

Note by Stephan Kinsella (www.StephanKinsella.com):

Per Christian Malloch emailed me sometime in the late 1990s I believe, with some bizarre, mocking, but not entirely unfriendly comments about Hans Hoppe's argumentation ethic (www.HansHoppe.com). We ended up corresponding. He was a very bright young student at Columbia at the time, as I recall. He was also into Satanism, and we corresponded about that too. He was into video games and writing about them, and weird projects like The Chicken Musical.

He must also have been into drugs because he apparently overdosed and was found dead in his dorm room or apartment in November 2000. I found out from an email subject lined "Remembering Per" from one of his friends, who must have found Per's email address list and sent it out. As I recall the others on the list appeared to be a bunch of black-leather wearing Goth types.

This is one of the articles Per sent me. I found it recently and scanned it in, as I am going paperless.

More info on Per is here:

http://www.stephankinsella.com/archive/2004_09_01_archive.php#109465893003515248

Stephan Kinsella, Sept. 2004

Introduction

Without the theory of the Satanic ritual and satanic magic, Satanism (as defined in the publications of Anton LaVey) would not be readily distinguishable from the other egoistic doctrines of the world, whether Nietzschean, Stirnerian or Randian. Here I attempt to reconstruct the theory in a way that makes clear the empirical beliefs and chains of reasoning that it involves. I cannot claim to speak for LaVey, but I do believe that it is at bottom his theory that I present below.

To get at the point of the theory we must ask: what are the facts about us that make religious feeling possible, and what use can an atheistic egoist make of these facts?

The Idea of a Synthetic Emotional Response

What religion says is out there is not out there. So what, in fact, are Xtians *doing* when they go to church? Obviously we cannot deny that they are feeling *something*. We only deny that the epiphanies and experiences of reverence they undergo are evidence of the existence of God. But if God is not causing these weird feelings, what is? The only remaining answer appears to be that the experiences are actually caused by the architecture, the religious symbols, the music, the tension given off by other people in the room, the ceremonies and their significance, the costumes, the light from the windows and candles... In short, it is the *church art and rituals themselves* which, given the psychology of the participants, generate a synthetic emotional response of reverence, cosmic calm, frenzied ecstasy, or what have you.

This conclusion should not at all be surprising. People have emotional responses to mere images and representations all the time. The sorrow one feels when watching a tragic movie is no less real for its being generated by two dimensional images of people who never existed. Of course, a moviegoer does not insist that the people in the film are *real* just because he feels their pain, while the religious person appears to do the equivalent of just this. Both, though, have genuine emotional responses to things that just aren't there. What triggers these synthetic emotional responses? In a word: symbols.

Symbols of Three Sorts

A symbol is anything in a real or imagined sense experience that one reacts to affectively as if it were something other than what it is. One feels towards the symbol what one's feelings would be toward the thing with which it is emotionally associated, were one to encounter *that*. The associated thing, on whose emotional significance the symbol is parasitic, is what the symbol "represents," "stands for" or "means." Why we form emotional associations between things-- whether because of frequent concatenation in space or time, operant conditioning, resemblance, sheer error, or I know not what else-- is a question I cannot answer, but that they do form seems beyond doubt. In them we see a primitive system of classification. (I am leaving linguistic and mathematical symbols out of this definition and the ensuing discussion, as they are really another topic entirely.) Here I am interested in three major types of symbols.

1. A drawing of a spider may provoke fear in an arachnophobic though it is by no means a spider; the drawing 'stands for' the spider in a quite literal sense, it stands in for

and might as well be a real spider. Such pictures are examples of what can be called representational symbols, which stand for sensible things.

