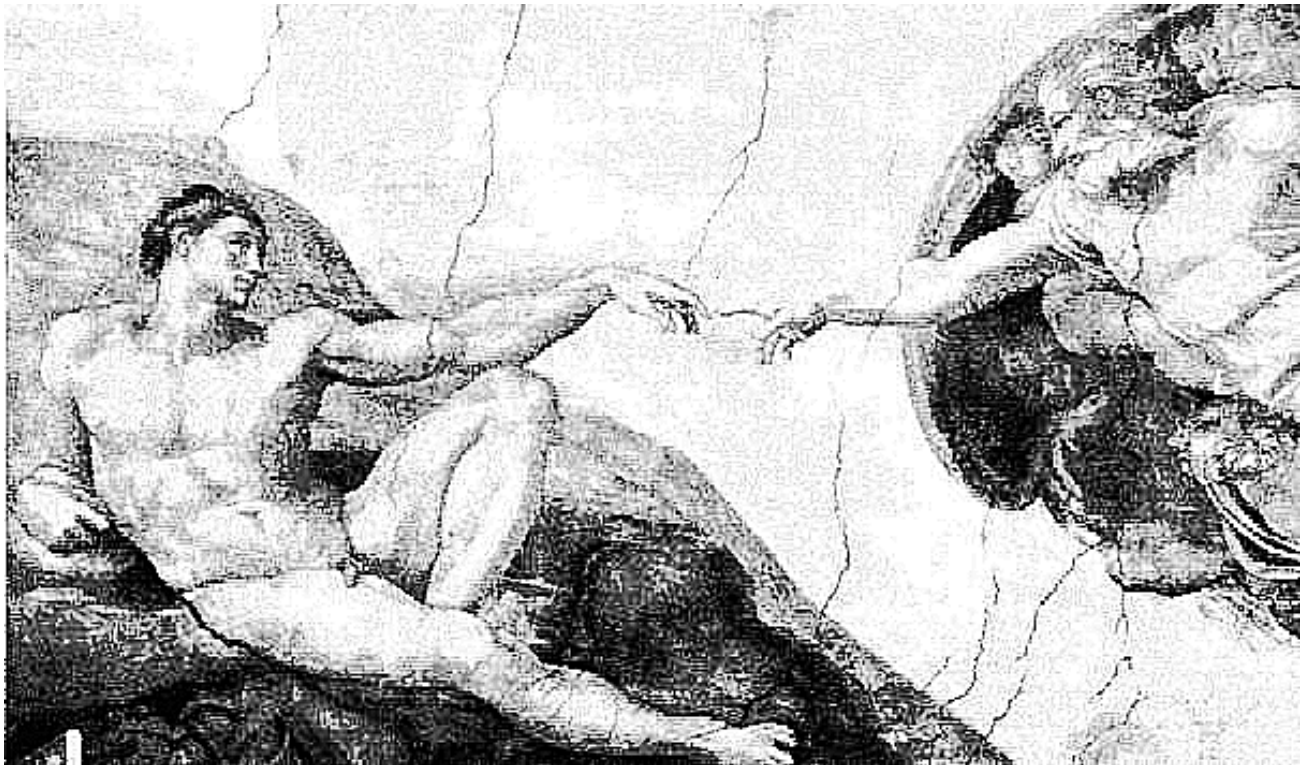# Spiritualism

A Modular Rules Supplement
for the Alternate Realities Role-Playing System

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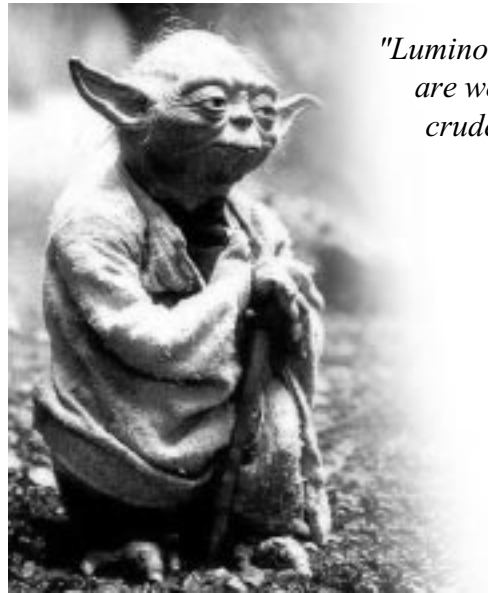## Alternate Realities Citation Statement

Disclaimer

"Luminous Beings are we; not this crude matter!"

