

Liber AL-gorithm

Sapere Aude · 6 September 2026

Imagine explaining a smartphone to Aleister Crowley.

He would probably spend five minutes marveling at the engineering, another ten attempting to discover whether it possessed a spirit, then eventually ask why everyone insisted on carrying a magical mirror capable of answering almost any question ever asked, only to use it for arguments with strangers about pineapple on pizza.

He'd have a point. Humans are ridiculous.

Humanity has assembled an astonishing collection of tools. A device that slips into a back pocket now carries more computing power than the machines that guided Apollo astronauts to the Moon. Entire libraries travel unnoticed beside wallets and car keys. Artificial intelligence can summarize research papers, translate forgotten languages, generate paintings, and explain quantum mechanics with surprising patience.

Meanwhile, millions of people spend forty-five minutes watching a raccoon steal dog food from a porch in Ohio.

Technology is neither a blessing nor a curse. It is an amplifier.

A curious mind becomes more curious. A disciplined artist becomes more productive. An anxious person discovers infinitely creative new reasons to remain anxious. The technology is innocent enough; the operator is the variable.

That observation brings us to an unlikely companion for the digital age: Thelema. The philosophy introduced by Aleister Crowley has accumulated enough myths,

misunderstandings, sensational headlines, and internet folklore to fill several respectable encyclopedias. Mention Crowley's name in polite company and somebody usually remembers newspaper nicknames, ceremonial robes, or stories that become less accurate every time they are repeated. Unfortunately, the central idea often disappears beneath the theatrical scenery.

Thelema asks a deceptively simple question. What are you actually here to do?

Not what pays the most. Not what your parents hoped. Not what social media rewards. Not even what feels pleasant this afternoon.

What is your True Will?

That phrase has generated more confusion than almost any other in modern esotericism. Many newcomers mistake True Will for desire. Others imagine destiny as a rigid script written somewhere beyond human reach. Neither interpretation survives careful examination.

True Will resembles the grain within a piece of wood. Work with it, the material grows stronger. Cut across it, the wood splits. Technology has complicated the search: never before has it been so easy to confuse movement with progress.

A typical morning begins innocently enough. Someone reaches for a phone to check the weather. A message appears. That message reminds them about another conversation. A notification announces breaking news involving celebrities nobody intended to think about before breakfast. An advertisement suggests replacing perfectly functional headphones with slightly shinier headphones. Twenty minutes disappear without anyone making a conscious decision.

Attention did not wander. Attention was recruited.

Modern technology is efficient at discovering what captures human interest. Recommendation engines observe habits with the diligence of Victorian librarians. Search engines complete thoughts before fingers finish typing them. Streaming services somehow know that nobody intended to watch an eight-part

documentary about medieval cheese-making until precisely this evening. The achievement is not prediction; it is persistence.

Every click teaches the machine. Every pause becomes data. Algorithms have long memories and people do not, which leaves intention in permanent competition with suggestion.

Thelemic philosophy offers a practical response: ask one question before engaging with any technology.

Does this serve my Will?

The wording matters. Not, "Do I enjoy this?" Not, "Will this make me look clever?" Certainly not, "Everybody else seems interested." Simply this: Does it move my life toward the person I am trying to become?

The answer is often illuminating, and sometimes uncomfortable. Nobody likes discovering that three hours vanished into videos explaining why ancient Romans preferred one variety of fish sauce over another. Interesting? Absolutely. Essential? Probably not.

Modern culture celebrates perpetual activity. Busy people appear important. Overloaded calendars resemble status symbols. Constant responsiveness masquerades as responsibility. Yet busyness has little relationship with purpose.

A compass spinning wildly still moves. It never arrives anywhere.

Crowley repeatedly emphasized discipline, though popular accounts rarely linger on that subject because discipline lacks the dramatic appeal of ceremonial magick. That omission matters: discipline is where philosophy becomes architecture, and every meaningful achievement eventually depends on it.

The violinist practices scales. The marathon runner trains in unpleasant weather. The writer produces sentences on days when inspiration has apparently booked a holiday.

