Propelling the Tiger Onwards:

Satanism, Traditionalism, & Paganism as Anti-Liberal Strategy in the Black Order

The zeitgeist of neo-white nationalist circles, or more broadly, those of anti-liberals, have fundamentally changed since the era of the archetypal skinhead neo-Nazis of 90s black metal. Though they certainly still exist, the days where skin head punks with basement-inked swastikas represented the majority of neo-fascists and thus constituted the face of anti-liberalism are long gone— but certainly not forgotten. Particularly in the West, where Liberalism—in the traditional definition of emphasis on political freedom, individual personal liberty, and for our purposes, democracy—has become a nearly all-encompassing ideological powerhouse across the mainstream political spectrum, anti-liberal activists have been forced to quickly adapt their tactics. As a result, the skinhead movement was (and is) viewed as largely unpalatable to the status quo, and this social ostracization has intrinsically influenced both the tactics of modern anti-liberalism and the broader ways in which they view the world. Despite having experienced some, albeit limited, success in parliamentarian-esque systems, largely stemming from certain subsets of these groups attempting to play on ambiguity to "clean up their image," most openly fascist groups are quite aware they will never experience mainstream success.

As such, many anti-liberal activist circles find it necessary to undertake highly non-traditional means of activism. Many of these groups have clung even tighter to their foundational beliefs because without the impetus of mainstream palatability, gone is the necessity of ideological moderation or compromise. Rather, modern neo-fascist groups like the subject of this paper, the Black Order, have instead eschewed any hope of achieving tangible change through traditional political or social means. This lack of hope has the potential to make these groups all the more dangerous. The Order of Nine Angles (ONA)—a Satanist neo-Nazi group with whom the Black Order shares much of its ideology as well as close personal ties— demonstrates the danger of anti-liberal hopelessness. The ONA's agenda, which "encourages members to infiltrate extremist political movements, whose members might be susceptible

to conversion"¹ aims to encourage the "destruction of modernity" and has been associated with a myriad of attempted and committed terrorist attacks, rapes, and murdersⁱⁱ. Effectively, groups like the Black Order have elevated their opposition to modernity to that of "cosmic war", where interpersonal conflict has been elevated to the universal, all-important level—and therefore, the genuine belief that there is no hope unless modernity is destroyed constitutes all-out war on the worldⁱⁱⁱ. While the Black Order is far more reclusive, and largely does not engage in the more direct means of the ONA, it is crucial to understand the basis the beliefs of groups of this kind in combatting the sense of powerlessness that is often synonymous with anti-liberal beliefs. The Black Order's cosmology provides a feeling of empowerment to a group of people otherwise socially marginalized, which might help to curtail terroristic violence, may also serve to embolden individual members or splinter groups to take more violent, direct action against what they believe is the source of their suffering: the rest of the world and everyone in it. Therefore, understanding the belief systems and rationale behind these groups is crucial to assessing the threat level they pose, as well as the way they represent another stage of development in neo-fascist tactics.

The cosmology of the Black Order represents a synthesis of traditionalist-esque ideology, LaVeyan Satanism, and Germanic/European esoterism as an anti-liberal strategy. The modern Order is fairly reclusive, having rebuilt itself from the group of the same name, which was active in the early 90s, yet does not recruit new members^{iv}. Instead, it maintains a small, devoted core who believe they are continuing the esoteric project of the Thule society which culminated with German National Socialism^v. The Black Order's framework of beliefs predominately implements ideas borrowed from Satanism in its principles of behavior in interacting with the "causal" or physical world, while its cosmology of the "acausal" or immaterial/transcendent realm relies more heavily on concepts borrowed from or inspired by traditionalism, with its stylistic religiosity of dubiously Norse-Germanic pagan origin. This cosmology marries spiritual esoteric beliefs with rational scientific ones to provide a tangible means of creating

change in the physical world without engaging in direct means like political activism. By implementing the almost nihilistic belief in the inevitability of cyclical time with the utilitarian nature of Left-Hand Path magic as a tactical response to modernity, they have synthesized a wholly unique anti-liberal strategy. While perhaps the most prominent anti-liberal thinker of traditionalism, Julius Evola advocated that one should "ride the tiger," or, the belief that those who see the true absurdity of liberalism should merely bide their time until the "tiger" of modernity destroys itself, effectively waiting for an opportune moment to engage and kill the tiger rather than be killed by it^{vi}. The Black Order has opted to not merely "ride the tiger," but rather further the destruction as both a means to push the cycle forwards and to empower themselves through supernatural means.

