**12/21/08 THESKEPTICARENA.COM**

**BACKWARD SATANIC MESSAGES (BACKMASKING)**

**An alleged practice of certain evil people, especially rock musicians, of saying or singing words which, when listened to backward contain evil messages such as "My sweet Satan"\* or "Kill yourself." Or they might contain messages such as "it's fun to smoke marijuana"\* or "sleep with me, I'm not too young."\* Of course, you probably won't hear these messages until somebody first points them out to you. Perception is influenced by expectation and expectation is affected by what others prime you for.**

**Since most people do not listen to their music backward, the belief in such messages seems to be predicated upon one or two false notions. Either the brain can be influenced subliminally by garbled words whose meaning is directly grasped by the subconscious or the conscious mind translates clear speech into reverse speech where the "true" meaning is understood by the subconscious mind. In either case, the subconscious mind allegedly then directs the conscious mind to believe bad things or do bad deeds. There is no evidence that such mechanisms exist.**

**The belief in the existence and efficacy of backward satanic messages probably derives from the ancient practice of mocking Christianity by saying prayers backward at the witch's Sabbath. The belief is mainly popular among certain fundamentalist preachers who cannot look at anything without wondering how Satan is involved. Perception is heavily influenced by one's belief system. We not only see what we want to see and hear, we see what we expect to see.**

**The Beatles used tapes played backward for musical effect in some of their recordings, though they allegedly put in backward or subliminal messages announcing Paul McCartney's death when he was much alive. Jimmy Page, guitarist and occultist, is said to have inserted the backward message "here's to my sweet Satan" into his "Stairway to Heaven" song. The former was clearly intentional; the latter is said to be accidental by many of those who have listened before being told what to listen for.**

**One practical problem emerged with using this backhanded way to communicate: the only way to hear the messages is to destroy your record. Fortunately, the digital age arrived and eliminated that problem while creating another: now it is first-grade simple to find hidden messages in every kind of speech.**

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**EMAIL FROM A LISTENER**

**Neo,

“Towards the end of your last show I got disconnected and did not get a chance to respond to your comments on altruism. You said you seemed to agree with all other Objectivist views, but not with their gripe on altruism. You then proceeded to give examples of what you considered to be acts of altruism, but they were not.”**

**ALLOW ME TO INTERRUPT HIS EMAIL, BRIEFLY, TO GIVE YOU SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON “ALTRUISM.”**

**MERRIAM-WEBSTER ONLINE DICTIONARY - ALTRUISM:**

**1 : UNSELFISH REGARD FOR OR DEVOTION TO THE WELFARE OF OTHERS**

**2 : BEHAVIOR BY AN ANIMAL THAT IS NOT BENEFICIAL TO OR MAY BE HARMFUL TO ITSELF BUT THAT BENEFITS OTHERS OF ITS SPECIES**

**WHAT OBJECTIVISTS HAVE DONE IS TO “REDEFINE” THE WORD TO MEAN WHAT THEY NEED IT TO MEAN. THEY HAVE REDEFINED IT, SO THAT ANY AND ALL HUMAN ACTS CAN BE CONSIDERED “SELFISH.” IN EFFECT, THEY HAVE DELETED THE WORD FROM THE LANGUAGE.**

**NOW BACK TO HIS EMAIL:**

**“If a soldier risks his life in battle, hopefully it is because he values living free.”**

**YOU CANNOT ASSUME TO KNOW WHY A SOLDIER RISKS HIS LIFE IN BATTLE. YOU GAVE ONE REASON THAT YOU WILL REDUCE TO A SELFISH MOTIVE. HOWEVER, THERE ARE MANY OTHER REASONS WHY MEN WILL RISK THEIR LIVES IN BATTLE. FOR INSTANCE, ONE MAY FIGHT TO FREE SLAVES. DESPITE KNOWING HE MAY SUFFER SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH, HE FIGHTS FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IT IS RIGHT. THAT FITS THE DEFINITION GIVEN ABOVE, NOT THE “REDEFINITION” BY OBJECTIVISTS.**

**“Such a man would rather die on his feet than to live on his knees.”**

**SOME MEN WOULD RATHER DIE ON THEIR FEET THAN LIVE ON THEIR KNEES. MANY OTHER MEN WOULD RATHER LIVE AS A COWARDS THAN DIE AS A HEROES. MANY OTHER MEN WILL LIVE ON THEIR KNEES IF THAT IS WHAT IT TAKES TO PROTECT AND RAISE THEIR FAMILIES.**

