

# **Is Satan an Anarchist?**

**Similarities and Differences Between Modern Satanism and the Anarchist  
Political Philosophy**

Cello Latini Pfeil; Bruno Latini Pfeil

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## Abstract

Our main motivation for this paper is to compare satanist and anarchist philosophies. We chose satanist philosophy as our object of analysis since it criticizes the Church and defends, in a variety of ways, total freedom and mutual respect. Our methodology includes a bibliographical review of anarchist literature, such as Bakunin's, Malatesta's and Kropotkin's, and satanist literature, such as LaVey's, Gilmore's and Vivdivis'. A comparative analysis is presented of both philosophies, highlighting dissonant or similar aspects between them and discussing the elements through which these theories emerge.

**Keywords:** Satanism; Anarchism; Christianity; Church; Individualism.

## Introduction

Both modern satanism and anarchism have historically been submitted to erroneous accusations. On the one hand, satanism is perceived as a set of cults that invoke demons, promote possessions, nurture diabolical forces and sacrifice children; on the other hand, anarchism is seen as chaos and mayhem, destruction of everything that is known, unbridled violence and vandalism. The common misconceptions about satanist and anarchist philosophies are that both reflect an image of chaos and brutality. As we shall see, these are common misconceptions that prevent us from understanding their actual similarities and differences.

Common sense about satanism, as members and founders of modern satanism demonstrate, and common sense about anarchism, as anarchist theorists and activists demonstrate, collide in some spheres. However, modern satanist philosophy and anarchist philosophy are quite different in their foundations, principles and histories, but similar in other respects. What we aim to examine is in which spheres these philosophies collide and complement each other. To do so, we initially introduce the definitions of modern satanism and anarchism to then compare both perspectives. Firstly, on satanism.

According to Ahriman (2019), satanism did not emerge in the last century. Obscure entities associated with darkness and evil have been claimed not necessarily by satanists. The people who could currently be considered satanists were regarded as pagans or heretics, and were therefore persecuted and exterminated by the Church. Ahriman understands that many of the groups considered satanist were in fact socially marginalized groups: "throughout the period of christianity, any group was considered Satanic, according to the authorities" (Ahriman, 2019, p. 6-7).

Ahriman suggests that satanism took its first steps in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the creation of the *Hell-Fire Club*, run by Sir Francis Dashwood in Ireland and Great Britain. The club was still quite distant from what is currently understood as satanism; it brought together members of the British elite, granting them access to morally condemned pleasures. Modern satanist philosophy, however, only emerged in the 1960s, due to the studies of the north-american occultist Anton Szandor LaVey. A brief summary of the development of Laveyan or modern satanism, as well as its ramifications at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is provided here. To do so, when we refer to satanism, we mean the modern satanism of Anton LaVey.

LaVey elaborated a structure for satanism, organized it into rituals and celebrations, principles and rules, not in order to equate it with christianity, but to consolidate it. The satanist religion was properly invented without bowing to a god or a prophet, but placing itself as "the most secular

and human, too human, of all religions” (Vivdivs, 2019, p. 10). Satanists admit that satanism was invented.

LaVey’s satanist activities began in 1966 at the Black House, his home in San Francisco (California), which would later become the Church of Satan. Initially, the Black House was home to the Magic Circle, an intimate group of people who debated the occult, magic, sexual theories and other topics (Vivdivs, 2019). It was at the Black House that the first filming of what would become the Black Mass took place. Before that, Ahriman (2019) identifies only one documented record of the Black Mass, which took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Black Mass is defined by the author as “an anticlerical liturgy that would be practiced anyway in the West, being an act of blasphemy, not affirmation” (Ahriman, 2019, p. 6). In a way, the Black Mass resembles the Satanist demonstrations of the 1960s at LaVey’s residence, which were more about mocking and satirizing Christianity than actually affirming satanism. The Satan worshiped at the Black Mass was a “caricature of Jesus” (Ahriman, 2019).

Later, the Magic Circle became the Order of the Trapezoid, a first organization in which satanism itself would be practiced. Over time, the Order would become the Church of Satan, with nine members forming the Council of Nine. The Church of Satan was founded on the famous Halloween, or Walpurgisnacht, on April 30, 1966. LaVey named 1966 as “Year One”, or Anno Satanus. At this point, Vivdivs highlights two revolutions that satanism leveraged: the convergence of a pragmatic, materialistic and realistic perspective with a mystical and ritualistic one; and the formal structuring of a satanic religion, with principles that affirm carnality, animality and indulgence.

After its creation, the Church of Satan conducted weddings, baptisms, funerals and seminars on the practice of sorcery and the Satanist religion, which attracted a great deal of media attention:

Rampant rituals, fertility rites, rituals of destruction, wedding ceremonies, shibboleth rituals, invocations of gods possessed by history, baptisms and funerals, Halloween celebrations, Walpurgisnacht and psychodramas in the form of the Black Mass were created for public participation and entertainment every Friday night. This period of rituals was not just a time for pranks and blasphemy, but a necessary development of growth and discovery that helped generate and concentrate the energy needed for the experiments of the coming years. (Vivdivs, 2019, p. 30)

By 1967, LaVey began to be referred to as the Black Pope and to give interviews, which massively popularized satanism. Two years after its creation, the Church of Satan had around ten thousand members and was growing, just at the time of the publication of *The Satanic Bible*. Other writings were then published by LaVey, forming a conglomerate of references on the philosophy of satanism. The 1960s was the flourishing period for LaVey and modern satanism in the United States.

