

**THE BIRTH OF THE NEW AEON: MAGICK AND MYSTICISM OF THELEMA
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF POSTMODERN A/THEOLOGY**

Gordan Djurdjevic

University of British Columbia

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[Aleister Crowley] reflects some of the central sexual and cultural issues of the early twentieth century, even as he foreshadows the crisis of modernity after the Second World War and many trends in recent postmodern thought as well.

Urban (2006, 17)

Historically and ideologically, Western esoteric tradition was for the most part involved in an uneasy and complex relationship with Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and to a lesser extent Islam.¹ In 1904, British poet and occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947)² claimed to have received a short prophetic text of *The Book of the Law*,³ announcing the birth of the New Aeon symbolized by the 'Crowned and Conquering Child,' an aspect of the god Horus. The philosophical and religious worldview of the book was designated as Thelema, a Greek word for will. Crowley interpreted the central message of the book, encapsulated in the phrase "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of

¹ The influence of Islam has been the strongest among the loosely organized movement of Traditionalism, which was mostly a 20th century phenomenon. On traditionalism, see, *inter alia*, Sedgwick (2004). For the overview of major trends and principles of Western Esotericism, see Faivre (1994), Stuckrad (2005), and, more popular in approach, Godwin (2007).

² The only major scholarly monograph about Crowley is Pasi (1999); German translation is Pasi (2006). For a biographical account see, among a dozen others, Kaczynski (2002).

³ The manuscript of *The Book of the Law* or *Liber AL vel Legis* (hereafter cited as AL with Roman and Arabic numerals referring to the chapters and verses respectively) was initially published in Crowley (1912) and the printed text in Crowley (1913), after which it had numerous publications. It has been included in the posthumous collection with other received or 'holy books' in Crowley (1983).

the Law” (AL I: 40), as a decree to search for and carry out one’s true purpose in life, in other words, to do one’s Will. The best method to accomplish this task, Crowley maintained, was a pursuit of what he termed Magick. In Crowley’s reinterpretation, Magick is a form of theory and practice, which embraces both Eastern and Western esoteric traditions, infused by the dominant ideological orientation anchored in the message of *The Book of the Law* and the Law of Thelema.

I suggest that the Thelemic ideological position shares consanguinity with the general orientation of postmodernism in assigning the principal value to the relative (individual) experience of the world and point of view, and in assuming a plurality of truths about the nature of reality. Thelema also distances itself from monotheistic traditions in its syncretism, an attribute that is congenial to the worldview of esotericism and shares parallels with the postmodern notions of pastiche and intertextuality. Hermeneutically, Thelemic perspective is at home with the conjectures about the death of author and with the reader-response theories of literary criticism, for its central scripture, *The Book of the Law*, is denied an official commentary and the meaning of the text is left to be decided ‘each for himself.’ In addition, Thelema abounds in aporias to such an extent that the play of contradictions and reversals provides ‘the key’ to *The Book of the Law*.⁴ By claiming that “existence is pure joy” (AL II: 9) this ideology seems to incarnate what Nietzsche,⁵ a major influence on both Crowley and postmodernism, calls *la gaya scienza*; the other links to Nietzsche include notions such as will to power, glorification of individualism, martial rhetoric, and a critique of Christianity. My main argument is

⁴ See Jones (1998).

⁵ Nietzsche’s influence on Crowley’s thought has been substantial and deserves a study of its own.

that Thelema may be conceptualized as a postmodern, post-monotheistic, esoteric religion.⁶

This paper will explore theoretical principles of Thelema with reference to the problems of postmodern a/theology as put forward by Mark C. Taylor (1984): the death of God, the disappearance of the self, the end of history, and the closure of the book. It warrants immediate observation that the horizon of these problems is circumscribed by the ideological framework of the Judeo-Christian worldview⁷ and its secular philosophical counterpart, while Thelema, in Crowley's interpretation, offers a new point of departure and a different religio-philosophical perspective. It announces the birth of the new Gods, the appearance of the ever-changing self, the beginning of the New Aeon, and the opening of the new book. In what follows I will elaborate on these four themes, basing my exposition primarily on Crowley's writings.

