

Who Was Franz Bardon?

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Franz Bardon is one of the most important but least known occultists and magicians of the Twentieth Century. He is mainly known through four books he wrote which were published in the 1950's. Many have borrowed his techniques and terminology without giving him proper credit, sometimes unknowingly, but not always. I recommended his book "Initiation Into Hermetics" to a person who had studied occultism for some years. He was stunned to find that a teacher of his in the past had distributed Bardon's materials pretending he had written them himself.

Bardon was unusual in that he stressed practice and practicality above all else. Although his books contained lengthy theoretical sections, his emphasis was on the tangible, usable results of magickal training. His stated purpose was to give the serious student of magick the most complete and best possible magickal instruction obtainable outside of an occult lodge and without the benefit of a personal teacher. Did he succeed? The only way to judge is by trying his curriculum yourself.

Bardon's Life and Work

Bardon did not appear to be trying to create a legend about himself. The only self-references in his works are occasional attestations that he had himself tried this or that experiment or ritual. I can't resist comparing this to a much more famous magician of this century who wrote voluminously about his own life and adventures, and had no qualms about glorifying himself in so doing

According to his student and close friend Otti Votavova, Franz Bardon was the oldest of 13 children, and the only son of a very devout Christian mystic, Viktor Bardon. Although he had achieved a certain amount of spiritual advancement, Viktor felt that he was unable to obtain and advanced initiation, and prayed that he receive this blessing. The story is that an advanced soul entered the body of his son Franz to become Viktor's initiator.

In later life, Bardon became a stage magician who gained some fame in Germany in the 1920's and 1930's under the stage name "Frabato".

As Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party ascended to power in the 1930's various groups such as the O.T.O. and the Freemasons were banned and some of their members arrested. Otti Votavova avers that Hitler belonged to the legendary "FOCG" or "99 Lodge" of black magick, described in Frabato The Magician and Fire And Ice (see the bibliography). Apart from this, Hitler and some of his intimate friends were supposed to be members of the "Thule Order," which was the external instrument of a group of powerful Tibetan black magicians.

Arrest & Imprisonment by the 3rd Reich

Through the negligence of one of Bardon's disciples (who had not destroyed their correspondence as Bardon had ordered) the Nazis arrested and imprisoned them both in late 1941 or early 1942. While the prisoners were being whipped, the disciple lost his control and uttered a Qabalistic formula to immobilize the torturers. However, the effects of the formula were eventually canceled and the disciple was shot as revenge. Adolf Hitler offered Bardon high positions in the Third Reich under the condition that he help win the war with his magick. Bardon was further expected to reveal to Hitler the address of the other 98 of the 99 Lodges spread all over the world. When he refused to help, the Nazis cruelly tortured him. Among other things, they performed operations on Bardon without anesthesia, and forged iron rings around his ankles and fixed heavy iron balls to them.

After the war Bardon found, with the help of his magick abilities, that Hitler had escaped abroad. For fear of recognition, Hitler had undergone several of surgical operations on his face.

Dieter Ruggeberg (publisher of Bardon's books) makes this comment on the above statements: "So much for Otti Votavova's recital of facts. In the years of my acquaintance with her I was able to convince myself of her love of truth."

After regaining his freedom, Bardon recommenced his occult work and healing. It was apparently this last work that got him in trouble with the Czech authorities. They strongly discouraged this type of thing in the very repressive political climate of postwar Czechoslovakia.

Arrest and Death

Regarding Bardon's last years, Ruggeberg wrote to me as follows: "The profession of Bardon was natural healer. He was able to cure cancer until the 2nd degree, without steel and rays, only with his own medicine made from plants and treated with alchemical means. For this reason the doctors of the official medicine became very jealous, because they could not reach such success with their chemical and nuclear treatments. After the publication of his books in 1956, a number of people came from Germany to visit him. The doctors took this opportunity to accuse Bardon to be a spy from the West, and that was the reason he was arrested in 1958 in Opava, Czechoslovakia." Russian Communist ideologies, thus they persecuted free-thinkers, Gypsies, Jews, Freemasons and anyone interested in the occult or esoteric subjects.

