

Numerology

Numerology is any belief in the divine or mystical relationship between a number and one or more coinciding events.^[2] It is also the study of the numerical value of the letters in words, names, and ideas. It is often associated with the paranormal, alongside astrology and similar divinatory arts.^[3]

Despite the long history of numerological ideas, the word "numerology" is not recorded in English before c.1907.^[4]

The term **numerologist** can be used for those who place faith in numerical patterns and draw pseudo-scientific inferences from them, even if those people do not practice traditional numerology. For example, in his 1997 book *Numerology: Or What Pythagoras Wrought*, mathematician Underwood Dudley uses the term to discuss practitioners of the Elliott wave principle of stock market analysis.

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History



Numerorum mysteria (1591), a treatise on numerology by Pietro Bongo and his most influential work in Europe.^[1]

Pythagoras and other philosophers of the time believed that because mathematical concepts were more "practical" (easier to regulate and classify) than physical ones, they had greater actuality. St. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430), wrote: "Numbers are the Universal language offered by the deity to humans as confirmation of the truth." Similar to Pythagoras, he too believed that everything had numerical relationships and it was up to the mind to seek and investigate the secrets of these relationships or have them revealed by divine grace. See Numerology and the Church Fathers for early Christian beliefs on the subject.

In 325 AD, following the First Council of Nicaea, departures from the beliefs of the state church were classified as civil violations within the Roman Empire. Numerology had not found favor with the Christian authority of the day and was assigned to the field of unapproved beliefs along with astrology and other forms of divination and "magic". Despite this religious purging, the spiritual significance assigned to the heretofore "sacred" numbers had not disappeared; several numbers, such as the "Jesus number" have been commented and analyzed by Dorotheus of Gaza and numerology still is used at least in conservative Greek Orthodox circles.^{[5][6]} However, despite the church's resistance to numerology, there have been arguments made for the presence of numerology in the Bible and religious architecture. For example, the numbers 3 and 7 hold strong spiritual meaning in the Bible. The most obvious example would be the creation of the world in 7 days. Jesus asked God 3 times if he could avoid crucifixion and was crucified at 3 in the afternoon. 7 is the length of famine and other God-imposed events and is sometimes followed by the number 8 as a symbol of change.^[7]

Some alchemical theories were closely related to numerology. For example, Persian-Arab alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan framed his experiments in an elaborate numerology based on the names of substances in the Arabic language.^[8]

Numerology is prominent in Sir Thomas Browne's 1658 literary Discourse *The Garden of Cyrus*. Throughout its pages, the author attempts to demonstrate that the number five and the related Quincunx pattern can be found throughout the arts, in design, and in nature – particularly botany.

Modern numerology has various antecedents. Ruth A. Drayer's book, *Numerology, The Power in Numbers* says that around the start of the 20th century Mrs. L. Dow Balliett combined Pythagoras' work with Biblical reference.^[9] Balliett's student, Juno Jordan, helped numerology become the system known today as Pythagorean, although Pythagoras himself had nothing to do with the system, by publishing "The Romance in Your Name" in 1965, provided a system for identifying what he called key numerological influences in names and birth dates that remains used today. Other 'numerologists' including Florence Campbell (1931),^[10] Lynn Buess (1978), Mark Gruner (1979), Faith Javane and Dusty Bunker (1979), Kathleen Roquemore (1985) expanded on the use of numerology for assessing personality or events. These different schools of numerology give various methods for using numerology.

Lack of evidence

Skeptics argue that numbers have no occult significance and cannot by themselves influence a person's life. Skeptics therefore regard numerology as a superstition and a pseudoscience that uses numbers to give the subject a veneer of scientific authority.^[2]

At least two studies have investigated numerological claims, both producing negative results: one in the UK in 1993,^[11] and one in 2012 in Israel^[12]. The UK experiment involved 96 people and found no correlation between the number seven and a self-reported psychic ability. The experiment in Israel involved a professional numerologist and 200 participants, and was designed to examine the validity of a numerological diagnosis of learning disabilities, like dyslexia and ADHD, and autism. The experiment was repeated twice and still produced negative results.