The Death of God and the Birth of the Crowned and Conquering Child

Theism is *obscurum per obscurius*.

(Crowley 1996 b, 26)

The old definition of God takes new meaning for us. Each one of us is the One God.

(Crowley 1996 b, 27)

There are three major deities in *The Book of the Law*, each one of them represented (or, given voice) by a respective chapter of the text. Their names – Nuit, Hadit, and Ra-Hoor-

⁶ This is not meant to imply that there are no alternative possibilities of conceptualizing Thelema.

⁷ These four theoretical / theological 'problems' are, for example, of no consequence within the context of the Buddhist view of the world.

Khuit - appear Egyptian⁸ but this is not the case of the revival of the Egyptian religion, for these are new gods. Nuit is the Goddess of space and infinite potentiality of existence. Hadit is the atomic principle of consciousness, her counterpart. “Our central Truth – beyond other philosophies – is that these two infinities cannot exist apart” (Crowley 1996 b, 23). It is however Ra-Hoor-Khuit that is principally related to the New Aeon, the beginning of which was signaled by the ‘Cairo revelation,’⁹ for he is its Lord.¹⁰ The nature of Ra-Hoor-Khuit (and other Thelemic deities), however, is such that it allows for a great freedom of interpretation, and it leaves open the possibility of non-theistic approach and understanding. From a certain point of view, the birth of the ‘Crowned and Conquering Child,’ as Ra-Hoor-Khuit is designated in *Liber AL*, does indeed coincide with ‘the death of God.’ Let me elaborate on this idea.

Ra-Hoor-Khuit relates to the concept of the death of God by the fact that he is not necessarily an external deity¹¹: every marriage between Nuit (object) and Hadit (subject) represents their ‘child’ – i.e. Ra-Hoor-Khuit. It follows that every human being is in a sense Ra-Hoor-Khuit,¹² just as *The Book of the Law* declares that “[e]very man and every woman is a star” (AL I: 3). Everyone is the central unit of the Universe, the focal point of a mandala, which is coterminous with one’s experience and perception of the world. “Therefore,” writes Crowley, “you have an infinite number of gods, *individual and equal and yet diverse*, each one supreme and utterly indestructible” (1996 b, 26; emphasis

⁸ For an overview of the role and influence that the *idea* of Egypt had on the Western Esotericism, see Hornung (2001).

⁹ The Cairo Revelation is Crowley’s term for the reception of the *Liber AL*, which took place in that city on April 8th, 9th, and 10th 1904.

¹⁰ “All leads up to the Crowned Child, Horus, the Lord of the New Aeon” (Crowley 1998 b, 34).

¹¹ “I think that we are warned against the idea of a *pleroma*, a flame of which we are Sparks, and to which we return when we ‘attain’” (Crowley 1996 b, 32).

¹² “We may then take it that this Solar-Phallic Heru-ra-ha [i.e. Horus] is Each Man Himself. ... Each man’s ‘Child’-consciousness is a Star in the Cosmos of the Sun, as the Sun is a Star in the Cosmos of Nuit” (Crowley 1996 b, 168).

added). Plurality of equal but diverse gods is on the one hand an interesting example of the Thelemic henotheism while at the same time and on the other hand it represents, by this very fact, a particular form of atheism, for god (the sacred, the numinous) is here emphatically *not* the ‘wholly other’ – as one of the classical definitions¹³ would have it. The alterity of the numinous is thus erased, and the sacred is understood as coincidental with the personal point of view¹⁴ and individual will. As a consequence, it may be argued that the concept of god is unstable – in other words, god as the *absolute* is ‘dead’ and made *relative* - to the extent that Thelema implies the possibility of coexistent monotheism, polytheism, and atheism.¹⁵ This also suggests that the notions of morality, justice, beauty, and truth (among others) are relative and individual, and from this the precept of “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law” (AL I: 40) follows by necessity.¹⁶ God as the wholly other and as the external lawgiver is dead. What remains is the play of the androgynous child whose nature lies in the constant act of going, i.e. change.¹⁷

¹³ See Otto (1958). Similarly, Taylor states that “the divine Other is eternally *beyond*, always *elsewhere*, and absolutely *transcendent*” (1984, 72; emphasis in the original).

