



BRILL

ARIES 9.2 (2009) 175–194



ARIES

www.brill.nl/aries

Ramon Lull's New World Order: Esoteric Evangelism and Frontline Philosophy¹

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke

Exeter Centre for the Study of Esotericism (EXESES0)

University of Exeter

Abstract

Raimundo Lullo e il nuovo ordine mondiale: evangelismo esoterico e filosofia militante

Tra le sue numerose conquiste, il poeta, romanziere, linguista e missionario e mistico catalano Raimondo Lullo (1232–1316) deve la sua fama soprattutto alla sua celebre Arte, un sistema di produzione logico e metafisico. Nelle intenzioni di Lullo, tale Arte doveva servire come evangelo esoterico per Cristiani, Ebrei e Musulmani attraverso l'istituzione di una forma di conoscenza assoluta e indipendente dall'autorità dottrinale. La forma esoterica di evangelismo cristiano elaborata da Lullo traeva ispirazione da varie fonti del Neoplatonismo cristiano, del Sufismo, della filosofia musulmana e forse della Kabbalah presenti nella Spagna del tardo XIII secolo. Il pensiero lulliano, nutritosi in questo modo di una varietà di tradizioni, offre un perfetto esempio medievale di come diverse correnti dell'esoterismo occidentale potessero trovare un'armonizzazione e una concordanza. La sua concordanza puntava a fungere da strumento missionario per la conversione al Cristianesimo di Musulmani e Mongoli, in un'epoca di grave instabilità globale. L'Arte lulliana esemplifica l'esoterismo occidentale in fusione di una specifica finalità politica, che investiva l'evangelismo e l'impegno militante. La sua visione di un nuovo ordine globale presentava tratti decisamente profetici se considerati nell'attuale contesto di rinascita dell'Islam.

Keywords

Ramon Lull; concordance; Christianity; Sufism; Neoplatonism; Kabbalah; Islam; Mongols

¹ I am grateful to the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice and Edizioni Medusa, Milan for granting me permission to publish this original version of a lecture delivered at the "Forme e correnti dell'esoterismo occidentale" conference at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 30 October 2007, and published in Italian as 'Raimundo Lullo e il nuovo ordine mondiale: evangelismo esoterico e filosofia militante', in Alessandro Grossato (ed.), *Forme e correnti dell'esoterismo occidentale* (Viridarium 5), Milan: Edizioni Medusa 2008, 71–91.

Among his many achievements the Catalan poet, novelist, linguist, missionary and mystic Ramon Lull (1232–1316) is best known for his famous Art, a productive system of logic and metaphysics.² Lull intended his Art to serve as an esoteric evangel among Christians, Jews and Moslems by positing an absolute form of knowledge independent of doctrinal authority. Lull's esoteric form of Christian evangelism drew on varied sources of Christian Neoplatonism, Sufism, Moslem philosophy, and possibly Kabbalah in late twelfth-century Spain. Thus resourced by multiple traditions, Lull's thought offers a fine medieval example of how different currents of Western esotericism could be harmonized and brought into concordance, thereby anticipating a classic feature of Renaissance esoteric philosophy.³

Western esotericism has been characterised as the combination of Alexandrian Hermeticism, Neoplatonism and related religious philosophies of late antiquity and the traces each has left in the three Abrahamic religions. This combination of legacies was intrinsic to Ramon Lull's late medieval project for inter-faith dialogue. His concordance was intended to produce a logical and metaphysical system to act as a missionary instrument for the conversion of the Moslems and the Mongols to Christianity at a time of acute global instability in the late thirteenth century. In this sense, Lull's Art exemplifies the form and content of Western esotericism in relation to an explicit political purpose, involving evangelism and a frontline battle for hearts and minds. The eclecticism and coherence of Lull's concordance also help explain the durabil-

² The standard modern work in English on Lull is Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France*. Other recent scholarship includes Frances A. Yates' more specialized studies in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* (see infra) and Robert Pring-Mill's many studies in Spanish and two in English. Literary studies of Lull before the Second World War were led by Peers, *Ramon Lull* and his translations of Lull's *Blanquerna* and other works. More recent analyses of Lull's logic include Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull* and Charles H. Lohr's numerous monographs and articles. The Ramon Llull Database (Centre de Documentació Ramon Llull) is maintained at Barcelona and on-line by Anthony E. Bonner, who has published the two-volume *Selected Works of Ramon Llull and Doctor Illuminatus*.

³ Western esotericism here denotes Antoine Faivre's identification of philosophical currents characterised by a cosmology of an animated or ensouled universe, linked by hierarchical orders of intermediaries and correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, and by a spiritual psychology of imagination and the transmutation of the soul whereby the human mind reflects this cosmos. Such a cosmology first emerged as philosophical systems in Hellenistic Alexandria as Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, with derivative sciences of alchemy, astrology and magic. It survived in mystical currents of Eastern Christianity, then passed through Arab and Byzantine transmission to the medieval Latin West, before its

ity of his reputation, firstly in the proliferation of pseudo-Lullian alchemy in the Renaissance, and then the survival of his knowledge system into modernity as a model for computational theory and logic machines. Lull's esoteric concordance, his mission to the Moslems, and his vision of a new global order are highly prescient in the present context of resurgent Islam.

Geopolitical Survey from 600 to 1300

The Eurasian world of Ramon Lull in the thirteenth century was essentially a threefold international order, involving Christendom, Islam and the Mongols. Global security and international peace was one of Lull's objects in his quest for a unifying, absolute knowledge, so it is helpful to review the balance of powers, their origins and prospects in his own era.