What makes this kind of symbolism possible would seem to be the fact that there are parts of our minds which do not distinguish between appearance and reality, which cannot say "this seems to be something other than what it really is." Indeed, the appearance-reality distinction appears to be peculiar to consciousness, which constructs the notion of a Real Thing, which we apprehend with our senses, but which exists "beyond" them. It is only by use of this idea that I can distinguish a tree from a hologram or drawing of a tree next to it; while there are similar phenomenal trees in my field of vision, I say, one of them is not really a tree, because the Real Things that give rise to the two phenomenal trees are different.

While I am consciously doing this distinguishing, however, I may still have strong feelings about the two phenomenal trees if I happen to love or hate trees-- because it is phenomenal trees that I have learned to feel about, *not the abstract idea of Real trees*, and my associations have been formed between phenomenal trees and other phenomenal things, not between any phenomenal thing and a Real thing. If I am a tree hater, little idiots inside of me say "look! a tree! our ancient enemy!" as I come across a mere drawing of a tree. The image affects me even if the Real Thing is quite absent; I would rage at tree-drawings even after the last tree in the world had been cut down and burned. I would also spit at images of tree-men, although tree-men have never existed at all; a representational symbol stands for anything that could be sensed, not merely anything that up to now has been sensed. The mouse flees from the shadow of a hawk even when the shadow is cast by a cutout, and some of that mouse-brain lingers in us.

The mental image of a thing that I 'see' inwardly when imagining it also provokes a shadow of the response that would be due the real thing, and so for our purposes can count as a representational symbol. Using these symbols I am able to imagine myself in different situations and then actually feel how I would feel in each (see 3. below.) This helps me to empathize with other people, and to evaluate different alternatives when I am deliberating about what to do.

2. We see a more interesting form of symbolism where a symbol generates a response to something that was *never there to be sensed in the first place*, as for instance an idea, a rule, a social institution, a Real thing, or a supersensory entity. Such a symbol can be called an abstract symbol. A phenomenal tree is an abstract symbol for a Real tree to a conscious observer (the Real thing remains an abstract concept as it by definition cannot be sensed "in itself.") Meanwhile, crosses, pentagrams, various animals, burning effigies, clenched fists, costumes, political leaders and musical tunes have all been used to stand for entire belief systems. People's feelings about the belief systems find a point to focus on in the symbols, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they are capable of having feelings about belief systems only through their reactions to the symbols that stand for them.

People are disturbed (or excited) by the sight of the swastika because it invokes disturbing images of marching troops and death camps-- the tangible *consequences* of the implementation of the ideas of National Socialism, which are naturally associated with the ideas themselves. It is doubtful that one could feel anything about a purely abstract idea when one had no *picture* of it or of what the consequences of its truth or adoption would

be. My feeling for the German nation-- a *concept*-- exists only in my feelings toward the German flag, German ways of dress, German landscapes, German speech, toward all of the things that are labeled German by this concept; ultimately my feeling is for labels ("I pledge allegiance to the flag.") The labels give me something to feel about; my imagined reactions to the practical consequences of the truth or implementation of the idea the labels stand for tell me what to feel about them.

Consider, on the other side of the coin, that most people do not feel anything at all about higher mathematics, unless they are engineers who understand what math can *do*, or mathematician-perverts who derive pleasure from conducting mathematical computations as an end in itself. Math, as something purely abstract, remains unreal to them because it lacks any concrete implications or applications for them to have gut reactions to. Thus even if there were an abstract symbol for math (perhaps a big plus sign in a circle,) people just wouldn't react to it. To use a metaphor, there must be gut reactions to sensible things on both ends of the "arc" of the association (imagined consequences and abstract symbol.) The association itself can only transport emotional energy from one to the other by route of the abstraction; there must be a "closed circuit."

By means of a symbol an abstraction can be viscerally felt, seen, touched. It becomes real to the subconscious when before it was only real as a thought. This is of great practical importance, as the subconscious is the seat of motivation; by itself, without some urge to point it in one direction or the other, consciousness is detached and contemplative. Take all of the facts known to man and perform every conceivable logical and mathematical operation on them, and you will still not yield a single resolution to do anything. Reason does not feel. Only will and desire, which are essentially arational and which *rage at facts*, can say what information is meaningful or relevant, what is to be done. Consciousness merely says, impotently, "this is so, and this is not so" and "this is permitted by this rule, this by that rule."