Given that it is central to what differentiates the Black Order's strategic approach to antiliberalism, it is important to note that Satanism sometimes serves as something as a catch-all for any pagan or even any non-Christian religious practice, and even when referring to the practice of selfidentified Satanists, the term spans a wide gamut of actual belief and practice. To be of any use analytically, it is important to note the context refers exclusively to self-identified Satanists, both theistic and non-theistic, rather than those who may colloquially be referred to or even self-describe as "devil worshippers" such as certain practitioners of Voodoo, Hoodoo, or Santeria, for example^{vii}. The Black Order's beliefs, like most modern Satanists, are based in the ideologies of two significant figures: Aleister Crowley, and to a much greater extent, Anton LaVey. The major early iterations of Satanism found in 19th century France as well as that of Aleister Crowley in the 20th century used the taboo of blasphemous, anti-Christian behavior as a means of liberating oneself from the social constraints of a society one deemed unnatural^{viii}. The interpretation of Satanism as a tactical means of overcoming unnatural societal conditioning through free thought remains prevalent to the Satanic framework used by the Black Order, often referred to as LaVeyan Satanism^{ix}.

The doctrine of the Black Order, despite its traditionalist and Norse pagan influences, espouses an intrinsically LaVeyan ethos where "Man need not to be a passive spectator or victim of 'Fate', but through the comprehension of Wyrd, and through 'Will', man can be an active participant in the evolutionary process and enact real changes"^x. Essentially, LaVeyan Satanism emphasizes egoism and individualism above all else, suggesting practitioners who allow external influence of any kind to be exerted them have failed in their highest purpose^{xi}. Much the same way, the Black Order has repurposed the concept of "Wyrd," the broadly Anglo-Saxon concept of destiny or fate, as "supra-personal forces (aka energies) which can influence individuals, which non-Adepts cannot control in any manner, which Adepts can discover and to a quite limited extent influence, but which only those of and beyond the esoteric stage of Master/Mistress (that is, beyond The Abyss) can fully synchronize with"^{xii}. Intrinsic to the Black Order's cosmology is this LaVeyan impetus towards exerting influence on one's world. As dictated by the "Satanic Golden Rule" *Lex talionis*, or "do unto others as they do unto you"^{xiii}, nothing is owed anyone inherently, but retribution is owed those who wish you harm, kindness only to those who have earned it, and only when it suits you^{xiv}. The Black Order's central impetus to "usher in a post-Western civilization"^{xx} is a prime example of this.

Like LaVeyan ideology, the Black Order too holds the belief bonds of moral construct, and argues man is simply an animal and therefore "scientific" doctrine, namely that of social Darwinism, is far more relevant than social contract. As such, the Black Order's ideological bases for its belief in eugenics, while undoubtedly inspired in part by the Nazi regime, is heavily inspired by the works of LaVey. LaVey borrowed heavily from the work of Ayn Rand, Nietzsche, Libertarianism, and the principles of social Darwinism^{xvi}. Thematically, the conception of the Übermensch appears frequently in LaVey's writings, along with implicit support for castes and eugenics in repeated references to the status of "the masses" as "deadweight," and emphasis that those most lack the potential to self-actualize and that those who do must "remove such dead weights to realize ambition"^{xvii}. Nearly echoing these words, on one of the

