

Spare Parts  
by Ramsey Dukes

First published in Agape, 1975

The following article is an introduction to Spare's Book of Pleasure. It was written as an appendix to the unpublished Uncle Ramsey's Bumper Book of Magick Spells, then first published in issue four of the occult magazine Agapé in the early 1970s, and then in a slightly modified form for The Sorcerer's Apprentice edition of The Collected Works of Austin Osman Spare with a postscript added to the original version. The essay was long considered to be the best available introduction to Spare's magical theories.

The article summarises The Book of Pleasure, helping the reader to find their own way through Spare's rather difficult prose. It also draws some parallels with other helpful texts. For a more detailed account of practical work with sigils etc I recommend two excellent books; Pete Carroll's Liber Null and Ray Sherwin's Book of Results. [Since writing this there have been several other books on the subject.]

(i)

"On the brink of mystery, the spirit of man is seized with giddiness" thus wrote Eliphas Levi in the Key of the Mysteries. Indeed we cannot live forever in a state of giddiness and so need to hide that brink behind veils. By the very decision to give a name or symbol to the Ultimate (e.g. God, Nothing, Tao) we save ourselves from having to see it face to face; the first veil is put up.

The philosophical system that is easiest to grasp, and the easiest to ridicule, is the one that has the most veils. For example the extreme simplicity of Zen Buddhism makes it less easy to discuss than the complex spiritual hierarchies of some other religions. In this sense Spare's philosophy uses comparatively few veils and this, together with his obscure way of writing, make it difficult to describe his ideas adequately.

For example: a basic theme of his writing is that we are not free, we are the slaves of our beliefs and conventions. This is quite obviously the case when we look at other people. We can laugh at the debutante who sorrowfully cries "Oh Mummy I CAN'T wear the same dress that I wore to Margie's party"; but alas the poor girl is right, she really can't! Consider also the novice soldier who for the first time is asked to kill a man in defence of his country; as he aims the rifle he is in no position of authority, instead he himself is a battlefield on which Patriotism is struggling with the commandment 'thou shalt not kill'. Perhaps the clearest example of all is witnessed by the outsider when he sees a family squabbling, struggling in a net of strong interpersonal feelings which are meaningless to the uninvolved...

In each case the truth of Spare's statement is totally obvious and yet the PRACTICAL use of it flounders when we try to see our own actions in this light. This 'simple' turning inward of our gaze is in fact a basic problem of all applied psychology; and it is such difficulties (rather than the trouble of finding the tongue of a hanged man or the eye of a newt) which the student of Spare's magic will encounter.

Instead of forming our own plan we will turn over the pages of The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love) the Psychology of Ecstasy, and outline Spare's system in the same sequence as he adopted.

(ii)

He starts with 'Definitions':

The Words God, religions, faith, morals, woman etc. (they being forms of belief) are used as expressing different "means" as controlling and expressing desire: an idea of unity by fear in some form or another which must spell bondage - the imagined limits; extended by science which adds a dearly paid inch to our height, no more.

Kia

The absolute freedom which being free is mighty enough to be "reality" and free at any time: therefore is it not potential or manifest (except as its instant possibility) by ideas of freedom or "means", but by the Ego being free to receive it. The less said of it (Kia) the less obscure it is. Remember evolution teaches by terrible punishments - that conception is ultimate reality but not ultimate freedom from evolution.

Virtue

Pure Art.

Vice

Fear, belief, faith, control, science, and the like.

Self-Love

A mental state, mood or condition caused by the emotion of laughter becoming the principle that allows the Ego appreciation or universal association in permitting inclusion before conception

## Exhaustion

That state of vacuity brought by exhausting a desire by some means of dissipation when the mood corresponds to the nature of the desire, i.e. when the mind is worried because of the non-fulfillment of such desire and seeks relief. By seizing this mood and living, the resultant vacuity is sensitive to the subtle suggestion of the sigil.

It is interesting to see that Spare in 1913 was already dismissing science along with religion. In this he was ahead of his time. Crowley, for example, emphasises the positive virtue of science, that it had finally freed us from the tyranny of religion; whereas Spare saw that science too could in turn prove to be a limitation.

The page is decorated with some symbols, including the hieroglyphic symbol for the Kai, or 'ego' in Egyptian psychology. There does not seem to be any connection between this and Kia - I have yet to find the origin of that term, or of the name 'Zos' that Spare uses for himself. In the latter case I only note how often the Z sound occurs in inspirational writing: Zarathustra (Nietzsche's hero), Znuz is Znees (the title of C.F. Russell's autobiography), Jeezus, Zunnus (the last anagram word in the Septem Sermones ad Mortuos) and the mass of Zeds in the gnostic words of power.