¹⁴ Crowley calls the point-of-view “the only philosophically tenable conception of Reality” (1944, 115).

¹⁵ Monotheism: “Each one of us is *the One God*” (Crowley 1996 b, 27; emphasis added). Polytheism: “*Each one of us* is the One God” (ibid.; emphasis added). And, since the identity is based on difference, if everyone is God then, in a sense, nobody is.

¹⁶ Thus “each human being is an Element of the Cosmos, self-determined and supreme, co-equal with all other Gods. From this the Law ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law’ *follows logically*” (1996 b, 25; emphasis added).

¹⁷ Statements such as “Every man and every woman is a star” (AL I: 3) and similar verses from *The Book of the Law* reinforce the notion that Thelema accommodates the death of God by recognizing the divinity of humankind. Crowley will eventually adopt as the motto of his magical fraternity Ordo Templi Orientis the phrase “There is no God but Man.” (See “Liber OZ” in Crowley 1986, 144). The Latin variant of the motto could be read in two ways, as either “Deus est Homo,” which brings down the divinity to the human level, or as “Homo est Deus,” which raises the status of humanity to the level of Gods. But the major implication of this proclamation consists in the erasure of difference between the human and the divine whereby the binary opposition between the two dissolves. In that sense, God is dead.

Ra-Hoor-Khuit is also a child that rebels against the patriarchal society and its scale of values. This rebellion is particularly vocal in certain parts of the third chapter of the *Liber AL*, where we find the following verses: “I am in a secret fourfold word, the blasphemy against all gods of men. Curse them! Curse them! Curse them!” (AL III: 49-50). “Bahlasti! Ompehda! I spit on your crapulous creeds” (AL III: 54). The sacrilegious and anti-metaphysical tenor of these and similar proclamations is especially interesting and relevant when Ra-Hoor-Khuit is understood as a metaphor for the contemporary *Zeitgeist*. Taylor is not the only one to claim and realize that the contemporary critical trend in scholarship, which is perhaps most typically exemplified by the deconstruction of authority and metaphysical assumptions of Western culture, is just another name for the death of God. “Deconstructive criticism unravels the very fabric of most Western theology and philosophy. ... [D]econstruction is the ‘hermeneutic’ of the death of God” (Taylor 1984, 10, 6; emphasis in the original). Thus we have an important alignment of analogous metaphors (rhetorical choices): the spirit of the times, the death of God, anti-authoritarianism, deconstruction, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit. In other words, if Ra-Hoor-Khuit is the sign of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, then one of his expressions consists in the deconstruction of the religious authority: the birth of the Crowned and Conquering Child is equivalent to the death of God.

The Disappearance of the Self and the Emergence of the Impersonal Identity

Know Thyself through Thy Way

(Crowley 1944, 254).

The notion of the self is intertwined with a number of traditional presuppositions of Western metaphysics. In Taylor's assertion, "knowledge of self is mediated by knowledge of God" (1984, 14), while the postmodern perspective, suspicious of all metanarratives,¹⁸ including those about self and God, disrupts the certainty of and reliance upon these anchors of identity. The self is at present habitually seen as a construct, a contingent product of social, psychological, and historical factors, devoid of permanent substance. The master narrative of a unified self, which is governed by rational decisions of the free agent, is shown to be fiction. In the final instance, the person is overcome by temporality, and subjection to the condition of impermanence and change "subverts the identity, propriety, presence, and property of selfhood. This subversion effectively dispossesses the subject" (Taylor 1984, 14).

Crowley is keenly aware of the contingent nature of selfhood, as it is non-critically understood by what he customarily designates as uninitiated. "The uninitiated is a 'Dark Star' and the Great Work for him is to make his veils transparent by 'purifying them'" (Crowley 1996 b, 32).¹⁹ By this process, the person eventually becomes aware of her inner stellar nature, and as a star that has its source of light within she is free to follow her own course. This inmost star is designated as Hadit, the essential identity of each man and woman.²⁰ Crowley, however, interprets Hadit as being *impersonal*. Hadit's principal function is to go, in other words, to change.²¹ Temporality and continuous transformation, which otherwise seem to jeopardize the solidity of selfhood, paradoxically turn out to be

¹⁸ In Lyotard's phrase.