Black Order's own "propaganda posters, they have chosen to emblazon Hitler's quote that "[h]e who would live must fight. He who does not wish to fight in this world, where permanent struggle is the law of life, has not the right to exist"xviii. The section of the Wyrdbook called "Eugenics and Dysgenics" espouses a markedly similar view of social Darwinism where the natural "selection mechanism is completely reverse: the most creative and intelligent have fewer or no offspring, and are taxed to support the increasing proliferation of the least intelligent and creative...until there are no longer sufficient numbers of the intelligent and creative to sustain a civilization, and it collapses"xix. This bares not only marked similarity to the Randian influences of LaVeyan Satanism, but also to the inversion of Guenon. In fact, much of the criticism of democracy bares marked resemblance to those of Guenon's belief that democracy is inherently mob rule of the lowest common denominator^{xx}. The same belief in the inherent and primordial nature of human hierarchy, as well as sharing similar belief in their own "priestly" exceptionalism in their belief they alone are able to see "beyond the veil" of conspiracist schemes of social control is shared. Though the "Priests" of LaVeyan Satanism and the Black Order bear little, if any, resemblance to those of Guenon and Evola's conceptions, the emphasis not only on the pyramid paradigm with the exceptional few above the masses, but the hollowness of "liberal" ideology demonstrates the shared schema of understanding. The works of the founder of the original Order, Kerry Bolton, illustrate the basis of the belief in eugenics and hierarchy as anti-liberal with the "condemnation of 'sickly humanism, whether it be called Christianity or liberalism'...[and] other potentially anti-Democratic statements"xxi.

The ideological threads which are shared with traditionalism are apparent both in LaVeyan Satanism itself, as the primary Satanist influence on the Black Order as shown the Wyrdbook. Where Evola argues one must "ride the tiger," and wait for an opportune moment to strike, the Black Order espouses a far more direct approach inspired by the utilitarian nature of magic and LaVeyan Satanist ideology. Despite prominent shared threads, like the belief in cyclical time and the emphasis on the

movement as countercultural, and the glorification of the movement's meager numbers as intellectual elites who have the ability of "true sight" those still trapped in the clutches of modernity lack, the Black Order uses these concepts differently than traditionalists might. Rather than purely based in the Hindu concept of Yugas, though the Wyrdbook does cite this belief^{wil}, the Black Order instead bases its conception of cyclical time in the work of Oswald Spengler. Spengler's concept of cyclical time originates in his publication of *the Decline of the West* in 1918 in Germany, where he suggested that cultures are like living organisms which undergo a lifecycle and thus, the West was doomed to fail in the next 200 years. Some scholars have pointed out that the reason Spengler's work was so popular was because Germany's stagnating economy and recent humiliation in WWI culminating with the Treaty of Versailles the following year^{will}. If all of Western Civilization was ailing, then the state of Germany not only proved Spengler correct, but offered a salve that what Germany had suffered was not its own fault. This perspective on why Spengler's ideas appealed then offers some possible insight into the appeal of this worldview for an anti-liberal faction like the Black Order.

While the primary attribution for the belief in cyclical time is Spengler, the more esoteric aspects of the way the world is ordered are not apparent in Spengler's work but rather come from traditionalism. Evola features prominently in the group's literature, with another of the Black Order's propaganda posters featuring his adamant belief that "[t]here is no point in indulging in wishful thinking with the illusions of any kind of optimism: today we find ourselves at the end of a cycle"xxiv. The Black Order's conception of cyclicality of time as well as civilizations is broadly based on Spengler, whose theory they summarize in the Wyrdbook as dictating that "[c]ivilizations all proceed through 'seasonal' phases. Each Civilization is unique, formed by a specific 'race soul', but following the same historical, organic laws of birth, blossoming ('Springtime' culture phase), and finally, senility, decay and death"xxv. The notion of 'race soul' is not found in the work of Spengler but does appear frequently in the beliefs of Evola who thought that both people and civilizations had inherent 'race souls', noting some Jewish

