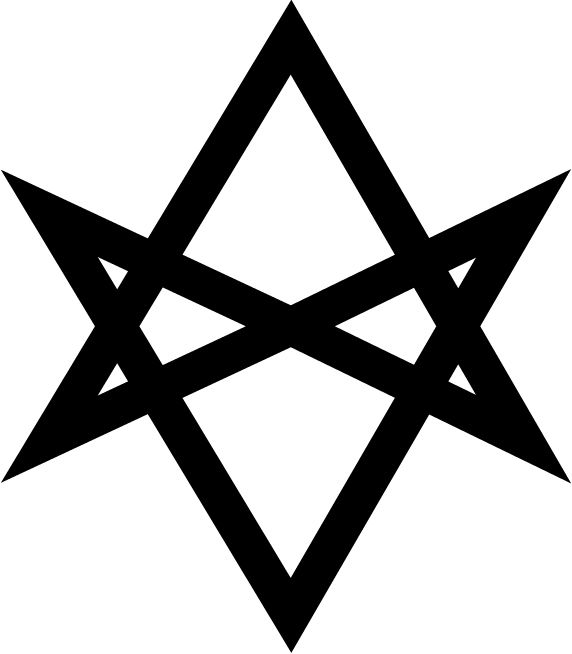
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**INTRODUCTION**

**TO**

**THELEMA**



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I. **INTRODUCTION**

In popular culture, the name of Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) is considered synonymous with transgression, and even evil, being attributed the role of “*initiator*” of Modern Satanism and apologist of all kinds of excesses. Although these considerations about Crowley are widely spread, the importance of his figure and ideas in the configuration of Contemporary spirituality and the genesis of new Neo-pagan religious movements such as Wicca or others such as the aforementioned Modern Satanism and even Scientology, should not be ignored, since many of these philosophical-religious manifestations derive, to a greater or lesser extent, from Crowley’s thesis. His esoteric system is not a simple reinterpretation of ancient rites and past magic-religious beliefs, but rather questions the current vision of human beings and in this real of existence.

The negative reputation that haunted Crowley for much of his life, due in large part to the British tabloid press of the first half of the 20th century and himself, was used by Crowley himself to identify those individuals genuinely interested in knowing and investigate his philosophical proposal, excluding the credulous who, driven by the sensationalism encouraged by the press, wanted to know personally if what was published in the tabloids was true.

Crowley considered his proposal of vital importance for the development of human beings in the new era that was to come, the *Aeon of Horus*. In his role as the prophet of a new divine revelation, Crowley established himself as a staunch defender of the individual will that was negatively conditioned by moral and religious precepts of past ages that were clearly incapable of responding to the existential concerns of humanity. According to Crowley, the only way to respond satisfactorily to them was through a series of magical-religious rites that included under the term "*magick*", a synthesis of elements from various Western and Eastern philosophical-religious traditions, highlighting yoga and tantrism.

Crowley gave a fundamental importance to sex, which he considered as a perfectly valid alternative to unleash the infinite power that resides in the individual and, through the performance of certain magical-sexual rites, break the limitations imposed by traditional ceremonial magic. For Crowley, magic is not something alien to human beings, but resides within them and must be taught to manifest it in the Outside World.

Although Crowley did not claim to be the initiator of a new philosophical-religious movement due to the lack of a revealed text, the strange events that he experienced between April 8 and 10, 1904, during his stay with his first wife, Rose Kelly (1874- 1933), in Cairo, forced him to reconsider his position. Crowley describes what happened as a significant vital turning point that marked a definitive break with his past. During those days, Crowley had put into practice some magical rituals when suddenly, Rose claimed that the god Horus himself had to communicate a message of great importance. Following his wife's instructions, Crowley claimed to have received from a supernatural voice a revealed text, the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, where the fundamental principles of a new religion called Thelema are collected, through which Humanity would enter the *Aeon of Horus*. As the prophet of Thelema, Crowley was to spread this divine message, a fact that he at first vigorously rejected as a mere fantasy.

During his student years at Trinity College, Cambridge, Crowley had taken a keen interest in philosophy and scientific empiricism, which, in the opinion of his biographers, was a logical reaction derived from the oppressive religious environment of his childhood, a fact that prompted him to seek other religious discourses based on philosophical and scientific principles, to which he was exposed at Cambridge. Among Crowley's most significant contributions to contemporary Western esotericism is his claim to legitimize his particular religious ideas in accordance with philosophical and scientific principles, in addition to maintaining at all times a markedly skeptical position regarding the religious phenomenon and its manifestations.

According to Crowley, none of the revealed religions, and especially Christianity, had been able to answer his questions, mainly due to the limitations derived from their methodological approaches. In his opinion, the only way to achieve a satisfactory answer was to unite the most significant elements of each of the epistemological systems of these religions. Crowley also considered that individualism was essential to achieve the full development of the human being, and that is why it plays a preponderant role in his philosophical thought.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a renewed interest in Crowley's figure and ideas arose, being adopted by some countercultural currents as an icon of rebellion and transgression against society. As a result, and after several decades out of circulation, Crowley's works were reissued thanks mainly to the work of two of his former followers, Israel Regardie (1907-1985) in the United States and Kenneth Grant (1924 -2011) in the United Kingdom.

Regardie, Crowley's personal secretary between 1928 and 1932, played an essential role in the resurgence of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn during the second half of the 20th century. Crowley, who had been part of the Golden Dawn in the late nineteenth century, appropriated various ideas and rites of the order, which were later suitably adapted for the pursuit of his personal goals. As for Grant, he was Crowley's assistant for a few months in 1944, and after the latter's death he actively collaborated with John Symonds (1914-2006), Crowley's literary executor and author of what is considered his “*canonical*” biography, *The Great Beast* (1951).

The progressive reissue of Crowley's works coincided with the resurgence of several Thelemite organizations, most of which had few members and a short-lived existence. However, some of them, such as the renewed Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), managed to consolidate around 1969 under the leadership of Grady Louis McMurtry (1918-1985). Later, the O.T.O. suffered splits such as those promoted by Grant in the early 1970s, which spawned a new organization, the Typhonian O.T.O., now known as the Typhonian Order. In addition to Grant, the Brazilian Marcelo Ramos Motta (1931-1987) encouraged a new schism in the O.T.O. that forced McMurty to denounce him before the courts of the State of California in 1985, which ruled in favor of the latter, a fact that will allow him to consolidate his leadership in the order, which will become the only one internationally recognized.

Academically, the importance of the study of Crowley's thought does not only lie in its influence on various manifestations of contemporary culture such as cinema, music or literature, but must be taken into consideration as a paradigmatic example of the emergence of new contemporary religious movements. In the opinion of scholars such as Wouter Hanegraaff, the texts of Crowley can be considered as one of the clearest manifestations of what Hanegraaff has called "secularized esotericism"1. Likewise, the study of Crowley's philosophical thought allows us to appreciate how it contains many of the basic discourses that have subsequently made it possible to configure contemporary spirituality.

Paul Heelas considers Crowley as the emissary of the "sacralization of the individual", which can be achieved through a set of ideas and magical-religious rites that allow the articulation of individualism according to the characteristics of Western thought and idiosyncrasy, in addition to having understood the inherent implications of its subjectivity2. The development of new fields of academic study such as the History of Western Esotericism or the characteristics of the new religious movements, has aroused interest in the study of Crowley's ideas, fundamental for the understanding and analysis of various contemporary religious philosophical manifestations, as well as its socio-political implications. Although Crowley wrote almost nothing about politics, in Marco Pasi's opinion, his ideas probably have political implications, since Crowley was involved in relevant events such as the strange flight of Nazi leader Rudolf Hess to the United Kingdom in May 19413.

Crowley's idea of magic did not develop in a specific space-time frame, but rather reflects the social context in which his life developed, transforming the epistemological conception and interpretation of magic and the practices related to it. In his attempt to accommodate the practice of magic to the sociocultural context of his time, Crowley relied on psychology and his postulates, and from these he considered that the ancient deities, demons and other supernatural beings were manifestations of the human unconscious. Ironically, considering himself the prophet of a new religion whose principles had been revealed to him by a supernatural voice that Crowley would later identify as that of his "guardian angel", and which he considered as a genuine spiritual manifestation alien to him that had manifested itself in the human realm and was not a projection of his own unconscious, Crowley seems to contradict himself regarding the aforementioned.

Although one of the most notable characteristics of Thelema is its essentially anti-Christian nature, its millennial vision is closely linked to the Western esoteric tradition, which in turn is influenced by biblical texts, particularly the Apocalypse and the theses of the British preacher John Nelson Darby (1800- 1882). The importance of elements from other traditions or religious beliefs in the configuration of the Thelemite guiding principles and rites, were assembled by Crowley to build a vehicle through which it was possible to know the hidden characteristics of the human body.