Both A.E. (in The Candle of Vision) and Rudolf Steiner independently associate the 'S' and 'Z' sounds with snakes and procreation. In Earth Inferno, Spare's first book, the term Zed-Kia occurs without explanation.  
(iii)

The first chapter is entitled 'Different Religions and Doctrines as Means to Pleasure, Freedom and Power'.

He starts by asking "What is there to believe, but in Self?" and then goes on to attack various alternative beliefs, showing how they all flounder because of the basic duality at the root of all consciousness. Instead the wise pleasure-seeker is urged to become a Kiaist and Riding the Shark of his desire he crosses the ocean of the dual principle and engages himself in self-love.

For example: Some praise the idea of Faith. They believe that they are gods (or anything else) would make them such - proving by all they do to be full of its non-belief. Indeed, putting one's trust in faith is a little like trying to overcome a weak head for heights by forcing yourself not to look down: it only works if you repress your imagination. Spare concludes Then, this ambition of faith, is it so very desirable? Myself, I have not yet seen a man who is not God already.

He goes on to criticise prayer - except as a means of producing exhaustion. He criticises those who endeavour to prove the unity of religion; those who elevate 'truth'; those who claim that everything is 'symbolic' (and yet reject modern symbolism) those who say that only knowledge is eternal; and he criticises the ceremonial magicians. In this last example he wins our hearts by saying : They have no magic to intensify the normal, the joy of a child or a healthy person...

The second chapter is entitled 'The consumer of Religion' and describes "Kia, in its transcendental and Conceivable Manifestation". He starts by saying: Of name it has no need, to designate, I call it Kia - I dare not claim it as myself. The Kia which can be expressed by conceivable ideas, is not the eternal Kia, which burns up all belief - but is the archetype of 'self' the slavery of mortality.

The beginning of that last sentence recalls, not inappropriately, the first line of the Tao They Chug which has been translated, in the Penguin Edition of D.C. Lane:

"The way that can be told  
Is not the Constant way"

"The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;  
The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.  
Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets :  
But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations."

Which is again appropriate, except that the advice of the last line is more suggestive of the advice which will be quoted later from the Septem Sermones. Spare goes on to say : The Kia which can be vaguely expressed in words is the "Neither-Neither." This Neither-Neither is explained in a later chapter. It is a thought process by which Spare endeavours to break through the limitations of dualistic thought in four steps. We start by considering any quality, for example 'light'. Duality immediately links that to the opposing quality 'dark'. The next step is to consider the combination of these two qualities - as in 'dusk' - and then we attempt to make the next step and meditate upon the absence of those two qualities - the 'Neither-Neither' as opposed to the 'Both-And.'

As a meditation this is reminiscent of the Zen Buddhists' koan by which practitioners attempt to confound reason and thus break through it. One example of this is the well-known koan "What is the sound of one hand clapping"? A very appropriate example especially as Spare later suggests that we try to see light by its own quality, and not in its contrast with darkness.

Spare's own description of the Kia is somewhat confusing. This is perhaps inevitable on account of the very nature of his subject and yet I cannot help comparing it with the, to me, very clear first sermon of the Septem Sermones Ad Mortuos by C. G. Jung, where Basilides

describes the Pleroma - a possible equivalent to Kia.

This should be read in conjunction with Spare. I will attempt a summary, but it should be borne in mind that this is a poor substitute and that it necessarily omits to answer a lot of objections which are in fact dealt with in the full text of the Septem Sermones.

Basilides starts by saying that he begins with nothingness - which is the same as fullness. Nothingness is both empty and full - you might as well call it black, white or whatever you like, for having all qualities is the same as having no qualities. This nothingness is called the Pleroma and in it both thinking and being cease - it is quite fruitless to think about it for it would mean self-dissolution.

Creatura is not in the Pleroma, but in itself. True the Pleroma everywhere pervades Creatura but it is in no way coloured by it or shared with it, just as light cannot be said to colour a completely transparent body. Yet figuratively speaking this makes us parts of the Pleroma and, also figuratively, we are the whole Pleroma. So why does he bother to speak of the Pleroma if it is all or nothing? Answer: he's got to start somewhere! And he starts there to free you from the delusion that there is somewhere some fixed and unchangeable principle. The only thing you can be sure of is 'Change'; but Creatura is what is changeable, and so the only fixed and certain thing.

How did Creatura originate? Answer: it did not. Created beings come to pass, not Creatura. Created being, just as much as non-creation was inherent in the Pleroma and so came to pass. Distinctiveness is a quality of Creatura, whereas the Pleroma has all: distinctiveness and indistinctiveness.

