

Rawn's Commentary Upon *Initiation Into Hermetics* By Franz Bardon

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Introduction --

It is my honor to present to you some of my thoughts about the course of initiation presented in Franz Bardon's "Initiation Into Hermetics" (IIH).

[I will be employing the 1999 Merkur Publishing edition throughout my comments. The differences between this edition and earlier editions are minor. The only change is that the present English translation is easier for the modern reader than the original translation.]

When a student first approaches this work, questions inevitably arise. While the best way to answer these questions is for the student to meditate and consider and come to the answers on their own, this seldom satisfies the beginner and many will put the book aside out of frustration. These days, now that the Internet offers us an easy way of getting in contact with others who have been doing the work of IIH for many years, there is little reason for the beginner to have their simpler questions become a barrier to progress.

The answers to the deeper questions though, must still be sought out by the student on their own. In these matters, experience is still the only reliable teacher!

The thoughts that I proffer here come from my own personal experience of working through the Steps in IIH. It is up to the student to prove or disprove what I have written through their own pursuit of the work. What I write is only meant to expand upon some of the things that Franz Bardon outlined, it is not meant to supplant what Bardon wrote. Hopefully, my words combined with the text of IIH, will make it easier for the student to begin the work with greater confidence.

I will cover only the section of IIH from "Theory" through "Step Four". Beyond that point, the student should reach the stage where asking questions from an external source will be unnecessary. Answering questions that relate to Step Five and beyond, is better suited to on-line dialogue such as the FranzBardonMagi board at yahoogroups.com. But, in my experience, such questions are rare except when they come from someone who has not reached that point in the work.

IIH presents a coherent course of initiation. It, unlike many modern systems of initiation, begins at the beginning. Each Step builds upon what precedes it. Therefore, it is prudent that the student skip nothing along the way. What seems simple in the beginning will prove itself to be essential to success in the longer run.

Initiation is not a race. It matters little if it takes you 30 years to reach the 10th Step or if it takes only 10 years. Progress at your own pace (without dawdling) and practice both patience and per-

severance. I have absolutely no doubt that anyone who sincerely wants to take up this work will meet with the desired success if they steadfastly pursue IIH.

Each of the 10 Steps in IIH is broken down into three categories of work: Spirit (Mental), Soul (Astral) and Physical. Each of these categories are to be pursued hand-in-hand. This brings about a balanced progress that is essential to true advancement in magic. Never should the student go, for example, from the Step One physical exercises, on to the Step Two physical exercises, until the Mental and Astral exercises of Step One have also been mastered. If a certain set of exercises within a Step come easily for you and you complete that category of exercises before you complete the other categories within that Step, then simply improve upon your successes while finishing up the rest of the Step's requirements. The standard of success Bardon lays out for all three parts of each Step must be attained before progressing to the next Step.

The work of IIH requires discipline and commitment. At first the student will need to carve out the time from their daily schedule to accommodate the exercises. I advise that, if possible, the beginner devote at least an hour first thing in the morning and an hour each evening before going to sleep. But do allow yourself occasional exceptions to this regimen -- five days a week will suffice, but seven is better. Eventually this discipline will become a joy and the period during which it is an onus will pass quickly.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider this BEFORE one begins the work. First, the student should read through IIH a few times and get a feel of exactly what will be required. If you see no way in which your busy life can accommodate the time required for this sort of work, then it is best if you put off beginning the work until such a time as you are capable of reshaping your life. In the mean time, you can initiate the changes in your life that will eventually allow you the time for these pursuits.

Be good to yourself. Initiation is not meant to be torture. It is supposed to be, if not fun, at least interesting and inspiring. Improving oneself can be (and in my opinion, SHOULD be) a joyous pastime.

Initiation is not a path toward great riches nor power over others. If these are your goals then you will meet with no genuine success in the pursuit of magic. Asking yourself the question of why you are choosing this work, is essential. It is wise to spend a goodly amount of time thinking about your reasons for taking on this responsibility.

Throughout the course of IIH, your intentions will be tested over and over again. These mark the various "pitfalls" or "blinds" that are spoken of by those who have made progress in the work. Only the "correct" motives will carry the student through certain parts of the path of initiation. If your motives are too selfish or too egotistical, then you will run into a wall and only a reevaluation of your motives will free you. This is a good thing and it is not meant as a blockage, per se. Instead, it is a vital part of initiation that guarantees that the student will either stay on course or give up the pursuit.

In this modern age when information is so easily accessible, we have the habit of seeking answers

from external sources. We have lost the habit of looking within for our answers and of trying our damndest to figure things out for ourselves. While it is easy to accumulate a great deal of information and store it in our minds as knowledge, it is only through experience that information is transformed into understanding. The process of initiation is one of experience, not a mere accumulation of information. Thus, it is important to contemplate every idea you encounter in IHH and puzzle things out for yourself whenever possible. This is especially true when it comes to the "Theory" section. Much of what Bardón says in this section is a mere outline of the facts and is meant less as an answer to all your questions and more as something to spur your own meditation and contemplation. Please rest assured that some of the most confusing bits will clarify themselves over time as you gather more experience.

Initiation requires of the student a radical self-honesty. Watch out for kidding yourself that you have attained to something that you have not in fact attained to. And always be ready to lovingly criticize yourself.

We each have within us a most reliable source of guidance. This is the interior voice of our individual conscience. One of the most important lessons that I have learned is to ALWAYS listen to my conscience. It has never led me astray and I have come to a point where I NEVER disobey its dictates. I advise the same for you. Listen to and follow your conscience and your continued success will be assured!

I wish for you the greatest success in your path of initiation!

Theory --

The Elements:

The philosophy of Elements is, obviously, a human construct. It is one way in which we humans have attempted to describe the workings of the universe. But even though it is a human construct this does not negate the fact that it describes a real thing. To my mind, it is a description that works well. It gives me a tool by which I can work with the actual forces that it tries to describe. Granted, it is imperfect and does not exactly match the reality of things, but then again, an exact match would be impossible.

The forces that underlie the Elements do exist regardless of whether or not we try to describe them and regardless of whether or not humans are around to perceive them.

There are two very important things to keep in mind when working with the Elements. First is that the Elements are not the same as the physical phenomena whose names they share. For example, the Element Fire is not the same as the physical phenomena of fire. The names of the Elements are derived through the "law" of analogy. This means that the Element Fire possesses many of the characteristics of physical fire, such as expansiveness, heat, brightness, and the ability to transform what it touches.

All too often the student falls into the trap of drawing too close a relationship between the Elements and their analogous physical phenomena. This tends to obscure the deeper significance of the Elements and should, therefore, be avoided.

Second in importance regarding the Elements is the fact that in our physical realm, the Elements never act alone. All physical things are a combination of the Elements. For example, the physical phenomena of fire is not composed solely of the Fire Element. Instead, physical fire is composed of all four Elements working together (plus the fifth -- Akasha). A physical thing may show a predominance of one Element over the others, but it still contains all four.

The Elements exist in their pristine, separate sense only in the most rarified reaches of the astral and mental planes.

The Electric and the Magnetic Fluids:

Bardon does not write extensively about the Electric and Magnetic Fluids in the Theory section of IHH. He does, however, speak of it in the ten Steps and in his other books, especially KTQ and Q&A. But in no one spot does he clearly and exhaustively define these terms.

Probably the first question that arises is what does he mean by "Fluid"? By Fluid, Bardon indicates an energy or essence that manifests motion and handles in a manner similar to water. Both Fluids are dynamic things. IHH teaches the student how to manipulate or wield these Fluids, form

them into whatever shape is desired and impregnate them with any corresponding wish.

These two Fluids are the primal polarity and are effective in every plane of existence. The Electric Fluid is the positive, expansive pole and the Magnetic Fluid is the opposite negative, contractive pole. As with a physical magnet, these poles cannot be separated -- they are manifest through the continuum that unites them in their eternal embrace. Both forces are equal and interdependent, and have been described in every culture in one way or another. At the highest level, these poles are expressed through the two faces of The One.

The Fluids are the root of the Elements Fire and Water. This is why, in the course of IHH, the student looks within the Fire Element for the Electric Fluid and within the Water Element for the Magnetic Fluid. It is in fact, difficult for the student to at first differentiate between the primary Elements and the Fluids. But there is a difference -- it's just difficult to explain.

Within the Fire Element, the Electric Fluid is found in the Fire's expansiveness, heat and light. The Magnetic Fluid is found within the Water's contractiveness, cold and darkness. The Magnetic Fluid gives form to the Electric force and everywhere in our world, they act in unison. The Fluids are the two primal forces and the Elements are their extensions or modifications.

Each of the Elements can be said to have a specific ElectroMagnetic charge. The Fire Element is predominantly Electric and the Water, Magnetic. The Air represents a balance of the two Fluids (the continuum which connects these two poles) -- the perfect hermaphrodite, capable of accepting the influence of either Fluid. The fourth pole of the quadrapolar magnet, Elemental Earth, represents the combined action of these three ElectroMagnetic charges.

This is often difficult for the novice to understand. It requires careful consideration to see how, at a philosophical level, the combination of parts can sometimes equal more than the sum of its parts. In this case, the amplification of effect occurs because the parts which combine are each dynamic things. Their dynamism makes them interactive and together, they make something new which does not exist at the level of their independent parts. Thus the Elemental Earth contains not only the Electric and Magnetic balance of Air, but also the raw polarities of Fire and Water. Together, they work in a dynamic, rhythmic and cyclic manner. It is the combination and interaction of these three dynamic parts that causes things to manifest solidity in each of the three mediums or substances (Mental, Astral and Physical).

The serious work with the Fluids doesn't begin until the eighth Step of IHH, so there is little point in listing too many correspondences for the Fluids here. Between now and Step Eight, you'll have plenty of time to become familiar with the Fluids on your own. In the mean time, here are a few notes from Bardon's own comments as relayed by his direct students in the book "Questions and Answers" --

MENTAL (page 24, question #19): "The Electric Fluid fills abstract thoughts with pure Electric Fluid, warmth, expansion and dynamics. The Magnetic Fluid fills them with pure Magnetic Fluid and the opposite attributes. For example, the Electric Fluid expresses itself through its attributes in willpower, while the Magnetic Fluid expresses itself in the antipole of the will, that is, in man-

ifested belief, an aspect of the productive universal power."

ASTRAL (page 47, question #12): "Clairvoyance is an Electric ability of the astral body; clairsentience and psychometry are Magnetic abilities."

PHYSICAL (page 65, question #5): "If we are under the influence of the Electric Fluid, then the Fire Element is more effective in us. In this case we feel hot, or we are active to higher degrees, we work more diligently, and therefore we are internally satiated with the Fire Element. Through the increased influence of the Magnetic Fluid we perceive coldness; should the Magnetic Fluid become satiated within us, elimination increases."

(page 66, question #6): "On the surface of the human body, the ElectroMagnetic Fluid is effective as radiating life-magnetism. The right side of the body is (in the case of a right-handed person) the active or Electrical side, whereas the left side of the body is passive or Magnetic. The opposite is the case with a left-handed person.

"The Electric Fluid, through its expansion, causes radiating electrons on the inside of every body [i.e., physical thing], which on the other hand are attracted by the Magnetic Fluid of the earth. [This explains "gravity".] The Electric Fluid is located in the Inner of everything created, therefore also in the center of the earth, while the Magnetic Fluid is effective on the surface of the earth on everything created. . . The Electric Fluid produces the acids in all organic or inorganic bodies or substances from a chemical or alchemical point of view, whereas the Magnetic Fluid is effective in an alkaline manner."

Needless to say (but I'll say it anyway), the Electric and Magnetic Fluids are not the same thing as the physical phenomena of electricity and magnetism. While they are analogously related, they are not the same. The physical phenomena of electricity and magnetism are each primarily caused by their corresponding Fluid but they are not purely one or the other Fluid -- they are each composed of the four Elements with a corresponding polarized predominance of either Fire or Water.

It is impossible for me to describe what it feels like to accumulate and project the Fluids. The only way to gain this insight is through direct experience, the key to which is to take careful note, in your daily life, of the qualities I described above and look for them, especially as you work with the Elements.

The "Od":

Bardon mentions "Od" in passing but doesn't really explain what he means by this term. I've heard several definitions of Od but from what I've gleaned of Bardon's definition, he is referring to the character of the individual or, in other words, the individual's expression of their particular Elemental composition.

The Od is primarily Electric in nature. Simply put, it is the energy that we each express through

our accumulated thoughts and emotions. At the mental level, it is our attitude and the quality/quantity of our ideas, seen by how they influence others -- in other words, their emanation. In astral terms, the Od is our astral character or emotional composition, again in its emanative phase of influencing our surroundings. As to our physical body, the Od is the vitality we bring to life and express through our actions. Thus, one with a strong Od is generally outwardly gregarious and active, and one with a weak Od is passive and shy.

These three aspects of the Od work in unison to produce the overall Od.

One place where Bardon speaks of the Od is in the little book "Questions and Answers", under the Astral heading (page 50, question #21). This question concerns astral healing methods and gives an important clue as to what Bardon means by Od:

"We draw this accumulated vital energy directly from the universe and direct it into the astral body of the ailing person without passing it through our own body. Through this we prevent the weakening of our own vitality and at the same time prevent the mixing of our Od (character) with the Od of the ailing person; otherwise we can infect ourselves with the negative attributes of the patient."

While Bardon speaks here only of the Od in relation to astral healing, the same can be said of the mental Od in mental healing and the physical Od during physical healing.

The Quadrapolar Magnet:

Bardon speaks of the Quadrapolar Magnet throughout his books but still, many readers have difficulty with the basic concept, especially those who are not familiar with a Hermetic diagram known as the "Cross of Equated Forces" (CEF). The CEF diagram is a simplified picture of the Quadrapolar Magnet and helps immensely in the understanding of it. Please take a moment to draw one for your own study (or at least visualize along with my description).

Begin by drawing a circle with about a three inch (7.5 cm) diameter. Draw a vertical line, from edge to edge, through the center point of the circle. Then draw a corresponding horizontal line through the center point. This should net a quadrated circle, i.e., an equal-armed cross within a circle.

Now label the poles of the cross. Writing just outside of the circle, put 'Fire' to the right, 'Water' to the left, 'Air' on top, and 'Earth' at the bottom. Just inside the circle write the following: Above the Fire line, put 'Hot', and below, put 'Dry'. Above the Water line, put 'Wet', and below, put 'Cold'. To the left of the Air line, put 'Wet', and to the right, put 'Hot'. To the left of the Earth line, put 'Cold', and to the right, put 'Dry'. At the center of the circle where your two lines intersect, place a heavy dot and label it "Depth Point" or "Aethyr".

If you want to colorize your CEF, you will need to again divide your circle, this time, into eight parts. Reproduce your work of creating the equal-armed cross but this time, place it askew so that

it divides each of the four sections exactly in half. As you will see, this establishes quadrants for each of the Elements instead of just poles for the Elements -- the four poles of the Elements meet the edge of the circle at the center of each Elemental quadrant. Color the right-hand quadrant a bright red for the Fire. Color the left quadrant a cyan blue for Water. The top quadrant should be bright yellow for Air, and the bottom quadrant should be either a deep earthy brown or a deep olive green. [Alternately, you can use the color associations Bardon lists: Red-Fire; blue green-Water; pale, bright blue-Air; and, dark brown, gray, or black for Earth.]

And now, for a final touch, you can divide into halves (along the vertical Air-Earth line), the whole of the paper you are drawing on -- the Electric Fluid on the right and the Magnetic Fluid on the left. With the right-hand side of your page, you should paint the area -- outside of the circle -- a bright red (slightly more blue than the color you used for Fire). Similarly, paint the left side of your page (again, outside of the circle) with a rich blue color (not as bright or as greenish as you used for Water).

You can, through time, add any correspondences you desire to this diagram. What it accomplishes most admirably is to illuminate the ways in which the Elements interact.

The main reason that Bardon used the analogy of a magnet specifically, was to emphasize the interaction not only of the Elements, but more importantly, of the Fluids. Like with a physical magnet, these two opposite poles coexist. They both attract through their similarities and repulse each other through their differences. This is the same situation with the quadrapolar magnet but on a different scale.

The quadrapolar magnet is composed of four poles instead of two.. Three of these poles (the predominantly Electric Fire Element, the predominantly Magnetic Water Element, and the equally balanced ElectroMagnetism of the Air Element) combine and their interaction causes the Earth Element.

Some say that the Earth Element is not a proper Element per se, but is the interaction of the three "true" Elements of Fire, Air and Water. This is only partially true. It IS the interaction of three Elements, but the fact that these Elements are dynamic and therefore interact when in combination, results in the creation of an entirely new factor -- the combination ends up equaling more than the sum of its parts. It is this unique product of the interaction of Fire, Air and Water that we call Earth. Thus the Earth manifests as one of the poles of the quadrapolar magnet.

By the same twists of philosophic thinking, the quadrapolar magnet, just like the common bipolar magnet, is more than its poles. It is also the cumulative interaction of its poles.

At the center of the quadrapolar magnet lies the "Depth Point" that Bardon speaks of in IHH (Step Five) and KTQ. This is nothing other than the Akasha or Aethyr, from which all else sprouts. The Hermetic's universe is infinite and one of the mysteries conveyed by the quadrapolar magnet is that this center point occurs every 'where', 'when', 'why', 'what' and 'who', within that infinity.

The Beings of the Elements:

In the on-line discussion board, the question recently arose as to whether the beings of the Elements are metaphorical and contained in the Psyche, or whether they are independent entities. This is a common question considering how much like a fairytale the writings about these beings sound.

The truth of the matter is that the beings of the Elements are, in and of themselves, entities independent from the human psyche. Their FORMS, however, are not independent from the human psyche. Sound confusing?

The beings of the Elements exist within the astral realm and as such they are seen to have a certain form. Their form is symbolic as is true of any astral form. Thus the form in which they are perceived varies from culture to culture. The European cultures generally view them as Salamanders, Sylphs, Undines and Gnomes, but, for example, an aboriginal African culture might perceive them dressed in an entirely different form.

We humans perceive astral beings differently since we each process our perceptions through different minds. But this does not negate their reality as beings which have an existence separate from our individual minds. It is only their astral FORMS which pertain to the human psyche, not their existence.

Karma / Cause and Effect:

It is prudent for the student to contemplate hard and long upon the topic of cause and effect. This law is a friend of the magician as it is the workings of this law that magicians use to craft their ascent. For example, as you work at improving your character, you will follow certain practices which will cause your negative traits to be replaced by more positive ones. Cause and effect is why practice makes "perfect".

Yet the magician will face instances where cause and effect cannot be used to advantage. A good example is in the work of healing either one's own self or another person. There are some illnesses which have a deep karmic root and the magician may find that there is nothing that he/she can do to improve a patient's condition. Likewise, there are certain inevitable events (hardships) that the magician cannot divert due to the fact that they are deeply rooted in a person's own karma. Seldom is the magician allowed to interfere with another's karmic debt.

It takes a certain amount of wisdom for the magician to accurately discern when she/he should leave a situation alone. This is only gained through experience.

Physical, Astral and Mental Planes:

This, like the philosophy of the Elements, is a human construct that seeks to describe universal

phenomena. Its biggest failing, in my opinion, is that it implies separate, clearly defined realms. The truth of the matter however, is that the universe is a unified whole. There is no exact point where the physical plane ceases and the astral plane begins. Likewise, there is no exact point where the astral realm ends and the mental realm begins. One graduates into the next and all three interpenetrate each other.

We divide the universe into these three parts simply because it is an easier, more convenient way to grasp its wholeness. Like all such constructs, it is only a tool -- it gives us the practical ability to manipulate universal forces.

A simple rule-of-thumb to remember is that for a physical thing to exist, it must also have existence at the astral and at the mental level.

The astral realm exists due to the descent of the mental realm into (or towards) the physical realm. It is, for the most part, an intermediary phase. The astral substance translates rapidly into physical manifestation and is easily manipulated by mind.

In terms of our human being, our mental body corresponds to our conscious awareness and it penetrates both our astral and physical forms. When we perceive our mental body, its shape and color reflects our state of mind. It takes on a shape similar to our physical dimensions only when we spread our awareness evenly throughout our physical body.

Our mental body does not feel our surroundings in a manner similar to the perceptions of our physical senses. The senses of the mental body are merely analogous to the physical senses. For example, there is a mental sense that shares some of the characteristics of physical sight, but the mental sight reveals a far different universe than that of physical sight.

Our astral body corresponds to our emotional being or personality and it penetrates our physical being. When we perceive our astral body, its shape is very similar to our physical body and its color reflects the state of our personality and emotions.

The senses of our astral body are very similar to those of our physical body, yet also similar to those of our mental body. The astral senses mediate between those of the mental and physical bodies.

A good way to tell the difference between an astral journey and a mental journey is to gauge the degree to which our perceptions of our surroundings match those of normal physical perception. During an astral journey one will be able to feel texture, heat and cold, etc., and will be able to hear sounds, smell odors, and taste flavors. During a mental journey however, there will be no physical-like sensations.

Our physical body is temporary. It lives for a certain amount of time and then dissolves back into the universe and its constituents disperse. Our astral body is also temporary yet of longer duration than our physical body. Eventually, it also dissolves. Only our mental body or spirit is eternal. It descends into a long succession of temporary astral and physical forms but does not itself

dissolve.

The three bodies of the human being serve as a handy analogy for understanding the interaction of the three corresponding realms. One of the advantages of Bardon's system is that it directly relates the three realms to the student's three bodies. In this way, the student learns to experience each realm by first experiencing its impact upon their personal experience. The path leads from the intimately personal to the universal.

Religion:

The question of religion is often troubling for the beginning student. One is faced with deciding how to combine one's religious viewpoint (if the student even has a religion to which he/she adheres) with that of magic. Each student must, of course, puzzle this out for themselves.

The only advice that I can offer is that you keep an open mind. Truly, magic can coincide with any religion. It has indeed taken every form throughout the ages and can be found within every religion known to humanity if one looks with eyes educated in the rudiments of magic.

To the magician, the most important part of religion is the feeling of devotion that it instills in the practitioner. Devotion, especially as it manifests through the act of worship, is a very powerful force that the magician can employ in their process of spiritual ascent.

Asceticism and Sexuality:

Bardon is very clear about what he means by asceticism. Basically, he is speaking of self-discipline and self-control. He always recommends a balanced approach that does not stray into extremism of any kind. Nonetheless, the question frequently arises as to whether or not the student should abstain from all forms of sex.

While many different systems advise abstinence from sex as a way of attaining purity or of increasing the will power, etc., this is not the case with Bardon's system. For the magician, it is clear that a complete abstinence from something so inherent and natural to human physiology as sex, is a form of extremism that produces little more than imbalance. There may be occasions in the magician's life when a temporary abstinence from sexual release is productive, but this is rare and only for very specific tasks.

In general, a healthy sexuality is a vital part of leading a healthy, well balanced life. Not only is it an essential bodily function, it is also an essential part of one's emotional well being.

Many male magicians practice what is called "retention of the seed" and report that this is beneficial on many levels. This is a simple technique of putting pressure on the tubes which carry the semen and thereby preventing ejaculation. This does not usually adversely effect the male orgasm and in fact, often heightens the energetic effect that orgasm has upon the male body.

Several years ago, a fellow said to me that homosexuality is due to an imbalance of the Water Element and that it was something that the magician should overcome. After a little discussion it became clear that his feelings about homosexuality had nothing to do with magic, per se. His bias was due to his upbringing and his personal morals and was truly not founded upon the philosophy of the Elements.

In point of fact, this aspect of sexuality has nothing to do with one's Elemental balance. Homo-, bi- and hetero-sexuality are all natural and none is more nor less healthy than another. I should hope that no student will fear that their specific sexuality prevents them from following a magical path.

The only important parts of sexuality that effect one's spiritual growth and advancement in magic, are how one feels about one's own sexual orientation and how one treats others with whom one is having a sexual relationship. In other words, it is the emotional and moral aspects of sexuality -- those parts that the magician can change and improve upon -- that are of concern to spiritual ascent.

Getting back to the main topic; other forms of asceticism, such as starvation, self-flagellation, self-deprivation, and so on, are not advisable. These practices only produce imbalance. Equilibrium is achieved through moderation and disciplined control, and this is the path recommended by Franz Bardon.

Time:

Time is not a subject that Bardon discussed in the "Theory" section of IIIH. Nonetheless, I think it is of such importance to the student of magic that I have chosen to say a few words about it here.

It is difficult to separate the objective reality of time from our subjective, human perception of it. Both are of concern to the magician.

As physical human beings we experience time as a thing which stretches behind and in front of us. To us, time either seems to move forward, or we seem to move forward through time. Either way, we perceive time as having forward movement.

To keep track of this forwardness, we have constructed elaborate methods of measuring time's passage. We divide time into seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, etc.

At the moment that I'm writing this, it is 1:10pm, Pacific Standard Time, on March 3rd, 2001. This fact has relevance to my mundane existence in that it helps me place myself into context with my scheduled routine, but as a magician, it has little relevance to me.

In magic, there is only one aspect of time that has true relevance, and that is the present moment or now. The exceptions to this are when the magician needs to set a duration to a certain magi-

cal act (such as when keeping a magical healing effective till a patient is well) or when aligning a certain ritual with favorable astrological events, etc.

The essence of time is sequential change. The number of changes that occur within each moment are truly infinite. There is no stasis -- no moment when change ceases and everything remains the same. This is the crux of what differentiates our subjective perception of time from the objective reality of time.

As physical human beings, we are not capable of perceiving the infinite number of changes occurring at each moment. All we can do is grasp hold of a small few of the changes at a one time. The mechanics of human perception are such that we take the equivalent of a photograph of the present moment -- altering it into a static, unchanging picture of events -- and then we decode its significance to us. This happens very rapidly and we develop a chain of these stop-action images and from this process we get the impression of forward movement similar to that derived from watching a motion picture made up of 24 static images per second.