The history of anarchism, on the other hand, slightly predates that of modern satanism. The first theorist to proclaim himself an anarchist was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, in 1840, in defense of a societal concept without government nor authoritarianism. As of 1867, Mikhail Bakunin defended the libertarian concepts of federalism and revolutionary violence. In 1880, the European political scene witnessed an expansion of anarchist ideals (Nettlau, 2008). Prior to this context, there were communalist movements in France and England as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as well as

societies that, in their original forms, were organized by communalism in Africa (Mbah; Igariwey, 2018). But the systematization of these principles into political theory only began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a European context, with Proudhon, Bakunin, Emma Goldman, Kropotkin and other anarchists. Among the anarchist principles that stand out are: the defense of self-government and self-determination, as fundamental elements in any organization and emancipatory method; mutual aid, particularly described by Kropotkin (2009), who claims that the practice of mutual aid, and not competition, is the fundamental factor in the evolution of species; direct action and hatred of State and governmental authority (Malatesta, 2001), since, in these terms, all authority is seen as negative and harmful to social organization; advocating the abolition of the State and its institutions, including the Church (Bakunin, 2001).

Among the different styles of anarchists, there are individualists, defined by Ervin (2009, p. 50) as “mere philosophers rather than revolutionary activists”; and there are mutualist anarchists, strongly influenced by Proudhon and seeking to reclaim the means of production and ‘cooperative’ trade, focusing on individual property. In contrast, there are the collectivist anarchists, mostly influenced by Bakunin and opposed to the mutualists’ focus on individual property, envisaging the collectivization of the means of production and the total destruction of the State. Then there are the anarcho-syndicalists, who grounded their ideology on the collectivists, but applied it in the context of the French and Spanish movements. For them, the destruction of the capitalist State should occur through strikes, and the dispute over the means of production should arise through trade unions. While anarcho-syndicalism focuses on the working environment, anarcho-communists extend it to all social spheres, based on Kropotkin’s ideas. Anarcho-communism opposes the entire capitalist structure, and aims to “foster the growth of a new society in which the freedom to develop as an individual is integrated to the fullest extent with responsibility towards others” (Ervin, 2015, p. 128). There are more recent anarchist movements, such as the autonomists, which emerged in the 1980s.

Despite internal disagreements, there are some common grounds among anarchists: the defense of abolishing the State and its institutions; disbelief in representative political systems; criticism of all forms of authoritarianism and hierarchization; rejection of all forms of enslavement, subjugation and discrimination. Furthermore, many anarchists strongly criticize the Church and the belief not only in a god, but also in the legitimacy of States. Anarchists advocate societies without a State, government or religious institutions – potentially oppressive ones.

The emergence of modern satanism and anarchism occur at different times and in different geographies. Modern satanism commenced in the 1960s in the USA, while anarchism, as political theory, emerged in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France. Although common sense brings these two theoretical and practical fields closer together, anarchist and satanist discourses differ widely. Therefore, in the following, an overview shall be made of the principles of satanism and anarchism, their conceptual and practical bases, in order to understand their similarities and discrepancies.

## **Anarchist and satanist principles in detail**

Semantically, according to LaVey, Satan means ‘opposition’, ‘adversary’, and represents the enemy against whom religious people direct their prayers. The association of satanism with cults that practice human sacrifices in summoning rituals, torture sessions, violence incitement and

social chaos is erroneous. The cult of Satan, the sacrifice of children and the distribution of hard drugs, pornography and *snuff* movies appear as hallmarks of the satanist agenda — despite not being guidelines of the Church of Satan. Likewise, the preconception of anarchism as the absence of rules, unjustified violence and the triumph of the strongest is totally contrary to what anarchist theorists convey in their writings. Anarchy stands for the absence of governance, of authority, and anarchism explores concepts such as mutual aid and communalism, which strongly oppose the triumph of the strongest and unbridled violence. The image of the anarchist as a violent, emotional and irrational person is still promoted by the media, which prompts us to ask: what is behind this heated discourse about the dangers of anarchism for society?

According to Gilmore (2007), the Church, perceiving a loss of power at the end of the last century, used satanism as a scapegoat: having an enemy to massacre could be more interesting than a god to worship. As a result, we often come across satanism being associated with the cult of the devil. As a figure to be hated and destroyed, the Church profited from Satan, with its personification as the great Evil that threatens the possibility of “living” posthumously in Paradise: “Without a demon to point the finger at, right-hand path religionists would have nothing with which to threaten their followers,” writes LaVey (1969, p. 30). As the great enemy of humanity, Satan was never given the chance to explain itself, to elaborate on its ideas and present its motives. By electing Satan as the great enemy of goodness, the opposition of those who follow Satan and those who do not legitimizes the goodness of the so-called “virtuous” people. Fighting an enemy would, in this logic, be more efficient than actually doing something good, since their “validity as human beings is measured not by what they can do or who they are, but against whom they stand!” (LaVey, 1992, p. 6).

