such times it is felt as violent upsurges or rushes of an overwhelming force, dimly perceived as springing forth from 'within.' One of the Holy Books, *Liber A'ash vel Capricorni Pneumaticii*, concerns this Phallic Consciousness, this Serpent within. It is identified unequivocally as being the supreme magical force, primeval creativity. Crucially, it is depicted as being essentially impersonal, veiling itself in incarnation in order to transmit itself, to carry the seed ever forth. The language of this Liber is rich and sensuous, and the implications are unmistakable.

The essence of this force lies in its impersonality. Indeed, it has no use for the individual except insofar as he is the expression and transmission of this force, its incarnation. He is actually nothing more than its vehicle. At its core, the centre from which it springs, this energy is the purest concentration of the 93 Current - indeed, it **is the 93 Current**. On an individual level, it focusses around a centre of gravity, forming an accretion; and this accretion is the nucleus, "the core of every star." This core is ever a dynamic focusing, however, and not a static, self-existent centre. It is more the transient convergence of energy or vitality, the flower that passes with its season. Once again, the essence of the matter lies not in Being but in Going, in energy tending to change.

It was the achievement of Freud to demonstrate that social and cultural values were nourished in the soil of suppressed libido. He recognised that at root this libido was the driving force, the creative force in humanity - whether that creation was on the physical, mental or spiritual plane. It is but to go one stage further to see everything - the whole fabric of manifestation, maya, the lila, the dream of living - as being an expression and concentration of this energy. What springs to mind here is Austin Spare's idea of "eternal fornication," of "all things fornicating all the time." He recognised that the same energy that drives the creative force in humans also weaves the lila. It is the fabric out of which the entire, glamorous, alluring tapestry is woven.

The sexual drive or current as commonly experienced is often a sphinx to the individual, who is its vehicle or expression. What passes for the sex drive in such cases is merely an insipid reflection of that dynamic, primeval energy which underlies manifestation, and out of which the lila dances. The natural proclivity of this force is towards pansexuality; and the vision of 'all things fornicating all the time' is an insight into this nature. It is the aim of Magick to realise one's identity with this current, welling as it does from the core of the True Will, and to permit its full and proper flowering.

This path - of utilising the force at the heart of manifestation in its direct, pristine form, in order to wrought change in the lila - is the path of the Ophidian Current. It is the way of Sex Magick; and although direct, it is precarious and full of danger for the unwary. Magick derives in etymological terms from the same root as maya, the play of illusion or manifestation, and it signifies the manipulation of that maya or illusion. Of all illusions, none are more potent or glamorous than those which glisten and glitter with the dark allure of sex. The magician who uses the Ophidian Current must be able to decouple the sexual current from lust, which is the tinsel and pretty packaging into which the sexual current is usually conditioned to flow. The force can be channeled into other directions. The essence of creative occultism is, by virtue of a consecrated intent, to channel the flow of this force into specific directions or forms - and hence to manipulate maya, to commission new dances, to form fresh patterns. The danger lies in the fact that, should any taint of lust remain, the Ophidian Current will inflate it to such proportions that the hapless magician will fall prey to obsession, to the sexual vampires that he has unwittingly created.

Sex Magick is not the only path to liberation or awakening, of course. It does, though, have the advantage of working through and with maya, rather than seeking to reject it as illusion. As the

*Kulanarva Tantra* says, the very things that lead to hell can also lead to heaven. In reality the dream of living is ours, and we do with it as we will.

The verse from *Liber AL* quoted at the outset of this section concerns the use of the Ophidian Current. Inevitably the insights are clothed in symbolism, since the axioms which they are seeking to convey are beyond the dualities of reason, speech or thought. They are best hinted at, therefore, by the sideways, flirtatious glances that are aimed at the intuition. Such symbols seep through intuitionally, and suggest by analogy or induction that which is too fleeting for more concrete expression. The image of the "secret Serpent" suggests a sexual connection, of course; and its coiled form indicates kundalini, the central magical force in humanity, figured as coiled around the base of the spine. It is "coiled and about to spring" because it is dynamic, full of energy. Its coilings are joyful, and this joy or ecstasy is the underlying nature of manifestation, maya, the lila. "*Remember all ye that existence is pure joy ...*"

Figuratively, this force can be directed upwards to a mystical, rapturous union with Nuit; or downwards, to a magical rapture with and of the earth. There is an echo here of an earlier verse of *Liber AL*, at the outset of the first chapter, where there are three grades mentioned - Hermit, Lover, and Man of Earth. The Hermit is perhaps he who directs the current upwards, to a union with Nuit. The Man of Earth causes the current to "droop down" its head and "shoot forth venom." The Lover combines these approaches in "love under will," using the flowers of manifestation as a Sacrament, reaching to their essence and awakening to identity, to supreme self-realisation. This is perhaps the Supreme Way, living life to its fullest, because it is a Sacrament, a Dance of Existence figured for its own delight.