Introduction

This is a collection of rules designed to add a spiritual dimension to characters and other AR Objects in RGs that require methods of handling Spiritual Powers, Deities, and other "real" manifestations of spirituality as opposed to purely cultural or psycho-social manifestations. This MRS will explore ways of incorporating into a role-playing campaign such elements as divine character objects including gods and demons, divinations and priest craft, spiritual energies such as chi and divine wrath, channeling, and divine intercessions.

As a Modular Rules Supplement, Spiritualism is not bound to a particular Reality, so these rules should be flexible enough to be find applications in many different types of campaigns and realities from High Fantasy to Four-Color Martial Arts to Science Fantasy. Clever reality designers will find ways to apply this MRS to create rules for systems of magic, to achieve elements of horror, and to adapt certain popular science fantasy mythoi from long, long ago and far away.

The Spiritual Character

New Attributes

In order to facilitate the portrayal of a spiritual aspect in a RG, certain characteristics and conventions must be invented to allow characters to interact on this dimension. This MRS will introduce a fifth attribute dimension which acts in parallel to the existing four dimensions of Mental, Physical, Psychosocial, and Sensory. The Fifth dimension, aptly called Spiritual, describes a set of attributes that describe all characteristics of the character's Spirit or Soul. These attributes inherit all characteristics of attributes of the appropriate level from the PRG.

Spiritual Attribute Inheritance Tree
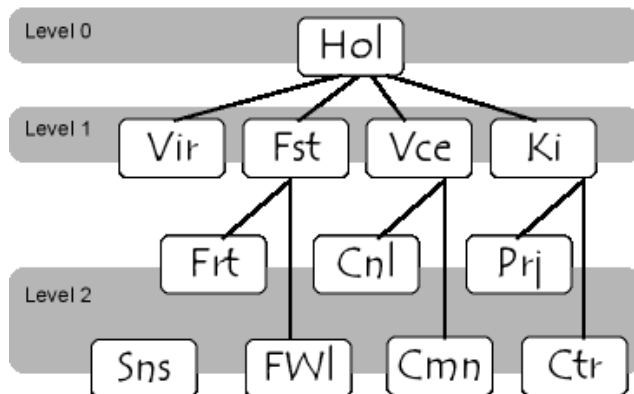
Level 0 Spiritual Attribute

Holiness (Hol). This is the most general of spiritual attributes and is simply an overall measure of spiritual capability. Although the word "holiness" may carry some connotations and associations, Players and GMs are reminded that this attribute in no way reflects any alignment or association between a character and a particular deity. Rather, it reflects the degree to which the character is "spiritually sound."

Level 1 Spiritual Attributes

Ki (Ki). Ki represents the innate power of a character's spirit. In spiritual confrontations, Ki can be thought of as analogous to Strength and Dexterity in the physical realm. Ki can be used to manipulate objects and inflict damage both in physical terms and in spiritual terms.

Voice (Vce). Voice describes the nature and strength of the character's connection with a deity and or other characters, and the character's closeness to the deity. Voice determines the character's ability to channel another character's actions and act as a vessel and projector for another character's Ki, as well as the likelihood that the deity will hear requests from the character.

Fastness (Fst). Fastness refers to the solidity of the character's spiritual aspect. It can be thought of as a rating of Endurance for the character's Soul. Fastness is vital in resisting spiritual attacks and attacks on the soul itself.

