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Chapter 4

Darkness Within: Satanism as a Self-Religion

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Satanism, it has been argued, is an ideology or a movement focused on the self (Harvey 2002: 55; Petersen 2005: 424ff.). The aim of this chapter is to develop and discuss the concept of Satanism as self-spirituality: What is the Satanist concept of the self, and how is the Satanist self constructed? How does Satanism fit within Paul Heelas' concept of self-religion (Heelas 1996)? To what degree are Satanist ideologies and ideal practices devoted to topics of self-development? The chapter aims to show the relations between Heelas' construct of the New Age movement and Satanism, but it will also elaborate on the significant differences within Satanism.

The New Age movement and Satanism seem to share several points of view. Both concentrate ideologically on the individual.¹ At first sight, however, the attempt to join Satanism to Paul Heelas' concept of self-spirituality may look unpromising. Summing up what he dubs the "essential *lingua franca*" of the New Age ideology as self-spirituality, Heelas finds three main elements:

It explains why life – as conventionally experienced – is not what it should be; it provides an account of what it is to find perfection; and it provides the means for obtaining salvation. (Heelas 1996: 18)

Words like 'salvation' and 'spiritual' tend to ring false in most ears when used in relation to Satanism, but as we shall see, there *are* important thematic and structural similarities between Satanism and Heelas' New Age-construct. In order to see this more clearly, I shall begin by looking at "diagnosis", or how Satanist writers construct contemporary selves and society. From there we shall move on to "goals", or how Satanists envision the ideal person/self and their relation to (a transformed?) society. Lastly we shall examine the "cure": To what degree and how do Satanists theorize transformation and transformational techniques?

¹ There are also social similarities that may, to greater or lesser degree, be common to new social movements of late modern, western society. For instance, both Satanists and New Agers seem to rate formal membership of a group rather low in their priorities. Participation in collective activities (building "community") seems to be relatively

My focus here is not on the seemingly minuscule amount of social, political action, but on practices related to the individual self. Finally, I shall aim to sum up by discussing Satanism up against some aspects of Heelas' "New Age"-self, primarily the distinction between utilitarian and expressivist selves, and how they relate to late modern, capitalist society.

The chapter mainly addresses the ideological level. I focus on a narrow spectrum of "movement texts" that is texts issued by figures central to contemporary Satanism that are ideologically important (cf. Hammer 2001: 37ff.). The chosen texts are related to specific organizations. Most of them are from books and official documents. In this chapter, I have chosen to mostly disregard web-based texts and relevant articles from Satanist journals. The examples are taken from what has been construed as two opposing categories of Satanism: "rationalist" and "esoteric" Satanism. Specifically, I have selected the central texts issued by Anton LaVey as being of primary importance in representing rationalist Satanism, ranging in time from *The Satanic Bible* (1969) to his selected essays in *Satan Speaks* (1998). In addition, I have used segments from the authorized LaVey biography and Church of Satan (CoS) history by Blanche Barton (1990, 1992). Esoteric Satanism is represented by texts from central figures in the Temple of Set (ToS), including Michael Aquino's early documents and history of the CoS (2002), Stephen Flowers' history of the Left-Hand Path (1997), and Don Webb's guide to the aspiring left-hand magician (1999). At the time they wrote *Demons of the Flesh* (2002), Nikolas and Zeena Schreck were leading members of the ToS, and this book is also included.

Diagnosis

The New Age movement, writes Heelas, holds that the mores of established social order "disrupt what it is to be authentically human" (1996: 18). The New Age ideologists therefore seek a detraditionalized self, free from the constraints of repressive socialization: "Perfection can be found only by moving beyond the socialized self", thereby encountering "what we are *by nature*" (ibid.: 19). Man's essential nature, according to Heelas' New Age-construct, can only be approached through discarding the "ego" or the "intellect". The inner realm alone is "the source of authentic vitality, creativity, love, tranquility ... and all those other qualities which are held to comprise the perfect life" (ibid.). To anyone familiar with Satanist thought in the tradition after LaVey, the first part of the diagnosis may sound very familiar. The other items may not fit equally well.

