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[1] **Satanic Theology: Exploring the Left-Hand Path**

- by Burton P. Gillis III°

[The following paper was originally read before a Philosophy of religion class at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada in December 1986.]

In this essay I will discuss the reverse side of the theological coin, exploring the dark and misty realms of Satanic and Setian philosophy. I shall also demonstrate the existential authenticity of the Satanic perspective on the universe and man's relation to it. I will begin with a discussion of the Satanism of Anton LaVey and its subsequent development into the Setian philosophy of Dr. Michael A. Aquino.

It is important to dispense with a number of misconceptions concerning Satanic philosophy. By the term "Satanism" I refer specifically to the philosophy of Anton LaVey as set forth in his books *The Satanic Bible*, *The Satanic Rituals*, and *The Compleat Witch*, and as espoused by the Church of Satan.

The first principle¹ of this philosophy is **Indulgence**² [LaVey, *SB*; Aquino, *The Church of Satan*]. This emphasizes the carnal aspect of man, which the Satanist feels to have been not only neglected by conventional religions but also actively repressed, at the cost of inducing a great many neuroses and much unnecessary suffering.

Generally I also apply the term "Satanism" to the Setian philosophy, the first principle of which is the Egyptian hieroglyph *Xeper*, which means "become" or "Come into Being" and is symbolized by the scarab beetle.

The Patron of "Setians" is the oldest semblance of the Prince of Darkness known to us: the Egyptian Set, brother of the Sun god Horus and symbol of the night and the Lunar principle.

The Setian philosophy espoused by the Temple of Set is highly eclectic and existential. For this reason the sacred and mythical animals associated with the *neters* [often loosely translated as "gods" but perhaps more accurately likened to the Platonic Forms] are interpreted in a highly metaphorical and allegorical manner.

It is also important to note the distinction between **esoteric** and **exoteric** interpretations of philosophical and magical imagery. The understanding of the sages and priests of ancient initiatory societies - those initiated into the inner temples - and that of the masses of followers who worshipped at the outer temples³ - were at great variance.

As the "riddler" or "dark philosopher" Heraclitus observed, many are incapable of understanding religious symbolism on a non-literal level, and thus worship statues.

I would also apply the term "Satanism" to the Thelemic [from the Greek *thelema*, "will"] philosophy of the self-proclaimed Great Beast 666, Aleister Crowley. Thus Satanic magical philosophies are those which exalt the individual will rather than seeking its dissolution through reunion with "God", the rationale being that if one's individual essence is dispersed into that of "God", the former ceases to exist as a separate entity [Aquino, *Black Magic*, *Crystal Tablet of Set*].

By Satanism I do **not** refer to the nefarious activities of juvenile delinquents and psychopaths. Such activities as human or animal sacrifice are looked upon with extreme disparagement by Satanists, Setians, and Thelemites. Moreover their objections stem from not merely the fear of social reproach, but also the very core principles of their philosophies. Cf. LaVey's "On the Choice of a Human Sacrifice" in his *Satanic Bible*.

Originally the Church of Satan arose as a reaction against what were perceived to be unreasonably restrictive moralisms. It was also a movement aimed at de-alienating man's carnal aspect. Moreover it questioned the widespread belief in the nobility and altruism of humanity as a whole, viewing this belief as naive and not substantiated by the realities of actual human behavior. The *Satanic Bible* maintained that man, or at least the common man, is the most vicious of all beasts.

Conventional religious worship was seen as self-delusion, as it was thought that "the force which permeates and balances the universe is far too impersonal to care about the happiness or misery of flesh-and-blood creatures". Thus the Judæo/Christian concept of a personal "God" was rejected, as were moral absolutism and the belief that "God" was the well-spring of morality.

In the beginning "Satan" was conceived as a metaphor for hedonistic self-indulgence, free-spiritedness, and freedom of thought & action. By and large rituals and ceremonies performed in his name were seen as psychodramas aimed at ridding the individual of irrational guilt fostered by his upbringing in the oppressive milieu of Christianity.

As time progressed, the Satanic philosophy was to take two quite distinctive directions, the first being a form of psychodramatic atheism in which

“Satan” was seen as merely an allegory for the carnal aspect of man and hedonistic self-indulgence, the second viewing Satan as an actual, sentient being separate from the physical universe, and the very source of man’s being and his capacity for non-natural action. [Aquino, *COS, BM*].

Hence there existed quite a dichotomy between those two approaches, the first endorsing a sort of naturalism and concerning itself exclusively with the physical/material universe, the second exalting the alien, non-natural aspect of man as what set him apart from the beasts, and embodying a form of dualism in its postulation of something beyond the purely physical. This second view was ultimately to be transformed into the more expansive Setian philosophy.

I contend that, while the Satanic philosophy of Indulgence is intensely liberating and an integral element of Setian philosophy, it intrinsically lacks direction and can ultimately become nihilistic. Hence I will deal primarily with the Setian philosophy, whose first principle is *Xeper* (Become). Becoming is an open-ended concept, in the sense that there is no ultimate and absolute goal. And herein lies its vitality and existential authenticity.

Consider for a moment one who fashions his entire existence around finite goals, e.g. the lovely, 2-story, three-bedroom house in suburbia, with 1-1/2 baths, 1-1/2 children, a pretty wife, and a 2-car garage containing two pleasant yet gas-efficient automobiles. Such goals are fully attainable.

Yet what results when such goals, having served as one’s *raison d’etre*, are realized? “Midlife crisis”, depression, a feeling of emptiness. To paraphrase the words of one of Her-Bak’s teachers: To fulfill a desire is to annihilate it. Every time one fulfills a desire, a part of him dies. All life seeks to fulfill a purpose; and once that purpose has been exhausted, death results. [De Lubicz, *Her-Bak*].

Therefore the only effective measure against spiritual death, which results from the feelings or emptiness that afflict such a large percentage of the world’s population and which is often the cause of physical death⁴, is a goal or ideal which is never fully attainable. Such a goal is **Becoming**.⁵

The Right-Hand vs. the Left-Hand Path

The term “Right-Hand Path” refers to those religions and philosophies which look upon the “ego”, the self, or the individual with disparagement and seek conformity of thought & action, and eventual dissolution of the individual essence into that of “God” [Aquino, *COS, CT*].