This has the effect of putting us ever so slightly out of temporal and emotional sync with real-time or objective time. In objective time, there is only one part -- the present moment or now. Objectively, the Now is eternal and in a ceaseless state of change. It has no movement -- it simply IS.

The present moment has three components: 1) Infinite Change. 2) Infinite Continuity. This is what makes one moment so similar to what precedes and follows it. 3) Nowness. This is the sensation of immediacy inherent to our experience of the present moment.

Processed by the human brain, the infinite present moment is perceived as a sequence of finite moments. Thus we feel that there are past moments, present moments and future moments. But the magician should clearly understand that at the physical level of our existence, past is only a function of memory and future is only a function of our creative imagination. Neither past nor future can truly be said to exist presently.

In seeming contradiction to this, we speak of an eternity which encompasses the whole of time's passage and we quibble over whether or not we have free will. I say to you that there is no contradiction, or rather, the contradictions coexist quite comfortably. While the present moment is all that truly exists within the physical realm where time involves itself so intimately with space, in the most ephemeral parts of the non-physical realm where eternity holds sway, all of time (past, present and future, as it were) exists simultaneously and wholly.

Time is multidimensionally infinite. When one experiences eternity, the whole multidimensional infinity of time is perceived as a unified Now. From this perspective, the issue of free will is irrelevant due to the fact that infinity implies that there are enough options to accommodate the infinite number of available courses one can choose to take. In other words, it takes free will to create and to follow the infinite number of choices which fill eternity. From the magical standpoint, this is the root truth behind many of the modern physicist's theories regarding the idea that there are an infinite number of universes following an infinite number of time lines. Eternity is

not filled with infinite possibility; instead, it is filled with infinite actuality. In other words, all possibilities are actualized -- if they were not, then eternity would not be truly infinite.

What prevents us from constantly perceiving eternity with our normal awareness is the fact that as physical human beings we are intimately bound up in sequence. In every regard, one thing follows another. One idea leads to another, one action is followed by an effect, etc. To perceive eternity (or any infinity in its whole, for that matter) requires that one must remove one's self to a non-sequential perspective. This perspective is so foreign to our day-to-day existence that seldom do we even consider its implications, let alone its possibility.

The physical realm is ruled by both space and time. I must say though, it is hard to separate space from time for without the factor of time, space would not exist.

The astral realm mediates between the densely sequentialized physical realm and the non-sequential aspect of the mental realm. Thus the astral realm is not completely bound to substance and for this reason it is said that space does not hold sway in the astral. This is only partially true. For the magician this is especially true when it comes to astral journeying and astral communication with other beings. In other words, the well trained magician may travel to any physical place through the astral realm and communicate with another being regardless of where in space they may reside. Time (i.e., sequence) however, holds a firm grip upon the astral realm and to truly travel throughout time, the magician must work within the mental realm.

The mental realm spans both the realm of sequence (time) and the non-sequential realm (eternity). Within the highest reaches of the mental realm, there is no sequence and one steps out of time, as it were, and views things from an eternal perspective. In the lower reaches of the mental realm (that of sequential thought and physical matter) time is a factor. Only at the level at which the mental realm intersects the physical realm does space become a factor, but this is a small part of the overall mental realm and thus we say that neither time nor space restricts the mental substance.

The student of magic will receive a great benefit by analyzing the nature of human perception and of time itself. Repeated meditations upon this subject, experimentation and reading the available literature will all forward the student's understanding.

And don't worry, there's plenty of time . . . <grin>

Step One

Preface:

In my opinion, the most important thing that differentiates Bardon's system from most all of the other modern systems of magic is that it begins at the beginning. The crucial nature of these elementary, beginning steps is all too often overlooked by other systems and this does an ill service to the novice.

True success with magic is built upon a foundation of simple things -- the firmer the foundation, the farther the student will be able to rise. In Step One, the student will find the basics of the rest of the course: Meditation, Introspection and Self-Discipline. I cannot stress sufficiently how absolutely essential these three things are to genuine magic.

Mental:

With Step One, the "Schooling of the Spirit" concerns three basic types of meditation. The first is titled "Thought Control", but this is sort of a misnomer. What is meant here is not direct, active control of what thoughts arise in your mind; rather, what is referred to is establishing yourself as an active observer of your thoughts. When the observer-perspective is established, the multitude of thoughts that normally arise, will naturally slow of their own accord.

The second type of meditation is titled "Thought Discipline" and has two phases of practice. The first phase is enacted in day-to-day life and involves disciplining your thoughts so that they pertain only to the task at hand. For example, if you're driving to work, you practice the shunning of thoughts that have nothing to do with the act of driving. The second phase of the practice is performed as a normal meditation (i.e., sitting with your eyes closed). Here, one chooses a single thought and shuns the intrusion of all other thoughts. It is best, in this instance, to begin with a simple, captivating thought. Each time your mind wanders, bring it firmly back to the chosen thought.

The third type of meditation is titled "Mastery of Thoughts" and involves the attainment of a vacancy of mind or an absence of thoughts. For those unfamiliar with meditation, this is often the most difficult task. It requires a good deal of will power and persistent effort. When thoughts intrude, you must learn to willfully shun them and regain your emptiness. I assure you that this is not an impossible task!

Q&A--

1) What is "thought control"?

In the initial exercises of Step One, Bardon describes three sorts of mental discipline or medita-

tion. The first type involves merely observing what goes on in your mind. In this exercise, the student does not block any thoughts, s/he merely observes what is present. Given time and repeated practice, you will notice that the flow of thoughts naturally slows down. But what is really happening is that you are re-tuning your mind to another, less cluttered, level of mentation. This is not something that you can force, so it does little good at this stage to be blocking certain thoughts while letting others through, etc.

Of concern here, is the other distractions that arise, such as that car alarm that keeps going off in the distance, or the bark of the neighbor's dog. These sorts of incidents can distract your attention from the observance of your thoughts. While such occurrences are not within your ability to control, your response to them is within your control. So, you must learn how to quickly dismiss these distractions and refocus your attention to the task at hand. At first this may be difficult, but with persistent practice, your ability to refocus will become so quick and absolute that such external events will no longer distract; or rather, the distraction will be so brief that it will not interrupt your practice.

Another sort of distraction is that you will be tempted to pursue the thoughts that arise in your mind. The point here however, is to distance yourself from involvement with your individual thoughts -- you are to be only an observer, not a participator. At first, this is also very difficult, but with persistent practice, you will learn how to distance yourself and observe.

No matter how difficult this exercise may at first be for you, do not give up. This is an essential precursor to the exercises which follow. You already possess the natural, generally unconscious, ability to do everything taught in IHH -- all that the training does is bring what has previously been unconscious, into the realm of a conscious ability.

2) What is "thought discipline" or "one-pointedness"?

The second type of mental discipline or meditation described in Step One, concerns the one-pointedness of mind. Here you focus your thoughts upon a single idea and shun all other intruding thoughts. This practice eventually re-tunes the mind to a still higher level of mentation. If you have learned to manage external distractions with relative ease and have reached the state of an observer of your quieted mind, then all you have to do here is select a single thought and focus solely upon it. The sorts of distraction you will encounter here is the intrusion of associated and non-associated thoughts, and the habit that your mind has of involving itself in these extraneous thoughts.

If we consider the analogy of re-tuning the mind, it becomes obvious that the mind functions in predictable ways at each frequency. At the frequency of our normal day-to-day lives, thoughts come with great frequency and variety, and we exercise little control over them. At the frequency of the observer, the mind contains fewer thoughts, but the mind itself is still also functioning at the level of the day-to-day. The observer exercise merely shifts the focus onto another frequency, it does not make the day-to-day frequency disappear altogether. The same is true of the one-pointedness frequency -- the observer and the day-to-day frequencies still exist, only the

mind is now tuned to a higher frequency. It's as if the background noise of the other frequencies still exist but are relegated to the background and taken out of the current focus.

Dealing with the intrusion of unwanted thoughts during the one-pointedness exercise is much like the management of external distractions you learned during the observer exercise. Part of getting your mind tuned into the correct frequency for one-pointedness, involves learning how to quickly dismiss these extraneous thoughts and refocus your attention. The more you do it, the quicker it becomes, and eventually, it happens so quickly that these distractions no longer interrupt your exercise.

Do not "battle" the natural workings of your mind as this leads only to frustration. The best tact is to coax your mind. You control your mind, not the other way around, and all you need do is take the control that you already have and make it a more conscious thing.

Again, do not give up if at first you fail. This is also a vitally important ability to master for the future exercises.

3) What is "mastery of thoughts" or "emptiness of mind"?

The third and final type of mental discipline or meditation covered in Step One, involves the emptying of the mind ("vacancy of mind"). If you have sufficiently mastered the dismissal of distractions in the previous two exercises and learned how to limit your mind to a single thought, then reaching an emptiness of mind is the next logical step. This is still only a higher frequency of mentation, but it is a very difficult one to tune into unless you have mastered the observer and the one-pointedness exercises.

Perhaps the easiest way to reach the emptiness of mind is to go by stages. First reduce your mind to a single thought and then eliminate even that thought. If you are facile with the dismissal of distractions, then the distractions at this level will be quickly managed.

Before progressing to the Step Two exercises, you should have made good headway with your emptiness of mind exercises. Even a small few minutes of true emptiness will suffice to begin with but you must constantly improve upon this initial success if you wish to make headway further along the course of IIIH. This is a basic magical technique which serves as a foundation for the rest of the work -- without this degree of mental discipline, many things are impossible in magic.

4) Should I keep track of all my distractions or just the major ones?

I recommend that on your first trial of each exercise, you do not bother counting your distractions. Focus instead upon managing them. In the case of the first exercise with the observer perspective, after you get the hang of it, start counting your external distractions -- the ones that actually interfere with your exercise. If you are able to manage a distraction rapidly and it doesn't inter-

rupt you, then don't bother counting it.

With the other exercises concerning the one-pointedness and the emptiness of mind, count all the distractions that interrupt your flow of consciousness. Again, count only those that actually serve to interrupt you.

Counting and keeping track of your disruptions is not a necessary part of mastering these exercises. Its only importance is when it comes to gauging your progress. It can be very beneficial to be able to compare how many interruptions you experienced yesterday or last week, to how many you encountered today. By making these connections, you will be able to see exactly how much progress you have made.

In Step Two, Bardon mentions using a string of beads or knots to keep count of your interruptions during your exercises. This is a good technique once you get used to it. Eventually, counting off another bead or knot becomes second nature and takes no interruptive thought at all.

5) Why is five minutes the goal to aim for?

Five minutes is one of those "at least" sort of goals. It is an arbitrary, but nonetheless good, rule to follow. The idea is not that you should strictly adhere to exactly five minutes; rather, the idea is that you should set a goal that is beyond the reach of your normal activity and one which will take a certain degree of commitment to attain. Never be satisfied with five minutes as the ultimate, end all goal -- always push beyond this limit. Ultimately, you should be able to reach and maintain these states for as long as you desire, regardless of whether that's for five minutes or three hours.

6) Doesn't keeping track of my time cause a distraction?

It can if you let it be. The way I work is I give the exercise a go and when I reach the state required, I flow with it for as long as I am comfortable with. When I'm done, I open my eyes and check the time. But while I'm doing the exercise, I don't think about whether I'm doing it long enough.

Another tact is to work at it until I suffer a major interruption. At that point, I open my eyes and check to see how long I went before I was interrupted. When I find that at least five minutes have passed before I was interrupted and that I can go for the same amount of time consistently, I then feel comfortable in assuming that I have attained my first goal.

How you measure your time is up to you and requires only a little inventiveness. I use a simple electric clock that doesn't tick, placed at my feet or otherwise within view. The problem with this is that I must remember what time it was when I started. Another alternative is to use a simple stopwatch, but that requires starting and stopping. All in all, use whatever method works best for you and affords the least interruption possible.

Astral:

In my opinion, this process of establishing the positive and negative soul mirrors is THE most important phase of initiation. The repercussions of this form of self-analysis will be felt throughout the entire life of the student and will be of great benefit regardless of how far into the Steps of IIIH one penetrates.

What is required here is a radical self-honesty. The student must ruthlessly penetrate through all of his/her illusions regarding who they are and how they act in the world, and excavate the unadorned root of the matter.

Doing this may be very troubling as you face up to parts of yourself that are unappealing. Thus, it is a good idea to be especially kind to yourself as you go through the process of introspection. Treat yourself to enjoyable activities and pastimes that you might not otherwise entertain. Remember that the unsavory parts that you uncover are simply who you are at this moment in time -- never forget that you have the power to change these parts of yourself!

The point of this exercise is not to simply make you feel bad about yourself, but rather, it is to clearly define where you must begin in the process of self-change. If you do not have a clear grasp upon who you really are, then you have no reliable means of knowing what you wish to become, nor little means of getting there.

In this process of self-change, the student transforms what is already present into something better. It is not a method which simply rids your personality of its negative aspects. Instead, it takes the energy of a negative aspect and changes it into a comparable positive manifestation. Here nothing is discarded or lost -- it is all transformed.

In the Step One work, the focus is upon taking stock. The work of transformation is relegated to Step Two. So while you are searching out the positive and negative aspects of your personality, temporarily set aside thoughts about how you want to transform them and leave this part of the task to Step Two.

An important consideration in setting up your positive and negative soul mirrors is that this task is best done with complete privacy. Never should you share your mirrors with another human being! This is important in that it supports the sort of radical self-honesty that the task requires. You must engender the feeling of absolute safety as you write down things, many of which you would never share with another.

A medium sized spiral-bound notepad is sufficient. I advise against using a hard-bound journal because you may find yourself ripping out pages, especially as you begin the work of transferring your list of items to your Element sections. Besides, a spiral binding has the practical advantage of lying flat and does not need to be held open. [NOTE: Do not type your lists on your computer! Writing your lists by hand upon paper personalizes the process and makes it considerably more intimate.] Without being paranoid about it, store your written mirror in a place where you can rest assured that its privacy will not be violated.

Begin, as Bardon advises, with the analysis of your negative traits. Write down absolutely everything that comes to mind, no matter how insignificant it may seem. Place yourself back into the different events of your life and see what there is to find. Keep track during each day of items that arise in the present. Meditate each day about who you are and in this way build a deep understanding of your negative side.

Franz Bardon suggests that you continue this analysis until you have a list of at least 100 items. Many people balk at this total, but I concur that this is a good standard to shoot for. If you find your list growing beyond 100 items, then go with it and continue until you feel satisfied that you have completely uncovered everything. If you find it difficult to make 100 items, then continue relentlessly until you do.

As you analyze your faults, make sure that each item is really something that YOU consider to be a fault. It is you who are judging yourself -- your list should not include the judgments of others.

Bardon suggests a time limit of one to two weeks for this part of the exercise (it is very rare in IHH that he sets out a time limit). This is important because this initial process of self-analysis should have a beginning and an end. It is not something to be dawdled over nor is it something that should be rushed, but it is something that should be attended to within a predetermined amount of time.

At the same time, the process of self-analysis is a life-long responsibility for the serious magician. I have, over the years, gone through this Step One procedure three times. Each time was separated by a few years and each time netted new results. This is another way for me to keep track of my progress, as well as being an exercise that is very helpful to my progress.

The magician must at all times be aware of who she/he is. The process of crafting the personality into what you desire to be is life-long -- achieving true absolute perfection is not possible as physical human beings. The best we can hope for is to be constantly involved with actively improving ourselves.

At any rate, to get back on track with the concerns of Step One: It is tempting, during the construction of your list, to rely upon the list of faults associated with the "Four Tempers" that Bardon included in the IHH text. I advise against this as the items he lists are too general. Your list should be as specific as possible.

Where the Four Tempers come in most handy is in the next phase -- dividing your list into five sections by way of the Elements.

The division into Elements is often a very difficult task, but the important thing to remember at this stage is that it doesn't have to be perfect. Do the best you can (meditating upon the symbolism of the Elements will help immensely) -- you can always move an item to another category later if you find your original designation to be incorrect. In my first go at this process, my "Aethyr/Unknown" section was bigger than any of the other sections! It may take a while to figure out where they truly belong, but don't let that difficulty stop your progress.

Bardon does not specify any particular time limit for this phase, but try your best to accomplish this task within a week, or at the most, two weeks.

The final phase of this part of Step One is to divide each of your five sections into three categories of importance. Bardon suggests that this be done within a week's time, so don't get too carried away with this part of your analysis.

That completes the basic Step One work with the negative mirror and one now shifts to crafting the positive mirror. The same processes and time limits apply to this process. Devote as much effort to this list as you did with your list of negative items. With this phase, instead of trying to avoid feeling too bad about yourself, you will need to avoid getting a swelled head. :)

The end result is two mirrors of 100 or more items each, each divided into five parts containing three categories. This whole process should take no more than three months to accomplish.

Should the other exercises of Step One take you longer than three months to master (which, by the way, is quite common), then it will be wise for you to spend that extra time studying your mirrors. Try to understand your present state of Elemental equilibrium. Look and see how the different items from your lists relate to one another. Often, you can in this way uncover "complexes" built of many items working together. Spend a good amount of time getting to know yourself through this medium.

In closing, I repeat to you, this is a very, very important part of IHH and no effort should be spared in this regard. Even if you come to IHH after many years of introspection and feel that you know yourself very well already, do not skip this step! Even if you have made some progress in the past and then set aside the work for an extended period of time, still do not skip this task -- a repeat of it may go very quickly for you, but still it should not be skipped.

Q&A--

1) What if I can't come up with 100 items for each of my soul mirrors?

Then keep trying till you do! The 100-item requirement is a good one since it pushes you to dig as deeply as you can. This is not meant to be an easy exercise that you could do without much effort. The idea here is to completely cleanse your soul and to hone your skills of introspection. This is a learned ability just like the mental discipline.

2) When do I stop making my list? Should I continue indefinitely?

This is the opposite of the first question. Some find hundreds of faults and have difficulty knowing when to stop for now. The point of this first exercise in introspection is to set a limited goal. If you find more than 100 items, then instead of continuing on indefinitely, limit your efforts to two weeks.

This is important because it is all too easy to wallow in self-criticism and thus avoid moving on to the part about changing yourself. Don't think of the overall process as being divided into sections so much -- it is a cycle, composed of two very important parts: introspection and subsequent self-transformation. Self-analysis alone doesn't accomplish much if there is no motive to change and improve what one finds. Likewise, self-change alone doesn't work for long if you haven't taken a thorough stock of what you already have to work with.

So, set yourself a limit of no more than two weeks for this phase of the cycle. This will suffice for now. You can (and should) always go back and add things to your lists later -- it does not have to be absolutely perfect on the first round.

Which brings me to the subject of the endless nature of this cycle of introspection/self-change. This is truly a life-long habit for the true magician. Over my time at this work, I have constructed three such mirrors of the soul, each separated by a few years. This is a process of constantly perfecting oneself -- there is no resulting absolute state of perfection. This is a dynamic and continuous process since, as humans, we are constantly changing and encountering new parts of ourselves.

For the purposes of Step One, you must see to your forward progression through the exercise along with your dedication to doing the best you can with it. This is only possible when you set goals and limitations for yourself. By approaching it in this manner, you learn the fundamentals of the process and you are then better prepared to continue working with it as the years stretch before you.

3) What should I do if I can't figure out which Element corresponds to a specific trait?

At this stage, don't fret over it. Simply assign the item to which ever Element seems most appropriate and those you absolutely can't figure, assign to that wonderful category titled "unknown". As you work with the Elements, your understanding of them will increase and you will be better equipped to decide if you've been wrong in your assignment.

At this point in the ten Steps, the actual Element each item belongs to is of less importance than the degree to which the item effects you. For the purposes of self-change itself, the second division into three categories of importance or frequency, is far more relevant than an item's Elemental correspondence. This is true because the actual techniques of self-change that you will be working with are not dependant upon the Elements themselves.

In the Step Two work of self-change, the changing of your traits will balance your Elemental composition regardless of whether or not you have assigned your items correctly. The main use of the Elemental division is that it gives you an idea of the quality of your overall Elemental balance or imbalance. This is when an accurate designation by Element becomes truly important, but at this stage it is of minor importance.

This does not mean that you should not try your best to determine the correct Elemental corre-

spondence. You should commit yourself to pursuing your "unknown" category until you assign each item to an Element. Also, as your understanding of the Elements improves, review the items you have assigned and see if you still feel that you got it right. One advantage to not having to carve your soul mirrors into stone is that you can always go back and change your mind!

Some have found that researching the character associations of the zodiacal signs of astrology is very helpful as they try to discern which item goes with what Element. Some find solace in the more recent works on psychology, and so on. At any rate, there are written resources that will help. But by far, the best aid is if you spend time meditating on the subject.

Another bit of practical advice is that when you encounter a truly puzzling item, look into it further. Often times, an uncatagorizable item is one that is too complex and that can be broken down into more specific parts. Usually, those specific parts are easier to categorize into individual Elements than is the whole complex of traits. Again, meditation is the magician's handiest tool - most answers are just inside, waiting to be discovered.

4) Under which of the elements would one place an addiction to substances, such as tobacco? I know FB himself dealt with this entity.

Well, as you've already guessed, there is no quick and easy answer. There are so many factors that contribute to an addiction that it is better if you break down these factors for yourself and deal with them individually instead of under the umbrella of 'addiction'.

I am also a smoker and have grappled with this issue at very close quarters. I quit smoking for three years and while it was very beneficial for the development of my will power, it had no effect upon my underlying addiction. From it I learned a great deal about how to manage my addiction, but it did not address the underlying emotional and mental aspects of my addictiveness.

Any addiction is composed of many more factors than the object of addiction. For example, my body is physically addicted to the periodic rush of nicotine. This is true of any truly addictive substance, whether it is something inhaled, eaten, injected or drunk. This is also true of the emotional states or activities that we are addicted to -- they each initiate chemical reactions within our physical bodies to which we can become addicted. While we can ameliorate the impact of the physical consequences of an addiction through abstinence, this does not address the other components of the root addiction (in many cases this has the opposite effect of amplifying those other components).

For me, smoking satisfied a certain inclination toward self-destruction. And it satisfied other needs as well: my need for social acceptance (this was back when everybody smoked); my need for something to keep my hands busy (probably the bane of every artistic soul); my need to distance myself from others; my need to have something entirely my own; and last, but by no means least, my need for pleasure (I actually like to smoke). Of course I could list a few more, but I'm sure you get my drift.

By breaking my addiction down into its component parts, the assignment of the parts to the Elements was made relatively easy. And this gave me the key to remedying the root addiction. Very often in any work of healing (and what else is the transformation of one's character other than a healing process?) it is the root disease that is more important than its symptoms. This is especially true when it comes to the work with your soul mirrors. We can be going right along in the smug assumption that we've managed the symptom (e.g., I quit smoking) quite admirably, when all of a sudden we realize that we did nothing to remedy the root disease (i.e., my addictiveness) and, poof!, all of our hard effort was for nothing. Until you reach to the root of an addiction and tackle all of its parts, the addiction itself will persist. In my case, after three years of not smoking, I started smoking again. In fact, at no point during those three years was I NOT addicted to smoking -- all because I hadn't addressed the other components of my addiction.

When I first assigned the item "smoking" to an Element in my first go at my negative mirror, I listed it under the heading of the Air Element. There were, for me, some very Airy aspects to my smoking but this really didn't work for me in a practical sense. When I began to break it into parts, I found that initial item spread out all over the place. In the end, it belonged to no single Element, and I'm certain that where the parts fell into place for me will be very different for each individual. So much of the soul mirror cannot be given a universal Elemental correspondence. Where such universal standards apply accurately is only at a very superficial level of generalization. This is why the list of the character traits associated with the four temperaments that Bardon gives in IHH is not all that useful -- it is too general.

Any time I have difficulty determining what Element to assign an item in my soul mirror to, I try to break it down into smaller parts. Invariably, this has solved my confusion and provided me with the handle by which to grab hold of and transform myself.

5) Why should I make a negative AND a positive soul mirror? Isn't just the negative mirror enough?

Granted, the primary purpose of the techniques of self-change is to equalize one's negative traits, but that is ultimately only half of the whole process. It is of equal importance that you nurture your positive traits.

It is also important in the process of introspection that you not look only at your negative side. This can be very depressing if you don't balance it with an equal look into your positive side. The magician must walk in balance, as it were.

Another important reason why both mirrors are essential to the overall process is that often the answers to your negative traits are found amongst the list of your positive traits! In this way, you are already your own best friend.

Physical:

This section of Step One opens with suggestions for a few simple daily exercises. The first concerns bathing and advises that the student bathe in a cold shower and brush the skin with a natural-bristle brush. This may sound silly but I urge you to actually try it. It is especially beneficial to the beginning student in that it very effectively opens the pores of the skin and facilitates bodily health. If you are arising very early to make time for your exercises, this technique will assure that you are fully awake.

The second set of recommendations concerns the establishment of a daily regimen of exercise. Again, this is especially beneficial for the beginning student as it draws the student's consciousness into a closer awareness of their physical body. This need not be taken to extremes -- the important aspects being the maintenance of flexibility and bodily vitality.

While these exercises are not strictly "magical", they are nonetheless, of importance and are pertinent to the further, more "magical" exercises.

The next section is titled "The Mystery of Breathing" and forms the basis of many of the exercises to come. It is important therefore, that the student pay attention to the mastery of this simple technique.

Please note that what concerns the student here is not the physical constituents of the air that are inhaled (oxygen, nitrogen, etc.), nor does it concern the vital energy inhaled. This is not "pranayama" nor is it an exercise to hyper-oxygenate the blood. The only thing of concern at this stage is the idea inhaled with each breath -- this idea represents the quality of what is taken in and is attached, by the mind, to the Akasha principle of the physical air.