With regard to the question of whether the established order disrupts the authentically human, the rationalist and esoteric Satanists seem to be of one mind: It does. Writing about Christianized culture, Anton LaVey (1969) considered that it has demonized the flesh to instill guilt and anxiety, thus promoting not only a spiritual view of man's nature, but also promoting ecclesiastical control over men's psyche. Thus Satan became "the best friend the church has ever had"

(ibid.: 25). Through many of his essays, he ridiculed or raged against a mass culture which he deemed to hold most people under control. The Satanist, however, should be a freer "spirit" or able to break free. Those who could not handle the flesh or the will invented the "sins" to keep mankind's carnal nature under control. Man's carnal nature, however, is not to be denied, and if denied, merely shows up in different, more harmful guise. Therefore, he advocated committing all of the seven deadly sins.

LaVey rarely stressed a need to break free of Christian socialization. Satanists are "born", not "made", he said. A Satanist should therefore already be at least partially free, with a strong, healthy ego. This ideal Satanist is therefore without need for any "support group," thus the thought of CoS as an organization of non-joiners (LaVey 1998: 163). However, at least in the early years, there seems to have been systematic practices devoted to breaking free of socialization (e.g. Moody 1974; Barton 1990: 29), and there are several, albeit unsystematic, examples of his thinking around such practices (e.g. LaVey 1969: 53f., 99ff.).

It is easier to find systematic thought around causes of "sleep" and practices for "waking up" with the Temple of Set. Former leader of ToS, Don Webb, writing about the nature and goals of the Left-Hand Path, agrees that man's situation is not what it could be. Humans, he states, "are but machines, but may in potential become gods" (Webb 1999: 3). To become as gods, there are obstacles to be done away with. Socialization and society have left "a series of randomly assorted thoughts, notions, and behaviors" which either actively hinder humans, or at best lull them into a sleeplike state. Everything from the food we eat to the patterns of "non-thinking" we acquire from society, works as obstacles to body, mind, emotions, or will, and keep humans from awakening. Webb systematically details how socialization entangles humans in patterns that keep them asleep. There are clear similarities with Heelas' construct, and Webb's thoughts are developed along similar lines.

In the New Age ideology, according to Heelas, detraditionalizing the self leads back to what we are by nature. The gradual process of awakening in Setian texts, however, is not so much a return to nature as it is awakening and developing a *special* capability. It is thought to be there in potential in all humans, but very few actually do awaken to become "lords of the Left-Hand Path." Achieving this goal is certainly no case of merely shedding socialization. LaVey may appear somewhat closer to the view that "liberation" is a mere matter of freeing one's natural self, but this could be due to his going in less detail on the matter. Although the details and the ideas of man's natural capabilities differ between the texts of ToS and CoS, they agree on the necessity of an internal "Black Flame" burning. This flame is only awakened in a few (e.g. Barton 1990: 82; Temple of Set 1997: 4f.). While both rationalist and esoteric Satanism (and the differences between them may at times be less than obvious) thus agrees that the current order keeps people asleep, they may be more elitist than the self-spiritualities with regard to the possibility for waking up.

This possible difference aside, Satanism is in accord with Heelas' New Age on the view that the dominant order hides important aspects of the self. With regard to the view that one should shed the "lower self" or the "ego" or "intellect", however, these similarities melt away. This may be the point at which the self-declared Left-Hand Path differs most clearly from Heelas' construct. From the emic point of view, the difference is immense. Unlike all Right-Hand Path religions, states Setian scholar Stephen Flowers (1997: 2f.), the Left-Hand Path religions honor and value the self. Where the Right-Hand Path, writes Flowers,

is **theocentric** (or certainly alleocentric – "other-centered"), the left-hand path is **psychocentric**, or soul/self-centered. Those within the left-hand path may argue over the nature of this self/ego/soul, but that the individual is the epicenter of the path itself seems undisputed (ibid.: 3).

This view, while given a slightly different spin focusing more clearly on the body and on sexual practices, also reappears in the writings of Nikolas and Zeena Schreck (2002: 20).² In Flowers' Setian version, the self derives from the principle of isolate intelligence (Set, or the Prince of Darkness), and the goal of the Setian would be to develop similarly as an isolate intelligence. This isolate intelligence, many Setians hold, may be or could become purely spiritual. While starting out as located within human animals alone, thus being connected to the body, the "flame" may be fanned to continue as spirit after death. Thus, one may find that although the stress on ego and selfhood among Setians deviates from the construct of New Age ideology, they seem to ultimately share an idealist perspective.

