

1/18/26

The Antecedents of Thelema

by

Alexister Crowley.

Extract from a letter A.C. to Montgomery Evans 22 Oct 26 .
"I started an essay on Thelema with reference to Rabelais, but have not yet finished it. Our position is that Rabelais was a great adept, a sort of prophet of Thelema. So to that in the description of the Abbey is an Oracle. In this he foretells an epoch when Church and Crown shall no longer count, but the world be run by bankers. He also indicates Bolshevism and such things; and the last line is a plain reference to me personally. My first motto was Ferdurabo, "I will endure to the end what you have to correct is the ignorant idea that Rabelais is just a naughty writer. He was master of all the sciences no less than Dante and Leonardo, and like them he achieved an extraordinary work for intellectual freedom"....

"I have just dug out a copy of the Essay on Thelema and enclose it. Section VII (? should be VI) is merely rough notes. Excuse the whole being so ragged, but I think it may be helpful..."

The Antecedents of Thelema.

I

It has been remarked by some critics of the Law of Thelema that the words "Do what thou wilt" are not original with the Master Therion: or, rather, with Aiwass, who uttered to the scribe Ankh-f-n-khonsu, the priest of the princes, the Book of the Law.

II

This is true enough, in its own way: we have, firstly, the word of St. Augustine: "Love, and do what thou wilt."

This is however, as the context shows, by no means what is meant by the Book of the Law. St. Augustine's thesis is that if the heart be full of love, one cannot go wrong. It is, so to say, a rider upon the theorem of St. Paul's 13th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians.

III

Far more important is the word of Rabelais, "Fais ce que veulx". The sublime Doctor does indeed intend, so far as he goes, to set forth in essence the Law of Thelema, very much as it is understood by the Master Therion himself.

The implications of the context are significant.

Our Master makes the foundation of the Abbey of Thelema the quite definite climax of his history of Gargantua; he describes his ideal of society. Thus he was certainly occupied with the idea of a new Aeon, and he saw, albeit perhaps dimly, that Fais ce que veulx was the required Magical Formula.

The Cardinal Jean du Bellay, indeed, reported to Francis I that Gargantua was a "new Gospel". It was, in fact, the Book that the Renaissance lacked; and had it been taken as it should have been, the world might have been spared the ignominy of Protestantism.

As the character of his parable demanded, he confines himself to painting a picture of pure Beauty; he does not enter into the questions of political economy (and like subjects) which must be solved in order to realize the ideal of the Law of Liberty. But he says distinctly that the religion of Thelema is to be contrary to all others. True, for Thelema is Magick, and Magick is science, the antithesis of the religious hypothesis. Also see Book of the Law, III 49-54.

There are to be no walls to the Abbey. To him, as to us, "The word of sin is restriction". (Al I, 41) He says plainly that construction merely gives rise to murders and conspiracies. It is impossible to quench the flame of the Holy Spirit of Man; and the attempt to smother it leads infallibly to conflagration of explosive fury.

Even in the matter of the petty restrictions of Time, the conventions with which we all unthinkingly comply, Rabelais sees the peril to the freedom of the Soul. In his Abbey of Thelema there are to be no clocks, no fixed routine; what must be done should be done when need actually arises. The text is fitness.

We should not take this passage too literally. Our time-conventions are devised by experience to secure to us the greatest possible margin of freedom.

Rabelais insists on the members of his Abbey being physically fit:

The Antecedents of Thelema.

I

It has been remarked by some critics of the Law of Thelema that the words "Do what thou wilt" are not original with the Master Therion: or, rather, with Aiwass, who uttered to the scribe Ankh-f-n-khonsu, the priest of the princes, the Book of the Law.

II

This is true enough, in its own way: we have, firstly, the word of St. Augustine: "Love, and do what thou wilt."

This is however, as the context shows, by no means what is meant by the Book of the Law. St. Augustine's thesis is that if the heart be full of love, one cannot go wrong. It is, so to say, a rider upon the theorem of St. Paul's 13th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians.

III

Far more important is the word of Rabelais, "Fais ce que veulx". The sublime Doctor does indeed intend, so far as he goes, to set forth in essence the Law of Thelema, very much as it is understood by the Master Therion himself.

The implications of the context are significant.

Our Master makes the foundation of the Abbey of Thelema the quite definite climax of his history of Gargantua; he describes his ideal of society. Thus he was certainly occupied with the idea of a new aeon, and he saw, albeit perhaps dimly, that Fais ce que veulx was the required Magical Formula.