people had "Aryan souls" and vis versa^{xxvi}. More broadly, the esoterism of Evola provides the basis for the Black Order's view that "[t]he Cosmos operates through polarities...typified by opposites such as Fire and Ice, Feminine and Masculine and Light and Darkness. Without polarities there is no progression"^{xxvii}. Once again, this conception does not appear in the work of Spengler but is inherent to that of Evola. Perhaps even more significantly, Evola too is tied to the markedly LaVeyan impetus towards action and the subsequent belief in the necessity of "pushing deeper into the dark. In a post on the Black Order's site titled "Beware the Merchants," the author emphasizes the necessity of action as "the core element of true Spirituality" and quotes Evola's work which suggests spirituality is "a way of life and that its measure does not consist of notions, theories, and ideas that have been stored in one's head...[true spirituality is] translated into a sense of superiority which is experienced inside by the soul, and a noble demeanor, which is expressed in the body"^{xxviii}. By emphasizing the necessity of action to achieve any sort of "real" spirituality, they are further justifying their own superiority, which illustrates the fundamental basis of the Black Order's approach to anti-liberalism as a means to seek empowerment when denied access through other channels.

Fundamentally, the Black Order's cosmology seeks to empower those to create change through alternate means because they feel direct anti-liberal strategies are pointless in the face of the farspanning reach of liberal modernity. If one considers the inherently utilitarian nature of magic as a response to a sense of disempowerment, it provides some clarity regarding the logic of structure of the Black Order's cosmology and ideology—specifically the combination of LaVeyan Satanism, Norse/Germanic paganism, National Socialism, and traditionalist elements, which are in some senses contradictory of one another. The Black Order's cosmology marries spiritual esoteric beliefs with rational scientific ones through the notion of polarities and dualities, where the causal universe (e.g.: Euclidean space and time, governed by scientific law) exists simultaneously with the transcendent, acausal universe which is comprised of forces beyond the material^{xxix}. Just as the causal energy, like that

of gravity and motion, inhabits the causal world, acausal energy exists beyond that of the causal world^{xxx}. The point at which these the causal and acausal intersect are called nexions which act as gates between the two realms, through which acausal entities and energy may enact change in the causal world^{xxxi}. An aeon is when a certain acausal energy manifests itself on Earth and influences a group of people's psyches over an extended period, and it is from this influence that particularly significant civilizations like the Third Reich, which the Black Order call "Aeonic Civilizations," are formed^{xxxii}. Thus, the Black Order believes that "the adepts of the Thule Society (for example) used what the ONA calls 'Aeonic magick' in the service of the West...by promoting a political form as a tool (i.e. National Socialism) and thereby influencing the consciousness of many people, so too can Adepts undermine and distort the archetypes of a culture"xxxiii. The Black Order's Left-Hand Path magic, refers to the ability to interact with the acausal for one's own self-serving purposes, as opposed to the Right-Hand Path, which is considered to be altruistic magic. One such illustration of "Left Hand Path" practices and how they aid an individual in combatting modernity is the multifaceted use of the term "Vindex". Often used in the traditional sign-off of the Black Order "Agios o Vindex!" (literally, 'O Holy Avenger'), Vindex is the term for a particular nexion "through which powerful acausal energies are presenced [sic] on Earth in order to destroy the current status quo (the Old Aeon, now manifest in the so-called New World Order) and prepare the way for – and inaugurate the practical beginnings of – the New Aeon"xxxiv. Nexions may also "manifest" through a person who is particularly adept at magic, and so Vindex may also be a name granted to someone "who, by practical deeds, brings-into-being a new way of life...[by confronting] the dishonour [sic] and the impersonal tyranny so manifest in the modern world, especially in what it is convenient to call 'the West'"xxxv. The means of doing so with magic and study of the esoteric, which the Black Order calls "playing the star game," is the central aspect of their approach to anti-liberal tactics^{xxxvi}.