A LaVeyan Satanist, on the other hand, would tend more towards materialism. While it is not *necessary* to read LaVey's early writings as materialist – there are plenty of passages that might support an idealist interpretation (e.g. 1969: 24, 94) – the development of his thought clearly points toward the conclusion that the ego's indulgence ends with the life of the body. The repeated statement to the effect that "Life is the great indulgence; death the one great abstinence" (1969: 92, 33) may indeed summarize most thought of rationalist Satanism on the subject.

The difference from the "New Age" derogatory view of the "lower" ego seems to be even clearer in rationalist Satanism than for the Setians' esoteric Satanism. Not only is the indulgence of the body and the ego the primary goal of LaVeyan Satanism; most of the practical advice for self-development and self-change is devoted to that indulgence. The Satanist, writes LaVey, "believes in the complete gratification of his ego" (ibid.: 94), and although there is considerable room for

² Zeena Schreck was at the time high priestess of ToS. The couple now lead a Setian splinter group called *The Storm*. Their variant definition of the Left-Hand Path reads, in compressed form: "The transformation of human consciousness to divine consciousness via the manipulation of the sexual currents of the physical and subtle bodies through erotic rites" (2002: 20). They underscore the focus on antinomianism, the individual psyche, body, and the physical realm as means to awakening.

interpretation as to how one might best develop to indulge oneself, most advice is straight-forward and utilitarian (e.g. LaVey 1989 [1970]). The self-development strategies we encounter in LaVeyan texts are rarely probable candidates for inclusion in a "New Age"-like moving beyond the ego to a "spiritual" higher nature. While New Age and Satanism share a common suspicion of the socialized self and of socially dominant ideologies, the specifics deviate, with rationalist Satanism (but also esoteric Satanism) placed closer to a utilitarian pragmatism.

We see something similar with regard to New Age belief in the "inner realm alone" as a source of vitality, wisdom, power, authority and anything of lasting value (Heelas 1996: 19). Again, there are important similarities, in that the vitality and power may, fundamentally, issue from the *Black Flame*, the "darkness within." This is certainly the case with ToS literature, where life and the human intelligence are "gifts of Set," working against the grain of nature (e.g. Flowers 1997: 233f.).³ It is, however, difficult to escape the impression that both rationalist and esoteric Satanism see the qualities mentioned by Heelas as deriving from *interaction*. Vitality may be tapped by "psychic vampires", wisdom relates to how one manages one's life, and power and authority are not least related to how one interacts with others to create real-life success.

The topic of real-world action and success runs through so many of CoS' texts that it may well be seen as *the* key goal. Considering that the debate over the split between CoS and ToS also concerned the practice of payment for priesthood, one might think that such practical considerations play a lesser role in the ToS.⁴ The movement texts investigated here, however, value worldly success highly, and the leaders certainly do not subscribe to an "inner realm alone"-view of wisdom or vitality. While former high priest Don Webb warns against unthinking and damaging practices derived from one's heritage, he equally advises the prospective magician to "take its products and enforce those you like" (1999: 26). Simple opposition against one's background is an obstacle to be overcome, and this is an important task in initiatory magic. Setian philosophy also emphasizes the importance of acquiring an education. Although the final goal is to develop a principle of isolate intelligence, the path seems to be filled with study of all kinds of philosophy as well as with developing as magician (e.g. Aquino 1989; cf. Webb 1999: 102ff.).

This also puts the Setian outside the small fringe of New Age thinkers who seem to propose solipsism, not merely epistemological individualism. Satanist movement texts all agree that there is a real world independent of human consciousness. One must usually act in manners that are intersubjectively agreed to work in order to achieve one's aims.⁵ What is "true for me" about the outer

³ Similar thoughts were voiced by Michael Aquino in the early days of CoS. His essay *Diabolisticon*, written in 1970, investigates similar thoughts (Aquino 2002: 497–514).

⁴ As I know next to nothing about internal life in the ToS, this *may* be true.

⁵ Of course, this may also include magical workings, for which many may deny validity. These should, writes LaVey, be judged by the result, and the magician should

world or myself should generally become validated by others. There is little room for epistemological individualism of the strong kind. However, a weaker version may be more common, as it also seems to be among real New Age practitioners. This weaker version holds that one should do "what works for you." There may be no one right way to achieve a certain goal, or there may be no one single goal everyone should work for. Certainly, this is also related to the focus on individuality and selfhood among both New Agers and Satanists. Individuality is not least understood as difference, and this side of selfhood seems to play a larger role in satanic movement texts than in New Age texts. In the vocabulary of Kevin Hetherington, the Satanic self of movement texts is more centered on the *bricolage* of individual identity than the homology of identification as a collective (Hetherington 1998: 28).

