

# The Method of Love

An essay examining the Thelemic concept of Love, including notes on the functioning of the self and on the nature of attainment.

by

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Sun in 7° Libra, Anno IVxv

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I<sup>N</sup> his introduction to *The Book of the Law*, Crowley writes:

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 model of the self as “an aggregate of . . . experiences” is worth further investigation.

When we act, consciously or otherwise, we do so on the basis of a combination of three elements:

- Our physical beings;
- The sum of our experiences to date; and
- The particular set of circumstances we find ourselves in.

For instance, if we put a hand into a fire, the likely response is that we will shortly remove it again at quite some speed, because our physical being is designed to instinctively take action to protect against damage to itself. Similarly, if it is night-time, and we desire light, we may respond by flicking the light switch, since past experience has taught us that doing so almost invariably results in light appearing. And of course, without the presence of fire around our hands in the first place, and without the presence of both relative darkness and an electrical light system in the second, we would not be able to make those choices.

The significance of our physical beings is largely fixed. For example, we cannot breathe unaided underwater, fly unaided, spend long

periods of time exposed to extreme temperatures, survive without a head, pick up a six hundred ton boulder, or eat gold nuggets. Similarly, we may expect the experience of somebody deaf and blind from birth to differ significantly from that of someone not so afflicted. Yet there are some elements under our control that can have a significant effect. It is reasonable to assume that a ninety pound weakling will have a substantially different experience of the world than will a brawny six-foot muscleman, and that the differences in physique will themselves contribute significantly to that varying experience. Similarly, the presence or degree of a particular physical skill may have a large effect. Yet the methods of developing these physical qualities are relatively well-known and straightforward, so will not be of special interest to us here.

Likewise, the particular set of circumstances we find ourselves in is what it is at any given moment. If we find ourselves inches underneath a huge mass of falling rubble then we are likely to find our decision made for us. Similarly, we are almost all constrained to existing on this particular planet. However, being described as autonomous beings, we are able to influence to a large extent which particular set of circumstances we do happen to find ourselves in — we may expect the professional soldier to have a far greater likelihood of acquiring direct experience of warfare than, for example, a professional ballet dancer.

However, like an action, an *experience* is a momentary conjunction of all of these things and each experience provides *information* about the world and about the individual experiencing it. If we restrict our discussion of action to “conscious choice” then we can say that at any given moment it is not the actual physical being that primarily affects the choices of the individual, but the way in which his physical being has contributed to his experience throughout his life. The way he interacts with his environment will be largely determined by his experience with similar interactions in the past. Thus we can rightly consider the “self,” the interpreting and directing faculty of the individual, to be the aggregate of his experiences to date, without worrying too much about whether or not we are capturing every possible influence within our definition.

We can imagine this aggregate of experiences as Crowley does in the quote above, as a sphere or other three dimensional shape around a “monad,” or point. When viewed as a philosophy of conduct, the key element of Thelema is the supposition of a “true self,” whose nature is manifested through the will, and a “conscious self” whose nature

is manifested through desire, emotions and the conscious mind.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary here to inquire too deeply into the actual reality of these two “selves,” or into the mechanics which cause them to arise.<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the current essay, we will simply assume that the conscious mind is a *tool* of the “true self,” but that this conscious mind can *interfere with* and *thwart* the nature of that self by failing to correctly apprehend that nature and the nature of the environment, or by willfully ignoring that knowledge.

We can imagine this “monad,” this “point,” as being the *centre of gravity* of the aggregate of experiences conceptualised as a three dimensional shape. Each experience, as Crowley states, can be considered to be a union between this monad, this centre of gravity, with something outside of that shape. This union naturally results in another experience, which adds to the aggregate, and we can visualise this by the surface of that shape expanding at some point to accommodate it.

Unless a set of experiences is chosen so as to expand that surface equally, in all directions, then it should be clear that any such new experience will *move* the centre of gravity — the addition of a new experience will cause the aggregate to concentrate a *new centre*. Thus, where a person would be inclined to act in a certain way in a certain situation, the addition of new experience may now cause him to act in a different way in that same situation; experience has caused the centre of gravity of his self to *shift*, and he is a changed person because of it.

The essential problem facing the aspiring Thelemite is this: the aggregate of his experiences to date has concentrated a centre at a point *distinct from where his true self is located*. Since it is the location of the point on which his conscious self is concentrated that will to the largest extent determine his tendency to act, then this difference of location can cause his conscious self to act in a manner *contrary* to his true nature — that is, not in accordance with his *true will*. As the theory goes<sup>3</sup> this divergence creates conflict and leads to suffering and frustration. What is more, if this shift in his centre of gravity causes him to select experiences which differ from the experiences his true nature would have selected, then it is likely those new experiences will add to the aggregate in a manner which causes his centre of gravity

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<sup>1</sup>This idea is developed further in my essay, *The Khabs is in the Khu*.

