

Step Five: Mastery of the Elements and Connecting to Inner Guidance

By Rawn Clark 27 September 2009

Today I will be speaking about the astral and physical sections of Step Five.

The astral exercises, which focus upon mastering the external projection and condensation of the Elements, are divided into three basic parts: First is the projection of the Elements through the solar-plexus and through other parts of the body into a defined space. Second is the projection of the Elements through the solar-plexus as defined shapes. And third is the condensation of the Elements directly from the universe.

From a technical perspective, based upon what you have accomplished with the Elements thus far, these exercises should be quite simple and just require repeated practice to fully master. However, Step five is just as much about overcoming the final vestiges of your internal resistance to letting yourself do, and letting yourself accomplish as it is about increasing your technical proficiency. In other words, the ultimate challenge of Step five is to your belief in the actuality of what we call “magic” and so here you are forced to confront your disbelief in the reality of magic head on. Until you overcome this subtle doubting, you will make no appreciable progress in Step Five or you will become diverted into chasing after unrealistic and inappropriate goals.

Throughout this section, Bardon challenges your doubts by offering up tantalizing opportunities that would seem to prove, once and for all through the generation of physical phenomena that magic is “real”. But in each case he reminds the reader that pursuing these abilities to the degree of being able to accomplish such physical proofs would take years of constant practice and he points out that this is a distraction, a diversion from the greater, more important task of spiritual development -- once again reiterating the idea that Hermetic initiation is a path of spiritual development, not merely the development of fantastic and miraculous powers.

A magician does not create the powers that are wielded. A magician merely directs and shapes the powers provided by the Universe; the Elements, Fluids, Lights, ideas, etc., that already exist independent of the magician. A magician is merely a conduit of these substances, so most of the training exercises are designed to slowly break down your resistance to allowing these substances to pass through you.

The greatest hindrance to this allowing, is disbelief or doubt that the substance itself is real and that its described effects are even possible. Hopefully most of this sort of doubt will have been purged through your previous work with the Elements but for most at this stage there will still be the question of whether or not the Elements are capable of producing physically measurable effects. So Bardon’s challenges are aimed precisely at this question, but he’s not really challenging you to prove the question; instead he’s challenging you to examine the question and especially to ask yourself why it’s important to you. He does this by first pointing out what’s possible and then telling you that to

pursue it at this stage would be unwise and a waste of time, all of which should lead you to examining the desires and needs that are at the root of your doubts.

This of course occurs in the broader Step Five context of working with the depth-point in the mental exercises and tapping into your inner guidance with the physical exercises. All of which focuses you deeply into your own self and ultimately, its connection with the Universe.

If you keep these factors in mind as you work with the astral exercises of Step Five, then it will go well for you but if you ignore the need for allowing, for being a conduit and the necessary confrontation with your doubts, then you will most likely get nowhere fast and end up completely frustrated. So let's move on to an examination of the exercises themselves.

The task in the first exercise is to repeatedly accumulate an Element within your whole body through the whole-body pore breathing and then to project it outward through your solar-plexus into the room or space surrounding you until you have created a dense external accumulation of the Element. The accumulation within the room or space must be dense enough that you can feel its sensory effects. With the Fire, your room must feel warm; with the Air it must feel light; with the Water, cold; and with the Earth, heavy.

At this point it's important to understand why this exercise involves the solar-plexus specifically. It goes back to what I said earlier about letting and allowing. From a physiological perspective, the solar-plexus is the abdominal brain, the seat or control center of the Sympathetic nervous system which controls the body's automatic systems such as digestion, heart beat, etc. In other words, it controls all those essential bodily functions that do not require our conscious participation – the functions we must simply allow to happen. Yet these functions may be handicapped or perverted by our negative emotional states. For example, anxiety will increase the heart rate and disturb digestion, etc.

From a Hermetic perspective, the solar-plexus is situated at the top of the Water region, near the division between the Air and Water regions of the astra-physical body: the “place”, if you will, where our thoughts most affect our emotional state, and conversely, where our emotional states most affect our thinking.

And from an energetic perspective, the Solar Plexus center is one of the main power chakras of the individual. It's associated with the functioning of the aura and with Mental and Astral plane sensitivity. Through this center the various spiritual energies enter for distribution to various parts of the body. The Solar Plexus chakra is also the center of psychic intuition.

All of these various factors I've just listed support what you need to accomplish with the Step Five work. With the depth-point work of the mental section, the solar-plexus supports your letting go of all your preconceptions and allowing objective perception of self. Here in the astral section, it supports your letting go and allowing the Elements to

pass through you. And in the physical section, it supports your letting go of your doubts and allowing your inner knowing to emerge.