¹⁹ Similarly and as a further example, Crowley asserts that a person "may attain to be aware that one is but a particular 'child' of the Play of Hadit and Nuit; one's personality is then perceived as being a disguise. It is ... a mere symbol without a substance ... The conscious and sensible 'man' is to his Self just what the printed letters on this page are to me who have caused them to manifest in colour and form. They are arbitrary devices for conveying my thought; I could use French or Greek just as well" (1996 b, 92).

²⁰ "Hadit is the 'core of every star.'" writes Crowley (1996 b, 87).

²¹ "We may here say briefly that Hadit is Motion, that is, Change or 'Love'" (Crowley 1996 b, 93).

the signatures of impersonal identity. “The death of the individual is his awakening to the impersonal immortality of Hadit,” writes Crowley (1996 b, 92).²² “ In other words, Hadit is “the Impersonal Identity within the Individuality of ‘every man and every woman’” (87).

In the final analysis, the ultimate selfhood appears to consist of the function of knowing, of being a conscious witness that undergoes experiences, which constitute one’s life (or many lives). The self is thus a verb rather than a noun; becoming, rather than being.²³ The horizon of this becoming is open and endless, since there is no goal or purpose that might bring it to a closure. An important implication of this position lies in the recognition that there is no fixed essence to one’s being and that there is, strictly speaking, no discovery of what one is but rather creation of what one may will to be. This coincides with Foucault’s assertion that it is a futile to search for the ‘truth’ of one’s being, and that it is much more interesting to *fashion* than to ‘discover’ one’s self. “From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art” (Foucault 1984, 351).²⁴ As a result, “life becomes serpentine wandering” (Taylor 1984, 15), for to have an end or an aim would ultimately be a limiting condition. In Crowley’s formulation, “the True Will

²² “The Aspirant must well understand that it is no paradox to say that the Annihilation of the Ego in the Abyss is the condition of emancipating the true Self, and exalting it to unimaginable heights” (Crowley 1996 b, 95).

²³ “True Self is the meaning of the True Will: / *know Thyself through Thy Way*” (Crowley 1944, 254; emphasis added).

²⁴ In Crowley’s case, the creation of one’s self as a work of art resulted in his adoption of many personas and a number of literary pseudonyms. Similarly, in a practice laid out in “Liber Jugorum” Crowley (1997, 659) suggests to students the following: “By some device, such as the changing of thy ring from one finger to another, create in thyself two personalities, the thoughts of one being within entirely different limits from that of the other, the common ground being the necessities of life.” In the note he elaborates: “For instance, let A be the man of strong passions, skilled in the Holy Qabalah, a vegetarian, and a keen ‘reactionary’ politician; let B be a bloodless and ascetic thinker, occupied with business and family cares, an eater of meat, and a keen progressive politician. Let no thought proper to ‘A’ arise when the ring is on the ‘B’ finger; and vice versa.”

has no goal; its nature being To Go” (1997, 581). Instead of a purpose, action results in play. Similarly, instead of “the unhappy consciousness of the historical agent” (ibid.), the joy of aimless wandering is experienced by the subject that has outgrown the limitations of rational purpose²⁵ and of personal identity. The true self is no self²⁶ and thus the binary opposition between the two dissolves.

The End of History and the Beginning of the New Aeon

... the world *was* destroyed by fire on 21 March, 1904 ...