Christianity was the dominant religion and culture of Western and Eastern Europe. Christendom had been first divided by the differing fates of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) and the barbarian invasions and destruction of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. Cut off from Byzantium, the successor Germanic kingdoms had made their own way as early Christian states until Charlemagne (742–814), king of the Franks, was crowned emperor of a new Holy Roman Empire by Pope Leo III in 800. This created a parallel imperial jurisdiction and the rift between the emperors and popes in Rome and Byzantium grew wider until the great schism of 1054 between the Latin West and the Orthodox churches of the Greek East. Islam prevailed across the southern and eastern Mediterranean territories embracing the Asia Minor, the Levant, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Andalusia.

Whereas Christianity was the religious and political legacy of Hellenism and the Roman Empire since the late fourth century in Europe and the Near East, Islam was a relatively more recent force. The seventh century had witnessed the rapid expansion of Islam as a militant religion of the Arab tribes under the first four caliphs (632–661) into the Sassanid empire of Mesopotamia and Persia in the East and across Africa. After crossing the Straits of Gibraltar in 711, Moslem armies invaded Spain in the West with further conquests under the Ommayad caliphs (661–750), until they were checked by Charles Martel, king of the Franks, at Tours in 732. During the rise of the Abbasid caliphate

reformulation in the Renaissance as a referential esoteric corpus of literature based on the concordance of Hermeticism, Neoplatonism and Christian Cabala. Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, 4–15.

(750–1258), Baghdad had become the dominant world centre of learning, science and medicine, assimilating and developing the creative genius and expertise of the Hellenistic world and Persia under Moslem rule.

Following settlement and consolidation, the Ommayad emirate, later caliphate, of Cordoba (929–1031) in Spain represented the western beacon of Islam projecting its achievements in the arts, philosophy and science northwards into the Latin West. However, the Christian *reconquista* from the eleventh century onwards led to the establishment of the Catholic kingdoms of Leon, Castille, Navarre and the Crown of Aragon in the northern part of the Iberian peninsula, while the fissile nature of Islamic sovereignty led to the disintegration of the Ommayad caliphate. Its small states were then overwhelmed by the Almorávides and Almohádes Moors from northwestern Africa from 1083 onwards. The Almorávides (1056–1171) and Almohádes (1140–1269) empires perpetuated Moslem rule and culture across southern and central Spain well into the mid-thirteenth century, by which time a further retreat of Islam was evident. The *reconquista* continued with further enormous Christian gains to the kingdom of Castile and the Crown of Aragon, the kingdoms of Valencia and Majorca up to 1230.

Meanwhile, Moslem power in the East had been strengthened by the arrival of the Seljuks, a Turkic people from the northern steppes converted to Islam, who became protectors of the Abbasid caliphate in 1055, destroyed a Byzantine army in 1071 and advanced into Anatolia and Syria. The Seljuks waged a war of conversion and threatened access to Christian pilgrims, thus provoking the First Crusade. However, their empire stretching from their capital Konia to Central Asia, from Armenia to the Persian Gulf restored Islamic unity and revived its arts and commerce. However, within two centuries Islam suffered a massive onslaught from the Mongols, whose hordes had first swept across Asia from Karakorum in 1219–1220 under their first chieftain Genghis Khan († 1227). The great trading cities of Bukhara, Merv and Samarkand were torched to ashes in days, entire populations of men, women and children slain. The Mongols had overrun Persia by 1231, destroyed southern Russia in 1236–1238, and ravaged Poland, Silesia and Hungary in 1241. The Mongol cavalry raids and battle-trains were the latest force in global politics, terrible in their speed and destructiveness. Advancing into the Near East, the Mongols now represented an enormous challenge to European and Moslem security. The successor khanates of Ghagatai and the Golden Horde occupied Central Asia and southern Russia, while the Ilkhan empire took over Asia Minor, Georgia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia, sacking Baghdad in 1258 and finally destroying the Abbasid caliphate. A century later, Tamerlane emerged from Samarkand to

resume the Mongol scourge of the Middle East, establishing a massive empire from Syria to India throughout the fourteenth century while Moslem power in the East was reduced to the Mameluke sultanate (1250–1517) in Egypt and the Levant. Moslem sovereignty also dwindled in the West to the rump Almohádes kingdom of Granada, which would finally fall to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain in 1492.

Articulated in the frontier zone of the western Mediterranean between Christendom and Islam, Lull's esoteric evangelism was not solely directed at the conversion of the Moslems to Christianity but addressed the much wider and pressing issue of rampant Mongol power across Eurasia in the late thirteenth century.

Ramon Lull's Life and Works: An overview

Ramon Lull was born in 1232 in Cuitat de Majorca (now Palma) in the Kingdom of Majorca, which had only been recovered from the Moorish powers two years earlier. The population was still one-third Moors with a strong Jewish presence ever since the diaspora first settled under the Roman empire. Nowadays a sunny holiday island destination for the working populations of northern Europe, Majorca was in the medieval age of sail a major mercantile, banking, insurance and shipping centre for persons and goods travelling within the western Mediterranean and for longer voyages from the Byzantine ports and Moslem world. Majorca lay at the centre of a commercial and intellectual network that reached from the Crown of Aragon, to Pisa and Genoa, to the Papal States and Sicily. The Kingdom of Majorca itself covered an incongruous territory comprising the Balearic Islands of Majorca, Menorca and Ibiza, the land of Roussillion in the eastern Pyrenees with a capital in Perpignan, and the city-state of Montpellier.⁴

Lull was born into a landed family, ultimately inheriting the estate recently conferred upon his father for services rendered during the victorious Christian expedition in 1229 of James the Conqueror (1208–1276), King of Aragon, Count of Barcelona and Lord of Montpellier, against the Almohádes Moors in the Balearic Islands. Ramon also had good connections to the dynasty and was married in 1257 to Blanca Picany, a relative of Prince James (1243–1311), the younger son of James the Conqueror, who became King James II of Majorca in

⁴ The political background is drawn in Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 58–103. For studies of the confessional groups and their relations, see Hames, *Jews, Muslims and Christians In and Around the Crown of Aragon*.