Why go on about 'qualities' of the Pleroma after what has been said? Answer: man, being of Creatura, has distinctiveness as an essence. It is his nature to distinguish things. When we talk about qualities of the Pleroma we learn nothing of the Pleroma, we are really revealing our own nature, or way of thought. We must be true to our nature and go on distinguishing.

Why must we distinguish things? Answer: if we cease to distinguish we fall into the Pleroma and cease to be creatures. "This is the death of the creature. Therefore we die in such measure as we do not distinguish". This is why non-distinction is a great danger for the creature.

At this point it seems that Basilides is recommending that we do NOT strive after Kia, he is telling us of its dangers. One could say that the danger is only to the CREATURE and if we wish to transcend that state then that danger does not concern us. However there are passages where Spare himself refers to the dangers of the freedom of Kia: "Total vacuity is difficult and unsafe for those governed by morality, complexes..."

It must be remembered that the duality is the BASIS of consciousness and manifestation; so that only a TOTAL dissolution can be rid of it. In practice the law of duality will ensure that any attainable ecstasy will tend to alternate with agony. Like a pendulum we swing between states.

What then can the Kiaist gain? To indicate an answer I continue to paraphrase Sermon I.

As was said we need to go through the play of distinguishing qualities of the qualitless Pleroma in order to foster our own distinctiveness. These qualities came in pairs: the Effective and the Ineffective, Fullness and Emptiness, Living and Dead, Light and Dark, Good and Evil and so on.

In the Pleroma they are not - being balanced and so void. But as we are the Pleroma itself ( see earlier) we have these qualities. But we are of Creatura, and so we do not have these qualities in a balanced and void state; as distinctiveness is of our essence we have them in a distinct form i.e. instead of balanced they are EFFECTIVE. "The Pleroma is rent in us".

We are now at an important point: we are moving from a philosophy of perfection - so far the 'Kia' idea could be said to amount to the perfectly true statement 'if you want to obtain desires then you must give up having desires' - to a liveable philosophy, or system of magic. So I will quote the next paragraph of Sermon I in full:

When we strive after the good or the beautiful we thereby forget our own nature, which is distinctiveness, and we are delivered over to the qualities of the Pleroma, which are pairs of opposites. We labour to attain to the good and the beautiful, yet at the same time we also lay hold of the evil and the ugly, since in the Pleroma they are one with the good and the beautiful. When, however, we remain true to our nature, which is distinctiveness, we distinguish ourselves from the good and the beautiful, and therefore, at the same time, from the evil and the ugly. And THUS we fall not into the Pleroma, namely, into nothingness and dissolution."

With the possible exception of that last sentence this paragraph is absolutely in keeping with Spare's first chapter and his criticism of those who flounder after desire and so also gain their opposites.

As an example of the practical application of this idea consider Sermon V where Basilides, talking of 'spirituality' and 'sexuality', reminds us that we must not forget to distinguish ourselves from them. They are not OUR qualities, in the sense that we possess and contain them; rather are they of a nature above and beyond us.

So, of course, this way of thinking is out of keeping with our 20th century education (although utterly in keeping with much 'primitive' thought) and therefore it cannot be considered as an instant cure to anyone's troubles. However I would like you to IMAGINE the very great change which does in fact develop in the lives of those who encourage this idea to grow in their lives at the expense of the 'rationalist' hypothesis. Their sexuality for example, is no longer their 'possession'; instead it is something 'without' which visits one. In practice this means that sexuality is no longer a possession which one feels obliged to compare in power with one's own rivals, and there is no more fear of possessing too little or too much of it. Nor is there fear that it is a finite quantity that is in danger of being used up, or atrophying with disuse nor is it something that one can sell to another. Instead it is something which visits one. Therefore one must become the seducer in order to be seduced; to encourage sexuality one must make oneself attractive to it; to banish it one has at one's disposal the entire tradition of banishment of spirits. In fact this is an idea to be lived, not discussed.

This first sermon ends with the answer to the paradox: if it is so bad to strive for a quality of the Pleroma, then should we really strive after distinctiveness? We are reminded that in fact the Pleroma has no qualities - we create them through thinking. It is not our thinking but our BEING which is distinctiveness. Therefore must we in fact not strive after 'difference' as such but rather OUR OWN BEING. By striving after our own being we attain our goal; but, alas, thought estranges us from being. So the purpose of all the knowledge given in the Sermon was in fact that it should serve as a leash to constrain thought.

I think that Thelemites would therefore stand and applaud at the end of this sermon!

