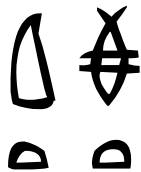


Analyzing  
Liber AL  
vel Legis

by Sam Webster.





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Publication in Class C

# ~ Analyzing Liber AL vel Legis ~

. by [Sam Webster](#), 1993

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## Why & How, an introduction

In 1904, on April 8, 9, and 10, an adept of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn wrote a text of 220 verses. The text was inspired by a series of magickal interactions between the adept and his wife [1] and then taken as dictation from a discarnate entity.[2] His name was Aleister Crowley and the text has been come to be called Liber AL vel Legis, i.e., the Book of the Law, or Liber AL for short. Its three chapters express a world-view, a life style and a spiritual mode of attainment. The text, its author or scribe, and the magickal order out of which he emerged have all been both lauded or repudiated and reviled at one time or another and yet each of them has had a deep and formative impact on the contemporary (Neo-) Pagan resurgence.

Due to a comment made by the scribe forbidding discussion there exist very few commentaries on this work. The scribe wrote several as did two of his students. However, none of them possessed theological training, nor did any of them possess the benefit of the many years hence of observing the benefits and debilities of working with this text. Furthermore their commentaries were written for the closed community of the occultists and in their distinctive jargon, rendering the commentaries opaque. This opacity would not be so great a problem if the text were more accessible to the common interested reader. However, the text itself is written in the jargon of a particular school of occultists, that of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. It is also speaking in a diction unique to itself and it is only through careful examination of the text that its true meaning begins to emerge.

Having studied and lived with Liber AL and certain other allied texts for the last ten years and having engaged in discussion of the text with many who receive from it a radically different character than I do, at this point in time it is necessary for me to analyze and comment upon this text. My goal is to place it in the genre of sacred writings, to understand what it has to say and its implications for our world, and how it may be applied in religious praxis. While I do not hope to be exhaustive in my efforts I seek to map out the major elements presented by the text therein.

Besides sheer enthusiasm, I am particularly qualified for the project. I too am an adept of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as well as a practitioner of the forms presented in our text. I have studied and practiced Yoga, Sorcery, Tantra, Alchemy, Buddhism and Witchcraft, as well as a variety of other spiritual practices and disciplines which all come into play in the study of

this text. Further, this analysis is taking place [1993] in the context of my theological education which public framework I am applying to the text to render it accessible to those who may be interested in understanding this little explored segment of the Pagan community.

Several approaches will be employed to make sense out of the text. The first is to let the text speak for itself. It defines terms and employs them in ways that create apparent contradictions. If we use structuralist mode of criticism and take the text at its word then certain problematic elements become more explicable. Also some of the jargon simply needs to be unpacked and explained. This includes explaining the Egyptian symbolism the text employs extensively. Some of this requires an understanding of the historical context in which the text emerged because much, though not all, of the Egyptology used in the text is peculiar to the Golden Dawn. Our text also presents certain philosophic and theological propositions upon which I, and the community of people who value this text, have pondered for the almost ninety years of its existence and these interpretations will also be examined and their implications explored in the light of practical theology.

However, to break through the ring of occult thinking that has surrounded and isolated this text from proper criticism and hence valuation by the educated public, I plan to analyze Liber AL by interpreting it as a symbolic embodiment of the principles of Alfred North Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism. This philosophy and its implicit theology resonate deeply with Liber AL and may provide a way for the public to penetrate AL's esoteric silence. I will root this analysis on the proposition that Whitehead and Crowley both were intuiting a similar character in experience, and each expressed it in the language they were most familiar, thus there should be a correlation possible between them.

This correlation also has the potential to be bilateral. Liber AL may provide an affect-filled expression of the notions of process thought rendering them more accessible to those who do not wish to labor through Whitehead's prose. Thus one text may illuminate the other. The potential for formulating religious praxis, especially ritual, meditation and contemplative techniques using the affect-laden symbols of one source grounded with the meaning-rich metaphysics of the other engenders much hope in me for the success of each respective tradition.