Bardon died July 10th, 1958. What connection, if any, his death had with the arrest I have been unable to determine. If he was a professional stage magician in Germany in the 1920's and 1930's, we could assume that he was born roughly around the turn of the century, and thus would not have been very old at his death.

The Fraternity of Saturn

Bardon stoutly maintained that he was not a member of, nor under any obligations to a magickal lodge or order. However, some sources indicate that he was actually a member of the Fraternity of Saturn, an important occult lodge which flourished in Germany in the

early part of the 20th Century. During the ascent of the Nazi party, they closed or persecuted all Masonic, religious and occult organizations. They closed and banned the Fraternity of Saturn Lodge sometime between 1933 and 1937, but it was revived in 1950.

I have not yet been able to positively identify Bardon as a member of the Fraternity of Saturn. While recognizing the power and validity of sex magick, Bardon emphatically discourages the student from dabbling in it until he understands its full implications.

Franz Bardon's Writings

Each book follows a roughly similar pattern: a mainly theoretical exposition followed by practical instruction. Reading and understanding them is a challenge, as they have been translated from German-and possibly from Czechoslovakian before that-into non-idiomatic English.

Translational difficulties aside, one thing that makes an enduring impression is Bardon's evident sincerity. He insists frequently that he is doing as much as possible to transmit a system of occult development to the serious student who is either unable to find a teacher or work in a group. In line with this, he also frequently reiterates that he has personally performed such and such an experiment, ritual or procedure.

His Sources

Before describing some of Bardon's theories, it is good to keep in mind that many of the words he uses have different meanings in a mundane context and even in other occult systems. Impregnation, fluid, condenser, sphere - all have special meanings.

For instance, Bardon appears to have originated the concept of the so-called "fluid condenser." "Fluids" are magickal qualities, not fluids as we understand them in daily life, and are divided into "electric" and "magnetic" types. A "condenser" is a magick wand, mirror, or other device the magician crafts to "condense", or concentrate, these fluids. An example of preparing a fluid condenser is given later in this article.

Many of his occult ideas can be traced to earlier works, such as Eliphas Levi and Barrett's The Magus. Bardon also seems to have been familiar with Tibetan occultism, or at any rate the works of Alexandria David-Neel, whom he cites now and then, and from whom he does a fair amount of borrowing. He mentions, for example, kylichors (magickal diagrams), and tum-mo (the ability of Tibetan adepts to stay warm in freezing weather). The mental exercises Bardon prescribes, such as one-pointedness, watching the roaming of consciousness and so on, are commonplace in yogic and other occult works.

Although Bardon does not mention Crowley or any of his writings, "The Beast's" influence is present. Compare Crowley's famous dictum: "Love is the law, love under will" to Bardon's: "Love is the law, but love under a strong will."

Bardon's Theories: The Magickal Universe

Bardon postulates an energetic model of the universe modified from Far Eastern theories, including Taoism and Hindu cosmology. His "electric" and "magnetic" fluids compliment

each other in the same way that Yin and Yang do. These are clearly not the physicist's forces by the same names, but there is a certain analogy between them. "Magnetism" is a cool, negative force with a blue emanation; and "electricity" is a warm, positive force with a red emanation.

In *Initiation Into Hermetics* Bardon refers once to the "OR" and "OB" forces. My guess is that these might represent the "Red"(OR = "Odyle Rot") and "Blue" (Odyle Blau") or electric and magnetic fluids. Or perhaps they are adaptations of the OD and OB forces described in Eliphas Levi's *Transcendental Magic*. Whatever the scientific validity of this approach, it is certainly rich with suggestive possibilities.

Bardon's "od" or "odyle" energy, which Baron Karl von Reichenbach originally developed in the mid-1800's. The negative pole of a magnet, he claimed, appeared blue to persons with high psychic sensitivity and induced a feeling of coldness. The positive pole appeared red and had the property of warmth. He elaborated this theory into a highly complex system of occult anatomy and mysticism. Bardon usually called od "vital power" ["lebenskraft"], but once or twice reverts to the term "od."