Crowley was essentially inspired by concepts and ideas of Tantrism such as the *chakras* and *kundalini*, which according to him, could be used interchangeably to overcome moments of spiritual crisis or as initiation. Tantrism was essential for the formulation of the magic -sexual rites of Thelema, although Crowley was not limited only to this, but took elements from other magical and philosophical currents. He assumed as his own the theses of thinkers such as Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824) or Hargrave Jennings (1817-1890), who considered that the origin of all global religions had its origin in the cult of the Sun and phallic symbols, both related to virility and fertility. Based on this, Crowley articulated his ideas about magic and religion, which can be clearly seen in certain passages of his *Gnostic Mass* (1913).

Crowley openly acknowledged having relied on various magical-religious traditions for his ideas, in addition to his extensive knowledge in the field of comparative religions, to endow his belief system and the elaboration of magical rituals with a certain internal coherence. Crowley himself linked Thelema with some mystical-religious beliefs of the ancient Sumerian religion, in addition to stating that the "guardian angel" who had transmitted the revealed text of the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, Aiwass, was actually a manifestation of Melek Taus, the god of the Yazidis. Despite the surprising nature of such a statement, it is possible to note certain parallels between the content of the Liber AL Vel Legis and some precepts of the Yazidi religion. Likewise, it is important to take into consideration Crowley's fascination for pre-Christian and Eastern religions, as well as for thinkers such as Plato or Marsilio Ficino.

The fundamental role of Crowley's theses in the current configuration and conception of Western magic and esotericism has influenced, directly or indirectly and with greater or lesser force, the genesis of many new contemporary religious movements. In the case of Wicca, its foundation is attributed to Gerald Gardner (1884-1964), and in its early days it was strongly influenced by Crowley's theses. The progressive development of their own beliefs and rites have been relegating them, and today they are even reviled by Wiccans. Crowley's relationship to Wicca is not entirely clear, and in Hutton's view, it is an issue that continues to cause controversy in Wiccan circles. Crowley's initial influence was probably due to Gardner's long-term relationship with Crowley, as well as his contacts with the British Thelemite movement after Crowley's death in late 1947, who had previously initiated him into the rites of the O.T.O.

Crowley's influence on Modern Satanism is not surprising, since he proclaimed himself on several occasions as the "*Great Beast 666*", which led him to be accused of openly promoting satanic ideas. However, in Crowley's texts there are very few elements related to Modern Satanism as conceived by Anton Szandor Lavey (1930-1997) and Michael Aquino (1946-2020), respective founders of the Church of Satan (1966) and of the Temple of Set (1975). Although Modern Satanism has incorporated some magical-esoteric ideas and concepts from Crowley, it has done so from a critical point of view, and generally regards most of Crowley's theses as nonsense.

Without a doubt, Scientology is currently one of the most controversial and popular new religious movements, mainly due to the membership of prominent personalities from the entertainment world and the media echo that this has caused. Although at first there seems to be no relationship between Crowley and Scientology, its founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) is indirectly linked to the former through John W. Parsons (1914-1952), leader of the only OTO lodge which remained active in the United States during World War II. In 1946, Parsons and Hubbard were involved in some magical rites that were called *Babalon Working*, but the relationship between them suddenly ended that same year when Parsons accused Hubbard of having stolen all his savings and cheating on him with his girlfriend. Despite the brevity of their friendship, Crowley's influence was very present in the genesis of Scientology and in American spirituality of the 1950s, which was characterized broadly by the conjunction of magical-esoteric elements and the science fiction so in vogue in those years, all fueled by a desire to find some new spiritual manifestation.

Both Crowley and his ideas are still very present in contemporary spirituality and popular culture. A 2002 BBC poll to determine who had been the 100 most influential British people in history revealed that Crowley was in an astonishing 73rd place, well ahead of perhaps better-known figures such as writer J.R.R. Tolkien, who was far behind Crowley, specifically at number 925.

Crowley's life has attracted the interest of a good number of authors. Among the various existing biographies, *The Great Beast* by John Symonds (1914-2006), Crowley's literary executor after his death, stands out.

Between 1951, when the first edition of *The Great* *Beast* was published, and 1997, Symonds revised his work on numerous occasions, adding new data or changing entire chapters. Despite being considered Crowley's “*canonical*” biography, it is not exempt from criticism due to its tendentious approach and its fixation on highlighting Crowley's shortcomings, as well as not having understood at all the theses of his former teacher, against whom shows obvious resentment. However, it stands out for its excellent documentation, since Symonds, as Crowley's literary executor, had free access to the latter's writings.

Among the fiercest critics of Symonds are Israel Regardie and Gerald Suster (1951-2001). Regardie, a fundamental figure in the configuration of contemporary occultism, in addition to having been Crowley's disciple and personal secretary between 1928 and 1932, owes his importance to the publication of all the rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in a work entitled *The Golden Dawn: The Original Account of the Teachings, Rites & Ceremonies of the Hermetic Order* (1937), order in which they both served. At the end of the 1960s, and after having read Symonds' *The Great Beast*, Regardie decided to write a new biography of Crowley entitled *The Eye in the Triangle* (1970), in which he presents a kinder visión, as well as a deeper knowledge of Crowley´s ideas and provides new data that does not appear in Symonds's work. Almost 20 years after the publication of *The Eye in the Triangle*, a new biography appeared entitled *The Legacy of the Beast*, written by Gerald Suster in 1988. Despite offering no new data, this biography follows a similar line to Regardie.

One of Crowley's most prominent disciples in his later years, Kenneth Grant (1924-2011), published several texts on his mentor, and actively collaborated in the late 1960s with Symonds on the reissue of some of his works. His position is halfway between Symonds and Regardie and Suster. Grant's works are of interest because they are based mainly on primary sources and on his own experiences with Crowley.

Other Crowley biographies have been published in recent years, including *Aleister Crowley: The Great Beast Demystified* (2006) by Roger Hutchinson, *A Magick Life: A Biography of Aleister Crowley* (2001) by Martin Booth, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (2002) by Lawrence Sutin, *Aleister Crowley: The Biography: Spiritual Revolutionary, Romantic Explorer, Occult Master and Spy* (2012) by Tobias Churton, *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (2003) by Richard Kaczynski, and *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult* (2008) by Richard B. Spence.

Regarding publications more focused on the thought and ideas of Crowley and Thelema, some stand out such as *Thelema: An Introduction to the Life, Work, and Philosophy of Aleister Crowley* (2018) by Colin D. Wilson or *The Law of Thelema: Aleister Crowley's Philosophy of True Will* (2018) by Antti P. Balk.

**II. ALEISTER CROWLEY: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

Aleister Crowley, whose real name was Edward Alexander, was born on October 12, 1875 in the English town of Leamington, in Warwickshire, into a wealthy family enriched by the rail business of his father Edward (1830-1887). Both his father and his mother, Emily Bertha Bishop (1848-1917), were members of a Christian fundamentalist group characterized by extreme rigor and literal interpretation of the Bible: the Plymouth Brethen. Crowley's paternal grandparents were Quakers, but his father had chosen to adhere to the postulates of the English preacher John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), which led him to abandon his business to become a traveling preacher.

For much of his childhood, the only book to which Crowley had access was the Bible, in addition to being forced to read it daily and take an active part in his parents' religious activities. Despite the evident and exacerbated aversion that he later showed towards Christianity, the influence of this, due to the experience lived during the first years of his life, is, in one way or another, very present in his works. It can be seen in the use he made of his symbolism and in Crowley's taste for the elaboration of texts of a notoriously prophetic style, which obviously influenced the development of his philosophical-religious doctrine: Thelema.

His father's death on March 5, 1887, marked a significant turning point in Crowley's life. In his autobiographical work The Confessions, Crowley affirms that after the funeral of his father, his life entered a new phase marked by rebellion, including the Christian rigorism of his mother and his relatives5. His new attitude resulted in a serious deterioration in his physical condition.

Doctors recommended to his relatives that young Crowley be homeschooled with private tutors, and that he have more exposure to the outdoors. It is in these moments when, in the words of Crowley himself, thanks to one of his tutors, Archibald Douglas, he managed to know the worldly pleasures of life and become aware of his true personality6. Although Douglas was fired shortly thereafter, his influence on young Crowley was profound7.

In October 1895, Crowley was accepted into Trinity College, Cambridge, and it is at this time that he decided to change his name to Aleister8 and consider himself a “reactionary conservative” and a Jacobite9. Although he never graduated, his three years at Cambridge left a profound mark on his later personal and intellectual development. In addition to being freed from the constant prohibitions of his mother and his maternal family, Crowley had the opportunity to study in depth the Greco-Latin and modern classics, as well as publishing his first poetic works such as *Aceldama*, *Songs of the Spirit* (both from 1898) and *An Appeal to the American Republic* (1899) thanks to Leonard Smithers (1861-1907). Also during the holiday periods he had the opportunity to visit Scandinavia and the Alps.

In 1896, Crowley received his father's inheritance, a large fortune that allowed him to be financially independent from his family and to pursue his true wishes.

During his time at Cambridge, Crowley had become interested in spiritualism and mysticism, and initially considered becoming a satanist10, although he changed his mind in early 1898 when he met Arthur E. Waite (1857-1942) and read *Die Wolke über dem Heiligtum* by Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-1803), one of the classics of modern esotericism. The reading of Eckartshausen so impressed Crowley11 that, according to Israel Regardie, he felt the need to integrate himself into some society that would allow him to ensure and promote the well-being of all human beings12. That same year, Crowley met two people who had a significant influence on the further development of his ideas: Oscar Eckenstein (1859-1921) and George C. Jones (1873-1960). Both were members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and thanks to them Crowley was admitted to it.