The Cardinal Jean du Bellay, indeed, reported to Francis I that Caesar Gargantua was a "new Gospel". It was, in fact, the Book that the Renaissance lacked; and had it been taken as it should have been, the world might have been spared the ignominy of Protestantism.

As the character of his parable demanded, he confines himself to painting a picture of pure Beauty; he does not enter into the questions of political economy (and like subjects) which must be solved in order to realize the ideal of the Law of Liberty. But he says distinctly that the religion of Thelema is to be contrary to all others. True, for Fais ce que veulx is Magick, and Magick is science, the antithesis of the religious hypothesis. Also see Book of the Law, III 49-54.

There are to be no walls to the Abbey. To him, as to us, "The word of sin is restriction". (I I, 41) He says plainly that construction merely gives rise to murders and conspiracies. It is impossible to quench the flame of the Holy Spirit of Man; and the attempt to smother it leads infallibly to conflagration of explosive fury.

Even in the matter of the petty restrictions of Time, the conventions with which we all unthinkingly comply, Rabelais sees the peril to the freedom of the Soul. In his Abbey of Thelema there are to be no clocks, no fixed routine; what must be done should be done when need actually arises. The text is fitness.

We should not take this passage too literally. Our time-conventions are devised by experience to secure to us the greatest possible margin of freedom.

Rabelais insists on the members of his Abbey being physically fit:

The Antecedents of Thelema.

I

It has been remarked by some critics of the Law of Thelema that the words "Do what thou wilt" are not original with the Master Therion: or, rather, with Aiwass, who uttered to the scribe Ankh-f-n-khonsu, the priest of the princes, the Book of the Law.

II

This is true enough, in its own way: we have, firstly, the word of St Augustine: "Love, and do what thou wilt."

This is however, as the context shows, by no means what is meant by the Book of the Law. St Augustine's thesis is that if the heart be full of love, one cannot go wrong. It is, so to say, a rider upon the theorem of St Paul's 13th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians.

III

Far more important is the word of Rabelais, "Fais ce que veulx". The sublime doctor does indeed intend, so far as he goes, to set forth in essence the Law of Thelema, very much as it is understood by the Master Therion himself.

The implications of the context are significant.

Our Master makes the foundation of the Abbey of Thelema the quite definite climax of his history of Gargantua; he describes his ideal of society. Thus he was certainly occupied with the idea of a new Aeon, and he saw, albeit perhaps dimly, that Fais ce que veulx was the required Magical Formula.

The Cardinal Jean du Bellay, indeed, reported to Francis I that Caesar Gargantua was a "new Gospel". It was, in fact, the Book that the Renaissance lacked; and had it been taken as it should have been, the world might have been spared the ignominy of Protestantism.

As the character of his parable demanded, he confines himself to painting a picture of pure Beauty; he does not enter into the questions of political economy (and like subjects) which must be solved in order to realize the ideal of the Law of Liberty. But he says distinctly that the religion of Thelema is to be contrary to all others. True, for Thelema is Magick, and Magick is science, the antithesis of the religious hypothesis. Also see Book of the Law, III 49-54.

There are to be no walls to the Abbey. To him, as to us, "The word of sin is restriction". (AI I, AI) He says plainly that construction merely gives rise to murders and conspiracies. It is impossible to quench the flame of the Holy Spirit of Man; and the attempt to smother it leads infallibly to conflagration of explosive fury.

Even in the matter of the petty restrictions of Time, the conventions with which we all unthinkingly comply, Rabelais sees the peril to the freedom of the Soul. In his Abbey of Thelema there are to be no clocks, no fixed routine; what must be done should be done when need actually arises. The text is fitness.

We should not take this passage too literally. Our time-conventions are devised by experience to secure to us the greatest possible margin of freedom.

Rabelais insists on the members of his Abbey being physically fit:

so too the Book of the Law: "Wisdom says: be strong!" (II,70) and similar passages.

There is to be no separation of the sexes, and no artificial restrictions upon Love. The Book of the Law is even more explicit upon this most fundamental social principle: see I,12,13; I,41; I,51-53; II,52.

With all this we find no suggestion of any communistic theories: they are in fact specifically disowned. The ethics of the aeon of Horus are equally individualistic. "Ye shall gather goods and stores of women and spices; ye shall wear rich jewels" etc. (I,61) "Ye shall see them at rule, at victorious armies, at all joy." (II,24) See also II,18; II,21; II,58 etc.

