



Supreme Mathematics

The Five Percenter Model of Divine Self-Realization and Its Commonalities to Interpretations of the Pythagorean Tetractys in Western Esotericism

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Abstract

This contribution aims to explore the historical predecessors of the Five Percenter model of self-realization, as popularized by Hip Hop artists such as Supreme Team, Rakim Allah, Brand Nubian, Wu-Tang Clan, or Sunz of Man. As compared to frequent considerations of the phenomenon as a creative mythological background for a socio-political struggle, Five Percenter teachings shall be discussed as contemporary interpretations of historical models of self-realization in various philosophical, religious, and esoteric systems. By putting the coded system of the tenfold Supreme Mathematics as one of its core teachings in context with the Pythagorean Tetractys, an arrangement of ten points in four lines, the commonalities between the sequence and concepts attributed to the respective numbers will be demonstrated.

Keywords

Black Islam – Five Percent Nation – Supreme Mathematics – Tetractys – Esotericism

1 Introduction

The Five Percenters¹ – founded in 1964 by the former Nation of Islam member Clarence 13X Smith, or simply *Allah*, as he is referred to by his followers² – have been popularized and brought to wider attention by the many affiliated Hip Hop artists during the last three decades.³ The rich mythological background of Black American Islam, introduced in its cultural dimension by the Moorish Science Temple in 1913, politicized by the Nation of Islam, and distilled in its esoteric essence by the Five Percent Nation, added a fascinating secretive, enigmatic dimension to the music and the aesthetics of Hip Hop culture. As such, Five Percenter ideology has been referred to as a *tradition of black hermeticism*,⁴ popularized in the form of *hip-hop Gnosticism*.⁵

The impressive development of the movement from a handful of mainly underaged or teenage “first born” followers,⁶ recruited in the streets of Harlem – or *Mecca*, in Five Percenter terminology – can partly be explained with its degree of flexibility, as compared to the formalized dress code and strict behavioral regulations of the Nation of Islam. In contrast, the highly inclusive approach of Five Percenters leaves external appearance and overall behavior patterns as much to the judgement of each individual follower as the respective interpretations regarding each *God's* personal truth and spiritual realities. It is exactly this state of mind that made *Allah* part ways with the Nation of Islam, in which he had been involved as a student of Malcolm X⁷ and lieutenant of its paramilitary wing, the *Fruit of Islam*.⁸ *Allah's* tolerant attitude towards alcohol and drugs, gambling, and illegal occupations quickly won the Five Percenters the reputation as a violent and highly dangerous street gang, with journalists even comparing them to the Hitler youth due the strong influence he exercised on his disciples.⁹ His level of control was impressively demonstrated during the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination, which sparked riots all over

1 Knight, *The Five Percenters*; the name alludes to the claim that eighty-five percent of the population are kept “deaf, dumb, and blind,” manipulated by an elite of ten percent in possession of the truth, while the remaining five percent are the “poor, righteous teachers,” trying to educate and “civilize” the masses. The Five Percenters are also known as Nation of the Gods and Earths.

2 Collins, *A Disciple of Malcolm X*.

3 Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*.

4 Sanneh, Killah Priest, *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 165.

5 Sanneh, Killah Priest, *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 165.

6 Macintosh, *The Bomb*, p. 3 et seq.

7 Collins, *A Disciple of Malcolm X*.

8 Macintosh, *The Bomb*, p. 2.

9 Knight, *The Five Percenters*, p. 122.

the country but did not result in such in Harlem, where *Allah* managed to convince residents to keep things calm.¹⁰ In return, John Lindsay, then mayor of New York, acknowledged him as a local community leader – with the town still renting the storefront building housing *Allah's School in Mecca* “at a cost of a dollar a year.”¹¹ On the other hand, the group faced severe control and suppression in prison environments and is considered as illegal in various states’ correctional facilities.¹² As compared to followers of the Nation of Islam, who are considered as related to Sunni Muslim groups, Five Percenters are not allowed to keep teachings in written form or gather for ceremonial purposes, since they are labeled “violent, racially supremacist gang.”¹³ Only recently, the Five Percent Nation has been acknowledged as a religion, quite contrary to their self-perception, however, since “they reject any scent of organized religion” and “prefer to think of their Nation as a culture rather than a faith.”¹⁴

While most studies on the subject focus on the functional re-interpretation of Islam and its central claim of *the Black man is God* as a means of empowerment and emancipation,¹⁵ other aspects of the phenomenon clearly hint towards its inner nature as an authentic system of self-realization, modelled after key concepts of past religious and philosophical schools.¹⁶ In order to illustrate this point, parallels between the Five Percenter system of *Supreme Mathematics* – a sequence of ten numbers representing a system of esoteric concepts and meaning – and interpretations of the Pythagorean Tetractys in Western Esotericism will be demonstrated.