This second chapter of The Book of Pleasure contains a sentence that demands some apology as it stands. Spare writes "As unity conceived duality, it begot trinity, begot tetragrammaton" In view of the usual nihilistic occult view of creation this is highly eccentric. As we have seen it is the Pleroma which necessarily begets duality ( $0=2$  in Crowley's formula) because everything which emerges from it comes with its opposite. (So only even numbers, that is to say the 'feminine' principles, arrive out of nothing) And in no way can the Pleroma be described as 'One thing'. But whereas it is absurd to talk of a man giving birth to a woman (unity begot duality) it is quite in order for a man to be born from a woman (a unity being found within a duality). Once we have the duality we have the foundation of consciousness, and it is consciousness which looks back at the original duality and perceives that it contains two units. Thus consciousness can extrapolate behind that duality and postulate a superior unity, calling it 'the action of extracting a duality from the Pleroma'.

This is of course a construct of consciousness' own workings and so ultimately trash. However it creates new complications because to talk about 'one act of creation' is to postulate a moment of time - to name a 'before' and an 'after'. As Spare says in his next sentence "Duality, being unity, is Time..." Thus we find Saturn or 'Time' ; represented in the first three sephiroth of the Tree of Life even though they do not yet contain sufficient material for three dimensional creation.

Spare closes the chapter with his observation on the inevitable ups and downs of existence. Ecstasy for any length of time is difficult to obtain, and laboured heavily for. With what does he balance his ecstasy? Measure for Measure by intense pain, sorrow and miseries. Various degrees of misery alternating with gusts of pleasure and emotions less anxious, would seem the condition of consciousness and existence. Duality is the law.

At this point the casual reader (I'd be less surprised to find a London taxicab at the South Pole than to find a casual reader still with us) is inclined to drop the book in disappointment. Duality is the law - so Spare has offered us no hope of relief.

However there is a big difference. We may not be liberated from failure and misery, but we may be in a position to use it. Knowing the law of duality brings the possibility of distinguishing ourselves from its working. No more the blind slide into despair but rather the studied descent, and the plan to use that unavoidable despair in order to plan the next high point. This is the key to Spare's practical work, or living magic. I can only say that it does with practice and understanding indeed help to create the possibility of exultation in despair. I end with his nice symbol for creation:

"One form made of two, that is three-fold and having four directions."

(iv)

'Soliloquy on God-Head' is the next chapter: it criticises some modern beliefs.

You disbelieve in Ghosts and God - because you have not seen them? What! You have never seen the mocking ghosts of your beliefs? Yea your very faculties and most courageous Lies are Gods ! Who is the slayer of your Gods - but a God!

The writings of Nietzsche are worth reading in conjunction with Spare, (many passages in, for example, the Dawn of Day have been already marked with this chapter in mind but I hope to restrain myself from quoting). In particular the style and feel of Thus Spake Zarathustra is reflected in Spare's Anathema of Zos (an automatic writing) in such phrases as: Let your pleasures be as sunsets, HONEST... BLOODY... GROTESQUE; together with Zos's references to the need for clean air and solitude.

However Nietzsche had much greater respect for science than had Spare; as was said before, in Nietzsche's time, science seemed to be the liberator rather than the tyrant. Spare asks us to be more critical of what science has given us. In Thundersqueak for example it is

explained how every triumph of experimenting amateur technologists is later annexed as a 'Triumph of Modern Science', whereas in fact the only effect that can be INDISPUTABLY ascribed to science is its ability to STOP certain things from happening - e.g. religion or magic.

Spare describes how science has 'discovered' new diseases, thus creating then in our beliefs so that we suffer them and need to call again on science for their cure. He describes, how 'facts' are produced in opposing pairs: for example the discovery that the sun was millions of miles away rather than a few miles away meant that we had also to believe that it was much more powerful than we before believed - in order to justify the amount of heat we receive from it.

Spare illustrates how you are 'one' with a butterfly in an interesting passage. He adds: So if you hurt the Butterfly you hurt yourself. But your belief that you don't hurt yourself protects you from hurt - for a time ! Belief gets tired and you are miserably hurt!

You are fearsome of entering a den of tigers?.. Yet daily you fearlessly enter dens inhabited by more terrible creatures than Tigers [men that is], and you come out unharmed - why?

Science is the accursed doubt of the possible, yea, of what does exist! You cannot conceive an impossibility, nothing is impossible, you are the impossible! Doubt is delay - time - but how it punishes! Nothing is more true than anything else! What are you NOT - you ever answered, Truthfully?

(v)

The next chapter is called 'The Death Posture.' A name which recalls Basilides's remark that the creature dies in so far as he does not make distinction.