Virtue (Vir). Virtue measures the degree to which a character is consistent within his or her own particular belief and perhaps more importantly, the degree to which the character actually embodies that belief. Virtue will affect many aspects of spiritual action, but it primarily concerns the relationship between a character and the deity or deities that the character is linked to. In general, the higher the Virtue, the more likely the character's deity is to act on the character's behalf.

Level 2 Spiritual Attributes

Projection (Prj). Projection measures the character's spiritual force, and the ability to project Ki onto other objects. Projection is specifically analogous to Strength

Control (Ctr). As its name implies, Control describes the character's ability to finely control his Ki, and thus acts as a sort of spiritual Dexterity.

Sensitivity (Sns). Sensitivity deals specifically with the character's ability to sense Ki and other spiritual characteristics. In the Spiritual

realm, Sensitivity is similar to Perception.

Channeling (Cnl). This attribute measures the character's appropriateness as a Vessel for channeling Ki from an outside source, whether from a Deity, an object, or another character.

Communion (Cmn). Communion reflects the ease with which a character can meld the whole of his Spirit with another for the purposes of communication whether the communion takes the form of a Vulcan Mind Meld or The Lord's Prayer.

Fortitude (Frt). Fortitude is a measure of Spiritual Stamina. Under certain circumstances (which have strong parallels with physical Stamina), The character may accumulate Angst, which is an indicator of Spiritual exhaustion. The rules for accumulation and dissipation of Angst are similar to those of Stress and Fatigue and will be discussed later in this MRS.

Free Will (FWl). Very different from the Psychosocial attribute Will, Free Will describes the character's degree of cosmic independence. That is, to what degree is the character's Spirit or Soul an independant entity? How much Autonomy does the character's Soul possess? A Very low Free Will means that the character is little more than a Spiritual extension of another being, while a Very high Free Will (usually reserved for Deity-like characters) implies a level of spiritual autonomy that in some sense transcends any form of imposition, control, and perhaps even understanding.

Spiritual Macros

Aiua (Aiua). Aiua is a measure of "structural" integrity of a character's Spirit. Any actions that cause damage to the charater's Soul directly affect Aiua. Aiua=DRF(Fst)´10,000. Aiua is directly analogous to Hits and inherits the rules for Damage, Incapacitation and Scrap, and Healing for Hits described in the PRG. More will be said about Aiua, Fortitude, and Angst later in this MRS.

Spiritual Actions (SActs). Spiritual Act is similar to the physical Act macro, but refers to actions taken exclusively in a spiritual capacity.

As such, SActs are computed based exclusively on Spiritual Attributes. To determine a character's SAct macro, average DRF(Ki) and DRF(Fst). Multiply that figure by 2 and round up to the nearest ½.

Deities And Powers

Deity Defined

Any Reality that makes use of this supplement is likely to contain deities. Whether or not the deities actually take the form of gods is up to the Reality Designer. For the purposes of this Supplement, a Deity or Power is defined as any Non-Player-Object containing at least Spiritual Attributes and the supplemental attributes of Code and Scope. A deity's attributes are generally scaled so high that there is little need to even record them. A Deity may have physical, mental or psychosocial attributes, but not necessarily. Indeed, a Deity need not even be an intelligence, per se. Some examples of Deities are Yahweh, Pallas Athene, Shiva, and The Force.

Deities generally act through and on the behalf of those characters that are affiliated with them.

The terms Deity and Power are used interchangeably throughout this MRS, and generally, these terms will be used to describe the "source" component of any source-target interaction of spiritual attributes. While either the source or the target may be a character, for the purposes of convention, the Character and the Follower will be used interchangeably to mean the "target" of the interaction.

Code and Scope

Code and Scope are two supplemental attributes that help to define a deity and the nature of its affiliation and interaction with the Reality. All Deities will have Code and Scope, though for some they may well be poorly defined. Note that Non-Deities may also have these attributes (even Player Characters!), especially those with strong Spiritual charactersitics who are likely to attract followers and penitents.