Bardon teaches that each part of the body is governed by either the electric or the magnetic force, or it may be neutral. Disease is caused by parts being out of balance.

The Four Elements

Bardon made use of the ancient four elements - Fire, Earth, Air and Water - plus Akasha, or Quintessence. His attributions of the elements are essentially the same as those in other systems and books: Water for emotions, intuition; Fire for aggressiveness, passion, etc. In his view, the skillful magician was one who could manipulate the Elements to achieve desired effects. Of course, before the student could become master of the Elements, he had to harmonize and control the manifestations of all Elements in his own being.

Bardon taught that man was superior to all spirits, demons and angels in that only man was a "four-pole" being - that is, combining the energies of all the Elements . For instance, gnomes are strictly creatures of Earth, sylphs of Air and so forth. He cautioned the student to beware of tricks and deceptions on the parts of these creatures, who wished to capture a part of the human's soul.

In Bardon's words: "Any deliberate cause, may be such as a wish, a thought or any imagination created in this sphere together with the dynamic concentration of willpower, unshaken faith and fullest conviction is bound to be realized with the help of the elements... . "Consciousness knows neither time nor space, and is therefore an akasha principle. He also instructs the student to re-dissolve the akasha into the universe rather than keep it accumulated. In other words, the "magickal" frame of mind should not be the same as the everyday one.

Preparation of the Student

A pillar of Bardon's method is the point that the magician must be balanced in the Elements that make up his own being. A student with an excess or lack of any Element could not achieve great success, no matter how much work he does. An analogy would be

an auto engine: no matter how much fuel you feed to it, it can only generate so much if it is not properly tuned and balanced. After a point, the engine will either wear out quickly or fail if you attempt to make it perform beyond its limits. The difference with humans is that our limits are self-imposed.

Bardon also insists on the point that the student begin at the beginning and not skip any section of his training. The student must completely master each step before proceeding on to the next. Again, the analogy to other endeavors is clear. If magick is a skill like flying, then the student cannot neglect the study of airplanes, weather, safety, avionics and so forth, without serious difficulties in the future.

Finally, as many teachers say, the student must keep a complete and accurate record. Without this, it is hard to repeat successes and avoid repeating mistakes.

Outline of Bardon's Magickal Curriculum

Although Bardon divides his praxis into ten steps, these are somewhat arbitrary. Here is a summary of his main points:

1. Self-Analysis & Basic Exercises

As mentioned above, the student must work diligently on understanding and harmonizing the four Elements within his own being before doing any further occult work. Bardon prescribes several weeks of minute, mercilessly honest self-observation and recording of one's faults and failings. The student classifies each under the four Elemental categories to see which Elements are out of balance in his Self. A similar exercise classifies his virtues and strengths. Since the magician is to have control over all the Elemental worlds, he must not be unbalanced or have any obsessions that would impede his effectiveness, or allow weak spots that could cause his undoing.

2. Intermediate Concentration & Breathing

In the next step, the student strengthens his ability to concentrate and performs breathing exercises and the techniques of autosuggestion. Bardon regards these as the secret key to the subconscious.

Bardon distinguishes carefully between two kinds of breathing: Pulmonary (normal) and through the skin. This second type of breathing takes practice. The body can respire automatically, but the student needs to learn to control it, combine it with voluntary pulmonary breathing and selectively inspire the various Elements and Akasha.

3. Advanced Visualization Exercises & Element Manipulation

This step entails intense concentration on and visualization of increasingly more complex objects, and "inhaling" the Elements into the body. The student also learns the "loading," or charging, of talismans, rooms, or objects for protection, healing, or other purposes.

4. Accumulation of Elements & Rituals

In this part of the training the student, works to perfect the balancing and concentrating of Elementary energies in the students own and other persons's bodies. In Bardon's system, "rituals" are not what we normally think of as such, but rather mnemonics based on hand gestures, verbal formulas or visual keys. He claims that once you understand the energies properly, can recall an energy or

situation with merely a surreptitious hand gesture, a silent formula or a combination thereof.