#### IV.

*Then the priest answered & said unto the Queen of Space, kissing her lovely brows, and the dew of her light bathing his whole body in a sweet-smelling perfume of sweat: O Nuit, continuous one of Heaven, let it be ever thus; that men speak not of Thee as One but as None; and let them speak not of thee at all, since thou art continuous!*

AL.I, 27.

We have seen in the preceding section of this essay that the True Will lies at the core of the star, and springs from its Hadit point, its secret seed. In fact, the True Will is an expression of this bindu, a flowering of its dynamism. Paradoxical as it may at first seem, everything that we have, are and do is an expression of the True Will, much as the spider spins its web. In this case, the web is of course the dance of maya, the dream of living.

There is a further paradox, which is that the apparent diversity of stars shares a common core. Humanity shares a common bed, and at progressively deeper levels of consciousness the individual merges into the racial consciousness or collective unconscious. Just as the individual is at root an expression and flowering of the True Will, so the True Will is a facet or partial expression of a deeper, vaster Collective or Cosmic Will, just as Sirius is the sun behind our sun. This is adumbrated in the phrase from *Liber AL* previously quoted, where Hadit declares that "*I am the flame that burns in every heart of man, and in the core of every star.*" There is a further indication in the sentence "*I am everywhere the centre, as she, the circumference, is nowhere found.*"

Actually, to regard the situation as being a multiplicity of True Wills, which somehow merge or blend into a much wider tapestry, is very much a simplification. At the risk of evoking shades of

"Alice in Wonderland," we can perhaps say that we go inwards, only to emerge, blinking, upon the outer. As we journey ever deeper into what we may fondly regard as our innermost core of being, the terrain gradually changes, and we find ourselves penetrating ever deeper into the core of Being itself, rather than what we had hitherto regarded as 'our own' being. It is the extension of 'our' consciousness to include all 'other' consciousnesses: except that, in the process, we become more and more ourselves, awoken more and more to our true identity. However, in order to discuss these matters we must keep them on relatively simple ground, expressed in terms comprehensible in the language of dualism.

So, we can say that the individual True Will is a facet of the Cosmic Will, and thus from this standpoint individuality is more apparent than real. This does, in itself, address one objection to the exoteric expression of Thelema: that of a possible clash of True Wills. This objection was mentioned to Crowley - doubtless not for the first time - by C.R. Cammell, then a friend of Crowley's and an admirer of his literary prowess, but hostile to his magical and mystical ideas. Crowley replied to the effect that the sum of the individual True Wills was the Cosmic Will, the Grand Design, God; thus, conflict could not arise, all True Wills blending, all being facets of the Divine Pattern. Cammell tells us, somewhat patronisingly, that he found this answer ingenious but unconvincing. Without some appreciation of the metaphysical underpinnings of Thelema, without some intuitional foreshadowings of its more magical and mystical subtleties, perhaps it is little wonder. However, once we begin to understand that individuality is more apparent than real, things start to slip into place. This is echoed by the words of Nuit in Liber AL: *"For I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union."*

This is the background from where springs individuality, which is apparent rather than real and thus partakes of maya, illusion. It is also to whence it returns. This insight is not unique to Thelema. Indeed, its affinity in this respect with other traditions such as Ch'an, Advaita Vedanta, and the Prajnaparamita stream of Buddhism lend a strength and confirmation to this insight. Advaita is often regarded as monism, an affirmation that all is one, but such an interpretation is mistaken. In fact, 'advaita' is a Sanskrit word meaning simply 'not divided.' The difference may seem subtle to the point of pedantry, but it is a crucial distinction. The term 'one' has meaning only in contrast to 'many'; thus, once there are no longer 'many,' the term 'one' is meaningless. It is more accurate to stick to the literal meaning of 'not divided.' Sunyavada is often seen as a further refinement and subtlety of advaita, but essentially there is little practical difference. Once you have abolished the diversity, it matters little what you call that which remains - assuming that anything does remain, that is. Doctrinal differences between Advaita and sunyavada can safely be disregarded for the purposes of this essay.

