

Hidden Persuaders and Hidden Hands. Conspiracy Theory in the Writings of Anton LaVey.

Abstract

In distinguishing between rationalist and esoteric Satanism, one runs the danger of overestimating the rationalist and scientific elements of laveyan Satanism. Often when looking at LaVey's texts, it seems the very parts calling upon science and research that are most strongly involved in the pursuit of esoteric truths. LaVey's strong focus on how to manipulate one's environment is mirrored by a similar interest in how we are manipulated in everyday life. The satanic magician is but one of the intentional powers seeking influence and hiding his hands in doing so. This paper takes a closer look at some of the hidden persuaders and hidden hands seen to manipulate man and society by LaVey. I relate LaVey's interest in some of these issues to the "agency panic" at work also in contemporary conspiracy culture, and suggest there may be more points of contact. For instance, parts of contemporary esotericism and contemporary conspiracy culture share an epistemic distrust of the openly visible. Thus, their texts often play in the gray areas between serious belief and open skepticism of truth-claims. I suggest we may find something similar in the ambivalence certain of LaVey's texts show.

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