2 Five Percenters Between Gnostic Traditions and Creative Empowerment

Cuba presented a variety of historical references regarding the deification of man linked to the Five Percenter concept of the *God Body* in various cultures and religions.¹⁷ Similarly, Shabazz suggested the involvement of Nation of Islam founder Wallace D. Fard in Theosophy and Sufism.¹⁸ The consideration of

¹⁰ Allah, *The Bomb*, p. 5 et seq.

¹¹ Knight, *The Five Percenters*, p. 98.

¹² Moore, *The Five Percenters*; Tanner, *Five Percent' Adherents*.

¹³ Durkin Richer, *Judge*, para 3.

¹⁴ Moore, *The Five Percenters*, para. 3.

¹⁵ Miyakawa, “*The Duty of the Civilized*”; Aidi, “*Verily*”; Gray, *The Traumatic Mysticism*.

¹⁶ Gray, *Show and Prove*.

¹⁷ Cuba, *Black Gods*.

¹⁸ Shabazz, *Essays*.

a possible influence of Islamic mysticism on the so-called Black Muslim movements is furthermore supported by the presence of Shaykh Daoud Ahmad Faisal, a Moroccan initiate in the Alawi Sufi Order who arrived in New York in 1907 and founded the Islamic Propagation Center in America in 1928.¹⁹ Next to being a contemporary of Fard, he is said to have “worked with the Moorish Science Temple”²⁰ of Timothy Drew, or *Noble Drew Ali*.²¹ Prior to the founding of the Moorish Science Temple, the latter is said to have been influenced by Abdul Hamid Suleiman, a self-declared masonic Muslim who emerged from the Black Shriner circles of the Prince Hall masons and founded the *Mecca Medina Temple of Ancient Free and Operative Masons from 1 to 96 degrees* in 1910 – and hence may be considered the first one to propose a cultural interpretation of the Islamic religion aimed at Black Americans.²²

Considerations of the Five Percenters as “some sort of indigenous African American Sufism”²³ have been brought forth by Knight but also put into question by the same author. In short, the aim of this contribution is to add a hidden contextual element to the consideration of the phenomenon as a hybrid “pop-cultural tool-kit for a modern-day gnostic experience,”²⁴ as compared to its perception as a self-styled, functional, pragmatic doctrine, designed to serve the cause of socio-political struggles.²⁵ In consequence, it shall be demonstrated that the Five Percenters’ claim of divinity needs to be regarded as more than a creative reaction to racist realities, but a legitime conclusion derived from the same consciousness that birthed Sufi mystics and Gnostic masters.

While authors like Knight simply reject such possibilities by pointing towards the conception of an externalized “mystery God in the sky”²⁶ in the context of Islamic mysticism as compared to the “true and living” principle of the divine experienced by Five Percenters, they fail to grasp the more heretic perspective of specific Sufi sects such as the Bektashi,²⁷ for instance. On the other hand, communicating personal enlightenment within the framework of established orthodox limits has always been a risky task, as exemplified by the Sufi martyrs who have died by the hand of their Muslim brothers due to perceived acts of blasphemy. As such, the divine conception of historical figures

19 Al-Ahari, *Islam*.

20 Al-Ahari, *Islam*, p. 7.

21 Nance, *Respectability*.

22 Bowen, *Abdul Hamid Suleiman*.

23 Knight, *The Five Percenters*, p. 232.

24 Gansinger, *The Influence of Islam*, p. 109.

25 Berg, *Mythmaking*.

26 Andrews, “Ain’t No Spook God.”

27 Clayer, *The Bektashi Institutions*.

like Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240), Beyazid Bistami (804–847), or Hallaj al-Mansur (858–922) was most likely more in line with the Five Percenter vision than the strict reliance on the “mystery God” of the literalists. However, even Islamic scholasticism somehow acknowledges the Five Percenter perspective of the impersonated “true and living God” in its condemnation of “*ta‘īl*, the heretical idea that God is totally disconnected from the world”²⁸ and its consideration of man’s status as God’s viceregent on earth:²⁹

Servanthood goes back to the divine incomparability, the fact that human beings are nothing in the face of God. Viceregency goes back to the divine similarity, the fact that human beings manifest nothing but the attributes of God.