My further researches has indicated that yet another strand needs to be woven into this exploration to interpret Liber AL: Tibetan Buddhism. As Liber AL comes out of a magickal tradition, so does the Tibetan Buddhist and some of its values and choices of symbols are dictated by the empirical ways of magick. My studies of Tibetan Buddhism seem to indicate to me that Liber AL may be best interpreted as being of the genre called 'tantra'. Due to the circumstances surrounding its generation Liber AL exhibits certain similarities to the Tibetan phenomenon called a 'terma' or 'treasure'. These are usually texts or sometimes objects that preserve and transmit practices and insights that are hidden until the time in which they are needed and when they are discovered. Sometimes these texts are 'discovered' when a discarnate entity, such as a Buddha or Dakini, dictates them to some human who then shares the text with others. This may be what we are seeing in Liber AL. To treat our text in this manner may present a normative context within which it may be interpreted along side similar texts, complete with appropriate cautions and safe-guards absent in the western tradition where this kind of text is a novelty.

## The Canonical Question

One important frame necessary to approach Liber AL vel Legis is the set of normative beliefs about the text and its message. With this text there is a problem with interpreting it simply and without critical analysis. As Hadit says in chapter II, v. 27, "There is great danger in me; for who doth not understand these runes shall make a great miss. He shall fall down into the pit called Because, and there he shall perish with the dogs of Reason."

The most immediate problematic element is the misinterpretation of the principle of Thelema, 'Do what thou Wilt'. All too often this is simply seen as 'Do your whim'. Fortunately, on the basis of the other discussions incorporated in this analysis this interpretation is demonstrated to be either a false or trivial finding, devaluing the text. However, there are many other elements that also need further clarification. In some cases these are not assailable in terms of simple logic, but rather my interpretations depend on certain assumptions.

First, given that this is the "Book of the Law", and that "the Law is for all" [AL I, 34], any or at least most of the references apparently focused on a particular historical person, e.g. Crowley, have to have also a more general interpretation. If this were not the case then the text would have no claim to universality and thus be of little value to the rest of us.

Another problematic element is that the text seems to contradict itself by saying both that "Love is the law" in AL I, 57, and "Beware lest any force another, King against King!" in AL II, 24, and then saying to "stamp down the wretched & the weak:" [AL II, 21] and "Trample down the Heathen; be upon them, o warrior, I will give you of their flesh to eat!" [AL III, 11]. Either we are seeing a simple contradiction, in which case the text is massively confused, perhaps beyond the possibility of interpretation, or these several statements are spoken on different levels, and thus are to be each interpreted differently. As many such statements occur in the third chapter, although not exclusively, one favored interpretation is that these are references to the iconography of Ra-Hoor-Khuit. If so, then these statements are no different in quality than similar ones in the Tibetan "Bardo Thodrol" or 'Book of the Dead' and should be interpreted accordingly. This will be discussed in more detail in the section on the Cult of Ra-Hoor-Khuit. This may provide a way of interpreting some of the more ruthless statements that run through out the text.

All of these interpretations assume that there is an intelligible message in this text, that wishes itself to be disclosed. If not, it is simply a closed cypher and not worth our attention. Further, if it has anything worthwhile to say to us it needs to be proadaptive, and not leading us into maintaining the violence and abuse that dominates our culture and would lead to our downfall. Some have interpreted Liber AL as misanthropic and conducive to a dominator society. Adolf Hitler and L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, are two examples of these known historically. If this is the best Thelema can do there would be little point in this discussion. However, if these are digressions from the simple core message of the text that we must work with each other, respecting our mutual sovereignty, there may be in Liber AL a new approach to life that may indeed, as Nuit says, "regenerate the world, the little world my sister, my heart & my tongue, unto whom I send this kiss." [AL I, 53]

## Nu & Had, The Cosmology of Liber AL vel Legis

Upon first examination of Liber AL vel Legis, the reader will note that it has three chapters, each spoken in a different 'voice'. Each chapter is, for the most part, 'spoken' by a persona referring to itself in the first person singular. The first chapter is principally the voice of Nuit, the second, Hadit, and the third, Ra-Hoor-Khuit. Each chapter serves to express the nature of the persona and its relationships with the other personas. The names are derived from Egyptian deities and most of the symbolism of the text refers to concepts from the Egyptian cosmos, among several others. Together they embody the expressed and implied cosmology of Liber AL, what the structuralists would call the surface and deep theological structures, respectively.