It is vital that the student maintain their normal rhythm of breathing during this exercise. One should not lengthen the inhale or exhale and should not hold the breath at any point. It is normal for the beginning student to automatically lengthen the breath cycle because it takes a few moments to get one's thoughts in order. The result is usually a longer inhale while the mind is establishing the idea to be inhaled and a lengthy holding-in of the breath while visualizing that the idea is penetrating the whole body. The reason this occurs is because the student is unfamiliar with the building-up of the idea and the visualization of its action upon the body, so to compensate, the breath is extended.

The problem that arises with this is that if this habit is continued then the student eventually associates the ability to breathe in this manner with extending the breathing cycle and it becomes impossible to accomplish this task with the normal breath. Learning to do this exercise within the confines of the normal breath is important because the magician may not always have the opportunity to slow the breath in order to perform the later exercises such as accumulation of an Element, etc.

With practice, the building of the idea and the circulation of it throughout the body, can be accomplished in a nanosecond. The trick to learning the exercises without altering the breathing cycle

is to disassociate the ideation from the breath. For example, establish your normal, comfortable breathing rhythm and breathe normally as you build up the idea in the air surrounding you. Then, when the idea is well established, inhale a normal breath of the impregnated air. Do not hold your breath at this point, but instead resume your normal breathing while holding the idea in your body and circulating it. Let your exhale be just of air and not of your idea.

In other words, it is your mind which does the work, not your breath. The breath is only the carrier of the idea and it is not necessary to alter your breathing cycle to accommodate the speed of your thinking. With practice though, you will get used to the mental work and it will become fast enough for you to not have to insert extra "empty" breaths while you think. Eventually, your rate of thinking and visualization will match the rate at which you breathe.

Other important factors are:

- 1) The nature of your idea. The thought you inhale should be positive and concern your own spiritual well-being.
- 2) The degree of your conviction. You should cultivate an attitude of absolute assurance that your idea is quickly becoming a reality.
- 3) Persistence. You should persist with a single idea until your goal is realized before passing on to another idea.

The next two sections are titled "The Conscious Intake of Nourishment" and "The Magic of Water". These techniques are based upon the same principles as the mystery of breath -- an idea is attached by the mind to the Akasha principle of the physical substance. Again, this has nothing to do with the physical properties (vitamins, minerals and other nutriment) of food and water. Our only concern at this stage is with the idea that the student must attach to the physical substance.

The same requirements (i.e., the nature of the idea, the degree of conviction, and persistence) apply to these exercises. This work with food and water should be carried out simultaneous with the breath exercises. In other words, you don't need to master the breath exercise before beginning this work with food and water.

These exercises should be made a daily habit. Do the breathing exercises every morning and every evening, and do the food and water impregnation with each meal. With a little inventiveness, you will be able to impregnate your food and drink unnoticed by others, even when you sit in a crowded restaurant or at a table filled with family members.

Q&A--

- 1) Do I have to give up smoking, drinking and sex?

No, you don't HAVE to do anything. But, if you want to succeed at the initial work of IHH it is advisable that you temporarily eliminate all mind altering substances. These substances remain in your blood stream for extended periods of time and they will effect how much control you are capable of exerting over your mentation. The idea of a magical initiation is that you must learn how to reach the equivalent altered states, of your own accord and without an artificial crutch to get you there. The well trained magician can match any altered state that a drug can induce -- AND control the nature and duration of the experience.

Once you have mastered your own mind, there is no reason why you may not indulge yourself in mind altering pleasures with moderation. Eventually, the only issue is whether or not the mind altering effect interferes with your magical practice. With attention to your timing, this can be avoided.

As to giving up all sexual expression, this is neither necessary nor advisable in the long term for the magician who seeks balance. Sexual abstinence breeds imbalance. Invoking this sort of specific imbalance may at times be of use to the advanced magician, but only for periods of short duration and for very specific tasks. If you have what is now called "sexual addiction", then a temporary abstinence may be a helpful component of your recovery. But alone, denial will not resolve an addiction -- one has to reach to the root of an addiction and work at it from the inside AND the outside.

2) Do I have to become a vegetarian?

This is a common question and there are always disagreements as to whether vegetarianism is required of the student. At best, it's a good idea if your body feels comfortable eating only a vegetarian diet and you feel comfortable preparing only vegetarian meals. But, it is not a requirement. The potential benefits to one's health are undeniable but this is not an essential part of learning magic.

What is far more important is to eat a well balanced diet. One that provides your body with the nutrients and energy resources it needs, will suffice. Try to avoid over- or under-eating.

3) Does this mean I have to start taking up yoga or go to the gym every day?

Not unless that is what works best for you. The idea behind what Bardou calls "daily gymnastics" is just to keep your body limber and fit. You don't need to go to extremes in this regard. Another important thing here is that daily exercise brings you into a closer contact with the state of your physical body.

4) How does the magic of breath, food and water work? Does the water have to be cold?

It is only the Akasha Principle that is worked with in these matters. The Akasha permeates all

things. By its nature, it is susceptible to any thought impressed upon it and it will transmit that thought to the matter it encounters. Thus, when you impress your thought into the Akasha permeating the air you breathe or the food and water you ingest, the Akasha will transmit that thought to the Akasha permeating your physical, astral and mental bodies. Through the agency of the four Elements, the thought will become a part of your physical makeup at a cellular level. This changes your body at every level.

This takes time -- it does not, at first, happen over night. With practice however, this can become a very effective tool for self-change and the rapidity of its effect will increase.

The temperature of the food or water you consume is not a factor in regard to the impression of a thought since it is only the Akasha you are working with. Where the coldness of the water becomes important is when you are accumulating the vital energy, an Element or a Fluid into the water. Then, it is not the Akasha (which permeates cold and hot water equally) upon which you are impressing your will -- it is the physical or astral substance of the water itself and the colder the water, the more readily it will accept this sort of accumulation.

5) Do I have to bless each meal and glass of water I consume?

No, you don't have to, but by doing it every chance you get, you will be increasing the effectiveness of this technique. Eventually, it will become second nature to you and no one else will even notice that you are doing it. If I remember correctly, it takes about seven years for your body to completely renew every cell. You can, in theory, insert your thought into the structure of each new cell that is born and thus, directly transform your physical body.

Step Two

Step Two opens with a section titled "Auto-suggestion or the Secret of the Subconscious". This describes a relatively simple technique wherein the student formulates a positively stated phrase pertaining to an aspect of self that is in need of improvement, and then proceeds to repeat this phrase over and over, until it becomes rooted in the subconscious mind.

This is not a stand-alone technique -- it will not assure permanent change in and of itself. To truly effect change in one's self, affirmation must be joined with direct action. This is elaborated further in the section "Magical Schooling of the Soul".

Where this technique is most effective is for keeping the positive alternative to a negative trait at the forefront of one's conscious mind. By implanting the positive affirmation into one's subconscious mind, it will naturally arise each time that the corresponding negative trait rears its head. When combined with a commitment to direct action, this is an invaluable asset.

In my experience, the best times to do this repetition are immediately upon waking and just before falling asleep.

It is very important that the affirmation be phrased in the present tense and in a positive manner. For example, "I will quit smoking" does not suffice as it is both negative and not in the present tense. Far better would be "I am a healthy, happy non-smoker." Avoid phrases which include the word 'not'.

It is in this section that Bardon introduces the idea of working with a string of beads (or knots) to keep track of the number of times that the affirmation is repeated or to keep track of the number of interruptions incurred in the concentration exercises. This is a handy tool. I work with a length of yarn in which I have tied 40 simple knots. At each repetition or interruption, I simply move my finger past one knot. This is advantageous in that it frees me from having to count my repetitions or keep track of the number of interruptions. Thus, keeping track does not itself constitute an interruption or distract me from the task at hand.

Mental:

The student must have reached the recommended degree of success with the Step One meditation exercises before beginning this section of the Step Two exercises. The ability to concentrate is essential to the work which follows.

With this section of the Step Two training, the attention is directed toward the five physical senses. The practice serves as an introduction to a type of meditation commonly called "creative visualization". But, as with many things in IIH, this is more than what is commonly meant or understood as creative visualization.

These exercises are an important first step toward the development of the subtle astral and mental senses. They are designed to achieve the following things: 1) To hone the student's powers of concentration. 2) To teach the student how to separate out one sense at a time. 3) To hone the student's physical senses.

The description that Bardon offers of these exercises is very straight forward and simple. The doing of them however, can be quite difficult for the average student.

Most students notice that the exercises with one sense will be more difficult than those of another sense and this is absolutely normal. The reasons for this are two-fold. First is the fact that we rely upon one or two senses more so than the others and so some of our senses will not be as well developed as others. This is easily remedied by focusing upon the sense at hand and consciously using it throughout the day. For example, if you have trouble bringing up the aroma of a rose, then go smell a few roses and concentrate upon their aroma. Pay special attention to how things smell and this will help develop your olfactory sensoria.

The secondary reason for the difference between one's senses has to do with the Elemental balance. Each sense is related to an Element and so when an Element is lacking, the corresponding sense is also lacking. Which of these exercises is easy and which is hard can tell you a great deal about the current state of your own personal Elemental balance. As you work at crafting a greater balance of the Elements in your personality (see Step Two, "Magical Schooling of the Soul") these discrepancies between the senses should ease.

The exercises with the sensory concentration should be carried out exactly as Bardon describes. Be sure to work with just one sense at a time. For example, if you are working with the smell of a rose, shun all images of the rose and all remembrances of roses past as they intrude upon your consciousness.

The sequence of senses should also be followed. They are presented in this sequence for very good reason and you should not spend five minutes with visualization, followed by five minutes with smell, etc., in a single sitting. Each sensory exercise should be mastered before beginning work with the next sense.

Choose simple images to work with when you are beginning the visual concentration exercise. I advise against using complex images or objects such as Tarot cards. This tends to make the exercise much more difficult to master and serves no good purpose at this stage. Likewise with the other senses, choose simple things to work with.

Please note that in Bardon's description of the "sentience or feeling concentration", he refers only to overall body sensations such as heat and cold, and not to tactile sensations such as rough and smooth. It will do no harm however, to include tactile sensations in your work, but it is not a requirement.

Q&A--

1) Does auto-suggestion really work? Why?

Yes, it does, but not as a stand-alone technique. To be truly effective, it must be combined with direct action.

This is a very common technique these days, so much has been learned about why and how it works. Cutting away all the fancy language and superstition, the simple fact is that by repeating your wish frequently, you keep the thought in your surface awareness. Of course, this also integrates the thought into your subconsciousness. But of main importance is that it helps you keep the thought in your conscious mind and from there, it impacts your other thoughts and actions.

2) What is the proper phrasing for my wish?

Your phrase should be entirely positive (no 'not's) and in the present tense (no 'I will'). For example, "I am a healthy, happy non-smoker" is preferable over "I will not smoke."

Furthermore, when it comes to using auto-suggestion for self-change, your phrase should address the root of the problem, not the mere symptom.

3) I can't visualize for beans, how do I overcome this?

Number one, keep trying! Secondly, try looking at things more closely. Pay attention to their color, texture, size, shape, etc. As with any of the sensory exercises, the more acute your physical senses, the easier it will be to do these exercises. Persistent trouble with the visualization exercise can be indicative of an imbalance of the Fire Element, so if this is the case for you, then working at rectifying your Fire imbalance should make your visualization exercise go easier.

4) Why are some of the concentration exercises easy and others difficult?

There are two factors at play here. First is the acuity of your senses -- we tend to favor one or more of our senses over the others in our day-to-day lives.

The second factor is your Elemental balance. The senses are associated with the Elements and so when one sort of sensory exercise is more difficult, it may be due to an imbalance in the corresponding Element. Addressing that imbalance may help with your sensory exercise.

5) I'm practicing Bardou's visualizations. I can imagine objects with closed eyes, but I still can't imagine objects with my eyes open.

The main reason that doing the sensory exercises with your eyes open is so difficult is because with your eyes open there is more visual stimulation than with your eyes closed. When your eyes are closed, all you generally see is blackness and this allows you to easily concentrate on just your visualization. But when your eyes are open, all the images of your surroundings interfere with your concentration upon the visualization.

There are several ways to make the transition between eyes closed and eyes open a bit easier. One method is to work in a darkened room. This reduces the amount of visual distractions during the eyes-open phase and mimics the blackness of having your eyes closed. Once you can manage your visualization with your eyes open in a darkened room, then gradually increase the light in your room until you can master the visualization, with eyes open, in a fully illuminated room.

A second method is to stare at either a black surface or a plain white surface when you build your open-eyes visualization. This will also reduce the amount of visual distractions.

A third method is to stare at a wall or into space with your eyes slightly out of focus. This blurs your surroundings and thus diminishes visual distractions.

A fourth, and probably the most difficult method is to first build your visualization with your eyes closed and then, holding firmly on to your established visualization, open your eyes. Once your eyes are open, try to hold on to your visualization and let it float before your open eyes.

The key in any case is to ignore the increased visual details of your surroundings when your eyes are open. Truly all you should concentrate upon is your visualization itself.

Many of the exercises require this sort of transition from mastery with the eyes closed to mastery with the eyes open. This is designed to teach the student how to make these abilities things that can be employed at any moment in their daily life.

When any exercise presents a difficulty for you, be inventive and try a variety of different methods to overcome the difficulty until you find the method that works best for you. I'm certain that in the above case, there are more than just these four methods for overcoming your difficulty. I hope that these examples will at least stimulate your imagination and inspire you to devise a method that works well for you.

6) Is it okay to skip from sense to sense or should I follow the sequence that Bardon infers?

The order in which Bardon presented the sensory exercises is important and for a reason. It is no different in the work of accumulating the Elements -- you follow the sequence of Fire, Air, Water and then Earth. The reasons for this are complex, but suffice it to say, you can trust Bardon on this. You will be wise to follow his directions exactly as stated. It is all too easy to fall into favoring one sense/Element and this violates the intent of a balanced magical training.

Astral:

While the Step One "Schooling of the Soul" concerned the analysis of the personality, the Step Two exercises put this analysis into motion. Here the focus is upon what I call "self-crafting", wherein the student begins the process of transforming what has been revealed by self-analysis, into a more positive manifestation of who the student wants to be.

Bardon recommends starting to work with the most bothersome aspect of the personality, but adds the proviso that if the student's will is weak, then she/he can begin work with a minor negative aspect. Truly, starting with the thing you want to change the most is the better way to go. But, if you really are lacking in will power, then starting small will build both your will power and your confidence.

It is of vital importance that you persist with your chosen item until you meet with the success that you desire. Do not ever give up half way to your goal. If you feel stuck, then spend some time reevaluating your approach to the problem and see if you can come up with a better tact.

Choose only one item at a time and devote all your personal resources to its successful transformation.

Bardon suggests a three-pronged attack, as it were, consisting of meditation, affirmation and direct action:

Meditation -- Once you have decided upon an item to work with, spend a goodly amount of time in contemplation. Try to uncover everything about this item that you can. Each negative trait serves a positive purpose -- what makes it negative is that these aspects of ourselves usually are formed as subconscious responses. Delve deeply into the negative item and try to uncover the positive purpose that lies at its root. Then craft for yourself a more positive way of meeting this root need, one that is a fully conscious choice instead of a subconscious habit.

Affirmation -- Enough has already been said in this regard in the opening section on the secret of the subconscious. The important thing here is that your affirmation be carefully crafted to support the positive alternative to your negative item. Use what you have learned about the magic of food and water to also support this work of self-crafting.

Direct Action -- There are two aspects to direct action worth mentioning here. The first is the moment-to-moment kind. Simply put, this means that every time your negative trait arises in your day-to-day life, you must immediately stop yourself and concentrate upon your positive alternative. Replace your negative response with a positive one. This is a very powerful form of self-transformation which will directly strengthen your will. The second aspect of direct action is more occasional. Here, one must plan certain actions which support the positive alternative and meet the needs of the aforementioned root purpose. For instance if the root purpose behind your negative trait is to provide you with a sense of connection with others, then instead of satisfying this valid need through a negative manner, plan positive activities that will bring you closer to others in your community or family.

Practice makes perfect and after your first success, your next will come all the more quickly and easily. This work is very, very, very important to a steady magical rise and no effort should be spared. Since we are constantly changing beings, this is a work that never ends -- it only gets easier. Soon enough, you will get the hang of it and self-crafting will become a joy.

Please remember that the Elemental Equilibrium is not an absolute, static state. It is a thing that takes constant attention. You are not expected to achieve an absolute Equilibrium before beginning Step Three. What is expected however, is that you will have made major advancement toward Elemental balance. A basic balance of the Elements within the personality is essential for the work ahead. Without this basic balance and the commitment to constantly improve upon it, the student risks damage to their psyche and their physical health.

Q&A--

1) Where should I start?

It really is best if you start with the one item in your negative soul mirror that bothers you the most. Stick with it until you transform it to your satisfaction.

Conceding to a weak will is a dubious practice in my opinion. I know that Bardón says you can alternately begin with a lesser item and work your way up to the more important ones. But that really is not the best method. A strong will is essential to the magician so why not do yourself the favor of cultivating it from the outset? This might not be easy work for you, but none of it is impossible. Instead of starting with a small item, work with a big item and go at it in small, manageable increments.

2) Am I supposed to change only my negative traits or am I supposed to tone down my outstanding positive traits as well?

This is a common question. The Step Two work should be focused upon transforming your most powerful negative traits. At this stage, the greatest use for your positive soul mirror is its value as a guide to the rectification of your negative traits -- many times, the answer to what you should change a negative trait into, lies within your positive mirror.

Some will say that too much of a positive trait indicates an imbalance of the Elements. This is only partially true, for an overabundance of a positive trait is actually a negative trait and should be logged in the negative soul mirror as such.

3) Help! I'm not making any progress with this, what do I do?

Well, though I'm sure you're tired of hearing this, keep trying! Sometimes, you will need to go back and entirely reevaluate your approach. Look again at the item you wish to transform, make

sure you've penetrated to the root of the problem, and make sure that all the techniques for self-change you employ fit the item exactly.

Sometimes, true and lasting problems with this part of the work stem from not having the degree of commitment that is required. If this is the case, then work at developing your commitment, as well as your ability to assure yourself that your desired change is inevitable or has in fact, already come to pass.

Physical:

The Step Two "Schooling of the Physical Body" exercises build upon those of the first Step. Here, we shift our attention from normal lung breathing, to what Bardon calls "pore breathing" or breathing with the whole body.

The pseudo-scientific rationale behind magical breathing is that the cells of the body are constantly regenerating themselves. They die off and are replaced on a fairly predictable schedule that varies from one type of cell to another. Our nutrition and our state of mind determines the health of the new cells. When we practice the magical inhalation of an idea, that idea becomes integrated into the structure of our new cells and thus we slowly transform our entire physical structure. This is why it is so important that the inhaled idea be circulated throughout the entire body.

The pore breathing technique is fairly simple and requires only a little imagination to accomplish. Bardon uses the dry-sponge-dipped-in-water analogy, but another good analogy is that of centering one's attention in the physical bones of the body and sucking in the air from there. Either way it is described, the feeling should be that one is inhaling air through the whole body at once. Please note that this is not something that is merely visualized, but rather, it is something that should be FELT by the entire physical body.

The first exercise in pore breathing involves the inhalation of what Bardon calls the "vital energy". Unfortunately for the new student, Bardon says very little about what this vital energy actually is. Consequently, this is a question that is frequently asked, so I will take a few moments to speak about the vital energy in the following Q&A section.

The exercises of this section of Step Two begin with the whole body pore breathing of the vital energy. Remember to avoid altering the breathing cycle during these exercises. Here, just as with the Step One exercise of inhaling an idea through normal lung breathing, it is the mind which does the actual work, not the breath itself. As before, take empty breaths to accommodate the lag time between your ideation process and your normal breathing cycle.

Once this technique of pore breathing the vital energy is mastered, the student's attention is turned toward adding an idea to the Akasha principle (of the vital energy or of the raw air itself). Here, the idea is inhaled through the entire body in the same way it was inhaled in Step One through the lungs alone.

Next comes the practice of the magical exhale. This follows the same principles as the magical inhalation but focuses instead upon ridding the body/psyche of a specific thought or ideation (usually the negative counterpart of the inhaled idea). Again, it is important to not force a change in the normal breathing rhythm -- take those empty breaths as needed. If you've mastered the magical inhale, then the magical exhale should be very easy to master as well.

When focused upon the same concern, the magical inhale combined with the magical exhale, constitutes a very powerful method for self-change. Its potentials for positive impact upon the physical and psychic health of the practitioner are uncountable.

The Step Two exercises close with a section on physical discipline. Specifically, this concerns the primary working asana (or bodily position) that the student will use throughout the IHH work. Bardon recommends a sitting posture (some call it the "King" or the "Throne" posture), but a kneeling posture will work just as well for most students. It really matters little which particular posture you choose for this as long as it is one in which you find bodily comfort. For example, if you choose a lotus asana and can do it without your legs falling asleep from lack of blood flow then by all means use it, but if the lotus asana puts your legs to sleep, then choose another posture that does not have this effect.

This exercise can (and in my opinion, should) be applied to ANY posture the student finds themselves in throughout daily life. The point here is to attain the ability to be in any position and still be able to achieve both comfort and uninterrupted concentration.

As with Step One, it is equally important that the student not move on to Step Three until all of the Step Two exercises have been mastered. If one part of the exercises goes quickly for you then spend your time improving upon your abilities until you have completed the rest of the Step Two requirements.

Q&A--

1) How do I breathe through my pores?

Bardon uses the analogy of a dry sponge which absorbs the water. This is good, but I prefer the idea of breathing from the inside of your bones. This way you are drawing in the air from the inside of your self. There is no way to really describe how this feels, but with a little practice you'll get the hang of it on your own.

2) What is the vital energy?

There are two questions about the vital energy that invariably arise: "What is the vital energy?", and "What does the vital energy feel like?" The first question is less important than the second at this stage in the training but nonetheless, it is worthy of an answer.

The vital energy is a specific energy that has a specific constitution. It is composed of the Elements (Fire, Air, Water, Earth and Akasha) and the Fluids (Electric and Magnetic) in a ratio that has an affinity with living (animate) matter. When an animate being is surrounded with the vital energy, it naturally draws from the vital energy as much of the Elements and Fluids as it requires. Thus a blade of grass will draw a slightly different array of Elements and Fluids from the vital energy than will a human body.

The vital energy is an astra-mental substance -- it is not, in and of itself, something measurable through the use of physical instruments (although many of its physical effects are measurable). Since it is astra-mental, it has an affinity for physical matter and does directly effect the structure of physical things.

The specific ratio of Elements and Fluids composing the vital energy expresses a slight preponderance of the Fire Element and the Electric Fluid. It also expresses the positive polarity of the Elements and Fluids with greater strength than it does the negative polarity. This gives it the quality of vitality reflected in its name.

Most often, it is visualized as a slightly golden brilliance (due to its preponderance of the Fire Element and the Electric Fluid). It is also visualized by some to be of a pure white brilliance instead of having a golden tinge, but in my experience this is not the vital energy that Bardon speaks of here. This pure white (totally colorless) energy is also vital, but its effect is more universal and not as specifically suited to animate, living matter. In other words, the pure white energy will have a greater effect upon the structure of inanimate matter but will have less direct an impact upon animate matter than the gold tinged vital energy. Since the focus here in Step Two is our own physical body, I highly recommend working with a vital energy that has a golden appearance.

3) What does the vital energy feel like?

As to the second, more important question about how the vital energy feels to the student's body, the main clue to this is found in the name this energy is given. This energy feels vital and it is stimulating and energizing to the human body. When performing the Step Two work with the vital energy, the student should feel this stimulation throughout the nerves of their entire body. Little more can be said for it is up to the student to find, through experimentation, their connection to this energy for themselves. With these clues and directions, you should have little trouble in this regard.

Step Three

Step Three opens with a discussion of the "four pillars of the Temple" -- Knowledge, Volition, Courage and Silence. Often, these terms are misunderstood, or rather, incompletely understood, so I will add a few words of my own to those written by Bardon in this regard.

Knowledge: This does not mean the mere stuffing of the mind full of facts and figures. This alone will not aid the student's magical rise. Rather, the type of knowledge important to the aspiring magician is that gained by combining study with practice. As any serious student of Alchemy will inform you, study alone does not make one an Alchemist. It is only through putting what one learns from study into practical use that true knowledge arises. This is what leads to Understanding and, eventually, to Wisdom.

Volition: Volition refers not only to the power of the magical will to overcome all obstacles, but also to the ability to invoke the feeling of absolute assurance that what one wills is real. This is especially important when it comes to the use of affirmations and the plastic imagination. Volition increases with practice -- it is something that can be cultivated. With a strong will, many doors which remain closed to the ordinary person, open for the magician. But never should the magician's will be a violent thing which rips through a barrier unconcerned. The sort of will the magician wields, is like the undeniable force of running water -- it penetrates obstacles by going around them instead of ruthlessly obliterating them.

Courage: This refers to an unflinching willingness to stand up to any obstacle and to face any challenge which confronts the magician. At the root of courage is the ability to control one's fear and to reach beyond its limits. This does not mean that one should ignore fear for it is a natural and important part of our mechanism of self-preservation. All that is meant is that when fear arises, it should be treated as a valuable bit of information and should, when appropriate, be set aside. Except in truly life-threatening situations, the magician does not allow fear to be a barrier to progress. This aspect of courage comes into play for the beginning student especially in regards to the work of introspection and self-change. Often times we will see things in ourselves that it takes courage to face and to overcome. A good meditation for building one's courage is to consider exactly what the consequences of a fear filled situation might be. Short of death or dismemberment, the consequences of most situations are minor and are usually magnified out of true proportion by the fear itself. There are also other methods for building one's courage. For example, I have an innate fear of heights, so I chose for a short while to become a window washer. This required climbing some pretty tall ladders, but by practicing caution, I was able to go beyond my fear. I still have an innate fear of heights, but now I know that my fear exceeds the real danger and it no longer prevents me from testing my limits.