Where the Black Order diverges from a purely LaVeyan conception of Satanism is its ritual and religious aspects, wherein the non-theistic Satanism of LaVey is supplemented with Germanic/Norse

neo-paganism which in and of itself reinforces the cyclical world view critical to self-empowerment. LaVeyan Satanism views the figure of "Satan" as the ideological embodiment of the values of pride and self-interest, and therefore is not theistic satanism, in that it is not literal worship of Satan as a divine or spiritual figure, so much as a purely ideological one^{xxxvii}. While the Black Order does not in fact worship the Christian conception of Satan, nor do they view the countercultural value set embodied in the LaVeyan conception of Satan as lacking deification entirely^{xxxviii}. In fact, unlike the works of LaVeyan Satanism or similarly adjacent sects of Satanist neo-Nazis, the Wyrdbook contains explicit mentions of Satanism only in referring to concepts borrowed from ONA, an adjacent group with whom the Black Order shares much of its basic ideology^{xxxix}. Arguably then, they are not theistic Satanists, but rather LaVeyan Satanists who have spliced the principles with neo-paganism. The Black Order believes in a literal rather than ideological entity which they call Uralten and define as the original ancient creative and destructive force of the Germanics, as well as this entity's equivalents from other European pantheons. Effectively, by their own admission, it is a belief in the spiritual equivalent of entropy as defined by physics. However, what technically makes them Satanists is their view of morality, where "attunement with Nature and the Cosmos [are] manifestations of the Uralten-Force [and] that which strengthens the individual as a manifestation of the Uralten-Force is 'good'. That which weakens is 'evil'"xl. The Uralten-Force functions much the same as Satan in LaVeyan doctrine, however what differentiates the Black Order as theistic is the simultaneous adoption of Germanic pagan practices.

Additionally, the intrinsically cyclical nature of Norse mythos serves to supplement the Black Order's views of both Aeonic civilizations and the cyclicality of time. The first indications of such are apparent on the cover of the Wyrdbook where the scrawl of Elder Futhark, a Germanic runic alphabet, around the border translates to "the way of the warrior, the way of the all father, follow the path of the hanged one and of the bleeding one through nine spheres, black order: to the greater glorj [sic] of the few, to gaze upon the mysteries of the ancient gods, to see the mysteries of thy-self"^{xli}. Emblazoned on

both the shield of the warrior and in the center of the groups symbol where it is surrounded by the snake ouroboros which is eating its own tail—a symbol of cyclicality in and of itself— is a symbol reminiscent of a swastika but rather composed of two Iwaz runes. The Iwaz, which is associated with the Yggdrasil, the tree of life and death in Norse mythology and Odin offers some insight into the runic scrawl^{xii}. Odin is referred to as the hanged one having hung from Yggdrasil for three days in search of forbidden knowledge, the bleeding one presumably his son Baldr as he is referred to as such in the Poetic Edda^{xiii}. The idea of Ragnarök, where the end of the world and the death of the gods begins the world anew demonstrates the same fundamental principles inherent to the Black Order's ethos: worship of the dark gods may offer a new future.

By tracing the threads of esoterism prior to and within the Third Reich, the founder of the original Order, Kerry Bolton, upon which this new iteration has succeeded in enmeshing the framework of modern LaVeyan Satanism with white nationalist/Neo-fascist rhetoric. While the Black Order is hardly the first Satanist group to espouse neo-fascist rhetoric as LaVeyan Satanism in and of itself carries many shared philosophical strands with other anti-Liberal strategy, the resemblance to traditionalist cosmology is unmistakable. The belief system and practices of the Black Order demonstrate attempts to build upon the works of Savitri Devi, Michael Serrano, and other prominent authors of esoteric Nazism—essentially the belief that Nazism or the Third Reich were endowed with mystical significance^{xliv}—using the more accessible platforms of neo-paganism and Satanism via the marginalized community of pagans in New Zealand. The Black Order's specific rhetoric is centered around creating a sense of purpose and elitism among its members, and therein lies the crux of how it serves as anti-liberal strategy.

Much like the sentiment of "milk before meat," the myriad of publications of Bolton demonstrate intent to mythologize and adapt esoteric National Socialism for maximum appeal among a broader demographic of people—specifically as a revolutionary youth subculture. By synthesizing futurism with the traditionalist rhetoric of cyclical time and the sense of empowerment counter-cultural

utilitarian magic can grant the disenfranchised, the Black Order bears more tactical resemblance to the alt-right than another esoteric guild like the Masons. By offering empowerment and a higher sense of meaning, the Black Order combats the hopelessness of anti-liberals by elevating the conflict to the cosmic level. Much the same way that terrorist groups are under no false assumptions a single bombing will win the war on the grand scale, this sense of cosmic meaning offered by the Black Order through Satanist/Neo-Pagan clandestine ritual offers antidote to the failures of the alt-right. Rather than relying on ambiguity, the Black Order instead embraces a sense of power born of secrecy and the showmanship of modern Satanism in what is effectively antithesis of "riding the tiger".