Spare starts by warning that ideas of self in conflict cannot be slain, for it is your resistance that gives them their reality. He advocates a formula of non-resistance: Does not matter - please yourself.

Here he describes the Neither-Neither rule and tells us to remember to laugh at all times, to recognise all things and to resist nothing: then there is no conflict, incompatibility or compulsion as such... 'Please yourself' is its creed. That last quote suggests to me that here in 1913 Spare was the mouthpiece for the negative or 'feminine' counterpart of Crowley's very positive "Do what thou wilt". Two poles of the same 93 current as it were.

In support of these passages I could quote the whole of Taoist literature known to me. In the second chapter of the Tao Te Ching is : "Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words".

I will not quote at length the description of the Death Posture and the kindred practices. There are many preliminary practices as innumerable as sins, futile of themselves but designative of the ultimate means.

You strain to your full height, standing on tiptoe with neck stretched, hands clasped behind your back and arms rigid: breathe deeply and quickly until you feel giddy and exhausted. This prepares you for the Death Posture; you lie lazily on your back as in a yawn, sigh and smile. Forget time and the world.

Or else stare hard at yourself in a mirror until the vision crumbles, the effort is forgotten and you have a feeling of unreachable immensity. This should be practiced before the actual Death Posture in order to give some idea of the mental state.

Let him practice it daily, accordingly till he arrives at the centre of desire. Thus by hindering belief and semen from conception they become simple and cosmic. (The latter being a reference to the alchemical transmutation of sexual energy).

I like this sentence: The primordial vacuity (or belief) is not by the exercise of focussing the mind on a negation of all conceivable things ... bit by doing it now, not eventually. It suggests a quasi-Zen story which might describe a pupil who asks Spare how to achieve liberation and receives the answer "There ! you've missed it". In other words: at any instant liberation is so close that the very act of asking the question was to miss by delay an opportunity to jump out of time and grab it.

It was not at all clear to me what the connection could be between Spare's magic system and the Egyptian system with its richness of Gods until I recalled the remarkable 19th and 20th verses of the eleventh chapter of the Divine Pymander of Hermes as given in G.R.S. Mead's Thrice Greatest Hermes as 'Mind unto Hermes'. I quote part of the 20th verse which bridges this gap quite comfortably, being highly appropriate to Spare's work, yet surely of Egyptian inspiration:

"Then in this way know God; as having all things in Himself as thoughts, the whole Cosmos itself.

If, then, thou does not make thyself like unto God thou canst not know him. For like is knowable to like alone.

Make then thyself to grow to the same stature as the Greatness which transcends all measure: leap forth from every body; transcend all time; become Eternity; and thus shalt thou know God.

Conceiving nothing as impossible unto thyself, think thyself deathless and able to know all - all arts, all sciences, the way of every life.

Become more lofty than all height, and lower than all depth. Collect into thyself all sense of all creatures - of fire, and water, dry and moist. Think that thou art at the same

time in every place - in earth, in sea, in sky, not yet begotten, in the womb, young, old and dead, in after-death conditions.

And if thou knowest all these things at once - times, places, doings, qualities and quantities; thou canst know God"

(vi)

In his next chapter 'The Cloudy Enemies Born of Stagnant Self-Hypnotism', Spare endeavours to clarify for us his use of the word 'Belief', natural belief rather than the conscious 'faith' that he dismisses in his first chapter. He says:

"The Nature of belief equals all possibilities ultimately true by identification through culture to an idea of time, so what is not timely is not true, and what is not true, prognostication. Thought of one thing implies the possibility of another idea as contradicting but not dissociated, belief is to make "one" more convincing.

The Centre of belief is love for one's self, projecting environment for fulfillment but allowing its distortion to simulate denial, an ambition to become ulterior to self-desire, but you cannot get further than the centre, so one multiplies (believes) in order to be more unaware of the fundamental."

Here Spare is obviously talking of different levels of belief, indeed he refers to those in desire as refusing to believe what they believe. It is the most deeply unconscious belief that projects the basic matter of the environment, the lesser and more conscious beliefs merely add fleeting impressions or distortions until we come to complete consciousness which is baffled by this environment and struggles to master it. Thus the very conscious desire for, say, riches is going to evoke opposition from the environment, as it is inevitable that at some level there must be a belief which places a limit on one's potential wealth. This schism, or blindness, is necessary for we are escapists. If nature did not pretend to surprise us we would fall back into self.

The basic belief of science (and so of a fairly important part of any scientist's mind) is that the universe is ultimately dead and boring. The advance of science slowly kills the universe but there are little bursts of surprise on the wavefront. Television regularly announces amazing new discoveries or theories which threaten to overturn scientific thought - but we hear no more of them. Either they too prove boring or else they are clobbered to death in turn.