<sup>2</sup>Although such questions themselves are naturally critical to a full understanding of the issue, and are investigated further in my essay, *True Will*.

<sup>3</sup>We refer the reader again to the essay *The Khabs is in the Khu* for a deeper analysis of this theory.

to shift *even further* from the location of his true self.

We can illustrate this diagrammatically. In figure 1, the circle represents the aggregate of experiences, which concentrates a centre on the dot.

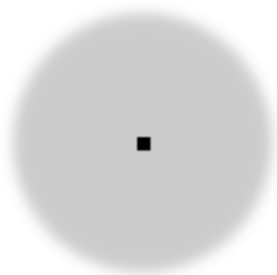


Figure 1: The coincident selves

In this figure, we assume the centres of the true self and the conscious self are coincident.

If we now assume that the individual acquires some more experience, and that this experience causes the aggregate to expand out towards the left, we get the situation in figure 2.



Figure 2: Slight asymmetrical expansion

The expansion of the aggregate off to one side has caused the centre of gravity of the conscious self — represented by the leftmost dot — to shift to the left, and is now *distinct* from the centre of the true self, represented by the rightmost dot.

If expansion continues in this direction, the centre of gravity of the conscious self will become *even more distinct* from the centre of gravity of the true self, resulting in the situation shown in figure 3.



Figure 3: Extreme asymmetrical expansion

What is more, we can see that in order to move the centre of gravity of the conscious self back to the location of the true self, then more experiences would have to be added to the right side of the aggregate, somewhere close to the vertical centre. However, there is far more of the edge of the shape to the left, so if experience is added randomly, it is likely that the centre of gravity of the conscious self will be shifted even further away, causing the process to *compound* itself. Therefore, once a shift in this centre of gravity has occurred, if the conscious self is allowed to determine the direction in which experience is obtained, then the result will be a progressive and increasing tendency to diverge further and further away from the true self.

This, then, is the essential problem. In order to return the centre of gravity of the self to the location of the true self — which we postulate is necessary in order to discover and carry out the true will — then paying attention to the conscious mind will not do, since the “conscious will” naturally tends to widen the distance. How, then, is this to be achieved?

The answer is *love*. These two concepts often provide difficulties for aspiring Thelemites, who tend to naturally assume the concepts

are in opposition. “Love” is often held to be something akin to the Christian concept of love, something to “reign in” the will against its more antisocial or disagreeable leanings, to temper the philosophy of individualism which Thelema clearly is. But this is not the Thelemic concept of love — “Nor let the fools mistake love; for there are love and love. There is the dove, and there is the serpent. Choose ye well!”<sup>4</sup>

“Love,” in the Thelemic sense, is simply “union,” specifically the “uniting of some one monad with one of the experiences possible to it” as we quoted Crowley saying right at the beginning of this essay. As to the question, “*which* experience?” the answer is simple: *all of them*.

In figure 3, we saw that experiences, if chosen randomly, were likely to increase the distance between the centres of gravity of the conscious and true selves. Naturally, if we try to consciously select experiences in order to bring the two closer together, we are likely to err, since the choice will be made by the conscious mind, which is now inclined off to one side. Fortunately, there is another, simpler way, and that is to *expand outwards in all directions equally*. Again, as we quoted Crowley at the beginning:

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.

If the aggregate of experiences comprising the self was to become infinitely large, then the distinction between the centres of gravity of the true and conscious selves would disappear, since in an infinitely large circle, any point can rightly be considered the centre.<sup>5</sup> Even if it does not expand to infinity, expanding equally in all directions at least serves to bring the centres *closer together*.

Again, we can see this diagrammatically. Figure 4 shows two “selves,” two aggregates of experience around two distinct points. They are wholly separate — they have nothing in common.

If, however, we expand the aggregates around each point, *without changing the centres themselves*, they start to have rather a lot in common, as we see in figure 5.

Even though the centres are still the same absolute distance apart, the experiences they share have very much in common. If we continue this expansion, even though we remain a long way from infinity, then the differences in experience will soon become so slight as to make no practical difference.

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<sup>4</sup>AL I, 57

<sup>5</sup>See AL II, 3.





