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Why You Should (Not) Become a Satanist

(A Case Against) Identifying with Satanism in the
Modern World

Queer Satanic

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June 11, 2024

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aspiring Satanist, “**Toward the queerest insurrection**” and *Queer Ultraviolence* would make much better centralizing texts than LaVey’s *The Satanic Bible*, that much is clear.

But there need be no centralizing text, or centralizing ritual at all.

You should be mindful of whether your religious activities are pillaging from Indigenous or other closed practices, you should be mindful about power even in what you consider your privacy (because “we are what we do repeatedly”). But even acknowledging this, the great joy of Satanism is its freedom — not just liberation yet to be but liberation here and now.

What does that look like to you? What rituals are good for you? As it comes to this, “Thou art god.”

So go: explore, create, *indulge*.

Why you should not become a Satanist

First, let’s make sure there’s no misunderstanding.

Most Satanists *do not* worship or even believe in a literal, supernatural devil. It is *absolutely not* the norm for Satanists to abuse or ritually harm children or animals; if anything, less than the general population, even. Satanists *do not* have much institutional power or influence in the world; most of what you hear along those lines eventually ends up being thinly-veiled antisemitism, frankly.

So who are Satanists, really? Mostly we’re just regular folk with some religious trauma.

If you’ve been raised by Christian reactionaries and particularly if told that you personally are evil because you have typical intrusive thoughts and human feelings, it’s going to mess you up. Or maybe you have an understanding of your own body, gender identity, and/or sexuality that your Christian family and church disapprove of. It can be quite natural to abandon trying to live up the expectations of those who will always hate you. When you notice that family members can justify abuse, rooting for genocide, and calling rank cruelty the way of heaven, it’s not surprising if you are one of so many who echo Huck Finn in saying, “All right then. I’ll go to hell.”

When you have watched those who say they are of-God make for years a convincing case that Satan is the logical and compassionate choice, why would a thinking, caring person not say, “Yes, I am of the devil. Be Gay, Do Crime, Hail Satan”?

Yet you should resist this temptation.

“The Church has been the best friend Satanism has ever had as it has certainly kept us in business all of these years!”

—Anton LaVey, probably

While, yes, if your background is the authoritarian, nationalist, slaver Christianity of the U.S. Republican Party and its

power worship, saying, “I desire the opposite of that!” makes sense.

But if you’re attracted to Satanism for its negation of Christian Nationalism and power worship, you might be surprised to discover that modern Satanism springs from the power worship of one Howard Levey, better known as “**Anton LaVey**”, who plagiarized a substantial amount of his book *The Satanic Bible* from the proto-fascist work *Might Is Right* by Arthur “**Ragnar Redbeard**” Desmond. (Oh, that’s another reason not to become a Satanist: there is an awful lot of pressure to adopt a new silly name like “Damien Nightblade” or “Lilith Evenstar”). It may surprise you to find out that people who worship power chose to take the mantle of a guy whose defining characteristic is “losing a power struggle against omnipotence,” but here we are. Actually, Redbeard’s biggest issue with Christianity was the egalitarianism, kindness, and — no joke — *Jewishness* of it.

LaVey loved the bigoted book, though; he re-used whole passages from it without attribution or quotations and agreed with its fundamental criticism of Christianity as a weak and hypocritical ideology — that is, as insufficiently devoted to dominating others without guilt.

Anton LaVey’s Satanism even self-describes as a “law and order philosophy”; no matter how much LaVeyans try claim that his ideas were pro-queer, that rings a little hollow when, in 1966 and today, much of the law itself is animated by anti-queerness. When the advice is to stay in the closet out of “pragmatism”, that just sounds like what it is: bootlicking and cowardice. In opposing this, we don’t misunderstand LaVey’s Satanism; we understand it very well and dislike it.

Of course there are other Satanisms. LaVey’s **Church of Satan** is atheistic, but the breakaway group **Temple of Set** founded by **Michael Aquino** in 1975 believes in a literal supernatural deity they can invoke. So does the **Joy of Satan** and **Order of Nine Angles**. Also, all of those other satanic groups

Bakunin had some good ideas — but he was also an antisemite. As anarchists, we follow and keep good ideas, but we worship and excuse no person. Collectives are just as valuable as proper “organizations,” and the most authoritative author can be “Anonymous.”

As far as invoking the devil positively, it’s true: embracing the role of horrible people’s idea of the villain can be quite powerful. The **Rebel Queers of Kyiv** in an interview with **UAN-TIFA** gave this as an answer for why they embraced satanic imagery:

The Christian religion denies queer people, and many homophobes use it to justify their hate. Mentioning Satanism is just a way of saying that we don’t care if your god hates us. We’re going to be ourselves no matter what. Society demonizes people who do not fit into its concept of “normality”. And if Society demonizes me, then being myself means denying Society. Therefore, Satanism is simply an acceptance of the “demonicity” that Society puts myself into.

We often leave the writing “be queer do crime hail Satan”. Being a queer person is perceived by society as a crime. So, just being queer, we are already committing a “crime”.

This inscription only calls for the acceptance of demonized and alienated parts of oneself, even if it means confrontation with Society. If being a queer person is a crime and includes demonizing us, then we accept this fate and choose to be ourselves.

—Rebel Queers to UANTIFA (2022)

They also expressed some affinity for **Mary Nardini Gang** and the **Bash Back!** movement of the late Aughts; if you’re an

“Satan, in his revolt, is my father, and, in his courage, Cain is my brother!”

Which is just an absolute banger of a quote, especially for 1854.