1243. As a wealthy young Majorcan landlord, Lull led a sensual life with few constraints. He composed poetry in his native Catalan tongue and became a troubadour, travelling widely and indulging the fashion for courtly love. By his own account, Lull led a dissipated life until 1263 when, on five different occasions, he beheld the vision of Jesus Christ crucified, which brought about his conversion and a vision of vocation. A later account in the *Breviculum* of Ramon describes this vocation:

O Holy Virgin Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are closer to the vision of your Son and more elevated in the empyrean heaven than all the saints! Here on this earth, where you are greatly honoured, called upon and sought out by so many pilgrims, I, your pilgrim, come to you with my vows, which I intend to pursue during my whole lifetime in this world, for the honour and praise of your Son and his holy law and doctrine. Our most compassionate advocate, obtain from your Son that it may please him if certain things needed by the Christian clergy in this world were supplied through my vow, namely, to make an Art, by the generosity of your great wisdom, whereby the truth of the divinity of your Son and of his holy law and doctrine could be demonstrated to unbelievers through necessary reasons. Secondly that devoted men of letters be found who know well the said Art which I propose to make, guided by the action of your Son's grace. Third, that the pope, the emperors, the kings, the princes and barons provide places where these men of letters can learn the Arabic and Hebrew languages, so that their voice may go out throughout the whole world, preaching the truth of your law, and that protected passage be granted universally to the said men of letters, and that spiritual weapons as well as the deterrence of corporeal weapons serve to establish agreement between Christians and Saracens, so that the clergy of both come together in agreement on what the truth is, because they are already so close to each other.⁵

Initially unsure how to pursue his newfound vocation of philosophical study and missionary work, Lull went on a pilgrimage in 1265 to Rocamadour and Santiago de Compostella. At Barcelona he met Raymond of Penyafort who advised him to conduct his studies in Majorca rather than at the schools of Paris. Lull then bought a Moor slave to teach him Arabic and began nine years of linguistic and philosophical self-education. In identifying Lull's sources of learning, it is significant that his scholarly studies were primarily conducted in Arabic and that he knew little if any Latin. Lull's principal object was to develop an Art or system of knowledge, by means of which he could prove the divinity of Christ and the truth of Christian doctrine to the heathen, as he called the Moslems, to write an exposure of infidel errors, and to promote the teaching

⁵) Latin caption in first miniature translated in Lull, *Breviculum*, 283–288, 311–356.

of foreign tongues in seminaries in order to advance his missionary objects. In 1271–1274 Lull published his first works, *Logica d'Algatzell* and *The Book of Contemplation*. After the death of his slave in 1274, Lull neglected his practical affairs to such an extent that, at the request of his wife and family, an official was appointed to administer his estate in 1275. He withdrew to Mount Randa, a peak in the centre of the island, where he underwent a further illumination and wrote the first version of his Art (*Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem*). He next visited Montpellier on the mainland, where he persuaded James II of Majorca to build a Franciscan monastery to train missionaries on the island. In 1276 a papal bull confirmed the foundation of monastery of Miramar on the northwestern coast near Deja, financed by the king, where thirteen Franciscan monks would study Arabic and the Art. Lull acted as professor of Arabic and philosophy at Miramar for ten years, composing many controversial treatises.

In 1283 (*aet.* 51), Lull set himself to write various works, including the novel *Blanquerna*, which contains *The Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, a mystical text which earned him the reputation of a Christian sufi. After a visit to the papal court at Rome in 1287 to drum up further support for his work, frustrated by the recent death of Pope Honorius IV, he journeyed on to Paris, where he met King Phillip IV (the Fair) of France. Lull remained at Paris until 1289 expounding his Art, but his teaching at the university was a failure, since the educated schoolmen were as much amazed by his lack of Latin language as they were bewildered by his arcane theories of knowledge. In 1289 Lull returned to Montpellier, and reformulated his Art in the *Ars veritatis inventiva*. In 1292 he dedicated his first work on the Crusades to Pope Nicholas IV.

A crisis arose in 1293 at Genoa where Lull agonized over whether to enter a monastery, but he decided on missionary action in the Islamic world and sailed for Tunis where he publicly preached Christianity to the Moslems for a year, before he was finally imprisoned and expelled. In January 1293 he reached Naples where tradition alleges that he studied alchemy, an apocryphal reference based on the many pseudo-Lullian alchemical works composed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In 1294 and 1295 he travelled between Naples, Majorca, Barcelona and Rome, but his efforts to interest Pope Clement V and Boniface VIII in his favorite project of establishing further missionary colleges were unavailing. He visited Paris again in 1297, dedicating his *Tree of Philosophy of Love* to the king and queen of France, but was disappointed in his main object. In 1299 at Barcelona, however, his efforts bore fruit as he received permission from King James II of Aragon to teach in all the synagogues and mosques within the kingdom. Incensed at news of renewed Mongol attacks in the Near East in 1301, he sailed to Cyprus to expand his plan of teaching

oriental languages for missionary purposes in the East. He journeyed onwards to Lesser Armenia (Gulf of Iskenderun) and possibly reached Jerusalem. At Barcelona he received grants from the king and at Montpellier he attended a meeting between Pope Clement V and the kings of Aragon and Majorca. In 1305 he wrote his famous *Liber de ascensu et decensu intellectus*, which summarised a Christian Neoplatonic gradation of cognitive levels.

