

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms
Menu
Chaos Magick
Sigils, Servitors and Godforms

By: Marik

This is the first part of a three part essay written by Marik (Mark Defrates). Comments, suggestions, criticisms can be sent to marik@aol.com.

Sigils, servitors and god-forms are three magickal techniques that chaos magicians use to actualize magickal intentions. Sigils are magickal spells developed and activated to achieve a specific, fairly well defined and often limited end. Servitors are entities created by a magician and charged with certain functions. Godforms are complex belief structures, often held by a number of people, with which a magician interacts in order

to actualize fairly broad magickal intentions. These three techniques are not quite as distinct as these definitions would suggest, they tend to blur into one another. The purpose of this essay is to explain these magickal tools, indicate their appropriateness for different types of magickal intentions, and show how these tools relate to the general theories of chaos magick and of Dzog Chen, a form of Tibetan Buddhism.

Part One: Sigils

1. A Universe neither of Man nor God

The use of the techniques of the chaos magician presupposes a certain stance, or attitude, towards magick that is relatively new in the history of the occult. This stance may, for lack of a better word, be described as postmodern, since it is neither traditional nor modern. The differences between these three approaches to magick - traditional, modern or postmodern can be elucidated as three conceptions of the nature of the universe. The traditional approach is based in Judeo-Christian metaphysics

and views the universe as anthropomorphic, in the image of the Christian

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
God, or less rarely, some other anthropomorphic form. The traditional magician believes that the universe is understandable by human consciousness because human beings are made in the image of God. The modern view is essentially a reaction to this and humanist in the extreme. Here the universe may be perceived as Newtonian, as a machine that is ultimately understandable by human consciousness, although humans may

have

to evolve into a more powerful form to be able to do this. The postmodern view of the chaoist denies that the universe can ever be understood by the human mind. Influenced by modern physics, particularly quantum

mechanics

and chaos theory, the chaos magician tends to accept the universe as a series of phenomena that have little to do with human beings. In other words traditional magick can be said to be God centered, modern magick

to

be human centered while postmodern magick eschews the very idea of a center. A brief review of traditional and modern approaches to ceremonial magick may help to illuminate the postmodern stance of the freestyle chaoist.

Ceremonial magicians use ritual magick to create effects in themselves or in the universe that they do not feel they can as efficiently bring about through normal means. All magicians agree that magick can cause change,

but few would argue that the change is inevitable, completely predictable, or fully knowable by the magician. All magicians, to a greater or lesser extent, are engaged in an ongoing dynamic in which the issues of personal desire, personal control and personal belief are thrust against the strictures of the universal consensual belief structure, the concept of will as a universal force, and the ideas of fate, predestination, and karma. At the core of this confrontation is the question of the nature of the universe. The question is: is the universe human centered, designed, created and maintained by a god force, or is it, as modern science seems to indicate, just there?

Until recently, magicians have tended to distinguish amongst themselves

by

hue, and the colors of the magician (white, gray or black) refer precisely to this dynamic, the confrontation between the personal wishes of the magician and a universal standard of morality or law. White, and to an extent, grey magicians, attempt to remove themselves from the debate by insisting that their magickal acts are inspired only by the highest motives of service and self-knowledge, that, indeed, they wish only to do the will of higher powers known as their Holy Guardian Angels. Perdition shall blast, so they say, those who use magick for self-centered or materialistic ends. Grey magicians may proclaim that the use of magickal powers for materialistic ends is valid sometimes, but rarely for selfish reasons, and in any event, is always problematical. Donald Michael Kraig, with the breezy superficiality of the traditional magus, in Modern Magick terms white magick the use of magick "for the purpose of obtaining the Knowledge and Conversation of your Holy Guardian Angel"(1), grey

magick as

magick used "for the purpose of causing either physical or non-physical good to yourself or to others"(2) and black magick as magick used "for the

purpose of causing either physical or non-physical harm to yourself or others"(3). Kraig is influenced by Aleister Crowley and by modern Wicca,

or Gardnerian witchcraft. Wiccans, ever concerned that their white magick

might slide through some unconscious twitch of desire through grey into black, corrected Crowley's axiom "Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the

Whole of

the Law" with the enervating modifier "An it Harm None". Kraig, worried that readers of his treatise might fall "into the pit of the black

magician," encourages neophyte mages to practice only white magick.

Fortunately, before he is two thirds of the way through his book Kraig is happily discoursing on talismans, grimoires, and the correct methods for disposing of recalcitrant demons. Few magicians can resist the lure of dark magick, despite protestations of innocence. This is because even

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
Wiccan influenced magicians are not, as Wiccans are, devotees of a religion. That is to say magicians are interested in the dynamic of personal will versus (in Crowley's term) True Will, while Wiccans have resolved this issue. While the occasional conflict may remain, Wiccans, like Christians, Jews, and Moslems understand that they have agreed to submit their wills to that which they construe to be the Will of their deities. Magicians, on the other hand, are not so sure. This, more than any other factor, accounts for the intense suspicion those of a religious cast view those who practise magick.