Such philosophies would include Christianity - with a view to a past golden age of blissful innocence in the absence of the pain which self-

consciousness produces, and a view to a future in Heaven, wherein such a state of innocence may be regained - and Buddhism, with its promise of *nirvana*.

Many are the religions and philosophies of the Right-Hand Path, and many are the other means which humans have devised in their attempts to extinguish this self-consciousness which so afflicts them. Drug abuse, alcoholism, and fanaticism of every kind have been employed in this capacity.

Whereas religions and philosophies of the Right-Hand Path seek to destroy this self-consciousness and exalt peace [and what is more peaceful than a freshly-embalmed corpse as it rests, ever so still, in its casket?], those of the Left-Hand Path exalt self-awareness as the highest value.

Accordingly the “Devil”, the “source of discord” [read “multiplicity”], is understood by the Setian to be a friend and not an enemy.⁶ Yet those whose highest value is not “self” but rather “peace” will obviously not esteem His Infernal Majesty so highly. And those in whose weakness the pain of consciousness is almost unbearable may be nothing short of virulent in their hatred of this image.

It will be said that the Christian perspective on the phenomenon of separate consciousness is being misrepresented - that Christianity has a personal concept of “God” and places supreme importance upon the person. To this I would respond that, while Christian monotheism indeed places a great emphasis upon the person [in contrast to pantheism, for example] and imbues him with a free will, exercise of this free will in contradiction to the “laws of ‘God’” is cause for extreme punishment.⁷

However, as LaVey points out in the *Satanic Bible*, one need not be a vicious and heinous individual to indulge in the “seven deadly sins”.

In opposition to St. Augustine’s contention that pride is the root of all other sin stands LaVey’s concept of pride - under the heading of which he includes such concepts as self-love, self-esteem and self-consciousness - as the *conditio sine qua non*⁸ of the ability to love another. Thus it is not those who take pride in themselves and possess a high degree of self-esteem, but rather those whose arrogance is the result of over-compensation for a **lack** of self-esteem who are unable to treat others with consideration.

Furthermore Satanists and Setians are moral relativists. Their rationale for this over moral absolutism will emerge from the following discussion of the Satanic & Setian interpretation of “God”.

The Question of “God’s” Existence

In the Setian philosophy the religious concept of “God” is conceived as roughly equivalent to the scientific concept of “natural law” [Aquino, *BM*]. Anthropomorphic and personal notions of “God” are rejected as internally inconsistent and illogical.

When one conceives “God” as loving or hating, dispensing rewards and punishments, one is imbuing “God” with human passions, characteristics, and dispositions. One is projecting on to “God” the image of an extremely powerful man. In doing so, however, one is limiting “God”, who is presumed by theologians to be **unlimited**⁹, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibeneficent.

As to the contention that “God” is all-good, the Satanist and the Setian would cite the abundance of “natural evil” (tornados, floods, earthquakes, etc.) as tending to refute such a notion. Many theodicies have been advanced by theologians in an attempt to demonstrate that “God” is just. These range from the claim that “God” **determines** what is just [it therefore being absurd to refer to “God” as “unjust”] to more elaborate and cunning arguments.

One such is the tapestry analogy - the argument that the universe¹⁰ can be visualized as a great tapestry. If we look at the back of this tapestry, the argument runs, we see a large number of knots and decide that the thing is rather unattractive. But if we turn it over and look at the front, we see a beautiful work of art. Similarly if we focus our attention upon the suffering and ugliness existing in the world, we are repulsed. Were we in a position to view the universe as a whole, as “God” is presumed to do, we would see that what *prima facie* appears hideous actually contributes to the beauty of the whole.

Both of these views serve to discount the value of the individual. In the former he is no more than a plaything of “God”; in the latter he is employed as a mere means to an end, a tool, a thing, an “it”.

Furthermore the conclusions of the theologian, who attempts to demonstrate the existence of “God” through subtle circumlocution, are dogmatically predetermined and therefore specious.

Conversely Satanists and Setians are under no compulsion to resort to mendacity to justify the enormous suffering existing in the world. Rather they view “God” as remote, intangible, amoral, unapproachable, and undeserving of worship [LaVey, *SB*].

Therefore the concept of “God” cannot be the basis of ethics for the Setian. It is absurd to suppose that ethics could be derived from the “will” of an impersonal & amoral being - or, more accurately, what is **believed** or **proclaimed** to be the will of such a being.

In its most elemental form, the Satanic/Setian concept of “God” is identified with the unity of non-conscious, mechanical existence [Aquino, *BM*].

The “Fall” of Man vs. his Rise

If one conceives of the natural universe as non-conscious, mechanical existence, what of the individual **will** - that concept so central to Satanic/Setian philosophy? The answer is that the will is a **non-natural** phenomenon alien to the natural universe and thus not wholly subject to its laws [Aquino, *BM*].

Arguably for free will or personal agency to exist, such a non-natural entity must exist. If our behavior is determined exclusively by natural causes, it is absurd for us to consider ourselves “free”.

One might propose some form of compatibilism¹¹, holding that the determinist incorrectly posits a dichotomy of determinism vs. non-determinism. The compatibilist holds that a behavior can be determined and yet freely-chosen, that the will is a function of nature and therefore determined, that thus there is no such thing as an undetermined action - that it is a lack of coercion which is the operative criterion of personal agency. Moreover the compatibilist maintains that the determinist position is counter-intuitive, and that we may postulate individual will on the basis of our phenomenological sense of freedom and explain it without appeal to a non-natural entity.

True, there is a distinction to be drawn between coerced and non-coerced actions. But if the actions are ultimately determined by nothing other than natural predisposition (e.g. genetic factors, physiological determinants, etc.) and social conditioning (programming), wherein lies man’s freedom?

There is nothing particularly unusual in the postulation of a dichotomy of will and nature, since Christianity posits a similar dichotomy (the “Fall” of man and his subsequent estrangement from “God”) and has exerted an enormous influence on much of the philosophical literature of the Western tradition. What is unusual, however, is the Setian philosophical attitude toward this conflict.