Satan’s evil character simply exists due to its association with carnality. Satanism’s vanquish would rest on the idea that its philosophy is in harmony with nature. The invariable order of nature has been corrupted by fanaticism and chaos; parasites enrich themselves and individuals with talent and potential find themselves unfairly singled out. However, the laws of nature are righteous, and the satanist philosophy raises itself above the chaos that has arisen: “The beast is waking up, discarding two thousand years of sleep to once again cleanse the scum and re-establish the dominion of fangs and claws” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 37). Satanist philosophy conforms to the nature of human beings; it does not condemn their natural inclinations, but encourages them. Thus, satanism becomes a threat to the repression of instincts, the control of impulses and desires.

“Belial”, one of Satan’s names, means “‘without a master’, and symbolizes true independence, self-reliance, and self-fulfillment” (LaVey, 1969, p. 60). The absence of a master is similar to anarchist ideas, as Kropotkin (2007, p. 35–36) defines the struggle of anarchists in terms of “the two great principles that are always in opposition in society: the principle of freedom and the principle of coercion”. Anarchists believe that there are essentially two parties: those who defend the State, the existence of a sovereign master, and those who defend freedom, anarchy. The existence of a master opposes both satanism and anarchism, thus bridging the philosophies.

However, this similarity is soon destabilized. The structure of satanist religion and philosophy is structured, according to Gilmore (2007, p. 18), as one:

a religion of elitism and Social Darwinism that seeks to re-establish the reign of the able over the idiotic, of swift justice over sluggish injustice, and for a wholesale

rejection of egalitarianism as a myth that has crippled the advancement of the human species for the last two thousand years. (Gilmore, 2007, p. 18)

From this perspective, satanism understands that there are individuals with a natural tendency for carrying out certain activities, such as leadership, while others have a stronger tendency to follow those who lead, and it qualifies as a religion based on individual merit, i.e. meritocracy. Satanists do not base their hierarchy on bloodlines, on biological aspects, but on the individual's performance, regardless of their talent. Satanism appears to be an elitist religion, not because it focuses on socio-economic aspects, but rather because it groups together a select number of people with advanced skills in a particular area, with talents that can be developed to their full potential. "The stupid should suffer for their behavior," writes Gilmore (2007, p. 23), and the talented and naturally magnanimous must be recognized as such and esteemed.

Such postulations conflict with anarchist ideas, since one of the foundations of anarchism is a sense of unbounded self-government and liberty. Gilmore, who accompanied LaVey in structuring the Church of Satan, criticizes egalitarianism and exalts the reign of supposedly intellectually superior people. In addition, the author criticizes the precarious functioning of the legal system, but exalts its existence and necessity. In this case, languid injustice would correspond to the current and bureaucratic legal system, and prompt justice would be exemplary of the Lex Talionis. Contrary to what Gilmore infers about the triumph of the strongest over the weakest, Kropotkin realized that mutual aid and mutual support prevail throughout the survival of various species. Mutual aid and individual initiative would lead to greater survival advantages, contrary to the individualistic principles of social darwinism. Thus, there is a dichotomy between individualism and collectivism in satanist and anarchist philosophies.

In its individualism, satanism recognizes that the concepts of "good" and "evil" are purely subjective, particular to each individual according to their life history, experiences and beliefs. The definitions of something benign and malignant depend solely on an individual's own judgment. For LaVey (1992, p. 52), "Good is what you like. Evil is what you don't like". There is no right or wrong way to act, only a way of acting that favors or contradicts each person according to their needs and desires. In other words, satanism does not impose morality. Morality would be a "human invention conferred by the selfish interests of an impoverished sensuality" (LaVey, 1992, p. 42). Satanism recognizes the non-existence of "good" and "evil" as concrete concepts; both are abstract! The only thing that underpins legislation and thus determines the criminality of one's actions is the power attributed to those regarded as capable of dictating the laws. The political and cultural systems in which we live are understood by satanists as artificial creations. Therefore, the legal systems operating in a given reality function on the basis of artificial and dichotomous concepts of good/bad, right/wrong. While, in times past, this power derived from a god, nowadays, according to Gilmore, it is conferred on those belonging to a governmental sphere. But to establish a jurisdiction cannot imply that there is actual justice. The society we live in is "ruled by lawyers and not justice" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 55), so that "rich get away with so much more, as their money gives them power and hence, more rights [...]". Hence, this is a satanist critique of the representative political system, especially of liberal democracy's claim to being the only democratic model of government in which justice reigns supreme.

Similarly, Goldman (2007) dismisses the political alternatives of both democracy or parliamentarism and dictatorship. For her, the shortcomings of the representative system cannot be resolved by expanding democracy, nor by the typical suppression of freedoms in dictatorships.