As reason is not infallible, many abstractions begin and end in thought, lacking any connection to reality. Needless to say, the idea of God is one of them. Yet there can be a symbol for a thing that never was. The subconscious does not care whether there is a Real Thing that a symbol stands for as long as the symbol has some meaning invested in it by process of association. People get some notion of what things would be like if God were like this or that, experience gut reactions to these imagined consequences (visions of resurrections and world-burnings,) associate these reactions with symbols that stand for God, and then thrill to the religious imagery they themselves have invested with meaning. This would be harmless if they did not then turn around and claim that the experience brought on by this imagery was empirical evidence for the presence of ghosts in the sky.

3. I conclude my brief tour of the world of symbolism with a look at what I call vicarious experience symbolism. One experiences and accomplishes things vicariously when one contemplates or imagines a series of events happening to a person or object with which one identifies on some level, leading one to imagine oneself in their situation and feel "what they would feel," both in response to the sensible things they encounter and to these things in their role as symbols.

As a representation of a sequence of events, a vicarious experience symbol is not a static thing but rather (all of the imagined events in) a story. Movies are an ideal example. People sob in movies regularly, though reason would point out that the people they are

crying for do not exist; it is because they identify with some of the people on the screen that they are capable of feeling for them even when the characters themselves never felt a thing. Notice, however, that people are most likely to say that they felt nothing during a film when they were unable to relate to any of the characters. Unless they can "be" the characters to some degree, the story will not be a vicarious experience symbol to them.

Paintings of successful hunts and wars, or ceremonies depicting the same, tell stories of victories to come and thus inspire those who imagine themselves in the position of the victors. Most common in our age is the ceremony of submission and the pledging of allegiance-- bowing toward the holy idol in order to symbolize one's "recognition" of a power above oneself spiritually or morally. A thing becomes "higher" than me only by virtue of my groveling before it (groveling symbolically, of course, as it, as "higher" thing, has no existence and cannot accept my tribute except in the world of symbols;) when I cease to do so the highness too does cease.

I have made no effort to come up with an explanation of the exact process by which the associations that allow symbols to work are formed. Nor have I attempted to offer an account of why we evolved to be so receptive to symbolism. Delving into these topics would be time consuming, beyond my competence, and not entirely relevant to an understanding of the theory of the Satanic ritual, which takes human receptivity to symbols as a given.

Satanism Reclaims Symbols for Human Use

Today the symbols man's consciousness originally constructed have run away with him. People care more about succeeding by analogy than actually achieving. They give up life for immortality-- sim-life mediated by picturebooks. Synthetic emotional responses are taken to prove the existence of nations, gods, human-ness and what have you. Idealists live robotic lives, ruled by random fantasies called the god Truth. Fanatics abuse themselves before idols in acts of symbolic submission to-- their own imaginings. Few are willing to admit that all the stirring romance and relevance of their ideals was originally generated in their own brains, that man is not only the Great One who makes the grass green but also the one who makes the grass "mean something."

As an atheist and amoralist, the Satanist, like other egoists and humanists, refuses to participate in rituals or habitually expose himself to symbols that reinforce (or create) belief in ideas that require him to subordinate his interests, or his judgment of what is true, to the interests and judgment of other people he doesn't respect or care about. Christianity, nationalism and the like go out the window not only conceptually but also in one's "inner life" of aesthetic responses.