Adherents to religions and philosophies of the Right-Hand Path either (a) evolve a naturalistic system of morality and attempt to resolve this conflict by means of conforming their actions to what they conceive of as “God’s will” or “natural law”; or (b) simply do not posit the existence of individual will, decrying the self as “mere illusion”. However ethical naturalism (the identification of the concepts “good” and “natural”) is rejected by the Setian philosophy. Instead it is the alien, non-natural aspect of man, seen as setting him apart from the common beasts, which is exalted.

In line with this exaltation of the non-natural intellect is an alternative interpretation of the *Biblical* myth of the “Fall”. There is a great deal of truth in the saying “ignorance is bliss”, hackneyed though that phrase might be. Thus because consciousness produces pain, mass humanity looks back to a time of bestial, mindless oblivion with great longing.

It is for this reason that the source of man’s freedom, self-awareness, and separateness has been slandered, painted red, and given horns & a pointed tail [Aquino, Temple of Set information letter]. There are those, however, who stand aloof from the many. Rather than disparaging this gift of freedom and self-consciousness, they seek to strengthen it and come to know the source of their being. And it is those of this latter camp who are Setians and Black Magicians in the true, full sense of these terms.

Monotheism, Neo-Polytheism, and Psychecentric Consciousness

Whereas “God” is generally conceived as the creator of man, the Satanist/Setian holds that the concept of “God” as the absolute standard whereby all things are judged is the **creation** of man¹² [LaVey, *SB*]. “God” is seen as the source of quasi-absolute, pseudo-objective validation and valuation for those unable or unwilling to assume the existential responsibility for self-validation of their own lives.

The Satanist/Setian takes a highly relativistic view of the universe, realizing that much of what is conceived as “objective reality” is more accurately understood as part of a prevailing local consensus reality.¹³ [And it is interesting to note that, while there are a great many consensus realities out there, most of which falsely represent themselves as “objective reality”, “truth”, “fact”, etc., there is presumably only one actual objective universe.]

The goal of the Satanic & Setian philosophies is not worship¹⁴ of “God”, but rather mastery by the individual over his own subjective universe, the attainment of a divine state of being. This is what I meant by the term “neo-polytheism”. By assuming the role traditionally afforded the monotheistic “God”, the Satanist/Setian becomes a god in his own right through validation of his own existence.

The Setian philosophy is psyche-centric as opposed to monotheocentric. Rather than placing “God” at the center of his subjective universe and conceiving the value of individual beings and their actions in terms of the concept “God’s will”, the Setian takes the view that reality is by and large a subjective construct. He places himself at the center of his own subjective universe and determines, through the process of attribution, the value of all that exists therein. Moreover he determines the value

of the objective universe itself. For as the value of inanimate matter and insensate energy is conceived as **extrinsic**, as an attribution rather than something **intrinsic** to these things, the universe would possess no value in the absence of beings with reflective consciousness.

There is an important distinction to be drawn between the concepts of psyche-centric consciousness and egocentricity. Whereas the latter is characteristic of small children and, therefore, does not presuppose that any degree of self-actualization has been achieved, the former arises out of a careful consideration of the phenomena Or experience.

As Immanuel Kant noted, only the phenomena of experience are accessible to us; and we are unable to obtain direct evidence of objects existing within the realm of the noumenal or “the thing in itself”. Furthermore as Robert Wilson notes in his *Prometheus Rising*, “What the thinker thinks the prover proves.” If one concurs with these theories, the idea of reality is identifiable with something which exists outside of ourselves becomes somewhat ridiculous, for what we term “reality” would be a mental construct. Moreover in a universe in which sentient beings did not exist, there would be no question of “real vs. unreal”.

Perhaps the most crucial distinction to be drawn between these two concepts is that the former recognizes the existence of other subjective universes while the latter does not.

Some will maintain that a purely materialistic universe comprised of matter and energy alone, in which no sentient beings existed, would possess a certain intrinsic value in and of itself completely independent of any form of attribution on the part of conscious beings.

What sort of value would this be? Would it not be far removed from what is normally meant by the term “value”? For is not the value of all things - or at least the values which are significant in the lives of human beings¹⁵ - determined by: (a) their usefulness to sentient beings, (b) the æsthetic pleasure¹⁶ they give to sentient beings, and (c) their relation to the subjective moral and ethical constructs of such beings?

In keeping with their highly relativistic, subjective, and perspectival outlook, the Satanic and Setian philosophies emphasize what Nietzsche termed “master morality” over “slave morality”. Hence the Satanist or Setian does what he perceives to be ethical, not because he fears punishment in the nether world for his transgressions but because he realizes that certain types of actions are life-affirming while others are life-stultifying.

Thus in willing the continuance and enhancement of life, he wills a certain type of ethic,

coming to a rational understanding of the necessity for certain ethical standards. However Satanists and Setians are not egalitarian in their outlook and do not concur with the notion that all men are created equal. They realize the important function which traditional religions and moralities serve in keeping the masses - shown by their behavior to be little more than dangerous beasts, behaving, as Ouspensky observed in his *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, primarily on an unconscious level - under control. For when billions of unconscious robots begin bumping into one another, destruction [and mass carnage] inevitably result. If such people cannot understand the rational necessity for certain ethical standards, perhaps it is necessary to appeal to them on a more primitive level, employing what Plato referred to as "sacred lies".

Faith vs. Doubt

Whereas adherents of many religious and even secular philosophies make a virtue of blind faith and consider it to be an adequate substitute for rational substantiation of their hypotheses [or inquiry], blind faith is looked upon with disparagement by Satanists and Setians.

On this subject Anton LaVey [quoting Ragnar Redbeard - Ed.] says: "He who is slow to believe anything and everything is of great understanding, for belief in one false principle is the beginning of all un wisdom." [LaVey, *SB*]. Elsewhere he writes: "Without that wonderful element of doubt, the doorway through which truth passes would be shut tight, impervious to the most strenuous poundings of a thousand Lucifers." [LaVey, *SB*]. Further you are invited to read the words of Michael A. Aquino in the first paragraph of *Black Magic* in the *Crystal Tablet of Set*.