Nuit and Hadit are complementary co-existents and as Ra-Hoor-Khuit is somewhat outside this symmetry, we will return to 'him' later. In terms of the philosophy of organism, Hadit is a personification of (an) Actual Entity while Nuit is the World of that Entity including 'God' in Whitehead's sense. One verse that explicitly states their relationship says "I, Hadit, am the complement of Nu [Nuit ], my bride... In the sphere I am everywhere the centre, as she, the circumference, is nowhere found." [AL II, 2-3] Their relationship is as Lovers and thus all their interactions are the creative act, which "is the universe incarnating itself as one". [PR 245] This is first seen in the opening line of the work, "Had! The manifestation of Nuit." [AL I, 1] The 'center & circumference' quote, according to Frances Yates, originates in the Gnostic Hermetic Corpus, appropriately, as this is the tradition in which Liber AL emerges.

Nuit functions in two ways like Whitehead's God and the world. First she declares herself as the world by stating that She is "Infinite Space and the Infinite Stars thereof" [AL I, 22], thus she is the system taken as a whole. Everything in the system is represented symbolically in this diction as a star in the body of Nuit; "Every man and every woman is a star." [AL I, 3] Nuit is a variation on the Egyptian Nut, the Heaven goddess, who's image is the night sky ('nuit' = 'night' in French). Here we are seeing the whole of existence expressed in terms of the experienced vastness of deep space. Later, when we see the phrase, "and the kisses of the stars rain hard upon thy body," [AL II, 62] we are seeing the ingression of the datum of other entities into the concrescent process of a particular human entity as modeled in the text's scribe.

Nuit is also the locus, in this expression, of the potentiality of the universe. Her gift is the "consciousness of the continuity of existence" [AL I, 26] and her presencing is through the "non-atomic fact of [her] universality" [AL I, 26 (manuscript)]. She is thus the extensive continuum in which all entities arise as a complex "united by the various allied relationships of whole to part,... of overlapping,... and contact,... [&c.]" [PR 66] This continuum has no boundary due to its non-entitative nature, her 'non-atomic'ness, and is thus the "circumference... nowhere found" [AL II, 3].

Nuit is also the 'Not', the nonexistent, in her continuity, "the omnipresence of [her] body". "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!" In this sense Nuit is both the Receptacle, the formless form in which all arises, and thus 'inappropriate' to speak about since no qualification about it can be made, as well as the abode of objective immortality. "I give... upon death; peace unutterable, rest, ecstasy" [AL I, 58] As Whitehead puts it, the "not-being of occasions is their objective immortality" [AI 237] In perishing the immediate occasion

enters into immortality in the body of Nuit becoming one with the company of the stars. The stars here are the determinant influences upon all future becoming. Interestingly, this is a reframing of the classical (Stoic) notions of astrology in which the stars rule the fates of all living things.

In the sense that "I am above you and in you. My ecstasy is in yours. My joy is to see your joy"[AL I,13], Nuit is also Whitehead's 'God the co-sufferer'. Similarly all acts of love are 'to her' since it is her lure that guides the concrescent process along. [cf. AL I, 53, 62, 63, 65 & III, 62]

Hadit on the other hand, as the center that is everywhere, reflects Whitehead's scheme in which the "real potentialities relative to all standpoints are coordinated as diverse determinations of one extensive continuum"[PR 66]. The relationship between Had and Nu is that of the contrary potentialities in mere continuum: "in the actual world there are definite atomic actualities determining one coherent system of real divisions throughout the region of actuality. Every actuality in its relationship to other actual entities is in this sense somewhere in the continuum, and arise out of the data provided by this standpoint. But in an other sense it is everywhere throughout the continuum; for its constitution includes the objectifications of the actual world and thereby includes the continuum; also the potential objectification of itself contribute to the real potentialities whose solidarity the continuum expresses. Thus the continuum is present in each actual entity, and each actual entity pervades the continuum."[PR 67] "In the sphere [i.e. the extensive continuum] I [Hadit] am everywhere the centre as she [Nuit], the circumference, is nowhere found." [AL II, 3]

Hadit is the individual concrescence produces and the process. This is clearly present in AL II, 7: "I am the Magician and the Exorcist. I am the axle of the wheel, and the cube in the circle. 'Come unto me' is a foolish word: for it is I that go." The Magickian calls into immediate presence and the Exorcist banishes into irrelevancy all influences upon the entity. This is clearly a description of the supplementary phases of concrescence. [PR p. 213-4] The images of the wheel and circle support this poetically and have some technical magickal application. They are speaking to the 'core' quality that Hadit presents in every entity reprising AL II, 6: "I am the flame that burns in every heart of man, and in the core of every star." We are also told that to invoke Hadit is of little effect, "a foolish word" since Hadit is the going process. In AL II 8 this expanded to indicate that even worship is thus impossible since Hadit is the worshiper: "Who worshipped Heru-pa-kraath[3] have worshipped me; ill, for I am the worshipper."

