

A Language of Numbers?

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From the original publication of *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888, orthodox scholars have enjoyed scoffing at the Stanzas of Dzyan and at the mysterious book on which they are said to be based. Diligent search on the part of theosophical scholars throughout the last hundred years have failed to turn up anything remotely resembling the published stanzas of Dzyan. For this reason, many both within and outside of our movement have concluded that Madame Blavatsky was pulling our leg with her delightful imagery of the "eternal parent in her ever invisible robes", the "seven small wheels revolving", the "water-men terrible and bad", and all the rest.

In an oral presentation at the 1996 Summer School of the Theosophical Society in America, the present author suggested that H.P.B.'s "secret books" may be a symbolical reference to a meditational process based on isopsephia (called gematria in the Jewish tradition), a numerical code appearing in several ancient languages (McDavid, 1996). The idea was summarized as follows:

WHAT IF:

1. Senezar writing is (at least in part) a form of number-writing or isopsephia.
2. Numerical "sentences" embodying the laws of cosmic and human origins are symbolically contained in a mystical "book" which may or may not have a counterpart in the material world.
3. This "book" is "read" by meditation on word-symbols and numerical patterns.
4. This "book" forms the basis of the Book of Dzyan described in *The Secret Doctrine*.

To use the system it is necessary to have the numerical values of the different letters of the alphabet. The Greek system uses the following set of correspondences:

A	1	I	10	P	100
B	2	K	20	Σ	200
Γ	3	Λ	30	T	300
Δ	4	M	40	Υ	400
E	5	N	50	Φ	500
—	6	Ξ	60	X	600
Z	7	O	70	Ψ	700
H	8	Π	80	Ω	800
Θ	9	—	90	—	900

The idea of isopsephia is that related words and phrases have the same numerical sums. Thus, for example, "spark" (ΣΠΙΝΘΑΡΙΣ) and "flame" (ΦΛΟΞ) share the same value 660 while "astrikos" (ΑΣΤΡΙΚΟΣ) and "ouranios" (ΟΥΡΑΝΙΟΣ), which both mean "celestial" or "heavenly", share a value of 901. Once we buy into this idea, we can begin to use this system as a kind of meditation technique. We begin by writing down some meaningful phrase and adding up the values corresponding to the letters. Having added up the numbers in a word or phrase, we look for other words or phrases which have the same sum. The results are often familiar and always enlightening provided our vocabulary is extensive enough.

The Master K.H. once wrote to a correspondent that from the point of view of occultism "God" and "Christ" simply refer to "good" on the abstract and concrete levels and nothing more dogmatic (Barker, p.127). This makes perfect sense in the light of isopsephia since God (ΘΕΟΣ=284) and Christ (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ=1480) are equivalent to Good (ΑΓΑΘΟΣ=284) and The Goodness (Η ΑΓΑΘΩΣΥΝΗ=1480) respectively.

Consider, as another example, the following phrase which should be significant to theosophists:

The	Great	Orphan			
O	ΜΕΓΑΣ	ΟΡΦΑΝΟΣ			
70	249	991	+		= 1310

Every theosophist familiar with the primary literature knows that "The Great Orphan" is a traditional, esoteric phrase which refers to MAN. The Greek word for "man" is "Anthropos" (ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ) which sure enough has a value of 1310 when you add up the letters. If, going one step further, you add up the digits of 1310, a process called "theosophical reduction" (Papus, 27), you get 1+3+1+0=5, the traditional number of man as explained in the *S.D.* and other writings.

Theosophists are also familiar with "the seven principles of man", a distinctive list of the constituents of a human being that was used in the early theosophical writings. Compare the traditional list in the left column with the equivalent Greek terms and note what happens when we add them up:

7.	Atma	A Spark of the Logos	ΣΠΙΝΘΑΡΙΣ ΛΟΓΟΥ	1233
6.	Buddhi	Wisdom	ΣΟΦΙΑ	781
5.	Manas	Mind	ΝΟΥΣ	720
4.	Kama	Desire	ΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΑ	555
3.	Linga Sharira	Shadow	ΣΚΙΑ	231
2.	Prana	Life	ΒΙΟΣ	282
1.	Sthula Sharira	Flesh	ΣΑΡΞ	<u>+ 361</u>
				4163

301	+	386	+	1196	+	770	+	1510	=	4163
ΤΑ		ΕΠΤΑ		ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ		ΤΟΥ		ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ		
The		Seven		Elements		of		Man		