Code is a description of the aspects that are held as the ideal of embodiment for the deity's followers. A Deity's Code is the yardstick against which any affiliated character's Virtue is measured. A Deity's Code is normally expressed in a set of Goals and Taboos, Drives and Constraints. The Code could be simply expressed or could be buried and obfuscated by texts and tenets of religion. Keep in mind that a Deity's Code may not have anything to do with its own Goals and Intentions, it is simply a codification of the rules by which an affiliated character can remain in the Deity's good graces.

Scope is defined as the subset of Objects and Events within a given Reality over which a given Deity may exercise its Ki to directly alter the very shape of Reality. Thus Demeter's scope includes the harvest, matters pertaining directly to fertility, etc.; this scope allows her to guaranty good crops on the one hand, and to strike an enemy barren on the other (subject to the limitations of her Ki). Objects and Events within a Deity's scope are potentially subject to its direct influence without the need to work through cause and effect, while anything outside of the Deity's scope cannot be affected directly.

Dam'blesh's scope consists of fire, war, and drought. Angered by the recent actions of a tribe of worshippers living in the Arbathian mountains, Dam'blesh considers his options for revenge. Because of his scope, Dam'blesh could attempt to bring drought upon the tribe, to interfere with their use of fire (possibly burning down their village or, more ironically, causing them to freeze to death by denying them access to his sacred flame), or to turn the tide of war against them (not a useful option here, as there are no other tribes nearby). Notably, Dam'blesh could not punish the tribe by means of earthquake, flood, or disease...these matters are not within his purview, and Dam'blesh could not control them (though he might persuade some other god to do his dirty work...).

It is worth noting that scope is independent of the abilities of any forms or manifestations of

a Deity. A Deity with a human form could act as any other character with such a form could act, irrespective of the Deity's scope. The same is true, of course, of spiritual or other forms taken by a Deity, for scope constrains the ability of a Deity to directly warp Reality, not to take action within it.

> *The fire god Dam'blesh is eager to take revenge on a tribe of worshippers in the Arbathian mountains. Concerned that rival gods will foil his efforts to punish the wrongdoers by means of his godly powers, Dam'blesh decides instead to send a physical manifestation to attack the tribe. Although death is not within Dam'blesh's scope (although his actions here could be argued to fall within the purview of war), nothing prevents his physical manifestation from marching into the village and slaying the tribespeople directly. His physical manifestation could even destroy a local dam, utterly destroying the village by flood, despite the fact that this is clearly opposed to his association with drought! (Not that he would be likely to do this, of course, since it would mean furthering the glory of his arch-nemesis, Shlasana, master of water, flood, and cold...)*

Followers of the gods

One of the unique characteristics of Deities is their tendency to attract followers. The relationship between a Deity and its followers relates to the Deity's Code and Scope. The relationship is usually a symbiotic one, in which the follower agrees to embody the Deity's Code in return for access to the Deity's greater spiritual power.

As has been stated earlier, the character's Virtue is a direct measurement of the character's level of embodiment of the Deity's Code. The more firmly a character embodies the Code he is sworn to, the more likely the Deity is to grant the character's requests. In terms of AR mechanics, a follower of a Deity is a character that is linked to the deity or power, either directly, or through an intercessor object. This link may be symbiotic or one-directional.

Spiritual Interaction

Certain interactions are commonly available to any characters or other objects with Spiritual attributes. While these interactions very often involve a Deity and a follower, they can also take place between two Spirits of equal status.

Because the scope of this supplement is so broad, and no attempt is being made to create Reality specific rules here, the following sections are very vague, but they provide a general outline of the mechanics spiritual interactions in AR terms. Reality designers are encouraged to tweak these mechanics to more perfectly model the spiritual reality they envision.

The Power of prayer

The primary means of communication between a follower and his Deity is Prayer. In prayer, characters can exchange information with or make requests of the Deity or Power. This raises two basic issues: under what circumstances are prayers heard, and under what circumstances are they answered.

Two things determine the likelihood of a prayer being heard by the Deity: The Deity's Sns attribute, and the character's Vce attribute. An omniscient Deity will hear all prayers, regardless of the character's Vce, while a weaker Deity might only be reached by a character with a strong Voice.