To know Hadit is a impossibility according to this text. Hadit says, "Yet she shall be known & I never." [AL II,4] This is pointing to the sense in which the actual entity does not know itself since that would require it to be objectified in itself which would mean that it would have already have had to perished, closed up and become an object capable of being objectified. We will see this again later in that the satisfaction of an entity can not be conscious to the entity during its process.[PR 85] But an actual entity is the living process of its becoming and its resultant. We can only know it by the genetic analysis of its becoming and its effect upon us, which is how we objectify it in our own constitution. Since Hadit presents the process and its resultant it justifiably claims to be "I am Life, and the giver of Life..." but since to know Hadit requires that the entity in question has perished the knowledge of that being is the knowledge of a dead thing, "...therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death." [AL II, 6] There is

also another way in which Hadit can not be known. Since during the process of concrecence that becoming entity is out of touch with all contemporary entities "during" its concrecence it is also at that time unknown. This is one explanation of Hadit's self-identification as being Not or none in Chapter II, verses 15 and 66.

Yet in verses II, 12-13 we see an interesting differentiation between Hadit and "the knower". This has shades of a doctrine of a true nature of the self and a supposed self, here 'the knower', verses Hadit. If we recall that Hadit is present throughout the extensive continuum that is the sphere (read Nuit), and then compare that with our usual awareness of not being everywhere at once we can then make a practical distinction between these two natures of the self. In sum, we ignore so much of our world that we hardly realize how much there is to attend to. The aspect that does so in all of us is here presented as Hadit and the aspect that ignores such data is here presented as the scribe, 'the knower' {cf. "Thou knowest!" AL I, 26 as a reference to the scribe}.[\[4\]](#)

In summary what we have in the Nuit and Hadit chapters are expressions about the nature of the whole of things from the point of view of a world in which there are embedded individuals and from the point of view of the individual embedded in a world. Since these 'two' dwell in deep relationality we must also explain how they relate. Nuit gives us the principle mode both through her law and through direct command: Love is her law [AL I 57]. It is to the fulfillment of that law that she invites us all to "Come forth, o children under the stars, & take your fill of love!" [AL I 12]. She again uses the phrase 'fill of love' in verse 51 saying, "...take your fill and will of love as ye will, when, where, and with whom ye will! But always unto me." Leaving aside the awesome issue of the sexual more expressed here, we see by the concluding sentence that these activities have a particular focus, upon Nuit. What benefit would having dedicated acts of love to Nuit give the individual? Chapter I, verse 32 charges us to "Obey my prophet! follow out the ordeals of my knowledge! seek me only! Then the joys of my love will redeem ye from all pain. This is so: I swear it by the vault of my body; by my sacred heart and tongue; by all I can give, by all I desire of ye all." Should we seek Nuit only we will be redeemed from all pain, she promises, by the circumference, the vault of her body, and by the center, her heart and tongue and by her relationship with us which is one of desire, and later we will see, love. Here Whitehead's notion of God the co-sufferer comes out clearly except here it is taken even more emphatically and positively. Nuit not only suffers with us, and in so doing redeems us from pain, but also co-enjoys with us.[cf. AL I, 13] It is in this relationship that the soteriology of Thelema comes forth. For it is in division and difference that pain and hurt emerge: "Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt." [AL I, 22] And again, "This is the creation of the world, that the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all." [AL I, 30]