5. Transplanting Consciousness & Levitation

This step consists of a graduated series of exercises to prepare the student for physical and astral levitation and astral travel, as a prelude to communication with astral beings. Communication with the astral world can either be active or passive. Passive techniques are simpler and safer, thus Bardon presents them first.

6. Introduction to Astral Beings & Astral Travel

Besides astral beings and travel, this chapter deals with the creation of non-physical beings for the magician's use. Bardon also discusses the perils of accidentally creating them. This inadvertent creation of phantasms which can attach to and parasitize the operator is a great danger for the dabbler in occultism. At this point, Bardon again insists that the student not skip any step in his development, in order to avoid this serious problem.

7. Development of Clairvoyance, Clairaudience & Other Abilities:

Creation of Elementaries

Bardon gives formulas for accessories such as special eye-baths and ear-plugs to aid in development of supersensory perception. He also discusses magick animation of pictures and statues.

8. "Fluid Condensers"

These are special tools which the magician creates to concentrate, store, and manipulate the electric and magnetic fluids. He gives fairly detailed instructions for making, charging and using these "condensers."

First, Bardon teaches that even minute quantities gold can add enormously to the accumulative power of any condenser. Thus, he recommends preparing a gold tincture to "charge" any condensers the student makes. The easiest way is to dissolve a gram of soluble gold chloride in 20 grams of distilled water. (Gold chloride is fairly expensive - about \$50 per gram.)

Here is an interesting example of Bardon's condensers: Put a handful of fresh or dry chamomile flowers into a pot. Pour enough cold water over them to cover them completely. Let the chamomile flowers boil for about 20 minutes. Cool them, but leave the lid on the pot and strain the decoction. Put this on the fire again and allow it to evaporate slowly until it weighs about 50 grams. A few drops more or less do not matter at all. Let the extract cool and, for better preservation, mix it with the same quantity (in this case 50 grams) of spirit or alcohol. (Remember to never use methyl or wood alcohol in any preparation meant to be used in or on the body.) To this mixture add about 10 drops of the gold tincture prepared above.

Bardon continues:

If you wish to use the condenser for your own purposes, you may still strengthen it, by adding a drop of your blood or sperm, if possible both together, on a swab of cotton wool, throw this afterwards without any scruples into the condenser and shake the lot well. Then, pour all, in a funnel, through filter paper or linen into a small bottle and keep it well corked in a cool and dark place, ready to use.

The magician can use these condensers in many ways: mixing them with liquids to drink, for anointing, mixing them with incense compounds, or pouring them in small bowls to collect and concentrate certain energies.

Any fluid condenser which has been prepared in this manner does not lose its efficiency even after many years. The condenser must be well shaken each time you are going to use it, the bottle is to be corked again after withdrawing some out

of it. In the same way you can prepare several universal condensers from Russian or genuine Chinese tea, from lily-blossoms-best are the white ones-popular leaves, alraune roots or mandragora roots, arnica montana, acacia flowers. Any simple fluid condenser, prepared from one plant is sufficient for normal use such as influencing through the elements, or developing the astral senses by means of the fluid condensers.

9. Magick Mirrors for Astral Travel & Healing

The magick mirror (of which the crystal ball is a species) is valuable for many experiments in clairvoyance, clairaudience and the like. After a brief description, Bardon lists many ways the magician can use it. He describes treatment of the sick using electro-magnetic fluids and the magickal loading of talismans, amulets and gems.

10. Elevation of the Spirit to Higher Levels

This chapter discusses the various ways the student should improve his spiritual qualities. Bardon wraps up with a discussion of several occult topics such as exteriorization, levitation, production of natural phenomena, suggestion, hypnosis, psychometry and long distance impregnation of rooms.

An amazing book on Communicating with Spirits

Bardon's second published work, *The Practice of Magical Evocation*, is a remarkable and unique work of nearly 500 pages. The first of its two parts is an exhaustive description of the many tools and apparatus the magician needs to work. The topics he treats include: The Magick Circle, Triangle, Censer, Mirror, Lamp, Wand, Sword, Dagger, Trident, Crown, Cap and Magus-Band. This book is much more ceremonially oriented than the first, which requires a minimum of apparatus. *The Practice of Magical Evocation* is a classic magickal grimoire, or instruction manual - probably one of the best ever written.