In his quest for an absolute knowledge capable of persuading by reason, Lull combined Moslem philosophy (his first formal education) with Christian Neoplatonism, and possibly Jewish mystical sources in order to produce an ideology that could unite the three creedal religions and ultimately convert the Mongols. His first goal remained the conversion of the Moslems and in 1307 he crossed over the Mediterranean a second time to Bougie (Bejaia) in Africa to engage in philosophical discussion and preach the gospel, and was imprisoned there for six months before expulsion. On being released he wrote the *Arts brevis* at Pisa in 1308 and at Marseilles he met the notable alchemist Arnold of Villanova (1240–1311). From 1309 to 1311 he lectured with increasing success at Paris and attended the General Council at Vienne (1311), where his proposals were nominally adopted. Although nearly eighty years old, Lull's zeal was unabated. He carried on his propaganda at Majorca, Paris, Montpellier and Messina, and in 1314 crossed over once more to Africa. At Bougie he resumed his philosophical crusade against Islam, but his measured discourse only provoked the quick fanaticism of the Moslems.⁶ He was stoned by an angry crowd outside the city walls and died of his wounds either on his return voyage or in Majorca on the 29 June 1315. He was buried at the Church of San Francisco, Palma.

The circumstances of Lull's death caused him to be regarded as a martyr, Majorcan patriotism helped to magnify his merits, and his esoteric doctrines found many enthusiastic partisans. The *doctor illuminatus* was venerated throughout Catalonia, and afterwards throughout Spain, as a saint, a thinker and a poet. However, his doctrines were disapproved by the powerful Dominican order, and in 1376 they were formally condemned in a papal bull issued at the instance of the inquisitor, Nicolas Emeric. The authenticity of this document was warmly disputed by Lull's followers, and the bull was annulled by Pope Martin V in 1417. The controversy was renewed in 1503 and again in 1578. The general support of the Jesuits and the staunch fidelity of the Majorcans saved Lull from condemnation. His originality lies in his Arabic sources

⁶ Miniatures IX and X in Lull, *Breviculum*, op.cit.

of philosophy and other eclectic inspiration and his break with the scholastic system. The subtle ingenuity of his dialectic has compelled the admiration of men so far apart in opinion as Giordano Bruno and Gottfried Leibniz. Lull was beatified by Pope Benedict XIV in 1750, and his cult confirmed by Pope Pius IX in 1847.

The Art of Ramon Lull: The Quest for Absolute and Universal Knowledge

Lull considered his Art as a transcendental method of production, meant to provide, not an Aristotelian abstract science (as in Latin Scholasticism), but rather an Aristotelian productive art as developed in the Arabic tradition that he had learnt though studying Arabic literature and philosophy from his Moor slave. By learning Arabic, Lull had privileged access to this kind of logic and the production of *maxima*, perfections which are infinite or approaching infinity. He believed that these provided proofs beginning not with propositions as in Aristotelian methods of proof, but taking concepts as the principles of a new generalised discipline applicable to all realms of knowledge and nature (cosmos). Concepts called *dignitates* (Latin) or *axiomata* (Greek) were neither axioms in the sense of an Aristotelian science, nor the transcendentals (cf. *unum, verum, bonum*) of St Thomas Aquinas, but the beginnings or roots of successful productive action. Lull's Art is a method of production corresponding to God's great work of art in Creation.⁷ Why was the Art so important? Lull believed he had discovered a method of thinking which was infallible because it was based on a spiritual logic based on the absolute structure of reality which followed the true pattern of the universe. It was the application of logic in the theological sphere capable of demonstrating the truth of the Incarnation and the Trinity to unbelievers. As a logical method, it was applicable in law, medicine, and science. It was truly a cosmic knowledge. It was also based on something that engaged the strong interest of Moslems: geometry and Neo-Pythagorean ideas corresponding to these basic signs. Lull would develop a very powerful logic based on the forms of geometry and *mathesis* to produce a qualitative science which does not need content: the circle equating to the Heavens, the square equating to the Elements, and the triangle equating to the Trinity.⁸

⁷ This discussion of Lull's Art is indebted to the masterly presentation in Yates, 'The Art of Ramon Lull', 115–173.

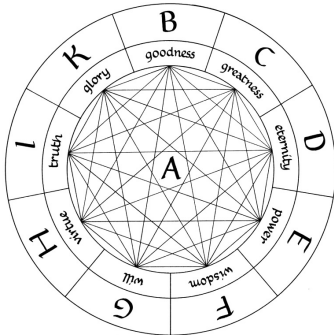
⁸ The logic of Lull's Art is extensively analysed in Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Lull*, and in Charles H. Lohr's numerous studies.

As Lull's Art progressed through several stages, the quaternary, ternary and short, he finally named nine such principles, dignities or axioms: *bonitas* (goodness), *magnitudo* (greatness), *duratio* (eternity or duration), *potentia* (power), *sapientia* (wisdom), *voluntas* (will), *virtus* (virtue), *veritas* (truth), *gloria* (glory), attributing to them an alphabetical sequence BCDEFGHIJK, which letters could enter a logical machine that enabled them to be computed with a system of algebra, again derived from Arabic system. These were paralleled by questions and rules.

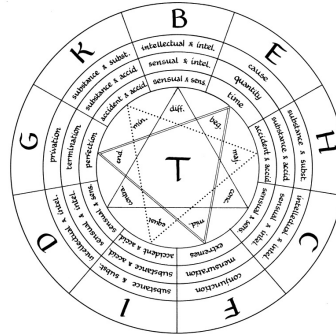
	<i>Fig. A</i>	<i>Fig. T</i>	<i>Questions and Rules</i>	<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Virtues</i>	<i>Vices</i>
B	goodness	difference	whether?	God	justice	avarice
C	greatness	concordance	what?	angel	prudence	gluttony
D	eternity	contrariety	of what?	heaven	fortitude	lust
E	power	beginning	why?	man	temperance	pride
F	wisdom	middle	how much?	imaginative	faith	accidie
G	will	end	of what kind?	sensitive	hope	envy
H	virtue	majority	when?	vegetative	charity	ire
I	truth	equality	where?	elementative	patience	lying
K	glory	minority	how? and with what?	instrumentative	pity	inconstancy

As everything in the natural world of second causes required a logical explanation, so Lull's system matched questions such as "Whether?", "What?", "Of What?", "Why?", "How Much?", "What Kind of?", "When?", "Where?", "How?" or "With What?" with these dignities. Similarly, correspondences were derived for a scale of metaphysical and cognitive states from God, through the angels, planets, and man and so through descending realms of imagination and animal sensitivity, to vegetative, elemental, and instrumental levels of being. A further scale offered moral correspondences with nine virtues and nine vices. With this system, enormous computations are possible. In his most simple and final edition of the Art, Lull stressed two basic circular figures, with which these correspondences could be generated by moving the annular rings and the points of the triangle around.