**“It is not a selfless act, but completely selfish to fight for a country that recognizes the concept of individual rights ie. that recognizes your right to live for your own "life, liberty and [selfish] pursuit of happiness" (or property). However fading the concept may be, it is significantly different to live in a country that never had or never will recognize this concept nor thus, the nature of man.”**

**THE NATURE OF MAN CONTAINS SOMETHING YOU LEFT OUT - EVIL. WHILE YOU WANT TO LIVE YOUR OWN LIFE AND PURSUE LIBERTY AND HAPPINESS - THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN, STILL ARE, AND ALWAYS WILL BE, THOSE WHO WANT TO TAKE IT ALL AWAY FROM YOU, AND THEY WILL KILL YOU TO GET IT.**

**GRANTED, IT IS IN YOUR SELFISH INTEREST TO FIGHT FOR YOUR COUNTRY AND FOR YOUR SURVIVAL. BUT IT IS DURING SUCH CONFLICT WHEN ALTRUISM IS AT ITS BEST - AS WHEN ONE SOLDIER SACRIFICES HIS LIFE TO SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS COMRADE.**

**IF I WAS IN A WAR AGAIN, THE LAST PERSON ON EARTH I WOULD WANT NEXT TO ME IS AN OBJECTIVIST: I MIGHT AS WELL BE FIGHTING ALONE.**

**“In such slavepens, man is asked to sacrifice his life for the will of god, for the welfare of others, or for any arbitrarily decided collective "will",  -- all ideals that are variants of the mysticist-altruist-collectivist axis. Irregardless of war or peacetime, in such primitive societies, man lives his life and dies not for his own sake, but for the ends of others deemed proper by the ‘state’.”**

**THEY ARE NOT ASKED TO SACRIFICE - THEY ARE TOLD TO SACRIFICE. THAT IS NOT ALTRUISM.**

**“If a woman spends money to buy a toy for her child, that she could have used otherwise on clothes for herself, she is not being altruistic, but selfish.”**

**REREAD THE DEFINITION. IF YOU HAVE TO REDEFINE THE WORD TO MAKE IT FIT YOUR BELIEF, THEN IT IS TIME TO REEXAMINE YOUR BELIEF, NOT THE DEFINITION.**

**“She values the health and well-being of her child more than she does the clothes and she finds virtue in achieving those values through the happiness of her child.”**

**ALTRUISM IS NOT NEGATED BY THE FACT THAT YOU DERIVED SATISFACTION OR HAPPINESS FROM YOUR SACRIFICE.**

**“But if she buys the toy for her neighbor's child and gives her child, which she values more, nothing, that is an act of altruism.”**

**BUT ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU SAID PREVIOUSLY, IF SHE VALUES THE WELL-BEING OF THE NEIGHBOR’S CHILD AND FINDS VIRTUE IN ACHIEVING THAT VALUE THROUGH THE HAPPINESS OF THE NEIGHBOR’S CHILD - THEN HOW CAN IT BE ALTRUISM?**

**“These are all examples of finding the virtue of selfishness, which is the basis for the Objectivist ethics.”**

**IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO FIND THE “VIRTUE” OF SELFISHNESS - EVOLUTION HAS ALREADY PROVIDED THAT FOR US, AS WELL AS EVERY OTHER LIVING CREATURE ON THE PLANET. IT IS NOT A “VIRTUE” BUT A CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL LIVING THINGS.**

**“Now it's understandable that altruism is the moral code that has long been associated with the message of "good will" and "kindness". Below are two paragraphs from Objectivist writer, Craig Biddle, that nicely characterizes the trajectory of altruism in America.