As such, the Five Percenter *Knowledge of Self*, hence, “the process of recognizing one’s inherent divinity,”³⁰ constitutes more than Gray’s suggestions of “the embodiment of traumatic mysticism”³¹ but may rather be seen as a contemporary manifestation of gnostic perspectives, informed by previous systems of self-realization that were hidden throughout the ages in the religious and philosophical streams of the time. This perspective would oppose Gray’s characterization of the Five Percenter teachings as “Mystical Non-Mysticism,”³² hence, his suggestion that underprivileged urban dwellers creatively responded to their socio-economic environment by providing a mystical lens through which these realities may be perceived and transformed. While the functional value and empowering nature of the identity construction are obvious enough and frequently incorporated in previous literature, the present study aims at exploring the commonalities of Five Percenters and Black Islam with pre-dating sources of esoteric nature, developed for purposes that transcend mundane matters.

Therefore, instead of reviewing the *secular* history of the movement, the focus lies on providing evidence for historical predecessors in Western Esotericism that informed the cryptic system of coded doctrine and symbolism introduced by *Allah*. For this purpose, his tool of *Supreme Mathematics* – a tenfold circular sequence of concepts and qualities linked to numerical values³³ – shall be

28 Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, p. 53.

29 Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, p. 55.

30 Gray, *The Traumatic Mysticism*, p. 226.

31 Gray, *The Traumatic Mysticism*, p. 217.

32 Gray, *The Traumatic Mysticism*, p. 220.

33 Gray, *The Traumatic Mysticism*, pp. 227–229.

analyzed for its commonalities with interpretations of Pythagoras' *Tetractys*,³⁴ an arrangement of ten points in four lines that has been linked to many esoteric movements, such as the Theosophical Society.³⁵ Blavatsky's³⁶ Heptomad mystery, "thus forming, with the higher triad, or Kether, the Crown, the full number of the Sephirothal Tree – the 10, the Total in Unity, or the Universe"³⁷ illustrates the relation between elemental nature (4) perfected by human spirit (3) and the divine, holy, trinity: "The Pythagoreans called the number seven the vehicle of life, as it contained body and soul. They explained it by saying, that the human body consisted of four principal elements, and that the soul is triple, comprising reason, passion, and desire."³⁸ The indicated universality via reference to the tenfold Jewish Sephiroth reflects "the Tetractys as the fountain of perennial nature": "Thus Number Seven, as a compound of 3 and 4, is the factor element in every ancient religion, because it is the factor element in nature."³⁹

3 Supreme Mathematics and Interpretations of the Pythagorean Tetractys

The harmony and mathematical equiformity of the double evolution – spiritual and physical – are elucidated only in the universal numerals of Pythagoras, who built his system entirely upon the so-called "metrical speech" of the Hindu Vedas.⁴⁰

While the numerous accounts about the life of Pythagoras and his estimated travels are hardly verifiable, an initiation period into the astronomical and mathematical mysteries of Egypt is widely agreed upon:⁴¹ "In the literary genre of arithmology which has influenced Western esotericism profoundly Pythagoras is portrayed as *the first Western initiate* into the 'mysticism of numbers.'"⁴² As compared to earlier manifestations of number symbolism

34 Oliver, *The Pythagorean Triangle*.

35 Fitger, *The Tetractys*; Brach, "Mathematical Esotericism".

36 Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891) founded the Theosophical Society together with Henry Steel Olcott in 1875.

37 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 440.

38 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, p. 418.

39 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 442.

40 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 9.

41 Godwin, *Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism*; Higgins, *Anacalypsis*, p. 46.

42 Fitger, *The Tetractys*, p. 12.

that “had focused on the importance of individual numbers (often 3,7, 9),”⁴³ in arithmology, which has been traced back to Plato’s consideration of the decade as the ideal number, “all numbers were linked to the decade and thus organized in a system that (in addition to its philosophical and theological meaning) accounted for the purely mathematical properties of numbers.”⁴⁴ In line with Blavatsky’s assertion that “[a]ll systems of religious mysticism are based on numerals,” the system of *Supreme Mathematics* constitutes a central element of the Five Percenter thought.