The designation of black magician still tends to be a term that magicians use to vilify other magicians. Aleister Crowley, arguably the single greatest influence on the development of magick in this century, and, for the purposes of this essay, defined as a traditional magician, used the term in this way. In *Magick*, for example, he asserted "any will but that to give up the self to the Beloved is Black Magick"(4). That is to say, any use of magick unlike his use of magick is black magick. Elsewhere Crowley muttered darkly about the existence of "Black Lodges" and

"Black

Brothers," magicians who chose to remain in the Abyss, the metaphysical gap between the first three sephiroth and the remainder of the Tree of Life. A magus of this hue, Crowley stated, secretes "his elements around his Ego as if isolated from the Universe"(5), and turns his back on the true aim of magick, which according to Aleister, is the "attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. It is the raising

of the complete man in a vertical straight line. Any deviation from this line tends to become black magic. Any other operation is black magick"(6).As students of mysticism will recognize, this goal is identical with the mystic's goal of the union of the self with God. Crowley, of course, wrote with his feet firmly planted in the Judeo-Christian paradigm, a paradigm in which the universe is visualized as Adam

Kadmon,

the Great Man, and is thus wholly anthropomorphized.

In 1969, Anton LaVey posited the argument of the modern black magician

when in The Satanic Bible he asserted "No one on earth ever pursued occult

studies, metaphysics, yoga, or any other "white light" concept without ego gratification or personal power as a goal"(7). Moreover, LaVey claimed "There is no difference between 'White' and 'Black' magic except in the smug hypocrisy, guilt ridden righteousness, and self-deceit of the 'White' magician himself"(8). Thus the term black magician began to be associated

with a style of magick that did not distinguish between self-interest and self-knowledge. LaVey in his organization, The Church of Satan, and later

Michael Aquino in his schismatic order, The Temple of Set, argued that the

will of the individual magician was paramount. Both denied even the existence of a universal Will. LaVey stated "The Satanist realizes that man, and the action and reaction of the universe, is responsible for everything and doesn't mislead himself into thinking that someone cares"(9). Michael Aquino asserted "The Black Magician, on the other hand,

rejects both the desirability of union with the Universe and any self-deceptive tactics designed to create such an illusion(10).

Unfortunately the refusal of modern black magicians to deal with the possibility that man may not be at the center of the universe, or may just be one in a large series of interdependent phenomena leads to an error. Reluctant, it seems, even to adopt completely a materialistic or mechanistic view of the universe, LaVey and Aquino embrace the ghost in

the machine and assert that the individual ego can continue after death. Thus LaVey stated "If a person has been vital throughout his life and has fought to the end for his earthly existence, it is this ego which will refuse to die, even after the expiration of the flesh that housed it"(11).

There is, of course, not a shred of evidence to prove that this has ever

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt happened nor that it can happen, but magicians of all hues, together with the adherents of most of the world's religions, continue to assert blandly the existence of a transpersonal, individuated spark that somehow is exempt from the normal process of birth, life, death, and corruption, a kind of eternal homunculus. Apparently the notion that the universe may not actually be human centered is too frightening for Satanists and modern

black magicians to bear, and the old chestnut of the soul is dredged out of the Judeo-Christian quagmire, brushed off, and presented as the "fully gratified" ego of the modern immortal Satanist.

Teetering on the edge of postmodern magick, Peter Carroll, the first contemporary popularizer of chaos magick, in *Liber Null and Psychonaut*, accepted the idea that the universal force may not be a force that bears much relationship to humanity. He stated: "The force which initiates and moves the universe, and the force which lies at the center of consciousness, is whimsical and arbitrary, creating and destroying for no purpose beyond amusing Itself. There is nothing spiritual or moralistic about Chaos and Kia. We live in a universe where nothing is true..."(12). Carroll was aware of the true nature of the ego, and stated "developing an ego is like building a castle against reality"(13). Moreover, he recognized that "the real Holy Guardian Angel is just the force of consciousness, magic, and genius itself, nothing more. This cannot manifest in a vacuum: it is always expressed in some form, but its expressions are not the thing itself"(14). In this statement Carroll aligned himself with the quantum mechanical view of the universe, a view that refuses to discriminate phenomena on the basis of dualistic concepts, but stresses the wave like nature of energy. This is also the viewpoint of sophisticated Buddhism. The key phrase of the "Prajna Paramita", a critical sutra in the development of Buddhist metaphysics, states "form is only emptiness and emptiness is only form."

Ultimately Carroll, however, was as reluctant as a Satanist to let go of the comforting paradigm of the soul or spirit and despite paying lip service to a universe in quantum flux stated "The adept magician however will have so strengthened his spirit by magick that it is possible to

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt carry it over whole into a new body"(15). This turns out to be a crippling flaw in Carroll's approach to magick and one that reinforces his belief in the efficacy of hierarchical magick, a contradiction of the fundamental principle of chaos magick, that it replicates the non-ordered flow of phenomena in the universe. The ego, after all, is an ordered construct that tolerates nothing so little as the inevitability of change. Perhaps the problem lay in Carroll's assertion that "physical processes alone will never completely explain the existence of the universe"(16), a statement that eventuates from the dualistic, epistemological mindset of Newtonian physics and Aristotelian western philosophy. Perhaps it comes from a fear of death.