(Crowley 1944, 24)

Ideas about progression of time in cycles are ubiquitous. Among the best known are the Greek conception of the ages of the world as given in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* and the Hindu teaching about the four *yugas*. In the 20th century, the most popular notion on the subject is expressed in speculations about the entry into the astrological Age of Aquarius. Crowley has on his part expounded the theory about the succession of Aeons, the names and major characteristics of which are associated with the Egyptian deities. Roughly speaking, each Aeon consists of 2000-year period. The earliest remembered Aeon was that of Isis, during which the conception of the divine was related to the nature, approached and worshipped as the Mother. The Aeon of Osiris was the age of the

²⁵ “The free exercise of one’s faculties is pure joy; if I felt the need of achieving some object thereby, it would imply the pain of desire, the strain of effort, and the fear of failure” (Crowley 1996a, 106-7).

²⁶ In the conclusion of her study of the concept of the formless self in Zen Buddhism and related philosophical traditions, Joan Stambaugh (1999) makes the following statements, which provide an interesting similarity with the idea of Hadit as an impersonal identity: “With regard to the question in what sense a Formless Self can be a self, we would in conclusion be able to reply that if selfhood is not to be conceived egotistically as a separate self opposed and hostile to everything other than itself, formlessness offers an eminent possibility of rethinking selfhood. Overcoming and abandoning its anxious sense of itself as an encapsulated separate ‘I,’ the self gains the wondrous freedom and openness to emerge in joyous compassion from the shackles of its self-imposed boundaries” (165).

masculine, monotheistic, dying-and-resurrecting God.²⁷ It was the period of patriarchal authority and it projected suffering as the condition of the world and as an avenue towards the divine. The Aeon of Horus commenced in 1904, the year of the reception of *The Book of the Law*.

Taylor suggests that, “[i]f God, self, and history are so closely bound, then the death of God and the disappearance of the self would seem to spell the end of history” (1984, 54). This is so because “History, as well as self, is a theological notion” (1984, 52). Generally speaking, the postmodern deconstruction of the traditional Western ideas about history centers on the recognition that history is fiction, influenced and shaped by ideological agendas, and constructed as a narrative discourse in such a manner that the distinction between it and the literary texts is blurred. Hayden White, in particular, has explored this idea in a series of studies. In the spirit of Nietzsche’s proclamation that there are no facts, only interpretations, White argues that important question is not “What are the facts? but rather, How are the facts to be described in order to sanction one mode of explaining rather than another” (1978, 134). Crowley himself has expressed doubts about the possibility of arriving at certain knowledge of past events. In his ‘banned lecture’ on Gilles de Rais, he claims (in the context of conjectures about Napoleon’s lost battle at Waterloo):

Now all these things are merely *matters of opinion*. There may be a little truth in some of them. But we have practically no means of finding out exactly how much, even if our documentary support is valid to establish any of these theories. It is, also, almost impossible to estimate the causes of any given event, if only because those causes are infinite, and each one of them is to a certain extent an efficient determining cause (Crowley 1998 a, 196; emphasis added).

²⁷ Crowley’s ideas about the dying God were to a significant degree influenced by the studies in comparative religion of James George Frazer.

From the perspective of the contingent and interpretative nature of our conceptualizations about history, Crowley draws a major conclusion and interprets to his advantage the traditional Christian teaching about the coming of the Anti-Christ. Simply stated, his main argument is that the author of the Revelation was correct in envisioning the end of the reign of Christianity but wrong in interpreting this event as the end of the world and as morally abhorrent. In describing the Tarot card “Lust,” which in the Crowley-Harris ‘Thoth’ deck depicts the Scarlet Woman riding upon the Beast, he writes: “The seers in the early days of the Aeon of Osiris foresaw the Manifestation of this coming Aeon in which we now live, and they regarded it with intense horror and fear, not understanding the precession of the Aeons, and regarding every change as catastrophe” (1944, 93-4). On several occasions, Crowley maintains that the old world was indeed ‘destroyed by fire’ in 1904. The same relativity and terminality applies to the current Aeon, which will be replaced by the Aeon of Justice, “presumably in about 2,000 years” (1944, 116).