So we see that nature is in fact playing with science, throwing her scraps like feeding a caged monkey with nuts. Thus she is ever saving science from falling into the horror of ultimate success. The burning ecstasies of hopeless love illustrate how greater denial brings greater desire and less danger of reality.

So effective magic requires that we get our desire away from the Great Abortionist and down into the unconscious. The sigil system of Spare's is designed with this purpose in mind.

At last this chapter provides the cynic with the disappointment he invites. Spare does not overlook his philosophy's own limitations. We must use the Neither-Neither everywhere, we must disperse all belief in Spare's own writing by the Neither-Neither. Indeed we must dispel the conception of The Neither-Neither by the Neither-Neither and believe it is 'not necessary. Some of us will find that rather easy!

For another account of the transcending of dualities by their annihilation see the remarks on the Mystical Marriage in Aleister Crowley's Liber Aleph - chapters 20-25 in particular.

(vii)

In 'Self Love as a Moral Doctrine and Virtue' we have a chapter which could almost have been assembled from quotes from Nietzsche and the Tao Te Ching. Consider the opening sentences. "The criterion for action, is freedom of movement, timeliness of expression, pleasuring. The value of moral doctrine is in its freedom for transgression. Simplicity I hold most precious." Nietzsche would also have been happy to read:

"The True teacher implants no knowledge, but shows him his own superabundance  
Which is nearer you, self-love and its immorality, or love and morals?  
Perfect charity acquires, hence it benefits all things by not giving. Knowledge is but  
the excrement of experience."

In the comparison with the Taoist doctrine I will present Spare's quotes from this chapter in alternation with Tao Te King quotes, labelling them S and T accordingly.

S: Are not the most simple things in the world the most perfect, pure, innocent, and their properties the most wonderful?

T: The Uncarved Block though seemingly of small account is greater than anything that is under heaven.

S: When faith perishes then duty to moral doctrines perishes, we are without sin and endure for ever in all-devouring love.

T: Banish human kindness, discard morality, And the people will be dutiful and compassionate.

S: It is because I know without learning...

T: Therefore the sage... learns to be without learning.

S: Control is by leaving things to work out their own salvation...

T: Governing a large state is like boiling small fish [i.e. they must not be over-handled]

S: He is akin to the great purpose. His actions explained for him, good seen of his evil,

without knowing, everyone satisfied with his will".

T: Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden: takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction. That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so.

In illustrating these parallel quotes are we trying to prove that Spare has cribbed from earlier sources? No. Instead we are trying to get over the difficulty that Spare's term 'Self-Love' will be repulsive to many of us because it suggests something that we think we know about, and despise. But I ask you, is your idea of selfishness really deserving of the word 'Love' in 'Self-Love'?

By taking two, at first sight very different, texts and finding in them some similarity in their liberating ideas we hope to have illustrated alternative routes to Spare's theory which will help to dilute initial misunderstanding. On the other hand we've also made it possible to treble the misunderstanding!

A final cheek-moistening quote from Spare: May the idea of God perish and with it women; have they not both made me appear clownish?  
(viii)

In the 'Doctrine of Eternal Self-Love' earlier passages are summarised and further illustration of the qualities and merits of Self Love given.

If this book had a contents list, the title of the next chapter would draw our attention straight away; it is 'The Complete Ritual and Doctrine of Magic.' Firstly he mentions secrecy, then he gives a definition of magic that would please an alchemist: Magic, the reduction of properties to simplicity, making them transmutable to utilise them afresh by direction, without capitalisation, bearing fruit many times.

Spare then reminds us that we must avoid "Deliberation, over-consciousness and concentration". This is the most tricky part, the 'letting go' of the desire so that it can speed to the attainment of its goal; for conscious desire does not work. Nor will we need to hallucinate.

The process he describes is for those who have not transcended the law of duality (what a relief!) and so it needs to work within that law. Therefore the magician must wait until he has another desire that is of similar intensity to the one he wishes to achieve. This desire will then be sacrificed in order that the first should be attained. An example would be for the magician to choose a time when a friend has finally let him down, his belief in his friend has then collapsed and the sacrifice of this friendship will answer the purpose: This free entity of belief and his desire are united to his purpose by the use of sigils or sacred letters.

So the practitioner is in a state of despair, he constructs a sigil to formalise his wish and he seats himself in meditation. He calms his mind of all thought except of that one visualised sigil. (It is no longer a 'wish' that is in his mind, but rather a simple geometric shape). In meditation he draws his consciousness slowly into one part, so that no outside impressions disturb.