The second part of the book is a huge catalog of spirits or entities that the student is supposed to be able to contact after perfecting the techniques in the first book. A short paragraph accompanies most of the entries explaining the the specialty or purpose of the being and what skills, knowledge or advantage it can bring the occult practitioner. Bardon states several times that he has contacted all these entities himself and is writing what he knows in the first person. In fact, he says there are many more entities he has omitted, because of their unsuitability for beginners.

The names of these spirits are quite interesting. A few of them are the same as the corresponding names in the "classical" magickal traditional. His "72 spirits of the Mercury sphere" are exactly the 72 angels of the Schem-ha-mephorash. Some of them are oddly changed. For instance, "osrail" is clearly the same as "Azrael," and "Opollogon" appears to correspond to "Apollyon." These spirits are described in Barrett's *The Magus*, among other books. The changes in spelling may be due to the fact that Bardon originally wrote in Czechoslovakian or German. However, most of his other spirits I have been unable to trace. For instance, here are some of the spirits of the Mars sphere, none of which I can locate in other references: Rarum, Gibsir, Rahol, and Adica. These names may be from an obscure medieval grimoire, have different meanings in Czechoslovakian, or have some relation to his own Qabalistic system - but so far I have been unable to make such a connection.

Bardon's Unique Qabalistic System

After the second book, the coherence and organization of Bardon's work deteriorates noticeably. His third published work was *The Key to the True Qabalah*. His Qabalistic system depends on the sounds of the various letters of the alphabet. It's not clear that this was exhaustively thought out, since there are many alphabets in use (even among Western languages). Hebrew, Cyrillic and Arabic all have different alphabets, and some (Chinese) have no alphabet at all. He uses his Qabala somewhat differently than other occultists: he connects Qabalistic formulae to various processes (e.g., a vibration consisting of the sounds "KTM" is a formula to load a room for protections, "AAQ" is used for remote healing, etc.).

Bardon also uses his Qabalah as sort of shorthand: once the occultist has made contact with some planetary intelligence, for instance, he can re-contact the intelligence by using its "phone number" for simplicity.

Later Books of Rough Quality

It is clear that after the first two books, much less time or assistance was available for Bardon to get his work in print. Perhaps he was incarcerated or dead and unable to help with the editing. In any case, Bardon's production after this point declined rapidly. The next book was *Frabato the Magician* for which Bardon only had notes. In the English edition, the publisher added extensive notes to indicate that the book (and appended material) is, in essence, Bardon's unedited notes. However, this is an intriguing occult novel somewhat along the lines of those of Dion Fortune.

Franz Bardon Today

A few years ago, an enthusiastic student started the "Franz Bardon Foundation" in Denver, Colorado. He showed his devotion to the "Magus Guru", as he called Bardon, by changing his name to "Jim Bardon." For a time, I subscribed to this newsletter, which was 4 or 8 pages and issued a few times a year. The newsletter was, I am sure, a sincere effort and often had interesting and useful ideas. Unfortunately, it also included much peripheral material that seemed to have no direct connection with Bardon's works. Each issue repeated much of the same information about "Jim Bardon's" predictions of major recessions and at least one world war between 1989 and 2005. I'm not sure if the recent Persian Gulf war would qualify. There is nothing in Franz Bardon's own writings that would support these theories. Furthermore, Jim Bardon, in his bulletins also advertised his own publications, astrological service and hermetic training.

I lost contact with him when he raised the yearly subscription for his newsletter from \$25.00 to \$50.00 - in order, he said, to separate the sincere from the frivolous. Apparently Mr. Bardon's Foundation is still in existence. A classified ad in a recent issue of Llewellyn's *New Times* gives a phone number for it in Seattle, Washington.

