

Step Ten: Mental Exploration of Higher Spheres, Merging With The One Self and An Overview of Advanced Magical Techniques

By Rawn Clark 29 November 2009

Today I will be discussing the mental and astral sections of Step Ten. I will not however, be commenting on the physical section since it's a self-explanatory listing of various advanced magical techniques.

The mental section is divided into three basic parts. First is the mental exploration of the four Elemental realms and consequent interaction with the beings that inhabit them; second, is the seeking out of a direct, face-to-face interaction with your Guardian Genius; and third, is the mental exploration of the planetary zones or spheres and consequent interaction with the beings that exist there.

Within the astral and physical realms, the four Elements are found only in combination and it is thus impossible to wander regions and encounter intelligences or beings composed of only a single Element within these realms. For such an encounter with the pristine, solitary Elements we must enter the mental realm.

The Elemental realms to be explored in this Step correspond to our planet earth; which is to say they represent the actions of the Elements in regard to our normal physical earth. These Elemental realms are composed of just that portion of the Elements involved in sustaining our planet earth. The Earth Element realm contains all of the Earth Element within our planet earth; The Water Element realm, all of the Water Element within our planet; the Air Element realm, all the Air Element; and the Fire Element realm, all the Fire Element involved with our planet.

Your normal mental body is composed of all four Elements in combination and this fact makes it unsuitable to enter into the realms of the solitary Elements. For example, the Earth, Water and Air in your normal mental body would be rejected by the Fire Element realm and you would be unable to gain access. So, in order to transfer your mental body into an Elemental realm, you must first fill it with the Element and, in effect, merge your awareness with the solitary Element. You access the Elemental realm by entering it as the pure Element.

Since these Elemental realms concern our planet earth and not the cosmos as a whole, when transferring your mental body into the realm of the Earth Element you will sink down below the surface of the physical earth itself. Likewise, when transferring your mental body into the realm of the Water Element, you will sink down into a physical body of water such as a lake or an ocean. To enter the realm of the Air Element, you will rise up into the atmosphere and to enter the realm of the Fire Element, you will transfer your awareness into a volcano or thermal vent, etc.

Of course, these locations lead to the Elemental realms only when you have merged with the Element. For example, if you were to sink your normal mental body, which is composed of all four Elements in combination, into an ocean you would not enter the realm of the Water Element. Instead, you would simply enter the mental realm of the ocean itself which, like yourself is naturally composed of all four Elements in combination. Only when your mental body has become the Water Element through and through will submerging into the ocean lead you to the realm of the pristine, solitary Water Element.

As we know, the Elements are Universal Principles however, what we encounter here in the Elemental realms are only the ways in which those Principles manifest in the work of sustaining our planet earth. Within our planet, each Element manifests in specific ways and with specific purposes or tasks, and when we mental wander an Elemental realm we will encounter embodiments of these purposes. Underlying each purpose is an intelligent will, which in the Elemental realm takes form as a so called “being of the Element”. Each discrete quanta of intelligent will condenses the pristine Element into a specific form, a being with specific traits and characteristics of appearance that conform to its Element.

Thus in the realm of the Earth Element we perceive beings of a compact, solid form with a relatively short stature and dark attire. They tend to move slowly and deliberately and always appear to be busy at work on some Earth-related task. They are capable of great seriousness and of great cheer equally. Their inherent intelligence manifests as a light which illuminates their immediate surroundings. This is often described as a lamp or similar light source that the being carries with it. The intensity and clarity of this illumination is related to the quantity and quality of the intelligence which forms the particular being. Since the Earth Principle arises out of the interaction of the Fire, Air and Water Principles, the beings of the Earth Element share more in common with us quadrapolar human beings than the beings of the other Elements do. The realm of the Earth Element is thus the easiest to get to know and the beings of this realm are the easiest to make friends with very quickly.

In the realm of the Water Element we perceive beings with very fluid and supple, somewhat elongated slender bodies. Their movement is undulating and rhythmic, similar to the way in which a dolphin glides through the ocean waters. As beings of the Water Element their main feature though is their magnetic attractiveness, the strength of which is a direct reflection of the quality of their informing intelligence. The higher the intelligence; the stronger is the being’s force of attraction. We perceive the magnetic attraction exerted by a being of the Water Element in whatever symbols our subconsciousness finds most appropriate or descriptive of “attractiveness”. For many, it is perceived in the symbolic form of physical beauty, which is of course a completely subjective valuation based solely upon personal likes and dislikes. Thus a very highly placed intelligence of this realm might be so extraordinarily attractive that if any imbalances exist in your psyche, you might begin to experience romantic feelings for them. In other words, your astra-mental Equilibrium of the Elements and Fluids is especially important in regard to wandering the realm of the Water Element.

In the realm of the Air Element we perceive translucent, almost transparent in some cases, beings of great delicacy and prettiness. They seem nearly insubstantial and their size is quite small in comparison to our human form. The features of their bodies are very colorful and incredibly detailed as if each was composed of an infinite number of distinct particles. They hardly ever seem to stay still for anything more than the briefest of moments. The higher their resident intelligence; the more ephemeral the being appears and the prettier its form. This means that the highest beings of the Air realm are the most difficult to perceive and therefore require the accumulation of a large body of experience within the realm of the Air Element before they are encountered.