However, in their eagerness to dispose of "irrationality," non-Satanic egoists often try to deny or marginalize a man's need to ritualize and symbolize. The most they will permit an upstanding man is to expose himself to propagandistic art which reinforces his political and ethical convictions through obvious parables (for details, see Ayn Rand's *The Romantic Manifesto*.) However, people cannot do without a mythology or symbol system which serves as a link between the conclusions of abstract reasoning and the visceral promptings that lead to action. Big Brain has to find some way to talk to Rabbit Brain in terms meaningful to it. This symbol system, if it is not invented, will simply be picked up by osmosis and be all the more shabbily generic for the process.

The religionist believes that his symbols can by themselves tell him what is real and desirable. The non-Satanic egoist claims that, except when it comes to what is obviously art, he responds only to Real Things and desires what is really desirable. Both end up thinking that some of their synthetic emotional responses are experiences of Real Things, however, because they do not really believe that their brain is capable of arbitrarily constructing emotionally potent symbols. The Randian who claims to live by reason, but shows through his fetishistic use of technical philosophic terminology in everyday discussions with total strangers that he is secretly trying to be one or more of the characters in *The Fountainhead* (thus allowing himself to vicariously live their far-more-interesting-than-his-own lives,) is no less pitiful a sight than the hokiest street preacher waving photos of aborted fetuses at the request of Christ himself.

As a Satanist, rather than ignoring my knowledge about the whole machinery of faith merely because this machinery is often misused, I try to make it work for me. Henceforth I will expose myself only to symbols that stand for-- me, the things that appeal to me, and my enjoyment of my own life. It is not enough merely to symbolically and ceremonially celebrate my *ideas*; normal people do this with flag salutes, Fourth of July barbecues and bumper stickers. An idea is a common denominator; ideas are in principle intersubjective and universal. If in my most private life it is my abstract ideas that thrill me, of what significance is the fact that I am me and not some other idealist or ideologue? I am no longer unique but a mouthpiece for a viewpoint that could just as well have settled in another skull. No, what most of all needs celebration and symbolization is *me*, my intensely particular combination of likes, dislikes, fetishes, needs, talents, aspirations, and so on. Then when I do as I will, my spirit too knows that no will is higher than my own.

Henceforth almost no place is given to abstract systems and other dimensions in the ritual chamber. It is to become like the inside of my head, a dark box where only my dreams do dwell.

The Satanic rituals and Satanic Magic Themselves.

How in practice is the Satanist to carry out the resolution to use all the mind-machinery that for ages has given emotional reality to brain-born abstractions, and thus encouraged people to believe in and live for something beyond themselves, for the new purpose of creating quasi-religious experiences of meaningfulness in a life directed exclusively at personal happiness? The best approach to answering this question involves a consideration of the purposes to be served by the contrived use of symbols, i.e. Satanic magic. For a Satanist, the most important of these are:

1. To connect one's conscious beliefs with one's emotional life by giving the subconscious symbols for purely theoretical entities and relationships, forms in which it can *grab hold of* these bodiless things. (Some abstract theories are true, after all!)
2. To enhance and intensify ones experiences of selfhood, purposefulness and happiness, generating the feeling that "life is meaningful."
3. To cope with desires whose objects are presently unattainable but which have become so insistent that they have become a source of distraction and annoyance.

These objectives are attained through the following practices:

Creation of an Artificial Environment- Each person has a set of preferences, fetishes and other "psychological vectors" that point his attention outward to the world wherein

his dreams can be made reality. The first order of business for the Satanist is to inventory his own personal tastes in imagery (representational symbols,) sound, music, sex, food, cars and everything else, then to gradually modify his lifestyle, living quarters and personal relations in a way that maximizes his exposure to things which he finds stimulating and removes him from the reach of things that are heart-numbing. In this he can take his cue from the deeply religious person who decorates his abode with holy relics, symbolic tapestries and like rubbish, who cuts himself off from unbelievers, and who passes the day in observances far from the temptations of conventional living.