On the contrary, Goldman argues, as do most anarchists, that the gradual flourishing of societies reaches its optimum with greater expansion of internal freedoms and a reduction in external authorities. It is through the exercise of this freedom, collective and individual, but not individualistic, that one could extinguish oppression, for there would be no freedom to oppress and exploit — that being the negation of all freedom — but rather freedom to live, to stand up against the violation of freedom. It is interesting to note that the individualism that Goldman mentions and criticizes is that same individualism used to justify the hypothesis of the social contract, which legitimizes the centralization of power in a State.

In this regard, some discrepancies between satanism and anarchism should be noted. The connection between individual freedom and compliance with the law is understood by satanists on the basis of responsibility: “Freedom always requires responsibility, and that responsibility includes an honest and accurate evaluation of the facts at hand as well as wise decisions based on that knowledge” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 115–116). With this — and considering that, according to satanist philosophy, the collective conceptions of “good” and “evil” are constructed and therefore abstract, and it is only up to the individual to define their own notions of good and evil — satanism does not advocate the absolute authority of the law, but rather the understanding that, if the individual commits a crime, they can be punished, and this concerns their responsibility for their own actions. Satanism urges individuals “to be aware of laws and to advocate their reform when proper, but meanwhile to be prepared to accept the results if disobedience leads to prosecution and incarceration” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 115).

The individualism to which Kropotkin refers in his writings, however, draws closer to the notion of individuality, “representing the full outburst of all of man’s faculties, the superior growth of what is original in him, the greater fruitfulness of intelligence, feeling and will” (Kropotkin, 2001, p. 72). Individuality, according to Goldman (2007, p. 31), is “the individual’s awareness of being what he is, and of living this difference”, while individualism means “a disguised attempt to coerce and overcome the individual in his singularity” (Goldman, 2007, p. 32). Individuality persists, while institutions perish. In libertarian terms, individuality differs from individualism in that it strives to enhance one’s individual capacities, while individualism aims to nullify individual characteristics as a means of an endless quest for accumulation, merchandise and prestige — as Gilmore indicates. It is only by restricting and strictly directing individualities, by imposing respect for laws and authority, and by believing in the neutrality of the legal system, that political and economic institutions are able to perpetuate their power. Regarding individualism in anarchism and satanism, one could also consider how the latter understands collectivism.

Gilmore presents his thoughts on the common association made between satanism and fascism. Fascism, for him, is a collectivist doctrine that demands the subjugation of certain individuals to the desires of others. Therefore, fascism rejects individualism, coercing people to “sacrifice himself to an abstract principle, which is treated as a sacred entity: THE STATE” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 53). The author stresses the sacralized nature of the State, and understands the political malleability of this inherently authoritarian institution.

Fascism presents itself as a mechanism for controlling the “herd”, which would be a mass of mediocre people in society, trapped in values peddled by the dominant culture and incapable of truly perceiving their surroundings. Satanism, then, in its individualism, would not fit in with the concept of fascism, but it would also not be in line with an anarchist vision of individualism, which tends more towards individuality, valuing collectivity and cooperation, than towards a liberal notion of individualism. The two philosophies meet again in debates about religion. Prag-



matism, secularism and, even so, the recognition that the human being needs ritual and dogma, hardly appears in our ideas about satanism. Satanism presents itself as a secular way of life, distancing itself from other religions characterized by gathering followers. Although satanism has gained popularity in the media, for example through the heavy metal genre, its philosophy is not often seriously considered. Devotional practices are emphatically repelled among modern satanists, so there can be no worship of Satan, since “Such practices are looked upon as being as Christian heresies” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 21), as is the dichotomization between darkness and light, evil and good. It matters not whether demons exist or not, or whether there is currently a war between the forces of darkness and the forces of God. Satanism does not advocate the existence of a Satanic God, or of a metaphysical den of demons; on the contrary, it recognizes that human beings created all the gods they worship to the detriment of their inability to accept themselves as carnal and animal beings.

For Gilmore, satanists are “anti-Christian”, deliberately rejecting beliefs that propose any kind of devotion to elements other than the human being itself. Satanists do not strive to convert random people to satanism, on the contrary. Let Christians continue in their “nauseating belief system”, as Gilmore writes (2007, p. 48), “so long as they keep it amongst themselves”. In response to allegations that satanism preaches the destruction of all that exists, sacrifice, chaos and violence, Gilmore recalls the allegations of child sexual abuse against Christian priests, the murders committed by the Inquisition, the torture and sacrifices carried out in the name of an ideology, and states: “It is they who seek to destroy our kind. It is they who will blame us for their own hideous actions. It is they who love death and torture, who believe in and practice sacrifice, and it is they who scorn the preciousness of life itself” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 48). Based on a similar criticism of the Church, Bakunin (2017, p. 15) characterizes the ruling class as being, “[...] in the State, what the priests and fathers of religion are in the Church”.