Yet concurrent with this discriminatory, black/white, dualistic approach of western occultism, there has always been another strain, the shamanistic, orgiastic approach that deliberately blurs these definitions and seeks to confront the universe as a dynamic, and non human process. This approach, however, has usually been the domain of art and artists rather than occultists. Modern English poetry since Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" has been obsessed with reconciling the poetic imagination with a stark and inhuman universe. Arnold recognized the universe in

1867

as a place that:

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night

By the time T.S. Eliot wrote "The Wasteland" in 1922, he saw the universe

as "a heap of broken mirrors," an metaphor that aptly describes the shattering of the familiar concept of the universe as reflecting a human face. The year before, W.B. Yeats in "The Second Coming" concurred:

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
Is my destroyer.
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

This dawning consciousness infuses all the arts, from the movement of modern art, from Dada and Cubism, through Abstract Expressionism, to modern music, from the dissonance of Ravel's "La Valse" to John Cage to minimalism to industrial. Artists for one hundred and fifty years have struggled to depict the face of a chaotic universe, and man's far from central place within it. In fact, the occult has been one of the last areas of human intellectual endeavour to avail itself of this perception of the universe. Not until the development of chaos magick can it truly be said that magick has finally started to deal with the insights of modern art and modern science.

Chaos magick derives from a series of magical positions articulated by Austin Osman Spare, a contemporary of Aleister Crowley. Spare's vision, itself influenced by the work of William Blake, is contained succinctly in *The Book of Pleasure*. Spare's approach to magick and the universe has been

validated by the discoveries of the new physics, by quantum science, and by chaos mathematics. The metaphysical basis for Spare's magick is similar

to that of Dzog Chen, a form of Tibetan Buddhism, and, in fact, the reference and counter reference between Buddhism, art, science, and chaos

magick is striking and continuous. Spare wrote *The Book of Pleasure* between 1909 and 1913, but most of Spare's work was ignored until Carroll

began writing about it. There are a number of reasons for this. Spare's work was printed in small runs and he did not seek fame. His style is elliptical and obscure. His work is difficult to understand in the absence of his lush illustrations, and since the illustrations are spells, or more precisely, sigils, they affect a deep level of the mind and tend to distract one from the content of his writing. His style is declaratory,

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
arrogant, and uses a special vocabulary, the definitions for which have to be teased out of the text. But perhaps of most importance, Spare's view of the universe is non-human, and consequently the usual god centered or human centered context of magick is absent. Not until contemporary metaphysical thought had changed to allow a non anthropomorphic universe

is did Spare become accessible. Even now he, together with Kenneth Grant, is one of the least read and least understood among modern magickal writers.

Spare begins with the idea of Kia, of which he says, in an echo of the Tao Te Ching, "The Kia that can be expressed by conceivable ideas is not the eternal Kia, which burns up all belief"(17). Thus he does not designate by name that which later chaos magicians would call Chaos, but concentrates on the immediate manifestation of the formless which he describes as "the idea of sel"Ó. This is precisely the viewpoint of Dzog Chen. Dzog Chen, a

sorcerous form of Buddhism developed by Padmasambhava in the eighth century a.c.e., posits the creation of the manifest universe as occurring at the instant that the conception of self develops. Spare said of Kia "Anterior to Heaven and Earth, in its aspect that transcends these, but not intelligence, it may be regarded as the primordial principle, the idea of pleasure in self-love"(18). In Dzog Chen the initial impulse splits emptiness from form, nirvana from samsara and develops dualistic thinking.

The multiplicity of the universe streams out of this split.

One of the central symbols of Dzog Chen is the dorje. A form of magick wand, the dorje is composed of two stylized phalluses joined by a small central ball. The dorje is, according to Dzog Chen, a terma, or hidden teaching. This teaching is a treasure hidden by Padmasambhava. The whole

of the dorje refers to the unlimited potentiality of the universe, and thus, in modern terms, is an image of chaos, or the quantum flux of the universe that is before and beyond discriminatory thinking, inseparable,

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
indissoluble. The two ends of the dorje refer, respectively, to form and emptiness, or samsara and sunyata. The small central bead that joins the two ends of this bilaterally symmetrical object is hollow to show the unknowable potentiality at the intersection between form and emptiness, and also to refer back to the chaos current. Thus the dorje is a three dimensional symbol for the way the universe manifests itself from unity through duality into its full, lush complexity. As Spare says "As unity conceived duality, it begot trinity, begot tetragrammaton"(19). In a statement that presages the modern understanding of the fractal universe as an event that is essentially a complex repetition and multiplication of a series of simple forms, Spare wrote:

The dual principle is the quintessence of all experience, no ramification has enlarged its early simplicity, but is only its repetition, modification or complexity, never is its evolution complete. It cannot go further than the experience of self-so returns and unites again and again, ever an anti-climax. For ever retrogressing to its original simplicity by infinite complication is its evolution. No man shall understand "Why" by its workings. Know it as the illusion that embraces the learning of all existence(19).

Recognizing the recursive movement of the movement of energy, or consciousness, through the universe, that is to say, of Kia, is essential to the understanding of the form of magick that Spare developed because

it

indicates the structure of the spells, sigils, and magickal techniques of chaos magick. Refuting absolutely the notion that this flow of energy is ever understandable by dualistic minds, Spare stated unequivocally that the magickal energy of the universe, the force that interpenetrates all phenomena is non-human. Moreover Spare required the magician, in order

to

avail himself of this force, to renounce his human belief systems, his dualistic mind, to achieve a state of consciousness that, as much as possible, mimicked the primordial. How to do this is the subject of the next section of this essay.