Although America was founded on the principle of individual rights, Americans since the founding have increasingly embraced a moral code that is diametrically opposed to that principle: the morality of altruism, the notion that being moral consists in self-sacrificially serving others.”**

**WHAT COUNTRY IS BIDDLE LIVING IN? WE MUST BE WATCHING DIFFERENT TV NEWS STATIONS. THE COUNTRY I SEE IS INCREASINGLY MORE SELFISH; ALTRUISM RARER EVERY DAY.**

**OUT OF MANY, I WILL OFFER ONE PROOF: BEFORE AYN RAND, THERE WERE NO OBJECTIVISTS - NOW THERE ARE MANY.**

**“We repeatedly hear: "Don't be selfish"— "Put others first"— "It is more blessed to give than to receive"— "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"— "Volunteer to serve in your community"— "Sacrifice for the greater good"—and so on. This is the morality that surrounded all of us growing up—and that still surrounds us. It is the morality taught in churches, synagogues, and schools; offered in books, movies, and on TV; and encouraged by most parents. And it is the morality by reference to which our presidential candidates build political platforms, clinch nominations, win elections, and govern the country.”**

**BIDDLE HAS TO BE INCREDIBLY NAÏVE TO BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO ASK THEM TO SACRIFICE. NO ONE DOES THAT.**

**PEOPLE VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO PROMISE THEM THE MOST STUFF.**

**THIS STUFF HAS TO COME FROM SOMEWHERE - IT COMES FROM THOSE WHO SUPPORTED THE LOSER. FOR SOMEONE TO VOTE AGAINST THEIR OWN SELF-INTEREST SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT THEIR CANDIDATE IS WRONG, IS EXTREMELY RARE … AND … ALTRUISTIC.

“Although few Americans strive consistently to practice the morality of self-sacrifice—because consistently acting in a self-sacrificial manner is wholly contrary to the pursuit of happiness”**

**BIDDLE ASSUMES TO KNOW WHAT MAKES EVERYONE HAPPY. HE ASSUMES TOO MUCH. MANY PEOPLE DO FIND HAPPINESS IN SELF-SACRIFICE; AND THAT IS SOMETHING HE WILL APPARENTLY NEVER UNDERSTAND.**

**“—most Americans have, to a significant extent, accepted this morality as true.”**

**BIDDLE, ARE YOU SURE WE’RE TALKING ABOUT THE SAME AMERICA?**

**THE SAME AMERICA WHERE PEDESTRIANS WALK RIGHT BY A WOMAN WHILE SHE IS BEING MUGGED AT NOON IN DOWNTOWN MANHATTEN? IS THAT THE AMERICA YOU’RE REFERRING TO? MAYBE WE LIVE IN DIFFERENT AMERICAS. I’LL ADMIT - I WOULD RATHER LIVE IN YOURS.**

**“And because Americans generally want to do what they think is right, their consequent striving for virtue in this regard—and their corresponding support for political candidates who call for sacrifice—has been and is leading to the demise of America."**

**I CAN THINK OF MANY THINGS THAT ARE LEADING TO THE DEMISE OF AMERICA. BUT AS I ALREADY POINTED OUT, YOUR CLAIM THAT PEOPLE SUPPORT CANDIDATES WHO DEMAND SACRIFICE IS FALSE. THEY SUPPORT THOSE WHO REPRESENT THEIR “SELFISH INTERESTS” - SOMETHING I KNOW YOU CAN RELATE TO.**

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**THE SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**9/16/08 Scientists get images of planet with sun-like star**

**Scientists have snapped the first images of a planet outside our solar system that is orbiting a star very much like the sun.**

**Nearly all of the roughly 300 so-called extrasolar planets discovered to date have been detected using indirect methods such as changes observed in a star when a planet orbits directly in front of it from the perspective of Earth.**

**But in findings announced on Monday, University of Toronto scientists said they used the Gemini North telescope on Mauna Kea in Hawaii to take direct pictures of the planet, which is about the size of Jupiter but with eight times the mass.**

**It is also much hotter than Jupiter, they said.**

**This planet and the star it seems to orbit are located in our Milky Way galaxy about 500 light years from Earth, the scientists said. A light year is about 6 trillion miles, or the distance light travels in a year.**

**"It's always been a goal to take a picture of a planet around another star. The challenge, of course, is that planets are much, much fainter than stars," Ray Jayawardhana, one of the scientists, said in a telephone interview.**

**Of all known extrasolar planets, this one is orbiting the furthest from its star. It is located roughly 11 times further from its star than Neptune -- the outermost planet in our solar system -- is located from the sun, the scientists said.**

**They said they are working to confirm that the planet is indeed orbiting this star as it appears, but it may take up to two years to get that data.**