Silence: This is probably the least understood of the "four pillars". Some take this injunction to mean that absolutely no word of magic or one's experience with it should ever be mentioned, but this is not the case. If this were so, then why, for example, would Bardon have written and taught as he did? At its root, silence addresses two concerns: the personal ego and the sanctity of magical experiences. The part of our human ego that requires approval from others must be con-

tended with by every student of magic. Here, silence about the nature and extent of one's magical experiences and abilities is very handy. If we start bragging about how all-powerful we are, then we feed this ego need and we become distracted from our higher purpose. By maintaining our silence in this regard, we avoid inflating this part of our ego and make it much easier for ourselves to contend with it. Also of note is that magical experiences are of a very intimate, personal nature. Their intimacy is easily violated when we speak the details of these experiences to another. Such a violation subtly diminishes the import of these experiences and does the student a disservice. Personally, I have no problem discussing the rudiments of magic, but never do I relay the intimate details of my own experiences. I have found this advantageous to my own rise and recommend this tact to you as well. This form of silence builds a very powerful charge of intimacy into your experiences that is unattainable in any other way.

Mental:

These Step Three exercises take the student a step further into the art of creative visualization. Creative visualization as described by Bardon is fairly unique in that the student approaches it in a step-by-step manner and assumes absolute control over what is visualized. This technique is important to the student's furtherance in magic for several reasons. It strengthens the concentration and will, it makes the physical senses and their astral and mental corollaries more acute, and it prepares the student for the later work of magical astral and mental wandering.

While at this stage the creative visualization is only a mental operation, it leads, combined with the other exercises, to actual astral experiences. The distinction between a mental projection that encompasses physical-like sensations and a genuine astral experience (which also encompasses physical-like sensations) is slight, but that is the point. Since it is so slight, mastery of the multi-sensory mental projection leads the student naturally to the art of astral projection. The main difference between these two is that in the astral projection, the realm visited is not reliant upon the mental projection of the magician; rather, the realm visited exists of its own accord. [The same can be said of true mental wandering except that in mental wandering there are no physical-like sensations.]

Another significant difference is that a true astral projection requires that the magician consciously separate the astra-mental body from the physical body and this does not occur with a mental projection.

Yet another aspect of these exercises that is worthy of mention is that through mastery of creative visualization, the student learns how to effectively build an image that can be wandered through astrally. A thoroughly crafted creative visualization effectively establishes a connection with its astral counterpart. For example, this is the secret behind the astral wandering of an occult symbol -- the symbol is projected through intense creative visualization which connects the projection to the symbol's astral counterpart and makes it a thing which can be explored with the astra-mental body.

With these things in mind, I hope it is apparent to the student of ITH that these exercises are of

great importance. As a matter of fact, each of the exercises found in IHH are of great importance to a steady, balanced magical rise and none of them should be overlooked.

If the student has indeed mastered the single sense exercises of Step Two, then these Step Three exercises incorporating two or more senses at once should present no difficulty. These exercises are presented in a very specific sequence which should be followed exactly.

The first exercise involves the external projection of a scene. Bardon uses the example of a ticking clock wherein the student combines the visualization of the clock with the hearing of its ticking and chiming. This projection should float before your eyes. Bardon also talks of visualizing a stream or a field of wheat, etc., employing two or more senses, but it should be noted that these also should be projections which are separate from the student -- these are not scenes that the student wraps around him/herself and stands in the middle of.

This first exercise is very much like the Step Two exercises except that more than one sense is employed at a given time. This exercise should be accomplished with the eyes open. The point of this particular exercise is to familiarize the student with combining the senses.

Only when the preceding has been mastered should you turn to the next exercise. This time you will work with your eyes closed and the visualization will be a personally familiar scene which is wrapped around you. This is far different from a projection which hangs in the air before your eyes and which is essentially separate from you. At first, you should make this scene only visual -- the point here being to familiarize you with the technique of stepping into a scene.

After this is mastered for five minutes, then create a scene and add sound to it. Then add sensation, etc. Here, you must involve yourself with the entire experience of your scene -- see its every detail, hear its every sound and feel its every sensation. Smell and taste can also be added to the visualization as appropriate.

Once you have mastered this technique with your eyes closed, proceed to experiment with your eyes open. You will have mastered this when you are able to achieve the same quality of involvement in your scene as you did with your eyes closed.

Next in sequence comes an exercise where you wrap an unfamiliar scene around you. Work as before with as many senses as seem appropriate. Start with your eyes closed and when this is mastered, shift to working with your eyes open. Working with a scene that is unfamiliar to you requires a greater degree of inventiveness and that is, essentially, the point of this variation.

Next, we turn to the multi-sense visualization of various animals. Start with stationary animals and master their visualization with eyes closed and then with eyes open. [Note: This is a projection, not a wrap-around scene.]

Now put those animals in motion and work first with eyes closed and then with eyes open. As before, begin with animals that are familiar to you and then move on to unfamiliar animals.

The final exercises of this section concern the visualization of human beings. Begin with familiar humans and project their image, without sound or smell or movement, first with the eyes closed and then with the eyes open. Then move on to the same exercise with unfamiliar humans.

When this single-sense visualization is mastered, switch to familiar humans in motion and speaking. Employ as many senses as you can, working first with your eyes closed and then with your eyes open. Finally, repeat this exercise with humans unfamiliar to you.

This completes the magical schooling of the spirit for Step Three. At the end of these exercises your abilities with creative visualization should be well honed. You should be able to place yourself within any scene you desire, for as long as you desire, populate it with whatever animals and humans you desire, and be able to employ any of the senses you desire.

Q&A--

1) How real should my multisense visualizations be?

Ultimately, they should be so real that when you reach out to touch them, you are surprised that they have no physical substance. Their degree of detail should be so exact that you cannot visually tell them apart from the genuine article.

2) Why do I have to work first with my eyes closed and then with my eyes open?

These are both valuable abilities for the practicing magician. We start first with our eyes closed because that is generally an easier way to learn the basic exercise. Once it is mastered with the eyes closed it is then relatively easy to master the exercise with the eyes open. The same quality of the multisense visualization should be achieved with the eyes open as with the eyes closed.

3) What's the difference between a visualization that hovers in the air before my eyes and one that I step into?

These are also two valuable abilities for the practicing magician. An example of the "hanging before the eyes" type of visualization is the imagination of a ticking clock which hangs on a wall. Here, there is little direct involvement with the visualization itself.

An example of the "step into it" type of multisense visualization is the imagination of an entire room surrounding you. Here, there is an intimate involvement with the visualization and you can employ all five of your senses at once.

The exercises begin with the "before your eyes" type of multisense visualization because this is an easier way to learn the basic technique and makes the transition to the "step into it" type that much easier.

Astral:

Before beginning these Step Three magical schooling of the soul exercises, the student MUST (!) have first established a rudimentary balance among the Elements of the personality. In order to avoid any ill effects upon the psyche and the physical body, the student must be absolutely certain that there exists no negative excess of any Element in their personality. All of the most bothersome items found in the negative soul mirror must have been addressed and transformed.

This caution cannot be stated strongly enough. No matter how eager you are to progress, please do not, by any means, enter into these exercises until you have established this rudimentary balance. If, for example, you still have strong negative aspects of the Fire Element that influence your personality, then working in this manner with the Fire Element will do nothing more than exacerbate that imbalance and cause you grief in the long run. If, on the other hand, you have transformed your prominent negative traits, then this work with the Elements will help strengthen the positive aspects of your personality and cause only joy.

As Bardon states, this work with the Elements is the deepest arcanum of magic. It forms the root of all true magical abilities and the student should pay close attention to these exercises.

The system outlined by Bardon in IIIH differs from all the rest in that the student learns how to cause magical effects by their own direct manipulation of the Elements. The student of IIIH does not start out by relying upon other beings for these effects (e.g., the Beings of the Elements, or rituals empowered by others, etc.). In IIIH, this is seen as later work that is only advisable once the student has themselves mastered the direct, hands-on manipulation. This is what, in Bardon terms, distinguishes the true magician from the sorcerer.

These magical schooling of the soul exercises combine the already established techniques of visualization, ideation and pore breathing. Simply put, the student visualizes their body surrounded by an infinite sphere of the Element at hand (e.g., red for Fire), empowers the visualization with the ideation of the Element (e.g., expansiveness and heat for Fire), and then inhales this empowered visualization with the whole body.

Bardon suggests seven inhalations to start, building over time to thirty inhalations, and it is advantageous to follow his instruction in this regard. It is important that the student build slowly as this gives time for the body to acclimatize itself to the Elemental burden and thus the student avoids any ill effects.

Bardon suggests a particular color for each Element to facilitate visualization: Fire --red, Air --blue, Water -- greenish-blue, and Earth -- yellow, gray, or black. Strict adherence to these correspondences is not absolutely necessary. Personally, I employ the following: Fire -- bright red, Air -- yellow, Water -- cyan blue, and Earth -- brown, dark gray, or black. These are the correspondences that I worked with before I encountered IIIH and they are the most comfortable to me. So, if you have worked with a different set than that suggested by Bardon, by all means continue with it if it works well for you.

Of greatest importance in these exercises is the feeling that the Elements invoke within you. You must feel the heat and the expansiveness of the Fire and so on. This must become for you a physical sensation.

[Note: Bardon speaks here, and in several other places, about what can be accomplished with the Elements, etc. But it is important that you realize these are just examples of what can be achieved after years of effort and that they are not meant as requirements. These are extreme practices and are not advised for the student as they tend to divert one from the more important goal of a balanced magical progress.]

The exercises themselves are very simple. You begin by establishing the visualization and then empower it with the appropriate ideation. Then you inhale the Element with the whole body through the now familiar technique of pore breathing. Again, be careful to avoid altering the normal breathing rhythm -- take empty breaths as needed. Begin with seven inhalations and increase by one inhalation with each exercise till you reach a total of thirty inhalations. Once you have inhaled the proper amount of the Element, spend some time sensing the Element's attributes and circulating the Element evenly throughout your body.

When this phase of inhalation and contemplation is complete, you must then magically exhale (with the whole body pore breathing) the same amount of the Element that you inhaled. The idea here is that you should rid yourself of all the excess of the Element that you previously inhaled. Use the same number of exhales that you inhaled, but be sure that you exhale exactly the same amount that you inhaled.

This is important because it is unhealthy to walk around with an excess of the Element for an extended period of time after your exercise. Likewise, it is unhealthy to go to the opposite extreme and deplete your body of its normal amount of an Element. In other words, exhale neither more nor less of the Element than you have inhaled.

Master this exercise first with your eyes closed, and then master it with your eyes open. Never neglect this habit of working with the eyes closed and then with the eyes open as it will become an important ability further on in the training as you apply these techniques in your daily practice.

Once you have mastered the magical inhalation and exhalation of the Fire Element and increased your capacity to thirty inhalations, then move on to working with the Air Element. Do not work with the Fire Element in one sitting and then the Air Element in the next, etc. Instead, master one Element at a time and work in the order Bardon recommends. This sequencing is important and the student is well advised to follow it exactly.

The Step Three magical schooling of the soul is complete when you can draw each of the four Elements into your body with equal ease and with your eyes open or closed.

Q&A--

1) Is inhaling the Elements any different than inhaling the vital energy?

The technique is basically the same -- surround yourself with a universe of the Element/energy and then inhale it. The main difference however, is that the Elements take a little more ideation than does the vital energy. Each Element feels different and their invocation is less easily sensed than the vital energy. Generally, the Elements take more concentration and you have to spend more time building the ideas associated with them.

2) The directions say to slowly increase my inhalations. Does this mean I'm "dynamically" accumulating the Elements? How is this different from the Step Four exercise?

In the Step Three exercises of breathing the Elements, there is a degree of accumulation and it does become dynamic (radiant), but there is no true "condensation" of the Elements. The "condensation" of the Elements is relegated to Step Four. More on this difference further on.

3) How clearly do I have to feel each Element? Do I really have to register a rise in temperature with the Fire Element?

Your sensing of each Element should be crystal clear. You do not have to actually take a thermometer and measure your bodily temperature, but you should progress to the point where you definitely feel an increase of your body's overall temperature. Likewise, you should feel the attributes of each of the Elements as a physical thing. With the Water, you should feel your body actually get colder; with the Air, lighter; and with the Earth, heavier.

4) What is the significance of the colors and sensations associated with each Element?

First of all, these factors help you get in touch with the Element itself. Secondly, the building up of the image (color and shape) and the sensation associated with a thing is a large part of future practice. Eventually, you will learn how to build not only the image and the sensation, but also the musical tone and the meaning of any force you want to project magically. Later in IIH and especially in KTQ, Bardon speaks of a "three-sense concentration" and a "quadrapolar action", based upon the Elemental correspondences. These Step Three exercises lay the foundation for these future magical abilities.

Physical:

The Step Three magical schooling of the physical body exercises take the pore breathing technique to a new level. The first stage in this is the breathing of the vital energy into each body part. This is important for two reasons. The first, as Bardon points out, is that this will give you a

degree of control over each and every part of your body. The second reason, not pointed out by Bardon, is that this educates the student about the manipulation of their own mental body.

As I stated in the "Theory" section, the mental body is very plastic and can assume any shape it desires and translocate to any place it desires. Where you focus your mental body (conscious awareness), determines its shape. Thus, in the exercise which follows, when your concentration is shifted to a specific body part, you are, in effect, altering the shape and placement of your mental body so that it assumes the shape and location of the organ you are working with. This introductory practice exercises an ability which becomes very important in later Steps involving the transplantation of consciousness into other objects and beings, as well as the practice of mental wandering.

I advise that if you do not already know the exact location of the organs in your body, then buy a book which gives you a visual layout of the organs. Study this information before you begin these exercises.

The opening exercise involves breathing the vital energy into and out of each organ or part of your body. This is not an "accumulation" of the vital energy -- each breath that you inhale of the vital energy is to be followed by an exhale of the energy. Bardon suggests seven such paired inhalations and exhalations. The idea here is to learn how to breathe through each organ -- the accumulation of the vital energy in each organ comes later.

It is wise, as Bardon suggests, to begin with the feet and slowly work your way up to the head. In the body parts and organs that are paired (i.e., feet, legs, hands, arms, ears, eyes, lungs, kidneys, etc.) it is good to first breathe through each side independently and then through both sides simultaneously.

I think it is best if you lie down for this exercise, but sitting in your usual "asana" will suffice. Invoke a deep sense of relaxation throughout your body. When you shift your awareness to a particular body part or organ you must establish a clear, sensory connection with it. For example, when you shift your attention to your right foot, you should sense each toe, as well as every spot on the surface and interior of your foot. Only then should you begin the pore breathing. This is done from the inside of the body part or organ, so your consciousness must be firmly rooted in its interior.

While this is relatively easy with a foot or hand, it is more difficult with the internal organs since our sensory connection with them is generally less developed. Studying an anatomical diagram is very helpful in this regard and I assure you that, with a little effort, such a connection with your internal organs is quite achievable.

This first exercise is complete when you are able to breathe the vital energy in and out of every organ and body part of your body.

The next exercise involves the "accumulation" of the vital energy in the whole body. An accumulation is different than the mere breathing of the previous exercise. Here, instead of inhaling

and then exhaling each breath of the vital energy, the vital energy is inhaled several times in succession and retained. Bardon suggests starting with seven inhalations (increasing by one inhalation with each exercise until you reach a total of thirty). With each inhale, the vital energy is retained and the following exhale is to be an empty breath. This builds the vital energy into a dynamic, radiant accumulation.

When you have reached the appropriate number of inhalations, spend several moments (remember to maintain a normal rhythm of empty breaths) sensing the radiance and the nature of the accumulated vital energy. When you are ready, then begin to exhale the vital energy (each inhalation should be empty during this process). Just as with the accumulation of the Elements, you should make sure that you have exhaled the same amount of the vital energy as you inhaled.

This exercise is complete when you are able to accumulate a dynamic charge of thirty breaths of the vital energy within your entire body and then are able to exhale the same amount of the energy as you have accumulated.

The next exercise should only be attempted after you have mastered the above. This exercise involves the explosive release of the accumulated vital energy directly back to the universe. The exhaling breath is by-passed and this is a much quicker method of releasing an accumulation. But, this practice requires a certain degree of resiliency as it can be damaging to a body not used to working with the dynamism of an accumulation of the vital energy.

To begin, accumulate the vital energy through the whole-body pore breathing. When you are ready to release the vital energy, do so all at once. It may help to tie this expulsion to a single exhale, but if a single exhale is not sufficient at the beginning, then by all means exhale whatever vital energy remains. With practice, you will become able to release the whole accumulation in one comprehensive explosion.

The final exercise of this section is to learn to accumulate and release the vital energy from each of your body parts and organs. [Note: It is advisable that you do not accumulate the vital energy in either your brain or your heart (especially if you have any heart disease). Simply breathing the vital energy in and out of these two organs is very beneficial, but accumulating the vital energy in them is neither beneficial nor necessary. This is due to the electrical nature of their function.]

Begin by accumulating seven breaths of the vital energy into the body part or organ (increasing by one inhalation with each exercise) and follow by exhaling the same number of breaths of the vital energy as you inhaled. When this has been mastered with all the body parts and organs, then pass to working with the explosive release of the accumulated vital energy. The technique is the same as for the whole-body release, but you will need to take greater care to not abuse your individual organs. Work first with the explosive release of smaller amounts of accumulated energy and as your plasticity increases, move to larger, more dynamic accumulations.

Q&A--

1) Bardon seems to use the word "accumulation" to mean two different things. Please clarify.

There are actually three types of accumulation in IIIH. First and simplest, is what I call a "passive accumulation". This is where you inhale and then immediately exhale a breath of an Element/energy/Fluid. This does not cause a build-up of what you are inhaling -- it only bathes you in the substance, as it were.

The second type is what I call a "dynamic accumulation". Here, you are taking several inhalations and holding them within your body. This typically results in a sense of radiance, where there is a certain degree of pressure felt by the accumulated Element/energy/Fluid.

The third type of accumulation is called "condensation". Here you inhale multiple breaths and build a dynamic accumulation. Then, you condense this accumulation into a smaller space. A condensation can also be accomplished by building up the Element/energy/Fluid into an object or body part directly to a degree that goes beyond a merely dynamic accumulation. In some cases, the difference between a dynamic accumulation and a condensation is subtle, but with practice you will be able to discern between the two. The work with condensing begins in Step Four. For the purposes of Step Three, all you need to concern yourself with is the dynamic accumulation.

2) How am I supposed to feel my Pancreas, etc.?

This is not as difficult as it may sound if you have mastered the mental discipline of the previous Steps. The best method is to get yourself a map of the internal organs, and with that as your guide, do your best to pinpoint the location of each organ. Keep trying to locate your organs until you can actually feel each one.

The basis of this technique is the "transference of consciousness" described in greater detail in the Step Four material. This work of Step Three serves as an introduction to the more complex aspects of the transference of consciousness.

Simply put, what you must do is focus your attention upon the specific location of the internal organ or body part. Your conscious awareness IS your mental body, so what you are doing, in more technical terms, is condensing your mental body into the organ or body part of choice.

Persistence pays off!

3) How clearly do I have to feel each organ and body part?

By the end of Step Three you should be able to sense each organ and body part with great clarity. Since each organ is different, each will feel slightly different -- some you will be able to feel very intimately and others less so. I cannot predict exactly what you will feel with each organ,

so it is up to you to decide when you feel enough.

Since you are moving your own mental body to a part of your own physical body, it is relatively easy for you to connect your awareness to the particular astral matrix of the organ or body part and sense what it feels. This is why the lessons in transference of consciousness begin with your own body and THEN progress, in Step Four, to transferring your consciousness to external objects and beings. Once you have mastered this technique within your own body, it is then easier to do the same sort of projection outward into foreign bodies.

4) Why is it advised that I should neither dynamically accumulate nor condense the vital energy into my heart and brain?

The electric nature of the vital energy is such that it interferes with the electrical functioning of both heart and brain. Thus it is unwise to accumulate an energy or Element into them. A passive accumulation or bathing of these organs is safe because there is no actual build-up of the energy/Element. Likewise, it is safe to accumulate a dynamic charge into the entire head or chest area, since there is no build-up in the brain or heart alone -- in other words, the accumulation is spread throughout the region and not focused solely upon the organ itself.

Addendum to Step Three --

At the end of Step Three, Bardón introduces the student to the magical use of the faculties gained from the pursuit of the exercises to date. This is a very important juncture in the development of a magician and careful consideration should be given before proceeding in these endeavors.

Of greatest import to the further ascent of the magician is the personal morality or code of ethics that the magician adheres to. As Bardón warns, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A magician who wishes to rise steadily must sow only the seeds of goodness and compassion -- anything else will stunt the magician's growth and severely limit their rise. This is simply an inviolable law of Nature, a way in which the higher Mysteries protect themselves.

Hidden within Bardón's words regarding the use of one's magical faculties, is a valuable technique which should not be overlooked by the student. This is the technique of drawing the vital energy directly from the universe and instilling it into any object, person or space, without first passing it through the magician's own body. In healing work, this is the preferred method in that it avoids any negative impact upon the magician's being (by passing the vital energy first through one's own body, a subtle connection with a patient's disease is established).

The student should, by now, be able to design their own regimen of exercises that will develop the ability to draw the vital energy directly from the universe and into any object, etc. Please do not neglect to do so as the benefits will far outweigh the effort required.

Read through this section with care and devise your own ways to use the magical faculties you

have spent so much effort to achieve. The options available to you are nearly limitless and making use of your abilities will only improve them. Be creative and inventive and remember to ALWAYS adhere to your moral code.

Q&A--

1) In the room impregnation or the impregnation of an object, should I use the same gold-tinged vital energy that I used in Step Two?

This depends upon the purpose of your impregnation and upon the type of object you are impregnating. If your impregnation is to effect the health of a living thing, then use the gold-tinged vital energy. If your impregnation is meant to transfer a specific idea, then you are relying only upon the Akasha principle of the vital energy and it matters little which type you use. If you are impregnating an inanimate object, such as a crystal sphere, then the type you use will depend upon your purpose -- if your purpose is to effect other inanimate objects, then use the pure-white type, but if it is to effect living matter, then use the gold-tinged type. This may sound confusing, but really, with practice, it will become clear.

2) These things (room impregnation, etc.) are all very interesting but do I really have to practice them?

No, you don't HAVE to, but I'll tell you now that you will do well to, at the very least, familiarize yourself with these techniques. How you use your magic is entirely in your hands. Nonetheless, these are valuable techniques that you will need to master before progressing to the following Steps. Once you've mastered them, it matters little whether you decide to use them constantly in your magical practice -- the only thing that matters at this juncture is that you master them.

Step Four

Mental:

With the exercises of the previous Steps, you shall have learned how to imagine any thing, being or place, and how to concentrate your mental body (conscious awareness) into any part of your physical body with ease. Now, with Step Four, you will learn how to transfer your mental body into any object or being you choose.

This is a very delicate part of the magical training and how strictly you adhere to your personal moral code will directly influence your degree of success. If your motive is to supplant your will into another being, then you will assuredly fail in these exercises. But if your motive is only to increase your understanding of others, then you will succeed.

The transplantation of your consciousness into another object or being will provide you with a deep compassion for the limitations and travail of others. Your understanding of the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms will blossom in a way no other experience can match.

There are four sorts or stages of transplantation of consciousness. [In a previous post to the on-line discussion board, I outlined three types of transplantation, but I believe these four types outlined here do a better job of explaining this topic than the three types I described before.] The first stage is where you experience the physical limitations and dimensions of the object or being. Here, there is no connection to the sensations, feelings and thoughts of the object or being, and your experience is limited to your own sensations, feelings and thoughts concerning the object of your transplantation. This is the most primitive and superficial sort of transference.

The second stage is where you feel the actual sensations that the object or being feels. Still, there is no perception of how the object or being itself feels emotionally or how it thinks. At best, at this stage, you are able to surmise the emotions and thoughts of the other, but you do not experience them directly.

In the third stage of transference, you experience all the attributes of the object or being you have transplanted your consciousness into. For example, if you transplant your consciousness into a bird, you will feel the sensations of the bird's flight, you will perceive the bird's emotional responses, and you will know the bird's thoughts. The same applies to any object (although most inanimate objects do not experience emotion or thought) or being you transfer your consciousness into. At this stage, you are an observer of the entire being. Of concern with this sort of transference is the personal privacy of any being you transfer your consciousness into. When it comes to transferring your consciousness into another human, you should never divulge their inner emotions and thoughts to another as this would violate their privacy and negate their right to choose for themselves what parts of their inner life they want to externalize or share with others. Think for a moment how you would feel if someone was to violate your privacy in this way -- learn from this to never cause this sort of injury to another.

With this third type of transplantation, you will have a deep understanding of the being but you will not be able to directly influence the being from the inside. What it does provide however, is a deep enough understanding of the being so that you will know exactly how to influence them from the outside. In other words, by knowing the sensations, thoughts and emotions of another, your understanding of them will allow you to predict the consequences upon them of your advice, healing efforts, etc. This is the stage associated with "mind reading" and is very advantageous for the healer or the psychotherapist.

The fourth and most complete stage of transplantation of consciousness can take years of work to master and is attainable only if one has strictly adhered to the highest moral code. With this fourth type, you switch from mere observer, to active participant. Not only do you experience the whole being (physical, astral and mental), but you also become one with the whole being. In effect, your mental body joins the mental body of the being you are transferring your consciousness into, and you thereby have access to an absolute degree of direct influence over the actions, emotions and thoughts of the being. However, the being into which you have transferred your consciousness to this degree, will also have access to your being from the inside out. Usually, the being you would transfer into in this manner, would not have the magical ability to even perceive your presence and take advantage of the connection you have established. Nonetheless, the consequences of the mutuality of such a connection should be considered beforehand.