Taylor inquires, “since time ‘clearly’ continues, what can it possibly mean to say that history is over?” (1984, 54). The internal weakness of the question lies in its assumption that history (or God, or self) is one. In Crowley’s terminology, the ‘end of history’ merely signals the beginning of the Aeon of Horus. The character of this new Aeon at its birth has been vividly described in a visionary text, what might be considered a Thelemic apocalypse, called *The Heart of the Master* (Crowley, 1992). Included within this text is the “Mediterranean Manifesto,” a document wherein Crowley, in rather Biblical language, describes his mission as the Prophet of Thelema by stating:

My Term of Office upon the Earth being come in the year of the foundation of Theosophical Society, I took upon myself, in my turn, the sin of the whole World, that the Prophecies might be

fulfilled, so that Mankind may take the Next Step from the Magical Formula of Osiris to that of Horus (1992, 117).

On an esoteric level, Crowley understands the notion of the ‘end of the world’ as a symbolic reference to the destruction of one’s limited personality in mystical trance. This event Crowley often glyphs through the metaphor of the ‘opening of the eye of Shiva.’ “In Hindu philosophy,” he writes, “it is said that Shiva, the Destroyer, is asleep, and that when he opens his eye the universe is destroyed – another synonym, therefore, for the accomplishment of the Great Work” (1981, 133). This mode of interpretation reinforces his gesturing away from uncritical understanding of the world events. But the most important implication, in the present context, is that Crowley’s distancing from traditional modes of perceiving the world and the ‘spirit of the times’ is at home with the postmodern relativism applied to the meaning and scope of history. History thus ends in the sense that it ceases to be the instrument of divine providence, “plotted along a single line, which extends from a definite beginning, through an identifiable middle, to an expected end” (Taylor 1984, 54). It becomes instead the playground of manifold *personal narratives*²⁸ without the external and universal reference point of meaning and determination.

The Closure of the Book and the Opening of The Book of the Law

God is the Author of authors who dictates the Book of books.

For this reason, God is the Author to whom all authors finally defer,

and His Book is the Book to which all books ultimately refer

(Taylor 1984, 81).

²⁸ “Treat time and all conditions of Event as Servants / of thy Will, appointed to present the Universe to / thee in the form of thy Plan” (Crowley 1944, 260).

The closure of the book is a necessary correlate of the death of God, the disappearance of the self, and the end of history. By deconstructing the notion of the book as an independent and completely original creation of an author who is the ultimate arbiter of its meaning, one is led towards the concepts such as intertextuality, pastiche, and the death of author. Roland Barthes suggests that the reader, not the author, determines the meaning of the text. This idea is fundamental to the so-called reader-response theories of literary criticism. The final consequence of the death of author is, by extension, the death of God, understood as the ultimate author / creator, whose ‘book’ is the world. Emphasizing the role of the reader takes away the supremacy of the author; “refusing to assign a ‘secret,’ an ultimate meaning to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what may be called an antitheological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law “ (Barthes 1977, 147).

The Book of the Law, the central scripture of the New Aeon, to a certain degree deconstructs itself explicitly, while the play of contradictions, or the refusal to ascertain veracity to any truth claim, constitutes an important epistemological principle of Thelema and its associated form of spiritual practice, magick. *The Book of the Law* resists interpretation on several levels but its central aporia is that it proclaims the *law*, which generally refers to a restrictive force, the message of which is *freedom*, expressed through a precept “Do what thou wilt” (AL I:40), while “The word of Sin is Restriction” (AL I: 41). The ‘key’ to the book, similarly, consists of the interplay between concepts AL, meaning God, and LA, meaning Not: the one negates the other, while both simultaneously coexist in the state of *coincidentia oppositorum*.

On the subject of fixed meanings and contradictions, Crowley offers important insights by stating: “One must constantly keep in mind the bivalence of every symbol. Insistence upon either one or other of the contrary attributions inherent in a symbol is simply a mark of spiritual incapacity ... It is characteristic of all spiritual vision that the formulation of any idea is immediately destroyed or cancelled out by the arising of the contradictory” (Crowley 1944, 63). These statements call to the mind the general principle of deconstruction: truth claims are made through language based on binary oppositions, while the suppressed or marginalized opposite of any assertion disrupts (deconstructs) its claim to self-sufficiency or universality. In Crowley’s formulation, “there could be nothing true except by virtue of the contradiction that is contained in itself” (1998 b, 205).