2. Spare, Self-Love and Sigil Magick

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
Spare recognized that the greatest bar to the successful actualization of the magickal intention was self-consciousness, the normal, dualistic state of mind that carries the baggage of our cultural context, our upbringing, our human or god centered belief system. Throughout The Book of

Pleasure

he inveighed against the idea of God. He stated "The idea of God is the primordial sin, all religions are evil"(20) He warned of the toxic effects of self-judgement, of self-analysis while in the performance of the magickal act. He wrote "He who trusts to his natural fund of genius, has no knowledge of its extent and accomplishes with ease, but directly he doubts, ignorance obsesses him"(21).

Spare asserted that the primordial consciousness, or Kia, was indistinguishable from the impulse. This is partly because of the dynamics of the manifestation of the universe from chaos. From chaos comes Kia, which immediately becomes duality. Duality, according to Spare, forms a trinity. This is essentially a procreative act, which Spare rightly identified as . Moreover Spare associated the intense experience of with the experience of Kia. He wrote:

Self-love only is the eternal all pleasing, by meditation on this effulgent self which is mystic joyousness. At that time of bliss, he is punctual to his imagination, in that day what happiness is his! A lusty innocent, beyond sin, without hurt!(22)

Access to magickal power, according to Spare, is encouraged by the state of consciousness we enter when in , while the activation of spells is facilitated by the sensation of vacuity. This, he wrote "is obtained by exhausting the mind and body by some means or another"(21). release was

a

frequent path to this for Spare, and a common motif in his drawings is a hand with fingers curled and thumb outstretched, an image of both

painting

and ion. Variants of this image include a hand with eyes, a hand with face, and a hand with wings. Spare continuously sought the integration of magickal concept with magickal gesture (mudra), with magickal drawing, with magickal act.

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
Spare believed that it was essential to base magickal acts in a state of consciousness he terms Neither-Neither, a state of simplicity and pure self. This is a state where, however briefly, the mind has ceased its chattering, its continual discourse, and is in a state that can most easily be achieved by exhaustion, but may also be a result of sex, alcohol, or today, even watching television until the mind has become

numb

and mute. The state of vacuity can also be reached by the neti neti technique of yoga, a technique in which emotional states and mental concepts are annihilated by being opposed against each other. Doubtless Spare was aware of this technique when he devised the Neither-Neither formulation of vacuity. This technique results in so called free energy, psychic energy that can be used to charge a sigil or infuse a magickal act. Spare wrote that magick was "the reduction of properties to simplicity"(22). Moreover, he believed that the conscious mind prevented the fulfillment of the magickal intention. He wrote that conscious desire raises self-doubt and "lust for result," that it was "non-attractive", creating "anxiety" which "defeats the purpose" because "it retains and exposes the desire"(23).

Spare asserted that the ground for magickal action was the "sub-consciousness", what we would normally call today the subconscious

or

the unconscious mind. He argued that the place where the magickal spell could be seeded was deep within the mind of the magician. He defined the subconsciousness as "the epitome of all experience and wisdom, past incarnations as men, animals, birds, vegetable life, etc., etc., everything that exists, has and ever will exist"(24). Spare believed that it was possible to reach this "storehouse of memory" through sigils and other magickal acts, but he consistently cautioned against using the rational or discriminative mind to reach the sub-consciousness. He wrote "in striving for knowledge we repel it, the mind works best on a simple diet."

This stress on simplicity, efficiency and non-rational technique is a major characteristic differentiating Spare from most other magicians of

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
the Twentieth Century. Spare wrote "By Sigils and the acquirement of vacuity, any past incarnation, experience, etc., can be summoned to consciousness"(25). He placed himself firmly against the elaborate rituals, dogma, and unending learning of the tradition of ceremonial magick by stating "Know all ritual, ceremony, conditions, as arbitrary (you have yourself to please), a hindrance and confusion; their origin was for amusement, later for the purpose of deceiving others from knowing the truth and inducing ignorance"(26).

Spare developed a method of sigilising quite unique in the history of magick. He maintained that "Belief is the fall from the Absolute"(27). In other words, belief as usually practised, was self-defeating because "we are not free to believe...however much we so desire, having conflicting ideas from first exhaust"(28). The mind, conditioned by its cultural context, the universal consensual belief structure, voices from childhood, and many environmental factors, cannot allow pure belief, but always muddies the intention of the magician. Spare's genius was to develop a technique that took this into account and subverted the discursive mind. He said "sigils are the art of believing; my invention for making belief organic, ergo, true belief"(29). He maintained that "belief, to be true, must be organic and sub-conscious," that in order for the magickal desire to be effective, it must become organic, and "can only become organic at a time of vacuity, and by giving it (Sigil) form"(30).

Spare stressed not only that the sigil must be implanted in the sub-consciousness at the moment of vacuity, but that afterwards the magician must strive to forget the sigil and the desire from which the sigil was crafted. He wrote:

When conscious of the Sigil form (any time but the Magical) it should be repressed, a deliberate striving to forget it, by this it is active and dominates at the unconscious period, its form nourishes and allows it to become attached to the sub-consciousness and become organic, that accomplished, is its reality and realization(31).