The true magician will ask permission from the other being before initiating this most complete stage of transplantation of consciousness. Every object or being is capable of expressing (in one way or another depending upon the sort of consciousness the object or being possesses), its willingness or unwillingness to participate in this most intimate sort of melding. If you ever try to violate the privacy of another being by overwhelming their unwillingness, it will be the last time you do so. This is a very high form of magic and if violated or abused, it will retreat from you and remain elusive till you redeem [Quite literally, "re-deem" means: to give new meaning to, or return the original meaning to, something.] the negative karma this act will naturally incur.

This ability is significant to the advanced magician. The advancing magician will do well to consider the implications of this ability in regard to the Step Ten work of merging with (i.e., "assumption of") a chosen god-form; with healing work of the most intimate level; with the merging at THE most intimate degree with a lover, friend, or guru/master; with advanced control of physical substances within the parameters established by Nature (remember, each physically manifest thing has an astral and a mental body as well, to which the advanced magician may connect in this manner); and, with the connection that two (or more) equally advanced magicians are capable of establishing. The possibilities are truly infinite and when explored to their fullness, they lead the magician to The Infinite.

At any rate, these exercises are well worth any effort you put into them. They form the foundation of many of the higher magics that IHH guides the student towards. For the purposes of Step Four however, the attainment of at least one experience of the third sort of transference that I described above, is sufficient, as long as one remains committed to pursuing the transference without rest, until the third type is mastered. It is even better if you have completely mastered the third type before passing on to Step Five, as that Step deals directly with the entry into the

fourth type of transference.

The Step Four magical schooling of the spirit exercises follow the same pattern established in Steps Two and Three. The student begins with a few simple, inanimate objects and learns to transfer their conscious awareness into them one at a time. The goal here is to establish the first type of transference mentioned above wherein the dimensions of the object, its relationship to its surroundings, and its intended use, are perceived from the inside out.

When this first type is mastered with inanimate objects, the student shifts to objects from the plant kingdom. Here the goal is to establish the second type of transference wherein the dimensions as well as the sensations experienced by the object, are perceived. For example, if you are transferring your consciousness into a tree, you experience not only the form of the tree, but also the way in which the tree senses its rootedness and senses its surroundings through the atmosphere.

Once this second type of transference is mastered with creatures from the plant kingdom, the student moves on to working with the more animate beings of the animal kingdom. Start with animals (including insects, etc.) that you can observe with your own physical eyes. Aim for establishing at least the second type of transference with them. [Establishing the third type of transference with an animal at this stage is quite difficult due to how different the thinking and emotions of an animal are from those of a human. It is best if you learn the third type of transference with a human before trying it with something so foreign to your experience as the inner workings of an animal.] For example if you transfer your consciousness into a bird, you should experience the limitations and advantages of its form and experience what it feels like to be in the bird's body. Once you have mastered this basic technique with animals you can experience first-hand, then move on to animals you imagine.

When you have mastered the second type of transference into an animal form, then shift your attention to other humans. Begin with humans who are familiar to you (preferably with someone you are observing with your own eyes at the moment you are doing your experiment). At first, establish the second type of transference wherein you sense the similarities and the differences of their particular form, and feel what it is like to be in their unique body. This type of transference should present no problems by now since you have mastered the exact same degree of transference with other sentient creatures such as animals and insects, etc. It is best if you begin with stationary people and then work with people in motion, sensing how it feels to move about in their bodies. Then do the same with people you imagine.

Once the second type of transference into other humans is mastered, begin expanding the depth of your transference until you establish the third type of transference. This comes easiest with someone who is already familiar to you, as you already experience some degree of mental and emotional connection with them.

Achieving the expansion of contact from the merely sensorial to the emotional and mental levels comes differently for each magician. I could say, "visualize your own consciousness expanding within the other human until it makes contact with their emotional being and their mental being", or "quiet YOUR self and listen closely to the interior workings of the other human until you hear

THEIR emotions and thoughts", but this would not begin to cover the various ways the magician can find to accomplish this third type of transference. Each student must devise their own best method -- if at first you don't succeed, try again with a new tact.

It is especially important here for the you to differentiate between what YOU think the other person is thinking and feeling emotionally, and what THEY actually are thinking and feeling. It is easy to imagine what they are experiencing and then falsely assume that our imaginings are actually the factual perception of their thoughts and emotions. To reach the genuine third type of transference with another being, the student must look beyond their own imaginings and perceive the actual thoughts and emotions of another.

Concurrent with this perception of another's present true thoughts and emotions, comes the perception of all their past experiences, thoughts and emotions. This is one way to tell the difference between your imagining of their thoughts, etc., and the actual perception of them. In other words, if you do not sense the person's past at the same time that you are experiencing their present moment, then you have not yet attained the third type of transference.

I should mention here that it is important for you to keep track of your own limits. Do not engage in so deep an empathy that you lose yourself in the other person's emotions and thoughts. Here, you are to remain an observer and not involve yourself directly, especially in their emotional state. It is all too easy to disrupt your own emotional state when you make this sort of contact with another's. An easy way to achieve this degree of control is to establish this sort of transference for only brief moments in the beginning. As you get used to keeping your own emotional being separate from another's, you can safely increase the amount of time you spend in this state of communion.

Once you have mastered this third type of transference with one person, begin experimenting with others, even those unfamiliar to you and those who you only imagine. It is always easiest to achieve this type of transference with people who are in front of your eyes at the present moment. With practice you should, for example, be able to sit in the middle of a busy restaurant and establish this third type of transference with any of the other patrons. Remember to ALWAYS respect the privacy of others and NEVER reveal the details of what you have learned about another being in this manner.

When you have achieved this third type of transference with humans, return to your work with non-human life forms (such as animals and plants). This is somewhat more difficult because these other life-forms experience their worlds quite differently than humans do. Thus, experiencing their astral and mental bodies will reveal things that are foreign to your normal experience and which may be difficult for you to understand at first. In essence, you must learn how to translate their emotions and thoughts from animal- or plant-terms, into human-terms. This is no small feat but it is well, well worth the effort!

This constitutes an important step in the expansion of the advancing magician's consciousness. The ultimate goal of the magician is to encompass ALL consciousness or Being within the own consciousness. This is an infinite expansion of consciousness until one's own consciousness

merges with The Unity of All Being.

This third type of transference into non-human life-forms expands the human consciousness to a great extent -- it is, so to speak, one finite step along the way to infinity. But take heart, we cannot encompass an infinity by taking an infinite number of finite steps -- at some point along the way, one takes a quantum leap from the finite into the infinite. When and how this occurs in the life of a magician is in the hands of Divine Providence. It is not something that can be forced -- all one can do is be patient and persistent.

The work of the Step Four magical schooling of the spirit is truly complete when you are comfortable with the third type of transference of consciousness into any human you desire to explore. Some headway should be made in the same degree of transference into plant and animal forms. At the same time, you should commit yourself to continuing your exploration of your fellow beings in this manner.

Q&A--

1) How does the transferal of consciousness work?

The transference of consciousness is actually the relocation of one's mental body or conscious awareness into an external object or being. In the first type of transference, your mental body does not make an actual connection with the mental, astral or physical body of the object or being into which you have transferred your consciousness. In the second type, your mental body does make a slight connection with the physical sensoria of the subject. In the third type of transference, your mental body makes a slight connection with the mental, astral and physical bodies of the subject. And in the fourth type, the connection between your mental body and the mental, astral and physical bodies of your subject is complete and crystal clear.

2) When I transfer my consciousness into another person I feel afraid that I will lose myself in them. What should I do?

This is a normal sensation with the third and fourth type of transference. This occurs in the early stages of mental and astral wandering due to the fact that this action of separating your mental and astral bodies from your physical body imitates the death process. Thus, the fear stems from a very primitive part of your physical body's own rudimentary consciousness. In the transference of consciousness (a form of mental wandering), this presents a lesser obstacle than it does in the astral separation (which more closely resembles death to the physical instincts).

In truth, there is really very little chance of your actually losing yourself. Each of our bodies is connected by a subtle "thread" or "cord" and it is only when those threads are severed that true dislocation occurs. But this fact does not negate the physical body's instinct for self-preservation.

The way to overcome any reticence invoked by this sort of bodily fear is two-fold. First is that

you must meditate upon the fact that your fear is unnecessary in this case. Try to convince your inner self that there really is no danger even though it reminds your body of the death process. Secondly, you should approach the third and fourth types of transference incrementally. Make your first experiences very brief and build slowly from there. This will introduce your physical body's rudimentary instinctive consciousness to the idea that this is a safe, unthreatening practice. As your physical body gets used to the idea that this is not as dangerous as it instinctively suspects, this fear will recede and will no longer be a barrier to your progress.

3) I'm too empathic. How do I avoid adopting someone else's mood?

True empathy is the result of your mental body establishing a direct link with another's mental and astral bodies. For some (natural empathes), this connection is an easy matter to accomplish, but for others, it must be learned.

The intimate link established during true empathy can only be invoked when the vibrational frequency of your mental body is in sync with another's. This provides the clue in both how to control and learn empathy.

The ability to establish an empathic link is a great boon to the magician. Yet to the natural empath who has not learned how to control their empathy, it can be a great burden. So, if you find yourself adopting another's mood through your empathic connection, you must learn how to control your empathy.

The first step in controlling your empathy is to take stock of your own mood. Clearly define your own state of mind and root yourself there. This gives you the ability to clearly distinguish between your own mood and the mood of the person you are empathizing with. As you enter into empathy with another person, keep a tight hold upon your own mood and act as a mere observer of their mood. At first, keep your distance and do not establish a direct link.

Once you have identified the differences between your mood and that of your subject, slowly begin to alter your mental frequency till it matches that of your subject. You'll recognize when you reach vibrational parity by the fact that you will be able to directly feel their mood.

To avoid becoming consumed by their mood, you must make your time of empathy very brief -- only a second or two at first. I call this "dipping" as it is a process similar to dipping your finger in to test the waters. Repeat this dipping until you are comfortable with maintaining the empathic link without totally merging with another's mood.

Essentially, what you are doing is matching only the exterior of your mental body with the frequency of the other's mental body while retaining your own frequency at the core of your mental body. This places you in the position of being able to directly control how deeply the other's mood penetrates into your mental body.

If you are a natural empath and find that you are empathic with just about any person you pass

on the street, then you will need to shield or restrict your mental body during your daily life. A shield is simply an energy vortex that keeps your mental frequency stable and prevents you from unconsciously modifying your mental frequency to match that of another person. A shield acts as a barrier between you and another person's mental body.

To erect a shield you must first take stock of your normal mental frequency. Then wrap an appropriate blanket of energy around your whole being and fill it with the idea that it will act to contain, and preserve the frequency of, your own mental being. Have it constantly replenish its energy by drawing it directly from the universe and instruct it to remain in place for as long as you consciously desire it to do so. In other words, make sure it stays intact until you wish to consciously establish an empathic link with someone.

With practice, shielding will help you regain control over your empathic ability and preserve your own state of mind. With even further practice you may be able to retain your shielding of the core of your mental body and then extend the periphery of your mental body in order to establish a safe empathic link.

No matter how unwieldy your natural empathy may seem at the beginning, you CAN learn to control it.

4) How do I prevent someone else from transferring their consciousness into me?

By this stage of IIIH, your will has become quite formidable. No one can transfer their consciousness into you without your allowing them to do so. So, if you feel that someone is trying to establish a mental link without your permission, all you have to do is willfully deny them entry. In extreme situations or if your natural empathy is untrained, you can always resort to shielding yourself and this will prevent invasion by another.

I must say however, it is very, very rare that someone else will even attempt to transfer their consciousness into you without your permission. There is no need for paranoia in this regard.

Many folks talk about being under "psychic attack", etc., but this too (when it is an actual attack and not just self-delusion) requires a certain degree of culpability or consent on the part of the person being attacked. Without your consent, any true attack will fail. Unfortunately, one has to make sure that there is no un-conscious consent as well as conscious consent. It is far easier to deny conscious consent than it is to ferret out any unconscious consent, and this is why some folks find themselves susceptible to an attack even though they believe they've consciously rebuked the attack. Again, there is no need for paranoia in this regard. True psychic attack is a very rare thing -- it is usually a matter of self-delusion.

5) Can I really control someone else in this way?

Only with the fourth type of transference are you capable of directly influencing another person

or being from the inside. The third type will provide you enough of an understanding of another that you can alter their behavior from the outside in much the same way that you do in daily life. In either way, but especially with the fourth type, you directly share in the karmic consequences of your interference.

I will warn you now to NEVER attempt to directly influence another being from the inside without their fully conscious consent -- you do NOT want to incur the negative karmic debt inherent in such an act. Even if you are effecting an innocuous, seemingly harmless, sort of influence, to do so from the inside without their consent is an abuse of your power that will surely incur some very unsavory consequences. Not the least of these consequences is that your magical abilities will suffer an extreme set back!

Astral:

With the Step Three magical schooling of the soul exercises, the student learned how to inhale the Elements into their whole body through the pore breathing technique. Now, with Step Four, the student learns how to dynamically accumulate the Elements in the individual body parts and organs. This is similar to the previous work with the dynamic accumulation of the vital energy.

At this stage in your development, you must be certain that you have established a clear Elemental balance, AND you must be able to maintain your balance. This means that you must by now be able to perceive the state of your balance at any given moment, and have the ability to correct any transitory imbalances you encounter. This is of vital importance and you should not, by any means, proceed with the Step Four exercises with the Elements until you have achieved your Elemental balance. If you proceed without this inner balance, you risk great harm to your psyche and your physical health.

As with the accumulation of the vital energy, the student is warned against accumulating the Elements into the brain and heart. Again, it is only the 'dynamic' accumulation with its building of pressure that is to be avoided. Merely bathing the heart and brain with the Elements or vital energy will do no harm, but when the Element or vital energy is condensed and the pressure of a dynamic accumulation is invoked, harm can easily be done.

The student begins in much the same manner as with the accumulation of the vital energy. Begin by accumulating seven breaths of the Element in the whole body through the pore breathing technique. Then shift the consciousness to the chosen organ or body part and condense the accumulated Element into that specific area.

This action of confining the accumulated Element into the smaller space of the body part or organ, condenses the Element and establishes a more dynamic accumulation of it. You should feel the attributes of the Element and a degree of pressure clearly in the chosen organ or body part.

When your contemplation of this accumulation in the chosen organ or body part is complete, then expand the condensed Element back to the whole body, spreading it evenly throughout the body

and releasing its dynamism and pressure. When the Element is thus spread again throughout the whole body, release it back to the universe by means of the magical pore breathing exhalation.

Starting with the Fire Element, repeat this procedure with each of your body parts and organs (except your brain and your heart). Then move on to the Air Element, then the Water Element, and end with the Earth Element. Seven whole-body breaths will suffice until you have familiarized yourself with the accumulation of each Element into each body part and organ. Only then should you increase the number of inhalations and thus increase the pressure that your dynamic accumulation exerts upon your body parts and organs.

This exercise is significant for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it introduces the student to the technique of "condensing" an Element. This is an important part of the magical use of the Elements.

Once the release of the accumulated Element through the whole body has been mastered, turn your attention to the technique of releasing the accumulated Element from the organ or body part directly back into the universe. This is no different than what you learned regarding the release of the vital energy. Simply exhale the condensed accumulation from the organ or body part directly, without first dispersing it throughout the whole body. With practice, you should eventually be able to release the accumulated Element in a single explosive expulsion, directly back to the universe from each organ and body part. This is a faster, more convenient technique and should be mastered with each Element and each body part and organ.

When the above has been mastered, attention turns to learning how to inhale the Elements directly into the body's parts and organs, without first inhaling them into the whole body. This is exactly the same exercise you followed in the section on accumulating the vital energy.

Beginning with the Fire Element, place your consciousness into the chosen body part or organ and, from there, inhale the Element directly into the organ or body part and dynamically accumulate it. Start with seven breaths and increase from there till you have reached your limit of a comfortable level of tension. Do not over stress your body by accumulating too much of an Element at any given time -- work your way slowly as you increase the dynamic pressure of the condensed Element and stretch your limits carefully. Again, avoid the dynamic accumulation of an Element in either your brain or your heart.

When your accumulation is complete, release the Element back to the universe directly from the organ or body part itself. Start with a paced exhalation of the Element and work your way up to the explosive release.

Repeat this exercise with each of your body's parts and organs and with each of the remaining Elements.

The following, final exercise of this section is of immense consequence to the advancing magician. I urge you to proceed in this exercise with gentleness. Go slowly and take your time as this exercise should not be rushed. The healing and balancing effects of this technique cannot be overstated.

The balancing effects of this final exercise are achieved through the accumulation of the Elements into their corresponding bodily regions. The main difference in this exercises compared to the work you have already done, is that here all four Elements are held within the body at the same time.

The technique begins with seven inhalations of the Earth Element, accumulated in its proper region of the body. This is held and then one inhales seven breaths of the Water Element into its region, etc. Eventually, seven inhalations of each of the Elements is accumulated in its own region and held there.

It is as if you are building your own little planet within your body. First you set the foundation of Earth. Then you allow the Water to flow over its surface. Upon this you let the atmosphere built of Air, rest gently. Atop the Air, the Fire flames, radiating its light out into the depths of space.

Spend several minutes (at least five) in this state and perceive the balancing effects as your whole, microcosmic being realigns itself with the universal, macrocosmic balance.

When you are ready, gently release each of the Elements from their regions, following the reverse order (i.e., Fire, Air, Water, then Earth). At first, master the release through the seven-breath pore exhaling of the accumulation and then slowly progress, in the usual manner, to the explosive release.

The question arises, regarding the four bodily regions, of what one does with the arms and hands. Bardon is silent on this subject so I will relate to you what I have found best in my own experience with this exercise. I relegate the shoulder, down to the elbow, to the Air region; the elbow to the wrist, to the Water region; and, the hand, to the Earth region. This seems to express their relative use and nature, as well as their interaction. Each modifies the movement of the next, with the hand (Earth) being the most complex modification of the initial motion of the shoulder (Air).

When the above seven-breath passive accumulation of the Elements into their regions has been mastered, it is safe to proceed with working towards a dynamic accumulation. Increase your accumulation by one inhalation in each region each time you practice -- retain the balance of the Elements. Slowly build the condensation and dynamism of the accumulated Elements and gently stretch the plasticity of the regions of your body.

Again, work with the two types of release: the magical exhalation and the explosive release.

Aside from the healing, balancing effects of this exercise, the student will also benefit as it prepares one for the later work of dynamically accumulating the Elements into external objects.

This exercise Equilibrates the Elements in all three of the magician's bodies (mental, astral and physical). The implications of this upon the magical ascent are uncountable. This is one exercise that you will doubtless repeat with joy throughout the remainder of your life!

Q&A--

1) Is this supposed to be a dynamic accumulation or a condensation of the Elements?

In these Step Four exercises, you start by establishing a dynamic accumulation in the whole body, and then you condense the entire accumulation into the smaller space of an organ or body part. Once this process is mastered, you turn to condensing the Elements into your organs and body parts directly, without first passing it through your whole body. Then, in the accumulation into the four regions of the body, you are working with a dynamic accumulation directly into each region, followed by a building of the accumulation into a highly condensed state.

2) Why should I avoid accumulating or condensing the Elements in my brain and my heart?

These two organs, more so than any other organs in the human body, depend upon the body's own electrical charge to function properly. Their electrical balance is fairly sensitive to irregularities and when this is toyed with, damage can easily occur. Since each of the Elements carries its own particular electromagnetic charge, accumulating the Elements into either of these organs risks disruption of their normal electrical balance.

However, when an Element is accumulated in, for example, the Fire in the head region (in the Elemental balancing exercise), the electromagnetic charge of the Element is spread throughout all the organs of the region and there is thus no resulting disturbance of the balance within the brain. The same holds true when the Air Element is accumulated in the chest region and when the Elements are accumulated in the whole body.

3) What is the practical use of this work with the Elements?

First of all, the Step Four work with the accumulation of the Elements into your body opens you to many new options in maintaining your bodily health.

Secondly, the Elemental balancing exercise will have a great impact upon your goal of achieving an overall Elemental equipoise.

Thirdly, this work is what makes the finger rituals possible.

Fourthly, these exercises introduce you to the technique of condensing the Elements. This is a rudimentary part of true magic. Condensing the Elements into your own body is the first step in learning how to condense the Elements into external objects.

Physical:

Step Four closes with a section on personal ritual. Here, the student must be creative and design

rituals that are of intimate personal relevance. Of course, the abilities already learned and the personal morality of the magician play an integral part in just how effective any ritual may become.

A ritual, for the true magician, is a short-cut. All it does is compress the hands-on labor into a short gesture. If the magician is not capable of performing the hands-on labor, then the ritual will be useless. Furthermore, the compression of the hands-on labor takes a good amount of labor itself. In other words, creating the short-cut takes repetition. At first, this is not a short-cut, but given time and effort, it becomes one.

A lot of fancy ceremonial is taught in many of the magical groups, lodges and schools, but to the well trained "Bardonian" magician these are relatively unproductive practices. Prewritten ceremony does have its place, but true magic is spontaneous. It must come from the heart of the magician and fit the demands of the moment. The true magician has no need for public display nor theatrics -- there may be times when these are appropriate, but the magician does not NEED them to effect their will. This is the lesson to be found here at the end of Step Four.

The magical rituals that you create for yourself, no matter how simplistic, will serve you far better than those you learn from someone else. Enjoy yourself, be inventive, and always work for the betterment of all!

Q&A--

1) What is the point of creating these rituals?

The path that Bardon lays out in IIH involves first learning the basic techniques of magic, followed by combining those techniques in ways that render them more useful. The idea here is that you must first gain the ability to do things the slow way, by hands-on, manual labor, and then learn to employ these techniques in a faster, less labor intensive manner. The creation of these simple finger rituals represents a faster way of doing the same thing that you can achieve through hands-on labor. It is a short step from mastery of these small rituals to the later work of creating beings that will carry out your will without your immediate attention. Throughout IIH you will see this pattern of taking simple things and making out of them more complex forms of magic.

Creating this sort of ritual takes lots of repetitive practice and this is the primary lesson to be learned through their mastery. Once you've gone through this process and mastered it, the creation of more complex rituals and learning the higher magical practices is made just that much easier.

2) How does a finger ritual work?

This is similar to the practice of managing intruding thoughts during the mental discipline exercises of Step One. By repeating the ideation process over and over, it becomes quicker and quicker, and eventually it reaches such a degree of rapidity that it becomes almost automatic. With the

finger rituals, the employment of the Elements at first takes time and extra thought, but with steady repetition, the whole process becomes so rapid that all you have to do is move your fingers in the predetermined way and your will is immediately carried out.

Of course, these rituals are completely useless if you are not already capable of manipulating the Elements. They are only short-cuts to the performance of things that you can already accomplish through the slower, hands-on labor. In other words, a ritual will not give you more power to do things -- it will only speed up the accomplishment of your will.

The technique itself is very simple. If you condense the Elements into your fingers as outlined by Bardon, all you then have to do is touch the appropriate fingers together to release their Elements and thus accomplish your will. This requires that you predetermine how the Elements will interact and how they will be directed to carry out the desired effect. So, there is a combination here of four factors: the condensed Elements; the physical movement; the building of the ideation; and, the explosive release of the condensed Elements. In this way, you can very quickly fill your surroundings with an Element, or combination of Elements, and through their attributes, effect your will.

Just how effective your ritual will be depends upon your abilities. At first you will be able to only effect the mental sphere of your surroundings, but with practice your effectiveness will reach into the astral and eventually, into the physical sphere.

3) How many rituals should I devise?

Start with one ritual and when that has been mastered, expand your repertoire by one ritual at a time. Be sure to master each ritual before you initiate a new one. I recommend no more than four rituals total as this gives you the opportunity to devise a series of rituals that depend primarily upon each one of the four Elements, while avoiding the dispersal of power that too many rituals can incur. It is good to devise enough rituals to meet your needs, but unwise to devise an endless number of them.

STEP FIVE THROUGH STEP TEN

Introduction --

On a few occasions, I have had been asked to write some sort of student's guide to Franz Bardon's "Initiation Into Hermetics". Each time, I responded with something like "I can't think of anything to add." And for years I've held this opinion, but my experiences participating in an Internet e-board discussion group about Bardon's works has led me to reconsider that sentiment. So, when I was asked to rewrite the Franz Bardon FAQ that appears on a popular website, I consented to write a few things concerning the first four Steps of IIH. Little did I know at the outset that I'd find all kinds of things to say! Word junkie that I am, I ended up writing no less than 37 full pages of commentary and answers to commonly asked questions. Even at that, hundreds more pages could be written.

Making things understood, presenting concepts in such a way that it is easy for the reader to grasp them, is the responsibility of the writer. But the writer's responsibility stops there -- it is up to the reader to do the understanding. And it is the reader who doesn't quite grasp the author's meaning that is responsible for trying to figure it out. That is indeed the failing of a written thing -- there is no chance for dialogue and for putting all your questions to the author for clarification. So, many written things remain misunderstood by many, or at least only partially understood.

In the case of Franz Bardon's books, this is compounded by the fact that as he wrote them, he placed himself in the perspective of the student who is actually involved with the labor of the material he describes. For instance, when he describes the exercises of Step Five in IIH, he is saying things that only a student who has done the labor of the Step One, Two, Three and Four exercises, will understand. Thus, the student who is in the middle of Step Two, or the student who is reading IIH for the first time and hasn't even begun the work, will understand what Bardon wrote regarding Step Five, less completely than someone who has completed the Step Four work.

This was certainly the case for me and as I progressed through the Steps, I was repeatedly surprised to find that I had previously misunderstood things in the mere reading of the text that now made perfect sense because I had done the work leading up to that point in the path. It was within this thought that I found a reason for continuing my commentary on IIH beyond the Step Four limit I had once set.

