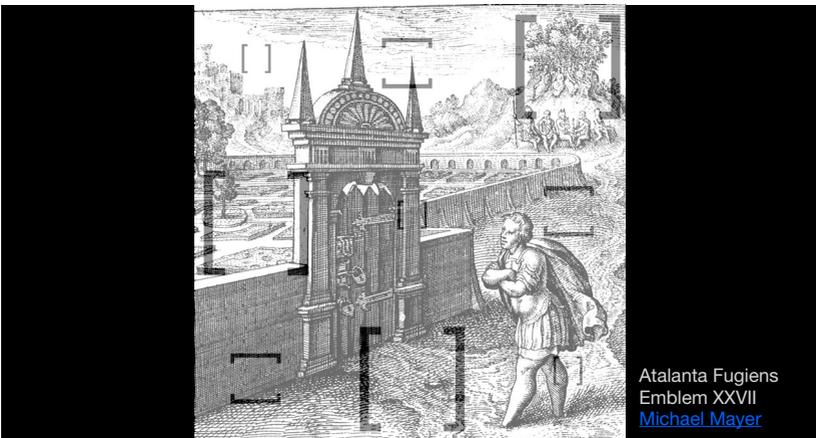


The reason why it is difficult/impossible to teach and *delimit* cabala, is that it articulates and incorporates values *between* identity and difference. In some ways, as a bid for the status of First Science, the art of cabala features a chapter of *mereology*—part/whole relationships—that are *makeshift/drift*ing.

First, the whole can fly into pieces and recombine in a different whole. It may/not be a better one. Second, though the parts are conceptually *distinct* in our thought, they *extend* into the whole in their functional aspects. Thought and extension are one in *substance*—which is the *treasure*.

In cabala, the distinction between *body* and *actor*—embodiment and agency—features in the distinction between *torah* and *talmud* (one in Hebrew, the other in ancient Syrian). The point being that two are *neither* identical *nor* different. At the gate, they enter a *working*-relationship.



Atalanta Fugiens
Emblem XXVII
[Michael Mayer](#)

In dealing with *contingencies* human beings have certain number of means at their disposal, including the mapping between the *temporal*—the realm of the tedious and causality—and the *uncreated*: matters concerned with metaphysics, with causality as principle, and with random vs. *necessity*.

The way that the uncreated deals with the matters of time can readily be evoked in terms of *phase-shifts*: that is, changes that are not *in* time, but are changes *of* time. MaHaRaL states that human beings *cannot* meddle in which things that are to happen, but can meddle with *when* and *how*.

For instance, the MaHaRaL states that one *can* consult with the dead, but one *cannot* conjure the dead to alter the course of history. He rejects attempts in this direction as despicable. Evidently, changing the order of events can be for better or for worse. It changes the *outcome* of history.

That is, the events happening are inescapable—or, necessary—when seen from the point of view of the uncreated (or, the infinite, which is Spinoza's errand in his Ethics). However, the *when* and *how* will fundamentally determine the *outcome*: if fate is set, *destiny* is not. It is *the* variable.

So, it is definitely not conceived as a zero-sum game. But it is not nonzero either: there is fundamentally *no exit*—we are *in it*. The Torah is in it. We are in it. The cabalistic art and study therefore adopts a radically immanent vantage point with regard to the world (and everything that is in it).

It is closer to a Quantum view of the universe than a Cartesian one. It can be affected through *superposition* (like tarot-cabala), *intra-action* (psycho-magic acts) and *entanglement* (how the bodies and agencies featuring in the Torah always re/combine as one): **1**) naming and **2**) changing.

These are ideas that seeped into European humanism through Pico della Mirandola, Agrippa von Nettesheim and his friend Albrecht Dürer, in the Renaissance. They passed under the heading of *natural philosophy*, or *magick*. A kind of practical philosophy derived from Aristotle.

Alot of attention is given to the rediscovery of Plato in the Renaissance. However, Aristotle remained central to its applicability. This point is made quite clear by Moshe Idel in his scholarly thorough study of [cabala in Italy](#), in the Renaissance. This is also when Abraham Abulafia came to Italy.

For a number of contemporary readers, [Abulafia](#) is the name of a computer in *Foucault's pendulum* by Umberto Eco. In fact, the entire book plays with the method of permutation used by Abraham Abulafia for meditative purposes. It is part of the ecstatic cabala, which is prophetic (not magic).

Here, cabala is twofold with regard to writing: **1**) where written elements *animates* bodies; **2**) where written elements act *on their own*. And how integration of bodies and agents—changing and recombining them—is part of the human burden. Of *earning one's bread by the sweat of ones brow*.