Crowley began his initiation at the Golden Dawn in November 1898 at the Temple of Isis Urania in London. At that time the leadership of the order was in the hands of Samuel Liddell Mathers (1854-1918), but his authority was constantly questioned due to the existence of numerous internal conflicts between various members of the order. Crowley, who had dropped out of college to dedicate himself exclusively to honing his knowledge of the principles and rituals of the Golden Dawn, rose rapidly up their organization chart. During one of the rituals, he would meet one of the most prominent members of the order, Allen Bennett (1872-1923), who a few years later would convert to Buddhism and one of its greatest popularizers in the United Kingdom13. Bennett, who suffered from chronic asthma, was a frequent user of opium, cocaine, and morphine, which he claimed helped alleviate the discomfort caused by his illness14.

Under Bennett's influence, Crowley began to take psychotropic substances15, and most likely as a result of their use, he considered using them solely and exclusively as a means to achieve altered states of consciousness that would allow him to live mystical experiences16. To calmly carry out his "*mystical explorations*" and rituals, in 1899 Crowley acquired Boleskine House17, a property located on the southwestern shore of Loch Ness18.

By 1900, the internal situation of the Golden Dawn had reached a critical point, and Crowley was directly involved in the events that occurred as a result of an uprising instigated by the poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) and the actress Florence Farr (1860-1917) against Samuel Liddell Mathers, who at that time was residing in Paris. Crowley, who had sided with Mathers, tried unsuccessfully to defuse the situation among the members of the order. Eventually, the Yeats and Farr faction seized power, and ordered the expulsion of Mathers and Crowley himself19. Despite the short time that he spent in the Golden Dawn, Crowley claimed to have reached the grade of Adeptus Minor under Mathers' tutelage, but the new leaders of the order at no time recognized him, although according to some researchers, there are several doubts about it20,21.

After experiencing the incidents that led to his expulsion from the Golden Dawn, Crowley's interest in magic was replaced by yoga and Buddhism22. In the spring of 1900 he left the United Kingdom for Mexico, where he would meet his partner Eckenstein to climb together some of the most important peaks in the country. Months later, Crowley sailed to Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) to meet with his friend Allan Bennett, who had previously settled on the island for his ordination as a Buddhist monk. Thanks to Bennett, Crowley had access to various Hindu and Buddhist sacred texts, as well as the opportunity to practice some meditation rituals23. In 1902 he met Eckenstein again in Dehli with the purpose of organizing an expedition to climb K224, which ended up being a complete disaster25. At the end of that year, Crowley settled in Paris, where he frequented the company of writers and artists such as Auguste Rodin (1840-1917)26 or William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)27.

In the spring of the following year, he left France to rest at his Scottish residence at Boleskine House, where he met his first wife, Rose Edith Kelly (1874-1932), sister of his close friend and painter Gerald Festus Kelly (1879 -1972)28. Despite Crowley's hectic life during those years, he had time to write and publish new poetic works such as *Carmen Saeculare* (1901) and *Tannhäuser* (1902), and his first essay on magic, *Berashith* (1903). After marrying Rose Kelly, they both embarked on a long journey that will take them across the East, and during its course, a strange event completely changed Crowley's life.

Between April 8 and 10, 1904, while Crowley and his wife were in Cairo, he claims to have unexpectedly received a message dictated by a supernatural entity called Aiwass, who Crowley would identify as his "guardian angel." Aiwass's message appears collected in the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, an essential text that gathers the principles of a new “*religion*”, Thelema, of which Crowley proclaimed himself his prophet29,30. As a result of that experience, Crowley's interest in magic resurfaced, as did his re-identification with part of the Golden Dawn´s symbology and rituals.

Back in Europe, and before returning to the United Kingdom, the couple spent a few months in Paris, which were used by Crowley to enlist as a Freemason in a chapter of the Grand Lodge of France, whose rites were not recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England. A new work by Crowley, the drama *Why Jesus Wept*, was published in 1904, as well as *The Collected Works*, a compilation of his early writings in three volumes, to be published between 1905 and 1907. During the spring of 1905, Crowley prepared a expedition that, led by himself, would try to scale one of the highest peaks in Asia, the Kangchenjunga31. As in other previous expeditions, it ended up being a failure, claiming the lives of several of its members32.

After the Kangchenjunga disaster, Crowley decided to continue his stay in Asia with his wife, and take a horseback trip through southern China. During the trip he had enough time to put into practice a new ritual designed by himself to which he gave the name *Augoeides*33, which he considered essential for his mystical-religious development34. Despite his expulsion from the Golden Dawn and his Buddhist stage, Crowley continued to study the texts and rituals of the order to continue ascending in its degrees, which he did until the 1920s. In Pasi's opinion, each of the degrees that Crowley reached by himself marked a new stage in his vital development35. After their trip to China, Crowley and his wife headed for Indochina, where the latter embarked for the United Kingdom, while Crowley continued on to Shanghai and later to the United States, to return to the United Kingdom in June 1906.

Back in England, Crowley met personally, after corresponding for a year, with British Army Captain John Frederick Charles Fuller (1878-1966)36, who after winning a literary competition organized by Crowley, became one of his most close collaborators37. Thanks to Fuller, Crowley expanded his following, mostly young students at Trinity College, Cambridge, which scandalized the academic authorities due to his controversial reputation, who did everything possible to avoid Crowley's presence at the university. Among the most prominent of these new followers was Victor Neuburg (1883-1940)38, who would become a celebrated poet and teacher of Dylan Thomas, as well as a brilliant mathematics student named Norman Mudd (1889-1934)39.

Between 1907 and 1908, Crowley published two new works, *Konx Om Pax* (1907) and *Amphora* (1908), in addition to making frequent trips to North Africa. In 1909 Crowley found the original manuscript of the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, which he believed he had lost forever, a fact that he interpreted as a divine sign that reinforced the belief that he was the prophet of a new religion to come40. With the help of one of his former companions of the Golden Dawn, George Cecil Jones, Crowley founded a new esoteric order, the Astrum Argentum41,42, based on the principles and rites of the Golden Dawn, to which he added magical-religious elements that had known on his travels in Asia.

Likewise, and with the purpose of serving as the propagandistic organ of the new order, he founded *The Equinox*43, whose publication would coincide with each equinox. In regards to his personal life, Crowley's marital problems, which had started a couple of years earlier, manifested themselves in 1909, and will end with the divorce of his wife Rose as a result of her alcoholism44. At the end of that year, between the months of November and December, Crowley went to Algeria in the company of Neuburg with the aim of carrying out several "astral experiments" based on the principles of Enochian magic, which Crowley considered essential for his development as a student of magic, as well as to achieve the degree of *Magister Templi*45.

During the spring of 1910, the former leader of the Golden Dawn, Liddell Mathers, filed a lawsuit to prevent the publication of the third issue of *The Equinox*, claiming that if allowed, much of the rites of the order would be revealed, which he was not willing to allow46.

Mathers' demand had wide repercussions among occult circles throughout Europe, but, unfortunately for the latter, the courts agreed with Crowley, which made him gain popularity and aroused the interest of personalities such as Theodor Reuss (1855-1923)47, which at that time was planning the founding of a new esoteric order that would achieve great impact, the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). That same year, Crowley organized *The Rites of Eleusis*48 in London, a public exhibition of some of his rituals that garnered a large number of favorable reviews, as well as some attacks from the tabloid press that accused him of being immoral49. Despite the accusations, Crowley refused to take legal measures to prevent it, but one of his closest collaborators, George Cecil Jones, filed several lawsuits that were dismissed by the courts. As a result of the accusations, Crowley suffered a certain ostracism not only from society, but also from some of his most prominent followers such as the aforementioned Jones and Captain Fuller50,51.

In addition to publishing *The Rites of Eleusis*, throughout 1910 Crowley edited a new compilation of some of his poems entitled *The Winged Beetle*, as well as a verse drama, *The World´s Tragedy*, in which he exposes his intellectual position against the dogmas and beliefs of Christianity.

In 1912 Crowley met with Reuss to discuss plans that would eventually lead to the founding of a chapter of the O.T.O. in the United Kingdom under the direction of Crowley, who obtained the rank of *Grand Master* after being initiated into the rites and secrets of the order by Reuss. From that moment on, Crowley's interest turned towards sex magic52. That same year Crowley published *Mysticism and Magick (Elementary Theory)*, the first two parts of the *Liber ABA* or *Book Four*, essential to understand his conception of magic and its practices53. In 1913 a new text will be published, The Book of Lies, a collection of essays in which Crowley reveals some revealing details of his philosophical thought54.

In January of the following year, Crowley settled in Paris to carry out, with the help of his friend Neuburg, some rituals of sex magic in which the journalist Walter Duranty (1884-1957) participated, who years later would be a correspondent for the New York Times in the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1936.