It’s also a great answer to the idea, usually from LaVeyans, that Satanism is “apolitical” and that people using the image of Satan to attack the idea of hierarchies and power rather than to reinforce and justify those hierarchies are “doing Satanism wrong” or whatever.

Again, from Pignal:

Now, in order to enjoy that liberty, it is necessary to prevent tyranny, and as we have already said: The king is certainly not the only tyrant in a kingdom. A king is only the summit of a governmental pyramid, the base of which is calculated to maintain it. As long as that base is not broken up, it would be useless to sacrifice ourselves to knock down its peak in order to acquire liberty...

Of course, the most famous and explicit anarchist invocation of the devil comes from **Mikhail Bakunin** in his *God and the State*.

But here steps in Satan, the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge.

If you want the “elevator pitch” version of anarcho-satanism, well, there you have it.

Something actually important to this sort of approach is that we are “anarcho-satanists”; we are not “Bakuninists.”

(and more!) are straight up Nazi orgs, or “esoteric fascists” if one wants to be most accurate.

For unaligned theistic Satanists / demonolaters / Gnostic Luciferians, etc. — it’s a crapshoot. There are many delightful antiracists / antifascists who will call upon literal supernatural entities. But when some people say, “I wish to invoke the name of the most evil and destructive forces in Christian imagination!” they don’t make their targets the existing social order; rather, they target those already most vulnerable and despised.

“But!” you may say, “Aren’t you forgetting **The Satanic Temple**? That’s the good one that does things like helping people get abortions, isn’t it?”

No, we are not forgetting “**Scientology for Mall Goths**.”

TST is owned by multigenerational landlord scion **Cevin Soling** (“Malcolm Jarry”), a failed cargo-cult messiah who also hates (integrated) public schools. The other owner is **Doug Misicko** (“Doug Mesner”, “Lucien Greaves”) who has been outright effusive about fascism and got along well with white nationalists but mostly just defends them now in the name of “free speech.” Misicko also has advocated for forcible sterilization based on IQ to prevent “dysgenics.”

Those men wholly own, jointly and separately, a half-dozen for-profit and tax-exempt corporations whose finances they keep hidden. There’s more, but no, we aren’t forgetting about The Satanic Temple.

In short, lots of people who were angry at Christianity — for completely valid reasons! — have called themselves “Satanists” over the years, but the ones actually in control of the largest explicitly Satanic organizations have been, at best, right-libertarians and classical liberals. Often the Satanic orgs are even worse and will tolerate much worse; their only virtue is their smallness and relative inability to harm others. There’s nothing “cool” about being a Satanist. You are surrounded by many absolute douchebags and pricks, as well as plenty of edgelord, “ironic” fascists who turn out to actually

whole-heartedly believe all that shit. There is no benefit to being a Satanist and lots of downsides.

Satanism is cringe. It's historically racist. It's sad and awful.
Do not become a Satanist.

Why you should become a Satanist

Have the enthusiastic, well-meaning but naïve folk gone?
Are we sure? Yes?

OK, if it's just us now, let's explain: in Rabbinical Judaism, a rabbi is traditionally expected to turn away a convert three times before allowing the conversion to continue. Well, Satanists should turn people away three hundred times — and keep checking in after that to see if they're ready to change their mind yet. Satanism, as (re)invented by Anton LaVey in the late 1960s up to the present, has been almost unfailingly cringe, substituting aesthetics of rebellion in the place of the practices and fundamental critiques of the status quo necessary for actual rebellion, necessary for challenging rather than worshipping power.

To repeat the previous section, "Satanism is bad, actually."

But! we can accept that's all true without relinquishing ownership of Satanism to these worst elements. LaVeyans will try to claim that theirs is the only strain of Satanism that matters or only one that *exists*, even. We can reject this, too. LaVeyans say, "Might Is Right"; very well: let them make a case by their own principles and us judge them by the same. Is their access to "might" persuasive these days?

But to the contrary, the whole appeal of Satanism, such as any appeal exists is to agree that tyranny should be opposed even when it's omnipotent and to acknowledge that no tyranny is actually omnipotent; therefore we, by our veneration of this myth, are required to oppose tyranny everywhere.

The reality of The Satanic Temple is atrocious, but they were on something of the right track with their self-marketing as calling back to an older Satanism. *Introduction to Romantic Satanism* by former TST member **Michael Osiris Snuffin** looks at the literary Satanists from the period between John Milton's *Paradise Lost* interpreted through William Blake and the Romantic poets at the turn of the 19th Century and then ending with Anatole France's throwback (and pretty terrible) book *Revolt of the Angels* in 1914.

But this skips over the more political self-aligned Satanism of the 19th century, particularly among its anarchist socialists. Swedish religious scholar **Per Faxneld's** *The Devil is Red: Socialist Satanism in the Nineteenth Century* fills in much of that more radical and practical history.

From the abstract:

During the nineteenth century, socialists all over the Western world employed Satan as a symbol of the workers' emancipation from capitalist tyranny and the toppling of the Christian Church, which they perceived as a protector of this oppressive system. Starting with the English Romantics at the end of the eighteenth century, European radicals developed a discourse of symbolic Satanism, which was put to use by major names in socialism like Godwin, Proudhon, and Bakunin. This shock tactic became especially widespread in turn-of-the-century Sweden, and accordingly the article focuses on the many examples of explicit socialist Satanism in that country.

—Faxneld, *The Devil is Red* (2013)

An early, proto-anarchist **Félix Pignal** wrote "**The Philosophy of Defiance**", and the fragments that remain are one of the earliest and still best examples of this political Satanism.