There are similarities between satanist anti-Christianity and the anarchist rejection of the Church. Christianity would be the “religion par excellence”, as it would express the “impoverishment, enslavement and annihilation of humanity for the benefit of divinity” (Bakunin, 2001, p. 18). The existence of God, according to Bakunin, implies human slavery, because religion is based on sacrifice. In distorting the benevolent appearance of the Divine, Bakunin states that “a master, no matter what he does and no matter how liberal he wants to appear, never ceases to be a master” (Bakunin, 2001, p. 21). Anarchism, in this sense, opposes the hierarchy between master and servant, and is defined by Malatesta (2001) as the absence of government, of authority and of any instance that positions itself as superior.

For anarchism, society does not need an authoritarian regime, a set of rulers who have “the power, to a greater or lesser degree, to use social force — be it the physical, intellectual or economic force of all — to force everyone to do what they themselves, the rulers, want” (Malatesta, 2001, p. 18–19). Through this prerogative, rulers assert their authority and exercise their oppression. It is therefore necessary to abolish any and all authority, any and all principles of government, with the exception of the government that one exercises over oneself. Abolishing authority, according to Malatesta, refers to the destruction of societal control that prevents the genesis of ungoverned, stateless, alternative futures.

Vivdivs (2019) discusses the idea of *future* when reflecting on humanity’s supposed progress. According to the author, progress in various spheres has come about as a result of people rebelling against authority figures or institutions of power. Satanism would be configured as a religion of revolt, and revolt and the breaking of dogmas has always been defended by Satan. “The devil has

always argued that man should experience, not simply believe” (Vivdivs, 2019, p. 16). The devil is the one who denounces unfounded beliefs which prevent people from developing their potential. This impediment, for anarchism, is fundamentally found in the existence of the State.

## **Similarities and differences between anarchism and satanism**

It can be quite difficult to define the State. In a way, what most characterizes a governmental structure are the ideas behind it or, according to Graeber (2011), an “imaginary totality” of society. States hold ideas, imaginaries that cover the entire social fabric and set out to order it coercively; in short, behind the ideology of the State lies the idea of control. The State is based on “ways of imagining the social order as something that could be controlled, models of control” (Graeber, 2011, p. 75). The State would be the combination of institutions that exercise some kind of violence to guarantee social order, be it police violence or any other coercive forces. Whoever governs exercises tyranny, no matter how much it is aimed at a supposed social good. Prior to the control of knowledge, there is the control of violence: “Those who have the power to hit people over the head whenever they want have no reason to worry about knowing what these people are thinking” (Graeber, 2011, p. 83). Violence has always been the resource of those who have no arguments to support their ideas, and is therefore the fundamental basis of the State.

On this basis, anarchism understands that the purpose of government is always to oppress, whether through police coercion, tax collection or territorial enclosure (Malatesta, 2001). Government reduces society’s potential, suppresses individuals’ egos and collective strength. According to LaVey, other religions have maintained their supremacy by suppressing the egos of their followers, submitting them to a greater entity. Contrary to this logic, satanism encourages the strengthening of satanists’ egos, because only through the gratification of one’s own ego would it be possible for them to completely experience life. Satanists understand the animalistic nature of the human being. Being a Satanist, for LaVey, represents the greatest and literal incarnation of human life, animality and freedom.

The freedom promulgated by anarchism rejects divine existence, because “If God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free, therefore, God does not exist” (Bakunin, 2001, p. 19). Similarly, the satanist critique of religions argues against the repression of many aspects of human carnality, animality and emotions, which are not accepted by christianity, or which undergo a process of refinement. And then one of the stages proposed by satanism for the construction of an ideal society would be to levy taxes on all churches, since they are exempt from paying such taxes. The sacredness that exempts them from taxation is taken away from the churches — a sacredness that, in alliance with the ruling elites, justified the formation of European Nation-States.

Satanism is not a religion of hatred, destruction and chaos, but a philosophy focused on the depth of human emotions, on life and its carnality, and on various aspects of human animality that are repressed and considered sinful by some religions. Satanists “embrace the full range of human emotions and that goes from the extremes of darkest hate through deepest love—both of which are rare in our lives’ experience” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 139). To the extent that satanists turn to carnality, they recognize both the potential for hatred and the potential for love. However, by admitting and inciting the capacity to experience hatred, satanists end up being considered devotees of destruction. On the contrary, the acceptance and immersion in “destructive” allows for the full experience of socially exalted emotions, such as love. Satanists, as well as anarchists,

value the materiality of reality. The code of conduct in satanism is, so to say, mirrored in the animal nature of the human being; this code must manifest itself naturally and carnally in the individual, and, in the course of social impositions — perpetrated, in the West, especially by a Christian reasoning — this code is condemned and repressed. For anarchism, social impositions are formed by these principles, and, however secular it may claim to be, the exercise of authority in modern Western society occurs through the morals sanctified by the Church. One must therefore recognize, with Bakunin and Kropotkin, the closeness between Church and State:

As the Church on one side and the gentry on the other succeeded in reducing the people to servitude, the right to make laws escaped from the hands of the nation and passed into those of the privileged. The Church extended its powers; sustained by the wealth which accumulated in its coffers, it interfered more and more in private life, and, under the pretext of saving souls, it exploited the soil of its serfs; it levied its dues from all classes and broadened its jurisdiction; it multiplied both crimes and punishments, and enriched itself in proportion to crimes committed, since it was into its strongboxes that the proceeds of the fines would flow. (Kropotkin, 2009, p. 104)

