

DAVID LINK

Scrambling T-R-U-T-H Rotating Letters as a Material Form of Thought

“Know that the secrets of God and the objects of His science, the subtle realities and the dense realities, the things of above and the things from below, belong to two categories: there are numbers and there are letters. The secrets of the letters are in the numbers, and the epiphanies of the numbers are in the letters. The numbers are the realities of above, belonging to the spiritual entities. The letters belong to the circle of the material realities and to the becoming.” *Aḥmad al-Būnī* (d. 1225)¹

The works of the Majorcan philosopher and missionary Ramon Llull (1232–1316) are commonly and rightly regarded as foundational for the development of Western combinatorics and logic. Circular disks inscribed with the letters from B to K, which can be rotated in relation to each other, play a central role in his



*Fig. 1: Alphabetic disk in Ars
Generalis Ultima, 1308.*

¹ Quoted by Henri Corbin, *Histoire de la Philosophie Islamique* (Paris, 1964), p. 205: “Sache que les secrets de Dieu et les objects de Sa science, les réalités subtiles et les réalités denses, les choses d’en haut et les choses d’en bas, sont de deux catégories: il y a les nombres et il y a les lettres. Les secrets des lettres sont dans les nombres, et les épiphanies des nombres sont dans les lettres. Les nombres sont les réalités d’en haut, appartenant aux entités spirituelles. Les lettres appartiennent au cercle des réalités matérielles et du devenir.” Translation from the French, D.L.