So, getting back to the exercise at hand; when we project through the solar-plexus we must let go and allow the Element to pass. Projecting the Elements through the solar-plexus thus involves an examination of all that keeps us from simply allowing the Elements to follow our will. Often the first place we perceive this resistance will be in how we are holding our physical body during the exercise. Most will discover that they tense up, especially in the abdominal area, and try to force the Elements. If this is the case, then the first step in addressing those inhibitions is to completely relax your body and release all muscular tensions. This alone will usually lead to the discovery of the deeper emotional and conceptual blockages.

As I said earlier, this exercise of projecting the accumulation through the solar-plexus is technically quite simple. However it's another matter to build a projected accumulation within the room that is dense enough for you to sense its physical effects – to sense them, not create them with your imagination, but to actually feel them with your normal physical senses. To accomplish this you must act without reservation, without doubt and without any holding back. You must, quite simply, allow it to happen. Not expect it to happen or force it to happen. Just let it happen through you. The most difficult part is the act of getting out of your own way, but once you do, you will be amazed by how simple it really is. A subtle form of getting in your own way is succumbing to the need for external physical proof such as relying upon a thermometer to substantiate a rise in the room's temperature. This is basically an admission of doubt in regard to the veracity of your own physical perceptions. You must rely upon and trust your own sensory perceptions instead of needing an external verification.

This first exercise is deemed complete when you are able to project all four Elements through your solar-plexus and fill a room or area with a dense enough accumulation to be felt physically. At this point you will have overcome your inhibitions in regard to letting the Elements pass through you freely and with all of their power intact, so working with the solar-plexus is no longer necessary and now you can achieve the next exercise of creating an equally perceivable accumulation by passing the Elements through your whole body and through various parts of your body.

Begin by projecting each of the Elements through magical, whole-body exhalation into the room or space and continue practicing until you attain the same degree of physical affect as you did through your solar-plexus. Once this has been mastered with each Element equally, proceed to working with projecting each of the Elements through different parts of your body. Of greatest practical value will be projections through your fingers, hands and eyes.

When this has been mastered with each of the Elements, the first phase of the astral exercises is complete. As you can imagine this alone is a fairly monumental work that may take many months of steady consistent practice to complete. The reward however, greatly outweighs the effort required.

The next phase of work presents a change of perspective. Till now we have been projecting an accumulation into a room or area so that the accumulated Element surrounds us and we feel its effects from every direction. Now however, the task is to project a smaller, contained accumulation that hovers in the air before us and which affects us physically from a single direction. Additionally, we are now working with molding the accumulation into a specific, defined shape. Because these exercises venture into new territory, they once again are focused in the solar-plexus. It's within the solar-plexus that we shape the accumulation and from the solar-plexus that we project the shaped accumulation.

So, begin as usual to accumulate the Element within your entire body with the whole-body pore breathing and then condense the entire accumulation down to the size of a small ball in your solar-plexus. This sphere should be about 6 inches or 15 centimeters in diameter and be a very dense, powerful accumulation of the Element. Next, let this sphere emerge from your solar-plexus, separate from your body and float in the air a short distance in front of you. Once it is separate from you, you should perceive its qualities physically. For example, your ball of the Fire Element will radiate physical heat which you will feel on your face. You must master this process with each of the four Elements equally.

Next you must master the same process with each of the Elements but in a variety of shapes and continue until you are confident that you can create and project through your solar-plexus any shape of accumulation you can imagine. Thus ends the second phase of the astral exercises.

The third and final phase of astral work involves yet another radical shift in perspective. Now we will work with drawing the Elements directly from the Universe into the room and thus create a physically sensible accumulation without the elements ever passing through our bodies. By now you will thoroughly understand that it is your imagination that directs and shapes the elements so this exercise should present no great difficulty once you get the knack of it.

You know as a matter of fact that the Elements exist everywhere in the Universe surrounding you so it is a simple matter to cause them to accumulate and condense where you want them to. It's no different really than causing them to accumulate within your own body except that instead of inhaling them into your body, you draw them into the space surrounding you. Here though, you must really be ready to allow things to happen and let your imagination do the work. Let the Elements stream into your room and condense to such a degree of density that you feel their effects with your physical senses. You must master the ability to condense each of the Elements equally within your room by drawing them directly from the Universe to such an extent that you can physically sense their effects surrounding you.