Analyzing the Bible, Bakunin (1970, p. 10) considers it “a very interesting and here and there very profound book” conceiving the figure of Satan as the emancipator of Adam and Eve, bound to the dictates of Jehovah: “He wished, therefore, that man, destitute of all understanding of himself, should remain an eternal beast, ever on all-fours before the eternal God, his creator and his master”. When Satan puts Adam and Eve to shame for their misplaced submission and obedience, they are emancipated by the fruit of knowledge into their own freedom. For Bakunin, this myth symbolizes what has led to human development through revolt. It is revolt, disobedience to universalisms and authority, that brings about change. Similarly, satanists incite the human capacity to experience hatred, to accept destructive and rebellious emotions — emotions repressed, but historically and institutionally practiced, by the Church.

From this, Satan serves as “a symbol of Man living as his prideful, carnal nature” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 21), or even as a “reservoir of power inside each human to be tapped at will”. The satanist conception of ‘god’ refers to a balance of nature, to a natural order of the universe, and not to a supreme, super-powerful entity capable of destroying and creating absolutely anything it wants — “Man has always created his gods, rather than his gods creating him” (LaVey, 1969, p. 22). The logic from which satanist philosophy reaches towards Satan is explained by LaVey (1969, p. 24):

God can do all the things man is forbidden to do—such as kill people, perform miracles to gratify his will, control without any apparent responsibility, etc. If man needs such a god and recognizes that god, then he is worshipping an entity that a human being invented. Therefore, HE IS WORSHIPPING BY PROXY THE MAN THAT INVENTED GOD. Is it not more sensible to worship a god that he, himself, has created, in accordance with his own emotional needs—one that best represents the very carnal and physical being that has the idea-power to invent a god in the first place?

This prerogative does not eliminate the possibility of using Satan as a symbol, of building altars to Baphomet, of dressing up with ornaments depicting dark representations. For LaVey, psychiatry has obscured the fantastical and enchanted nature of human reality. Satanism comprehends the necessity of dogma, fantasy and ritual for the human being, not in order to attribute

power to a mystical entity, but as a tool for sustaining reality itself, interposing itself between “fundamentals of psychology and good, honest emotionalizing, or dogma” (LaVey, 1969, p. 29). Satanist philosophy contains the dogma humans may demand or need, and states that there is “nothing wrong with dogma, providing it is not based on ideas and actions which go completely against human nature” and that the individual “knows he is using this controlled self-delusion as a tool for dealing with existence” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 125). The coexistence of reality and fantasy is not negative. The harm would be found when the fantasies we rely on become impositions and absolute truths, overriding other people’s fantasies. What satanist philosophy states about dogma is basically that everyone should stick to their own symbolic square. Thus, the satanic ritual is not about invoking Satan or any other demons, but rather about a personal or collective catharsis, a discharge of desired energy.

Satanism contains its own rituals and symbolisms, providing them to satanists as possible paths, but not restricting it to them. Following its bias towards individuality, the ritual is not about other people, but about the individual performing the ritual. The satanic ritual is described as a “black mass”, the inverse of the catholic mass. However, the Black Mass, if performed by satanists, would only exist as a parody of Christian rituals, and as a psychodramatic performance intended to subjectively benefit the person performing the ritual (LAVEY, 1969). This parody-like criticism of Christian rituals is also practiced by anarchists. According to Bakunin (2001), although in Christian ideology we are all equally submissive to God, it inserts a hierarchy between individuals in terms of inspiration: the most inspired are in a position of prestige and pronouncement, the least inspired must listen and obey. Church and State are based on the authority founded by this relationship, constituting, according to the author, the fundamental institutions of slavery. If God is sovereign and man is its servant, those who proclaim themselves divine only do so through a divine revelation, experienced by themselves or by others. Revelation requires people to interpret it and defend its veracity. In other words, divine sovereignty is shared by people who, based on their social position, hold the power of justice and salvation: absolute power. If God is the master and men are its servants, the man who sees himself as divine – and we refer to “man” on purpose -, the holder of a close bond with God, has the power to determine his servants, as well as legitimizing their exploitation.

Christian faith justifies the humiliation of the worshiper, as it inverts the image of the oppressor, who sees himself through the mirage of a divine subject. The authority of the priest or pastor is not respected by satanists, since the figure of Satan undermines all forms of authority. The Satanic Mass subverts the hierarchy found in Christianity, especially by denying the ability of anyone to exercise any supernatural power, such as communicating with “god”. There is no concern for the afterlife whatsoever, as Satanists are interested in life, in the here and now.

Satanism is not an inversion of Christianity and hell is not Satanists’ paradise. Although satanist philosophy includes a plurality of beliefs among its members, it does not present a series of rules that must be followed in order to enter Lucifer’s kingdom in the afterlife. Satanism is a self-centered philosophy, without attributing any effect on reality to metaphysical entities. For this very reason, Satan has become a symbol: “He was described as the prideful one, refusing to bow to Jehovah. He is the one who questions authority, seeking liberty beyond the stultifying realm of Heaven” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 126).