Now why should it work out like that? The ancients believed that it was more than chance. This is one reason why they regarded language as a marvelous divine revelation. This is why we have Pythagoras saying that he who gave things their names was the oldest and wisest of men. This is why we have the author of the book of Revelation urging "he who hast wisdom" to calculate the number of the beast, etc. In light of the preceding examples, is it not likely that Madame Blavatsky and her Teachers were working with these same old traditions and that *The Secret Doctrine* was written with all this in mind? That is why she said with such confidence that sooner or later we would realize that the secret doctrine was not invented by her but was simply stated. I think it is probable that this kind of numerical language was symbolized by the mystical books described in the *S.D.* If this is true, we can learn to "read" whether or not we ever find an actual printed copy of the Book of Dzyan. We can then see that H.P.B. was not making up anything but simply echoing the words of the eternal wisdom embodied in the the eternal language of mathematics.

H.P.B. talked a great deal about an "old book" composed of a collection of palm-leaves "made impervious to the elements by some unknown process" (Blavatsky, I: 1). This book is said to form the basis of many sacred scriptures widely scattered around the world. Was this book an actual thing or a symbol based on the numerical language of the initiates? Let's try to read it using isopsephia. We form the following phrase and add up its letters:

The	holy	book	from	palm	leaves	made						
Η	ΙΕΡΑ	ΒΙΒΛΟΣ	ΕΚ	ΦΟΙΝΙΚΩΝ	ΓΕΓΟΝΥΙΑ							
8	+	116	+	314	+	25	+	1510	+	542	=	2515

We now look at 2515 to see what combinations of words and phases are hiding there. Remembering that what is supposed to be contained in the old book is a geometrical figure consisting of a circle (ΚΥΚΛΟΣ =740), a central point or dot (ΑΚΜΗ=69), and two lines (ΓΡΑΜΜΗ =192) forming a cross (ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ=1271) we can subtract these from 2515 and see what is left over. Thus: 2515-740-69-192-192-1271 = 51. If we know our numerical vocabulary we know that 51 is ΜΙΑ, a feminine adjective meaning "one". We can associate this with the feminine noun ΑΚΜΗ, and write down the equation:

the holy book made from palm leaves = circle+one point+line+line+cross

And that is the way you "read" inside the words (Collins) using the language of isopsephia.

A literal translation of the title of "The Book of Dzyan" is "The Book of Knowledge" (Reigle). Rendered into Ancient Greek, this would be written as "Η ΒΙΒΛΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΓΝΩΣΕΩΣ" which has a numerical value of 2888. If the idea I have proposed is correct, it should be possible to construct numerical paraphrases of the stanzas of Dzyan by expansion of this numerical value. The following phrases were all "unfolded" through persistent meditation on the number 2888. Conserving always the same numerical total, we can create multiple combinations of letters which tell the story of cosmic evolution from the eternal sleeping parent to the fully-established solar system in the familiar words of the stanzas. Here are a few examples:

The original principle (SPACE) was asleep for seven eternities
 APXH (AIΘHP) HN KOIMIZOMENH EIS EITTA AIΩNΑΣ
 709 + 128 + 58 + 330 + 215 + 386 + 1062 = 2888

Time was not. Kosmos was asleep.
 ΧΡΟΝΟΣ ΟΥΚ ΗΝ. ΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΗΝ ΚΟΙΜΙΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ.
 1090 + 490 + 58 + 600 + 58 + 592 = 2888

The great universal mind was not. Angels were not.
 Ο ΜΕΓΑΣ ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΝΟΥΣ ΟΥΚ ΗΝ. ΑΓΓΕΛΟΙ ΟΥΚ ΗΣΑΝ.
 70 + 249 + 430 + 720 + 490 + 58 + 122 + 490 + 259 = 2888

The Darkness (is) Father and Mother and Son Asleep
 Η ΣΚΟΤΙΑ ΠΑΤΗΡ ΚΑΙ ΜΗΤΗΡ ΚΑΙ ΥΙΟΣ ΚΟΙΜΙΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ
 8 + 601 + 489 + 31 + 456 + 31 + 680 + 592 = 2888