Discipline creates freedom through repetition, and technology follows the same principle. Used deliberately, it is one of the best teaching tools ever built. Used carelessly, it is a sophisticated distraction machine that politely congratulates its users while borrowing their attention one notification at a time.

The machine is not plotting against humanity; it performs its assigned task with great efficiency. The uncomfortable truth is closer to home.

Most people no longer need external tyrants. They carry personalized ones in their pockets, dressed in glass, glowing softly, and asking only for one more minute.

Every Wand Is a Technology

Human beings have always built tools that seemed miraculous to the generations that came before them. Fire extended the day. The wheel extended the body. The printing press extended memory. The internet extended conversation. Artificial intelligence now promises to extend thought itself.

Every invention inspires the same cycle. First comes amazement. Then comes dependence. Finally comes the uncomfortable realization that the tool has quietly begun reshaping the person using it. The problem is not new; it now arrives at fiber optic speed.

The magician understands this instinctively. A wand has no power until someone decides how to use it. A ceremonial dagger does not make decisions. A pentacle does not choose a purpose. Every magical instrument serves the Will of its owner, assuming the owner has taken the trouble to discover that Will in the first place.

Technology deserves the same respect. A laptop is not sacred, and not profane either. It is another wand waiting for instructions, and many people hand the wand to someone else before they even switch it on.

Algorithms decide what deserves attention, shepherding curiosity down carefully constructed corridors until people believe they chose every turn themselves.

The experience resembles wandering through a shopping mall where every corridor rearranges itself according to previous purchases. You went in for a pair of socks. Somehow, two hours later, there's an air fryer, a set of wireless earbuds, three books that seemed absolutely essential fifteen minutes ago, and a growing suspicion that life won't be complete without a Japanese chef's knife capable of slicing tomatoes into molecularly thin expressions of existential perfection.

The algorithm didn't force the purchase. It merely became persuasive.

Thelema asks an inconvenient question.

Who is holding the wand?

That question follows every modern technology. Who is deciding what deserves attention? Who is choosing what enters the mind? Who benefits from each additional minute spent scrolling? Questions like these make advertisers uncomfortable. They also make magicians difficult customers.

Artificial Intelligence Is a Brilliant Apprentice

Artificial intelligence has become the latest object of both utopian optimism and apocalyptic anxiety. Depending upon which headline appears first, AI will either cure every disease known to medicine or replace every profession except perhaps plumbing. History suggests the truth will probably prove less dramatic. Every generation imagines the future in blockbuster movie terms. Reality usually arrives disguised as software updates.

AI can imitate competence across an extraordinary range of activities. It writes essays, translates languages, drafts contracts, analyzes spreadsheets, and occasionally invents historical facts with such confidence that one almost admires the performance.

Confidence has never been the same thing as wisdom.

Crowley frequently reminded his students that knowledge without understanding becomes little more than decoration. You can memorize every symbol on the Tree

of Life without getting one ounce wiser. You can generate ten thousand pages of AI-written text without producing a single original idea.

Artificial intelligence should perform the chores. You should perform the Great Work.

Ask AI to summarize a difficult philosophical text before reading it yourself. Excellent.

Ask AI to compare several translations of *Liber AL vel Legis*. Even better.

Ask AI to organize decades of journal entries into searchable themes. Remarkable.

Ask AI to discover your True Will.

Now you've wandered into territory where the machine has impressive vocabulary, considerable statistical ability, and absolutely no authority.

The Holy Guardian Angel has never communicated through predictive text. At least not yet.

Technology becomes dangerous whenever convenience replaces participation. Reading summaries instead of books. Watching tutorials instead of practicing. Collecting quotations instead of wrestling with ideas. Asking software to make decisions that properly belong to conscience.

The Great Work has always required effort. Nobody meditates by proxy. Nobody exercises by watching somebody else perform push-ups. Nobody discovers True Will because a chatbot produced a particularly eloquent paragraph. The path still belongs to the walker. The boots have merely become more comfortable.

Your Attention Is Your Temple

Ancient temples were carefully protected spaces. One did not casually wander into the sanctuary carrying livestock, gossip, yesterday's market prices, or an enthusiastic salesman offering two-for-one olive oil.