Although self-determination is also a principle of anarchist philosophy, we must make some criticisms regarding the way in which satanist freedom is advocated. Freedom, for anarchism, is both individual and collective: individual, because the individualities of all people must be

respected; and collective, because it is through the expansion of the freedoms of all members of a society that such a society can be defined as free. As Bakunin (1975) wrote, the expansion of other people's freedoms extends one's freedom indefinitely. To live to the fullest, with the least restrictions, to fulfill oneself with what is presented and with what is possible to achieve, paying attention to the materiality of reality: this is what satanism advocates. Satanists see themselves as the most important people in their lives, thus becoming their own gods. However, there is no expressive defense of the importance of collective freedom.

Satanist freedom is therefore strictly individualistic, and the freedom promulgated by anarchism is not limited to the anarchist individual who praises it, but to all the beings around him, because "the more numerous the free men around me and the deeper and greater the freedom, the wider, deeper and greater will be my freedom". From this thought derives Bakunin's famous phrase: "My personal freedom, thus confirmed by the freedom of all, extends to infinity" (BAKUNIN, 1975, p. 22-23). In other words, living to the fullest with the least restrictions, from a strictly individualistic perspective, is not in line with the libertarian defense of freedom and equality, for the freedom defended by anarchists is collective. The freedom of one depends on the freedom of all others.

Malatesta (2001) follows Bakunin's ideas when he points out the two qualities of human self-preservation: individual struggle and cooperation. As the author explains, human beings have understood that, through cooperation, they can ensure their existence, their security and their flourishing. Through solidarity, one's well-being expands to the collective well-being; one's freedom complements the freedom of others, rather than limiting it. Selfishness is not opposed to altruism, because it is even more directed towards the well-being of others: if I value my safety, my survival and my freedom, I must inherently fight for the safety, survival and freedom of those around me. Selfishness is altruistic in that it values the individual being over the collective being, with solidarity meaning "the contribution of each to the good of all and of all to the good of each" (Malatesta, 2001, p. 39).

As opposed to altruism, one can see misanthropy, a principle of satanist philosophy, defined as contempt for humanity, the perception that humanity is not considered valuable in its own right. Gilmore describes satanists as "misanthropologists". This principle is related to humanity's inclination towards dogma and mass thinking. In opposition to conformity, satanism sets out to free people from mass and dogmatic thinking. Satanists perceive themselves as alienated from their surroundings, questioning the meanings of other people's values, normalized routines, rhythms, obligations and demands that are culturally imbued in our lives, without us being able to actively act in a possible opposite direction, whatever that may be.

The alienation sought by satanists is not an alienation promoted by the Church or the media, but rather a detachment from so-called 'normal' circumstances. Alienating oneself from reality, in this case, would be tantamount to estranging it. For LaVey, the Church was once the institution that exercised the most power over people, but its primacy has been lost to television, or rather, to what television represents: consumerism, the media, the formation of what LaVey calls "the herd". Modern heresy is not about believing or not believing in a cosmic entity, but about not conforming to a 'television' and consumerist lifestyle. However, this is not the reason why the power of the Church is waning. It is not possible to live without the influence of religion in a society whose morals, however secular they may be, were founded on religious soil. As a result, satanists fully claim to be heretics, both in relation to religious dogmas imposed as absolute truths, and in relation to a lifestyle that conforms to social norms.

Gilmore (2007, p. 153) defines Satanists as people who “enjoy the here and now, and do not look for a fictive afterlife”. Here, there is a potential rupture with the anarchist approach, due to the Satanists’ submission to the jurisdiction of their nation. Jurisdiction is commonly present in Gilmore’s discourse, and this is due to the assertion that satanism presents itself as a realist philosophy. Under the justification of being realistic, satanism conforms to the norms of its State, which leads us to infer that nonconformity — as practiced in anarchism — would be idealistic, or utopian. Nevertheless, the maintenance of anarchic freedom is linked to a twofold factor: the acceptance of communal reality — in other words, everyone must respect each other, unlike the old moral, which was patriarchal, religious (Christian) and hierarchical; and an understanding of the reality in which one currently lives, since one can only organize a movement against the State and its institutions if one is aware of the political articulations that define this scenario.

Gilmore considers idealism to be a rather dangerous practice, as it can culminate in the superimposition of what “could be” over what really “is” (Gilmore, 2007). Satanism is a realist philosophy, and attributes idealism to religions that strive to impose their esoteric projections on reality. In this sense, satanists deprecate any sacrifice made in the name of a symbol that carries with it an ideology.

In a sense, the satanist opposition to idealism and its proximity to realism is similar to anarchism’s proximity to materialism. For Graeber (2011), nations and political systems are purely abstractions. There is no totality that is not the result of our imagination. The only thing that makes a reality concrete is the belief in it. According to Graeber (2011, p. 57), “everyone, every community, every individual, lives in their own unique universe”, which reflects the image of the satanist as someone who dresses and behaves the way they want, who eats what they want, who affirms their own way of life.