One possible implementation of this works as a contest with the combined attributes of the Deity's Sns and the character's Vce on the one hand and a task difficulty on the other. Note that in most cases, the Deity's Sns (indeed all of the Deity's attributes) are going to be scaled dramatically, and both the scale of the character's attribute and the task difficulty must be reconciled to the higher scaled attribute (see the rules for reconciling dissimilar scales in the PRG). It is important to note that in most cases where a character is attempting to contact a Deity with

highly scaled attributes, this test is trivial, and GMs may rule that a test is simply not necessary.

As has been stated previously, whether or not a prayer is answered depends on both the character's Virtue and the Deity's scope and power. This will result in a test with two factors: the Deity's disposition towards granting the character's request, and the Deity's ability to grant the request. This is handled as a contest with the Deity's Ki and the Character's Virtue on one side and a task difficulty on the other. The effect of this is that deities will tend to grant the requests of moderately Virtuous characters only when the difficulty of the request is on a similar scale of the character's Virtue. Generally, requests that are a true challenge to a Deity (those whose task difficulty is on a similar scale to the Deity's Ki) will only be granted for characters of truly divine Virtue! Thus, lowly characters may have to pray to intercessors of one sort or another in order to have exceptional prayers answered.

Channeling

When a character attempts (or is forced!) to channel the Ki of another Spirit, whether a Deity, Power, or another character, two characteristics are relevant: The character's Cnl attribute, and the Deity's Ki. Any attempt to utilize and control Ki from an outside source will require a contest between the character's Cnl and the amount of the Deity's Ki that is being channeled.

Any amount of Ki that is successfully channeled through a character is treated as a one-time bonus to the character's own Ki attribute. Alternatively, channeling can be treated as a temporary increase of a character's Ki, regulated by the use of a continuous form contest between the character's Cnl and the desired increase in Ki, with the time component equal to the duration of the bonus in seconds.

Note that (in principle) a Deity can direct any amount of Ki to a Follower. However, the likelihood of a given Deity's success at projecting Ki on any particular attempt is directly related to his Ki attribute. To attempt to project Ki, the Deity must make a standard form contest of his Ki attribute versus the amount of Ki to be projected. As one would expect, then, Deities that attempt to project Ki far above their own attributes are unlikely to succeed.

Phillipé Vertemae, pinned down in a back alley, appeals to Ogou Chango (his loa) for spiritual aid. In particular, Phillipé needs a bonus of 70 to his Ki attribute in order to pull off a particularly demanding spell (and quickly!). Ogou Chango's Ki attribute (in this manifestation) is 13ha, so the GM rules that a contest between Ogou Changou's Ki (13ha) and the requested 70 Ki is trivial (the chance of failure would be well below 1%). Phillipé's Channeling attribute is only 30, thus he must make a fairly difficult contest of his Channeling attribute versus the bonus (30 versus 70), giving him a rolling target of:

DRF(30-70) = DRF(-40) = 21%.

Phillipé's player rolls a 20%, just barely making his test; Phillipé manages to channel the loa's gift, but only just!

A Failed attempt to channel results in the severing of the spiritual connection and the backlash of this severing can be very painful. If a character fails the channeling test, the amount of Ki he was trying to channel is applied instead to the character's Angst (if the continuous form contest is being used, the Angst from the severing is incurred only once!). Note that if the Ki being channeled is scaled higher than the character's Frt, Angst can very quickly result in the Aiua being scrapped which may (depending on the nature of the Soul in a given Reality) result in the character's death, or the destruction of the character's Soul, or other nastiness.

Phillipé Vertemae, having extricated himself from the alley in which he was trapped, is now on the run. Fleeing across the city streets, he suddenly stops short: a Sensitivity test (made by the GM) tells him that his enemies have just placed a lethal curse upon him. Struck by sudden weakness (20 Fatigue points), Phillipé realizes that he must act quickly to remove the curse or be captured and killed by his pursuers. Removing a curse of this magnitude is a difficult task, normally requiring elaborate rituals, but Phillipé doesn't have time for that right now; as before, he appeals to his loa, Ogou Chango, for a gift of spiritual power. To have a reasonable shot at removing the curse, Phillipé guesses that he needs 150 points of Ki...no mean sum! Chango, however, accedes, and Phillipé struggles to channel the tremendous surge of energy. As before, Phillipé must make a contest of his own Channeling attribute versus the bonus (30 versus 150), though now he also faces a 5 point penalty due to his fatigue. His rolling target, then, is:

DRF(30-150-5) = DRF(-125) = 8%.