I firmly believe that anyone who has progressed through IIH up to the start of Step Five, has no need for outside advice. The student of Step Five will have mastered the most rudimentary techniques upon which the remainder of the course is constructed. Plus, the student will have learned the ability to puzzle out their questions on their own and will have, by necessity, honed this skill to a razor sharpness. At this point, IIH becomes much easier for the student.

This stage, typified by the student's ability to ask their questions internally and seek out answers through their own experimentation, is a necessary part of the path of initiation. As you trod the path of initiation, the responsibility for your progress falls more and more into your own hands.

Inquisitiveness and inventiveness are both important allies of the student of magic and there are certain passages where that is all you will have at your disposal to work with.

I have tried to find a balance between giving this fact its due respect and trying my best to steer away from giving encouragement to those who wish to leap farther than they are truly prepared to step. My compromise has been to do two things in regard to IHH: First, I have limited my detailed commentary and practical suggestions to the "Theory" section and the exercises of Steps One through Four.

Second, I have written a commentary on Steps Five through Ten which outlines some of the points where Bardon's way of writing from the student's immediate perspective interferes with the understanding of the unprepared reader. I will not offer my practical advice for these later Steps other than in personal correspondence or conversation with practicing students of those particular Steps. The same holds true for Bardon's second and third books, the "Practice of Magical Evocation" and "The Key to the True Quabalah." I should add here, that I don't expect I'll ever be asked such questions anyway. Everyone that I know that has reached these stages in their initiation does not need to ask the advice of another person, consequently they don't ask.

All of my internal rationale aside, I do have concern that those who read IHH or who look ahead to the Steps to come, will get the wrong picture of what it all really means. At many places in IHH, Bardon has to resort to metaphors that can only be understood if you already know what all went into the metaphor in the first place. It is difficult for the reader to make the subtle connections between what is learned in one Step and what is then applied in a new way in the next.

My concern is especially sharp when it comes to Bardon's PME and KTQ. All too often I have encountered students who pick up PME and want to START with evocation while totally overlooking what Bardon says (repeatedly) about having to first reach the end of the Step Eight of IHH (or its equivalent by other means) before beginning the work of PME or KTQ. It is easy to think from the mere reading of these two books that it is really possible to ignore Bardon's stated prerequisite, but the reality is an entirely different matter and Bardon's admonition is completely accurate. This sort of misunderstanding of PME is, in my opinion, due to a lack of background in genuine magic and the consequent inability to truly understand the deeper significance of what is being said. This is inescapably natural and what I have said is meant only as a statement of fact that must be dealt with openly and not as a criticism.

For this reason above all others, I will attempt, through my own commentary, to help the reader at least become aware of the places where this is an important addition to their understanding of the author's deeper meaning. Whether or not my comments actually add to your understanding of IHH is out of my hands -- all I can promise is that I will try my best.

I would ask that as you read my comments, you do so with this thought in mind: The only true teacher is experience. Even though a thousand sages will spend a billion words trying to explain the Mysteries, you will not truly understand their full implications until you yourself have penetrated what lies beyond the veil. But never let this dissuade you from doing your damndest to penetrate this veil -- it is only gossamer, as they say. The further you penetrate, the deeper your

understanding will grow; and the deeper your understanding, the deeper into the Mysteries will you penetrate. Hold your conclusions with loose hands so that you may always be able to re-form them. Always remain willing to deepen your understanding -- the main barrier to this is holding on too tightly to our conclusions. Adopt your own conclusions not those of another. This is especially true considering that all I can offer you here are my own conclusions and yours might be far different than mine. The best I hope for is that reading about a few of my conclusions will inspire you to question and expand your own conclusions.

STEP FIVE

Mental (Magical Schooling of the Spirit): The "Depth Point" and Space Magic --

Bardon begins his discussion of the depth point with a quote from Archimedes: "Show me a point in the universe [upon which to stand] and I shall lift the world out of its hinges!" Unfortunately, Bardon's explanation of what Archimedes was trying to say is not sufficient for the modern reader.

For the convenience of the uninitiated reader, Bardon speaks of the three standard physical dimensions and posits a fourth, non-physical dimension, but for the student of Hermetics (and for the modern physicist) this does not suffice. The Hermetic is conscious of the fact that there are more than just three dimensions to be contended with in the physical realm. Aside from length, width and height, there is another dimension that impacts physical matter directly, namely "duration". Each physical thing exists for a specific amount of time and this is important since at the level of the physical present moment, physical matter is not infinite. At any given moment within the space-time continuum, only a small part of the universe's physical infinity is expressed. In other words, the physical infinity of the universe exists in its entirety only outside of the realm of time, in the eternal realm. So, in the physical realm where the dimensions of length, width and height hold sway, the duration of a thing's physical form directly effects a thing's existence with the same magnitude as the standard three dimensions.

Bardon describes time as this fourth dimension but he does not state it as a physical dimension and therein lies the confusion, for the "point" that Archimedes refers to is not a physical dimension. Archimedes' point and Bardon's point are actually a fifth dimension, namely "meaning".

The dimension of meaning directly impacts the physical realm in that it is a thing's meaning (at the physical level, we see this in a thing's purpose) which determines the particular details of its appearance. But this is not a strictly physical dimension like the previous four. Meaning spans all of the dimensions of existence and impacts each in a similar manner.

In the physical realm, duration is the part of time that holds sway. In the astral realm, time becomes more than the limited duration of the physical realm as the whole duration of time opens to the astral eyes. And in the mental realm, time becomes eternity and the mental eyes perceive the entire infinite duration of time as a unified whole. The differences sound subtle as I describe them but they are anything but. The significance of these three ways of viewing time are difficult to understand from within a time-space perspective.

The conception of the universe in Archimedes' time was that it is an infinite thing -- not only infinite in spatial terms, but also in terms of thoughts, ideas, emotions, meaning, and time. Similarly, Hermetic philosophy defines the three realms (mental, astral and physical) as each being of an infinite nature. The problem is that in order to perceive the infinity of the physical realm in particular, you must be able to change your perspective to that of a higher realm. In other words, you must shift your focus of attention from that of being centered in your physical body, to that of viewing the universe from within the heart of your astra-mental body. This removes you from

the spatial restrictions of the present moment's duration and allows you to separate yourself from your intimate involvement in the physical present moment's life circumstances. This is the depth point perspective and from here, you can directly perceive a thing's meaning at an astra-mental level.

Another concept to consider in regard to the depth point is the unique nature of infinity. This is an important concept to the Hermetic which should be studied by every serious student.

One of the mysteries of an infinity is that any and every finite point that can be defined, exists at the exact center of the infinity. For example, where ever you stand within a truly infinite space, space will still stretch infinitely in every direction. In other words, infinity has no edges, per se -- it has only "center". Furthermore, this center point can be of any size and it will still be a finite center within the infinity.

Consciousness, being the root or Primordial principle, pervades the entire universe, at every level. At our level as human beings, we manifest this root consciousness most clearly as our individual awareness. Our individual consciousness is what ties us directly to the infinite consciousness of Being. We have, by virtue of this connection, the ability to place the finite center point of our awareness anywhere within the infinite universe and expand or contract it as we wish.

By pursuing the depth point, we free our center of awareness from the ties of the physical present moment and are then able to expand it and move it around.

The depth point is not a spatial coordinate. In other words, it is not a physical place or thing. It is not, as some have erroneously assumed, the center of gravity of a physical form. These are meant only as analogies to enhance one's visualization and ideation during the process of reaching the depth point.

There are many ways of describing this depth point and the process of becoming aware of it. In one tradition that I am familiar with, the depth point is equated with Tiphareth (the kabbalistic sphere associated with Sol, the sun). In this system, the initiate is instructed to travel mentally to a temple of Tiphareth and once there, look down into a pool or a crystal sphere, and view their own life circumstances as if from above. This causes a certain disassociation from direct involvement in one's life circumstances and provides the initiate with a renewed, broadened perspective. The root feeling here is that one has made contact with one's own inner meaning and is viewing the physical expression of that meaning from one's own core. Pursued further, this perspective opens the initiate to viewing the entire passage of their existence (past lifetimes) up to that point in time.

From the depth point, the initiate can influence the physical manifestation of any thing from the inside out. Thus it is related to the previous Step's work of the transference of consciousness. Step Five expands upon the transference of consciousness and takes it to a new level. The work begins with the transferal of your consciousness into the depth point of other things and ends with the reaching of your own depth point.

But, if you work only from the perspective of placing your consciousness into the spatial center of a thing, you will not discover the true depth point. You must instead, reach for something deeper than a spatial coordinate.

Another mystery of an infinity is that a finite point within the infinity cannot encompass the infinity through expansion by finite increments. The only way to encompass an infinity is to become the infinity itself. This requires, at some finite point along the way, a quantum leap of expansion where the center becomes the whole all at once.

The depth point exercises are only one finite step along the way to encompassing the whole infinity. All they will do is make you a swimmer in the infinite stream of time. The final step is to become the stream itself, not a mere fish navigating its flow. But the depth point is the eye of the needle so to speak, through which you must travel in order to reach the ultimate expansion.

There are many levels or degrees of infinity. The infinity of space-time is just the first which the Hermetic magician must needs conquer. When the human consciousness expands till its center encompasses the whole infinity of space-time, then this infinity becomes a "closed infinity" and the new perspective allows one to view other infinities directly. From this perspective, the entire infinity of time-space is perceived as a unified whole and the consciousness is free to focus on any part of that continuum at its own discretion.

The leverage that Archimedes spoke of is found within the depth point of every thing. This equates with the fourth, most complete type or stage of transference of consciousness I spoke of in the Step Four material.

In order to reach the depth point, the student must have mastered the emptiness of mind (from Step One) to a high degree. The student must be able to completely disentangle themselves from involvement with their physical senses as this is the key to reaching the depth point.

Astral (Magical Schooling of the Soul): Projection of the Elements --

The Step Five Schooling of the Soul exercises are similar to those found in previous Steps only now they concern the projection of the Elements. The techniques are exactly the same as those employed in learning to master the vital energy, so these particular exercises should present no problem to the student.

It may truly be impossible for the passive reader to understand what it feels like to accumulate, condense and project an Element. In the hands of the magician these Elements become very real, concrete things that can be condensed to such a degree that they become physically active. When Bardon speaks of condensing the Fire Element to such a degree that anyone can sense its heat, he's not exaggerating.

However, care must be taken in reading this section of IHH since in many places Bardon informs the student of what is possible and then later says that what is possible is not necessarily advis-

able. The student of Hermetics strives for balance, especially in regard to their magical rise. Many of the possibilities that Bardon mentions can be achieved only after years of focused, one-sided practice and this often runs contrary to a balanced development.

So, if at the end of reading this section you are left with the impression that the student must master the Fire Element's condensation to such a degree that he/she can actually measure an increase in temperature with a thermometer, then read it again. In point of fact, Bardon explicitly states that this and similar trickery are not a requirement of Step Five. The reason for this is that as the magician's abilities increase, higher forms of magic will enable the student to accomplish these sorts of things very quickly and without the years of effort it would take to master this ability otherwise.

In this and the following Steps, Bardon says that the projections (whether they be of an Element, Fluid, etc.) must be clearly perceived by the magician. They must be so condensed that the magician can actually feel them. Herein lies a problem for the passive reader in that the impression is given that anyone should be able to perceive the magician's projection (such as the heat of a room filled with the Fire Element). But the truth of the matter is that whether or not another person can, for example, feel the heat in a room that the magician has condensed the Fire Element into, is secondary. What is of most importance is whether or not the magician can feel these physical sensations themselves.

The degree of condensation of a projection is a function of the magician's own plastic imagination. By Step Five, the magician's creative imagination has been honed to such a high degree that the sensations accompanying their visualizations become real things, but the student should not concern themselves with whether or not their projections are felt by another at a physical level. The student has nothing to prove (magic is not a game of competition) and if this is held as a goal, it will interfere with the student's progress.

For the reader, it is important that you keep in mind what I have just said. In the chapters ahead, be sure to ask yourself whether Bardon means that it is the magician who must be able to sense a thing or whether another person must also be able to sense it. Most often, the magician's projection does not have to be so condensed that it is a physically sensible thing to an ordinary onlooker.

If we define "high magic" as being that which comes after the merging with a godform, then what is presented in Step Five would be considered somewhere between "low magic" and mid-range. At this stage, the condensation of a projection to such a degree that it becomes sensible to any person regardless of their magical ability, is a very difficult task. It is not impossible through these means, but it would require so many years of devoted practice that it would constitute a diversion from the main goal of a steady advancement.

Physical (Magical Schooling of the Physical Body): Passive Communication --

The first three of the preparatory exercises listed here are interesting and their significance may

not at first be apparent. The first exercise, which involves loading the hand with the vital energy and then causing it to move by will alone, is the most mysterious.

To explain its rationale and its importance will take some backtracking, so please bear with me. In the normal course of events, to move a specific muscle requires two things: energy and volition. For example, if you raise your arm, this requires the will to do so and the muscular energy to contract the necessary muscles. If either is not present, the arm will not rise. Within this context, we can define two types of muscular movement or contraction: voluntary and involuntary. An example of a voluntary contraction is when you consciously contract your biceps -- this requires a focus of your will upon a single muscle. An involuntary contraction occurs when for instance, you raise your arm and as a consequence your biceps contracts. Here, the contraction of your biceps is not directly willed but is a normal part of the primary will to raise your arm. More energy and will power are expended in the voluntary contraction of a muscle than in its involuntary contraction. The will to move a muscle comes from within your mind, but the energy required, comes from your body's own storehouse of physical energy.

In the first preparatory exercise, the body's own energy is substituted by the accumulated vital energy. Furthermore, the will power is not directed into the muscle itself but into the vital energy instead. The main function of this specific exercise is to teach the student the difference between the normal movement of a muscle (in this case the hand) and a movement accomplished by an external force. It also shows the student how to sever the connection between their own mind and their muscles, and still accomplish a movement.

The second exercise involves the accumulation of the Air Element and the effecting of movement by virtue of its weightlessness. This, of course, is a type of simple levitation caused by the Air Element. Again, the mind causes no actual movement of the muscles -- the movement is caused exclusively by the Air Element's weightlessness and the sensation is one of floating. This carries what was learned in the first preparatory exercise a step further and teaches the student how to sever even their will power from movement. In the first exercise, it was the will power, focused through the vital energy which caused movement via the muscles, but in this exercise, it is the character of the Air Element itself (its weightlessness) which causes the movement. The only will power required in this exercise is that involved in accumulating the Air Element. Any contraction of the muscles is incidental and involuntary.

The third preparatory exercise involves the "exteriorization" of the hand. [Note: Bardon refers to the right hand, but if you are left-handed, then you should work with your left hand.] The term "exteriorization" means the conscious separation of your combined astral and mental (astra-mental) hand from its physical shell. This is the first step towards learning the technique of astral-mental wandering and here, it is applied to the passive communication with non-corporeal beings.

The exteriorization is not as simple a matter as it may sound to the passive reader. For the exteriorization to be complete, the astra-mental hand must feel exactly like the physical hand. For example, if you exteriorize your astra-mental hand and then lay it in your lap, you must be able to clearly feel the fabric of your clothing, the warmth of your own body, and the pressure of your hand resting on your lap. In other words, your astra-mental hand must be capable of all the same

sensations as your physical hand was.

It is fairly easy to exteriorize only your mental hand, but to truly exteriorize your astra-mental hand is more difficult. So, to be sure that you have accomplished this astral exteriorization, you should use the aforementioned sensory standard.

When mastered fully, this astra-mental exteriorization completely severs your will from your physical hand. This is because it is your astra-mental hand that conveys your will to the muscles of your physical hand. The result is that your physical hand is now empty and is thus made available to the influence of an outside force.

Bardon states that a physical hand thus emptied of its astra-mental counterpart, is transferred to the Akasha. This is difficult for the passive reader to understand unless this is connected up with the Step Five mental/spirit exercises concerning the depth point. Perhaps a better way of stating it is to say that a physical hand, emptied of its astra-mental counterpart, is noticeable in the Akasha as a properly prepared environment through which a being can communicate with the physical realm directly, through the Akasha. [This is an example of why it is so important in the process of astra-mental wandering for the practitioner to establish some sort of protection or shielding for the vacated physical body.]

The depth point plays a big role in the passive communication practice. The practice consists of three phases. First is the preparation of the material devices such as the pendulum, planchette, or pen and paper; and, the preparation of the hand through exteriorization.

The second phase is the reaching of the student's own depth point. This places the student's mental body in the Akasha.

The third phase is the calling forth, from the Akasha, of the being you wish to communicate with. This calling forth occurs completely in the Akasha and you utter nothing with your physical voice. The being is then invited to use your physical hand for their communication.

Once the being has made its contact with your physical hand, you must open your eyes (while retaining your trance state) and proceed with your communication, asking questions of your chosen being and noting their answers. When the session is complete, you must, of course, re-integrate your astra-mental hand and remove yourself from your trance state.

Bardon counsels the student to focus mainly upon establishing communication with their own guardian genius or angel. Much has been said in the occult literature about the nature of this being, so I will not repeat it here. There are also many other methods of establishing communication with one's Guardian Angel. What Bardon presents here is a passive or indirect method which relies upon an intermediary such as a pendulum, planchette, etc. As Bardon relates, the point of this passive communication is to lead the student into a more direct form of communication.

A good supplement to learning the passive communication technique is to practice a simple direct

communication. Let me explain: We each have access to the guidance of our Guardian Angel in each moment of our lives, through the little interior voice of our conscience. By practicing the attentive listening to your conscience, this communication becomes stronger -- especially if you adhere to the counsel of your conscience and follow its every dictate. Eventually, the inner conversation with your Guardian Angel can become two-way, where you ask questions and receive answers directly. Both this method and Bardon's method lead to the same place but Bardon's method teaches the student several important things that the method of listening to your conscience cannot. Listening to your conscience does not require exteriorization and mastery of this technique is a prerequisite for the work of future Steps. Furthermore, listening to your conscience is not a technique that is effective in the communication with beings other than your own Guardian Angel.

Bardon speaks of the different ways in which the communications from a non-corporeal being may be perceived by the practitioner. Some will sense foreign thoughts in their own mind, some will see pictures or hear words, etc. Some may even establish a direct communication with their Guardian Angel on the first attempt at the passive communication, so it is vital that the student not limit their experience by holding too tightly onto their expectations.

STEP SIX

Mental (Magical Schooling of the Spirit): Becoming conscious of the Mental Body --

These exercises should remind you of the Step One and Two astral exercises of introspection and self-analysis, combined with the Step Two and Three mental exercises with the single- and multiple-sense concentration. In point of fact, the mental exercises of Step Six replicate this work at a higher level.

What Bardon describes of the meditations upon one's own spirit or mental body is, in practice, no where near as simple as it may sound in print. Little more can be said about these meditations beyond what Bardon has written since we are each so different and unique. It is up to the student alone to penetrate to the true significance of this initial exercise.

The exercises which follow, regarding the accustoming of yourself to the three-part (mental, astral and physical, simultaneously) action, are straight forward in their nature and should pose no problem for the student who has progressed this far.

As with all of the previous exercises, these concerning the spirit or mental body, are essential to further progress. They are rudimentary to future work with ceremonial ritual, astral and mental wandering, evocation, kabbala, and many, many other forms of magic.

Learning the three-part action changes the seat of your awareness and actively connects your three bodies. At a deeper level, these exercises relate to a subject I've raised before, vis a vis, the mechanisms of human perception. I hope the importance of this subject is now obvious to the reader.

As I said, these exercises are not as easy as they may sound and Bardon's warnings about feeling disoriented are sincere. The three part action requires a very different degree of self-awareness and this takes some getting used to.

Astral (Magical Schooling of the Soul): Mastering the Akasha Principle --

Mastery of the Akasha is no easy matter. [Actually one does not "master" the Akasha, but one can master the techniques for working with the Akasha.] To begin with, you must first have attained to a very high degree of control over the Elements themselves. The Akasha will not allow you to do anything you are not already able to do by means of manipulating the Elements directly.

Furthermore, and of special significance here, the quality of your character, as reflected by the ethics you adhere to, will directly determine your success with the Akasha. The Akasha will not allow you to create effects within it if you do not possess a noble character. That is the plain and simple, completely undeniable, truth.

As Bardon explains the exercises with the Akasha, he states that you must "imagine that you are in an infinite space where you are at the center." I want you to think back to what was said regarding Archimedes' fulcrum and the "depth point" concentration. From this, you will see that Bardon means that you must begin this exercise by transferring your consciousness into the depth point of your own body.

You are then instructed to inhale the Akasha into your body using the same technique you've used for inhaling the vital energy, etc. As Bardon points out, the Akasha cannot be accumulated by virtue of its essential nature. What he doesn't say is that this is not actually an exercise where you take in the Akasha; rather, it is about placing yourself fully INTO the Akasha. This is accomplished in two phases. The first phase is the transferal of your consciousness into your depth point (i.e., where 'you' intersect with the Akasha). The second phase is one of merging your center of awareness with the infinite, non-centralized Akasha. Bardon accomplishes this through the inhalation of the Akasha (through its color and its feeling) until the internal Akasha matches the external Akasha. This is not an accumulation, per se -- it is a merging.

Bardon states, and quite truthfully, that you will be able to manifest any desire from within the Akasha. What he doesn't mention, and assumes you will realize, is that when you reach this stage of development, what you desire will look very differently than it does now. You will have no petty desires, and even if you did, you would not be able to manifest them through the Akasha. Please take heed of this if you are tempted to work with the Akasha before you are truly prepared, for you would only be wasting your time and you can easily cause yourself some pretty nasty karmic consequences. Remember, the fact that the Akasha is the realm of cause and effect is what gives it its power over the Elements -- and, it is also what makes it so dangerous for the unprepared dabbler.

Physical (Magical Schooling of the Physical Body): Creation of Entities --

With the sixth Step, Bardon leaves off on listing exercises that pertain directly to the physical body, although what he describes can be said to be physical in nature. Beginning with this Step, the physical schooling sections will be devoted to certain magical practices.

In Step Six, Bardon explains the magical creation of Elementals (not to be confused with Elementaries) and makes the student aware of other similar creatures, such as larvae, schemata and phantoms. The reader may find Bardon's analysis surprising, for it certainly does not seem like what others have written on this subject in the past. Bardon, in his usual manner, penetrates to the heart of the matter from an Hermetic perspective.

In order to create a truly effective Elemental, the student must possess a very high proficiency with plastic imagination. It is also necessary that the student have mastered the depth point exercises since it is from within the Akasha that an Elemental is formed and sent off to the appropriate realm.

The creation technique that Bardon describes concerns a very simple Elemental that will be effec-

tive upon the mental sphere. From there, its effect may reach down into the astral and later into the physical realm, if this is the desire of its creator, but its primary focus will be upon the mental realm itself. This sort of Elemental is the best place to start. Once success has been achieved with this simple method, then you will be better able to create more complex creatures.

Bardon provides several rules that must be adhered to in the creation of an Elemental -- the shape and color, the name, the purpose or task to be accomplished, and the duration of its effectiveness. Another important rule to follow is that you must completely disassociate your mind from involvement with the Elemental once it has been created. You must be able to release it and turn your mind firmly to other matters. If you do not, the Elemental will remain attached to your own sphere and not become fully effective (if at all) within the realm you wish to send it to. You may, periodically, recall your creation to your presence and recharge it, but you must again release it completely so that it may go about its business without your meddling. This may seem an easy matter to the passive reader but it actually requires great mental discipline to release something you have created.

Again, your moral development is at issue here. Take care that you don't create something to meet petty needs for it will most likely turn and bite you in the butt.

STEP SEVEN

Mental (Magical Schooling of the Spirit): Analysis of the Spirit --

The mental schooling of this entire Step is devoted to the establishment of the mental Equilibrium of the Elements. In Steps One and Two, the work was with the astral Equilibrium of the Elements as regards the personality. The mental Equilibrium is a somewhat different matter. The mental Equilibrium is not expressed in as concrete a way and is not something that can be itemized like the personality traits. The analysis itself is a major task, but the rectification of any imbalance is based upon methods the student will have already learned. Bardón's instructions in this regard will suffice for the student who has done the work of Steps One through Six. As always, this work demands inventiveness and a deep insight into one's own self.

The mental Equilibrium has a direct effect upon the astral personality. The student may find it necessary to once again pass through the work of the soul mirrors and bring them up-to-date in relation to the improved mental Equilibrium.

Attainment of the mental Equilibrium roughly equates with the basic mind-set of a seventh degree initiate in many of the popular Golden Dawn-type systems. This is the grade of Adeptus Exemptus (exempt adept, 7=4) and without this fully integrated Equilibrium of the three bodies, there can be no rise to the next level of Magister Templi (temple master, 8=3).

Astral (Magical Schooling of the Soul): Development of the Astral Senses --

The seventh Step astral exercises serve the special cause of developing the student's astral senses, namely clairvoyance, clairaudience and clairsentience. As Bardón points out, this may not be necessary for every student who has reached this level. Many students will find that they already have a natural ability with the astral sensoria and others may have developed their senses to a sufficient degree as a consequence of the Step One through Six work. Still others, who have done the preceding work, will find that they have little or no ability with the astral senses, and it is specifically this type of student for whom the seventh Step exercises are designed.

We each, by course of nature, possess the astral senses and use them continuously throughout our daily lives. Where we differ is in the degree to which our use of these senses is conscious. For most humans, our astral perceptions only reach our subconscious mind, but for those who are considered gifted, our astral perceptions reach our conscious mind and directly impact our actions, thoughts and emotions.