It is in this context that we can revert once more to the image of the onion, with its many layers, levels or peelings. It is a good image for Thelema and for the journey to the core of the 93 Current, because the more layers we strip away, the deeper we penetrate to the core. At that core burns the 93 Current in all its fierce glory, and it creates the lila, the dance of maya, for its own delight. This illusion or maya, apart from which there is nothing, which springs from nothing, and which essentially is nothing, has no purpose. It is pure delight, pure joy; and the whole gamut of existence, with its apparent pleasures and pains, sorrow and happiness, resolves to this. It is this randomness, this purposelessness of existence, which many people find hard to accept. It is also the reason why so many in the West ultimately fail to come to terms with, and hence reject, the insights of that current represented by such traditions as Advaita, Ch'an, and sunyavada. Even as great a thinker as Einstein, whose discoveries gave birth to quantum physics, could not face the random nature of existence which that theory seems so inexorably to imply. He declared that he refused to believe

that God played dice with the universe. In the final analysis Einstein, like almost everybody else, proved to be bound by his own preconceptions.

The search for purpose or meaning is the rock on which all philosophies or traditions must ultimately founder, unless they erect a purpose as an act of faith. Yet the question itself is, when examined, rather strange. Why should there be a purpose to existence, after all? On an individual level, perhaps the search for purpose betrays an inability to enjoy the here-and-now, to partake of the divine sacrament of existence. Hindu metaphysics erects the conception of vast epochs of time, stretching for billions of years, and ultimately resolving to a Day and a Night of Brahma, the eternal and successive arising and dissolution of manifestation. Against this background, ideas of self-perfection, evolution of individual consciousness, and so forth, begin to look rather humorous. If we as individuals are not happy with the direction - or apparent direction - that our lives are taking, then it is up to us to inject a purpose into our existence, if that is what we appear to lack. This should be recognised, however, as the act of pragmatism that it is. There are no grounds for imputing it on a cosmic scale.

Physics at the sub-atomic level tends to add weight to such a picture as the one afforded us in our considerations so far of Thelema. It does not paint exactly the same portrait, and neither should we expect it to. It does, however, provide a basis for intuition to approach the shrine from another angle and still arrive, joyful, at the inner sanctum. This territory has been well explored by Fritjof Capra in his book *The Tao of Physics*, and it is not appropriate for us to go into his presentation here in depth. In summary, matter is composed of atoms, and the atoms are themselves composed of sub-atomic particles of several types. Physicists are, have always been, and no doubt always will be hopeful of discovering an indivisible unit of matter, regardless of its scale. Sadly for their ambition, they have yet to discover anything that does not itself, upon closer examination, break down into smaller constituent particles. On the basis of past and present tendencies, there seems little prospect of anything being discovered that is not so constituted. The ultimate building block of matter proves to be remarkably elusive, and probably does not exist, paradoxical as it may seem. We grasp at matter, and find nothing there! Instead, there is an infinite regression of sorts, an eternal succession of boxes within boxes. Quantum physics suggests a drastic alteration of the world-view of Westerners, evoking echoes of a ringing phrase from Liber AL: "... for I have crushed an Universe; & nought remains."

However, the particles which have so far coquetted before our astonished gaze display several curious features - at least, curious in terms of accepted notions of reality. The same 'particle' behaves both as a wave of energy and as a particle, and seems to be both simultaneously. This gives rise to a rather beautiful image, that of matter being composed at the sub-atomic level of interlocking waves of energy. On a vast scale these form patterns, and these patterns are maya, the dance of illusion, or existence as we know it - or think we know it. We are now in a position to make a marvelous intuitional leap, and identify this energy - waves of which constitute matter - with the 93 Current, the eternal weavings and whorlings and plays of the True Will. This meshes well with Hindu mythology, manifestation springing directly from the love-play of Radha and Krishna. It is also mirrored in *Liber AL*, where manifestation is the child Ra-Hoor-Khuit, arising from the couplings of Nuit and Hadit.