In the realm of the Fire Element we perceive beings that look like individual flames, predominantly red, orange and yellow in coloration. These beings never stop their movement which is also like the flickering of a fire's flames, seemingly random and lightening fast. But even though these beings exhibit a constant, rapid movement, this doesn't mean that they are moving from one place to another; rather, their motion is anchored to a central still point of radiant energy or fire. All their intensity of motion is focused around and radiates from this still point, which itself may move from place to place as slowly or quickly as it needs. Their degree or quality of intelligence is manifest through the power of their radiation and the quality or color of light that is emanated. The highest beings of the Fire realm possess a truly massive radiation of energy that manifests with a nearly white-hot light.

Bardon suggested that you give your mental body the shape and size of a typical being of the Elemental realm you wish to explore and then fill it with the Element. For example, he suggested that you use your magic mirror to see what a being of the Earth Element looks like and use that image as the template for shaping your mental body. In my experience however, this is less appropriate or advantageous than starting with a spherical shape and then letting the combination of the Element and your own awareness determine the ultimate shape. When you inhabit the Element filled sphere with your awareness, it will automatically take on the most appropriate shape and will thus be a genuine expression of your intelligence within the Elemental realm. The result is that who you really are is immediately reflected by your shape, size and features upon entering the Elemental realm. For example, your form within the realm of the Earth Element might possess a very bright light in comparison to the image you saw in your magic mirror. The advantage here is that the beings of the Element will immediately recognize your true Self and thus afford you greater hospitality.

During your encounters with the beings of the Elemental realms you may access whatever information you may desire in regard to the mental, astral and physical planes of our planet earth. But this work is meant to be about more than just the acquisition of information; it is also about your giving something of yourself to the Elemental realms instead of just taking from them. With each encounter you have an opportunity to give the gift of friendship, of kindness and of light. By "light" I don't mean some vague new-age feel-good clap trap; instead I mean the specific light of Self-Awareness. The beings of the solitary, pristine Elements do not possess our human quadrapolar type of self-

awareness so when they encounter you, they experience your self-awareness as a blessing, a bringing of light into their comparatively dark existence. Just your presence alone serves an uplifting effect upon them but when you intentionally cause your awareness to radiate as a gift that you give to them, then they are elevated even higher. It is this attitude of unselfishly giving for the sake of giving that leads you to encounters with the highest beings of the Elemental realms. If, on the other hand, all you do is take, you will never have the good fortune to befriend these higher beings.

Mental wandering of the Elemental realms begins with the realm of the Earth Element. Once the Earth realm has been thoroughly explored and you have made friends with higher beings, you then begin wandering the realm of the Water Element. Then comes the realm of the Air Element and finally, the realm of the Fire Element. Only when all four of the Elemental realms have been thoroughly explored and you have become acquainted with the higher beings of each realm are you ready to travel to higher spheres beyond our planet earth.

For these journeys to higher planes beyond the earth you will need to a guide, not just any guide but your guide. Your guide for this upward journey through the higher spheres must be able to lead you all the way to the Saturn Sphere. No lesser guide would do. This guide, of course, is your Guardian Genius, the agent of your Greater Self. Your Greater Self, which is to say, your eternal mental body or spirit of which your temporal mental body is just one of many projections, exists within the Saturn sphere, or Binah of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. So only your own Guardian Genius as agent of your Greater Self is capable of truly guiding you where you need to go.

Your first extra-planetary task then is to make direct, face-to-face contact with your Guardian Genius on the mental plane. Since we are not concerned here with the mental plane of planet earth and are instead seeking a meeting on a higher aspect of the mental plane, we must rise up with our mental body beyond the earth. We do not load our mental body with an Element or in any way alter its appearance; instead we simply rise up, up, up and all the while call out to our Guardian Genius requesting a face-to-face meeting. Eventually your Guide will appear.

This is an utterly unique and individual experience so there is no benefit in my trying to describe such an encounter. Suffice it to say that it is significant and utterly transformative encounter!

From that moment on, your Guide will lead you home, step by step to the eternal embrace of your Greater Self. Along the way, you will mentally wander the spheres of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, and Jupiter; or in Kabbalistic terms, the sephirot of Yesod, Hod, Netzach, Tiphareth, Geburah and Gedulah, in successive order, before crossing the abyss and reaching Saturn, Binah.

Once you have connected with your Guide, the technique for traveling to the higher planes will be made clear to you by your Guide, however in the context of this lecture it's worth noting that the method is quite simple. Bardon described it as "*ascending straight*"

as a dart from the earth, concentrating on the sphere he wishes to visit, and according to his will, being attracted by the sphere.” In other words, we employ the mental plane Law of Attraction and fill our awareness wholly with the essential meaning of the sphere we wish to explore.

For wandering the spheres of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars and Jupiter, we use our solitary mental body, the conjoined Air and Fire regions of our awareness. To go beyond Jupiter however and reach Saturn which lies across the abyss between the sequential realm and the non-sequential realm of eternity, we must shed the Air region of our mental body and journey with only the Fire region, our central spark of Self. Only the Fire region of the temporal mental body is capable of experiencing the non-sequential nature of the eternal realm.

So, let's turn now to the astral section of Step Ten. When it came to writing this part of the lecture and specifically to writing anything new about the subject of merging with The One Self, I was stumped. After re-reading my original commentary on this section I realized that I'd already written all I could possibly say of any value, so I decided to simply read to you the words I wrote almost a decade ago:

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 concept(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 alikeness 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.

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 or 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. 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.

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.

I hope that by this point you have become well aware of the importance of each Step of IIH. 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.