The teachings of the Five Percent Nation are built on the concept of *Supreme Understanding*, which is derived from the question-and-answer format of the *Secret Ritual* devised by Nation of Islam-founder Wallace D. Fard and elaborated into the *Lost-found Muslim Lessons* or *120 Degrees* by his *prophet* and successor *The Honorable Elijah Muhammad*. *Allah* incorporated his alphanumerical system of the *Supreme Alphabet* and the *Science of Supreme Mathematics* as keys for the deeper interpretation and application of the lessons. Being devised as a “key to understanding man’s relationship to the universe,”⁴⁵ the system shares its ambition with all the historical declinations outlining the sequence of the seven-fold emanation sequence “by which Cause flows into Generation and eventually produces bodies, the latter being objectifications in matter of superphysical paradigms or archetypes.”⁴⁶ The lexical counterpart to the *Supreme Mathematics*, the *Supreme Alphabet*, has claimed to be influenced by the Arabic spiritual practice of *Hurufa-i-jay-Hurufa Ab-jay* that attributes mystical meanings to each letter.⁴⁷ Hence, Five Percenters devised a coded system of concepts which turns the first ten letters into *Allah – Born – Cee – Divine – Equality – Father – God – His/Her – Islam*, for instance. However, in consideration of the Pythagorean *Tetractys*, which has been identified as an influence on numerous religious and metaphysical systems, such as the Theosophical Society,⁴⁸ the focus here shall be on the tenfold *Supreme Mathematics* and the possible commonalities with the former. To begin with, there are some surprising similarities to be observed between the respective intentions of Pythagoras and *Allah*. As formulated by Ekpo:

Supreme Mathematics is a series of numeral elements that are associated with a principle. These principles represent an order of thought

43 Ibid.

44 Fitger, *The Tetractys*, p. 12 et seq.

45 Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, p. 25.

46 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 219.

47 Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, p. 29.

48 Fitger, *The Tetractys*, p. 88 et seq.

and behavior that is interpreted as the proper direction of cognition. Supported by basic arithmetic, Supreme Mathematics is applied using addition. Supreme Mathematics is applied to 120 lessons as a method of making connections between the morale of each lesson and one's reality.⁴⁹

Interestingly, this perspective eerily resonates with Hall's interpretation of Pythagoras' use of mathematical principles as a teaching method:

Pythagoras was well aware that inconstancy and inconsistency render valueless the greater part of human rumination, – hence he regarded the quality of exactness as essential to true mental functioning. He knew that a mind trained to recognize but one right answer to any problem in mathematics would likewise recognise that there is but one right solution to any problem in life.⁵⁰

This description is in line with the following definition of the working mechanism in the Five Percenter system of *Knowledge of Self*: “This way of cognitive functioning enforced an individual to maintain a consistent level of self-awareness and it posted positively on their ability to reach their full potential.”⁵¹ Hall, on the other hand, is pointing out the central function of mathematics as the “supreme discipline in the science of knowing:”

Mathematics is the supreme discipline in the science of knowing. More mystics have come into an understanding of the unseen side of life and realized the unfoldment of their inner perceptions through mathematics than through any other science known to man.⁵²

He goes on to state that: “He who understands mathematics can never conceive of himself as existing in an unorganized universe nor regard himself as an exception to the immutable laws of Being.”⁵³ Hall elaborates on that thought on another occasion:

Between the rational soul and mathematics is the sympathetic bond of similars. Preciseness – which is a quality of Number – rejoices in the continuity of similar and retires from the malarrangements of

49 Ekpo, *The Teachings*, para. 12.

50 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 124.

51 Ekpo, *The Teachings*, para. 13.

52 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 124.

53 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 124 et seq.

dissimilars. In facing inward toward its own intrinsic perfection, the self becomes Number regarding No Number, or that Cipher which precedes numeration.⁵⁴

In *Supreme Mathematics*, the term *Cipher* is attributed to *Zero* and *Ten*. The other numbers are defined as: 1 – *Knowledge*, 2 – *Wisdom*, 3 – *Understanding*, 4 – *Culture or Freedom*, 5 – *Power or Refinement*, 6 – *Equality*, 7 – *God*, 8 – *Build or Destroy*, 9 – *Born*. Further interpretations of this alphanumerical system have been turned into a song by early Five Percenters like Knowledge Allah and got adopted as the *Universal Anthem* or *The Enlightener*, intonated at every congregational meeting:⁵⁵

Chorus:

Peace Allah, Allah-U-Justice

Peace Allah, Allah-U-Justice

each and every day

each and every way

I'm going to Show and Prove

and teach the righteous way

(Chorus)

the Knowledge [1] is the Foundation

the Wisdom [2] is the way

the Understanding [3] shows you, that you are on your way

(Chorus)

the Culture [4] is I-God the Power

[5] is the Truth Equality

[6] only shows you that you have planted your roots

(Chorus)

God [7] came to teach us of the righteous way how we must Build [8]

with that

which he taught us build to be Born [9] on this glorious day

(Chorus)

the Knowledge [1] of the Cipher [0]

is to enlighten you

just to let you know that GOD is right amongst you

(Chorus)

PEACE!