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt

The assertion that Sigils need to be forgotten after they have been charged means that sigils are not appropriate for certain magickal intentions. For example, a sigil to accomplish a goal which is long term and daily obsession may not work if the magician is unable to release the obsession into the magickal act. That is to say, if the magician develops a sigil to gain a promotion at work, to get good grades at school, or to attract a partner, if the day after charging of the sigil the magician continues to obsess about his lousy job, his worsening grades or his complete inability to get laid, it is unlikely that the sigil will work. To give a personal example, it is my wish to actualize a much more powerful computer system. I have sigilized this intention. Unfortunately, every time a computer catalog comes in the mail (almost daily), I see the computer system I want and I wonder when my sigil will work. I wonder

if

it is going to work. I chastise myself because I am thinking about it working. My mind then proceeds to create all manner of conflicting thoughts circling around this topic. Does magick really work? Do I

deserve

a better computer system? Was my father right when he thought I would be a

failure? Perhaps if I just mentally shove at the obstacle preventing the actualizing of the sigil it will work. Perhaps I should do the sigil again? Perhaps I should charge it harder? Clearly, this is "lust for result", not to mention fear of success and the multiple dysfunctions of personal psychology. In this event, another magickal technique, such as the creation of a servitor or a sacrifice to a godform may be more appropriate. Sigilizing is unlikely to work while I am obsessed with a new computer system.

The technique for developing sigils that Spare outlines in *The Book of Pleasure* is simplicity itself. Giving as his magickal intention "This my wish to obtain the strength of a tiger", Spare analyses the structure of the letters of the phrases that make up the sentence containing the magickal intention, removes repeating letters, then combines them, and finally simplifies them into an iconic symbol. This symbol will be

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt sufficiently remote from the original sentence that it cannot be identified. Thus the only meaning it contains resides in the memory of the magician. Spare wrote: "Now by virtue of this Sigil you are able to send your desire into the subconsciousness (which contains all strength)"(32). Carroll suggested two other methods for developing sigils. In one, a picture of the magickal intention is drawn, in another, the sentence containing the magickal intention is transformed into a mantra by, for example, removing repeating letters and transposing other letters until a euphonious phrase results. Carroll stated "It is not necessary to use complex symbol systems"(33). Spare went further and wrote "you do not have

to dress up as a traditional magician, wizard or priest, build expensive temples, obtain virgin parchment, black goats blood, etc., etc., in fact no theatricals or humbug"(34). Readers interested in these methods for constructing sigils are directed to Frater U.D.'s comprehensive treatise Practical Sigil Magick. As Frater U.D. indicates "In Spare's system there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' sigils; neither is there a list of ready-made symbols. It is of no import whether a sigil is the 'correct' one or not, but it is crucial that it has been created by the magician and is therefore meaningful to him/her"(35).

Spare's system of creating sigils is, as Frater U.D. points out, an individual-anarchist approach to magick. It does not require learning complex systems, strange incantations, or any of the usual bric-a-brac of traditional magick or religion. It is simple and efficient. However, anarchical as Spare was, he was also a man of his culture and time and his system is influenced by ideas that while far from accepted in his day, were current. The idea of the subconscious is clearly influenced by psychoanalytic theory, particularly Jung, and Spare's insistence on the primacy of the impulse owes not a little to Freud. Of course Spare's system works if one believes in psychoanalysis or not, not so much because

the existence of a deep unconscious, collective or otherwise, is any more provable than the existence of a soul, but because it subverts the conscious mind and the failure tapes of normal consciousness. Culturally

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
defined consensual belief structures work tirelessly against the actualization of magickal intentions, requiring, at the least, refuge in plausible explanations for apparently abnormal events or at least some kind of explanation. Thus unusual events such as the actualization of a spell for success in one's job, for example, are justified by the collective consciousness as something that was bound to happen anyway,

or

less plausibly, the inevitable result of increased self-confidence that the magick spell brought about in the magician. If these explanations are insufficient then perhaps the grace of God, angelic intervention, demonic agency, or just good luck can be proffered. It is the stance of modern chaos magick, however, that none of these explanations are necessary, except perhaps in that they increase the ability of the magician to engineer belief structures. But the engineering of belief structures is a poor substitute for their suspension. If quantum mechanics is correct, human beings live in a universe of mind numbing complexity, at an order

of

magnitude far greater than the ability of the human mind to comprehend.

If

this is the case, and we live in a quantum flux of unlimited potentiality then all things are equally possible, all beliefs equally true, or, as Hassan Ibn Al Sabah, Le Vieux de Montagne, is alleged to have said, "Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted." If this is the case the need of human psychology to explain events is merely another aspect of the totalitarian dictates of society's consensual belief structures.

The vacuity that characterizes the charging of a sigil in Spare's system takes on a different color when viewed in the light of modern chaos magick. It is the No-Mind of unlimited potential, a relaxation into the quantum flux, a suspension of both belief and disbelief, of all the paraphernalia of the rational, discursive mind, and of the seething, bubbling unconscious mind or, as Buddhists would say, 'Not Two, Not

One.'

From this viewpoint, it is the discursive mind that is delusionary, the rational mind that presents phantasms of being and becoming. The truth is

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
that there is no Absolute, no becoming, no being, or as the Prajna
Paramita states:

Dharmas here are empty
all are the primal void.
None are born or die.
Nor are they stained or pure
Nor do they wax or wane.(36)

The "Prajna Paramita", or Heart Sutra, is at the basis of the
reformulation of Buddhism by Nagarjuna in the third century a.c.e.