There is, however, one situation in which one will find that the Satanist is encouraged to adopt a position where the inner realm of the Satanist's mind is all that counts. This is with regard to the performance of ritual. Anton LaVey writes: "Any and all intellectual activity must take place before the ceremony, not during it" (1969: 111). But if one should perform with a focused will, certain of the outcome, one ought still to judge by results. The main purpose of workings of such "greater magic" is presented as emotional release. Webb relates similarly of the kind of magic he calls sorcery, that it depends on emotional energy, and that "logic and reason ... must be dropped for the time of your ceremony" (1999: 21). Afterwards, however, one should again take a "scientific approach" and learn what works and "what doesn't work for you" (ibid.).

Goals

The primary goal of rationalist Satanism is *success*, understood as physical and emotional fulfillment (e.g. LaVey 1969: 83). Indulgence, not abstinence, was a central feature of Satanism in the thought of LaVey. We may see this in many central parts of *The Satanic Bible*, but it is summarized very pointedly in the first two of the nine satanic statements.⁶ In order to be able to indulge (relatively) freely, however, there are other goals to be reached. Indulgence was also contrasted with *compulsion*. The strong ego should be able to control impulses and desires, not be a slave to them. Indulgence, writes LaVey, implies choice (ibid.: 81). He argues that compulsion is the result of repression: "When a person has no proper release for his desires they rapidly build up and become compulsions." If people did have the opportunity for periodic indulgence, however, "they would be sufficiently released to lead unfrustrated lives in the everyday world" (ibid.). Thus, freedom may increase both pleasure and strength. Freedom may also increase generosity:

acknowledge as functioning magic whenever the result is in accordance with the will.

⁶ Satan represents "indulgence instead of abstinence" and "vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams."

"Only if a person's own ego is sufficiently fulfilled, can he afford to be kind and complimentary to others, without robbing him of his self-respect" (ibid.: 94).

Indulgence increases the chance of reaching other, important goals as well: self-respect, freedom, a strong ego, emotional, and physical gratification. All these elements interact to strengthen each other. Other goals (sometimes hard to separate from techniques) may be added. One of these important goals is that of self-knowledge. Writing about what he terms "The Balance Factor", LaVey says:

If, in attempting to attain your goal through either greater or lesser magic, you find yourself failing consistently, think about these things: Have you been the victim of a misdirected, over-blown ego which has caused you to want something or someone when the chances are virtually non-existent? ... To be able to adjust one's wants to one's capabilities is a great talent. (ibid.: 127)

LaVey recommends introspection and self-evaluation as tools to achieve a balanced view of one's own capabilities. We may further notice the value placed on self-knowledge by observing that self-deceit, pretentiousness (empty posturing), lack of perspective, and solipsism are all on the list of nine satanic sins. They are classified as counter-productive and unwanted.

Furthermore, a Satanist should display a sense of *individuality*. Herd conformity is another of the nine satanic sins. It is wrong because of its unthinking response to the habits of the many, but also because it shows a lack of the independent and iconoclastic spirit otherwise valued. However, individuality and non-conformance should only be taken so far. Counter-productive pride and a lack of compliance with (what is presented as) universal standards of aesthetics are considered satanic sins. Aesthetics is important, and one should strive for one's own style, "reflective of one's own nature", but not deny "universally pleasing and harmonious configurations" (Barton 1990: 67). These sins are presented as being counter-productive with regard to the central goal of "success". Pride is a good thing, but not beyond the point where it is no longer productive. A lack of aesthetics is seen as an impediment to lesser magic, and is thereby a hindrance to success. Pretentiousness is regarded as a sin, not because posturing is wrong in itself, but because the pretentious cannot actually deliver. There are many reasons why stupidity is regarded as the cardinal sin in LaVey's Satanism, but one important reason is that it serves as a hindrance to the good life.