The first Figure (A) arranged the dignities in a circle with nine points around the centre marked as A. The Figure (T) of the *Ars Brevis*, the most simplified version of his Art, involved the triangle of the Trinity turning around the circle of the heavens against the square of the four elements. In his *Ars demonstrativa*, the triangle turned round to demonstrate certain propositions within a plethora of complicated computational boxes. What were the sources of Lull's inspiration and, most importantly, the applications to the historical situation in which he found himself? As Frances Yates has shown in her thorough analy-



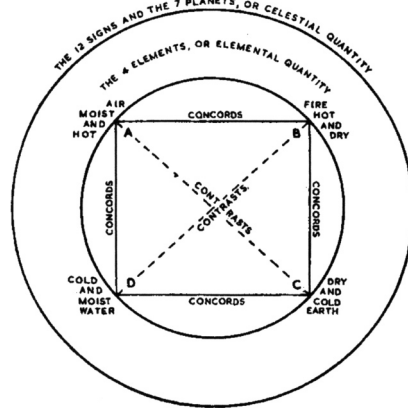
The First Figure.



The Second Figure.

Figures A and T

sis, Lull’s logical system combines concords and contrasts with the Aristotelian elements of Air, Water, Fire, and Earth, Aristotelian humours and qualities:⁹



Lullian Concords, Contrasts and the four elements

But the Art is also a work of both logic and metaphysics. In the *Breviculum*, Ramon Lull presents his ladder of logic showing the nine questions of cause, time and space.¹⁰ This ladder of logical questions and solutions is shown to

⁹⁾ Yates, ‘The Art of Ramon Lull’, Fig. 2, p. 149.

¹⁰⁾ Miniature V in Lull, *Breviculum*, op.cit.

correspond with a metaphysical order of being in his *Liber de ascensu and descensu intellectus*, a hierarchy of ascent through the lower states through *animal sensitiva*, *imaginatio* to *homo* and on through the *coelium* and *angelus*, to *deus*.¹¹ Here Ramon Lull is weaving his circle of logical and natural relations onto a ladder of ascent and descent throughout the nine orders of perception and logical understanding, except this vertical axis implies more than logic in a metaphysical hierarchy.

Lull thus presented a model of Aristotelian logic combined with a Neoplatonic metaphysical order of being. If the dignities or principles BCDEFGHJK were the *absoluta*, divine attributes, subjects of a ladder, so germane to esoteric systems, then A was the unmoved mover at the centre, which Lull identified as the Trinity. The dignities BCDEFGHIK are divine attributes, each arising through the primitive elemental world (*elementativa*), stones, through vegetable world (*vegetativa*), the animal world (*sensitiva*), into the human world (*homo*), and thence through the celestial world (*coelum*) and to the angelic and Divine worlds (*angelus*, *Deus*).

The Esoteric Sources of Lull's Inspiration

Lull's initial training in Arabic language and philosophy, his background in Majorca, so recently liberated after centuries of Moslem rule and acculturation, together with long-standing Jewish influences in medieval Spain, offer a potential treasury of eclectic influences in his elaboration of esoteric philosophy. These various influences will be discussed under four principal headings: (i) Sufism; (ii) Jewish Kabbalah; (iii) Moslem philosophy and its mediation of Greek Neoplatonism; and (iv) Christian Neoplatonism.

According to the leading Arabic scholars (*Arabistas*) of interwar Spain, Julian Ribera y Tarrago and Miguel Asin y Palacios, Lull was effectively a Christian Sufi, whose thought and works indicated the strong influence of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240), the Islamic Sufi mystic and saint.¹² Born in Murcia, Spain, then within the Almohádes Moorish empire, Ibn 'Arabi had studied in Andalusia and North Africa, where he encountered other Sufis and experienced mystical visions. Around 1202 he moved east and settled in Damascus, Syria. As the author of the 12-volume *al-Futubat al-Makkiyah* (*Meccan Revelations*), he created a monumental synthesis of Sufi doctrine, while his *Fusus al-Hikam* combined classical Sufism with Neoplatonism and

¹¹ Lull, *Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus*.

¹² Olabarrieta, *The Influence of Ramon Lull on the Style of the Early Spanish Mystics*, 6–11.

Islamic theology. Ibn 'Arabi wrote over 280 works and was renowned as a poet, "El-Akbar" ("The Greatest Sheikh") and one of the great Sufis of the Middle Ages. According to the *Arabistas*, it is very likely that Lull assimilated much of his thought from Ibn 'Arabi's works, mediated through his study. One recalls that Lull learnt philosophy from Arabic sources and knew little Latin. His philosophical system was anticipated by Ibn 'Arabi's *al-Futuhāt*, while the *absoluta* of the "Dignities" closely related to Ibn 'Arabi's idea of *hadarat* ("presences"). Finally, most convincingly, Lull composed his major work, the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, in imitation of Sufi poetry.¹³