In the months immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I, Crowley had left France for Switzerland, although he temporarily returned to the United Kingdom for the purpose of joining the British intelligence services, but his request was rejected due to his reputation55. The great fortune that Crowley had inherited from his father had almost completely vanished, and in October 1914 he decided to take a new direction in his life, embarking for the United States to meet John Quinn, an American collector interested in acquiring part of his personal library56. Although at first Crowley only intended to spend a couple of weeks in the United States, his stay lasted five years. In early 1915 he began to write assiduously for a pro-German newspaper, *The Fatherland*, owned by the writer George Sylvester Viereck (1884-1962), whom he had met in London in 1911. Crowley also contributed occasionally to *Vanity Fair* until October 1915, at which point he will leave New York to establish on the West Coast57. In Vancouver he met one of his followers, Charles Stansfeld Jones (1886-1950), who had organized a chapter of the O.T.O. in that city58.

In 1916 Crowley met the literary critic Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) and was involved in an affair with his wife, Alice Richardson, known by the pseudonym Ratan Devi, with whom he performed some sex magic rituals59. In the summer of that year, Crowley retired to New Hampshire to focus on his ritual studies to reach the penultimate degree of the Golden Dawn, that of *Magus*60. He also devoted his time to writing a new work, *Moonchild*61, which would not be published until more than ten years later.

During the spring of 1917, the London police organized a raid on the British headquarters of the O.T.O. sparked by the deeply anti-British articles Crowley had earlier published in *The Fatherland*62. To avoid further reactions from the British authorities, Crowley went on to write and take over the management of another publication owned by Viereck*, The International*, where he was approximately for eight months63.

In the spring of 1918 Crowley met a school teacher named Leah Hirsig, who became his new lover and assumed the position of *Scarlet Woman*64.

In December of the following year, Crowley returned to the United Kingdom after considering that his induction period to ascend to the rank of *Magus* had concluded successfully65. After his return, the British authorities did not take any action against him, but Crowley had no intention of remain a long time in his native country, since he had plans to found what he called an "abbey" where a group of his followers could put into practice the rites of Thelema, in addition to carrying out a sociological experiment. The chosen place was a villa rented by Crowley himself in March 1920 in the Sicilian town of Cefalù, to found what he called the "*Abbey of Thelema*"66.

At first only Crowley, Leah Hirsig and Ninette Shumway (1894-1990) settled. During the approximately three years that the “*Abbey*” was active, many of Crowley's followers and friends passed through, most of them from the United Kingdom. In the last months of 1921 there were serious clashes between members of the Thelema community that caused the residents of Cefalù to urge the police to act67. In 1922 Crowley left Cefalù to retire to Fontainebleau for a few months and end once and for all his addiction to heroin, which he had started using in 1919. The detox attempt completely failed, and his addiction continued until his death in 194768.

In May 1922, Crowley sailed for London to raise funds to continue his social experiment in Cefalù. To do this, he published several articles in a magazine called *The English Review*, in addition to signing a contract to publish a new work, *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, where Crowley recounts his experiences with various drugs and his life in the “*Abbey of Thelema*”69.

The book's publication sparked a wave of fierce criticism from mostly the *Sunday Express,* which accused Crowley of immorality for advocating substance use70. At the time Crowley had another literary project in progress, his autobiography, *The Confessions*, which could not be published due to rejection encouraged by the British tabloid press. In October 1922 Crowley returned to Cefalù, although before doing so he spent a few days in Rome, witnessing the march on Rome of the National Fascist Party7[[1]](#footnote-1).

In February 1923 tragedy struck the “*Abbey*” as a result of the death of a young disciple named Raoul Loveday (1900-1923). Loveday had drunk unsafe water, which caused typhoid fever and his death72. During his illness, Loveday received no treatment, and his wife, who had accompanied him to Cefalù, reported Crowley and his followers to the British consul in Palermo. Shortly thereafter, Loveday's widow returned to the United Kingdom and began to appear in virtually all British tabloid publications, notably the *John Bull* and the *Sunday Express*, which found new impetus in their criticism of Crowley73. As a result of the criticism and constant denunciations of the inhabitants of Cefalù, on April 23, 1923, Mussolini decreed the expulsion of Crowley from Italy, causing the end of the “*Abbey*”74.

After his expulsion from Italy, Crowley settled in Tunisia for the remaining months of that year, dedicating himself to writing and publishing a collection of poems entitled *Songs for Italy*, in which he ridicules Mussolini and the Italian fascist movement. The following year he went to France, where he remained until September 1924. In the spring of 1925, and from Tunis, where he had returned after being in France during 1924, Crowley launched what he called the “*World Teacher Campaign*”, a project to unmask Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1934), whom he considered a fraud for presenting himself as a kind of new “*messiah*”. Krishnamurti, who had the support of the Theosophical Society, led at the time by Annie Besant (1847-1933) and Charles W. Ledbeater (1854-1934), considered him to be a clear example of a spiritual leader who would lead Humanity to a New Age75.

Fortunately for Krishnamurti and the Theosophical Society, Crowley's attacks had no effect. During his smear campaign, Crowley met George I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949), who invited him to visit his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, located near Fontainebleau76.

The O.T.O., which at that time was mired in a deep crisis caused by the death of Reuss, which had not left any express indication as to who should assume the leadership of the order after his death77, caused that two high-ranking members, C.S. Jones and Heinrich Tränker, decided to offer it to Crowley in late 1924. Crowley was legitimized at a congress held in Thuringia during the summer of 1925 by the German Rosicrucian Movement, which included the German chapter of the O.T.O. and an esoteric organization known as Pansophia. The decision to accept Crowley as the new leader caused a serious rift in the German Rosicrucian movement. Critics of that decision supported his stance on Crowley's reputation, as well as highlighting that his appointment as leader of the O.T.O. it would imply the acceptance of his ideas, which from a merely instructive point of view they considered interesting, but not enough to follow.

Crowley's supporters included some of the most prominent members of the O.T.O. and from German esoteric circles, such as Karl Germer (1885-1962) and Martha Küntzel (1857-1941). Germer became so involved in Crowley's cause that he supported him financially until his death in 1947. Following Crowley's death, Germer was designated in Crowley's will as the international leader of the O.T.O.

From 1926 Crowley settled in Paris, where he remained until March 1929, when he was expelled from the country by the French authorities due to his dubious reputation and morality, which had wide repercussions in the international press. Crowley tried to return to the United Kingdom together with his new wife, the Nicaraguan María Teresa Ferrari de Miramar, whom he had married in August 1929 in Leipzig, so that she could obtain British citizenship and reside indefinitely in the country.

In August 1929, Crowley, his wife, and one of his disciples, Israel Regardie (1907-1985), settled on a small farm in Kent County.

Back in the United Kingdom, and after trying hard to find a new editor for his works, Crowley managed to convince Percy Reginald Stephensen (1901-1965), owner of a small publishing house called *Mandrake*, to publish a good part of his texts, which due to the media campaign launched by the tabloid press had not been publicly available. Some of the published works were *Moonchild* and the first two volumes of *The Confessions*. At the end of 1929, and without Stephensen, Crowley published the continuation of the *Book Four* under the title of *Magick in Theory and Practice*, in which he developed his ideas on magic. In the spring of 1930 Crowley again traveled to Germany with his wife to prepare an exhibition of some of his pictorial works which was eventually held in Berlin. During his stay, Crowley met the young artist Hanni Jaeger (1910-1933) with whom he fell madly in love and returned with her to Kent after abandoning his wife Maria somewhere in Germany.

In August of that year, and in the company of Jaeger, Crowley settled in Lisbon, where for a whole year, he would maintain frequent contacts with the well-known Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), who was very interested in the esotericism and in Crowley himself. Among the different reasons for Crowley's stay in Lisbon, some authors such as Pasi have considered the possibility of offering Pessoa the direction of a chapter of the O.T.O. in Portugal. In the course of his Portuguese stay, one of the most curious episodes of Crowley's life occurred, the simulation of his own death.

With Pessoa´s help, Crowley made international public opinion believe that he had committed suicide by throwing himself into the sea, which will allow him to appear shortly after, and discreetly, in Berlin. According to a letter dated October 29, 1949 sent by the French philosopher and mathematician René Guenón (1886 1951) to his friend Julius Evola (1898-1974), Crowley had faked his death to return to Germany and occupy a position as Adolf Hitler's advisor78.

Between September 1930 and until mid-1932, Crowley resided in Berlin, where he came into contact with figures such as Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) and the British adventurer Gerald Hamilton (1890-1970), who was closely linked to the German Communist Party.

In the early summer of 1932, Crowley returned to the UK and lived in London until the Luftwaffe bombings forced him to relocate. Since his return, Crowley has not made any trips due to his poor health, a consequence of his continued drug abuse. His financial situation was difficult, but he managed to survive through donations from some of his followers. During these years, his relationships with some of his close friends and collaborators were seriously affected. Crowley avoided some of them like Regardie or Germer. With the latter, Crowley contacted again before dying.