This produces a feeling of detached calm, of balance which recalls the passage in Crowley's Book of Lies: "The Universe is in equilibrium; therefore he that is without it, though his force be but a feather, can overturn the Universe".

Only the sigil is retained in thought, it is to be used as the 'chalice'. Withdrawing his consciousness to a point gives a feeling of surrounding immensity. he is the point, around him is infinity - Crowley would describe this as Hadit and Nuit and indeed the ultimate marriage to which he refers is here reflected. For Spare says he must now imagine a union taking place between himself (The mystic union of the Ego and the Absolute). This should produce a sexual ecstasy, but it is not desired that it should become physical in manifestation. The nectar of this ecstasy - The syllabus of Sun and Moon - should be slowly sipped from the chalice.

The correct mental state should be one where he is beyond all desire, the original object of the operation is forgotten and no longer of interest, except that he is still holding this apparently meaningless sigil in mind.

But should he fail, and still be yearning for this desire, then he is in danger of being obsessed by it. Instead of being tidily packaged and dropped deep into the unconscious the desire is free to take over his mind at this moment of extreme vulnerability. All the free energy of his original disappointment is at its disposal.  
(ix)

So the next chapter is a 'Note on the Difference of Magical Obsession (Genius) and Insanity'.

He criticises spiritualism in a way that is customary amongst magicians. Whereas the magician consciously chooses an obsession, and therefore has ultimate power over it through knowledge of how to bind it, the passive medium lays himself open to unknown obsessions. Should the uninvited obsession in his mind become as strong as his own Ego then there is a split in personality, a loss of control.

Spare concludes that Disease and Insanity arise when there is a free energy within, which has no role to play in the vital economy. This free energy, which should have been used to vitalise a sigil, is like an unemployed work force which, having no part in the vital economy, will seek expression through resistance. (This suggests an analogy with some theories about

cancer cells).  
(x)

The next chapter called 'Sigils' (subtitled 'The Psychology of Believing') tells us very little about sigils, except that it reminds us at the end that the magical sigil should not be allowed to return to consciousness and known, but must be repressed and forgotten.

Spare suggests that the state of mind most productive of genius is one which is open to all perceptions and is immoral in that it allows free association of ideas without the strict rules of past belief or knowledge.

He asks what has happened to our childish wonder when we used to see things for the first time and marvel at them, asking 'childish' (i.e. philosophical) questions. Is it not that the world is now sterilised by our patterns of 'knowledge' (i.e. beliefs), which are like a curtain between us and surprise?

The difference between this receptivity and the scorned receptivity of the spiritualist in the last chapter is clearly one which calls for care - or at least 'innocence'!  
(xi)

Here follows a nice chapter called 'The Sub-Consciousness'.

He begins by announcing that all geniuses have active sub-consciousnesses, and they also have some, not relevant, powerful interest or hobby which serves to distract consciousness from their aim from time to time, with the result that the subconscious can work on it. Thus it is that inspiration comes at odd moments. It DOES demand a previous exhaustion of concentration but it is unlikely to arise at that time, but rather when the consciousness has wearily looked away, or we have 'slept on it'. (A booklet by W.H. Easton called Creative thinking and How to Develop it reprinted from the August 1946 edition of Mechanical Engineering' supports this observation).

Thus it is that we must forget our wish once it is sigillised. An important note is that it is no good to wish the opposite as such, because that is too reminiscent of the original wish; instead we must consider irrelevant topics.

Spare's idea of the sub-consciousness is more akin to Jung's Collective Unconscious than any lesser function. Assuming an evolutionary history, he points out that just as our evolutionary history is illustrated in the development of the foetus, so also is it registered in our whole being. If the human brain has developed from the basic mammalian brain - rather than having been miraculously and independently created - then its deeper ('deeper' for the evolutionary growth is apparently outward) structure must be common to all mammals including man. Progressing backward, the different branches of evolution converge and we find that we contain the blueprints for all creation right back to our cell structure which reflects the earliest forms of life.

So, by regressing into this 'Storehouse of Memories' we can contact all the strata of previous life forms. But evolution is largely a process of increasing complexity - resulting in decreasing competence and ability. By the slow processes of conscious thought Man has to struggle to overcome his obvious limitations. His technology has provided him with the swiftness of the leopard, the ability to fly, and resistance to the seasons; yet he is still not as mighty as the microbe! However we can contact these deep layers by the use of Spare's sigils and can thus tap their powers directly.

The only reason why our customary methods of learning and study ever produce results is that they can produce this exhaustion which diverts the concentration.