The final Step Five astral exercise with the Elements is to draw the Elements directly from the Universe into a chosen shape which hangs in the air before you. Instead of

filling the room or area so that the Element surrounds you, you must now create a shape that radiates the Element and thus affects you from a single direction. Begin by creating spheres of each Element and once this is mastered, create a variety of different forms until you are again confident that you can create any shape of condensed Element you can imagine.

By the end of the long months devoted to the Step Five astral work with the Elements you will have truly mastered the Elements.

So, let's turn now to the Step Five physical exercises and what Bardon titled "passive communication".

To my mind, Bardon designed these exercises to be started after you have begun working with your own depth-point. The passive communication techniques themselves presuppose that you are already capable of inhabiting your own depth-point and yet that exercise comes last in the sequence of the Step Five mental work, so either Bardon expected the two preparatory exercises in passive communication to take many months to master or he intended for the student to postpone work with them until work with one's own depth-point had begun. The fact is, the work with your own depth-point will assist you in mastering the preparatory exercises, especially the first one, so whether or not it was Bardon's intention, it is my advice that you do wait till you have begun inhabiting your own depth-point before beginning the physical exercises of Step Five.

The primary goal of these exercises is to convince you of the existence of, and establish communication with, the inner source of guidance known commonly as your "holy guardian angel" or "genius". In point of fact this guidance is the manifestation of a higher level of your own awareness; your eternal mental body or Greater Self.

I mentioned this important source of internal guidance previously in my lecture on the mental exercises of Step Five in relation to the work with inhabiting your own depth-point. Here then Bardon presents a second, less direct and therefore more passive form of interaction with your internal guidance. Through your depth-point you may come literally face-to-face with your Guardian but here, with the physical exercises, communication is more akin to a telephone or email conversation. On its own, this technique can develop into a more immediate and deeper interaction; but no exercise in IIH exists on its own and this one is no different. Along with this exercise you are also working with the mental depth-point exercises which eventually lead to inhabiting your own depth-point and this factor leads very quickly to an exponential deepening of the passive communication. Ultimately, the passive turns into active and you access an immediate, continuous, clear and completely reliable guidance.

A secondary goal of these exercises is to convince you of the existence of, and establish communication with, (quote) "another world which everybody will enter and live in after passing away" (close quote) -- in other words, the astral and mental planes where, after death of the physical body, the astra-mental body spends a certain amount of time before reincarnating.

This is a very important precursor to development of the astra-mental senses and then wandering the mental and astral planes. Without a deep, in-your-bones conviction that these realms exist, the more advanced astra-mental work is impossible.

The key to these passive communication techniques is the disconnecting of your own will from your hand and this is the essence of the “magical preparation” of your hand. The first aspect is to render first your fingers individually and then your entire hand free of dependence upon muscular action for movement. This is accomplished with the Air Element and a form of “levitation” or, more properly, weightlessness.

First the entire hand is filled with an accumulation of the Vital Energy into which you must strongly impress the idea that you are in fact able to move your fingers and hand by your mental will alone, without having to contract your muscles, etc. In other words, that by merely imagining that your finger is rising, it rises without your having to physically raise it in the usual way with your muscles. After a few moments, release the Vital Energy from your hand and return it to the Universe. Here, the vital energy is merely acting as the conduit of your intention and setting the attitudinal stage, so to speak, for the next part of the exercise.

Now you must accumulate the Air Element in your forefinger and thus create a state of weightlessness within this finger. Focus your mind upon the fact that you can move your weightless finger merely with your will instead of your muscles and then will your forefinger to rise. You must have the feeling that it is your willpower that moves your finger, not your muscles. You can actually feel the difference – when you hold your finger up with your muscles, it will quickly tire and will take effort to keep aloft, but when you are using your willpower alone this does not occur and it feels as if your muscles are completely relaxed while the finger is aloft.

This exercise can be quite difficult and frustrating until you let it happen. Again, you must allow it to happen instead of forcing it to happen. This exercise depends upon how thoroughly you let go of your normal inclination to use your muscles for physical movement. You must sever the connection between your will and your muscles. Instead of flexing your muscles, you must shift your intention to causing your weightless finger to rise solely by force of will. No muscles are required for this at all so the more completely you shift your focus away from your muscles and allow your willpower to cause your finger to rise, the easier it will be. This is as much a mental shift as it is an emotional shift.