In 1933 Crowley won a lawsuit that he had filed against a bookseller who had brought serious charges against *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, and encouraged by the success achieved in court, Crowley filed new lawsuits, one of them against Nina Hamnett (1890-1956), a former follower who had revealed to the public her experiences at the “*Abbey*”. The trial against Hamnett took place throughout 1934, but this time it did not benefit Crowley, because during the hearings he ended up being accused of immorality, which again provoked new attacks from the tabloid press. In July, Crowley was indicted and brought to court for having received several letters that had been stolen to elaborate his indictment against Hamnett. Crowley was convicted and sentenced to two years of probation, which caused him to declare bankruptcy in 1935.

That same year, Karl Germer was arrested in Berlin by the Nazi authorities for his membership in the O.T.O., which along with other esoteric groups and orders, had been outlawed. Germer was taken to Berlin's Alexanderplatz prison, and later locked up in the Esterwegen concentration camp. Around 1940 he was released and went to Belgium, where the authorities accused him of being a Nazi spy. On the eve of the German invasion of Belgium he was deported to France, where he will spend ten months in a prison camp until 1941. That year he embarked for the United States, and from there he held the position of *Grand Treasurer* of the O.T.O.

After his judicial journeys, Crowley devoted himself exclusively to writing and publishing. In 1936 he published *The Equinox of the Gods*, where he recounted the events that led to the creation of the *Liber AL Vel Legis* in Cairo in 1904. Four years before his death, he published *The Book of Thoth* (1944), a personal interpretation of the Tarot.

On December 1, 1947, as a result of a heart condition aggravated by bronchitis, Crowley died in a Hastings boarding house. After his death, some of his most significant works were published, such as *Magick without Tears* (1954), where he exposes the foundations of his philosophical thought; *Liber Aleph* (1961), a compendium of teachings addressed to his disciple C.S. Jones and the remaining parts of his autobiography, *The Confessions*.

**III. AN INTRODUCTION TO THELEMA**

Although in some aspects Thelema could be considered as a new religious movement, it would be more correct to classify it as a "*religious philosophy*" derived from the Western esoteric tradition despite containing elements from Eastern religious currents and thought. Its name derives from the Greek term θέλημα, which can be translated as "will, desire or purpose."

The fundamental principle of Thelema, known as “*Law of Thelema*” is reflected in the motto coined by Crowley: “*Let your will be all the law. Love is the law, love under will*”. This has been the subject of various interpretations, sometimes endowing it with moral, esoteric and even sociopolitical connotations. The founding text of Thelema is the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, which contains its basic guidelines.

The Thelemite pantheon is made up of several deities, among which a divine triad based on the religion of Ancient Egypt stands out, consisting of Nuit, Hadit and Ra-Hoor-Khuit, who speak in each of the three chapters of the *Liber AL Vel Legis*.

According to Crowley, the 20th century would mark the beginning of a New Age of Humanity, the *Aeon of Horus*, whose moral precept would be "*May your will be the only law.*" As Crowley was defining his belief system, he also produced other texts, according to him of "*divine*" inspiration, which will make up the so-called *Sacred Books of Thelema*, which contain concepts taken from both Western and Eastern esoteric and philosophical currents.

**Origins**

Although of Greek origin, the term θέλημα was not used frequently in Classical Greece due to its terminological connotations, mainly related to lustful desire. However, it was widely used in the *Septuagint Bible* and in early Christian texts to refer to the human will and even the Evil One, but more usually to the will of God. Some examples can be read in Matthew 6:10 and 26:42. In the 5th century AD, St. Augustine used it in a sense similar to John 4: 4-12.

During the Renaissance, in *The Dream of Poliphilus*, a work by the Dominican priest Francesco Colonna (1433-1527) written in 1499, a character called Thelemia appears, representing desire. The protagonist of Colonna's story, Poliphilus, has two spiritual guides, the aforementioned Thelemia and another called Logistics, which represents reason. According to the argument of this work, when Poliphilus has to decide to follow the advice of Thelemia or Logistics, he decides to opt for the first, moved by his sexual desire, leaving reason in the background. Colonna's text influenced a much more famous later work, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, by François Rabelais (1494-1553). In *Gargantúa and Pantagruel*, written by Rabelais in 1534, the author used the term *thélème* to name a fictitious abbey where the only rule was “*Fay çe que vouldras*”, that is, “*Do what you like*”.

Around the second half of the 18th century, the British aristocrat Francis Dashwood (1708-1781) founded a secret society called The Hellfire Club, which remained active between 1749 and 1766. All its members came from the most reputable noble families of Great Brittany, and met in the ruins of an ancient Medieval abbey located at Medmehan. In one of the entrance porticoes of the abbey, Dashwood ordered to inscribe the motto of the Abbey of Thélème described by Rabelais.

**Liber AL Vel Legis**

Crowley claimed to have received this text during his stay in Cairo in early April 1904, through a supernatural voice belonging to an entity called Aiwass, which Crowley later identified as his "*guardian angel*." The text is structured in three chapters, and each of them collects the message of the deities that make up the divine triad of Thelema, Nuit, Hadit and Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

The text and events related to its reception have been the subject of controversy. For Israel Regardie, it was not dictated by any supernatural entity, but by Crowley's subconscious. This opinion is not shared by many Thelemites, who consider it to be a divine text. To settle the controversies regarding the nature of the text and its "revelation", Crowley claimed that it was impossible for him to have written such things due to the complexity of many of the passages contained in the text. According to Crowley, the only way to determine the authenticity of the text was by studying it, and he was sure that this would put an end to the doubts.

For David Evans, who carried out a careful analysis of the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, it contains numerous similarities to a work by Florence Farr (1860-1917) entitled *The Beloved of Hathor and The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* (1902). According to this researcher, this may be because both Crowley and Farr served in the Golden Dawn, which allowed them to know its principles and rites79. One of Crowley's recent biographers, Lawrence Sutin, claims to have found similarities between some aspects of Thelema and the work of the Anglo-Irish poet and playwright William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) who, like Crowley and Farr, was a member of the Golden Dawn.

Between 1904, the date of the reception of the *Liber AL Vel Legis*, and 1925, Crowley wrote several comments on it. In the last of those comments, titled simply *Commentary*, Crowley cautions that any discussion of what is contained in the Liber AL Vel Legis, as well as its interpretation, must be conducted in accordance with his writings.

**The True Will**

According to Crowley's thesis, every human being possesses what he called "*True Will*", which is different from the ego's desires, as it is conceived as the ultimate purpose that leads to self-realization. This can be achieved through individual effort, without depending on the whims of God or any other supernatural entity. Since 1904, and as a consequence of the events that occurred in April of that year in Cairo, in later works such as *Liber II* (1941), Crowley affirmed that the “*True Will*” in its purest form is a manifestation of the divine will. According to Crowley, to achieve the “*True Will*” all the restrictions imposed by society must be rejected, especially the sexual ones, which restrict the power of divine creation.

The "*True Will*" is the "guardian angel" that guides the steps of each individual in the search and achievement of their own *Magnum Opus*, which is different in each human being and can only be achieved by following the rules of Thelema.

**Cosmogony and deities**

The most important deities of the Thelemite pantheon are based on the Ancient Egyptian religion, the most important of them being Nuit, the "*Great Mother*". It is represented as a naked woman in an arched position that covers the entire Earth. She symbolizes the night sky and is considered the origin of all things.

The next most important Thelemite deity is Hadit, husband of Nuit, who symbolizes movement and time, being described in *Liber AL Vel Legis* as the flame that burns eternally in the hearts of human beings and in the center of the stars.

The third and last of the main deities of Thelema is Ra-Hoor-Khuit, one of the manifestations of the god Horus. He is represented as a hawk-headed man who carries a kind of magic wand in one of his hands. Ra-Hoor-Khuit symbolizes the Sun and the powers that emanate from the magical rites of Thelema.

Other minor deities of Thelema are Hoor-paar-kraat, the god of silence and inner power; Babalon, goddess of pleasure, and Therion, the wild beast that resides in every human being.

**Rites and “Magick”**

Crowley conceived magic as a science (and as an art) that allows us to transform reality according to the wishes of the "*True Will*". To differentiate it from traditional magic, Crowley coined the term "*magick*" to designate a series of rites and practices whose performance allows us to discover the essence of the "*True Will*". In their magical practices, elements of both Western and Eastern esoteric currents are combined, as well as others from the Golden Dawn.

From these elements, Crowley developed rituals such as the *Lesser Pentagram Ritual*, the *Liber Samekh* (Invocations to the “guardian angel”), the *Gnostic and Phoenix Masses* and the *Liber Resh* (Four daily prayers to the Sun). Likewise, sex magic is of great importance, and its practice is recommended for initiation to the highest degrees of O.T.O.

Those who have succeeded in knowing the nature of their "*True Will*" must "cross the Abyss", which means to renounce their ego completely. If they are not capable, they will become what Crowley called a "*Black Brother*", who instead of merging with divinity, considers the ego as something divine. According to Crowley, the "*Black Brothers*" tend to vanish from the world, consumed by their ego, which they try to satisfy by taking advantage of other individuals.