In response Nuit claims that, "There is no bond that can unite the divided but love: all else is a curse." [AL I, 41] This makes her claim that the Law is love more clear. It is through love that the pain and hurt are remedied and the Law made whole. But beyond this more general claim she also adds that "But to love me is better than all things:" [AL I, 61] From this verse to the end of the chapter we see a focus on what can be best termed the Cult of Nuit. We are asked again, as we were in verse 51, to make all actions "Unto Her". To understand this first off we need to see that we are being told that the process 'to love her' is better than any substance; 'all things'. This



accords with the nature of cultic activities since they need to be doings to engage us. We know further from her promise that to enjoy the love of her redeems us from all pain. Who then is Nuit that this generic dedication of love would apply and could work in this way? She, being everything but the individual percipient entity, is the Other, that which we are not yet, but in coming into contact with it we are about to become, that is, we are about to include in our constitution. She is thus the region of all potential. She is also referred to in the first verse of the second chapter as Nu, the hiding of Hadit. Nu is the phonetic representation of the Egyptian 'nu'-pot, a small round vessel which, inverted, is likened to the bowl of the sky, Nut or Nuit. This invokes our previous discussion of Nuit as the Platonic Receptacle. However, Nu also puns simply to 'new', all that we are not, yet. 'Nuit', the region of all potential, the 'Nu', the receptacle out of which all forms emerge, and the 'New' together function as what Whitehead describes as the 'lure to novelty'. By calling us to her, Nuit is inviting us to expand our natures into the openness of possibility escaping beyond the limitations of division through entering into a love-relationship with all we are not. We are invited to make our world and everything in it our lover, dissolving all pain into the joy of union [cf. AL I, 30] To this end Nuit's original epiphany in AL I, 26 is with "her lithe body arched for love." She wishes to be our lover in all that we do.

### **Word, Law and Will in Liber AL vel Legis**

As Thelema, or 'Will', is a central motif of our work it remains a principle in need of deep elucidation. We find it for the first time in our text in the phrase, "The word of the Law is Qelhma" [AL I, 39]. This phrase brings together several key notions from the ancient and classical worlds; 'word', 'law' and 'will'. We have a very useful and powerful resource provided by Christian scholars for understanding these words in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. By drawing upon this resource we can recreate the context in which these words are embedded and thus be able to better understand their meaning in our text. One key element here is the question of whether Crowley is a participant in the tradition in which these terms emerge. Besides the fact that he was raised in a family belong to the proto-fundamentalist sect called the Plymouth Brethren and educated in the classical manner at Trinity College, Cambridge, a brief scan of the bibliography he provides for training in his system of thought and the texts referred to in his writings show that he is seated firmly in this tradition. Our subsequent exploration will bring this out even further.

As we saw before in our word analysis of 'Law',<sup>[5]</sup> logos can mean simply a way of letting a thing lie before one. For the Greeks this notion of logos was 'almost symbolic of the Greek understanding of the world and existence.' [TD v. ?<sup>[6]</sup> p. 77] Their understanding of this notion transformed from simple accounting to mathematical proportion to reason and eventually to the greater notion of mind. It was through the agency of logos that the Stoics saw human's ability to recognize the intelligible law imbedded in all things and thus the cosmic order.[TD v. ? p.81] They saw that in the individual dwelt a particular logos that was part of the great general logos that when lived out combined into a great cosmos.[TD v. ? p.85] To attain to awareness of this logos and to live by it was the ethical task of the Greek. The Mysteries and Classical Hermetic traditions carried this further with emphasis on the revelation of the logos to be followed.

Whereas in the Greek tradition 'logos' is the connected rational element in speech, its data, in the Old Testament the logos is principally the uttered command of Yahweh, both in the sense of

creation and cultic demand. Its similarity to the Greek is to be noted in that this uttered word still provides the determinant order that creates the world but it does not possess the rational constraint of the Greek notion by its being a revelation. In Johannine Christianity, where the notion of logos takes on its most forceful appearance, it emerges in the life, words, acts and simple facticity of the Christ. Christ is the Word and his actions are embodiments of the Word. But it is in Christ's uniqueness as the only Word that contrast emerges with the general Greek conception. Here Christ remains as a model and manifestation to which all may aspire but none may attain. Let us stop here and go back to explore 'Law' because we will find that they both end in the same place, with the uniqueness of Christ.