Members of superstitious religions are not to be allowed to enter the Abbey of Thelema. In the Book of the Law the attitude is not merely defensive; the implication is that superstition is to be stamped out, or at least that its victims are to be definitely relegated to the slave-class. The Freeman is to war down the serf: "on the low men trample in the fierce lust of your wrath." (II,24) There is no place in the Abbey imagined by Rabelais, and to be realized by the Master Therion, for those parasites of society who feed upon the troubles caused by Restriction: officials, lawyers, financiers, and the like. Ill-disposed people - that is those whose failure to understand their own true will of Freedom leads them to interfere with others - are not to be tolerated.

In the Book of the Law this is implied throughout. The true will of every free Man is essentially noble. (It might well be said that a man's True Will were to see Justice established; but this is not the normal conception of a lawyer. And so for other cases.)

Thus ends Rabelais his account of the qualifications of admission to his Abbey: that the Postulant should be filled with the spirit of Nobility, of Truth, and of Beauty. With this idea the Book of the Law is so penetrated that quotation would overwhelm.

We may then conclude that the masterpiece of Rabelais contains in singular perfection a clear forecast of the Book which was to be revealed by Aiwass to Ankh-f-n-khonsu 370 years later.

IV.

Was the mighty spirit of Alcofribas Nasier aware of the prophetic fire of his immortal book?

He has fortunately left us in no doubt upon this point; for he did not content himself with having created in parable that Abbey of Thelema which his eager gaze foresaw from the black abyss of those Ages not yet thrilled by the Morning Star of the Renaissance and dimly heralded by the Wolf's Tail of the Reformation.

He proceeded to envelop himself in the mist of oracular speech, to fulminate his light through dark sayings, to clothe the naked beauty of his time-piercing thought in the pontifical vestments of prophecy.

The reader of to-day plunged from the limpid waters of his allegory into the glooming gulphs of sibylline and subterranean song, is startled indeed when, after repeated efforts to penetrate the mystery of his verses, he perceives the adumbration of dim forms - and recognizes them, with something of terror, for the images of the

events of this very generation of mankind!

Writing at a period when the Divine Right of Kings under the Supreme Governance of Almighty God was yet unchallenged, Rabelais describes the rise of Democracy. Idle people, he writes, will stir up social strife, so as eventually to destroy all proper relations between classes and individuals. The ignorant will have as much political power as the instructed. The dullest and the most stupid people will be entrusted with government.

Just as we see it to-day! For genuine knaves are rare enough in governments; real capacity, even for dishonesty, is baffled by our political machinery. A clever man must at least pretend to be stupid to attain, and act with consistently dense imbecillity to maintain, his place among the rulers of the world. No sooner is he suspected of possessing even one spark of intelligence than the herd distrust him, butt him from his pedestal, and trample him to death beneath their hooves.

The style of the oracle at this point becomes unfathomably obscure; it is hard to discover what exact process Rabelais describes as the means of terrestrial catastrophe which culminates in universal revolution. But, the horror at its height, the Master becomes admirably lucid in his description of the avenging lightning which Destiny has prepared for the salvation of the race.

A great flame will spring up, he says, and put an end to this flood.

What clearer reference could be desired to the Aeon of Horus? Is not Horus "Force and Fire", the victorious foe of the dark waters of the Nile. Is not To Mega Therion, the Great Wild Beast, the Lion of the Sun, the destined conqueror of Iesus, the Fish?

And so at last the elect, the sons of self-chosen Freedom, come into their own, and the false slaves of Restriction stripped of their knavish spoils, their hoarded dross of stupidity, and put in their proper place as slaves of the true Men of the Race. Nor does the great Medicar of Lorraine stop with a y mere symbolic identification: he indicates the Master Therion by name! The very last verse of his oracle runs thus

O quest à' ventr-(?) venerer

Cil qui en fin pourra perseverer (?)

He who is able to endure unto the end, he insists, is to be blessed with worship, and what is this "I will endure unto the end" but PERDURABO, the magical motto at his first initiation of the Master Therion?

V

Superb as is this adumbration of the Law of Thelema by Rabelais with his word "Fais ce que veux", the Book of the Law gives us more - it gives us "all in the clear light."

~~Although "Do what thou wilt" shall be the whole~~

Through (text reads 'although') "Do what thou wilt, shall be the whole of the Law", we have a deep er truth for the strong student, a more detailed and accurate technique for the Aspirant to practice: "The word of the Law is thelema." In the analysis of this word is to be found the masterkey to every theorem and to every problem of the day. There lies concealed from the profane yet open to the consecrated, the proof of the nature of Always Himself, of his superiority in intelligence to any mere human being. The whole doctrine of the Universe, the

events of this very generation of mankind!