But as the Satanist's is a religion of himself (not, note, a religion of "the self" or "the individual," but rather of himself specifically,) his holy relics and symbols of greatness will often be nothing more than movie posters and ticket stubs, dragon medallions and chicken shaped pillows, while the sullyng presences he might remove from his lair might be televisions and campaign buttons. His in-group will consist of his friends and lovers, people who complement him or otherwise add texture and amusement to his life; from those who would sap his vigor without repayment, from those who cannot contribute anything novel or interesting to his day, yes, even from those that simply bore him or annoy him for absolutely no reason-- he remains ever most vigilantly segregated. His observances, finally, will amount to working on his projects, hobbies and relationships, "getting shit done and getting paid" with a studied lack of regard for what the rest of the world may think of his doings.

In addition to all this, the Satanist will construct or participate in more specialized environments where a particular theme or brand of imagery is emphasized, as for instance in a room whose decor recreates the mood of a particular film, or a convention hall where everyone dresses and behaves like Victorians or vampires. These specialized environments allow total visceral immersion in the realm of (symbols of) things that are to one's liking, and become the soul's great vacation.

Systematic Pursuit of Novelty- To counterbalance the tendency toward stagnation that the filtration process described above creates, the Satanist will constantly be on the lookout for the opportunity to enter novel contexts and have new experiences. Variety in experience is desirable because it can give one the ability to experience new forms of pleasure and amusement after re-imprinting and reprogramming. Only what is known to be of no use or interest is relentlessly shut out.

If a Satanist lacks the resources to travel or otherwise involve himself in foreign environments where he can get culture shock, he can also resort to mind games to change his perception of everyday life. He can write an alternate history or cosmology of the universe and attempt to interpret his experiences in light of this arbitrary theory. For instance, according to the Law of Fives mentioned in Robert A. Wilson's *Illuminatus!* trilogy, everything is related to the number five if you look hard enough. Provisionally believing in this law leads one to notice the number five popping up in the strangest ways. For instance, as I was reading about the Law of Fives on the train, I looked up to see that I was at 23rd street station ($2+3=5$.)

Purpose Rituals- These are at the core of Satanism; no one who has not performed one can say he is a Satanist. The situation that leads me to perform a purpose ritual is this: I have a desire that for the moment must remain unfulfilled. This is not in itself bad; indeed it might inspire me to great deeds. But for some reason, my subconscious has become

unduly fixated on this want of mine. The thought of what I want pops continually into my awareness. It distracts me, ruins me; it becomes as a foreign presence, a mind parasite, ever drawing my attention to what it can do me no good to daydream about. I am no longer master of my desire because instead of gaining pleasure from its fulfillment I merely suffer pain and anxiety from its lack of fulfillment, even when reason tells me that presently it cannot possibly be fulfilled and that consequently I should just forget about it for the time being. As I dwell on it, so does it dwell in me.

Now, however, I take this desire by the hair. If it causes me to think of what I want too often, then I shall think that thought to death. I shall fight fire with fire, reach my subconscious directly through symbols and tell it to *stop* sending me these thoughts, instead of consciously ordering myself to stop daydreaming of what I do wish for. And since, as Oscar Wilde is said to have said, the only way to eliminate temptation is to give in to it, the way I will cause my subconscious to abandon its fixation is by making it seem like the object of the fixation has indeed been attained. Using every kind of symbolism, but especially vicarious experience symbolism, I will construct and act out a ritual, a scenario, in which I symbolically attain the thing the love of which so troubles me. My subconscious, which does not divide the real from what appears to be real, will be temporarily “fooled” into satiety.

Detailed instructions on how to perform rituals of this kind can be found in Anton LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Witch*. One destroys the effigy of one's enemy while vaunting eloquently; one is enfolded by one's prospective lover in sheet after sheet of obscene art; one prematurely celebrates publication, or mind controls a key editor with the aid of mind control demons one has sculpted oneself.