However it is important to realize that the Setian philosophy is not based upon pure logical positivism, though an attempt to apply this in its proper place is made, with the realization that such an approach is not sufficient to facilitate an adequate Understanding¹⁷ of the Universe [Aquino, *BM*].

As noted earlier, the Setian philosophy does not discount the value of the subjective universe, as would a pure logical positivist. In addition to the intellectual faculties, or what might be termed the "intelligence of the head", the Setian recognizes the existence of an intuitive form of knowing or "the intelligence of the Heart¹⁸", the objects of which are apprehended through the Greater Black Magical¹⁹ working²⁰. The knowledge arising out of such workings is highly phenomenological, involving the intuition of essences by means of free imaginative variation.

The Setian Greater Black Magical working is to be distinguished from conventional religious worship in that the Setian does not identify Set with "God" but Understands him to be a finite being who is engaged in a constant process of Becoming. Nor does the Setian abase himself before this being, but instead sees him as a teacher.

Ultimately it is the Setian who must apply his knowledge. The Prince of Darkness is no redeemer; rather [again after Redbeard - Ed.] every individual Setian must be "his own redeemer".

Blind faith is not a factor here, for it is expected that one will accept a principle only after careful consideration and on the basis of the evidence which one has at his disposal. [In fact there are those Satanists and Setians by whom the Prince of Darkness is understood in an allegorical context.]

However the Setian philosophy is based upon certain premises for which there is no absolute proof. For example the existence of free will cannot be known with objective certainty, and a sufficiently crafty philosopher will always be able to develop arguments to the contrary. Yet such arguments themselves rest upon certain assumptions.²¹ Hence it seems apparent that the adoption of certain assumptions is inescapable: that all theories, even those of the natural scientist, depend ultimately upon assumptions.

To be strictly accurate, therefore, no man is without faith. However there are degrees of faith, and that of the individual who has carefully examined a problem from as many angles as possible before coming to his conclusion is quite far removed from that of the fanatic who, not having adequately examined the question at hand, resolves it on the basis of blind faith.

Having dispensed with the Cartesian criterion for knowledge²² (objective certitude), if one adopts a more existential epistemology and judges as existentially authentic those philosophies and religions which are life-affirming rather than life-denying, the existential authenticity of the Setian philosophy is more than apparent.²³ The Setian philosophy places a supreme value upon individual existence, affirming rather than denying it by adopting as its highest value something external to it, and placing ethical responsibility and the responsibility for self-validation upon the individual.

Notes

1. The ancient Greek concept of *logos* (word of fundamental rational principle in accordance with which the Universe is made intelligible - language and that which underpins language) is central to the Setian philosophy in this connection. It is interesting to note Martin Heidegger's concept of language [in *Letter on Humanism*] as the house of

the truth of being, contrasted to the Aristotelian notion of man as a rational animal [literally the Greek translates as “a living thing/animal having *logos*]. Thus it is in man’s relations to *logos* that his divine and transcendental essence is revealed.

2. Indulgence does not imply what might be inferred from it by those unacquainted with the actual principles which comprise this philosophy. Suffice it to say that true Indulgence - that is the exercise of free will - presupposes profound self-knowledge.

3. The outer temple is an actual place in the physical and spatial sense, whereas the inner temple exists within the soul of the individual initiate [de Lubicz, *Her-Bak*].

4. Consider the case of the man, for whom the only value in his life is the love he feels for his wife, who for no **apparent** reason dies a few months after his wife’s demise.

5. Perhaps it is not strictly accurate to speak of *Xeper* as the “goal”. One might propose *Xem*, the “eternal quest”, as the goal and *Xeper* as the **process** by which one move toward the ever-receding goal.

6. In the absence of separate consciousness there would be no “I” to make such an evaluation.

7. Such freedom is analogous to that of a victim of an armed robbery, who is “free” to either hand over his valuables or contest the robber.

8. [The “indispensable condition”] Pride, understood in the sense of self-love, self-esteem, etc., is not only a necessary precondition of the ability to love others, but is also essential to one’s emotional well-being. A great deal of pathological and neurotic behavior is attributable to a lack of this sort of pride.

9. We as finite cannot speculate concerning the nature of a hypothetically infinite being. To echo an argument of the Enlightenment rationalist Benedict de Spinoza, such passions as love and hate are particularly finite **modes** of thought. “God”, if an unlimited being, would have **thought itself** as an attribute. Therefore a “God” posited as infinite/unlimited and yet motivated by the same passions which determine human actions is a logical contradiction.

10. “The Universe (with a capital ‘U’) is defined as the totality of existence, both known and unknown by humanity.” [Aquino, *BM*]. The Universe is comprised of the objective universe and a multiplicity of subjective universes. The objective universe is defined as the totality of inanimate matter and insensate energy. Generally speaking, the terms “material”, “physical”, and “natural” are interchangeable with the “objective” universe. A subjective universe is comprised of the collective phenomena of the individual mind. Perception,

imagination, thought, will, memory, etc. are all constituents of a subjective universe. The subjective universe is non-physical and possesses the capacity for non-natural action.

11. Three of the foremost positions concerning the question of personal agency, also known as the problem of free will vs. determinism, are non-determinism, determinism, and compatibilism. **Non-determinism** posits the existence of individual will and holds that, when one is acting freely, his behavior is motivated by something more than, say, the *libido* of Freud, which is merely an instinctive drive. There is something to be said for the non-determinist position, as we conceive the human person as being free in a manner that the mere beast is not. If one conceives of the human “will” as nothing more than a collection of instinctive drives like those determining beast behavior, it follows logically that he must also either (a) attribute personal agency to animals, or (b) deny personal agency to mankind. Both #a and #b are inconsistent with our normal thinking about personal agency, however. As freedom entails responsibility, if we accept #a as true, we should consider animals moral agents. If we accept #b, we should absolve man of ethical responsibility for his life and world - which I consider absurd, hence I reject the notion that the individual will is reduceable to mere instinct. * The **determinist** position holds that individual will is merely an illusion: that human actions are determined by external forces beyond one’s control. The individual is lost in such a view, being reduced to links in a great causal chain. * The **compatibilist** position is the most pragmatic of the three, holding that personal agency and determinism are not compatible - that our actions are determined but that we can still act freely. The rationale behind this may be illustrated thus: When deciding whether a person who has broken the law has done so freely, a juror does not conjecture that the person may be reduced to a mere cog in the cosmic machinery, but rather seeks to ascertain whether the person was acting under coercion or compulsion.