These elements of elitism and comfortable living also come to the fore with regard to social visions. In the program entitled "Pentagonal Revisionism", LaVey (1992: 93ff.) outlined a short list of goals for social transformation. The central element is *stratification*. Society should, to a much larger extent, reward the productive and let the unproductive fall behind. The remaining four – taxation of all churches, reintroducing Lex Talionis, development of artificial human companions and total environments – serve or rest on stratification. Taxation of churches is presumed to lead them into bankruptcy. Reintroducing the law of the jungle is seen as necessary to revive a sense of responsibility, and to counter the

state victimization of those who choose to fight back against becoming victims of crime. Eugenics is presented as important, both ecologically and as a way of producing more Satanists. "Satanists are *born* not made ... so we must *breed* our new race of Satanists" (LaVey in Barton 1990: 82). Society is unlikely to change just because a few of its members have become awakened to their inner flame. While LaVey saw extremism as an important social safeguard against simple mediocrity and herd thinking, he made no specific political program. LaVey seems to have emphasized a kind of limited, enclave-forming withdrawal from ordinary society (Barton 1990: 83). The construction of artificial human companions and total environments was presented also as ways of ensuring the insular "happiness" of the herd, but it seems not least to have been a vision for freeing the Satanist from having to live in the ugliness and pollution of ordinary society (ibid.: 87ff.). The total environment would be a place for the satanic self to indulge, create, enjoy. More than reforming the totality of social life by evolving as a self, the vision seems to have been to create a free space for the existing self to enjoy. If society plays a central role in this vision, it is to the extent it enables or hinders this goal of total environments.

The self-oriented goals of the ToS are devoted to transforming the mature adult into a "philosopher king". This central goal is to be reached through a process of sequential mastery of more specific tasks. These "goals on the way" seem to include most of those promoted by LaVey, but they are understood within an esoteric framework, and there are further goals added to LaVey's. Webb separates his didactic presentation of goals into those related to the *inner* and those related to the *outer* world. He divides the path into levels. These levels are presented as rulership and royal power in the inner and outer world. The process would normally go from rulership of the inner world through rulership and royal power in the outer world, and end with royal power in the inner world (Webb 1999: 3).

Rulership of the inner world involves controlling the body, mind, emotions, and will, and means that the initiate achieves "a sense of reality and purpose in what one does" (ibid.: 4). To reach this goal, one should find factors that hinder development at all levels, and remove them. Forces opposing the *body* are "those things which shorten life, remove energy, or dull the senses" (ibid.: 3), and range from drugs and the wrong kind of food to cultural and environmental factors. Forces opposing the *mind* are all "habits of non-thinking" involved in herd conformity or habitual thought and feeling: "The average human being follows his or her emotions; for the Left-Hand Path initiate, emotions follow him or her" (ibid.: 4). Sentimental attachment to cultural norms should be confronted and rejected, as they are signs of "blind obedience to external symbols", a force opposing the *will*. The performance of symbolic actions involving rejection and making fun of such norms is seen as a valuable tool for deconditioning.

Rulership of the outer world involves being able to make informed choices based on "rational foresight plus healthy self-love" (ibid.: 5). The goal is to know what one likes, what is good for one, and to decide what to sacrifice in view of other or later gains, and to make manifest in the initiate's life.

insights. Mastery of the outer world involves fulfillment and personal achievement in the real world. Together with rulership of the inner world, it seems that this goal overlaps with LaVey's view of success.

Royal power in the *outer* world relates to goals involved in making other people better. The initiate, writes Webb, "recognizing as virtues personal strength and self knowledge, does what he or she can to help others create the states" (ibid.: 6). This means overcoming Right-Hand Path denigration of the desire to show off and "immature" Left-Hand Path denigration of the desire to help others. Success in helping others on the path also benefits the initiate, however, by refining thoughts and moods, ascertaining what *really* works in the world, thus furthering self-initiation (ibid.: 7).

Royal power in the *inner* world means to be able to "take on the inner darkness and make it glow with its own self-created light" (ibid.). The metaphor of inner darkness here seems to involve what Webb terms "inward-directed fears": fear of the unknown impulse, fear of the future, fear of wasted time, and fear of the unverifiable (ibid.). The goal of making the inner darkness glow is not merely a matter of overcoming such inner fears, but also a matter of turning episodes that formerly produced fear to effective use. The unknown impulse is a key to power, writes Webb. The magician's actions are neither random nor accidental, and the impulse from within ought to be "a great source of Mystery, from which even more being can be gained" (ibid.). Fear of the future relates to the unknown consequences of one's actions. The future is "the Great Darkness out of which all things are manifested." Royal power means learning to let go of justification, take full responsibility, and act in a way that enables one to feel good about one's choices (ibid.: 8). Overcoming the fear of wasted time is the act of choosing wisely, writes Webb. This also depends on finding the right attitude to inform one's actions. The right attitude is based on earlier achievements from the other parts of sovereignty, the realization that "if you continue with an Initiatory attitude, all life experiences can be used in the Quest for Sovereignty" (ibid.). The last fear to overcome is that the quest for sovereignty may in the end, be at best good motivational psychology, that the "Quest for Immortality might be a unicorn-hunt" (ibid.). Letting go of the last fear involves being able to explain one's own life to oneself, and "make the remaining decades of our life powerful and joyous" (ibid.).