If, in this ritual, I can attain a high enough level of frenzied emotion, then I shall “burn out” the offending thought-circuit, collapse the reality-tunnel which has led me to my rut. The desire that has been thus vicariously satisfied will lie dormant within me, to be called to awareness only when the chances for its attainment are real. Thus tamed, it is again a source of pleasure to me, not a thing that compels me. Freed of its pull, I become more clear-headed, more able to attain it in the first place. Finally, the massive amount of purposefully focused emotional energy discharged in the ritual may, in some way no yet known to science, bring me what I called for through a series of bizarre coincidences. However, it would be counterproductive to rely on the ritual to produce this effect, since if I leave the chamber wondering whether and how the ritual will “work,” then the ritual hasn't accomplished its main purpose, which is to get me to stop worrying so I can get on with my life!

Celebration Rituals- Celebration rituals are an elaborate and symbolic way of saying “I like X” or “I believe X.” They are needed to rekindle enthusiasm for what, blunted by the routine of everyday life, one might otherwise take for granted and forget to cherish. Nothing is worse than allowing one's existence to become colorless and uninspired. Periodically one must restore a sense of grand perspective, purpose, importance in the scheme of things. Widespread secular celebration rituals include birthday parties (“I like myself/my friend”) and Xmas (“I like my friends,”) where positive sentiments are expressed through gift giving and festive decorations attempt to spread general good cheer. Satanism incorporates these without difficulty. National holidays (the Fourth of July) give indoctrinated citizens the opportunity to say “I like my country” and “I believe

that my country exists.” Religious observances and gatherings (the usual “Sunday bullshit”) likewise serve mainly as forums where people can symbolically affirm their beliefs and value judgments.

Anton LaVey’s *The Satanic Rituals* consists mainly of celebration rituals. The values and beliefs celebrated in these are simply: the value of oneself and, secondarily, of the practices that aggrandize oneself, and of the belief in no higher authority over oneself. When numerous Satanists come together to praise Lucifer, what they are praising is the defiant independence this imaginary, heaven-storming being stands for as displayed in their own persons (not “independence as such.”) They must have an incarnation, an avatar of the abstraction of “their independence” to feel brotherhood *with*, however; they cannot, ludicrously, shout “we value our independence” and expect the subconscious to stir and give them the feelings of inspiration they seek.

Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to reconstruct the theory of the Satanic ritual and Satanic magic as first presented in Anton LaVey’s *The Satanic Bible*. I first asked what made religious emotional experiences possible, in spite of the nonexistence of any objectively real spiritual entities to cause such experiences. My answer was that religious emotional experiences are caused by exposure to religious symbolism which the religionist himself has invested with meaning.

I defined a symbol as something sensed or imagined-as-sensed which provokes the emotional response that would be due to a real thing which is for some reason associated with it in the mind of a spectator. I then went on to name three major kinds of symbols: representational symbols, which stand for sensible things; abstract symbols, which stand for nonsensible concepts; and vicarious experience symbols, which stand for entire experiences of both sensible things and of other symbols.

Rather than throwing man’s symbol-making capacities out the window as do many modern rationalists, I went on to say, the LaVeyan Satanist puts his own receptivity to symbols to work for *him*. He does this through surrounding himself with only the people and imagery which stimulate him, by ritually affirming his belief in his own value, and by purging himself of excessive fixations on certain objects of desire (in rituals where these objects are symbolically attained.) He is truly a complete egoist, for he pursues not only the pleasures of the flesh (sex, food, and all that money can buy) and of the mind (education and theorizing) but also of the “spirit,” the symbol-constructing, story loving, dreaming, fantastic, myth-making part of us that makes the children of our thoughts into parts of our visceral experience, real features of our motivational landscape.

The Satanist does not have the much sought meaning of life revealed to him, nor does he bemoan its absence in a universe of blind indifferent mechanism. Rather, he creates it for himself. It is not too much to say that this is the greatest magical working of all: to make life, which to reason must appear absurd and tragic or else simply insignificant, a play worth performing to the end.