Phillipé's player rolls the dice, and luck is not with him: he scores 83%, which is not even close to success. Chango's energy, improperly channeled by Phillipé, instead rips into his soul, causing 150 points of Angst. Phillipé is now in a very bad situation...and one suspects that Ogou Chango may be losing patience with his erstwhile servant....

Communion

Another form of active interchange between two Spirits is the trade of information, or Communion. The act of forging a communicative link between two spirits is a contest between the Spirits' Cmn on the one side and the Task difficulty on the other. The GM may rule that this contest is required only to establish a connection, or for each specific exchange of information, or not at all, between two consenting Spirits.

Communion is a specific form a prayer whose purpose is generally the exchange of mental or spiritual information, The nature of

Communion is a hazy thing. The actual effects and consequences of establishing communion between two characters can vary so widely depending on the role of the Spiritual world in a given Reality that no hard and fast ruling can be made in this supplement. Some examples of the uses of Communion are Buddhist meditation, the Vulcan Mind Meld, spiritual mediums, and so on.

Guilliam de Fauchard seeks to commune with the dread demon Potensius in order to divine the secret path between worlds. Guilliam's Communion rating is 10, and the demon's is -5da. In this world, the GM rules that communion is fairly easy, with a task difficulty of 0. The pair's rolling target, then, is:

DRF((-5da+10)-0) =
DRF((-5da-165da)-(-198da)) =
DRF(28da) = 73%.

The GM's roll is 51%; the communion is successful.

Appropriate Vessels

Characters and Deities can also attempt to force communion or channeling on any character within their scope or to which they have a link. Attempting to establish communion by force is a contest between the resisting
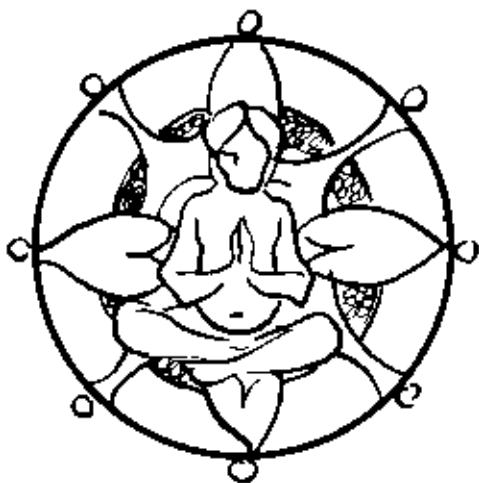
character's FWl and the initiator's Cmn. The nature and use of this test is subject to the GMs ruling, based on the nature of the Reality and the actors involved.

Forced Channeling is handled in a similar manner, but its initiation is a contest between the resisting character's FWl and the initiator's Ki. Forced Channeling is essentially "possession", and allows a deity to take full or partial physical control of the character.

Guilliam de Fauchard has collaborated with the demon Potensius in order to find the hidden path between worlds. To attain the key to this secret path, Guilliam must converse with the spirit of a recalcitrant mage. The mage, alas, is not keen on communing with Guilliam...thus, he must endeavor to force a communion to take place. The mage's Free Will attribute is 0, and Guilliam's communion rating is 10; thus, Guilliam must beat a rolling target of:

DRF(10-0) = DRF(10) = 60%

in order to force a communion on the spirit. Alas, Guilliam's player rolls 78%, and Guilliam thus fails to force the spirit to surrender.

If a character successfully resists an attempt at forced channeling or communion, the initiator suffers a backlash, incurring Angst equal to the resisting character's Success Margin times the rating of Ki or Cmn that was applied to the contest by the initiator.