Modern attention deserves similar protection. Instead, most people begin each morning by opening the front gates and inviting the entire internet inside before breakfast. News alerts arrive first. Messages follow immediately behind. Social media informs everyone that complete strangers are having fascinating days somewhere else.

The stock market has opinions. Politics has opinions. Influencers have opinions. Apparently even refrigerators have opinions now.

If Plato turned up today, somebody would eventually ask him to subscribe to a premium newsletter.

The tragedy is not information; civilization has always run on it. The tragedy is interruption.

Deep thought requires uninterrupted time. So does prayer. So does writing, composing, painting, scientific discovery, meaningful conversation, falling in love, raising children, reading difficult books, learning difficult skills, and almost everything else worth doing.

The attention economy profits whenever uninterrupted thought becomes rare.

Thelema rebels against that economy. If every act should conform to Will, then attention itself becomes sacred. Every interruption deserves scrutiny. Every notification becomes a tiny magical operation attempting to redirect consciousness from one object toward another.

Not every invocation deserves an answer.

Sometimes the highest magical act available is pressing one beautiful button.

Do Not Disturb.

It lacks the poetry of the grimoires. On a Tuesday morning, it's worth more.

The Performance of Self

Oscar Wilde once observed that people are least themselves when speaking in their own person. Give them a mask, he suggested, and they will tell the truth. The internet has managed to reverse that equation. Today people remove the mask only to spend enormous effort constructing another one.

Profiles become biographies carefully edited for public consumption. Photographs migrate through filters until they resemble memories that never actually happened. Vacations become productions. Meals become photo shoots. Even quiet moments somehow acquire hashtags before they have finished occurring.

Nobody wakes up and announces, "Today I shall manufacture a marketable version of my personality." It happens gradually.

A photograph receives more attention than expected. Another photograph imitates the first. Opinions that attract applause become slightly louder. Opinions that receive criticism quietly disappear. Before long, an online identity develops a momentum of its own, like a character in a novel who begins making decisions independently of the author.

Thelema offers a useful warning here: True Will is discovered, not manufactured.

That distinction matters because modern technology excels at rewarding performance. The person who performs convincingly often receives more attention than the person who speaks honestly. Performance scales beautifully across digital platforms. Authenticity grows much more slowly.

Many people spend years trying to discover who they really are while simultaneously maintaining several carefully curated versions of themselves online. Eventually somebody has to remember which personality belongs to which platform. That sounds exhausting because it is.

The Great Work asks for integration, not fragmentation. It invites a person to become increasingly whole, not increasingly optimized for different audiences. There is an enormous difference between sharing your life and editing it into a continuous advertisement. The first builds relationships. The second builds analytics.

Love Under Will in an Online World

The phrase “Love is the law, love under will” (AL 1:57) may be the most frequently quoted sentence in Thelema. It may also be the least understood.

Modern culture often treats love as little more than agreeable emotion. If everyone smiles, everyone agrees, everyone approves, then surely love has prevailed. Reality proves slightly more complicated.

Parents love children enough to establish boundaries. Teachers love students enough to correct mistakes. Good friends occasionally say things one would rather not hear.

Love without Will becomes indulgence. Will without Love becomes tyranny. The internet encourages both extremes.

Every disagreement threatens exile. Every conversation risks becoming tribal warfare conducted through animated profile pictures. One side demands complete agreement. The other demands complete surrender. Neither approach leaves much room for understanding.

Thelemic philosophy proposes something harder. Approach every encounter with respect for another person’s sovereignty. That does not require agreement; it requires recognition.

Every individual pursues a path shaped by experiences invisible to everyone else. You can reject an argument and still respect the person making it. You can defend the truth vigorously without giving up kindness. That discipline has become rare.

Imagine what social media might resemble if users paused before responding. Not forever. Perhaps thirty seconds. Long enough to ask one simple question.

Am I trying to understand, or am I merely trying to win?

Civilization might survive the experiment. Comment sections would get shorter.

Building a Digital Temple

Every magician eventually discovers that sacred space does not create itself. Someone sweeps the floor. Someone lights the candles. Someone chooses which symbols belong inside the temple and which remain outside. Digital life deserves the same intentional care.