Once you have raised your weightless forefinger with your willpower, let it drop, again by force of your willpower, not your muscles. Practice this exercise with your forefinger until it becomes easy and then move on to the same with all of the other fingers of both hands. Once you’ve managed to lift all your fingers in this way, practice with your entire hand, lifting it and then letting it drop, all with your willpower and the Air Element. When this is mastered, practice with the other hand, and then with both forearms so that you are able to raise either forearm up to the elbow. When you are able to lift both hands,

forearms and all your fingers by this method you may move on to the next exercise of “exteriorization”.

With this next exercise you will learn how to sever your will entirely from your hand and, for that matter any body part you desire. This is crucial for true passive communication; for without this separation of your own will or directing awareness from the medium of communication, in this case your hand, you would be most liable to interference from your own subconscious psyche and end up talking with yourself instead of a discarnate entity.

Although our will has its root in our mental body, it is enacted through and personalized by our astral body when it comes to influencing our physical body. It is our astral body that mediates between our mental and physical bodies and integrates them. So in order to truly sever the whole of your personal will from your physical hand, you must remove your mental and your astral hand from its physical shell. I say this specifically because as a friend recently pointed out to me, Bardón repeatedly used the terms “mental hand” and “spirit hand” in his instruction for this exercise, seeming to indicate that only the mental body component needs to be exteriorized or relocated. However in practice, it is absolutely necessary that both components be removed – only when both components are removed does the empty physical shell become, as Bardón described it, “visible” in the Akasha. If only the mental component is removed, leaving an astra-physical shell, then the hand is visible only in the astral realm to astral entities and this is generally not enough for contact with one’s Guardian Genius.

The practice is very straightforward. Sit at a table and place both hands, palm down on its surface in front of you. Now imagine that your astra-mental right hand and forearm, from elbow to fingertips, descend out of your physical hand and forearm, passing through the table and coming to rest on your right knee below. They must feel exactly like your regular hand and forearm while you must have absolutely no sensory awareness of your physical hand and forearm. Focus on the idea that your physical hand is now a completely empty shell and that your real hand rests upon your knee. Then return your astra-mental hand to the physical shell and flex your fingers, move your arm, etc., to firmly reintegrate them.

Practice with your right and then left hand and forearm until you can easily exteriorize them for at least five minutes at a stretch. That completes the preparatory exercises so now I will turn to discussing the passive communication technique itself.

Each of the techniques Bardón described, whether it be with a pendulum, planchette or medial writing, requires four basic steps. First step is to gather the materials needed, such as pendulum, planchette or pen and paper. Second is to “magically prepare” the hand and forearm by making them weightless (and thus easily moveable) through an accumulation of the Air Element and levitate them as necessary. Third is to exteriorize the hand and forearm. And fourth, is to enter your own depth-point and call out to the entity you wish to communicate with. Once these four steps have been enacted, communication may begin.

I'll use the sidereal pendulum technique to illustrate these four steps in action. First, gather together all the ingredients Bardon described; the pendulum, thread and tinkling objects and set them up as instructed.

Second place both hands and forearms on the table in front of you and create an accumulation of the Air Element in your right hand and forearm up to the elbow. If you are normally left-handed, then use your left hand and forearm instead of your right. Next levitate (i.e., cause it to rise with your will) your hand and forearm until it rests on your elbow and the pendulum swings freely a couple of centimeters above the table surface.

Third, exteriorize your hand and forearm and let them glide through the table to rest on your thigh below. Your physical hand and forearm are now completely empty and will stay propped up on their own because of their weightlessness.

Fourth, you must shift your awareness into your own depth-point, into the Akasha, and call out to the entity you wish to communicate with. At first, it really should be your own Guardian Genius that you seek out, but eventually you should pursue communication with other entities as well.

Your desire thus placed in the Akasha will create a magnetic resonance within the mental realm and the desired entity will be drawn to you and will be able to use your empty hand to maneuver the pendulum.

When you are finished, you must intentionally and thoroughly reintegrate your astral-mental hand and forearm with the physical shell, release the accumulated Air element and then once again resume normal control over your hand and forearm.

The only case in which the levitation or raising of the Air Element-filled hand is not required is the example Bardon gave of having the hand in your pocket and using just finger movement for communication. In this case, the hand must be filled with the Air Element but does not need to be levitated into position. Furthermore, only the hand itself or just the fingers involved will need to be exteriorized.

As Bardon pointed out, abilities cultivated in future Steps will override these techniques of passive communication and make them seem quite primitive and cumbersome in comparison, but for the time being they are quite valuable and deserve to be pursued. To my mind, their most important gift in terms of your initiation, is that they instigate an ever-deepening relationship with your Guardian Genius and thus, with your Greater Self.