When Guilliam de Fauchard fails to force a communion with the spirit of a long-dead mage, he suffers a backlash of spiritual energy. His rolling target for the communion was 60%, but his actual roll was 78%; thus, his success margin was -18%. Guilliam now takes 18% of his Communion rating (10) as Angst, due to the warping of his spirit due to the failure. Forunately for Guilliam, this is only 1.8 (rounded by the GM to 2) Angst points, not enough to amount to a penalty. If Guilliam had used more power, however (perhaps by channeling it from some dark god), a failure might have been far more costly....
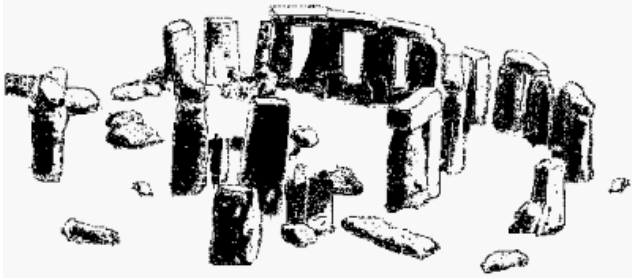
Consecration

Consecration is a cooperative act by which a Deity may artificially extend its scope to include the object or objects being consecrated. In consecration, a follower typically channels the Deity's Ki to consecrate an object, placing that object within the Deity's scope. The important factors in consecration are the amount of Ki being brought to bear on the task on the one hand, and the difficulty of the task, including the size of the object and its distance from the deity's scope, on the other.

Conceivably, a very powerful follower could consecrate an object to his deity on his own Ki, but typically, it is done with Ki channeled from the deity. In this case, the follower opens a channel of Ki from the deity following the procedure stated above. Then the character's

Ki and a task difficulty which might be derived from the object's Siz, its conceptual distance from the deity's scope, and, if the target object is a character, its FWl. To improve chances of success, other characters can join in the effort to consecrate the object. In such cases, all of the

Seven priests of Apollo seek to consecrate a temple altar (and the immediate area surrounding it) to him. The GM rules that the difficulty of this task will be equal to one rating point per five square feet of temple space - given that the area surrounding the altar is 1000 square feet in size, this is not a trivial task (a difficulty of 200)! The priests' individual Ki ratings are 25, 30, 40, 60, 20, 15, and 80, respectively; through prayer they are each able to channel 90, 120, 60, 190, 80, 100, and 160 points of Ki from their deity (again, respectively). Because the consecration follows the maximum success margin rule, we find each priest's individual success margin as follows:

Seven priests of Apollo desire to consecrate 15,000 square feet of temple space, by employing a long-term ritual. Collectively, the priests can spend 5 hours per day in consecration rituals, and the group attempts these rituals daily for 10 weeks. The GM elects to give the group the standard +1 rating bonus per minute for a continuous form test, for a per-person bonus of 3,000. The priests' tests, then, are as follows:

DRF((25+3000)-3000) = 71%   SM = 4%
DRF((30+3000)-3000) = 74%   SM = -2%
DRF((40+3000)-3000) = 79%   SM = -20%
DRF((60+3000)-3000) = 84%   SM = 76%
DRF((20+3000)-3000) = 68%   SM = 64%
DRF((15+3000)-3000) = 64%   SM = 13%
DRF((80+3000)-3000) = 88%   SM = 54%

Clearly, the priests are easily able to consecrate the temple grounds, without having to channel extra Ki in the process. (Of course, they did consume 2,450 man-hours to ensure a reasonable chance of success, but the work of the gods is rarely easy.)

subsequent Ki ratings are treated as additive modifiers to the first.

Consecration can also take place over a period of time (sometimes necessary for exceptionally difficult tasks). In this case, the consecration is treated as a continuous form contest between the character's Ki and the task difficulty. If the character is channeling the Ki needed for the consecration, then the time duration of the continuous form test of consecration must be equal or less than that of the continuous channeling test.