Crowley placed special emphasis on the adoption of a skeptical point of view in the analysis of the results obtained through magical or meditative practices, and recommended a daily record of the rites performed, as well as the conditions in which they had been carried out. In Crowley's opinion, and based on the statements of individuals who had achieved a high spiritual development, magic would end up being accepted by Science thanks to the understanding of its phenomenology, and terms such as "*spiritual*" or "*supernatural*" would be definitively abandoned. For Crowley, the magical rites he had designed followed the scientific method, and their results could be scientifically analyzed.

**Thelemic ethics**

The *Liber AL Vel Legis* offers some rules of conduct that must be followed by every thelemite, the main one being "*Do what thou wilt*". This does not mean that the individual will should be above other human beings. According to some interpretations, it includes respect for others and making it possible for them to satisfy their “*True Will*”. In the Liber AL Vel Legis no guide is given to adopt a certain position, and Crowley himself stated that there was no need to explain the ethical principles of Thelema because they all derive from the primordial law, which is none other than "*Do what thou wilt* ".

However, Crowley produced several writings in which he exposes his ideas about the individual will in accordance with the principles of Thelema, such as its limits with respect to others, which are analyzed in the *Liber OZ*. In this text, Crowley presents and develops the fundamental rights of the human being in accordance with the fundamental principle of Thelema. Some of them are:

* live according to your own law and your convictions.
* die when and how you choose.
* express your ideas freely, without being subject to social, religious or any other conventions.
* kill those who violate these rights.

Regarding the duties of all those who accept the "*Law of Thelema*", they are the following:

* the only duty is to oneself. The ego is the center of the internal universe of the human being, and allows us to know our true essence, and what is more important, the “*True Will*”.
* respect the will of others, avoiding interfering in their actions and guiding them when necessary, always taking into account their divine nature.
* follow the "*Law of Thelema*" and ensure that the established laws guarantee the freedom of each and every individual. Crimes are an attack against the "*True Will*", and must be prosecuted.
* in case of doubt or conflict, always refer to the "*Law of Thelema*". The incorrect use of another living being or object is an attack against its essence. The human being can take advantage of the goods that the Earth offers, but always in accordance with its nature. Otherwise, the "*Law of Thelema*" must be avenged.

In *Liber II* (1942), Crowley specifies that the "*Law of Thelema*" consists solely and exclusively in the command "*Do what thou wilt* ", not being necessary to do anything else. However, the "*Law of Thelema*" has been subject to various interpretations. Today most Thelemites reject any kind of dogmatic or fundamentalist attitude. Crowley himself insisted on the importance of the "True Will" of each individual, as well as the freedom to adhere to any other philosophical or religious current if desired. For this reason it is possible to find Thelemites in other religious movements without causing internal conflicts, since they are following their will. Also, by drawing on many other Western and Eastern religious and philosophical traditions, Thelema bears many similarities to other currents of thought.

While some Thelemites only accept the *Liber AL Vel Legis* and reject the rest of Crowley's "revealed texts", on the other hand others create their own beliefs taking those ideas or concepts that they consider suitable for their "*True Will*", rejecting others. There are those who believe that Crowley's system is just one more of Thelema's manifestations, and there are other valid ones like Kenneth Grant's. Finally, some Thelemites are not interested in the religious connotations of Thelema, and only focus on its study as a philosophical current.

**Thelemic influence**

In addition to Wicca, Modern Satanism and Scientology, as well as Astrum Argentum and the OTO, which were led by Crowley at some point in his life, since his death in 1947 other currents have emerged that to a greater or lesser extent, claim to expand and continue Crowley's work. These include the Typhonian Order of Kenneth Grant or the Fraternitas Saturni, founded in the late 1920s in Germany, or the also German Thelema Society, which in its particular belief system includes theories of prominent philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger.

**NOTES**

Bogdan, H; Starr, M.P. (eds.) *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism*, Oxford University Press, NY, 2012; p.7.

2 *Ibíd*, p.8.

3 Pasi, M.; *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2014; p.3.

4 http://alchemipedia.blogspot.com/2009/12/100‐greatest‐britons‐bbc‐poll‐2002.html

5 *“From the moment of the funeral the boy's life entered on an entirely new phase. The change was radical (…) a complete reversal of his attitude to life in every respect. (…) obvious that his father's death must have been causally connected”* A. Crowley (eds. K. Grant & J. Symonds) (1989), *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography,* p.53.

6 *“…my Uncle Tom made occasional mistakes, and one of these was very fortunate for me. He engaged a tutor named Archibald Douglas (…) he produced a complete revolution in my outlook upon life, by showing me (…) smoking and drinking were natural (…). He introduced me to racing, billiards, betting, cards and women (…) and began to behave like a normal, healthy human being (…) my eyes were opened and I had become as a god, knowing good and evil.*” Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 75-76.

7 “*Uncle Tom appeared upon the scene. Got Douglas out (…) and dismissed him. But it was too late.*” Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 76.

8 *“…how I came to have changed my name. For many years I had loathed being called Alick (…) because of the unpleasant sound and sight of the word (…) it was the name (…) my mother called me. Edward did not seem to suit me (…). Alexander was too long (…). I had read (…) that the most favourable name for becoming famous was one consisting of a dactyl followed by a spondee (…). Aleister (…) fulfilled these conditions and (…) is the Gaelic form of Alexander (…) it would satisfy my romantic ideals. The (…) spelling (…) was suggested (…) by Cousin Gregor.* “Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 140.

9 “*Scott, Burns and my cousin Gregor had made me a romantic Jacobite. I regarded the Houses of Hanover and Coburg as German usurpers (…) My reactionary conservatism came (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 121.

10 “*…in these early days, my real need was spiritual satisfaction; and I was a satanist or a worldling (…) in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi*.” Crowley, Confessions, p.92

11 “*He (Waite) replied (…) I should read The Cloud upon the Sanctuary by (…) Eckartshausen. (…) It determined the direction of my efforts*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, 127.

12 *“…Waite urged him to read a certain book which spoke of a hidden community of light, an invisible and interior Sanctuary whose sainted members watched over the welfare of mankind.”* I. Regardie (1989) *The Eye in the Triangle*, p.38.

13 “*In the spring of 1899, at some ceremony (…) I knew (…) Very Honoured Frater Iehi Aour, called among men Allan Bennett*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 178.

14 “*Allan Bennett (…) suffered acutely from spasmodic asthma. His cycle of life was to take opium for about a month, when the effect wore off, so that he had to inject morphine. After a month of this he had to switch to cocaine (…) till he began to "see things".”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.180.

15 *“(…) under his tuition I made rapid progress. He showed me where to get knowledge, how to criticize it and how to apply it. We also worked together at ceremonial Magick*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, p.181.

16 Pasi, M. *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics*, Routledge (2014), p. 12.

17 James Patrick “Jimmy” Page, guitarist for the British band Led Zeppelin, bought Boleskine House in 1970 because of his fascination with Crowley's ideas and work, as well as considering it the ideal place to compose his songs. See: Case, George (2007) *Jimmy Page: Magus, Musician, Man: an Unauthorized Biography*. Hal Leonard, p.98.

18 “*In the year 1899 I came to Boleskine House and put everything in order with the object of carrying out the Operation of Abra-Melin the Mage*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 357.

19 “*Early in 1900 (…) the London body was in open revolt against the Chief (…). I went to London and discussed the matter (…) I cannot understand how (…) W. B. Yeats should not have repressed such methods (…) and insisted (…). The rebel camp broke up in anarchy. They issued various hysterical manifestos, distinguished by confusion of thought, inaccuracy of statement, personal malice, empty bombast and ignorance (…). Mathers (…) had fallen. There was no point in my going back (…)*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, pp.193-197.

20 Ruggiu & Tereshchenko (2009) “The Crowley Affair”, www.golden dawn.com/eu/displaycontent.aspx? pageid=113–crowley-affair.

21 Churton, Tobias (2011) *Aleister Crowley: The Biography: Spiritual Revolutionary, Romantic Explorer, Occult Master and Spy*. London: Watkins Publishing. p. 52.

22 *“In 1900 I left England for Mexico, and later the Far East (…) my thought (…) passing through a stage of Hinduism, I had discarded all deities (…) and philosophy”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.357.

23 *“During the whole time, I had been studying the original scriptures of Hinduism and Buddhism very thoroughly. Besides this, I had discussed every aspect of religion and philosophy with immensely varied types of thinkers (…) as Allan Bennett”*; Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 276.

24 *“(…) I had agreed to consider the question of an Himalayan expedition, to Chogo Ri, marked "K2" (…) the second highest mountain in the world.*” Crowley, *Confessions*, p.253.

25 *“(…) Srinagar, 132 days after leaving it. The expedition to Chogo Ri was over.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 331.

26 *“In France one attains eminence (…). Men of art and letters are respected and honoured (…). I was introduced to Rodin and (…) fell in love with the superb old man and his colossal work*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 338.

27 *“William Somerset Maugham, my nice young doctor whom I remembered so well from the dear old days of the Chat Blanc.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 570.

28 *“Gerald Kelly's elder sister, Rose (…) was a woman as beautiful and fascinating (…)”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 348.