Hermeneutically, *The Book of the Law* deconstructs the interpretative authority of any other agent besides the reader. Its ‘official’ or ‘inspired’ Comment in fact calls for the destruction of the book itself and discourages not only the discussion about but also even the study of the text. “The study of this Book is forbidden. It is wise to destroy this copy after the first reading. ... Those who discuss the contents of this Book are to be shunned by all, as centres of pestilence. All questions of the Law are to be decided only by appeal to my writings, each for himself. There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt” (Crowley 1983, 196). By investing the reader with the ultimate authority to decide about its meaning, *The Book of the Law* in effect actualizes the death of the author.

Both Taylor and Barthes suggest that the contemporary (postmodern) condition implies a transition from the (closed, finished, absolute) Book to the (open and continuously written) text. The “infinite interrelationship of interpretations cannot be

captured in a closed book; it must be written in an open text” (Taylor 1984, 16). This observation relates to the perception that postmodernism is primarily concerned with the philosophy of language. In an important sense, magic shares this same concern. In his study of Agrippa’s occult philosophy, Christopher Lehrich (2003) advances the thesis that magic is parallel or analogous to writing. Just as Derrida (1976) has shown that writing is a necessary supplement of speech, often thought of as less valuable because it is an indicator of absence, magic turns out to be a necessary supplement of religion and science.²⁹ This is a significant conclusion and it is consonant with some of Crowley’s ideas on the subject.

In his essay on “The Revival of Magick” (1998 a), Crowley draws attention to the fact that Thoth is equally the God of magick as of writing. He adds that the “word used by Sir Walter Scott for Magick is ‘gramarye,’ and a ritual of magick is a ‘grimoire,’ ‘grimorium,’ or grammar; all from *gramma*, a letter” (1998 a, 13). Magick is then, just as writing, an activity of signification and communication.³⁰ The correspondence between Crowley’s and postmodern attitude lies in the fact that there are no external absolute measures of standard, meaning, beauty, or truth. The difference is that the Thelemic orientation is not secular but, in the final analysis, religious. The Book is closed; the meaning of *Liber AL* does not rest in the intention of its author; instead, the book invokes the reader to do her will and *that in itself* is the act of signification: “Know thyself through Thy way” (Crowley 1944, 254).

²⁹ Lehrich also observes that Derrida, in discussing a pertinent myth, overlooks the fact that Thoth is the inventor of both writing *and* magic. Thus Derrida marginalizes magic in the same text where he accuses traditional Western philosophy of logocentrism (the philosophy of presence), which in its turn marginalizes writing. For the relationship between magic and philosophy of language, see also Lehrich (2007).

³⁰ “Magick then may be defined for our present purpose as the art of communicating without obvious means” (Crowley 1998 a, 13).

The way of Thelema, its mode of ‘writing,’ is basically twofold. It consists of the dynamic (one could also say, erotic) interrelationship between Hadit and Nuit, manifested through the person (incarnation) of the Crowned and Conquering Child. The full name of this Child is Heru-Ra-Ha, which again represents union of opposites. The active form is Ra-Hoor-Khuit, God of ‘force and fire’; its passive twin is the God of Silence, Hoor-paar-kraath. These two forms symbolize, among other possibilities, the ‘will to live’ or Magick, and the ‘will to die’ or Mysticism. It is highly significant that Crowley maintains that these two methods of achievement, although apparently opposite, ultimately amount to the same.³¹ In a manner that is typical of postmodern deconstruction, or of postmodern a/theology, the boundary line that separates this and other binary oppositions is erased.

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Aeon (Thelema). Quite the same Wikipedia. Just better.Â In the religion of Thelema, it is believed that the history of humanity can be divided into a series of aeons (also written ã|ons), each of which was accompanied by its own forms of "magical and religious expression".[1] The first of these was the Aeon of Isis, which Thelemites believed occurred during prehistory and which saw mankind worshipping a Great Goddess, symbolised by the ancient Egyptian deity Isis.Â In this new aeon, Thelemites believe that humanity will enter a time of self-realization and self-actualization.