All ritual and ceremony is worthless - originally devised to amuse and later to deceive. But, as is customary, the deceivers end up by deceiving themselves more than their victims.  
(xii)

In 'Sigils. Belief With Protection' he describes his system of sigils. The exact process is not really important.

Throughout the book his illustrations are decorated with beautiful sigils of different styles. He has his own magical alphabets - he uses six different alphabets in this book and does not explain any of them, because a magical alphabet is a set of symbols you devise to communicate with your subconscious and so should be of your own private design (like the perfect 'personal' tarot pack). "Sigils are monograms of thought".

He suggests that we write in block capitals and superimpose the letters into a monogram. So 'WOMAN' could become for example :

In this way then he shows how the desire 'This is my wish to obtain the strength of a tiger' can reduce to a single monogram.

He goes on to describe methods of use in a passage which makes one wonder whether he is amplifying the instructions of his 'Complete Ritual' or whether he is giving an alternative approach. He talks of obtaining vacuity by some means, quoting as good examples: mantras and asana, women and wine, tennis and patience, or walking in concentration. He adds that none of these are necessary to someone who has for a moment attained the state of beyond-duality, as by the Neither-Neither; so perhaps this is a 'lesser' magic for those who have not mastered the Complete Ritual earlier discussed?

Indeed it appears that Spare has followed the best scheme for a book on practical magic: he



has started with the theory of perfection - and thus repelled the merely curious - has proceeded to describe his 'High Magic' and thus repelled dabblers - and only now is he telling us 'how to do spells'.

When one is exhausted the sigil form is held in mind until it grows vague and vanishes - taking with it the desire.  
(xiii)

The next chapter on 'Symbolism' extends the theory to symbols in general. He describes how an artist can know a truth in symbol form long before the scientist uncovers it. The Egyptians in this way understood the theory of evolution - as reflected in images of their gods - but they only understood it as far as was useful in their lives; they did not pursue this knowledge as we have done.  
(xiv)

His views on art are enlarged in 'Automatic Drawing as a Means to Art'. He provides a parallel with his law of self-love which had been praised as a law which permitted its own transgression; for the laws of art exist and yet they need not tyrannise. As soon as one law begins to dominate we are free to create a whole new art form by breaking that very law.

He describes how to use a sigil as a basis for an automatic drawing. First you train the hand to be free of inhibition, to wander freely in easy loops and curls ( as distinct from the manic scribble of frustration). Then a sigil is used to tap the subconscious level corresponding to the desired picture (he illustrates a drawing based on a bird karma) whilst the consciousness is constrained elsewhere - for example by staring at your thumb in a moonbeam's light until "it is opalescent and suggests a fantastic reflection of yourself..."

(xv)

He finishes with the chapter 'On Myself', in which he questions all he has done, and his worth or 'right' to do it. So cautious is he that he does not even dare to fully believe his own ideas and yet: "Poor though I be my contentment is beyond your understanding."

It is difficult to restrain oneself from asking a question about Spare which is only a slightly less subtle form of the old wisecrack: "If you're so clever why aren't you rich?". After all if it was really Einstein's genius which has led to the discovery of the atomic power which now holds the world in balance, why did he fail to become a world dictator? Can you really believe that he did not try?

The Tao Te Ching says:

I alone am inactive and reveal no signs,  
Like a baby that has not yet learned to smile,  
Listless as though with no home to go back to.  
The multitude all have more than enough.  
I alone seem to be in want.  
My mind is that of a fool - how blank !  
Vulgar people are clear.  
I alone am drowsy  
Vulgar people are alert.  
I alone am muddled.  
Calm like the sea;  
Like a high wind that never ceases.  
The multitude all have purpose.  
I alone am foolish and uncouth.  
I alone am different from others  
And value being fed by the Mother.

Austin Spare ends with the sentence:

Alas the futility of the idea of God has not yet reached its limit, all men are liars, appear striving for insanity its climax: while I alone as one prematurely aged, reason tottering on its throne, remain sane, in positive chastity, confessing no conscience, no morals - a virgin in singleness of purpose.

(xvi)

In this essay I have not mentioned his illustrations e.g. 'The Death Posture : Preliminary Sensation Symbolised' where the figure has no head and thus recalls the 'on not having a head' meditation (instead the face is in the heart region). Nor have I considered Spare's life history. But I hope that these notes will encourage readers to persevere with The Book of Pleasure's 'head' meditation (instead the face is in the heart region). Nor have I considered Spare's life history. But I hope that these notes will encourage readers to persevere with The Book of Pleasure.

For the nature of Spare's writing is such that it is possible to read the whole book for the first time and gain absolutely nothing from it. However do not be discouraged, repeated reading is satisfying. At least Spare has the decency to make his books SHORT.

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