If consecration is successful, the object is now within the Deity's scope and can be acted upon directly (attributes can be changed, constraints imposed or eliminated, etc.) subject of course to the Deity's Ki.

Dancing with the Devil

A dilemma of trying to map functions of the spiritual world into the rational space of a simulation is that there is no rational basis for it in the first place. Without empirical data on the topic, how can one determine the nature of spiritual action? With those issues in mind, the author has chosen to map the AR model of Fast Action into the realm of the spiritual world. This may cause some Reality designers and GMs some consternation. The simple solution to this problem is to change, modify or rewrite these guidelines to match the necessity of one's Reality.

Spiritual action deviates from the Fast Action rules stated in the PRG in the following ways: Sns is substituted for Ini; SAct is substituted for Act; and Prj is used for all attacks and Ctr for all parries and dodges. The Round is probably best thought of as the same 2 seconds as in physical fast action, especially if the Reality allows for overlap between the physical and spiritual world. In cases where the spiritual action overlaps the physical, the physical reality will generally provide constraints on dimension and movement, except perhaps in cases of spiritual "hauntings" where the site of the haunting may be assumed to be part of the spirit's scope. In this case it may have total control over and

within its reality.

Aiua: Damage in the Non-Corporeal

The following mechanics are offered even more tentatively than the previous section, as the nature of spiritual damage is likely to vary wildly with differing visions of spiritual reality. In particular, the interactions of the Aiua, Angst, Fatigue, Hits, and Stress are likely to become the topics of heated discussion among reality designers. The author will attempt to sidestep this difficulty by stating possible interdependencies without making a definitive statement on the matter.

What is the nature of Spirit? How important is the soul to the existence of the body, and the body to that of the soul? What happens to the Soul when the body dies? How strongly are the Intellect and Personality linked to the physical world and how strongly are they linked to the spiritual? Below are some possible answers to these questions and some of the consequences of those answers.

Body and Soul are wholly interdependent. The Spirit and Body are so strongly intertwined that the one cannot exist without the other. In this paradigm, the Aiua does not represent a "soul" in the religious sense so much as a spiritual projection of the character's person. Imagine that the Physical and Spiritual aspects of the character are the two posts holding up the lintel of intelligence and personality. If either aspect is incapacitated or scrapped, the character is left as a partial person, an empty shell of either pure spirit or pure physicality.

Body and Soul are independent; Soul has priority. In this paradigm, the body is merely an extension of the Spirit into the physical world, or a vessel for the transportation and interaction on the physical plane. The Soul is the "real" character, and only attacks against Aiua have the ability to destroy the character. Incapacitation or scrap of the physical renders the spiritual character a free entity. Mental and psychosocial attributes

are linked to spiritual so the spirit retains the personality and mental capabilities of the character. The character's spirit might have the ability to project itself from its body and possess other vessels, occupied or otherwise. Incapacitation or scrap of the soul is the only way to truly destroy the character. Destruction of the Aiua results in an empty vessel; a physical husk that may still function normally, may still be physically healthy, but is a mental and psychosocial vegetable.

Body and Soul are independent; Body has priority. The spiritual aspect of the character is an addendum; a means of connecting with a spiritual realm that is beyond the character's physical nature. The body is the "real" character, and the brain houses the personality and intellect. The Spirit is an extensor, allowing the character to manipulate spiritual characteristics of reality. Just as the body can function after the loss of a hand or foot, the character can function after the destruction of the Aiua. Loss of Aiua may incur systemic damage such as stress and may well result in physical incapacitation or scrap, but if the character can survive the actual assault on the Aiua, then the danger of character death has passed. The magnitude of the sense of loss depends on the role that the spiritual realm has played in the character's life and the character's psychosocial attributes.

Body and Soul are independent and equal. Both the physical and spiritual components of the character are equally important, but the character can function with either intact. Destruction of one may incur systemic damage on the other, but if this is survived, the character still retains mental and psychosocial function. The sense of loss may be great and might have a dramatic impact on the character. This paradigm can result in some interesting situations for characters, both in the spiritual and psychosocial realms.