12. Satanists and Setians are not atheists, but their concept of “God” bears very little resemblance to popular concepts. The Satanic and Setian philosophies approach theology on a rational level, while much of conventional religion amounts to nothing more than the fervor of the passions completely ungoverned by any semblance of reason.

13. A consensus reality is a collection of beliefs concerning the nature of the universe or a certain portion thereof, endorsed and reinforced by members of a society [Robert Wilson, *Prometheus Rising*].

14. Understood by Satanists and Setians to be a subjugation of the individual will to something

outside of itself, a denial of the worth of self and a refusal to assume the existential responsibility for self-validation.

15. The balance between the centripetal and centrifugal forces which keeps the planets of the solar system in their orbits has a certain utility value, but absent sentient beings this utility has no existential value.

16. For example, how could a sunset be beautiful absent someone to perceive and appreciate it?

17. An individual in whom there exists a harmony between all forms of knowing (rational, empirical, intuitive/phenomenological, etc.) is said to possess Understanding [with a capital "U"]. Such an Understanding discounts neither the subjective nor the objective elements of a question [Aquino, *BM*].

18. Cf. Isha de Lubicz, *Her-Bak*.

19. In the *Satanic Bible* Anton LaVey defines magic as "the change in situations or events in accordance with one's will which would, using normally-accepted methods, be unchangeable". Setian Black Magic is divided into two major categories: Lesser and Greater [Aquino, *BM*].

20. A ritual or ceremony, also an exploration of essence [Aquino, *Church of Satan*] - the process whereby the higher self or spiritual being of the initiate is unmasked and a knowledge of Set, the source of the being, is manifested.

21. The determinist hypothesis (the contention that individual will or creative agency does not exist - that "actions" are merely **events** determined by the laws of natural causality) presupposes a causal relation between events. Yet the existence of the very cause and effect relationship cannot be proved absolutely, being suspect in that it is inferred *a posteriori* (from induction based on empirical observation). For (a) the evidence of the senses is suspect, and (b) when one resorts to induction, there is always the danger that one will fall into the logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* ("after this, therefore **because** of this"), the fallacy of assuming that because event #B follows event #A, event #B is necessarily **caused** by event #A. Should one attempt to limit himself to *a priori* reasoning or purely logical deduction, he may find himself able to know that all bachelors are unmarried, yet unable to argue successfully for the existence of the material universe or those of other minds.

22. In the context of Becoming, all things are in flux - even truth and reality, for the magician transcends mere philosophy, or the art and science of coming to understand that which **is** by bringing something **new** into existence. Cf. Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell or a

Hell of Heaven."

23. As the function of a religion is to impart significance to human existence, the religious validity of the open-ended principle of **Becoming** - a quest which is never completed and thus constantly impels the Setian forward - is undeniable.

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[2] III° Recognition: Burton Gillis

Dr. Michael A. Aquino, High Priest of Set, has announced the Coming Into Being of Burton P. Gillis of St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada as a Priest of Set III°. Priest Gillis is the author of "Satanic Theology" in this issue of the *Scroll*. He was Recognized on the Vernal Equinox by Magister Robertt W. Neilly. Priest Gillis is a CoSentinel of the Gates of Hell Pylon.

[3] II° Recognition: George Smith

George Smith of Olympia, Washington was Recognized as Adept II° on the evening of Friday, March 13, XXII by Magistra Constance Moffatt. This was done during a simultaneous working. Adept Smith is already busily engaged in organizing the Northwest into a possible Pylon, with Magistra Moffatt's approval. [Ed. note: Is it possible? Will Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia surpass the tremendous work, growth and *Xeper* from within the strong Texas Setian entourage?]

[4] The Great Dragon Set?

- by George C. Smith II°

The few representations we have of Set have almost continually irritated me because these images simply don't look "right". While it may simply be

that the sponsor of our unnatural workings in GBM should **not** resemble anything in my experience, I still have found this appearance more than just a little peculiar.

I have no idea whether this is an Egyptian representation of an ant eater [horrors!] or simply a true-to-life representation of Set, an alien being from outside natural experience. However there are some elements here revolving around similarities and parallels with the dragon which I'd like to briefly discuss.

First, I am inclined to dismiss the anthropomorphic "human body" the head of Set is depicted as being attached to in the same way that cat- or bird-headed Egyptian gods are shown. To my mind it simply smacks of the same artistic license which may have been indicating that these entities were certainly **not** merely animal nor human but divine.

Second, look at those dual "antenna" or "combs" on Set's head. I am reminded of horns, and immediately wonder whether they were not actually being depicted as side-by-side in that peculiar Egyptian "flattening" of perspective which so often we see in their ancient murals.

Third, the "snout" of Set certainly **does** look elongated and flexible, and yet I wonder if this might not be more of an abstraction of a more reptilian appearance? More than anything this was what I was attempting to depict in my drawings - the possible similarities of an abstracted image.

Fourth, if we consider the dragon with Set, we have a being which is (1) "mythological" and yet (2) global and cross-cultural.

Fifth, the dragon has always been closely associated with magic, hidden treasure, and the four major [Western] elements of fire (breath), air (flight), earth (treasure/lair), and water (Leviathan/Tiamat). Consider how Set is associated [at least by Setians] with GBM and *Xeper*.

Finally in this speculation I wonder if perhaps both the Egyptian depiction of Set and the world-wide description of the dragon may not be attempts to represent an as-yet-undescribed entity? I find the figure of the dragon to be far more familiar and fascinating, but then again perhaps such personal biases are irrelevant to an objective entity. What do you think?

[5] "The Laughing God" - Feedback

- by Robertt W. Neilly IV^o

The February issue of the *Scroll* was special for a number of reasons, all of them being the material therein. While much thought, commentary, or conversation could be devoted to any single work such as Adept Jim Grady's thoughts on "life after

life [and Remanifestation]" or the many expressions of Setian being in poetic form, I'm going to talk about Setian Ruth Smith's "The Laughing God". This struck familiar regions of my mind. Following are some of the ways in which it did so.