Another curious feature of particles or waves at this sub-atomic level is their apparent randomness or lack of predictability. All that can be said is that there will be a tendency for them to behave in such-and-such a fashion in the course of the experiment. It has also been found that the presence of an observer does of itself alter the behaviour of particles at this level, thus demonstrating that there is at least a certain amount of interplay between the observer and what is being observed. Given the

picture painted above, which portrays 'objects' as being vibrant, dynamic fields of energy, there is bound to be some degree of interaction, exchange and interplay between these fields. In other words, these objects or fields are not independent entities as such, nor even discrete bundles of energy. Instead, the entity tends towards a certain form, an approximation, but there is a constant peripheral exchange with other entities. I was once listening to a radio programme about research into sub-atomic physics and the behaviour of particles, and heard one interviewee tell of how some experiments had demonstrated that it was possible for the observer mentally to influence the behaviour of particles. Regrettably I've never come across another mention of this, and so am unable to substantiate it. However, given the sweep delineated above, and the interpenetration of energy fields, it would hardly be surprising that research had turned up something along those lines.

It is this malleability of matter or maya, the nature of which is illusion, of which the magician avails him in his manipulations. Thelema leads us into the heart of the illusion, giving us a glimpse into the nature of reality, and enabling us thereby to realise our identity with that play.

#### V.

*The Perfect and the Perfect are one Perfect and not two, nay, are none.  
Nothing is a secret key of this law. Sixty-one the Jews call it; I call it eight,  
eighty, four hundred & eighteen.  
But they have the half: unite by thine art so that all disappear.  
AL.I,45-47.*

At the core of Thelema, as at the heart of matter - for the two are not different - there is a void or nothingness. Yet this nothingness is also a plenum, because it is out of this nothingness that the full panoply of manifestation arises. Paradoxically, the void contains the seed of all, secreting the manifestation or lila at its secret centre. This gives rise to the formula at the heart of Thelema, that of  $0 = 2$ . The further we go into Thelema the more paradoxical things seem to become, and these paradoxes may be subsumed under the prime paradox of this formula. It is also sometimes expressed as NOX, 210. Put simply, apparent diversity is symbolised as two, springing from and being equivalent to zero. Essentially there is no difference between the two and the zero or nought. 210 is a further refinement, showing the reduction of the two to one, and thence to zero; however, as mentioned in the preceding section of this essay, reduction to the one is more a pseudo-stage than anything. The formula is also sometimes expressed as  $(+1) + (-1) = 0$ , where +1 and -1 represent the dual, polarity, the two poles of apparent diversity, the male and female principles. It also expresses another notion of balance, the void or zero including within itself both Being and Non-Being. It is in this formula of  $0 = 2$  that quantum physics and Thelema converge. This is not at all surprising, because it is the energy of 93 or Thelema which underlies all, which is at the core of all, and which is "everywhere the centre." In the world of manifestation, polarity is a key concept, the mechanism through which manifestation arises. As far as we can see, manifestation is always balanced or polarised. Any manifestation arising from the void at the heart of existence, therefore, can only be in terms of balance or polarisation - hence the expression  $0 = (+i) +$  The zero, nought or void is not merely the negation of matter or something, but also contains the opposite or non-manifestation. This is, of course, similar to Shen-Hui's so-called Double Negative.

Quiescence in matter or manifestation is only ever apparent, and seen as it were from afar. At a sub-atomic level, as we have seen, particles are bundles of energy, in a state of interlocking velocity. Manifestation is always dynamic, always in a state of going, and never static. Stability is always produced by a balance of the dynamic forces or energy; in reality, all is in a state of flux and flow.

Again, this illustrates Crowley's definition of magick as energy tending to change, as well as the insight that magick is not Being, but Going. The 93 Current is ever dynamic, ever creating anew, ever flitting between creation and dissolution. To revert to an earlier analogy, it is the fine strands of mycelium out of which the fruiting bodies of mushrooms are woven, successively fruiting and dying. Matter arises, flowers, falls into dissolution, and then arises again in some other form. There are finely-woven waves of energy, caught in a perpetual dance of ecstasy, of joy, of coupling, whorling and eddying. One of the tantric texts translated by Woodroffe has the title *Wave of Bliss*. And this title suggests well the dance of maya.

It is futile to look for purpose or reason in this perpetual lila, this play of successive creation and destruction. Ultimately it is self-love or ecstasy, "*for I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union.*" Once we become attuned to this current, we too can share this sentiment, which is of the highest delight.

Manifestation springs from the zero, and returns to the zero. It does this not over countless aeons of time - for time is as illusory as matter - but every instant. A common symbol for infinity is 00, which conveys well the sense of perpetual motion, of flitting in and out of manifestation, a dynamic and polarised balance. We are, therefore, ever incarnating anew in this pageant of delight, this ecstatic journey across the oceans of bliss. We are ever in a dynamic state of change, of transformation, of magick in the sacrament of existence. Life needs no other seal or sanction than this.