The reasons for this difference between individuals varies greatly. It can be due to the work we accomplished in past incarnations, or it can be due to mere happenstance (e.g., a severe accident or other traumatic incident), or even something so simple as our basic Elemental composition. The main barrier however, is the fact that our western cultures generally teach us to ignore and undervalue our more subtle perceptions.

Clairvoyance, clairaudience and clairsentience can all be learned. But despite what the passive reader may think, the techniques that Bardón presents in Step Seven will not work for someone who has not passed through the previous Steps. For these techniques to be anything more than a waste of time, the student must already possess the Elemental Equilibrium and must have gained the full awareness of their three bodies. Again, this is a point where intimate knowledge of the mechanisms of human perception proves invaluable. In short, the astral techniques of Step Seven are 'magical' techniques and require a magician for them to be at all helpful.

The astral senses are difficult to describe. They are more than their physical corollaries. For example, the astral corollary of sight, clairvoyance, is essentially visual yet it provides the clairvoyant more than just visual information. When the clairvoyant observes a thing with their astral sight, certain information about the thing is revealed at an almost intuitive level. The clairvoyant will perceive the thing's essential nature along with its current motivation or 'raison d'etre'. Ultimately, this normally passive sense can lead to an active form of two-way communication.

Similar things can be said of the other astral senses. For example, the clairaudient individual will be able to perceive the meaning of sounds and the clairsentient person will be able to perceive the meaning and the entire past of a thing that is touched.

The astral senses are what enables the magician to perceive the astral realm. This is an essential attribute for the magician who engages in astral wandering, for without the astral senses, the astral wanderer would walk deaf, dumb and blind. This is also an imperative faculty for the magician who wishes to practice evocation, for without it, the evoker has no way of truly seeing the inner nature of what they have evoked.

It is hard to conceive just how radically the blossoming of the astral sensoria can effect the initiate's life. At every level, the amount of information that the initiate will be able to perceive in any given moment will be multiplied a thousandfold. But along with developing the astral senses the student must learn to control them. It is not convenient for the magician to always have their astral senses active -- sometimes ignorance IS bliss! There are many who suffer mental and emotional pain because they cannot shut off their more subtle perceptions. Thus the student of magic should do their best to avoid this pitfall by learning to develop AND control their astral sensoria.

The exercises of this section are straight forward and well described by Bardón. One must however, pay close attention to the details for success to ensue.

Physical (Magical Schooling of the Physical Body): Creation of Elementaries --

In the sixth Step, Bardón teaches how to create an Elemental. An Elemental is composed of light or pure energy, impregnated with an idea, given a form, a name and a specific term of life. An Elementary, the topic of Step Seven's physical schooling, is different in that it is composed of one or more of the four Elements. An Elemental's realm of influence is primarily mental, but an Elementary can be created to immediately effect any realm or combination of realms that the

magician desires. Of course, the degree of its effectiveness depends upon the capabilities of the magician.

An Elementary has life, whereas an Elemental has only purpose. The life of the Elementary however, comes from the magician's own life breath. Thus the relationship between the Elementary and the magician who creates it, is similar to that of parent and child. Furthermore, a magician is karmically responsible for all of the actions of their Elementaries. Needless to say, great care must be taken in the creation of an Elementary.

In order to be able to create a genuine Elementary, the magician must have complete mastery over the Elements, for an Elementary is created through the projection and condensation of the Elements. The magician must follow the pattern of life and create three bodies for the Elementary -- a physical form or body, an astral body and a mental body -- and, s/he must bind these bodies together.

In most cases, the physical form of the Elementary stays with the magician and only the astral form is sent out to accomplish the Elementary's task. The realm to which it is cast depends entirely upon the task it is to perform and upon the will of the magician. All of the details are up to the magician for this is a true act of creation. Even so, certain rules have to be followed and since these are so well explained by Bardou, I have nothing to add to them.

An Elementary should be treated with a firm will, with love, respect and kindness. It should always be empowered with only a good purpose to fulfill. If you find that you are frustrated by your Elementary's inability to accomplish its assigned task within the time you have specified or in the manner you have specified, then back off. This is never the fault of the Elementary itself. It is due entirely to an insufficiency in your charging of it, or in your accumulation of the Elements, or in your impregnation of it with your ideation, etc. Or, it could be that its task is not allowed by Divine Providence. Whatever the reason, you can either make modifications (i.e., provide it a greater density of the Elements or refine its root ideation, etc.) that will make it more effective, or you can dissolve it and start over.

The termination of an Elementary takes nearly as much care as its creation. The process mimics exactly that of normal human death. Remember that an Elementary is connected to its creator in very real ways, so if the dissolution is too abrupt great harm can come to the magician's own self. In the rare case where an immediate, violent dissolution is necessary certain precautions must be taken so as to avoid personal injury.

The magician is free to create as many or as few Elementaries as he or she desires. But the passive reader would do well to consider the logistics of managing too large a brood! Unlike an Elemental which can form itself subconsciously, the creation of an Elementary is a conscious process and requires the magician's periodic attention once it has been released. A magician can draw an endless supply of Elementals to him or her self without having to pay them constant attention, but to create an endless supply of Elementaries is an entirely different matter.

The only truly practical way to achieve this sort of result is through still higher forms of magic.

Thus the legends of magicians who possessed hundreds of Elementaries can indicate one of two things: Either -- 1) the legend confuses Elementals with Elementaries and really indicates a magician who has figured out how to draw Elementals into their sphere -- or -- 2) the legend indicates a magician of very advanced capabilities who is able manifest as many Elementaries as desired by means of higher magical techniques than those described here.

The possibilities are endless when it comes to what a magician can accomplish through an Elementary. The creative practice itself will enhance the magician's inventiveness to unimagined heights. This work will also test the magician's ethical maturity and may likely purify the initiate through a trial by fire. It is hard for me to describe to you how deeply this touches the initiate -- it is MEANT to squeeze out the last shred of ethical imbalance and if it does not, then no further advancement is possible. The subtlety of these tests is incomprehensible to one who has not come to this stage of the work and the specific tests themselves are different for each individual.

I would like to project ahead to Step Ten for a moment in order to explain the significance of the purifying tests that go hand in hand with Elementary creation. In Step Ten, Bardon speaks about the communion with one's own personal god (one of the goals of IHH). Imagine if you will, the significance of this. Pretend, for the moment, that you actually are your highest idea of deity. Consider the infinite number of options at your disposal and think also of the infinite number of consequences, many of them quite terrible, that each of those options will manifest.

Now return to your normal sense of self and feel how overwhelming just that little glimpse was. The truth of the matter is that the reality is infinitely more. Imagine now, from your normal state, what it would be like to have your conscious awareness permeate every one of that infinite number of options and their possible consequences, simultaneously and fully. Imagine that absolutely every thing that is, was, or will be, is encompassed within your own being. Imagine that amount of responsibility and you will have some glimpse of why the magician must first pass through these sorts of tests in order that they may be able to reach so high a magical practice as communion with deity.

STEP EIGHT

Mental (Magical Schooling of the Spirit): Mental Travel --

We each are familiar with a simple form of mental wandering which we know as daydreaming. In a daydream we can project our imagination any where and any when. But there are many differences between a daydream and what Bardon describes here as mental projection, travel or wandering. The main difference is that in a daydream our projection is entirely imaginary and has little direct connection to actual events, whereas in mental wandering, we learn to observe actual events and places. In a daydream, we explore only our own inner mental landscape of desires, but through mental wandering we are able to explore the external universe.

Contrary to what the passive reader might assume, the magician does not simply exteriorize their mental body and right off the bat begin receiving accurate perceptions of their surroundings. It actually takes long and arduous practice to make the transition from the daydream-like imagination in which everything perceived is one's own creation, to the actual perception of what is real. There is no trick to making this transition other than repeated practice. For some, the training of previous Steps, combined with a native ability, may make this transition an easy matter, but for many students, this will take a great amount of effort and time.

The first exercise of this section involves sitting in front of a mirror and transferring your consciousness into the reflected image of your body. Some have assumed that this practice has something to do with a magical land that lies within a mirror's reflection but this is mere superstition and the student of magic will immediately see that this is not the case here. The point of this exercise is simply to accustom the student to the transferal of their mental body into their own image and the perception of their surroundings from that perspective. This is only introductory.

For the actual work of mental wandering, the student does not rely upon the transferal into a mirror image. Instead, the student transfers their awareness into their own mental body itself. Here you will see the importance of the Step Six work of becoming conscious of your own mental body. To begin the mental wandering, the student must sense their mental body with full consciousness and then step with it, out of the astra-physical shell or body. This is very different than a mere transferal of consciousness.

Bardon cautions the student against giving in to the feeling of freedom that is immediately felt once the exteriorization has been achieved and it is wise to heed this warning. This is important as it teaches the student control. The recommended approach is one of incremental steps.

At first the student is to stand very close to their physical body and observe the details of its appearance. Then the student looks around at their surroundings. Only when the surroundings are clearly and accurately perceived is it wise to venture further. This is followed by walking into the next room or a short distance from the physical body.

At each stage, the student must learn to clearly and accurately perceive the details of their sur-

roundings. To verify the reliability of their mental perceptions, the student must examine the same area when in their physical form and check to see if what they perceive with their physical eyes matches what they perceived with their mental vision. Again, you will see the importance of past work, specifically that of developing the subtle senses in the previous Step.

An important factor in the alignment of your mental vision with that of your physical eyes are the meditations that Bardón explains. At the beginning of each mental wandering exercise, the student is instructed to meditate upon the ability of the mental body to perceive the external universe with accuracy. The student must be assured, at a very deep level, that this is so. This is reminiscent of the Step Six exercises concerning the action of the spirit but here it is taken to a new degree since the mental body is now separate from the astral and physical forms. Here, the student must learn how to look through the mental eyes alone and not through the astral and physical eyes as before. This difference may seem subtle to the passive reader but it is very significant in the actual practice.

When the student has reached the stage where their mental perceptions reliably match the physical reality of their immediate surroundings, then s/he may venture further. At a certain point (distance of travel), the student will no longer be able to travel physically to the same location and verify with their physical senses whether or not their mental perceptions match the physical reality. Thus it becomes necessary to test the accuracy of their mental perceptions by trying to alter what they see by imagining it differently. If the imagination alters what is perceived then the student will know that their mental perceptions do not match the physical reality. With repeated practice the student will eventually reach the state where their mental perceptions are accurate and reliable, and they will no longer be able to effect their surroundings with their imagination alone. This is the crux of the matter when it comes to genuine mental wandering -- it is very easy to project what you want or expect to perceive and fool yourself that this is indeed real when it is in fact not. It is also easy to convince yourself that you are unable to change things with your imagination and thus short circuit your ability to test your perceptions. This is especially pernicious and should stand as a warning that the previous Steps must first have been completed since the preparatory work is what provides the magician the ability to know when this subtle sort of self-delusion is happening.

When the student reaches, after long practice, the stage where their mental perceptions are accurate regardless of the distance traveled, then and only then, is it time to venture into other realms. To where and to when the mental wanderer may travel is limitless and dependent entirely upon the maturity of the initiate. The mental wanderer may also be able to cause magical effects upon their surroundings, from within their mental body, by following the practices learned in previous Steps.

I have said in the past that there is a way to tell the difference between a mental journey and an astral journey. The main difference is in the nature of the sensations that the wanderer can perceive while separated. When one wanders with the astra-mental form (astral wandering), the sensations will be very similar in quality and quantity to those experienced by the physical body. But when wandering in the mental body alone, the perception of sensations will be of a lesser quality. But I must warn you that the mental body is capable, through the plastic imagination, to ampli-

fy the lesser mental sensations to such a degree as to be almost like those of astral wandering. Nonetheless, there is a distinct difference. The true astral sensations invoke a near physical feeling of ecstasy.

Mental wandering is the magician's most amenable tool when it comes to exploration of the external universe. With the mental body, the initiate is capable of travelling to any 'where', any 'when' and any 'why'. This is not the case with astral wandering where the magician is limited to exploration of the astral and physical realms -- the astral body is simply not fine enough to penetrate the mental realm itself. The advantage of astral wandering is that the magician can cause magical effects from the astral realm immediately, whereas with mental wandering it takes greater effort to cause an effect to manifest upon the astral and physical levels. At times, it is advantageous to be able to manifest an astral density in order to communicate directly with astral beings, etc. But for most purposes, mental wandering will suffice and with extended practice, mental wandering can net the magician the same effectiveness as astral wandering.

The main point of mental wandering is to familiarize yourself with the universe. This is especially important as a preparation for still higher work, specifically that of merging with deity (which by its nature is omnipresent). A part of the preparation for the actual experience of omnipresence involves getting the feel of the infinite nature of the universe through a thorough exploration. Furthermore, without the ability to wander mentally, the art of evocation is an impossibility for the student.

For the magician who has completed the eighth Step, the universe is an open book.

Astral (Magical Schooling of the Soul): Mastering the Electric and Magnetic Fluids --

This section begins with a few words about the magician's character and achievement. This is a very important matter and what Bardon says should be considered deeply by the aspiring student before proceeding any further.

Bardon speaks about the Akasha preventing the unprepared from further progress and about it "protecting" the Mysteries from those who would abuse them. I would like to clarify this a bit for the passive reader.

These functions of the Akasha are very real but they are not of the nature of a parental or demagogic intent per se. They are simply laws of Nature. In other words, this aspect of the Akasha is not meant as a punishment for those who would step beyond their true capabilities. There is not genuine, conscious intent here such as we would think of it in human emotional terms. The Akasha acts, in this regard, without bias -- this is just the way the universe is structured. It is not so much that the Akasha consciously prevents the rise of the unprepared student; rather, these requirements that Bardon speaks of are, by their very nature, what opens the Akasha and allows for a deeper penetration into the Mysteries. This is a difficult concept to describe and I can only hope that my words have clarified the matter for you to some minor extent.

The actual exercises of this section concern the manipulation of the Electric and Magnetic Fluids. Bardon describes two methods for accumulating the Fluids -- the inductive and the deductive.

By inductive, Bardon means from the outside in. In other words, the corresponding Element is visualized as surrounding the student and the Fluid is drawn from the external Element and accumulated within the interior of the student's body.

By deductive, Bardon indicates a reverse process. The student accumulates the corresponding Element, in the normal manner, within their own body to such a degree that the Fluid itself accumulates on the surface of their body.

Both of these methods serve different purposes as outlined by Bardon. The primary purpose of the inductive and deductive exercises however, is to prepare the magician for the regional accumulation that follows. Here the student accumulates the Magnetic Fluid in the lower region of the body (that of Water and Earth) and the Electric Fluid in the upper region (that of Fire and Air). This is similar to the accumulation of the Elements into the four regions explained in Step Four. Once this is mastered, the student extends the exercise and directs the Fluids from these regions into the left (Magnetic) and right (Electric) sides of their body, and eventually, condenses this accumulation into their right and left hands accordingly.

After extended practice of these very complex and difficult exercises, the student becomes a master of the Fluids and can at any moment charge either hand (or both) with their appropriate Fluid. This allows the magician to do many things in a blink of an eye that would otherwise have taken more time and effort to accomplish through the manipulation of the Elements.

There are two important things for the passive reader to understand here. First is that the Fluids are the essence of the Elements and thus, the magician can accomplish things more quickly and effectively through the use of the Fluids than through the labor of the Elements. The second thing has to do with the nature of the student's ascent from 'lower' magic to 'higher' magic. What differentiates 'higher' from 'lower' magic is the degree to which the student masters the essential nature of the forces employed. Here, the hands-on labor of the Elements is considered 'lower' because the magician is not working with the deeper essence of the Elements but with their outer form. The work with the Fluids however, is considered 'higher' because the magician wields the true essence of the Elements. There are still higher forms of magic than the mastery of the Fluids. An example is that of communion or merging with deity, for deity is the essence of even the Fluids.

Physical (Magical Schooling of the Physical Body): Magical Influence Through the Elements & Fluid Condensers --

Here again, the exercises listed have nothing to do with the magical schooling of the physical body. What Bardon presents in this Step are various techniques that the student can employ for their own purposes. The student of Alchemy (the physical application of Hermetics) will find these techniques of great interest.

There is little that I can add to what Bardon relays in this section other than to comment upon his recommended use of gold in the Fluid condensers. Many will think that this presents a large expense, but this is not the case. I purchased a simple homeopathic preparation of gold chloride several years ago (a little goes a long way) for just a few dollars. This homeopathic preparation is very effective and I recommend it highly. Contrary to what one might think, there is enough gold in a gold chloride solution for use in a fluid condenser.

[NOTE: In the introduction to both PME and KTQ, Bardon states that the student must have completed Step Eight of IIIH before beginning the work of magical evocation and/or kabbala. Please consider for a moment the degree of training and magical maturity of one who has genuinely made it to this stage. Such a one will possess an absolute magical equilibrium, be capable of the three-part action, be able to journey with their mental body with ease, and have absolute control over the Elements and Fluids. All these attributes are essential for success with evocation and kabbalistic speech. Anyone who dares to begin work with PME and KTQ before reaching this stage risks great harm to their mental, emotional and physical well being.]

STEP NINE

Mental (Magical Schooling of the Spirit): Magic Mirrors --

In the introduction to this section of Step Nine, Bardon speaks of the many common methods for developing the subtle senses. I should hope that this will explain to the passive reader why many well trained magicians have so little respect for the seemingly endless number of new-age books written about clairvoyance, etc. These practices are truly harmful to the untrained practitioner. Unfortunately it may be years after following these practices that negative symptoms show themselves and many who suffer will not equate their illnesses with their past pursuit of these exercises.

Another important factor, from a magical perspective, is that the results of these practices are uncontrollable by the practitioner. Especially when it comes to the ingestion of hallucinatory substances. While these may reveal a broader perspective upon the universe to the practitioner, they do not allow one to control the "trip" nor do they allow one to determine the length of the "trip". Both of these factors would be abhorrent to the well trained magician.

The exercises of the magical schooling of the spirit in Step Nine concern the proper use of the magical mirror. This is a very handy tool for the magician and is essential for the work of PME.

While Bardon's instructions are explicit concerning the proper use of the magical mirror, a certain aspect of the practice may be unclear to the passive reader. This concerns the fact that when projecting into the mirror, it is with the mental body alone that the magician travels. The magician may explore the astral realm with the mental body in this manner, but when journeying with the astral body into the astral realm, the magic mirror is not employed.

Astral (Magical Schooling of the Soul): Astral Travel & Four Divine Attributes --

With the ninth Step astral exercises, the student begins the work of true astral separation, commonly known as astral journeys or out-of-body-experiences. Bardon's explanations are very explicit and should, of course, be followed to the letter. But considering the large number of books written upon the subject since IIH was first published, I feel it necessary to add a few words of caution and clarification for the passive reader.

To begin with, I'd like to discuss Bardon's technique. He recommends that the student first separate their mental body and then draw forth their astral body. This is wise considering the course that Bardon has established, but it is not altogether necessary. It is just as easy to rise out of the physical body with the astral and mental bodies conjoined. This eliminates the step of merging the exteriorized astral and mental bodies, but may, at the same time, present difficulties at first.

The second thing to note are Bardon's concerns about the cessation of breath and heart beat that occur with his method. Part of what he says about the dangers this presents in terms of being

touched by another person (or animal) during separation, are phrased for the purpose of dissuading the uninitiated from pursuing astral separation. But, and here's an important point, it is possible for the well trained magician to maintain the physical breath and heartbeat if desired and thus minimize the danger.

The rationale behind this is that during an astral separation, the silver cord (astral matrix) which connects the astra-mental body with the physical shell, remains intact. The well trained magician is able to keep this connection active enough to sustain the physical breath and heartbeat. All that is transferred to the astra-mental body is the responsibility for the impulse to breathe, not the physical breath and heartbeat itself. To accomplish this, the magician must split their conscious awareness to a certain degree and leave part of it behind to maintain the normal physical functions. When done properly, this does not diminish the depth of the astral experience. One key to this is the joint separation of the astral and mental bodies.

Other than that, the only thing I can add to Bardon's instructions is that it is necessary to afford some degree of protection to the vacant physical shell once you have separated your astra-mental body from it. Please think back to the Step Five exercises concerning passive communication. Therein, the task was to vacate a hand which placed it within the Akasha, so to speak, and made it available to the possession of other entities. The same holds true for the entire body when you vacate it. This means that it becomes susceptible to occupation by another, non-corporeal entity and this should be guarded against. The simplest way to do this is to erect an energetic shield around your physical body that is impressed with the ideation that it will prevent any other being from taking control.

Now, I will move on to other matters that have nothing to do with the instructions provided by Bardon.

It is important that the passive reader understand the dangers of astral separation, especially in light of what has been written by others upon this subject. Many writers assert that astral journeying is a simple matter and can be accomplished by anyone who makes the sincere effort. The magician however, will be well aware that this is not the case. Much of what is labeled as astral journeying is nothing more than a type mental journeying. I have spoken already about the differences between a mental journey and an astral journey so I will not repeat myself here.

The greatest danger is the fact that a true astral separation is, as Bardon states, an ecstatic experience. It is stimulating at a near-physical level and this can be a very addictive undertaking since it so extremely pleasurable. But this is a merely physical sensation, not a spiritual ecstasy. The well trained magician is capable of handling physically pleasing sensations in such a manner as to not allow them to distract from their ultimate goal. This however, is not the case with an untrained practitioner and the danger of distraction is very potent. Many have fallen into this pit of pleasure and belayed their progress. Now I do not mean to belittle physical pleasure as I consider this one of the advantages of a corporeal existence, but it is not the goal of the magician. It requires of the magician a very strong will to avoid this pitfall.

The ability to control one's reactions to any given situation is of prime importance to the magi-

cian, especially when it comes to interaction with the astral realm. Astral beings can easily manipulate the emotions and perceptions of the magician who does not possess a high degree of self-control. It is very easy to become self-deluded while within the astral realm, so it is imperative that the traveller be able to distinguish between their own desires and expectations and the objective reality. This is one reason why astral wandering is placed so late in IIIH.

The astral traveler who has not previously developed their astral senses to a high degree of reliability will find themselves deaf, dumb and blind once they separate from their physical form.

Astral travel serves a limited function when compared to mental travel. In the solitary mental body, the magician can reach into nearly every realm, but with the astra-mental body, only the astral and physical realms can be reached and explored. The one advantage is that while in the astra-mental form, the magician can interact directly with astral entities. When in the solitary mental body however, some astral entities will not be able to perceive the mental body of the traveler. Also, the magician can more readily cause effects upon the astral realm directly from within the astra-mental body. It is also easier for the magician to condense their astra-mental form to such a degree that it becomes physically apparent to other physical beings, than it is to do the same with the solitary mental body.

As a final note, it should be said that there is a big difference between astral wandering and lucid dreaming. Many maintain that lucid dreaming is a form of astral wandering but this is not the case. Granted, lucid dreaming involves the astral body, but the difference is that in lucid dreaming all one can explore is one's own inner psyche -- there is no journeying beyond this realm into the broader astral realm itself. The dream state is a specific state that is very personal in its focus. It can lead to genuine astral wandering, but when it does, one is no longer in the dream state itself.

The Step Nine astral exercises end with a section describing a series of meditations that must be undertaken concerning the nature of deity. This is very, very, very important work and is an absolute necessity before beginning the work of Step Ten and the merging with one's personal deity. Bardon, of course, specifies four basic attributes of deity corresponding to the four Elements. Each of these aspects must be understood from the inside out, as it were. Please note that when Bardon speaks of "God", he is not referring to the lesser gods of which there are an uncountable number, but to the Unitary, highest form of deity imaginable.

Physical (Magical Schooling of the Physical Body): Magical Healing Through the Fluids, Loading of Talismans, & Volting --

Here again, these are not specifically "schooling" exercises but more in the line of suggestions for practice.

Bardon begins with the subject of healing. It should be clear that this is not the sort of healing that is learned from the study of books on treatment modalities and human physiology. The magician who has progressed to Step Nine will have the ability to perceive the cause and the ramifications of any disease with their own subtle senses and there will be no doubt in the mind of such

a healer as to how to best effect a cure. As to the occult anatomy of the human body that Bardón speaks of, this too will be evident to the eyes of the initiate who has progressed to this Step and they will have no need of a listing of what organ is composed of which Fluid, etc.

Every healer is limited, by the will of Divine Providence, as to the scope of what they may cure. Seldom will the magician be allowed to extinguish a disease that is essential to the karmic fulfillment of another individual. This factor will also be evident to the eyes of the magician who has reached this level of development. Karmic debt is the responsibility of each individual and it is only through the will of Divine Providence that the Step Nine magician is allowed to interfere in this regard.

The section on healing methods is followed by a discussion of various techniques for the loading of objects such as talismans, crystals, etc. There are a nearly infinite number of methods to achieve such a loading and Bardón introduces a few of them merely to spur the initiate's creativity.

Step Nine closes with a discussion of magical "volting". This is a very advanced technique and a truly effective one. Needless to say, only the magician of a very high ethical maturity will be allowed to enact their will by these means.

STEP TEN

Mental (Magical Schooling of the Spirit): Ascent to Higher Planes --

This, of course, is the final Step of IIIH. Reading it may give the impression that it is just like any other Step, but this is far from the case. The completion of this Step, above all the other Steps, is in the hands of Divine Providence. It may take lifetimes for an initiate to complete this Step or it may take only the blink of an eye, or anywhere in between. There is no way to predict what course the initiate might face in this part of their journey, as this depends entirely upon the particular maturity and accumulated karma of the individual.

But just because the realization of a thing may be beyond our ultimate control, doesn't mean that we cannot succeed if we try. In fact, the only way to succeed in this case IS to try. The initiate who patiently persists will, without a doubt, eventually reach their goal. There must be a fearless caution and a willingness to see it through to its ultimate end, regardless of what may come along to test the initiate. Knock and you shall be answered, to paraphrase an ancient bit of wisdom.