Writing at a period when the Divine Right of Kings under the Supreme Governance of Almighty God was yet unchallenged, Rabelais describes the rise of Democracy. Idle people, he writes, will stir up social strife, so as eventually to destroy all proper relations between classes and individuals. The ignorant will have as much political power as the instructed. The dullest and the most stupid people will be entrusted with government.

Just as we see it to-day! For genuine knaves are rare enough in governments; real capacity, even for dishonesty, is baffled by our political machinery. A clever man must at least pretend to be stupid to attain, and act with consistently dense imbecillity to maintain, his place among the rulers of the world. No sooner is he suspected of possessing even one spark of intelligence than the herd distrust him, butt him from his pedestal, and trample him to death beneath their hooves.

The style of the oracle at this point becomes unfathomably obscure; it is hard to discover what exact process Rabelais describes as the means of terrestrial catastrophe which culminates in universal revolution. But, the horror at its height, the Master becomes admirably lucid in his description of the avenging lightning which Destiny has prepared for the salvation of the race.

A great flame will spring up, he says, and put an end to this flood.

What clearer reference could be desired to the Aeon of Horus? Is not Horus "Force and Fire", the victorious foe of the dark waters of the Nile. Is not To Mega Therion, the Great Wild Beast, the Lion of the Sun, the destined conqueror of Iesus, the Fish?

And so at last the elect, the sons of self-chosen Freedom, come into their own, and the false slaves of Restriction stripped of their knavish spoils, their hoarded cross of stupidity, and put in their proper place as slaves of the true Men of the Race. Nor does the great Magician of Lorraine stop with any mere symbolic identification: he indicates the Master Therion by name! The very last verse of his oracle runs thus

O quest à' ventr-(?) venerer

Cil qui en fin pourra perseverer (?)

He who is able to endure unto the end, he insists, is to be blessed with worship. And what is this "I will endure unto the end" but PERDURABO, the magical motto at his first initiation of the Master Therion?

V

Superb as is this adumbration of the Law of Thelema by Rabelais with his word "Fais ce que veulx", the Book of the Law gives us more - it gives us "all in the clear light."

~~Although "Do what thou wilt" shall be the whole~~

Through (text reads 'although') "Do what thou wilt, shall be the whole of the Law", we have a deeper truth for the strong student, a more detailed and accurate technique for the Aspirant to practice: "The word of the Law is Thelema." In the analysis of this word is to be found the masterkey to every theorem and to every problem of the day. There lies concealed from the profane yet open to the consecrated, the proof of the nature of Always Himself, of his superiority in intelligence to any mere human being. The whole doctrine of the Universe, the

events of this very generation of mankind!

Writing at a period when the Divine Right of Kings under the Supreme Governance of Almighty God was yet unchallenged, Rabelais describes the rise of Democracy. Idle people, he writes, will stir up social strife, so as eventually to destroy all proper relations between classes and individuals. The ignorant will have as much political power as the instructed. The dullest and the most stupid people will be entrusted with government.

Just as we see it to-day! For genuine knaves are rare enough in governments; real capacity, even for dishonesty, is baffled by our political machinery. A clever man must at least pretend to be stupid to attain, and act with consistently dense imbecillity to maintain, his place among the rulers of the world. No sooner is he suspected of possessing even one spark of intelligence than the herd distrust him, butt him from his pedestal, and trample him to death beneath their hooves.

The style of the oracle at this point becomes unfathomably obscure; it is hard to discover what exact process Rabelais describes as the means of terrestrial catastrophe which culminates in universal revolution. But, the horror at its height, the Master becomes admirably lucid in his description of the avenging lightning which Destiny has prepared for the salvation of the race.

A great flame will spring up, he says, and put an end to this flood.

What clearer reference could be desired to the Aeon of Horus? Is not Horus "Force and Fire", the victorious foe of the dark waters of the Nile. Is not To Mega Therion, the Great Wild Beast, the Lion of the Sun, the destined conqueror of Iesus, the Fish?

And so at last the elect, the sons of self-chosen Freedom, come into their own, and the false slaves of Restriction stripped of their knavish spoils, their hoarded cross of stupidity, and put in their proper place as slaves of the true Men of the Race. Nor does the great Merciful of Louraine stop with any mere symbolic identification: he indicates the Master Therion by name! The very last verse of his oracle runs thus

O quest à' ventr- (?) venerer

Cil qui en fin pourra perseverer (?)