*Also the Holy One came upon me, and I beheld a white swan floating in the blue.*

*Between its wings I sate, and the aeons fled away.*

*Then the swan flew and dived and soared, yet no whither we went.  
A little crazy boy that rode with me spake unto the swan, and said:  
Who art thou that dost float and fly and dive and soar in the inane? Behold,  
these many aeons have passed; whence camest thou? Whither wilt thou go?  
And laughing I chid him, saying: No whence! No whither!  
The swan being silent, he answered: Then, if with no goal, why this eternal  
journey?*

*And I laid my head against the Head of the Swan, and laughed, saying: Is there  
not joy ineffable in this aimless winging? Is there not weariness and  
impatience for who would attain to some goal?*

*And the swan was ever silent. Ah! but we floated in the infinite Abyss. Joy! Joy!  
White swan, bear thou ever me up between thy wings!*

Liber LXV, Cap. II, 17-25.

Pursuing our ecstatic journey into the heart of matter, we have arrived at its core, at the void. It is important, however, that this void is not thought of as being somehow more 'real' than manifestation; or, conversely, that manifestation is not somehow denigrated or downgraded by considerations as to what lies behind it. That would be blasphemous, a denial of the sacramental nature of existence, a none-too-subtle form of dualism, and a disastrous and absurd misunderstanding of the situation. For zero equals two, and the two equal zero. They are identical, utterly identical, and thus both aspects are complementaries of equal importance. If this is not clear, then we can see the Manichean demon beckoning seductively from afar.

Herein lies a very simple principle - that of not confusing the planes. A basic illustration will suffice. Nuit says: "*Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt.*" A simple consideration of Advaita suggests that, indeed, all differences

are conceptual impositions on a continuum. For all that, if I choose to imbibe a nice warm cup of hemlock, rather than my usual Ovaltine, then my failure to perceive the difference between the two beverages leads to the destruction of my present vehicle of incarnation. From a certain point of view, of course, this can be said to make no odds: I as an apparent entity have only a transient existence anyway, an insubstantial wraith in the morning mist. Logically, there is no gainsaying the viewpoint which might say "we all die sooner or later, so what does it matter?" Existence is essentially a sacrament, however, to be partaken of wholeheartedly. To quote Nietzsche: *"All joy wants eternity - wants deep, deep, deep eternity."*

Again, it may seem paradoxical, but once we have awakened, have realised the nature of the lila, we carry on as before - but with the difference that we know it to be play. It is rather like the Zen parable about mountains and valleys. Once I saw mountains as mountains and valleys as valleys. Then I pursued enlightenment; and mountains were no longer mountains, and valleys were no longer valleys. But now, mountains are again mountains, and valleys are again valleys. Once awake, we continue to play the part; but we are no longer absorbed in the drama, lost in the rôle; for we are awake, and know it to be but a dream. This is of the highest alchemy. It is important to grasp this point, for otherwise gross confusion will arise, and the sacrament will be denied its sacramental nature. The lila is illusion from the standpoint that it is nothing masquerading as something, but real in the sense that it has arisen from that nothing. The pseudonymous Wei Wu Wei says, *"I am, because I am not."* That sounds paradoxical, and makes no sense to the intellect. It may, however, be intuited - and apprehended for an instant, fleetingly, by some part of our being which is "beyond all I am."

Once we have awakened, we do not thenceforth abide permanently in the awareness of our underlying identity. Rather, we flit in and out of this realisation, this awareness - or rather, so it seems to our earthbound sensibilities. It cannot be grasped, but is a free spirit, choosing to come and go as it pleases. We do not live - we are lived. The lila manifests temporally as well as carnally; and, time being illusory, the flashes of awakening appear to us neither as sequential nor as consistent. It is indeed pathetic, attempting to clothe these darts of insight in language, by its very nature stammering, halting and incoherent. However, perhaps in such attempts we point a finger towards the moon, and at least give intuition some sort of directional indication.

But we should be content to take occasional dips into the pool, into the ecstasy and the miracle of awakening to our identity, in which we are both conterminous with the whole of manifestation and non-manifestation, and yet also beyond both. All and None are to be embraced with equal fervour, as we go rejoicing on our way, swirling this way and that in the glorious pageant which is our creation, in an ecstatic communion of both hedonist and ascetic, both partaker and hermit - dwelling both within all, and apart from all.

For - is this not our Will?