Jewish Kabbalah provides another potential source of Lull's esoteric thought. Kabbalah had only recently emerged as a distinct current of Jewish mystical philosophy in Provence in the late twelfth century. The *Sefer ha-Bahir* had introduced the Tree of Life as a cosmological hierarchy of *sefira* (spheres) alongside Merkabah mysticism, a Jewish version of the Gnostic idea of powers of God concealed within the Divine Glory (*Kavod*). Isaac the Blind (fl. 1190–1220) of Narbonne had practised meditation on the *sefira*, and attracted many Jewish disciples in Provence and northern Spain. This early phase led to the School of Gerona in Catalonia, more theosophical and neoplatonizing, whose representatives were Asher ben David, Azriel, Ezra ben Solomon, Nachmanides (b. c. 1195). There followed a School of Segovia in Castile, as a Gnostic reaction, with Jacob of Segovia, Moses ben Simon of Burgos, Todras ben Joseph Halevi Abulafia (c. 1234–1305). Finally, in Lull's time, came a new movement of ecstatic Kabbalah, combining currents of German Hasidim with Sufism from the East, whose best known practitioners were Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia (1240–1292), sometime at Barcelona, and his pupil Joseph Gikatilla ben Abraham (fl. 1260).¹⁴

Moshe Idel has offered some tantalizing pieces of evidence to suggest that Lull's speculation bears the mark of contemporary Jewish Kabbalah, in particular Abraham Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah. In 1263 there were public disputes between Jewish and Christian masters in Barcelona. Abulafia was himself a

¹³ Blaquerna recalls how a Saracen (i.e. Moslem) told him 'the Saracens had certain religious men, among whom the most highly considered were those called "Sufis", and that these men had words of love and brief examples which aroused great devotion in men ... Now when Blaquerna had heard this idea, he decided to make the book in the above-mentioned manner ... and with this [*Book of the Lover and the Beloved*] he would be able to increase fervor and devotion in the hermits, whom he wished to inspire with a love of God', cited in Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 189.

¹⁴ For this survey of medieval Jewish Kabbalah, see Ginsburg, *The Kabbalah*; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*.

zealous Jewish missionary and ecstatic. After an illumination at Barcelona in 1271, he went to Italy, published a prophecy at Urbino in 1279 and tried to convert Pope Martin IV to Judaism in 1281. Imprisoned and condemned, he escaped thanks to a minor earthquake, which his disciples took as divine sign, and went on to receive messianic revelations in Sicily in 1284, later founding a millenarian-kabbalistic movement with thousands of followers in Malta. Besides the possibility of Lull and Abulafia meeting at Barcelona and elsewhere in their many travels and interfaith dialogues, Idel discovered that combinations of letters, states of union, and rotation were present in Pico della Mirandola's *revolutio alphabetorum* bearing a strong resemblance to Lull's concentric circles of logical and metaphysical production. The fact that Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) was the first figure in the Christian reception of Kabbalah in the Renaissance suggests that his sources reflect a medieval Spanish Jewish model, which in turn could have been known to Lull two centuries earlier in Spain.¹⁵

Lull's inspiration in Moslem philosophy was not limited to Sufism, obvious though its influence was in the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved*. Charles Lohr has shown how Lull was familiar with Islamic theology and knew the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*. There were more specific sources for his work. Muhammed Al-Ghazali († 1111) from northeast Iran, provided the basis of Lull's first book on logic (*Logica del Gatzell*). This Moslem author should not be confused with his brother Ahmad Al-Ghazali († 1126), the Sufi ecstatic, whose work Lull may have also known. Furthermore, Ibn Sab'in of Murcia (1217–1269) wrote the mystical *Budd al-'arif* (*Escape of the Gnostic*) which was a definite inspiration to Lull's *Logica nova* (1303).¹⁶

Although Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism was suffused with Greek Neoplatonism, there may be another crucial source of Lull's metaphysical speculation in Neoplatonism, that fundamental current of esoteric philosophy that runs through all three Abrahamic religions. Frances Yates identified a major source of Lull's esoteric thought in Christian Neoplatonism. Her studies in Renaissance Lullism in the 1960s had suggested Lull's legacy of Neoplatonic currents passed to Pico della Mirandola, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535), Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), and Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638), the

¹⁵ Idel, 'Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah', 170–174, figures a-e, p. 17. For further literature on Jewish culture in thirteenth-century Aragon, see Burns, *Jews in the Notarial Culture*, Chap. 1 The World of the Wills.

¹⁶ Lohr, 'Islamic Influences in Lull's Logic', 147–157.

teacher of Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670) at Herborn.¹⁷ However, in her earlier meticulous study of the Lullian Art, its operation and transformations, she discovered a key source for Lull's "dignities" in the work of the scholastic philosopher John Scotus Erigena (c. 810–877).¹⁸

Born in Ireland, Erigena was invited around 847 by Charles II, king of the West Franks (later Holy Roman emperor), to take charge of the court school at Paris. At King Charles's request he translated the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and his commentator Maximus the Confessor. Erigena's own philosophical speculation is contained in the *De divisione naturae* and the fragmentary *De egressu et regressu animae ad Deum*. Erigena was perhaps the most learned man of his time and a remarkable thinker. His thought, based on that of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, the Greek Fathers, and St. Augustine, is Neoplatonic, whereby philosophy and theology are identified; all thinking and being begin and end with God, who is above all being and thought. Erigena makes a fourfold division of the things that are, or nature—that which creates and is not created; that which is created and creates; that which is created and does not create; that which neither creates nor is created. The first is God, the source of all things. The second is the Logos, existent in, and coeternal with, God, in whom are the primordial causes and types of things. The third is the world of space, time, and generation, which came into being from the primordial causes by emanation through the successive genera and species. The fourth is again God, but regarded now as the end of all things; for just as creatures have emanated from God, so they will return to Him.¹⁹ Yates found a definite clue to Lull's "Dignities" in Erigena's *De divisione naturae*, in which she discerned the seminal influence of Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchies* with its ninefold hierarchies of angels and being. Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. 500) was most likely a Syrian monk who may have studied with the Greek Neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius before the closure of the pagan school of Athens and his own conversion to Christianity. His transmutation of Neoplatonic metaphysics and hierarchies of being and ascent into Christian angelic orders has remained a seminal text of esoteric spirituality and philosophy. Through Erigena's Latin translation it entered the medieval Latin West and subsequently influenced German medieval mystics, the Florentine Neoplatonists, and the birth of Christian theosophy in the late sixteenth century.