Endnotes

ⁱ Kelly Weill, "Satanism Drama Is Tearing Apart the Murderous Neo-Nazi Group Atomwaffen," *The Daily Beast*, March 21, 2018, https://www.thedailybeast.com/satanism-drama-is-tearing-apart-the-murderous-neo-nazi-groupatomwaffen.

ⁱⁱ BBC, "US soldier Ethan Melzer accused of planning attack on own unit," *BBC News*, June 23, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53145806.

^{III} Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 145-163.

^{iv} The Black Order, "A message to 'the media'," *The Black Order*, last revised June 28, 2020, accessed April 11, 2021, https://nexion88.theblackorder.org/a-message-to-the-media/

^v The Black Order, *Book of Wyrd* (Wellington: Realist Publications, 1993), 3.

^{vi} Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul,* trans. Joscelyn Godwin & Constance Fontana (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2003), 8-13.

^{vii} Chris Mathews, *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 14. ^{viii} W.R. van Leeuwen. "Dreamers of the Dark: Kerry Bolton and the Black Order of the Left Hand Path, a Case-study of a Satanic neo-Nazi Society" (Master's thesis, University of Waikato, 2008), 4, 9-10, 14, 48, Waikato Research Commons.

^{ix} Ibid., 5-11.

^x The Black Order, "The Founding Principles of The Black Order," last revised April 20, 2016, accessed April 16, 2021, https://nexion88.theblackorder.org/articles-of-faith/

^{xi} Massimo Introvigne, *Satanism: A Social History* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 91, 117, accessed March 25, 2021, Ebook Central.

^{xii} The Order of Nine Angles, A Glossary of Order of Nine Angles Terms (London, ONA: 2012), 20.

^{xiii} van Leeuwen, 9.

^{xiv} Jesper Aagaard Peterson, "The Seeds of Satan: Conceptions of Magic in Contemporary Satanism," Aries (2012), 119, 121.

^{xv} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 15.

^{xvi} van Leeuwen, 6, 9-11, 21-22, 26-28, 48.

^{xvii} Ibid., 9.

^{xviii} The Black Order, "Visual Ammunition – Set of 12 Propaganda flyers," *Waralda Press*, accessed April 29, 2021, https://nexion88.theblackorder.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/TBOPropaganda.pdf

^{xix} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 22.

^{xx} René Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World* (San Rafael: Sophia Perennis, 2004), 15-30.

^{xxi} Kerry Bolton, "Law of the Strong," *The Watcher* 8 (1991) cited by van Leeuwen, 21.

^{xxii} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 12.

^{xxiii} David Engels, "Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West" in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, ed. Mark Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 7.

xxiv The Black Order, "Propaganda Flyers".

^{xxv} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 13.

^{xxvi} Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge Press, 2002), 158-163.

^{xxvii} The Black Order, "Founding Principles".

xxviii The Black Order, "Beware the Merchants," last revised October 8, 2019, accessed April 20, 2021,

https://nexion88.theblackorder.org/beware-the-merchants/

^{xxix} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 15-18.

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxi} Order of Nine Angles, *Glossary*, 11.

^{xxxii} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 15.

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

^{xxxiv} Order of Nine Angles, *Glossary*, 19.

^{xxxv} Ibid., 20.

^{xxxvi} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 18.

xxxvii Mathews, Modern Satanism, 32.

^{xxxviii} The Black Order, *Wyrdbook*, 28. ^{xxxix} Ibid., 15-18. ^{xl} Ibid., 3. ^{xli} Ibid.

^{xlii} Ibid., 29.

xiiii Henry Adams Bellows, *The Poetic Edda* (Garden City: Dover Publication, 2004), 15.

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