The male seed (is) the one solitary ray from the darkness
 ΤΟ ΣΠΕΡΜΑ Η ΜΙΑ ΜΟΝΗ ΑΚΤΙΣ ΕΚ ΤΗΣ ΣΚΟΤΙΑΣ
 370 + 426 + 8 + 51 + 168 + 531 + 25 + 508 + 801 = 2888

The Divine Dragon of Wisdom
 Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ Ο ΔΡΑΚΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ
 70 + 284 + 70 + 975 + 508 + 981 = 2888

The Great Father and the Great Mother Spin the (Threads) Web
 Ο ΜΕΓΑΣ ΠΑΤΗΡ ΚΑΙ Η ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΜΗΤΗΡ ΝΗΘΟΥΣΙΝ ΤΑ ΝΗΜΑΤΑ
 70 + 249 + 489 + 31 + 8 + 87 + 456 + 797 + 301 + 400 = 2888

FORTY NINE

The Gods from the Light: 10+6+5+3+1+4+1+5+14
ΟΙ ΘΕΟΙ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΦΩΤΟΣ 10+6+5+3+1+4+1+5+14
80 + 94 + 25 + 770 + 1870 + 10+6+5+3+1+4+1+5+14 = 2888

SEVEN and SEVEN and SEVEN and SEVEN and SEVEN and SEVEN and SEVEN
ΕΠΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ
386 + 31 + 386 + 31 + 386 + 31 + 386 + 31 + 386 + 31 + 386 + 31 + 386 = 2888

The Seven Angels (are) the Sacred Army of the Voice
ΟΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΙ Η ΙΕΡΑ ΣΤΡΑΤΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΦΩΝΗΣ
80 + 386 + 122 + 8 + 116 + 912 + 508 + 756 = 2888

The seven sons and the eighth the sun and the great breath
ΟΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΥΙΟΙ ΚΑΙ Ο ΟΓΔΟΟΣ Ο ΗΛΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΜΕΓΑ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ
80 + 386 + 490 + 31 + 70 + 417 + 70 + 318 + 31 + 370 + 49 + 576 = 2888

The Kingdom of the Heavens
Η ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΩΝ
8 + 259 + 1150 + 1471 = 2888

The last phrase is the familiar Biblical phrase generally translated "The Kingdom of Heaven". In the context of the fully developed solar system, its meaning seems a little different from the orthodox interpretation. Can all these examples come about by chance? Of course they can, but it is not really all that likely. The frequency of assembling a single phrase with the value of 2888 from random numbers having the mean and standard deviation of a typical population of Greek words can be shown to be on the order of one in five hundred trials. Multiple events reduce the odds even more. It would seem that the number 2888 is some kind of key to the whole system.

We have heard a lot about the Book of Dzyan and the mystical Senzar language. Most of us have been looking to India and Tibet for the keys to these mysteries. However, maybe we can find at least part of the answer little closer to home. Looking in a Greek lexicon, we find that "ZAN" or "ZHN" is an old Greek name for Zeus, the Supreme God. Adding the Greek numerical values for "Senzar" yields 363, a number which can be interpreted numerically as "The Sure Words" (ΟΙ ΒΕΒΑΙΟΙ ΛΟΓΟΙ) or "With precision" (ΔΙ' ΑΚΡΙΒΕΙΑΣ). Both of these make perfect sense if the language of mathematics is meant. Senzar is supposed to be universal and to cut across cultures. Certainly mathematics does just that.

I will leave this discussion with one curious final example using Sanskrit words but computed with the numbers from the Greek calculation table:

FIRST SANSKRIT WORDS: CIRCLE, POINT, LINE, LINE

ADI SANSKRITA PADANI VRITTA BINDU REKHA REKHA

15 + 882 + 146 + 1111 + 466 + 134 + 134 = 2888

This article presents some evidence that Madame Blavatsky was for real and that she was not "making it all up as she went along". She was part of a living esoteric tradition with traditional signs, symbols and secret passwords. Part of her work could be only understood by other initiates and they were, like herself, sworn to secrecy. Some thought she was going too far and revealing too much. But it was not her policy but that of her Teachers. She did not tell everything and sometimes she had to hide things from an unprepared generation. Sometimes she used "blinds" and occasionally she made mistakes because her Teachers had not told her everything or were too busy to supervise her properly. In all this, Madame Blavatsky was never acting in a vacuum. Selected by the Brotherhood after years of search, she was sent out into a hostile world as the harbinger of a New Era. We are only beginning to understand the importance of her mission.

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