There seem to be few or no texts on how the transformation of the self may be related to society, or how Setian initiation may change society. Founder Michael Aquino seems to have an approach to justice is similar to that invoked by CoS' program of pentagonal revisionism,⁷ but I have no available authorized movement text on the general subject of society. Webb's social focus is the "school of magic", how the initiate will be drawn towards a school of magic, break with it, and found his or her own. The school of magic, such as the ToS or its subgroups, seems to be the main concern and the central consequence of Setian initiation.

⁷ E.g. the comments on Frank Miller's *Return of the Dark Knight* in the ToS reading

We may gather from the information above that the ToS theorizes (and almost certainly practices) techniques focused on self-development to a larger extent than does the CoS. The ToS aspires to be an esoteric, initiatory school of thought, and therefore expends a large amount of energy on thinking out a system. Acknowledging its occult forebears as well as its more or less scientific contemporaries, it also has a large body of thought and practice to draw on. The CoS on the other hand, having developed its degree system less as a system of initiation, has had less to gain both for the organization and its members by focusing on steps towards and processes by which to develop the self. Instead, Anton LaVey chose to develop the CoS more as a "mutual admiration society" for those who had already taken some steps towards achievement (1998: 163).

This does not mean, as stated above, that the CoS does not have a history of systematic thought or practices devoted to processes of self-development. There are several topics of at least the early CoS texts that relate to transformation. The first is that of the Black Mass and similar tools for deconditioning the individual from negative socialization. The Black Mass in the satanic context, is then not to be viewed as a set piece of ritual, but as a form of psychodrama with the purpose "to reduce or negate stigma acquired through past indoctrination" (LaVey 1972: 34; cf. Webb 1999: 4). The performance is always antinomian, in that it must break rules of "past indoctrination" in order to have effect. It must, in the words of LaVey, maintain "the degree of blasphemy necessary to make it effective psychodrama" (LaVey 1972: 34). Transgression is, however, only a tool in order to reach the goal of freedom, and the specific, transgressive content must be tailored to fit the individual participant. Similar formal rituals ("greater black magic") were adopted and adapted for other purposes. The ceremony of *L'Air Épais*, wrote LaVey, could be used to exorcise "any unconscious death motivations," serve as a dedication to life, and turn "death's accouterments into instruments of lust and life" (ibid.: 57). *Das Tierdrama* should strengthen the view that man is also an animal, making participants assume "animal attributes of honesty, purity and increased sensory perception", at the same time reinforcing the message that all religions and gods are man-made (ibid.: 77f.). All ritual magic also involves preparations and mental activities supposed to train one's imagination, will, feelings, and thus promote one's ability to live life fully. Individual ritual practices may, then, play a role for those rationalist Satanists who want to use them.⁸

In addition to ritual or greater magic, the practice of lesser magic also may involve techniques for self-transformation. The main object of lesser magic as presented by LaVey (1989) is to manipulate others into conforming to one's desires. Lesser magic seems to consist mainly in behavioral techniques. The different techniques may use social stereotypes or personal preferences regarding looks, smell, behavior etc. in order to promote specific effects. Such lesser magic

at the same time, trains the aspiring Satanist in the behaviors most likely to have the desired effects on other people (cf. Moody 1974). This necessarily also acts on the individual Satanist, and as s/he gains mastery, successes may build self-assurance in the insecure as Moody argued. More generally, the training in and application of techniques of lesser magic teaches new skills, and thus might tend to achieve at least some level of transformation.

These techniques are presented for general consumption through LaVey's books. If they have an important frame of use, it may be as a rough guide to building an individual style, and the importance of doing so. The CoS seems no longer to involve itself much in explicit attempts at "curing" individuals of the afflictions supposedly put there by dominant ideologies. Ever since the middle of the 1970s, the focus has been more on using the CoS as a collective for the "alien elite", what LaVey termed the "*productive* aliens, not misfits who need to depend on a group" (in Barton 1990: 30, emphasis in original). The leaders and members of the CoS do not view the organization as a "school" in which to train members to rid themselves of the ill effects of socialization. While they may still, occasionally, engage in such activities, emphasis is elsewhere.