29 Crowley, A. (1936) *The Equinox of the Gods*, Chapter VII, pp. 94-134.

30 Pasi, 2014, p. 13.

31 “*There was no time to spare, if we were to attack Kanchenjunga this summer*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, p.421.

32 *“(…) the demon of Kangchenjunga was propitiated with the sacrifice of the five men.”* Crowley,  
*Confessions*, 442.

33 *“(…) I chose the word "Augoeides" to represent my thought (…) reason becomes clear if we consider the nature of the meditation (…) essence of my success (…). I continued (…) the Augoeides, with occasional additions and progressive intensification, week after week.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp.515, 528.

34 *“(…) had to undertake it in order to fulfil completely (…) necessary to complete the work of the Second Order before (…) take up my work in the Third.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.529.

35 Pasi, 2014: 13.

36 Fuller is known for his treatises on military theory, as well as for his active involvement in the British Union of Fascist, an organization founded by Sir Oswald Mosley (1896-1980) in the 1930s. In 1939 Fuller was invited to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of Adolf Hitler. See: Pasi, 2014: 14; Boot, Max (2006). *War made new: technology, warfare, and the course of history, 1500 to today*, Gotham.

37 *“One other seed had fallen upon fertile ground. (…) Captain John Charles Frederick Fuller, of the First Oxfordshire Light Infantry. It had come his way through the Rationalist Press Association (…). He had not done any serious writing before; (…) a few insignificant articles and poems, (…)* to the *Agnostic Journal*.” Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 538

38 *“(…) Fuller had met a youth named Neuburg, Victor Benjamin (…) who was at Trinity College, Cambridge, and knew my work. (…) Neuburg was certainly a most distinguished specimen (…) He was an agnostic, a vegetarian, a mystic, a Tolstoyan, and several other things (…) one of the best natured people that ever trod this planet. (…) from the first moment I saw him, I saw (…) extraordinary capacity for Magick. (…) I decided to utilize them for the benefit of the Order, and of himself.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp.562-563.

39 *“(…) a man named Norman Mudd, whose parents were poor and without influence, with the loss of his mathematical scholarship. (…) Mudd was the mainstay of the hope of the college for the forthcoming Tripos, and Mudd himself had the heart of a lion.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.565.

40 *“(…) October 1908, I was carrying out a Retirement (…) invoking my Holy Guardian Angel, without any reference to The Book of the Law. (…) I was sheltering myself from The Book of the Law by taking advantage of a phrase in the text which insists: "All this and a book to say how thou didst come hither and a reproduction of this ink and paper for ever-for in it is the word secret & not only in the English..." And the manuscript had been lost! (…) The finding of the manuscript was not even a miracle; it happened in the ordinary course of nature. (I) was only waiting to hear the unmistakable voice of my Master, and that this insignificant incident supplied the intuitive certainty: that none other than he was behind it. I knew in myself from the first that the revelation in Cairo was the real thing. (…) I knew in myself that the Secret Chiefs had arranged that the manuscript of The Book of the Law should have been hidden (…) and arranged every detail of the incident in such a way that I should understand it as I did.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 542, 597-598.

41 “*On July 26th I went to stay with Cecil Jones, who was now an Exempt Adept. I conferred with him about my operation.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.530.

42 *“(…) the A:.A. '. (…) was a reformulation of the old Golden Dawn (…) with classical mystical and occult techniques. (…) differed (…) in (...) Hindu methods based on his own experimentation with Yoga training (…) a combination of Yoga and Ceremonial Magic (…).”* Regardie, *The Eye in the Triangle*, p. 454-455. To know in Crowley's own words the process of founding the Astrum Argentum, it is recommended to read An account of the A: A, published in *The Equinox Vol I. Nº I*, pp. 7-17.

43 *“(…) The Equinox was the first serious attempt to put before the public the facts of occult science (…) It was the first attempt in history to treat the subject with scholarship and from the standpoint of science.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.604.

44 *“During these two years my domestic tragedy was becoming constantly more acute. Rose told me that she was keeping her word, but it had become impossible to do any work where she was. She was in a state of continual irritation. (…) she had obtained one hundred and fifty bottles of whisky (…) in five months.* (…) *Early in 1909, the doctor (…) told her that she must agree to be sequestrated for two years. She refused: I insisted upon a divorce.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 534-535.

45 Crowley, A. (1999) “Liber CDXVIII The Vision and The Voice with Commentary” en *The Vision & the Voice With Commentary and Other Papers: The Collected Diaries of Aleister Crowley, 1909-1914 E.V.*; Weiser Books, NY, pp. 1-37.

46 *“In the spring, a few days before the publication of number three of The Equinox, which contained the Ritual of the 5° - 6th degree of the old Order, Mathers served him with an injunction restraining publication (…) He instructed his lawyers and did not even trouble to go to court. Mr. Justice Bucknill, who heard the argument, happened to be an eminent freemason and though he had no idea what the fuss was about, it seemed to him, on general (…) nobody ought to be allowed to publish anything (…) He therefore confirmed the injunction. I appealed. The judges (…) admitted the difficulty (…) The argument had been farcically funny and all the dailies had anything up to three columns on the case. On the very day of publication, (…)  
I found myself famous and my work in demand.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.628.

47 *“One of my callers (…) a man named Theodor Reuss (…) was Grand Master of Germany of the combined Scottish, Memphis and Mizraim Rites of Freemasonry. (…) he did persuade me that there were a few men who took the matter seriously (…). “*Crowley, *Confessions*, pp.628-629.

48 *“In 1910 during "The Rites of Eleusis" in Caxton Hall, to which we purposely invited a police  
representative, they had other men in plain clothing outside the building, apparently hoping that something indictable would ooze through the brickwork. I could not condescend to reply to personal abuse. (…) they repeatedly raided in search of some evidence of the "Devil Worshipper's Mystic Love Cult" and of course found nothing; from which they concluded not my innocence, but that my pact with the devil contained a clause guaranteeing me against the discovery of my crimes. If any of those obstinate asses had possessed sufficient intelligence to study a single page of my writings, he would have seen at once what ridiculous rubbish were the accusations (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 888.

49 “*I saw no objection to stating my position for the sake of sincere and worthy people who might, through ignorance of the facts, be turned away from truth. I accordingly availed myself of the editor of a high-class illustrated weekly, the Bystander, and wrote two articles explaining what the Rites of Eleusis were; how people might cultivate their highest faculties by studying them. I also published the text of the rites as a supplement to number six of The Equinox.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 639.

50 *“I cannot comment upon such incidents. I have never been able to understand the psychology of such crass stupidity as I have found almost universal among editors and publishers. I can understand any man considering any piece of literature worthless, or thinking it a supreme masterpiece.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 689.

51 *“Fuller had begun to behave in a totally unintelligible way (…) It was a mere instinct that something was wrong. The climax came after Jones vs The Looking Glass. Fuller had urged me to take action myself. When the verdict justified my judgment. Fuller hinted that he could not afford to be openly associated with The Equinox. He also tried to interfere with my conduct of the magazine and made it a condition of his continuing (…) Mr Jones wrote me, in the tone of a dictator, that I ought to go to law to clear my character from the aspersions cast upon (…) But in this jest of Mr Jones' pompous imbecility, there was something sad.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 635, 760.

52 *“(…) the O.T.O. assumed its proper importance in my mind. I understood that I held in my hands the key to the future progress of humanity. I applied myself at once to learn all that he could teach me (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 710.

53 *In my Book Four, Part I, I have copied from my diary (…) an attempt at classification of (…) ideas (…) write a book on my system of mysticism and Magick, to be called Book Four (…). Part One of Book Four expounds the principles and practice of mysticism in simple scientific terms stripped of all sectarian accretion, superstitious enthusiasms or other extraneous matter.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 242, 677, 680.

54 *“I do not hesitate to claim that in none other of my writings have I given so profound and comprehensive an exposition of my philosophy on every plane. I deal with the inmost impulses of the soul and through the whole course of consciousness down to the reactions of the most superficial states of mind. I consider this book so important as a compendium of the contents of my consciousness (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 687.

55 *“There was a (…) Gentleman (…) in the British Military Mission with whom I had such dealings (…) our secret service sent to interview me. I told him that I could find out exactly what the Germans were doing in America. I also told him that (…) I could go to Germany in the character of an Irish patriot and report on the conditions of the country (…). The secret service people, while considering my application for employment (…) wailed piteously; "we don't understand him at all."* Crowley, *Confesssions*, p. 754.

56 *“I went to America by the Lusitania, on October 24th, 1914, expecting to stay a fortnight and return (…) one of the first people I met in New York, Mr D, whom I knew as a collector of rare books, paintings and sculptures, including some of my own introuvable publications, showed an interest in the purchase of some of my unique editions and manuscripts.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 745.

57 *“(…) I discovered that his office was the office of a paper called The Fatherland, appearing weekly. (…) The name of this person was George Sylvester Viereck (…) he had met me in the office of Mr Austin Harrison, the editor of the English Review. I made a great impression on Frank Crowninshield, editor of Vanity Fair. I was in form that night and told everyone exactly right. He realized it could not be guessing The chances against me ran into billions (…) I got an introduction to the editor of Vanity Fair (…) I became a frequent contributor.”* Crowley, *Confessions,* pp. 747-748, 765-767.