Methods

Alphabetic systems

There are various numerology systems which assign numerical value to the letters of an alphabet. Examples include the Abjad numerals in Arabic, the Hebrew numerals, Armenian numerals, and Greek numerals. The practice within Jewish tradition of assigning mystical meaning to words based on their numerical values, and on connections between words of equal value, is known as gematria.

Latin alphabet systems

There are various systems of numerology that use the Latin alphabet. Different methods of interpretation exist, including Chaldean, Pythagorean, Hebraic, Helyn Hitchcock's method, Phonetic, Japanese, Arabic and Indian.

Pythagorean system

This method can be referred to as either Western Numerology or Pythagorean Numerology. The Greek Philosopher, Pythagoras, is known as the father of Western Numerology. Pythagoras began his theory of numbers by discovering the numerical relationship between numbers and musical notes. He found that the vibrations in stringed instruments could be mathematically explained.^{[13][14]} The Pythagorean method uses an individual's name and date of birth. The name number reveals the individual's outer nature. This is the personality that they present to the outside world. To start, you need to use the individual's full name as written on their birth certificate. Then, each letter is assigned to a number one to nine, based on the ancient Pythagorean system. The numbers are assigned to letters of the Latin alphabet as follows:

- 1 = a, j, s,
- 2 = b, k, t,
- 3 = c, l, u,
- 4 = d, m, v,
- 5 = e, n, w,
- 6 = f, o, x,
- 7 = g, p, y,
- 8 = h, q, z,
- 9 = i, r,

Next, add together all of the numbers associated for each letter in your full birth name. Then, the number is reduced until you obtain a single number.

Example: James Duncan Halpert

- James
 - $1+1+4+5+1$
 - $= 12$
- Duncan
 - $4+3+5+3+1+5$
 - $= 21$
- Halpert
 - $8+1+3+7+5+9+2$
 - $= 35$
- James Duncan Halpert
 - $12+21+35$
 - $= 68$
 - $6+8$
 - $= 14$
 - $1+4$

- = 5

Then, Jim Duncan Halpert's name number is 5.

A quicker way to arrive at a single-digit summation (the digital root) is simply to take the value modulo 9, substituting a 0 result with 9 itself. As mentioned before, the single digit then arrived at is assigned a particular significance according to the method used.

When someone changes their name they will get a new name number. This is believed to change certain parts of the individual's personality and destiny. Next, the birth number is viewed as an extension of the name number. This number represents the traits/talents that you desire to have. It is believed that your birth number reveals your inner nature and life purpose. To find your birth number you add together all the numbers in the month, day, and year you were born. Then, you reduce that number to a single digit number.

Example:

- James' birthday is May 5th, 1997
 - $5+5+1+9+9+7$
 - = 36
 - = $3+6$
 - = 9

In the Pythagorean system, there are three master numbers (11, 22, 33) which do not get reduced to a single number. Hence, if your name number or birth number comes out to one of these master numbers, then you do not combine the numbers to form a single digit. Finally, the single digit name number and birth number are assigned a particular meaning and significance based on the Pythagorean system.^{[15][16]}

Chaldean system

The Chaldeans were ancient people who ruled Babylonia from 625–539 BC. Therefore, this system is also known as the Babylonian numerology system. Chaldean numerology is used to recognize the energy changes that occur when you or someone else speaks or thinks. The sound of someone speaking comes out in vibrations of different frequencies that affect the speaker and those around them. The Chaldean system uses the numbers 1-8. The number 9 is not used in the system because it is regarded as sacred due to its connection to infinity. The Chaldean system uses this 1-8 number system on the name that the individual is currently using because that is the energy that would currently be projected. Then, each letter is assigned to a number one to eight, based on the Chaldean numerology chart. The numbers are assigned to letters of the Latin alphabet as follows:

- 1 = a, q, y, i, j
- 2 = b, r, k
- 3 = g, c, l, s
- 4 = d, m, t
- 5 = e, h, n, x
- 6 = u, v, w
- 7 = o, z
- 8 = f, p

Example: Assume James Duncan Halpert normally goes by Jim.