Movement texts of the ToS, on the other hand, are resplendent with both techniques for, and theories of, transformation. Its self-identity is of a school of magic, where evolving, or "becoming", as an isolate intelligence takes center stage. The central work of the Setian is his or her own *xeper*, initiatory magic, and the levels of the organization are devoted to that development in different ways. The degree system of the ToS, writes Stephen Flowers, "is a map or guiding instrument for the general parameters of that Xeper-process" (Flowers 1997: 238). The guiding principle behind all the practices, writes Webb, "are Trust, Honesty, Forgiveness, Growth, Artistry, and Extraction" (1999: 44). The path is theorized as training to trust oneself, being more honest with oneself, forgive oneself of self-loathing, grow, develop artistry, and "extracting the essences and structures of phenomena within and beyond one's self and working directly upon them" (Webb 1999: 46).

Flowers accepts the primary focus of CoS as being important also to Setians. Separating the world into the natural and the non-natural, objective and subjective, lesser magic is defined as working with "obscure physical or behavioral laws" (Flowers 1997: 237) and part of the natural order.⁹ A Setian ought, according to Flowers and Webb, never to use unnecessary means. Lesser magic should only be used when simple, natural actions are not sufficient, and greater magic only when lesser will not do. In the same manner, the techniques advised for self-change range from advice regarding exercise and diet to items such as the construction of sigils and the performance of initiatory rituals.

⁹ Interestingly, Flowers seems to define, by way of Aquino's *Black Magic in Theory and Practice*, most of LaVey's ceremonial, greater magic as "white magic" (Flowers 1997: 236).

⁸ My impression is that they seem not to care much for ritual.

The types of techniques for self-change listed by Webb, closely matches his four-fold division of rulership and royal power. Again, he is relatively detailed and didactic. He gives a seven-part list involved in taking care of and training the body, and five-part list related to mastering a traditional system of magic (Webb 1999: 33f.).

These are again only two parts of a list with nineteen general items. Most of the nineteen items are related to different practices for developing a utilitarian self. Four or five of the items relate more clearly towards the expressive side, such as practicing an art, learning to sing and to tell jokes. The expressive and the utilitarian elements are integrated into each other, but utility seems to be the guiding factor. Singing is said to relieve stress and teach the magician how to control others through voice. Practicing an art may give experiences of “flow” and bypass the “medial level of being” in how one acts upon the universe (Webb 1999: 43). Thus art may encourage and facilitate one’s development as a magician. The esoteric utilitarianism is more clearly visible in the advice to “plan for your retirement” to be able to enjoy the fruits of life as much as possible (ibid.: 42). The esoteric part of planning ahead also relates to the body: “What kind of things can you do in your 20s (like all night shamanic vigils) that you won’t do in your 50s? Learn how to make the stages of life work with your goals” (ibid.: 33). Mastering a traditional system of magic and constructing one’s own system are presented as important techniques to further one’s development, thus fusing the expressive and the utilitarian closely together.

Webb’s advice to “explore your sexuality” (1999: 33) may also be construed as fusing the expressive with the (esoterically) utilitarian. Webb himself does not develop the topic of sexuality to any degree.¹⁰ However, there are several other important Setian writers who develop the topic of sex magic as an important Left-Hand Path tool of self-transformation. In the work of Nikolas and Zeena Schreck (2002: 20f.) the part of sex is (almost) as important as self-deification in defining the Left-Hand Path. Sexual rites, violation of taboos, and exaltation of the female principle are central elements in their concept of initiation and self-development. The stress on violation of taboos should probably be read similarly to Webb’s advice that one should not assume that anyone else’s model of one’s sexuality is right, and Crystal Dawn’ and Stephen Flowers’ advice that magicians “need to find out what *really* excites and arouses them” (2001: 3). For both the Schrecks and the Flowers this seems primarily to involve practical advice and theoretical discussions on how to use (very controlled) sado-masochistic practices in self-development. This is indeed the sole of focus of the Flowers’ book *Carnal Alchemy* (2001), subtitled “a sado-magical exploration of pleasure, pain and self-transformation”, while the Schrecks are much more inclusive in their discussion of different kinds of sexual magic. Nikolas and Zeena Schreck may seem to be more narrowly focused than other Setian ideologists, and it may be no

¹⁰ Except for spells to attract sex in his work on typhonian magic (Webb 1996: 71ff) he seems to leave the topic alone.

surprise that they broke off from the ToS at about the same time as their book was published.