Summary of Franz Bardon and Editorial

Perhaps it is unfair to make such comparisons, but it is interesting to contrast Franz Bardon's works with those of the other great magickal teacher of the century,

Aleister Crowley. Although when the spirit moved him, Crowley could be intensely disciplined, kind and helpful to his students and magnanimous, he also enjoyed a life filled with sex, drugs, alcohol and bon vivant - all of which are integral parts of his magickal philosophy. Crowley was continually heaping praise on himself, excoriating those he felt were beneath him, discarding students as unworthy, and continuously justifying his behavior. He praised strength and sneered at weakness. Crowley's writing are full of literary practical jokes, insults to the reader's intelligence, and deliberate deceptions.

Bardon represented almost everything that Crowley was not. He appeared to be patient, devout, non-judgmental and earnest. He insisted that only through balance and purging of excesses could one achieve success in magick. And (though this probably reflects my personal biases), it seems that Bardon's reticence and cautionary tone concerning sexual magick is a much more reasonable attitude than Crowley's, especially for beginners.

Certainly not one occultist in a thousand has made good use of sex magick, whereas an unfortunately large number have become obsessed, or worse. How many people have you heard of who have improved themselves through sex magick? But it's certainly a heck of a lot more fun than the drudgery of discipline. Similar observations apply to students whose magickal work revolves around the use of intoxicants and narcotics.

I feel that Bardon does deliver what he promises: detailed magickal instruction for the diligent and serious student who, for whatever reason, cannot or will not attach to a magickal order or group. It is sometimes a challenge to penetrate the mediocre translations of his works, but with supplementary magickal study things do become clear.

Bibliography

Works by Franz Bardon

Der Weg zum Wahren Adepten (1st ed. 1956).

Die Praxis der Magischen Evokation (1st ed. 1956).

Der Schluessel zur Wahren Qabalah (1st ed. 1957).

Frabato: Ein Okkulter Roman (1st ed. 1979).

Initiation into Hermetics (1st English ed. 1962).

The Practice of Magical Evocation (1st English ed. 1967).

The Key to the True Qabalah (1st English ed. 1971). The formulas mentioned above, to immobilize one's enemies, are in this book under the headings "E-M" and "E-N."

Frabato the Magician (1st English ed. 1971). This is an "occult novel" which Bardon's student and friend Otti Votavova claimed was based on true events. This edition also contains fragments from a work that Bardon was never able to complete. Published under the title "the Golden Book of Wisdom" and an unpublished tract titled "High Magic."

Other Related Works

The dates given after the titles are the years of first English publication. Most of the works listed below have been reprinted in various formats, some many times.

Barret, Francis, *The Magus*, London (1801), offers information on "classical" demonology.

Blatter fur Lebenskunst, August 1956, p.3.

Cavendish, Richard, ed., *Man, Myth and Magic* (1970). See articles on "Magnetism" and "Double" for information on Baron Von Reichenbach's theories.

David-Neel, Alexandra, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1931) and *Initiation and Initiates in Tibet* (1932). Bardon refers to these in a few places.

Flowers, S. Edred (pseud. of S. Edred Thorsson), *The Fraternity of Saturn* (1990). This is surprisingly good. It is well documented and relatively sane. Of course, in order to sell the books, it emphasizes the sexual magick aspect of the Fraternity of Saturn.

Howe, Ellic, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (1972). See p. 282, Note 1, on the banning of the Fraternity of Saturn.

King, Francis, *Sexuality, Magic and Perversion: The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.* (1973), *The Magical World of Aleister Crowley* (1977). Although long on sensationalism, King's works are usually reliable and relatively well-documented.

Levi, Eliphas (pseud. of Alphonse Louis Constant, transl. by A.E.Waite), *Transcendental Magic* (1896). This is an English edition of *Dogme de la Haute Magic* (1855) and *Rituel de la Haute Magic* (1856).

Ruggeberg, Dieter, letter to the author, Oct 28, 1988. Herr Ruggeberg, the longtime publisher of Bardon's books in English, wrote this in response to a query for more information about Bardon's life.

von Reichenbach, Baron Karl, *Physico-Physiological Researches on the Dynamics of Magnetism*, (1850, 1851) and *The Odic Force: Letters on Od and magnetism*, (1926, reprinted 1968).

Wilson, Colin, *The Occult* (1971) offers information on von Reichenbach's theories.