

On the True Will

Thelema in the Age of Infinite Scrolling

Raquel Dantas · 6 September 2026

θέλημα is the Ancient Greek word for Will. Before delving into the meaning of True Will within the religion created by Aleister Crowley, it seems necessary to establish a distinction between two concepts which, although frequently confused, are not necessarily equivalent: Will and Desire.

This distinction is particularly important in the Thelemic context. The maxim “Do what thou wilt” may, at first glance, suggest a kind of unrestricted freedom, as though the realization of the Will simply consisted in satisfying whatever our ego desires. This, however, is not what it is about; doing one’s Will does not mean doing everything that occurs to us to do, nor indiscriminately obeying the impulses that arise within us. True Will, in Thelema, seems to be precisely much more demanding: it presupposes discernment, discipline, and, above all, the ability to distinguish that which we truly want from that which we merely desire.

In fact, in the Greek language itself, we have another word for “desire”: *πιθυμία* (*epithymía*), which may be understood as an impulse or inclination toward that which one desires. The Thelemic Will, on the other hand, is the inherent and individual divine purpose of each human being—understood, in Thelemic philosophy, as a Star—for the accomplishment of the Great Work. In light of this, there is an incompatibility between the realization of the Will and submission to one’s own impulses or to the immediate pleasures of the flesh, since the Will is inscribed within a context broader and deeper than the momentary satisfaction of sensory desires, being in accordance with the movement of transformation and development proper to the Great Work of each individual.

This perspective also appears in *One Star in Sight*, when it is stated that “any True Will is necessarily in harmony with the facts of Existence; and to refuse to accept the Book of the Law is to create a conflict within Nature.” The Will, therefore, does not present itself as an arbitrary force or as something contrary to this order, but rather as that which allows the individual to recognize and fulfill their place within it.

Although the *Book of the Law* does not provide a precise description or give further details about the True Will, it states:

“Thou hast no right but to do thy will. Do that, and no other shall say nay. For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect.” (AL 1:44)

Crowley, in turn, states explicitly in *Book 4*:

“The theory is that every man and every woman has definite attributes whose tendency, considered in due relation to environment, indicates a proper course of action in each case. To pursue this course of action is to do one’s True Will.”¹

Thus, we may understand the True Will, for the Thelemite, as an axiomatic and central principle in their religious and philosophical practice; a notion that is not limited to the theoretical field, but which guides the very way in which the individual understands themselves, their actions, and the purpose of their existence. In this sense, it constitutes a kind of guiding narrative of Thelemic practice, placing the individual within a temporal perspective in which their present actions are related to a purpose that transcends them. The Will, therefore, does not end at the moment in which it is recognized, but must be realized throughout existence, providing it with direction and continuity. It is in this sense that we may bring it closer to Byung-Chul Han’s reflection in *The Disappearance of Rituals*, when the author defines rituals as “symbolic techniques of encasement,”² capable of transforming “being-in-the-world into being-at-home” and of making time habitable. Ritual practice, thus, provides a temporal structure to existence; similarly, the True Will functions as that which gives direction to the individual’s

passage through time, allowing their actions to acquire coherence within a work that is not accomplished in a single moment, but throughout existence itself.

Still, this direction is not reduced to a single purpose in life, which we often assume to be a single facet of our daily existence. For instance, fatherhood may form part of a particular individual's Will; however, this single aspect of their being, even when cultivated and directed, is only a fraction of their True Will, merely one visible aspect of their nature. The Will possesses a cosmological and spiritual dimension that cannot be reduced to a single perspective or to personality traits which, moreover, may themselves be mutable. Although certain circumstances of existence may favor the manifestation of the Will, it does not seem appropriate to confuse them with the Will itself. To be a father, mother, artist, soldier, lawyer, teacher, or anything else may constitute an expression of what one is, but none of these conditions, in isolation, seems sufficient to define what one is meant to do.

This also allows us to establish a distinction between True Will and what we might call a "life project." A project may be abandoned, replaced, or even frustrated without the Will thereby ceasing to exist. The profession we choose, the relationships we establish, the places where we live, and even certain aspirations that we regard as fundamental may change throughout existence. The Will, however, does not seem to depend upon the permanence of these particular forms. It may find different means of expression according to circumstances, without this necessarily implying a change in its nature.

In this sense, perhaps it is more appropriate to understand the particular events of life as possible manifestations of a deeper orientation, rather than as its absolute definition. For instance, fatherhood may be an expression of the Will without the Will being reduced to fatherhood; a professional vocation may manifest it without exhausting it; a loving relationship may participate in its realization without constituting, in itself, its purpose. The same Will may therefore assume different forms throughout time, as the individual's own life transforms and, moreover, as they undergo one or more initiations.

This is particularly important because what we recognize as "who we are" at a given moment in existence may also change. There is a difference between the

permanence of an orientation and the permanence of the forms through which it manifests itself. The individual who seeks their True Will does not necessarily seek to discover a definitive description of their personality, but rather to understand that which remains meaningful throughout the successive transformations of their existence in the material world. The Will, in this sense, seems to possess a continuity that does not depend upon immobility.

It is precisely for this reason that the notion of realization becomes so important. If True Will could be reduced to the discovery of a characteristic, a profession, or a particular objective, its identification would bring the search itself to an end. Once one had discovered “what my Will is,” it would be enough to remain faithful to that circumscribed definition. Yet, if the Will manifests itself through existence, it cannot be entirely separated from the process by which the individual realizes it. Discovering it and realizing it are, therefore, distinct but inseparable movements: the first concerns the recognition of an orientation; the second, its concrete incorporation into life; like a Serpent that continually coils itself around the heart.

The Will does not oppose transformation; it is realized through it. The individual remains a Star not because they remain motionless, but because their movement possesses a direction within their own orbit. What changes are the forms, circumstances, and experiences through which this direction manifests itself.

From this, I believe we can say that the True Will is also not reduced to the execution of isolated acts or individual rites. Neither can it be delimited to the attainment of degrees within Orders, although, certainly, many Thelemic Orders offer interesting paths toward its identification and assumption. No; it goes beyond this. It is a matter of organizing one’s own existence and the narrative inscribed within it in Time. The Thelemite thus assumes the great responsibility of doing only their Will—not as a punctual exercise, but as a principle that must permeate and guide their very existence. And perhaps it is precisely from this perspective that AL 1:44 acquires its full dimension:

“Thou hast no right but to do thy will. Do that, and no other shall say nay. For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect.

1. Aleister Crowley et al., *Magick: Liber ABA* (Weiser Books, 1997). [_](#)
2. Byung-Chul Han, *The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present*. (Polity Press, 2020). [_](#)

Bibliography

- Crowley, Aleister, Mary Desti, and Leila Waddell. *Magick: Liber ABA*. Weiser Books, 1997.
- Han, Byung-Chul. *The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present*.. Polity Press, 2020.

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