**"The star is very typical. It's like the sun, just younger. But the planet is quite unusual. It's on the high end of the mass of the extrasolar planets found so far. And it's also very far away from its star," Jayawardhana added.**

**Before this, the only planets or similar objects that have been directly imaged outside of the solar system were either free-floating in space and not orbiting a star, or orbiting a brown dwarf, a failed star that did not reach the mass necessary to spark the nuclear fusion typical of a star.**

**The scientists said they benefited from technology that reduces distortions from turbulence in Earth's atmosphere.**

**Jayawardhana said the scientists have evidence of water and carbon monoxide in the planet's atmosphere. The planet is not thought to be a good candidate for extraterrestrial life because it appears to be a gas giant, a type of planet inhospitable to life, and because it is too young.**

**The star is considered a newborn, forming an estimated 5 million years ago. The sun is about 4-1/2 billion years old.**

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**THE ARENA GOES ABROAD**

**Malaysian Islamic body bans yoga for Muslims**

**Nov 22, 08**

**Malaysia's top Islamic body fresh from banning tomboys has issued an edict that prohibits Muslims from practicing yoga, saying that elements of Hinduism in the ancient Indian exercise could corrupt them.**

**The National Fatwa Council's chairman, Abdul Shukor Husin, said Saturday many Muslims fail to understand that yoga's ultimate aim is to be one with a god of a different religion \_ an explanation disputed by many practitioners who say yoga need not have a religious element.**

**"We are of the view that yoga, which originates from Hinduism, combines physical exercise, religious elements, chanting and worshipping for the purpose of achieving inner peace and ultimately to be one with god," Abdul Shukor said.**

**News of the yoga ban prompted activist Marina Mahathir to wonder what the council will ban next: "What next? Gyms? Most gyms have men and women together. Will that not be allowed any more?"**

**The edict reflects the growing influence of conservative Islam in Malaysia, a multiethnic country of 27 million people where the majority Muslim Malays lost seats in March elections and where minority ethnic Chinese and mostly Hindu ethnic Indians have been clamoring for more rights.**

**Recently, the council said girls who act like boys violate Islam's tenets. The government has also occasionally made similar conservative moves, banning the use of the word "Allah" by non-Muslims earlier this year, saying it would confuse Muslims.**

**Analysts say the fatwa could be the result of insecurity among Malay Muslims after their party \_ in power since 1957 \_ saw its parliamentary majority greatly reduced in elections because of gains by multiracial opposition parties.**

**Malay Muslims make up about two-thirds of the country's 27 million people. About 25 percent of the population is ethnic Chinese and 8 percent is ethnic Indian, most of whom are Hindu.**

**"They are making a stand. They are saying 'we will not give way,'" said Ooi Kee Beng, a fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.**

**Decisions by Malaysia's Fatwa Council are not legally binding on the country's Muslims, however, unless they also become enshrined in national or Shariah laws. But many Muslims abide by the edicts out of deference.**

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**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1900) 55 years**

**He was a nineteenth-century German philosopher and classical philologist. He wrote critical texts on religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy, and science, using a distinctive German language style and displaying a fondness for metaphor and aphorism. Nietzsche's influence remains substantial within and beyond philosophy, notably in existentialism and postmodernism. His style and radical questioning of the value and objectivity of truth raise considerable problems of interpretation, generating an extensive secondary literature in both continental and analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, some of his key ideas include interpreting tragedy as an affirmation of life, an eternal recurrence (which numerous commentators have re-interpreted), a rejection of Platonism, and a repudiation of both Christianity (especially 19th-century) and Egalitarianism (especially in the form of Democracy and Socialism).**

**Nietzsche began his career as a classical philologist before turning to philosophy. At the age of 24 he was appointed to the Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel (the youngest individual ever to have held this position),[1] but resigned in 1879 because of health problems, which would plague him for most of his life. In 1889 he exhibited symptoms of serious mental illness, living out his remaining years in the care of his mother and sister until his death in 1900.**

**“Great intellects are skeptical.”**

**"There is not sufficient love and goodness in the world**

**to permit us to give some of it away to imaginary beings."**

**(\* IF YOU DOWNLOAD THE MP3 FILE, THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL HOUR OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN NEO AND TWO WARRIORS WHO INVADED THE ARENA TO DO BATTLE \*)**