Final Discussion

Movement texts are obviously not lived life, and all of the above says very little about real, individual Satanists and how they actually go about ordering and constructing themselves. What *can* we say then?

We have seen that Satanism celebrates the self or the ego. If there is a question about the extent to which the different varieties of Satanism are self-religions, this ought mainly to involve the part of “religion.” Certainly there are many definitions of “religion” by which at least rationalist Satanism ought to be excluded. One might, then, take seriously the claim and desire of many rationalist Satanists to be categorized by a different label. However, it does seem like contemporary Satanism belongs on the outskirts of the same kind of late modern “religion” as do the self-spiritualities discussed by Heelas. More specifically, both rationalist and esoteric Satanisms are primarily world-affirming forms of self-spirituality. They see success in society and the world as it is as a valid and desirable goal. While one may find much disgust with prevalent forms of society among Satanists, there seems to be very few world-rejecting Satanists among the two groups discussed above. The movement texts examined above show no such dispositions. Rather, if one should place most Satanists on the spectrum from “harmonial religions” (where success is one valid goal, springing from one’s rapport with cosmos) to “mainstream empowerers” (seeking spirituality to operate more successfully in the real world) (Heelas 1996: 30ff.), we would expect to see a clearly right-skewed graph. Heelas’ description of the utilitarian self clearly seems to fit the satanic self: “What matters is exercising one’s capabilities – powers, will, determination, initiative, reasoning abilities – in order to maximize what the externals of life have to offer” (ibid.: 166). Pleasure, success in life, and in the world among other men are not only valid goals in and of themselves, they are signposts by which one may measure one’s progress along the Left-Hand Path.

They are, however, not the only signposts, and the Satanist self is not merely utilitarian. Looking at the “self” of the Satanist movement texts, we find traits such as self-defined, heroic, self-directed, and inner-motivated. Most of the traits would fit with the solid personality hailed by modernists. The self is also seen as an essence. It is essential, and singular. Deviating from the “herd” by one’s individuality is a must. This singular, inner-motivated self ought simultaneously to seek, rationally, to maximize its self-interest. These interests, however, to varying degrees go beyond the simply utilitarian. Success in life may variously be understood as success in business or in personal life. Leading the good life, however understood, takes precedent in the writings of LaVey over the kind of successes that might lead one to miss out on the pleasure of living. In the writings of Don Webb, the development of a rounded and full personality also includes

following multiple interests. Expressivity is an important part. The Satanist self of these texts thus seem to stride the fence, both capitalist utilitarian and romantic-expressive. While the Satanist of movement texts would not devalue success, nor minimize utilitarian pursuits, they would also fit within Heelas' description of expressivists:

Expressivists live their life in terms of what they take to be a much richer and authenticated account of what it is to be human. They are intent on discovering and cultivating their 'true' nature, delving within to experience the wealth of life itself. (Heelas 1996: 156)

To achieve such experience, ideologists such as Don Webb may agree that there are certain things one might need to give up, but the ego is not one of them. Nor is the calculating ethicality of the utilitarian necessarily thrown away. While everyone from LaVey to Webb may harbor ideas that one's "authentic nature" may lead one to behave better towards others – at times – they tend to mean that cruelty may be equally authentic and spontaneous. The self-ethic of the Satanist also includes these behaviors as expressions of the true self.

In conclusion, this means that one may say much the same for Satanism as a religion of modernity that Heelas said about the New Age (ibid.: 169). Satanism provides a legitimization of many widely held values, assumptions, and practices of modern society. Satanism, however, goes further towards legitimating common practices that compete with important contemporary values. Elitism and stress on stratification, however much more in touch with *real* society, goes against values about equality. Stress on man's viciousness and the legitimacy of violence and retribution equally collide with New Age ideas about "tranquility, harmony, love, [and] peace" (ibid.). Thus, Satanism, while decrying the effects of much dominant culture, in both the versions examined here, goes further in legitimating a self that belongs to and may thrive in the, at times, vicious and chaotic circumstances of the late modern world.

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