- Jim
 - $1+1+4$
 - = 6
- Duncan

- $4+6+5+3+1+5$
- $= 24$
- $= 2+4$
- $= 6$
- Halpert
 - $5+1+3+8+5+2+4$
 - $= 28$
 - $= 2+8$
 - $= 10$
 - $= 1+0$
 - $= 1$

Then, Jim Duncan Halpert's name numbers are 6, 6, and 1.

The Chaldean system recognizes the same master numbers that were present in the Pythagorean system. These master numbers are 11, 22, and 33. The master numbers do not get reduced to single digits. In the Chaldean system, an individual's first name is their social persona and how they present themselves in public and the energy that comes with that. The first name also indicates the individual's personal interests and habits. The middle name is the soul energy and it reveals the truth about your inner soul and the deepest parts of yourself. The middle name shows the hidden talents, desires, and what your soul is trying to reach for. The last name is related to the domestic influence of the family.^[17]

Abjad system

The Arabic system of numerology is known as Abjad notation or Abjad numerals. In this system each letter of Arabic alphabet has a numerical value. This system is the foundation of *ilm-ul-cipher*, the Science of Cipher, and *ilm-ul-huroof*, the Science of Alphabet:

1=أ 2=ب 3=ج 4=د 5=هـ 6=و 7=ز 8=ح 9=ط

10=ي 20=ك 30=ل 40=م 50=ن 60=س 70=ع 80=ف 90=ص

100=ق 200=ر 300=ش 400=ت 500=ث 600=خ 700=ذ 800=ض 900=ظ

1000=غ

Chinese numerology

Some Chinese assign a different set of meanings to the numbers and certain number combinations are considered luckier than others. In general, even numbers are considered lucky, since it is believed that good luck comes in pairs.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and its associated fields such as acupuncture, base their system on mystical numerical associations, such as the “12 vessels circulating blood and air corresponding to the 12 rivers flowing toward the Central Kingdom; and 365 parts of the body, one for each day of the year” being the basis of locating acupuncture points.^[18]

Chinese number definitions

Cantonese frequently associate numbers with the following connotations (based on its sound), which may differ in other varieties of Chinese:

1. 一 [jét] – sure
2. 二 [ji:] – easy 易 [ji:]

3. 三 [sá:m] – live 生 [sá:ŋ] but it can also be seen as a halved eight when using Arabic numerals (3) (8) and so considered unlucky.
4. 四 [sēi] – considered unlucky since 4 is a homophone with the word for death or suffering 死 [sěi], yet only in the Shanghainese, it is a homophone of water (水) and is considered lucky because water is associated with money.
5. 五 [ŋ] – the self, me, myself 吾 [ŋ], nothing, never 唔 [ŋ, m] in the Shanghainese, it is a homophone of fish (鱼)
6. 六 [lù:k] – easy and smooth, all the way
7. 七 [tsʰét] – a slang/vulgar word in Cantonese.
8. 八 [pā:t] – sudden fortune, prosperity 發 [fā:t]
9. 九 [kěu] – long in time 久 [kěu], enough 夠 [kěu] or a slang/vulgar word derived from dog 狗 [kěu] in Cantonese

Some "lucky number" combinations include:

- 99 – doubly long in time, hence eternal; used in the name of a popular Chinese American supermarket chain, 99 Ranch Market.
- 168 – many premium-pay telephone numbers in China begin with this number, which is considered lucky. It is also the name of a motel chain in China (Motel 168).
- 888 – Three times the prosperity, means "wealthy wealthy wealthy".

Indian numerology

The list is shown below:

- 1 = A, I, J, Q, Y
- 2 = B, K, R
- 3 = C, G, L, S
- 4 = D, M, T
- 5 = E, H, N, X
- 6 = U, V, W
- 7 = O, Z
- 8 = F, P

There is no assignment for the number 9. Numerologists analyze double-digit numbers from 10 to 99.