Nomos, Law, goes through several distinct stages in Greek usage. It begins as the norms of society which are seen as manifestations of cosmic order. When the Greek world contacts other cultures it begins to have its laws and mores challenged by the plurality of law that they contact. Nonetheless for Socrates law was the commonly available objective knowledge of right and wrong and, not being able to separate his conscience from the degenerate political morality, he felt compelled to drink the hemlock. Plato responded to this misuse of law by demanding more intelligence for it. Since law could not change to meet new circumstances fast enough, he wanted a king who's word was law and who was able through the possession of 'true knowledge' able to guide the state. In this sense this individual would then be outside of the law and a law unto themselves, yet through being so thoroughly righteous was the ideal ruler. This lawful life without laws became the aspiration of Greek culture and an source for individual piety. Through contemplating the law of the cosmos the philosopher becomes a manifestation of the law in his [sic] actions. This law becomes a strong interiorized drive in the lives of its individual adherents and was further developed in Neo-Platonism and Orphic Platonism. The law here becomes that principle "wherein a being, or something of intrinsic validity, is discovered and apprehended... It is the ancient, valid and effective order which does not merely issue orders but creates order, which does not merely command, require or prohibit but rules, which evokes as it were its own fulfillment, and which upholds itself, or is upheld, in the face of non-fulfillment." [TD v. ? p. 1035]

The Judeo-Christian pattern is very similar. For the Jew the Law of the Covenant was the constitutional proclamation of the order of the People of Yahweh. It determined membership and behavior. As such it was the cultural norm and, as the word of Yahweh is seen as creative, it constitutes in some manner Cosmic order itself. Yet this followed a pattern of interiorization similar to the Greek's in the person of Jesus. Jesus, in his instance that the attitude with which an action is performed matters more than the form turns the law inside out. But there is an even more fundamental change in Jesus's innovation, the law is removed from its place as mediator between Yahweh and his people and Jesus takes its place. This is essentially the same as the replacing of the nomos of the Greeks with the divine King. This gives the law a more interactive quality only possible when it is intelligent. However, the principle difference is that here, again this embodiment of law is only available in the person of Christ Jesus. We have again arrived in the same place and so let us stop here and examine 'Thelema' or Will in terms of this tradition.

In Hellenistic times 'thelema' referred to the purpose of persons and some times simply to the impulse of desire. In the Synagogues it became a term referring to the Divine Will. For the Hermetics it was equated with God especially in the sense of perfect, unlimited creative and regenerative power. However, by the New Testament, thelema is "the ultimate basis, the

supreme norm, the only source of the whole work of salvation. It is its final, pre-temporal foundation." [TD v. ? p.57] The task of the adherent is to be ready for a renewal of their nuos for "[o]nly the renewed nuos knows the will of god in order thereby to set up its goal and to fashion its service. The request to be filled with the knowledge of His will... is also concerned with a gnosis relating to the practical goal of life... The doing of the will [is] the basic condition of an essential goal." [TD v. ? p. 58] Yet this notion of will, exemplified by Jesus is characterized by the submission of the will of the individual to the divine will implying that these are inherently alienated. This contrast is further emphasized in that the Cosmos is said to not do the will of God and so a Christian must. [TD v. ? p. 58] Here is where our three words come together at this same end point.

The Thelemic paradigm can be seen as an answer to the dead end presented by Jesus Christ's role as sole Word and Law, and who's example in the way of will is through submission. The problem is that if Jesus is the only Word and Law, neither of these are accessible to the rest of us and we are dependent on a preserved text and revelation. Worse still, this revelation is 2000 years old and massively out of date. For example, I live with nuclear bombs, not sheep. Further, in an age of wide spread oppression, submission to any power is suspect. Who can know the needs of an individual better than that individual? These are the challenges Thelema addresses. But before we can truly interpret Liber AL's message we need to examine the phrase we began with: "The word of the Law is Qelhma."

On the basis of the Greek tradition out of which this term emerges we can now transform this phrase into the response it is to the Christian tradition. 'Word' is the process where by order is intelligible and recognizable. 'Law' is the normative principle inherent in the world as its order, superior to and more fundamental than any given expression of that order, thus it is not able to be reduced to formula. From this reasoning we derive: "The Intelligence of Ordering is Will."

Having situated 'Thelema' in the tradition out of which it emerges we need to probe into its ontological function. To do this we may turn to our normative metaphysics, the philosophy of organism. What I hope to show is, in accord with my basic thesis, that the thelemic notion of 'will' is able to be interpreted by Whitehead's philosophy and in Whitehead's terms would be called the 'subjective aim'.