Set's sense of irony seems to me at this stage an established fact. But does Set have any other avenues through which humor is made manifest? I believe so. Brought to mind are specific aspects of the "universal joke" (per Crowley) and the "Devil and his 'tricks'". Some inherent concepts within the æonic Word "Indulgence" could also be said to apply to this "laughing god".

Classical imagery, such as those of Cernunnos, Pan, and satyrs, also comes to mind, though not so much from the laughter of Setian Smith's god as from the connected pleasure/Indulgence principles. Her impression of "the joy of existence, of sure knowledge, of confidence" obtained from this image are enough to convince me that his communications were an admonition towards doing one's will and all that follows. The fact that this vision seemed "mated" to the personality of the aspirant reinforces the edict that the Setian magician uses/conjures/creates that which works best and appeals most to him/herself.

Are humans alone in the universe in terms of their being sentient, intelligent creatures capable of *Xeper*? Further per Setian Smith's quest[ion], are we "alone in the universe as recipients of the Gift of Set"? A most intriguing query. Many of us have long thought, anticipated, and/or speculated on this very issue. Setian Smith received a response that I would like to see verified one day. My present beliefs lean towards the truth of such a premise.

Throughout my magical adventure thus far, I have learned through hindsight, among other tools, to place credence in the many signposts of balanced *Xeper* I've experienced, seen, or sensed along the way. To Setian Ruth Smith I would say there's every indication that the "laughing god" is one such indicator.

Once examined, and once proper context is established for this experience [already in the works], such a look into the self may prove a lasting, magical aid.

[6] I Move

- by Ronald L. Barrett, Jr. I^o

I have walked these tracks before, and briefly I am here again, gliding along a silken rail through twisting, jagged gash. The mountains rise. My eyes. Sea of thrashing water down a sky-blue, frozen staircase.

Winter Solstice. We meet again, having passed

through the time of Set. Steel in my heart, the blood of my essence; I have forged my *Nothung*.

Our Wills combine, and we fly through the gates together.

I walk behind the Sun now, wet grass at my feet, moving towards the sea. A beautiful day - dark day. My way.

This is the fire of my creation, for I am the Grandfatherman, a cobbler nailing his heel in place. I move, and there are others.

I am the magician.

[7] "Ell Eigh" Has it All

- by Constance L. Moffatt IV°

The Set-VIII International Conclave will be held in that mecca of bronzed and sensual living, Los Angeles, California. As a resident of this paradise, I would like to clue you in on a few things as your prepare to arrive in Hollywood in August.

First of all, August is when our summer really begins. [It ends in January if at all.] The spring fog has lifted, and we are just starting to get heated up.

Hollywood is in the northeastern side of the basin, which lacks the ocean breezes, thus the days may become quite hot - anywhere from 70° to 100°. However every place in Hollywood is highly air-conditioned.

Your clothing should be typical summer garb, with jackets, sweaters, shawls, etc. for the cool indoors or our cool evenings [which could be in the 60°s]. Since Southern California is very laid-back, your apparel for tourist events can be anything of your choice. There is no real dress-code here, but you can be cited for indecent exposure [makes for a lot of fun!]. Many places even accept bare feet and chests.

Anything in this world can be purchased in Los Angeles. The book, music, and novelty stores have it all, and they will ship anywhere. Specialty shops abound, including some very good occult shops.

Whether you purchase or not, you should not miss the gorgeous purple building on Hollywood Boulevard, Frederick's of Hollywood [the sexiest garb anywhere]. There are several little shops on and off the Boulevard which have neat ancient Egyptian and other jewelry. There is an international magazine and news stand at Highland and Hollywood.

Eateries abound in Hollywood, and prices are competitive. At Set-VIII I'll have suggestions. You will satisfy any gourmet urge, as this is a very cosmopolitan area. Unlike Nu Orlens L.A. does not have a distinctive dish. We are a melting-pot. Mexican, Chinese [all provinces], Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Middle Eastern and European all prevail.

Now an important topic - how to speak in Hollywood and Los Angeles. Here is a little bit of a paraphrased and original guide:

"Have a nice day": Hey, man, do your own thing and leave me alone.

"That's clear to me": I could care less.

"L.A.": Los Angeles, and that's O.K. We're unlike the purists of Frisco who do nothing but expound on their city's proper name.

"Las Vegas": a huge sand pile in Nevada, blazing with neon and tinsel, where Angelenos lose bucks .

"Canada": icy 51st State whose emigrants and descendants make up 30% of us.

"Taco Bell": no, not Tijuana's phone system, but a fast food chain. Burp.

"Swap meet": a place where you add to your junk collection so you can have a garage sale, or where you may get fleas.

"Quake": what you get after a bad night on the town.

"New Yorkers": very fine people [I am one] who ignore traffic and all other laws [or so it seems the worst drivers on the road].

"West Hollywood": boys' town of the west.

"Mercedes-Benz": the best status symbol to be run over by in L.A. Numbers count - the higher, the better. Mine is only a 240D.

More hints on enjoying and speaking L.A. in the next issue. [I hope you realize that all is in jest.]

[8] The First of the *Jeweled Tablets*

- by Constance L. Moffatt IV°

Due to the serious nature of most articles in the *Scroll*, I try to keep my editorials light. Now, however, I address something that will expose my famous fangs. When did you last read the *Crystal Tablet of Set*? Not recently? Not ever? [And I know that some of you fit this category.]

What are you waiting for? You will not be spoon-fed. You are expected to use the very best tools prepared by the Temple for your initiatory progress. There is nothing that offers more to I°s and II°s than the *Crystal Tablet*. Everything you need to acquire a solid foundation can be found in this first book of the *Jeweled Tablets*. Due to the extensive and continuously updated reading list, you will find that all degrees consistently update and use it.