Nagarjuna founded the Madhyamika school of Buddhism, of which Dzog
Chen is

an offshoot. Ingrid Fischer-Schrieber wrote of Nagarjuna:

Nagarjuna attempts to show the emptiness of the world through the
relativity of opposites. Opposites are mutually dependent; one member of

a pair of opposites can only arise through the other. From this he draws
the conclusion that such entities cannot really exist, since the
existence of one pre-supposes the existence of the other.(37)

The reader is cautioned that emptiness, or sunyata, in Buddhist
terminology means limitlessness, or unlimited potentiality, which
Madhyamika Buddhism asserts is the true ground of being.

Spare's technique of Neither-Neither is kin to Nagarjuna's mutual
dependency of opposites. Stephen Mace, in his brilliant analysis of Spare
and Sorcery, Stealing the Fire from Heaven, described this technique:

The Neither-Neither principle asserts that there is no truth anywhere
that is not balanced by an equally true opposite somewhere, and there is
only perspective and circumstance to determine which seems more true

at

any given time. To apply this principle to conjuring, wait until you are
absolutely positive something is true, then search for its opposite.

When you find it, oppose it to your 'truth' and let them annihilate one
another as well as they may. Any residue should oppose to its opposite,
and so on until your truth has been dismembered and the passion

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
converted into undirected energy - free belief. By applying the
Neither-Neither we can gut the meaningless convictions that obsess us
every day and use the power released to cause the changes we desire(38).

It is this "undirected energy-free belief" that is used to charge the
sigil. For in this state of mind the magician brings the sigil to
consciousness, concentrates on it, and allows it to sink past
consciousness into the pool of undirected energy. In Buddhism this state
is called sunyata, or emptiness.

In my personal experiences of sunyata, it is a state of consciousness
characterized not so much by silence, but by a great calm. The mind, for
me at least, continues to chatter, but it is now recognizable as just
another function of the body. The mind chatters just as the lungs breathe,
just as the heart pumps. Thoughts arise and fall, but the universe hums
with energy, with limitless potentiality. Space seems to expand and my
vision becomes extremely clear. Fairly rapidly, of course, I become
distracted by the novelty of the experience and fall back into normal
consciousness, or samsara.

So Spare's technique is one designed to reveal this state of mind, the one
Buddhists term sunyata or emptiness and Mace's "undirected energy" may
be

thought of as synonymous with sunyata. It is part of the annihilistic
tendency in chaos magick that even Spare's Neither-Neither technique
can

be considered an unneeded elaboration, for if this state of mind is the
actual ground of being, then all that is needed is for the magician to
look in another direction, an instant of work. Thus, the whole edifice of
ritual is viewed by chaos magicians as a kind of massage for the mind, a
way to lull it into a state of Neither-Neither. But actually, none of it
is necessary, and perfectly valid results can be obtained just by creating
a sigil and leaving it uncharged. Some chaos magicians assert that sigils
never need to be charged, that, in fact, the act of their creation slips
the sigil behind the discursive rational mind.

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
There are other methods for creating sigils, also, and some of these collapse the charging into the creation. For example I once did a sigil in a group workshop to produce a laser printer of a certain configuration, one that was unavailable at the time of the creation of the sigil. My sigil, which was a paper sculpture composed of white paper that I had colored, rolled into a tube, cut, and shredded open, looked nothing like my magickal intention, and, as far as I could see had no initial reference to it either. When I finished it I threw it under the couch of a friend. I guessed that the couch would not be moved for some time, and that when

it

was the paper would not be recognized and would be thrown away. The act of

creating the sigil charged it for I thought in a non-attached way, of the printer I wanted while I created the sculpture. I recall that we did charge the sigil by holding our breath until near to fainting while staring at the sigil we had created. This gave me a headache. Perhaps when

my friend moved, as he did at around the time the printer I wanted manifested itself, he charged it when he threw it away. Either way, the sigil worked, and I do not trouble myself with explaining to myself why it worked.

Jan Fries, in Visual Magick, has a few other suggestions for the creation of sigils. After discussing the traditional forms of pen, ink, and parchment, or wood engraving, or metalsmithing, Fries states:

If you desire matters of dream magick you could draw your sigil on paper, fold it into a paper boat, and send it off on a river, stream, or pond. The water destroys the body and receives the idea. You might draw

the sigil in earth colours on your skin and dance until you've sweated it off, or form the shape in berries, food for the birds. You could draw it in the earth with a stick and leave it for the rains, or give it, drawn on paper, to the fire. You might even feed on it. Ink can be washed off and drunk with water (use a non-toxic sort), and some signs can be drawn or baked into cakes or bread(39).

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt

Chaos magicians on the Internet have developed other techniques. After transforming the sigil into a mantra it is sent to a usenet newsgroup picked at random as a garbage post (or perhaps not so random, e.g. alt.jesus.is.lord). One innovative method discussed on alt.magick.chaos involved developing a database of the numbers of frequently used public phones around the country. Chaos magicians wishing to charge a sigil would

choose a number, dial it, and, if the phone is picked up, shout the sigil at the baffled recipient.