Most people organize their physical homes more thoughtfully than their phones. Kitchen drawers receive attention. Desktop folders become archaeological sites. An inbox holding fourteen thousand unread emails should probably qualify for historical preservation.

Thelemic practice encourages conscious arrangement. Imagine treating every application as though it were an object placed upon an altar. Does it belong there? Does it strengthen your work? Does it nourish your mind? Or has it stayed because deleting it wasn't worth the trouble? A digital temple begins with subtraction.

Remove unnecessary notifications. Delete applications that repeatedly borrow attention without returning value. Curate information sources with the same care used when selecting companions.

Algorithms are perfectly happy to consume every available minute. Boundaries teach them otherwise.

Many practitioners already keep magical diaries, and modern technology offers new ways to continue that tradition. Journal applications can record insights immediately after meditation. Voice notes preserve ideas that appear during long walks. Encrypted documents protect years of personal reflection. Calendars can schedule periods of study, contemplation, creative work, exercise, and ritual.

Technology excels at remembering commitments. The difficult part remains honoring them.

Artificial intelligence can be a useful assistant here. It can surface recurring ideas buried in years of journal entries. It can recommend books on subjects that keep

returning. It can even suggest questions worth meditating on.

The machine supports reflection. It never replaces it.

Five Habits of the Digital Magician

The principles themselves are ordinary.

Begin each day before opening social media. Allow your own thoughts to arrive before inviting millions of other people's thoughts into the room.

Create more than you consume. A single written paragraph, sketch, melody, or thoughtful conversation contributes more to the Great Work than another hour of passive scrolling.

Use artificial intelligence as an apprentice, never as an oracle. Delegating routine tasks creates freedom; delegating judgment creates dependency.

Protect uninterrupted attention as though it were sacred ground. Because it is.

Schedule regular periods completely offline. Not because technology is evil, but because silence remains one of the few places where True Will can still be heard.

These habits are cheap. They require no expensive equipment. No secret initiations. No rare manuscripts. No crystals imported from mysterious mountain ranges by persuasive online retailers. They require only consistency, and the Great Work has always preferred consistency to spectacle.

The Great Work Has Better Wi-Fi

If history teaches anything, it is that human beings eventually stop noticing miracles. Electricity became ordinary. Flight became routine. The internet became something people complain about when it doesn't load a webpage in four seconds.

Artificial intelligence is following the same path. What felt astonishing last year already feels expected today. Before long, people will speak to machines as casually as they once spoke into telephones, forgetting how strange the arrangement is.

Technology changes quickly. Human nature changes rather slowly. The same hopes, fears, ambitions, jealousies, curiosities, and distractions that occupied philosophers in ancient Athens now occupy people carrying smartphones that contain more information than the Library of Alexandria ever dreamed of collecting. Only the packaging has improved.

The Great Work has always addressed human nature rather than technology. Crowley never wrote about smartphones, wireless networks, or artificial intelligence, yet his central insight remains relevant. Every intentional act is a magical act. Every decision either aligns a person more closely with True Will or nudges that person away from it. The modern world offers more opportunities to forget which direction you were walking. A person can spend an entire day surrounded by information without encountering wisdom.

You can collect thousands of digital books without reading any of them. You can subscribe to every productivity channel on YouTube and never become more productive. You can ask artificial intelligence to explain enlightenment in six different writing styles while putting off ten minutes of quiet meditation.

Knowledge has never been easier to acquire. Transformation remains stubbornly analog. It still arrives one deliberate choice at a time.

The Most Powerful Algorithm

People often speak about algorithms as though they were mysterious entities operating somewhere beyond human understanding. In reality, an algorithm is simply a pattern of decisions repeated with relentless consistency. That definition should sound familiar.

Habits are algorithms. Character is an algorithm. A daily routine is an algorithm written in behavior instead of code. Wake. Reach for the phone. Check notifications. Open email. Scroll social media. Read headlines. Wonder why the mind feels scattered before breakfast. Repeat tomorrow.

The computer did not invent that pattern. It merely automated it. The same principle works in the opposite direction.