Other uses of the term

Subcarrier Spacing and Symbol Length in 5G/NR Wireless Communication Systems

Fifth generation (5G), a.k.a. New Radio (NR), uses the term "numerology" to describe the combination of subcarrier spacing and symbol length. For example, in NR(5G) several different numerology (i.e., different subcarrier spacing and symbol length) are supported whereas in LTE there is only one numerology.^[19]

To describe questionable concepts based on possibly coincidental numerical patterns

Scientific theories are sometimes labeled "numerology" if their primary inspiration appears to be a set of patterns rather than scientific observations. This colloquial use of the term is quite common within the scientific community and it is mostly used to dismiss a theory as questionable science.

The best known example of "numerology" in science involves the coincidental resemblance of certain large numbers that intrigued such eminent men as mathematical physicist Paul Dirac, mathematician Hermann Weyl and astronomer Arthur Stanley Eddington. These numerical coincidences refer to such quantities as the ratio of the age of the universe to the atomic unit of time, the number of electrons in the universe, and the difference in strengths between gravity and the electric force for the electron and proton. ("Is the Universe Fine Tuned for Us?", Stenger, V.J., page 3^[20]).

The discovery of atomic triads, an early attempt to sort the elements into some logical order by their physical properties, was once considered a form of numerology, and yet ultimately led to the construction of the periodic table. Here the atomic weight of the lightest element and the heaviest are summed, and averaged, and the average is found to be very close to that of the intermediate weight element. This didn't work with every triplet in the same group, but worked often enough to allow later workers to create generalizations.

Large number co-incidences continue to fascinate many mathematical physicists. For instance, James G. Gilson has constructed a "Quantum Theory of Gravity" based loosely on Dirac's large number hypothesis.^[21]

Wolfgang Pauli was also fascinated by the appearance of certain numbers, including 137, in physics.^[22]

British mathematician I. J. Good wrote:

There have been a few examples of numerology that have led to theories that transformed society: see the mention of Kirchhoff and Balmer in Good (1962, p. 316) ... and one can well include Kepler on account of his third law. It would be fair enough to say that numerology was the origin of the theories of electromagnetism, quantum mechanics, gravitation.... So I intend no disparagement when I describe a formula as numerological. When a numerological formula is proposed, then we may ask whether it is correct. ... I think an appropriate definition of correctness is that the formula has a good explanation, in a Platonic sense, that is, the explanation could be based on a good theory that is not yet known but 'exists' in the universe of possible reasonable ideas.

— I. J. Good^[23]

Attempts by gamblers to see patterns in random chance

Some players apply methods that are sometimes called numerological in games which involve numbers but no skill, such as bingo, roulette, keno, or lotteries. Although no strategy can be applied to increase odds in such games, players may employ "lucky numbers" to find what they think will help them. There is no evidence that any such "numerological strategy" yields a better outcome than pure chance, but the methods are sometimes encouraged, e.g. by casino owners.^[24]

In popular culture

Numerology is a popular plot device in fiction. Sometimes it is a casual element used for comic effect, such as in an episode titled "The Séance" of the 1950s TV sitcom I Love Lucy, where Lucy dabbles in numerology. Sometimes it is a central motif of the storyline, such as the movie π , in which the protagonist meets a numerologist searching for hidden numerical patterns in the Torah; the TV show Touch which focuses almost entirely on the role of numerology in the events and coincidences of any person's life; and the movie The Number 23, based on claimed mysteries of the number 23 (itself based on the Law of Fives).

Numerology is a topic taught in Arithmancy class in the Harry Potter series of books. In Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, the third book of the series, Arithmancy is offered as an elective course. In Harry Potter's world, arithmancy was used as the practice of assigning numerical value to words in order to predict the future.^[25]

See also

- Abjad
- Biblical numerology
- List of topics characterized as pseudoscience
- Number of the Beast
- Numbers in Egyptian mythology
- Numbers in Norse mythology
- Significance of numbers in Judaism
- Synchromysticism
- Synchronicity

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