¹⁷ Yates, *The Art of Memory*, passim.

¹⁸ Yates, 'Ramon Lull and John Scotus Erigena', 1–44.

¹⁹ Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 16–17, 30–34, 60–62.

The Christian Origins of Islam

With Lull's debt to Erigena and the latter's to Pseudo-Dionysius, we find we are returning from late Moorish Spain in the century before Lull's birth to the sources of Moslem philosophy and science in the East. Pioneering scholars such as Margaret Smith, De Lacy O'Leary and Julian Baldick have each shown the crucial importance of the eastern Christian churches such as the Nestorian, Jacobite and Syrian Churches to the origins of Islam. It is a well-known thesis that the Moslem Arabs east of the River Jordan so much admired the Christian desert monks and hermits for their ascetic fervour and solitary prayer, that they adopted their woollen (*suf*) garb and thus became known as Sufis. Others have noted the common link stressed between God and men, and prayers in Remembrance of God. Paul Fenton has noted the contemporary parallels between the Hesychast tradition of Mount Athos, the Jesus Prayer, the Sufi *dhikr Allah*, and the Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia with its ecstatic repetitions, as repetitive phrases invoking the remembrance of God. These experiential traditions suggest the ecstatic and practical influence of early Christian mysticism at the heart of Islam.²⁰

The Christian influence on the origins of Islam is well established. As Margaret Smith has stated: 'Syria and Palestine had been the first home of Christianity, and from its first foundation in Jerusalem, Damascus and Antioch, the Church had extended itself as far as the Arabian desert. Bishoprics were established beyond the Jordan, and in Palmyra and the district east of Jordan were to be found many Christian hermits, who influenced many of the desert Arabs, and won numbers of them to Christianity'.²¹ In the Christendom of 600, the church had largely adopted the institutions and administrative practices of the Roman Empire. However, in the eastern borderland areas of Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia where the Arab tribes first entered history, Hellenism was a potent and continuous cultural force. 'Muslim theology, philosophy, and science put forth their first luxuriant shoots on a soil that was saturated with Hellenistic culture'.²² As De Lacy O'Leary has argued, the Hellenistic heritage was continuously diffused in the borderlands of Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia, first through the Seleucids (321 BC – 248 BC), then through the Romans in their continuous wars with the Parthians (230 BC – 220 AD) and then through Chris-

²⁰ Fenton, 'Rabbi Abraham Abulafia's Method of Kabbalistic Meditation'.

²¹ Smith, *The Way of the Mystics*, 105.

²² Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam*, 9.

tianity.²³ In the Roman frontier provinces of Syria, Palmyra and Mesopotamia, which regularly fluctuated between Roman rule and the Parthian kingdom and (after 211) Sassanian Persia, the Nestorian Church had established large churches and congregations at Nisibis, Edessa, Jundishapur and Seleucia. Here in the East, while still subject to persecution in the Roman empire, Christianity had been tolerated by the Sassanian kings of Persia, who allowed their Roman captives and subjects to build churches and develop congregations. Moreover, there was less centralization in respect of governance and doctrine. Later, the Nestorian and Monophysite (Jacobite) churches would become ever more detached on account of their distance and removal from the great ecclesiastical centres of Antioch and Constantinople, their doctrines assimilating local coloration in response to oriental congregations. In due course, Constantinople would declare the Churches of the East schismatic and later heretical but they essentially mediated Hellenistic and Christian thought, science and medicine to the Arab tribes in these territories.²⁴ Islam readily adopted a great deal of Christian and Persian traditions. By the time Mohammed appeared on the world-stage, Christianity was well established in Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia and Christian Neoplatonic mysticism came to play an important part in orthodox Islamic philosophy. Jundishapur, Nisibis and Edessa remained powerful bishoprics in the Christian East and Mohammed sought not to eradicate Christianity; rather, Moslems were only too happy to learn science, architecture medicine and philosophy from the Christians and the Persians.

The savage Mongol invasions through Central Asia in the early thirteenth century swept away the Church in the East at its historic centres of Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, Seleucia-Ctesiphon and Jundishapur. Vine reports that ‘The Mongols were not hostile to Christianity as a religion itself, but nevertheless presented an acute danger to Christian peoples. This was due to the rapidity and savagery of the invading hordes’. A contemporary source described the Mongol horsemen ‘clothed with skins and riding the wind and tempest, they overturned in the twinkling of an eye the strongest towns’. Within minutes of the bells tolling in the Christian cities of Central Asia ‘they seemed to spring up

²³ O’Leary, *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*, 54; idem, *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs*, 18.

²⁴ Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise*, 1–15, 50–75. For a more recent study, see Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East*.

everywhere as if by magic. They covered the earth like the waters of a flood and no one could resist them'.²⁵ Rich communities on the Silk Road were reduced to ashes and cinders within a week.

By the second decade of the thirteenth century the Jacobite and Nestorian churches had disappeared under Mongol fire and pillage in Central Asia and Baghdad had also been sacked in 1258. But the Church of the East had disseminated the Hellenistic and Christian legacy to the Moslem world in its ascendant phase of the seventh to eighth centuries. Five hundred years later, in the West, Ramon Lull constructed an esoteric synthesis to convert the Moslems and the Mongols, now a clear and present danger.

Why did Lull launch his mission of esoteric evangelism?