By now it should be clear that the technique of sigilising is not as important as the creation of the mental state which accompanies it, for it is in this ground state that magick works. The Temple of Psychic Youth, founded fifteen years ago by Genesis P-Orridge and highly influenced by the sigil techniques of A.O.Spare is an international association of chaos magicians. Genesis has since disavowed the project, but other members continue the association. Historically members of the Temple of Psychic Youth would create sigils with three different bodily fluids and two different portions of hair and then send them to a central depository of sigils at one of the headquarters of the organization. Despite the respect with which these sigils were regarded by TOPY members, it was widely recognized that the act was magickal because of the states of consciousness developed, the interplay that these states allowed between the conscious mind and the deep mind (or that part of the mind that is not conscious), and that actually, the sigils could have been incinerated in a fire or confiscated by law enforcement authorities without harm being done

to the magickal intention. Indeed, rumors abound to this day, perhaps deliberately spread by TOPY members, that the sigil depository has been compromised by some such action. The usefulness of rumors such as these

lies in its ability to allow the ego of the chaos magician to confront the process of magick. Should a TOPY member be concerned that a British bobby

has his sigil, or that it was burnt, or that some nefarious black magician

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt is now using it in dark magick? Certainly, if these concerns allow the TOPY member to ask himself what magick really is. Genesis said, in an interview in Gnosis magazine, about this issue:

I wanted to contradict the tradition that those things were innately dangerous for other people to have possession of. Because I thought that was something people had hypnotized themselves into being vulnerable to.

(40)

P-Orridge's approach to chaos magick is typical in its insistence on the importance of belief structures and the general faith in access to a fundamental stream of energy and power that cannot really be termed human.

He said:

Things do get manifested when you focus on them and truly desire and need them to manifest. That happens. And I don't really care why. My suspicion is that it's an innate gift that comes from so far ago and is so primal that it's pointless putting names on it and trying to humanize it. I think it is always an error to humanize phenomena. (41)

For magick is not a variant of the role playing game of Dungeons and Dragons, nor is it the Satanic cultism of the tabloid, although it may appear from a social perspective look like that way. Magick is the dynamic

synergy of the magician's desires with the quantum flow of the energy matrices of the universe.

Fries discusses in some detail the process of spell-making, and the common delusionary knots with which magicians engaged in this confrontation bind themselves. Most of these result from the mechanism Spare termed "lust for result", and are solved through deliberately forgetting the sigil, the magickal intention, and, ultimately, the precipitating desire.

As Fries states:

Sigils are used where conscious will finds its aim frustrated. We use sigils to bypass adverse conditions, to avoid the censorship of identity, to achieve our will through avenues we do not even know about.

If you think about results while transmitting, you effectively bind your mind to find a solution along the desired channels, and this is frequently a hindrance, as "the desired channels" are usually the very approach that does not function. Our conscious selves are often the greatest obstacle to the sigil's manifestation.(42)

Unfortunately, as Fries points out, many magicians seem to miss the point,

and, influenced by the power stratagems of traditional magick, charge and recharge their sigils, doubtless berating themselves for their magickal flaccidity as they do so. In this way, they assume, the sheer force of their conscious will shall drive the sigil into the deep ground of being and hence to fruition. In fact their actions raise ever stronger barriers against this occurring, as the conscious mind, whose habit it is to deny the unity of the universe and the interdependence of all phenomena, builds

walls of steel against itself. Fries counsels patience and compassion. He suggests dealing with the non conscious mind as one would deal with an old, wise, dear friend. He suggests:

Magick can be worked quite easily once one learns to re-believe in innocence, simplicity and direct inspiration. Why use a memorized invocation, including "divine names" and "words of power" when one

can

get better and livelier results by "speaking from the heart" plus a dose of freestyle chaos language and chanting? (43)

Why indeed? Partly the answer lies in the personality and conditioning of the magician, partly in the depth of his experience of magick. Magicians with very strong traditional belief structures, magicians conditioned by membership in a magickal order such as the Ordo Templi Orientis, or even

the Illuminates of Thanateros, may need elaborate ritual in order to break down this conditioning until a state of simplicity can be reached.

Magicians who are relatively new to magick may need ritual in order to increase self confidence and decrease the effect of the anti-magickal

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
consensual belief structures. Magicians, young or old, who have for some reason opened the door to their own simplicity can successfully cast a spell with a brief hand movement, with a howl at the moon, or with, as I do from time to time, curse with the crushing of a fortune cookie at a Chinese Restaurant. No chaos magician writing today suggests discarding Spare's techniques. The hold of traditional magick is far too strong to neglect such an efficient system for deprogramming. But at least among

the

community of chaos magicians discussing sigils on the Internet, suggestions are routinely made that magick is far simpler than even sigilising.

According to the visions of many mystics the world itself is suffused with magick. Gerald Manley Hopkins wrote in 1918:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed....

from "God's Grandeur"

Although Hopkins writes within the paradigm of Christian mysticism, his insight of a world filled with supernal power is hardly different from the approach of a modern chaos magician, or a Dzog Chen master. In the middle

of the 17th Century Thomas Traherne wrote , describing the way in which he

saw the world when he was a child:

Rich diamond and pearl and gold
In every place was seen;
Rare splendors, yellow, blue, red, white and green,
Mine eyes did everywhere behold.

From "Wonder"

The experience of the universe as a place filled with unlimited potentiality, and gorgeous beyond description to boot, is typical of many

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
altered states of mystical perception. Dzog Chen maintains that this is the actual nature of the universe, a place of limitless light and potentiality. Tibetan Buddhism is called the Vajrayana after this assertion, for Vajra means diamond, and the universe is a diamond web of dynamic interconnections. Diamonds, in tantric tradition, are the crystallized sperm of the gods.