One of the key characteristics of an individual will is that it is coordinated with all other individual wills. This has to do with the reflexivity of the system as a whole expressed in Liber AL as the complementarity of Nu and Had. [AL II, 2]. Very little is said about this although it is essential in most interpretations of Thelema (cf. Crowley's commentaries, the prologues to the various editions of Liber AL, &c.). This is often seen as manifestation of the divine will, i.e. Hadit's will, [7] in each individual person or 'star'. The philosophy of organism provides an excellent way of accounting for this. This individual subjective aim is derived from the divine subjective aim. This is in part due to the continual effect the primordial nature of God has upon all subsequent concrescences by providing the ground of order upon which all functioning depends [PR 108, 283]. But also, in a more particular manner, the divine aim is relevant to the particular world in which that entity becomes [PR 224-225], and presents the best aim for that particular *impasse* [PR 244]. Thus the incursion of divine aim is not simply a generic providence but a specific one related to the needs and reality of the particular concrescent entity. By being the lure or guide towards the best that could be achieved in each moment there is implied in the

divine aim impressed upon the initial phases of an entity's concrescence a coordination with all other wills in that they are similarly derived from the one universal will. This might well be called the whole-ing of the law which nature is love and which is actualized through doing one's will (cf. word analysis of 'law').

Another factor in the nature of will as presented in the philosophy of organism is the importance of subjective aim in the genetic constitution of an entity. This raises the subjective aim to the same high level of ontological importance as will is presented in Thelema. The subjective aim determines the ordering, integration and relationships between all of the ingressing eternal objects, the subjective forms and the prehensions. As these constitute an actual entity the importance of subjective aim or will is thus obvious. In Liber AL we see this raised to the status of ultimate law. When we read that "There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt" [AL III, 60], we are being told that the subjective aim of the individual entity, which is derived of God, is the ultimate arbiter of purpose and being. Obviously, Whitehead would agree.

Having looked at the system's relationship to the individual and the individual's genetic relationship with the system we can see there is a clear correspondence between 'subjective aim' as presented in the philosophy of organism and 'will' in Liber AL. What Liber AL also purports to do is give advice about how 'will' works and on the right relationship between the individual and their will. We will find that this advice corresponds nicely with Whitehead's assessment of the nature of the subjective aim and concrescence.

The strongest advice given in Liber AL is given in the first chapter in verses 42-45. : "So with thy all; thou hast no right but to do thy will. / Do that, and no other shall say nay. / For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect. / The Perfect and the Perfect are one Perfect and not two; nay, are none!" This is one of the very few verses that use the word 'will' (other than in the sense of 'shall') that we have not discussed already. It constitutes the single most useful piece of advice about how to function in the world that our text presents. Thus, its analysis in terms of the philosophy of organism is important.

"So with thy all;" Since all that we 'have' are the ingressing eternal objects, the subjective forms and the prehensions included in our concrescences, it is with them that we are being directed by this phrase to concern ourselves. "... thou hast no right but to do thy will," tells us that there is no other way of dealing with these concerns except through the organizing principle of our subjective aim or will. "Do that, and no other shall say nay," speaks to the conditioned autonomy of that subjective aim in the process of its integrations. Once an entity has begun its concrescence it is out of touch with all other entities until it completes its process and during that process it freely determines the nature of its process and thus itself in accord with its subjective aim.

The wherefore of this process comes in the next sentence: "For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect." To be 'unassuaged of purpose' is to be without any distractions from the goal. Whitehead handles this with his notion of 'balance' which means that "no realized eternal object shall eliminate potential contrasts between other realized eternal objects." This would "attenuate the intensities of feeling derivable from the ingressions of the various elements" in the constitution of the concrescent entity. [PR 278] This is sub-optimal since the generic aim is towards the intensity of experience.

To be 'delivered from the lust of result' is to be acting without attachment to the result of one's actions (cf. the Bhagavad Gita). The down fall in this is that, as Whitehead puts it "[n]o actual entity can be conscious of its own satisfaction; for such knowledge would be a component in the process, and would thereby alter the satisfaction." [PR 85] In other words, if one knew where one was going one would never get there. What Thelema adds to this understanding is how to handle the fact that there is always some vision of the goal, a lure towards an aim. This, whether a simple contrast or complex proposition must not be lusted after, just simply worked for without distraction, even the distraction of the goal. The deliverance from distraction is the advice Thelema presents so as to attain to the 'perfect' satisfaction in every concrescence, in 'every way'.