The "Protocol" section has so much of the traditions of the Temple of Set that I wonder why anyone would skip it. Do read this part. When I as a member of the Priesthood get a letter from you addressed "Dear Connie" or just "Connie", I am frankly irritated. Please address all Setians as befits their dignity. [I'm prone to ignore letters written in a

disrespectful way. Thus if you expect to hear from me and do not, you know why.] When permission is given to be informal, it will be clear. This is not to be “stuffy”, but rather to respect the higher beings we both are.

Another point of “Protocol” having direct effect on editors is to notify the Temple when you move. In February four packages came back with \$7.68 postage wasted. 'Nuf said! Just be aware that we **do** take our *Tablets* and our Protocol very seriously.

[9] **Set-VIII and You**

- by Robertt W Neilly IV°

Why is everyone who has attended at least one of our Conclaves before urging you to attend Set-VIII? Because the most intense and most joyous gathering of Setians on an international level occurs at conclaves. Every conclave I have experienced has changed my life dramatically in terms of progressive *Xeper*. When I leave Set-VIII, will I be able to take home with me a personal perspective of **you**?

[10] **Book Recommendations**

- by Ruth Smith I°

For those of you interested in Western shamanism, Runes, and a good yarn, try *The Way of the Wyrd* by Brian Bates, Harper & Row, 1983. Based upon an actual medieval document circa 670 CE, it is the account of the growth of a young Christian scribe as he is initiated into the world and power of an Anglo-Saxon sorcerer in pre-Christian Britain. From the dramatic first encounter with the sorcery of his own Saxon heritage to his final realization of himself as a sorcerer, Brand must deal with his Christian upbringing and the evidence of his own perceptions. Engrossing, short, easy to read.

Another book which I highly recommend is *Brain Power: Learn to Improve Your Thinking Skills* by Karl Albrecht, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980. Before you get insulted or dismiss this as irrelevant to yourself, I would like to point out that all of us, myself included, could use help in this area. Our great egalitarian school system has the primary function of socializing us, not teaching us to think. It behooves us as Setians to rectify this error. In the words of Jonathan Swift: “Man is not rational, merely capable of it.”

The author, Dr. Albrecht, has a wonderful chapter on “crap detecting”. He also addresses such issues as fact-finding, thinking under pressure, problem-solving, decision-making, idea production, logic & logical fallacies, and evidences a playful sense of humor throughout.

[11] **Gates of Hell Lucid Dream Project**

The Gates of Hell Pylon will present a special project on generating and controlling lucid dreams. If interested, please obtain and read the cover story in the April issue of *Omni* magazine. Adept George Smith will be the major coordinator of this project.

[12] **Fragment of the Black Rock**

- by William Huber II°

Here the story of black king, last king, old king of old nation, older than yellow, bent his weight against, turned too many pages. Head swam with fear, heat rising in impossible vectors. Book older than time: vicious book, book of blood, book of love. Broke down the ancient seawall. Shadows crashed through the seawall. Childhood became hideous, vengeful. A rage against the ... This, the story of the black king. Lost his throne, his light. See the shattered eyes, eyes drowned in blood. Old king, master of pain, dwelling in sorrows, lord and lover of sorrows, escheator, escheatarch. Last king gazes at the seawall.

[13] **The Tarot and the Black Magician**

- by Jim Grady II°

The Tarot has taken some serious criticism, and I'll admit that on occasion I have perpetrated a few slanderous remarks myself. A great many of these criticisms are probably well deserved. In the past and still today, the Tarot is a convenient tool for con men, charlatans, and other undesirables. In the face of all this, it is not surprising that the validity of the Tarot should be the subject of some question.

It might also be noted that the Tarot receives quite a bit of attention from the “white lighters”. The relationship between these two may be best described by the Black Adept as “stage magic run amok”. The Tarot can be a very effective LBM prop, but only if the magician **knows** that he **is** using it as a prop. If the Adept takes this role too seriously, he is liable to deceive himself and sink to the level of a carnival fortune teller.

If the Black Adept is to approach the Tarot in a constructive manner, he must blaze his own path. I am not an expert on the Tarot, and I have not seen any popular work on the Tarot that I would consider to have been written by an expert. Other than Crowley, it would seem that modern Tarot “experts” are using the deck to pick lottery numbers. So much for them.

With all this in mind I sat down and outlined exactly what I wanted from a Tarot reading.

First I will be dealing with concepts, and I will want a better understanding of these concepts. Therefore I will use three cards to reflect the essence of the concept.

Next I will view my own position. I am not a “querent” or “petitioner”. I am an **Adept**, and this is the filter through which I perceive the concept. It is the viewpoint of the Black Magician, which is unique and should be treated so. The next three cards will reflect the position of the Black Magician.

I wonder about the role of the objective universe. How do certain concepts manifest themselves? There is bound to be evidence of change in the immediate universe, and recognizing them can be likened to P.D. Ouspensky’s “self remembering”. It would be useful to see the impact of a concept on the Adept’s objective universe. I will allot three cards to this also.

The seed of each concept is planted and nurtured in the subjective universe. How it takes shape - how the Adept molds and fits it to himself - is of prime importance. I will use three more cards to represent the subjective universe.

There is a fifth level consisting of three cards. This is the tier used to represent the realization of the concept. We work with a great many diverse ideas. They are weeded, filtered, and bred; and eventually emerge as a workable concept for the Black Magician. This is a very useful evolution, but a concept will remain a victim of philosophy until there is a realization on the part of the Adept. It is in this manner that our concepts pass from philosophy to truth.

In using these five categories I believe that I have formulated a constructive use of the Tarot. In its totality it is a general and fluid reflection of the Black Magician’s U/universes.

[14] Zoroastrianism

- by Nancy Flowers III°

The history of Zoroastrianism falls into two periods. The first of these dates from the appearance of Zoroaster in the 7th century BCE [the traditional date Zoroastrians assign to their prophet is 258 years before Alexander - 588 CE] until the fall of the Achæmenid Empire in the 4th. The second covers the period of the Second Empire under the Sassanians; from the 3rd to the 7th century CE.

During the Achæmenid dynasty the Zoroastrian priesthood fell into the hands of the Magi, the traditional priest caste. It became the official religion of the royal house, although older cults continued to exist beside it and influenced the religion in ways that will be discussed.