Figure 4: Small selves in isolation

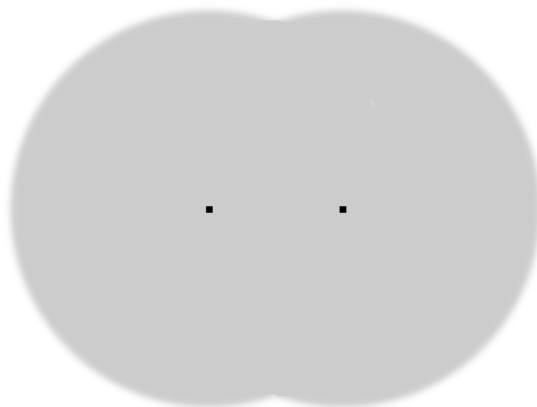


Figure 5: Large selves approaching integration

This, then, is the solution. Rather than trying to consciously select a direction in which to gain experience, one should gain experience in *all* directions, and in so doing will bring the conscious self closely into *alignment* with the true self. As Crowley says in his commentary<sup>6</sup> to AL I, 31:

The development of the Adept is by Expansion — out to Nuit — in all directions equally.

This point is made in many places in *The Book of the Law* itself.

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<sup>6</sup>Published as *An Extenuation of The Book of the Law* in 1926, and posthumously as *The Law is for All*.

Come forth, o children, under the stars, & take your fill  
of love!<sup>7</sup>

To “take your fill” of love implies just that, to expand outwards in all directions, and to do it to the greatest extent possible; if you fill a balloon with air, it will expand equally around its centre.

Since I am Infinite Space, and the Infinite Stars thereof,  
do ye also thus. Bind nothing! Let there be no difference  
made among you between any one thing & any other thing;  
for thereby there cometh hurt.<sup>8</sup>

Nuit defines herself as “Infinite Space,” and instructs us to let “there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing;” in other words, to expand equally without discrimination. To “let there be [a] difference made” is to prefer one direction over another, which as we have seen will lead one away from the true self.

follow out the ordeals of my knowledge! seek me only!  
Then the joys of my love will redeem ye from all pain.<sup>9</sup>

If Nuit has already defined herself as “Infinite Space,” then the injunction to “seek me only” is an injunction to expand to infinity. This process will “redeem ye from all pain” in the manner described in the essay “The Khabs is in the Khu.”

The word of Sin is Restriction. O man! refuse not thy  
wife, if she will! O lover, if thou wilt, depart! There is no  
bond that can unite the divided but love!<sup>10</sup>

To “restrict” is to constrain expansion into particular directions, rather than in all directions. To expand equally unto infinity is to “unite the divided,” to encompass everything within the self, and the only bond that can achieve this is “love”.

Be goodly therefore: dress ye all in fine apparel; eat rich  
foods and drink sweet wines and wines that foam! Also,  
take your fill and will of love as ye will, when, where and  
with whom ye will! But always unto me.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>AL I, 12

<sup>8</sup>AL I, 22

<sup>9</sup>AL I, 32

<sup>10</sup>AL I, 41

<sup>11</sup>AL I, 51

Here Nuit admonishes against morality, against restricting actions to those which are consider “virtuous,” as to do so is to skew growth. The only commandment we have is that it be “always unto me,” i.e. unto infinity, with the purpose of expanding the self equally and in all directions.

But exceed! exceed! Strive ever to more!<sup>12</sup>

A commandment to push expansion as far as possible.

Invoke me under my stars! Love is the law, love under will.<sup>13</sup>

“Invoke me” is to invoke infinity, which is identical to expanding outwards to it. Love must be “under will” because it must be in all directions equally *from the centre of the true self*. This is critical to understand; love being “under will” does not *constrain* that love to a particular direction, it *releases* it from a particular direction.<sup>14</sup> Crowley comments on this in *Liber II*, saying:

This is to be taken as meaning that while Will is the Law, the nature of that Will is Love. But this Love is as it were a by-product of that Will; it does not contradict or supersede that Will; and if apparent contradiction should arise in any crisis, it is the Will that will guide us aright.

The “nature of that Will is Love” — this *must* be the case, since the very essence of will is action, and since action cannot occur in isolation it *must* involve a union between the self and “something else,” which is how we have defined love. But the will reaches out in all directions from its centre, so the love in question is a “by-product” of the will because it is constrained into proceeding directly outwards from the self in all directions. “If apparent contradiction should arise,” i.e. if the individual should mistakenly believe himself to have encountered a particular object particularly worthy of his devotion to which he should dedicate himself, then “it is the Will that will guide us aright,” and return us to a course of equal expansion.

Thus, to conclude, the business of the aspirant is indeed “Expansion — out to Nuit — in all directions equally,” and this method is the method of love. If the aspirant pays attention to methods which require him to develop directionally, whether towards humility, or compassion, or to any other manifestation of a moral code, then he will

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<sup>12</sup>AL II, 71–72

<sup>13</sup>AL I, 57

<sup>14</sup>Or forces it to follow *all* directions, which is the same thing.

surely skew his development and move further and further away from his true nature. He must “love” — i.e. unite — without discrimination, for only by expanding himself equally, by building more and more experience into his being, can he realise his true nature as a star; only in this way can he smooth the veils of the Khu.

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