As for "The Perfect and the Perfect are one Perfect and not two; nay, are none!" see PR p. 85 for satisfaction as the means through which an entity becomes an "immortal part-creator of the transcendent world". The transcendent world is the determinant influence of all entities that have become and perished, passing into objective immortality, their not-being.[AI 237] Being real but not longer actual, in terms of the symbol set found in Liber AL this transcendent world is termed the 'not' or here 'none'. It is also 'one world' or 'one Perfect' in that it is through a wholeness or unity that the past comes to bear on the concrescent present, and no part or duality. The perfectness of this entire description comes with the complete accommodation that the divine makes for the actual entity as it passes into objective immortality, completing the creative cycle, fulfilling the divine aim.

### **Postscript**

Having come to the end of the immediate time and energy to be put in to the project of analyzing and exegeting Liber AL vel Legis, it is clear that there are vast regions of research opened by this initial exploration waiting and available for study. These will have to be addressed in the future. What this study has shown is that the classical exegetical method does apply to our text, bringing out deeper insights as to its meaning and its relevance to and place in mainstream theological discourse. It also shows that the philosophy of organism can be a workable world view through which Liber AL may be interpreted. This preliminary study speaks strongly to the need to break the silence surrounding discussion and interpretation of Liber AL vel Legis so that its value may become more available to all.

This said, it is worth while to briefly list some of the further problems facing the exegete and some of the at present visible avenues of research to be done.

Word-study: The following words need to be studied in light of their place in our text and in the western tradition: 'not at all', king (and allied notions of sovereignty), slave, service, star, warrior, children, heart and tongue, because, fool(s), light and night, ordeal and initiation, dog, &c.

Issues: the place of women (partly dealt with by the writing conventions of the era and "Every man and every woman is a star" [AL I, 3] which proclaims their fundamental equality with men, but must be contrasted with AL I, 61, and other places where they appear as property). Are the more wrathful expressions of Ra-Hoor-Khuit (and others) simply iconography able to be interpreted in a similar manner to the Tibetan Wrathful Buddhas? Ra-Hoor-Khuit needs to be

explicated in general. Who are the Beast, and his Bride, the Scarlet Woman. What of the titles Scribe, Prophet, Priest, and Prince? How exactly does Thelema and Liber AL present the Egyptian tradition. What relationships are there between Liber AL vel Legis and the other Thelemic Holy Books that Crowley wrote, and beyond that to the continually emerging other Holy Books scribed by people other than Crowley? What relationship is there between Thelema and Buddhism, specifically Mahayana and Vajrayana, and further to Dzogchen? Is Liber AL a western tantra or a 'terma', a mind treasure? What of the topography of the Cult of Thelema can be mapped out? How much of Liber AL can and should be interpreted in the light of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn ("Abrogate are all rituals, all ordeals, all words and signs. Ra-Hoor-Khuit hath taken his seat in that East at the Equinox of the Gods;" [AL I, 49] is a paraphrase of the Golden Dawn Equinox ceremony. Is this relevant and if so, how?). What is the place of Qabalah in Thelema? How trustable are Crowley's commentaries? What is the place of Yoga in Thelema? How is reason to be used (cf. "Also reason is a lie; for there is a factor infinite & unknown; & all of their words are skew-wise." [AL II, 32])? What relationship does Liber AL have with the Chaldean Oracles? What is Thelema's political program? How much more connection is there between Thelema and Whitehead's philosophy of organism. What of Thelema can be used to explicate the philosophy of organism. &c.

This list is just a preliminary set of questions with which to spark much further research. It is by no means exhaustive. What we have here is the beginning of the task.

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## Footnotes

- . Rose Kelly Crowley, who was completely unschooled in the Craft
- . According to the reported account in Crowley's *The Equinox of the Gods*, New Falcon Pub.s, Scottsdale AZ, 1991, originally published 1936.
- . The child god of the Egyptians, some times called the Lord of Silence. He is also the inner form of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, thus a processual symbol, not the entity or the process itself.
- . The concept of knowledge here may compare favorably with the Dzogchen notion of same. (A direction for further research.)
- . Please see appended text "[Word Analysis of the use of the word "law"](#)" in Liber AL vel Legis".
- . volume numbers were to be added later, sorry.
- . "Because of me in Thee which thou knewest not." [AL II, 12]