The principle sources for the study of Zoroastrianism are two texts; the *Avesta* [a large

fragment of which remains] and the *Pahlavi*, written in approximately the 9th century, but also inscriptions from the Achæmenid and Sassanian periods.

Zoroastrianism postulates two principles at the origin of the Universe. Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu were regarded as the twin sons of Infinite Time (Zrvan-akarana) Ahura Mazda, by a fusion of his two names, became Ohrmazd. Angra Mainyu - agonized or negative thought - became Ahriman. These two mark the two poles of existence. The first created life, the second death. Both were considered omnipotent and omniscient. However some myths present only Ahura Mazda as infinite, and in some Ahriman is not omniscient but rather has only “backward knowledge” - that is knowledge of the past, not the future.

In the beginning Ohrmazd was on high and dwelt in the Endless Light, Ahriman in the depths and dwelt in the Endless Darkness. Between these kingdoms was the Void. Ohrmazd created the “ideas of the sky, the earth, stars, water, fire, animals, plants and man. (Some texts report Ohrmazd’s dissatisfaction with having to create a female in order to propagate the human race.) And for the next three thousand years creation remained motionless.

Though separated by the Void, Ohrmazd believed that once Ahriman had seen his kingdom, he would attack it. And indeed after creation had been completed, Ahriman arose from the depths, and because of his nature rushed in to destroy it. However he saw that “its bravery and glory were greater than his own” and fled back to his darkness, where he created the demon hordes.

Ohrmazd proposed peace for 3,000 years [this number varies in extant texts] and, being omniscient, knew that there would be 3,000 years of peace followed by 9,000 years of intermingled wills and a final 3,000 years where he alone would prevail. Ahriman agreed, and when Ohrmazd revealed his knowledge to him, Ahriman became “confounded” and fell back to the darkness, where he remained for 3,000 years.

After 3,000 years Jeh, a creature whose origin is never discussed but who is described as being so powerful that her very look smites as nothing else could do [and that the inmates of the houses of ill-repute are her creatures], flew to Ahriman and roused him from his sleep by recounting her evil deeds to him. [It takes two full recitations of those accounts to rouse him!] Ahriman awoke, kissed her, and “the pollution which they call menstruation became apparent in Jeh.” He asked her what her wish was, and she told him to appear in the form of a 15-year-old youth.

Afterward, in the form of a serpent, Ahriman, with attendant demons, burst forth through the Void and, rending the sky and the Earth, destroyed the day and set the celestial spheres in motion.

Ahura Mazda's followers are *asha-vans* (*asha* = truth), and his opponents are *dreg-vans* (*dreg/druj* = lie). *Druj* became a class designation of minor female demons. *Dreg-vans* or *dregvants* are followers of that principle which violates the natural order.

Originally the followers of "the lie" were worshippers of the traditional, indigenous gods, whose liturgy included the slaughter of oxen and consumption of the fermented juice of the Haoma plant. Zoroaster considered these gods to be maleficent powers, and so they became demons; Indra, for example, the Aryan war-god, turns up in the *Avesta* as a demon. Thus demons are called by the same name as the gods of the *Vedas* in Sanskrit (*deva*, Persian *div*, Latin *divus*).

The diabolical nature of the *devas* consisted in their devotion to trickery and falsehood. The *drujs* were creatures of deceit. The *pairikas* or *peri* disguised their malevolence under their charming appearance. They disturbed the normal action of the heavenly bodies and of the natural elements.

Druj, originally the abstraction of the "lie", became a female leader of the host of demons. *Jeh* (or *Jahi*), the "Great Whore", is a female demon of debauchery and lust. She is the force that is responsible for reviving Ahriman from his unconscious state after Ohrmazd revealed to him the ruin into which he would fall.

The female principle appears more often in a negative than in a positive manifestation, there are more frequent manifestations of the negative "Terrible Mother" than a positive one.

In the *Pahlavi* texts fire and water are spoken of as male and female respectively. Zoroaster considered the outward symbol of truth to be fire, and fire-altars were the center of the Zoroastrian religion. Water, though created by Ohrmazd, deserted him for Ahriman.

Like water, woman deserted her creator and fled to Ahriman. The *Pahlavi* word for "whore" - *Jahi* or *Jeh* - etymologically means "one who bears children". It is through her contact with Ahriman that menstruation began, and she became "irremediably defiled". Thus the female is represented as having a fatal propensity to evil. Both water and woman desert Ohrmazd and take the "Devil's" part.

Therefore in Zoroastrian mythology *Jeh*, the demon personification of woman, represents the force which "awakens the Serpent", that is the agent by which change is caused to occur in the universe. Without change there is no Becoming.

These forces of change always create fear and hatred of those who ally themselves with the forces of stasis against those of Set.

[15] Vampyr Filmography: Two Film Reviews

- by Dennis K. Mann III°

Countess Dracula (1970). Producer: Alexander Paal. Director: Peter Sasdy. Screenwriter: Jeremy Paul. Not a *Dracula* film at all, but rather a tale about Elizabeth Bathory. In this film she uses blood to remove the effects of 50 years of bad living with the old count [who is being buried at the start of the film]. She takes the place of her 19-year-old daughter [conveniently kidnapped by her henchmen], and enjoys seducing young Austro-Hungarian cavalry officers. Unfortunately the beneficial effects of the blood wear off after two days, and replenishment is necessary. This film is a bloodless turkey; I could only stand to watch half of it. The film showed signs of originally being R-rated, but was badly spliced in my viewing. There's no magic in this film at all.

Vampyr (1932). A Danish film, but set in France with English and German dialogue. Producer/director/ screenwriter(?): Carl Th. Dreyer. This film has little plot structure. A man interested in Satanism and vampirism visits/is drawn to a secluded inn. There's been a Vampire in the neighborhood for 150 years [he was active then - 11 victims - but has been real quiet for the last 149], and everyone knows it's going to strike. They are all fatalistic, but he isn't. Eventually the vampire is identified and killed, and the local doctor (the evil assistant) is buried alive in a grist mill. The movie is notable for a very creepy musical soundtrack, which gets on your nerves after a while [Priest Whitaker, take note; this score's for you!] Aside from the score, the film is not particularly magical.