There are disagreements between satanist and anarchist worldviews, in the terms of idealism and realism. Couldn’t anarchist altruism coexist with satanist egoism, embracing both the individualist and collectivist aspects inherent in each individual? With this questioning, we conclude the discussion of our study. By presenting the similar and dissonant aspects between anarchism and satanism, we have incited debate about the possibilities and limits of these philosophies, and we understand that, having pointed out the differences between both perspectives, we must end by pointing out their similarities.

## **Conclusion**

Similarities and discrepancies between anarchism and satanism are presented. The individualism of satanism contrasts with the collectivism of anarchism, while both philosophies claim self-assertion and autonomy as fundamental principles. Anarchist’s opposition to the Church is similar to satanism’s criticism of that same institution, but satanism’s focus on jurisdiction and the State as major social institutions departs from anarchism, which sets out to dismantle the authority of the State. In this way, satanism and anarchism, despite having some aspects in common, have strong disagreements, disrupting the social imaginary that places anarchist and satanist philosophy in the same place of stigma and stereotype. There are, however, some assertions in these philosophies that bring them significantly closer together, starting with satanism.

The Church of Satan does not require its members to follow a strict, crystallized lifestyle, but rather to apply the basis of LaVey’s philosophy in the way that suits them best in their lives. There

is no such thing as a “Satanist community” (GILMORE, 2007), precisely because of the diversity and differences between the members of the Church of Satan, according to Gilmore (2007, p. 105): “Satanists are amazingly diverse individuals and they may share very little in common beyond the fact that their approach to living leads them all to adopt the label “Satanist””. Although certain views may be congruent, such as “love of and respect for animals, a desire for swift justice, and an aesthetic sense that demands that things rise above the mediocre” (GILMORE, 2007, p. 105), the lifestyles, personal hierarchies, family structures, tastes, hobbies, training, professional practices and other aspects of the life of a person who calls themselves a satanist can be, and usually are, totally averse to the same aspects of the life of a member of the Church of Satan.

This perspective is similar to what Ervin (2015) presents about the ramifications of anarchism. There are numerous disagreements within anarchist movements, and they do not necessarily annul each other. While some anarchists propose violence as a means of opposing the State, others think of violence as a tool only in specific situations of self-defense. While some envision economic systems devoid of money and based on trading services, others oppose the idea of commercial exchanges as a whole. There is no single great thinker in anarchism, a figure who hands out ideas and from whom ideological ramifications arise. The different anarchist groups are formed more by the sort of practice and organizational principle they advocate (GRAEBER, 2011), and less by the personification of a theory. Anarchism is less about a theoretical framework and more about a course of action, based on the belief that it is possible to socially organize without the interference of authoritarian institutions.

Anarchism is not based on a grand total theory, quite the opposite. Its principles recognize “the need for a great diversity of broad theoretical perspectives, united by some common premises and commitments” (GRAEBER, 2011, p. 14). The distance between one theoretical perspective and another doesn’t promote their annulment or immediate conflict, on the contrary: different theories can mutually benefit one another, to the extent that they recognize the particularities and needs of the different groups that call for them. In satanism, if there are conflicting interests, the inconsistencies between the members of the Church of Satan can be resolved in the following way:

Since we’ve never been about fellowship, we don’t require that all of our members work with each other, either. Here is the basic house rule: When members have conflicting values, they are to go their own ways, not wasting energy and time sniping at the members who have selected different methods of applying Satanism to reach personal satisfaction. (Gilmore, 2007, p. 115)

Satanism wastes no effort in trying to ‘convert’ the population to its presuppositions and it does not interfere in other people’s lives, but neither does it refrain from criticizing and detailing them. By this logic, children of satanist families are not forced to follow their philosophy. They are encouraged to “employ an open and questioning approach to all things, particularly religions and philosophies” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 59). The forced insertion of children into religions other than those of their choice is refuted by satanism, which recognizes the unfortunate normality of this practice in various religions, especially Christian ones. We can thus identify freedom of thought in satanism and a similarity with anarchist criticism of the Church.

In conclusion, among the main positions of satanist and anarchist philosophies, we find that, although satanism defends the individual autonomy of each person over their own body and over

their sexuality and bodily modifications, it also defends that certain people need to be governed, advocating a certain intellectual hierarchy; by contrast, anarchism defends, through its fundamental principles, not only individual autonomy and free expression, but also the abolition of hierarchies and equality between all individuals in a society or organization.

Despite contrasting in several aspects, there is something that brings both philosophies closer together: their recognition that there is no single way of being a satanist or an anarchist, which can be seen in the variety of anarchist branches (which don't exclude each other) and satanist branches (which don't invalidate one another either). In this sense, regardless of the similarities and differences that we have discussed throughout this paper, we can say that satanism and anarchism are reflected in the sphere of plurality, the defense of self-determination and autonomy, as well as in the criticism and rejection of the religious authority of the Church.

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