58 *“I was warmly welcomed in Vancouver by my "Son", who had established a large and increasing Lodge of O.T.O.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 769.

59 *“The next act was the appearance of Ananda K. Koomaraswamy, the Eurasian critic of religion and art, with his wife, Ratan Devi, a musician from Yorkshire (…) Ratan Devi possessed a strange seductive beauty and charm (…) He introduced himself to me, knowing my reputation on Asiatic religions and Magick. She and I lost no time about falling in love. I taught her how to let her genius loose (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 773-774.

60 *“(…) I have been able to construct an intellectual image of the initiation; and if these preliminary remarks be thoroughly understood, it should be easy to follow the course of my progress to the Grade of Magus. The first period of my sojourn in the United States was consecrated to my preparation for more active instruction by isolation and darkness. For this purpose I went to live in a cottage on the shores of Lake Pasquaney in New Hampshire.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 797, 806.

61 *“In this novel I have given an elaborate description of modern magical theories and practices (…) my first serious attempt at a long novel (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 777, 817.

62 *“While I was in America, the London police not only disgraced themselves by the brutal raid (…) but covered themselves with shame and ridicule (…)”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 888.

63 *“(…) I secured control of The International and became contributing editor (implying practically sole responsibility for the contents) in August. This magazine was originally the organ of pure literature, the only one in the United States of any authority. Unfortunately, the editor --- and to all intents and purposes the proprietor --- was Mr George Sylvester Viereck. At the outbreak of the war, he transformed the character of The International, introduced pro-German propaganda and thus ruined its reputation. In eight months I pulled it up (…) it became saleable.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 779-780.

64 *“She was tall and strangely thin, with luminous eyes, a wedge-like face, a poignant sadness and a sublime simplicity. She radiated an indefinable sweetness. Without wasting time on words, I began to kiss her. She wished to be near the New York University, having begun a course of lectures on law, being sick of her job as a teacher in Public School No. 40, the Bronx (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 792.

65 *“A final inspection of the bughouse in Detroit left me free to get back to Europe. I reached London a few days before Christmas 1919.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 794.

66 *“(…) I have laboured to construct an Abbey of Thelema in Sicily on the principles of the Law, so that I might have experience of the problems of government (…) the intelligent application of the Law of Thelema solves all social problems, and that its violation is immediately and automatically avenged.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 850.

67 *“(…) they were paying the price of their outrage on morality. On the one alleged breach of the law, we were raided by the Cefalu police, of course without warning.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 879, 883.

68*“(…) went down to Fontainebleau for fresh air and exercise, and also to make a little Magical Retirement. As soon as I sat down to look at myself, I was aware of the old wound. I knew there was only one way. I must open it up and cleanse it thoroughly.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 868.

69*“(…) aided by financial advances and contracts (…) This was fulfilled to write The Diary of a Drug Fiend (…) as well as several things for the English Review. I proposed as a title The Diary of a Drug Fiend and sketched out a synopsis of its contents on a sheet of notepaper (…) J. D. Beresford (…) made all the difference to the fate of the book. The synopsis was accepted enthusiastically and I obtained the pledges of money and advances (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions,* pp. 631, 896.

70*“(…) the publication of my novel would arouse a rumpus, as it did. This was fulfilled by the attacks on me in the press which followed the publication of the novel.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 631.

71*“I broke the journey at Rome. All through northern Italy we had been held up by bandits of Fascisti, who had occupied the railway stations. It was the day of the coup d'état. Rome was wild with enthusiasm. The Fascisti swarmed all over the city. They policed the towns and suppressed any attempted breach of the peace with the utmost efficiency; but for all that my first doubts disturbed my pleasure in the victory.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 911.

72*“(…) Raoul (…) began to have attacks of rather inexplicable illness which increased in frequency and severity (…) At first he suffered mostly from a recurrence of malaria of many years' standing. Various complications ensued. We called in the doctor at the first sign of any symptoms with which we were not familiar and able to deal. For some time he got neither better nor worse, but the, without warning, developed acute infectious enteritis. The doctor (…) told me at a glance that he expected a fatal issue. Raoul developed paralysis of the heart and died (…).”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 917.

73*“(…) Betty's temporary absence from the abbey from the Sunday evening before the Friday of her husband's death, till the following day. Betty (…) pestered us with complaints (…) After Raoul's death (…) the reporters of the gutter press got after her, made her drunk and prompted her to give them a sensation story which was on long series of falsehoods. The rabble resumed their chorus of calumny. Each fresh article was crazier than the last. I was accused of the most fantastic crimes up to cannibalism.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 918-920.

74 *“I left (…) the abbey. Despite my world fortitude, I was near a physical breakdown, and at Palermo seemed so ill (…) to Tunis. We reached our City of Refuge on May 2nd and I knew that the spirit of Liberty still lived and laughed under the banner of France.”* Crowley, *Confessions*, p 920.

75 *“The Black School has always worked insidiously, by treachery. We need then not be surprised by finding that its most notable representative was the renegade follower of Blavatsky, Annie Besant, and that she was charged by her Black masters with the mission of persuading the world to accept for its Teacher a negroid Messiah. To make the humiliation more complete, a wretched creature was chosen who, to the most loathsome moral qualities, added the most fatuous imbecility.”* Crowley, A. (ed. Karl Germer, 1954) *Magick without Tears*, O.T.O. NY, p.103.

76 Webb, James (1987), *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky and Their Followers*, Shambhala, Boston, pp.314-315.

77 Crowley himself seems to contradict this statement in the following lines: *“This position was at this time occupied by Theodor Reuss, the Supreme and Holy King of Germany, who resigned the office in 1922 in my favour."* Crowley, *Confessions*, p.700.

78 *“(…) in 1931 (…) while he was in Portugal, he suddenly disappeared. They found his clothes on the border of the sea, something that made them believe he had drowned. But it was only a simulated death (…) he went to Berlin to play the role of secret adviser to Hitler who was then at his beginning.” Letters from Guenon to Evola (X)* http://www.gornahoor.net/?p=4693

79 Evans, D.; *Aleister Crowley and the 20th Century Synthesis of Magick*, pp. 10, 26–30. Hidden Publishing, 2007.

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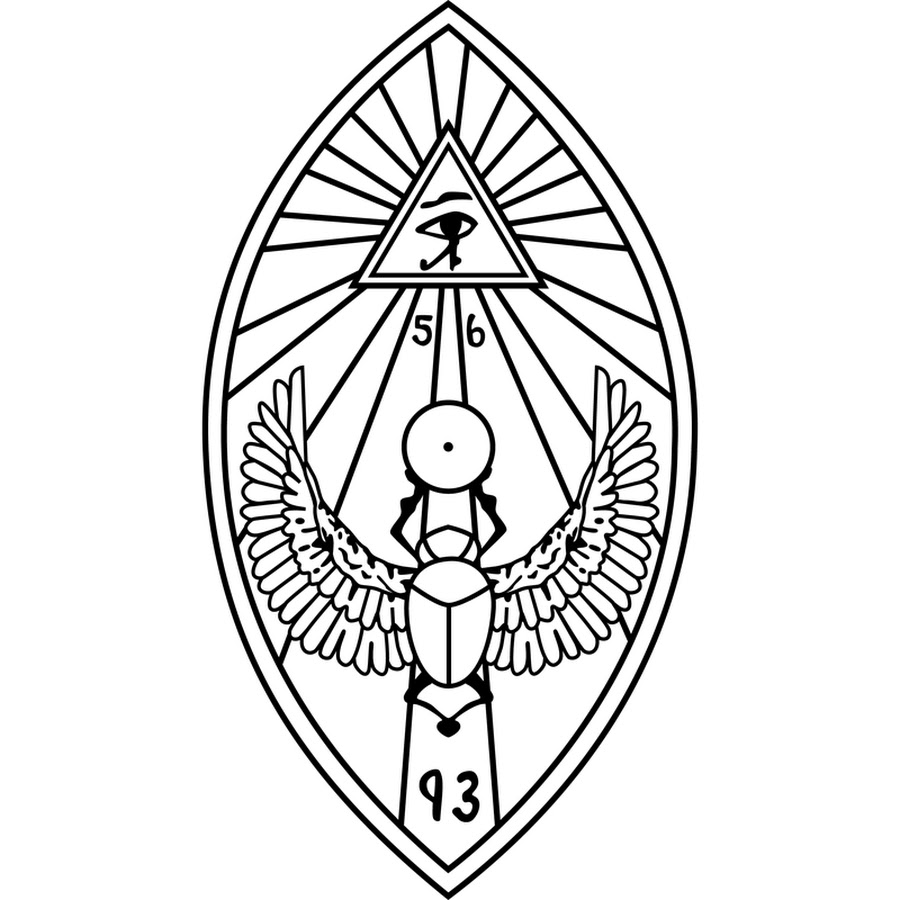
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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)