He who is able to endure unto the end, he insists, is to be blessed with worship. and what is this "I will endure unto the end" but PERDURABO, the magical motto at his first initiation of the Master Therion?

V

Superb as is this adumbration of the Law of Thelema by Rabelais with his word "Fais ce que veulx", the Book of the Law gives us more - it gives us "all in the clear light."

~~Although "Do what thou wilt" shall be the whole~~
Through (text reads 'although') "Do what thou wilt, shall be the whole of the Law", we have a deeper truth for the strong student, a more detailed and accurate technique for the Aspirant to practice: "The word of the Law is thelema." In the analysis of this word is to be found the masterkey to every theorem and to every problem of the day. There lies concealed from the profane yet open to the consecrated, the proof of the nature of Always Himself, of his superiority in intelligence to any mere human being. The whole doctrine of the Universe, the

solution of every question of Ontology, is given thereby. So also it reveals full many a mystery of science. I suppose that my research has yet revealed not one tythe of its marvels; but the time has come to disclose what truths I have discovered therein. They shall serve both as the warrant of my work, and as the earnest (to the stern seeker after Wisdom) of further rewards- that shall surpass my holiest imagination.

VI

The Universe = 0 (or it would not be complete. But 0 = I plus (-I).

(0-2) = Magick = the Will to Live.

(2-0) = Mysticism = the Will to Die.

"Every man and every woman is a star". (A star is an individual identity; it radiates energy, it goes, it is a point of view. Its object is to become the whole by establishing relations with other stars. Each such relation is an event: it is an act of Love under Will.

Love = I plus (-I) = (a)0 and (b)2.

This is expressed by Mother (Hé) Father (VauYod) then Son (Vau) (= 2), then Daughter (Hé final) (= 0)

This process repeats itself perpetually. An Event is the ultimate thing in the Universe; it is the conjunction of an Individual with a possibility. Each (I plus P) is unique and infinite; so is each event. (Cf. Berashith on value of 0 to the power of 0) The Individual is measured by the number and importance of the events belonging to his growth; i.e. to the number of possibilities he has fulfilled. (a)

I plus P always \geq 0, such being a term in a series. They are indistinguishable. I (a) Ia from I b etc, as the series is homogeneous; there are no coordinate axes. But Events are theoretically distinguishable: $Ea \neq Ia, Pb, Eb$ $Ea \neq IaPb, Eb = IbPa$ etc, so that as soon as we can define an individual of the second order I to the power of I, one to whom belong Events Ea Eb etc, we can have a practical distinction between events; this gives us the idea of "Events of the Second Order" E'. Thus E'a is not E'b, though both composed of identical elements- at least of indistinguishable ones. All relations are meaningless in themselves; but one relation may be contrasted with another. The Ego grows with by establishing relations with other points of view and absorbing them. hence the bigger the Ego, the less the sense of Egoty. The Universe is a set of events; they do not exist, they occur. (Note. Of the electron, which has no mass, but is an electric charge. It is a dynamic not a static phenomenon. Any stasis is a mere temporary resolution. Logic describes the process of thought, which is the essence of action. Mathematics is the language of Logic. A man must think of himself as a LOGOS, as going, not as a fixed idea. "Do what thou wilt" is thus necessarily his formula. He only becomes himself when he attains the loss of egoity, of the sense of seperateness. he become All, PAN, PAN, when he become zero. Note that events may be considered for convenience in any or all of three modes of projection (a) as extended in space (b) ditto in time (c) as causally connected. these are forms of (a) sensation (b) consciousness of being (c) reason.

The Universe is an act of faith.

its Reality is an Act of Love

Men resent happiness, "knowing that it cannot last"; but other animals- and-ise Men- accept things as they are.

Marriage is the strait-waistcoat of Love. Art and Science consist

in selecting, arranging and presenting facts so as to illustrate some aspect of Truth.

Law is the corpse of Justice.

Morality is the corpse of Conduct.

Religion is the carcass of Fear.

Happiness is the state of mind resulting from the free fulfilment of a function.

A holy man is one who is not bound by normal desires.

A prostitute is one who is obliged to treat individuals as members of a class, ob pecuniam.

All proofs turn out on examination to be definitions. All definitions are circular. (For $A = BC$, $B = DE$,.... $Y = XY$, and $Y = 7A$.)

Consider the proposition: Thought is possible.

Realism = Romanticism to one strong enough to worship things as they are.

The true Artist loves all his characters equally.

X Punishment: increase of sensibility at the expense of control.

Reduce the 4 logical proposition to 2: thus A and E are extreme cases of I and O, as the circle is of the ellipse.