Wake. Breathe. Write. Meditate. Read a page from a meaningful book. Walk outside. Then decide whether the internet deserves an invitation into the day. Repeat tomorrow.

That, too, is an algorithm. The difference is that one algorithm was consciously written. The other was installed by default.

Thelema has always encouraged conscious authorship. Not because control is an end in itself, but because awareness creates freedom. Every habit quietly casts a vote for the person you are becoming. One vote accomplishes very little. Thousands of votes eventually become identity.

Changing a life does not always require dramatic gestures. Sometimes it requires changing the first five minutes of the morning.

The Magician and the Machine

Imagine, for a moment, that Crowley really did appear in the twenty-first century. The newspapers would undoubtedly have a wonderful time. Social media would be even more unbearable.

Somebody would insist he needed a podcast. Someone else would demand that he explain ceremonial magick in under sixty seconds because attention spans have grown frightfully short.

Eventually a journalist would ask the inevitable question.

What do you think about artificial intelligence?

After a suitably theatrical pause, I suspect he might answer with another question.

What do you think about yourself?

That response would disappoint television producers. It would also be consistent with Thelemic philosophy.

Machines are fascinating; people are mysterious. One deserves careful engineering, the other a lifetime of study.

The Great Work has never been about building more powerful tools. It has always been about becoming a more conscious user of whatever tools happen to exist.

That perspective transforms technology from a rival into an ally. Artificial intelligence becomes a research assistant. A smartphone becomes a library. A calendar becomes a magical diary. A focus timer becomes a ritual bell. A “Do Not Disturb” setting becomes the digital equivalent of closing the temple doors before beginning ceremonial work.

Nothing mystical has happened to the devices. Something has happened to the relationship.

That is where magick has always lived. Not inside the wand. Inside the Will directing it.

Logging Off Without Disconnecting

There is a peculiar irony in modern life. People have never been more connected. Many have never felt more distracted. Perhaps those two observations describe the same phenomenon from different directions.

Connection without intention becomes noise. Information without reflection becomes clutter. Technology without Will becomes habit.

Thelema offers an alternative that feels almost radical in its simplicity.

Become conscious.

Not occasionally. Repeatedly.

Every email becomes an opportunity to communicate with integrity. Every search becomes an opportunity to cultivate curiosity. Every online conversation becomes an opportunity to practice “Love under Will.” Every encounter with artificial intelligence becomes an opportunity to remember that wisdom has never been measured in processing speed.

The future will almost certainly become stranger. Artificial intelligence will become more convincing. Virtual reality will become more immersive. Wearable technology will become less visible. Machines will anticipate desires before those desires fully enter awareness.

Somewhere, somebody is almost certainly inventing a coffee maker that’s convinced it needs a social media presence.

Progress has always had an eccentric sense of humor.

None of those developments alter the central question. They simply ask it more frequently.

Does this serve my True Will?

Not my impulses. Not my anxieties. Not my carefully curated online identity. My True Will.

That question survives every technological revolution because it addresses something technology cannot manufacture.

Meaning.

The Great Work has never depended upon escaping the modern world. It asks something far more demanding. It asks us to inhabit the modern world consciously, refusing to surrender our attention, our judgment, or our purpose to systems designed primarily to monetize all three.

Keep the smartphone. Keep the laptop. Experiment with artificial intelligence. Learn every new technology that sparks genuine curiosity. Create beauty. Share knowledge generously.

Laugh at the absurdity of software updates that somehow require seventeen gigabytes to improve an app that was opening perfectly well already.

Watch the occasional cat video. Life would be unnecessarily solemn without a few moments of delightful nonsense.

Just remember that no algorithm, however sophisticated, can discover your True Will. No machine can perform your Great Work. No notification can tell you why you are here. Those questions still belong to you.

Crowley offered one of the simplest instructions ever written.

“Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law” (AL 1:40).

More than a century later, surrounded by satellites, smartphones, quantum processors, and artificial intelligence, it remains as challenging—and as liberating—as ever.

Everything else is just another notification waiting for permission to interrupt the conversation you are already having with your own soul.