The task of the magician who accepts the mystic's description of the universe, or if not that of the mystic, the model of the universe proposed by quantum mechanics, for there is little to differentiate either model from one another, is to deprogram himself, to annihilate the discriminatory mind sets of rational thinking, the primary intellectual artefact of civilization. For once this level of consciousness is reached, once the conscious and the non conscious mind are working together, then there is no difference between the will of the magician and the movement of the stream of energy that is the universe.

John Cage's statement about art is as applicable to magick. He wrote:

The history of art is simply a history of getting rid of the ugly by entering into it and using it. After all, the notion of something outside of us being ugly is not outside of us but inside of us. And that's why I keep reiterating that we're working with our minds. What we're trying to do is to get them open so we don't see things as being ugly or beautiful but we see them just as they are. (44)

Substitute art with magick, ugly with unattainable and beautiful with attainable, and Cage's statement presents the formula for chaos magick. Sigils are just one means to bring about this transformation, to internalize a desire that the magician considers to be unachievable so that the discriminatory definitions of achievable and out of reach no longer have any validity.

Yet if there is so little difference between the mystic and the magician why are they traditionally viewed as two separate paths? Few magicians would term themselves mystics (fearing relegation to the New Age) and even

fewer mystics would term themselves magicians. Sai Baba and a few other

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt
Indian gurus are exceptions. In Liber Kaos, Peter Carroll postulated a psychohistorical theory that asserted that magickal shamanism, a simple and fluid form of magick based upon a mystical awareness of the interdependence of all phenomena, degrades into paganism, and with the growth of religious forms magick is relegated to a priestly caste, who, over a period of time lose access to the magickal current and degrade into formalism. (45) The argument is plausible, particularly when placed alongside the rise of civilization, an event that required the development of hierarchical society. Social hierarchy, of course, is a template that is internalized at an early age, and defines access to power as being confined to channels devised by other than oneself. This notion is anathema to magick in general, and chaos magick in particular. Thus in tribal societies there would appear to be little difference between the mystic and the magician, both roles often being held in the personage of the tribal shaman, and all members of the tribe, in some degree or another, having access to the universal magickal power. By the time one thousand years of Christian conditioning had afflicted the minds of the peoples of the West, magickal acts were either heretical, quaint and secretive folk practices, or, if approved by the Church, miraculous and the marks of sainthood. Another thousand years of the slow deterioration of this conditioning, and, finally, the beginnings of breakdown in the toxic structures of civilization, and magick has begun to be seen as a power available to all, as a means of directly communicating with the universe as it is, and as a particularly appropriate series of techniques to live in a universe in which human beings are both as incidental and as important as all other phenomena.

Footnotes:

Donald Michael Kraig: Modern Magick, Llewellyn, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1992, p. 10

Kraig, p. 11

Kraig, p. 12

Aleister Crowley: Magick, Samuel Weiser, York Beach, Maine, 1973, p.

60

Crowley, p. 332

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt

Crowley, p. 294

Anton LaVey: The Satanic Bible, Avon, 1969, p. 110

LaVey, p. 110

LaVey, p. 41

Michael Aquino: General Information and Admissions Policies, Temple
of Set, San Francisco, California, 1994, p. 4.

LaVey, p. 94

Peter Carroll: Liber Null and Psychonaut, Samuel Weiser, York Beach,
Maine, 1987, p. 154

Carroll, p. 165

Carroll, p. 103

Carroll, p. 167

Carroll, p. 151

Austin Osman Spare: Book of Pleasure (Self-Love), from From the
Inferno

to Zos: The Writings and Images of Austin Osman Spare, First
Impressions, Seattle, 1993 , p. 7

Spare, p. 7

Spare, p. 9

Spare, p. 30

Spare, p. 30

Spare, p. 33

Spare, p. 51

Spare, p. 37

Spare, p. 38

Spare, p. 47

Spare, p. 48

Spare, p. 48

Spare, p. 44

Spare, p. 44

Spare, p. 44

Spare, p. 44

Spare, p. 31

Spiral Nature - Magick - Chaos - Sigils, Servitors and Godforms.txt

Spare, p. 51

Carroll, p. 20

Spare, p. 50

Frater U.D. : Practical Sigil Magick, Llewellyn, 1991, p. 6

Translation of the Heart Sutra in Roshi Philip Kapleau: Zen Dawn in the West, Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York, 1980, p. 180

Fischer-Schrieber, Erhard & Diener, tr. Michael Kohn: The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen, Shambhala, Boston 1991, p. 152

Stephen Mace: Stealing the Fire from Heaven, Privately Printed, New Haven, Connecticut, 1984, p. 20

Jan Fries: Visual Magick: A Manual of Freestyle Shamanism, Mandrake,

Oxford, 1992, p. 16

Genesis-P-Orridge, interviewed by Jay Kinney in Gnosis, Summer 1994, p.52

Kinney, p. 53

Fries, p. 22

Fries, p. 35

John Cage quoted in Williams & Tollett: A Blip in the Continuum, Peachpit Press, Berkeley, California, 1995, p.81

Peter Carroll: Liber Kaos, Samuel Weiser, York Beach, 1992, p.53 to 75.

This is a work in progress, but may be freely disseminated on the Internet. The author requests email notifying him of such acts. His address is marik@aol.com.

12/3/95

Used with permission.

Advanced Search

Last modified:

11-11-00

© Copyright 2000 CE Webmaster