At this stage in the magician's advancement, the responsibility for seeing to it that their process of initiation continues forward, is in the hands of the magician alone. No corporeal being will be able to assist the magician through this stage. Even the initiate's own Holy Guardian Angel is limited in what it can do to aid the magician in this regard. By knocking, the magician may get an answer, but it is up to the initiate to open the door and enter.

In western kabbalistic terms, the work of Step Ten corresponds to the final approach to the Abyss -- which lies between Chesed and Binah (the Jupiter and Saturn planes) -- culminating in a successful crossing of the Abyss (i.e., the reaching of Binah/Saturn which confers Unity). The Abyss marks the barrier between the kabbalistic "worlds" of Yetzirah and Briah, of the sequentialized realm and the non-sequential realm (also known as "chaos"). In spite of the symbolism used in my description, this Abyss is not a spatial thing -- it is composed entirely of MEANING. The crossing of this Abyss completely, and forever, transforms the consciousness of the initiate, for from the "other side" of the Abyss, the initiate perceives eternity.

The work of this section of Step Ten concerns the exploration of the various spheres and planes of existence through mental wandering. The student begins with an exploration of the realms inhabited by the beings of the Elements.

The passive reader may easily think at this point that Bardon is completely out of his mind and has wandered off into fantasy land, but this is not the case at all. Granted, what he describes sounds exactly like a fairytale, but there is a reason for this. The realms of the Elements visited by these means are perceived in a highly symbolized manner. Symbols are the matter which composes this particular plane. Thus the experiences of this plane are described in a symbolic manner that approaches the fairytale. However, the actual experience itself far exceeds the description and with the "visual" perception of each symbol, the magician will also perceive many other levels of information. Finite words can only capture a small portion of the experience, so

when we describe our experiences in these realms we must resort to metaphor and story telling.

In my discussion of a past Step, I mentioned that it is difficult for some astral beings to perceive the mental body of the magician. That is not the case with the Elemental realms for a couple of reasons. The first is that though these realms are astral, per se, they are a very fine vibration of the astral materia. Remember in my discussion of the astral realm in the "Theory" section of IIIH where I said that the three realms actually merge into one another? Well, the part of what we define as the astral realm that we are concerned with here can be said to lie in its upper reaches. Thus, the beings which inhabit this realm have little difficulty in perceiving the mental body of a magician.

The second reason that the beings of the Elements are capable of perceiving the mental body of the magician in this case is that the student is instructed to carefully craft an image of their mental body that is recognizable by the being at hand. For instance, when exploring the Earth realm, the student takes on the appearance of a gnome. This adds a layer of symbolism to the student's mental body. Furthermore, the student builds the density of this body by filling themselves with the Element and merging with the Element itself. Together, this creates a density of the mental body that is easily perceived by the beings of this plane.

Once this special body is prepared, the student projects into the appropriate realm. The passive reader should at this point consider the amount of training required to accomplish these things for real and will, hopefully, realize the necessity of the work of previous Steps.

Bardon lays down a few very specific rules for the exploration of the Elemental realms. The first, of course, is the aforementioned building of an appropriate body. The second rule is that of not speaking first. This is very important and perhaps an analogy or two will help you to better understand the rationale behind the rule.

One good analogy comes from the myths concerning a spirit's need to be invited into a person's home before gaining entry. If permission is given, then the entity will have free reign, but if the rule of permission is violated, then the entity risks capture. In the case of the magician wishing to converse with the beings of the Elements, it is the magician who is seeking entry into a new realm and must receive permission before gaining full rein. The magician who violates this rule and forces him or her self upon the beings of a foreign realm, risks capture as Bardon points out.

Another good analogy is that of the human immune system. The magician is a foreign substance entering the realm ruled by the respective beings and if any threat is perceived, the beings of that realm will respond in a protective, defensive manner. If, on the other hand, the magician shows that they are no threat by being respectfully patient, they are then integrated into the Elemental realm.

A third rule regarding exploration of the Elemental realms is that the magician must display their "superiority" to the Elemental beings they encounter in order for these beings to become willing to converse with the magician. I fear that for the passive reader, "superiority" will be misunderstood in this context. This is not the sort of common superiority that comes from the end of a big-

ger stick! The magician does not enter the realm at hand and start bragging about their achievements or enact displays of their prowess, pushing the beings there around at their whim. Rather, the sort of superiority meant here is not the kind you have to prove to another. The only way the magician communicates their superiority is by openly being exactly who they are. This is the sort of superiority that these beings comprehend. It is not forceful -- it is honorable and respectful. The mental body that the magician has crafted for their explorations will communicate who they are, in no uncertain terms, directly to the Elemental beings. The initial reticence of these beings is only natural for they have learned not to trust humans and so they wait awhile to see if the magician is consistent in who they are. Again, I hope you will see the importance of the training of the previous Steps.

The magician will encounter many different types of beings in these realms. In spite of the male oriented description that Bardon provides, the same sort of attractions can occur for a female adept and for those of an other-than-hetero sexuality.

A magician must be able to understand the symbolic nature of the experience of the Elemental realms. In these realms it is not the form that is the core issue here, it is the meaning symbolized by that form that should concern the magician. The adept must be able to remain steadfast within their own central self in order to avoid the pitfall of getting stuck in these realms. These experiences can be very enticing and it can truly take forever to thoroughly explore their every nook and cranny and learn everything there is to learn. All of Bardon's warnings about getting too emotionally involved with the beings of these realms is very truthful. The magician must always remember that this is only a stop along the way and that there are higher, less transitory goals to attain.

The magician must make choices and decide when they have explored enough to continue further. I should add for the passive reader, that the experience of exploring these realms is not exactly linear. In other words, one can experience a large portion of each realm within seconds of elapsed clock-time. Thus, exploring "enough" does not necessarily entail years and years of effort to achieve.

The next task of Step Ten, once the Elemental realms have been explored sufficiently, is to seek out direct, face-to-face, contact with one's own Holy Guardian Angel (HGA). In Step Five, Bardon gave instruction on how to achieve a passive form of communication with the HGA, and this Step represents a quantum difference in the depth of this communication.

To fully explain the nature of this HGA would require an extensive treatise on the subject of the overall occult anatomy of consciousness and I'm unwilling to present such a diversion here. So, it will have to suffice when I say that the HGA has its root in the sphere of Saturn or, in kabbalistic terms, Binah. Also in kabbalistic terms, Yesod, or the Lunar sphere, is the "throne" of Binah. Thus it is before the student engages in rising to the Lunar plane that one encounters the FORM of one's HGA. Please note that I've said "the form of". The HGA itself, is formless, but for this sort of direct communication, the perception of a form is essential. At this level of communication the student does not merge with their HGA and there is no knowing of the HGA from the inside-out, as it were -- this comes later. At best, the experience is like when two very dear

friends, who can read each other's minds, meet and converse.

Bardon's description of how this meeting transpires is actually very accurate. The density of symbolism at this level, with this particular entity, is very minor and communication is direct and generally not intensely pictorial.

This guide will not fail the magician so long as the magician has achieved true Equilibrium. Otherwise, this can be a very disturbing experience and the imbalanced person can easily be led astray by their own ego. Many have returned from this encounter with the impression that they have been endowed with some sort of grand mission to save the world, etc., and have then gone about embarrassing themselves to no end by announcing just how important they are to the overall scheme of things. The reason for this is that they have not seen through the delusions of their own psyche and reached deeper into the genuine contact with their HGA. In reality, the HGA is ruthlessly honest and never deceptively builds nor diminishes the ego of the magician. To do so would run contrary to its essential purpose as the most intimate guide.

Beyond this point, the adept needs no other guide, but for the passive reader Bardon instructs that the student must then proceed to explore the other planes of existence. He lists them in the established planetary order, beginning with Luna and ending with Saturn. There are realms beyond Saturn (this refers to the philosophical realm, not the physical planet) but this subject is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

As a final note, I will add that Saturn represents three things: 1) The appearance of what lies beyond the Abyss as it is seen from THIS side of the Abyss. 2) The Abyss itself -- the veil that separates the sequential realm from the non-sequential realm. 3) The non-sequential realm that lies beyond the Abyss.

Consequently, the exploration of the realm of Saturn has three phases. The first phase involves the image presented of the Saturn realm as it is approached from below. This is as much of this realm as can be perceived through the medium of sequentialized symbol. In other words, it is a representation and is not the realm itself. This aspect of Saturn can be explored in a manner similar to the lower planetary realms and this brings the initiate face-to-face with the veil of the Abyss itself..

The second phase involves the penetration of this veil. Only Divine Providence, through the agency of the magician's HGA, can offer guidance in this regard. The experience is different for each individual.

The third phase occurs simultaneously with the penetration of the veil. Here the initiate enters the realm of eternity and once this realm is entered, complete oneness with The Unity is made available to the initiate. It may take the initiate many years to fully integrate this experience of Unity into their daily lives, but the experience itself is eternal.

This is the ultimate goal of the path of Hermetic Magic. It correlates exactly with the merging with one's own personal god ('merging', not just 'communion with') elucidated in the next section of Step Ten.

Astral (Magical Schooling of the Soul): Communion With a Personal God --

The astral exercises of Step Nine culminated in the impregnation of the astral body with the four divine attributes. With Step Ten, this process is taken further and a direct link between the magician and deity is established.

While Bardon describes the basic Hermetic approach to this subject well, he really gives the passive reader no idea of its ultimate implications. His explanation may suffice for the serious student, but for the passive reader, it is perhaps too simplistic.

To begin with, I should clarify some of the terms I will be using. I do not like the term "God" with a capital 'G'. To me it seems too involved in religious conceptions and when it is used it generally brings a very specific religious image of deity to the reader. In order to avoid this, I will be using the term "Unity" to designate the ultimate, All encompassing deity, instead of 'God'.

I will use the term "god" or "gods" (with a small 'g') to designate the familiar religious conception(s) of deity. For example, when referring to the pantheon of lesser, more limited deities, such as the Greco-Roman or Kabbalistic deities, I will say "the gods". I feel it is important to differentiate between these two levels or forms of deity as each presents a different sort of work for the magician.

It is also, in this context, important to differentiate between the "communion" with deity and the "merging" with deity. With communion, there remains a separation between the consciousness of the magician and the deity itself. This is a form of face-to-face communication. With merging however, there exists an at-one-ness between the magician's consciousness and that of the deity. Here, the magician experiences no separateness from the chosen deity and in fact, the magician functions as the deity; or rather, the magician and the deity become one and function as one.

Bardon is not very clear in his description as to what level of deity he is speaking of where. The magician can commune or merge with the lesser gods from below (i.e., THIS side of) the veil of the Abyss. These forms of deity are sequentialized and are thus somewhat limited in their scope when compared to the Unity. These are the deities that Bardon refers to when he speaks about communicating with the various gods or deities.

While the Unity can be communicated with, on a face-to-face basis, below the veil of the Abyss, it is only when one has crossed the Abyss and entered the non-sequential realm that the Unity can be merged with. Once this merging with the Unity has occurred, the initiate is also instantly merged with all of the lesser gods.

Where confusion arises in what Bardon presents is that the four divine attributes apply more correctly to the Unity than they do to the lesser gods. But this confusion dissipates when the reader considers the previous mental exercises of this Step. Therein, the student was directed to rise along the planes. During that rise up to the edge of the Abyss, the magician will be able to work with the lesser gods at both a communicative and a merging level, and with the Unity, only on a basis of communion. Once the initiate reaches through the veil to the essential Saturn, then there

is a merging with the Unity.

The communion with deity is similar to prayer, except that here there is a direct and immediate, real time (so to speak) reply. While prayer occurs in an upward, from-below-to-above direction, the actual communion with deity occurs at a more equal level, because the magician is impregnating their own form with the same attributes as the chosen deity.

The merging with deity, however, is a different matter. Here, the magician's consciousness must be skillfully brought into a state which exactly matches that of the chosen deity. Below the Abyss, the deity will, as Bardon states, meet the initiate half-way. This is part of the normal function of the lesser gods -- they mediate between the Unity and the human level of consciousness.

The merging with the Unity however, cannot occur below the Abyss. It is not so much that the Unity will not meet the initiate half-way (the Unity permeates All things, after all); rather, it's that the magician's consciousness is not capable of encompassing the Unity until she/he has passed into the non-sequential realm. Only the mental body or spirit of the initiate is capable of this journey.

Even though the ultimate realization of the Unity occurs at a purely mental level, Bardon places these exercises under the astral or soul heading. The reason for this is because his technique begins at that level. The building of an image of deity and the impregnation of that image with the four divine attributes is an astral work. This practice eventually leads the student to manipulating the four attributes or qualities, independent of form or image. At that point, it becomes a purely mental operation and it is this transition to the mental realm that enables the initiate to conceptualize the Unity in its otherwise formless state.

I must caution you at this point that due to the finite nature of words, it is impossible for me to accurately describe either the Unity or the experience of merging with the Unity. Non-sequential experiences simply don't fit into such sequentialized things as words! Consequently, each thing I say in this regard will be only partially true and will convey things in a sequential manner that belies the essential non-sequentialized reality of the Unity.

But even in saying this I have implied things that are inaccurate. Case in point is when I say that the Unity is non-sequential. The deeper mystery is that the Unity encompasses both the sequential and the non-sequential realms, simultaneously. When I say it is non-sequential, I am referring more to how the Unity appears to our sequentialized human consciousness and not to its essential nature. Often, how we attempt to describe the indescribable involves pointing more to the differences between these things and "normal" things, than it does to their similarities. The greatest problem with this is that pointing out only differences seems to limit our understanding of the essential Unity of Being. In the hopes of avoiding that obfuscation, I will try to point out as many similarities as I can in what follows.

The first thing I should say in terms of describing the merging with the Unity, pertains to the sense of self that the magician experiences. The self-awareness of the Unity is often described as an "I am" state, but what is often overlooked is the fact that this deific sense of self-identity is of the

same quality as that experienced by a normal human being. The only difference is in quantity as the Unity encompasses every thing that has existence and the individual human encompasses only a minute portion of that infinite expanse. It is, in fact, this continuum of likeness that the magician follows in the ascent or expansion of the quantity of consciousness. In simplistic terms, the magician stands firmly rooted in the quality of self-awareness and expands the quantity of that awareness until it encompasses the Unity of All Being.

The implications of this in practice are that the magician, once merged with the Unity, experiences the entire universe as if it were in fact a part of their own self. There is no part of the infinite universe of which the Unity is not aware.

This brings us to the four attributes of deity, which I think will serve as a good foundation for further describing the ramifications of merging with the Unity. Please note that the four attributes listed in Step Ten vary slightly from those listed in Step Nine. It is the Step Ten list that I will concern myself with here, though it pays to compare the two on your own.

The four attributes are --

1) Omnipotence (All powerfulness): This is associated with the Element Fire. The sort of omnipotence experienced by the Unity, and by one merged with the Unity, is not akin to the popular conceptualization of a god "up there" who points down at us mere mortals and, poof!, things change according to "his" will. The Unity's omnipotence works from the inside-out of EVERY thing, all at once. There is no splitting of consciousness at the level of the Unity proper -- the splitting of consciousness is only a manifestation of the Unity.

Within the Unity, there is also no willing akin to human willing. Instead, the Unity exists all at once, as a unified whole, and what we think of as divine will is merely the Unity being what it naturally is. When initiates speak about merging with the divine will and say things like "let Thy will be my will", an incorrect impression is given that the individual will is somehow transplanted by a higher will. This is not the case. The individual will is transformed by the experience of merging, not replaced. Again, an initiate follows the continuum of similarity as they rise to the divine. The thread of similarity here has to do with the fact that the human will is an aspect or manifestation of the divine will. And once again, the difference is a matter of quantity not of quality.

The omnipotence of the lesser gods is more limited than that of the Unity. Because they exist below the Abyss, they are finite, sequentialized creatures. Thus they are of limited, specific use to the magician. For example, in modern ceremonial magic, one must carefully choose the appropriate "god form" for the task at hand. But if one can merge with the Unity, then nothing is impossible.

But having said that, I should note that the magician capable of merging with the Unity will not be willing petty things nor things that violate the universal lawfulness. You must keep in mind that this transformation touches the individual adept at EVERY level of his or her being.

2) Omniscience (All knowing): This is associated with the Element Air. The root essence of the

Unity -- the stuff of which it is composed -- is consciousness. Every thing that exists (mentally, astrally and physically) is a manifestation of this consciousness. The consciousness of the Unity is self-aware within all of its parts or manifestations, simultaneously and fully. In other words, the Unity knows EVERY thing, from the inside-out. This is not just the knowing of an external observer; rather, it is the knowing of a participant.

I wish for you to carefully consider the implications of this for the magician who merges with the Unity. Truly, any thing the magician wishes to know or explore is made instantly available. But this knowing will be from the inside-out in a most intimate manner. It is similar in quality to the sort of knowing we experience in our daily lives as we pass through a specific event. The difference is, as usual, in the quantity of the knowing. For example, we all know how to tie our shoes because we have experienced it numerous time, but in relation to the Unity we are like a small child who has never tied a shoe and our understanding of this mysterious art comes from the descriptions of our parents. In other words, the Unity knows EVERY thing from the inside-out and the normal human knows only a relatively few things from this perspective.

I must say that the conceptualization of this sort of all knowing is quite different from the actual experience. The magician who merges with the Unity is not only ABLE to know everything, she/he DOES know everything *while in the merged state*. Few magicians, however, choose to bring this knowledge back into their normal consciousness used for daily life. Knowing too much tends to take all the fun out of life -- there is no longer any surprise.

3) All-Love or Mercifulness (Divine benevolence): This is associated with the Element Water. Please note that in Step Nine, Bardon associates Immortality with Water.

The divine Mercy is similar in quality to human love, except that in the human manifestation of love we tend to direct it at specific persons, ideas and things. Thus our human love is more limited than the divine love and it is a projection from ourselves to something external (self-love aside). The deific love of the Unity comes from a broader perspective that includes EVERY thing and it works from within each thing. It is without bias and is shared equally with All that exists.

It is common for us to wonder how the unpleasant aspects and events of life can exist in a universe permeated by a Benevolent deity. The answer to this lies within the quantity aspect of the divine benevolence or Mercy. The Unity permeates the whole of the infinite universe all at once and completely, thus it has an eternal perspective from which every event is seen as conforming to the universal lawfulness of things. In other words, from the eternal perspective of the Unity, benevolence is an undercurrent in All events, even the most unpleasant ones.

Suffering exists for a reason. It teaches us lessons that we have not been able to otherwise learn through more pleasant means. So at the core of each unpleasant situation lies the divine benevolence that knows this is the way in which we must learn -- it is the root lesson that holds the benevolence, the manifestation of events is itself secondary. The only way sometimes, to perceive the divine benevolence behind unsavory events is to broaden one's perspective to include lifetimes instead of single moments.

An adept who has merged with this divine Mercifulness may at times seem very stern, but this should not be mistaken for a lack of caring. At its root is the awareness of a much broader perspective on things than the ordinary human consciousness is able to achieve.

Such an adept will feel a deep love and concern for all creatures and will manifest their loving kindness willfully and in the most appropriate manner befitting the occasion.

4) Immortality (The same as Omnipresence in this case): This is associated with the Element Earth. In Step Nine, Bardon lists Omnipresence here, but if you think about it, this is essentially the same as Immortality in that the Unity is an immanent thing and thus it exists throughout the whole of space-time. The divine Immortality is not the same thing as what we consider when we think about the immortality of a human form. Theoretically, human immortality (if such a thing were to exist) is strictly a moment-to-moment matter of prolonged duration. In other words, the immortal human would pass through time moment-by-moment. While the quality of this is similar to divine Immortality, the quantity is quite different. The Immortality of the Unity occurs at an eternal level -- the moment-by-moment duration is only a manifestation of the eternal Immortality.

But, and here's a big but, nothing that is either astral or physical in its nature is eternal or immortal. True Immortality exists only at the level of the eternal, non-sequential realm.

I compare the Immortality of the Unity with its Immanence and say that they are the same thing because the Unity's Immortality is eternal. It has no beginning and no ending and there is no 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where' or 'when' that does not partake of the Unity. The connection between these two may be easiest to perceive when you consider the space-time continuum. From the eternal perspective, the whole infinite span of space-time is perceived as one single present moment or as a grand, infinite "Now". But, since the Unity is Immortal and eternal, this perspective is not just a from-afar sort of experience; instead, it is experienced simultaneously from the inside-out -- from the perspective of each thing involved with the minute details of the physical manifestation of space-time to the most ephemeral and comprehensive experience of space-time.

While the feeling or quality of Immanence is similar to what the student experienced in Step Six with the practice of being aware of their mental body within their astral and physical bodies, there is a difference in terms of quantity. For the Unity, there is no separateness -- there is no immediate sense of being WITHIN a body. Instead, the Unity completely fills the embodiments of its Immanence. The entire infinity of the manifest universe IS the Unity -- it is not the mere shell which houses the Unity. There is no separation between the "body" of the Unity and the Unity itself. When we look at a rock or a leaf or through an electron microscope at a single molecule, we are looking directly at the Unity. When we look at each other or within our own selves, we are looking at the Unity.

I will now close my comments upon the merging with the Unity with one final note. This pertains to the process the adept must undergo in order to integrate the experience of merging into their daily lives. Many fail to successfully re-cross the Abyss and return to their normal functioning consciousness. I presume you are aware of the many tales of mystics who have returned

from an especially deep experience only to become raving lunatics. Here is where preparation and a proper training come into play for the Hermetic magician.

In many ways, the integration into the normal day-to-day consciousness of an experience of the non-sequential eternal realm is an even more difficult task than the achieving of such an experience. The experience of Unity is so foreign to our normal level of self-awareness that it, in effect, doesn't fit, in its entirety, within the confines of normal human consciousness. Thus it is of vital importance that the adept have a thorough working knowledge of their mechanisms of perception. Essentially, the adept must translate and interpret the non-sequential experience into terms understandable to the normal, sequentialized consciousness. Only in this way can such an experience be integrated at a normal functional level.

Upon the return to normal waking consciousness, the adept will be inexorably transformed. So deep and pervasive a transformation requires a reassessment and a readjustment of the adept's personality and individuality akin the Step One and Two work with the soul mirrors, but on a much broader level.

The adept will not be able to retain full consciousness of the infinite details encountered in the merging experience once he/she has returned to a normal state of awareness. These details (the fullness of the experience) must be compressed in the memory and be made available so the adept can draw upon them at any moment desired. But to experience the fullness of a merging experience, the adept must be within the non-sequential realm and be functioning with their higher mind. This dichotomy of being so close, yet so far, from Unity, can at first be very disorienting even for the most advanced adept. Once again, the training of the previous nine Steps is essential for success in this matter.

Furthermore, the adept must balance the transformational experience of Unity with their mundane lives in such a way that their internal changes are not laid bare for all to see. This may sound odd and you might ask "why?". The reasons for this are not esoteric; rather, they are extremely practical and are due to the circumstances of our present location along the continuum of space-time. In other words, considering the present state of affairs, it behooves the adept to not reveal their achievements because if they were to do so, they would be inundated by people demanding their wisdom or presenting themselves for the satisfaction of other needs. There have been, and there will again be, times when the adept can safely reveal themselves openly, but now is not one of those times. As a consequence, there are many adepts who have achieved Unity but keep this a well hidden secret.

As I mentioned earlier, Bardou has the student work with the four attributes from the outset of these Step Ten astral exercises -- even though they apply more strictly to the Unity than to the lesser god forms and even though it is the lesser gods that the student encounters first. The reason for this is that these four attributes will eventually lead the student to awareness of the Unity. While working with the lesser gods, the student must employ the four attributes in an uneven ratio appropriate to the nature of the chosen god form. Working with these varieties or flavors of godhood expands the adept's consciousness and prepares it for union with the Unity.

I hope that by this point you have become well aware of the importance of each Step of IIIH. If any single Step has been overlooked, the ultimate goal of this Great Work will remain unattainable. I also hope that you see how the whole course comes together at the end and creates a complete circuit.

Physical (Magical Schooling of the Physical Body): Various Magical Abilities --

In this final section of Step Ten, Bardon describes a few possibilities for the magician to consider in regard to their magical practice. I see no point in adding my thoughts to this section as Bardon is perfectly clear.

EPILOGUE

In his own epilogue to IIIH, Bardon states: "Occult abilities are mere side effects; you could consider them a compass for spiritual development, designated for noble purposes only, and as aids to your fellow man; that is why they are reserved only for the true magician." Many people have the impression that a highly advanced magician will, by necessity, be constantly practicing the magical abilities that they have acquired. But this is not always the case. Just because you possess the ability to accomplish something, does not mean that you must do so. With initiation, the acquiring of magical abilities is not the point -- the point is to learn them as a path to higher achievements. An interesting, rather ironic, part of the Mystery is that the attainment of great magical powers (and here I do not refer to mundane powers which are usually abused by those who possess them) renders the magician uninterested in needlessly altering the universe. As the magician passes a certain point in their ascent, she or he may actually initiate fewer and fewer mundane magical actions.

The goal of Hermetic initiation is essentially spiritual, but the path to that goal involves the acquiring of many mundane abilities. Without learning those abilities and going through the transformations that their learning brings to the initiate, the ascent would halt at a very low level.

I would hope, through my many remarks that you have so patiently read, to convey to you the manner in which the sincere student must consider the attainment of the many, seemingly glamorous, magical abilities that Bardon describes throughout IIIH. These are not the goals to strive for -- they are only interesting scenery along The Way.

One can spend decades or lifetimes, learning abilities that will greatly impress others, but in doing so one will only be delaying their ultimate realization. This is the Long Way. The Short Way is found when one does not become too involved in (attached to) the magical trickery and instead focuses upon the ultimate goal. There is no less achievement in this Short Way -- rather, the achievement is greater, sooner. This is The Way that Bardon directs the sincere student toward in IIIH.

My best to you, dear reader,
Rawn Clark