As Lull had recorded in his vision of vocation, he sought agreement between Christians and Saracens, 'because they are already so close to each other'. Indeed, there was much commonality: early Sufism of the eighth and ninth centuries had combined with mystical Christian spirituality and Neoplatonism, while Judaism provided the legalistic boundaries of Islam. Aristotelian and Neoplatonic themes were common to both Islam and Christianity. As Julian Baldick has suggestively phrased it, 'Islam both is and is not Christianity'.²⁶ In Lull's view, there was a need to overcome creedal and theological disagreement though the examination of the philosophy and logic shared by the great faiths. His quest for a logical and metaphysical system based on *absoluta*, the "dignities" or axioms, was intended to demonstrate to Moslems that Christianity was a logical map of metaphysical order. Just as Islam's cradle had lain in the East within Hellenism and Christianity, so he in the West proposed their reunion for there now existed the threat that, without strong united resistance, they would both be destroyed. The Mongols had already destroyed more than half the Moslem world in a graphic clash of civilization in the thirteenth century. In Lull's view, there were two world civilizations and the hordes. Against Mongol catastrophe, mass slaughter and the collapse of Islamic power, Lull saw the need for the combination of Islam and Christianity to generate a world reformation and global redemption from barbarism in Eurasia. Christianity had to convert the Mongols but they were presently blocked by Islam. Moreover, Lull saw that if the Mongols were not converted to Christianity they would be converted to Islam; an accurate prediction of what ultimately occurred among

²⁵) Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, 142–143.

²⁶) Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 1–49.

the populations of West and Central Asia.²⁷ Ramon Llull took the view that he should concentrate his attention on Islam as the most coherent and important non-Christian religion in the medieval world. In some ways he resembles the contemporary world strategist Samuel P. Huntington writing just a few years before 9.11.2001, who evaluated the Sinic and Islamic challenges to the West.²⁸ While Huntington asserted the core values of the West in its classical legacy, the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, social pluralism, representative institutions, the rule of law, and individualism, Llull also believed that such qualities, the legacy of Hellenism and Christianity, could be demonstrated by his esoteric Art. Such universalism embracing both faiths, underpinned by love, will and deterrence, could secure a new world order and security.

Bibliography

- Baldick, Julian, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism*, London: I.B. Tauris 1989.
- Baum, Wilhelm and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History*, London: RoutledgeCurzon 2003.
- Bisson, T.N., *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991.
- Bonner, Anthony E., *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 2 vols, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985.
- Bonner, Anthony E., *Doctor Illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993.
- Burns, Robert I., S. J., *Jews in the Notarial Culture: Latin Wills in Mediterranean Spain, 1250–1350*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1996.
- Carabine, Deidre, *John Scottus Eriugena*, New York: Oxford University Press 2000.
- Faivre, Antoine, *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1994.
- Fenton, Paul, 'Rabbi Abraham Abulafia's Method of Kabbalistic Meditation', lecture at New York Open Centre 'The Golden Age of Andalusia: Sufis, Kabbalists and Christian Philosophers' Conference, Granada, 18 September 2007.
- Ginsburg, Christian D., *The Kabbalah: Its Doctrines, Development, and Literature*, London: George Routledge & Sons 1920.
- Hames, Harvey H., *Jews, Muslims and Christians In and Around the Crown of Aragon: Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie*, Leiden: Brill 2003.
- Hillgarth, J.N., *Ramon Llull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1971.
- Huntington, Samuel P., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon & Schuster 1997.
- Idel, Moshe, 'Ramon Llull and Ecstatic Kabbalah: A Preliminary Observation', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), 170–174, figures a–c, p. 17.

²⁷) Hillgarth, *Ramon Llull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France*, 12.

²⁸) Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 68–72.

- Johnston, Mark D., *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987.
- Lohr, Charles, 'Islamic Influences in Lull's Logic', *El Debat intercultural als segles XIII i XIV. Actes de les Primeres Jornades de Filosofia Catalan, Girona 15–27 d'abril del 1988*, ed. Marcel Salleras, [Estudi General 9] (Gerona: Col·legi Universitari, 1989), 147–157.
- Lull, Ramon, *Le Myésier's Breviculum: Ramon Llull, Breviculum seu Electorium parvum Thomae Migerii (Le Myésier)*, in Charles Lohr, Theodor Pindl-Büchel and Walburga Büchel (ed.), "*Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis. Raimundi Lulli Opera Latina. Supplementi Lulliani*" Vol. I, Brepols: Turnholt 1990.
- Lull, Ramon, *Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus*, Valencia 1512.
- Olabarrieta, Sister Miriam Thérèse, *The Influence of Ramon Llull on the Style of the Early Spanish Mystics and Santa Teresa* [The Catholic University of America Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures 67], Washington: Catholic University of America Press 1963.
- O'Leary, De Lacy, *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1939.
- O'Leary, De Lacy, *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1948.
- Nicholson, Reynold Alleyne, *Mystics of Islam*, London: G. Bell 1914.
- Peers, E. Allison, *Ramon Llull: A Biography*, London: SPCK 1929
- Scholem, Gershom, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1974; New York: Meridian, 1978)
- Scholem, Gershom, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, edited by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, translated from the German by Allan Arkush, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.
- Smith, Margaret, *The Way of the Mystics: The Early Christian Mystics and the Rise of the Sufis*, London: Sheldon Press 1976.
- Stewart, John, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1928
- Vine, Aubrey R., *The Nestorian Churches: A Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians*, London: Independent Press 1937.
- Yates, Frances A., 'The Art of Ramon Llull: An Approach to it through Lull's Theory of the Elements', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17: 1, 2 (1954), 115–173.
- Yates, Frances A., *The Art of Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1966.
- Yates, Frances A., 'Ramon Llull and John Scotus Erigena', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23: 1/2 (1960), 1–44.

Copyright of *Aries* is the property of Brill Academic Publishers and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.