54 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 258.

55 Knight, *The Five Percenters*, p. 100 et seq.

However, in line with Brach's⁵⁶ definition of arithmetic as "a 'qualitative' approach to numbers and mathematical objects in general," depicting a "correlative thinking" that is "linking the quantitative values of mathematical entities to a vast array of correspondences," Five Percenter Saladin Allah⁵⁷ relates the intrinsic logic encapsulated in the alphanumerical system and its consideration of inherent concepts as elements and composites as follows:⁵⁸

For example, when some folks say Wisdom Understanding births Power [$2 + 3 = 5$], they just talk about Power without ever elaborating on HOW Power, in principle, is a composite or synthesis of the individual principles of Wisdom and Understanding. If this were Chemistry, Power would be a Compound and Wisdom and Understanding would be the Elements that are bonded together to create that Compound. As Elements they have their own unique identity and when fused together they forge a new substance called a Compound. Water [H_2O] is a natural Compound composed of the Elements Hydrogen and Oxygen. [...] What makes our Mathematics Supreme is our ability to demonstrate the higher application of life principles through any field of mathematics, not just simple addition in Arithmetic.

The principles attributed the numerical system of *Supreme Mathematics* will be juxtaposed with Hall's and Busenbark's interpretations of the tenfold Pythagorean Tetractys in the subsequent section.

4 Numerical Interpretations in Juxtaposition

In the following, the core concept behind each number in the *Supreme Mathematics* shall be juxtaposed with corresponding interpretations of the *Tetractys* as presented by Hall and Busenbark.⁵⁹ It must be noted that,

⁵⁶ Brach, "Mathematical Esotericism," p. 405.

⁵⁷ Saladin Allah is a Five Percenter rapper and educator based in New York. He serves as a Human Rights Commissioner in the city of Niagara Falls and is the founder of the Atlantis School For Gifted Youngsters, see Allah, *Atlantis School*.

⁵⁸ Allah, *Atlantis School*, para. 4.

⁵⁹ In 1949, Ernest Busenbark published a concise work on phallic symbolism in ancient and present religions, adding on to and reintroducing the work of pioneering authors such as the influential occultist Hargrave Jennings (d. 1890) and the religious historian Godfrey Higgins (1772–1833).

while Hall's overview on commentaries of "Nicomachus, Theon of Smyrna, Proclus, Porphyry, Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, Aristotle, and other early authorities"⁶⁰ is rather extensive, the few lines dedicated to each number by Busenbark render each resemblance even more striking. Hall's discussion of the number One, interpreted as ALLAH for A as the first letter in the *Supreme Alphabet* and linked to the aspect of *Principle* attributed to the number by Five Percenter Saladin Allah,⁶¹ starts with the following statement: "Monad – 1 – is so called because it remains always in the same condition – that is, separate from multitude. Its attributes are as follows: It is called mind, because the mind is stable and has preeminence."⁶²

While the mention of the "Monad" matches the alphabetical association of ALLAH as the infinite, creative force, the term "mind" resonates with the Five Percenter concept of *Knowledge*.⁶³ A passage of Busenbark's interpretation of the number's symbolic value in Pythagoras' system likewise mentions synonymous terms, as well as aspects of stability: "Represents unity, origin of source of all things. It is identified with the point and is thus a unit having position and magnitude. Identified with reason (intellect) because it is unchangeable."⁶⁴ References of "reason" and "intellect" seemingly fit with the attribution of *Knowledge*, the "origin of source of all things" as well as "magnitude" correspond with Five Percenter interpretation of *Sun, Moon, and Stars* as *Man, Woman, and Child*.⁶⁵ In addition, the characteristic of the number One as "unchangeable" distinguishes the male or solar manifestation from its female counterpart, the moon, *Wisdom*, or *Values* elaborated from *Principles* and manifested in *Words* and *Actions* in the Five Percenter system. In accordance to that, Busenbark notes: "On the principle that the universe consists of a dual system in which all existence is composed of pairs of opposites, this figure is considered a female or negative symbol."⁶⁶ Hall's interpretation of the gender attributed to the first two numbers is in line with the Five Percenter perspective: "As the monad is the father, so the duad is the mother."⁶⁷ Even his initial attribution of *Wisdom* to the monad is put in perspective by the following consideration:

60 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 215.

61 Allah, *Supreme Mathematics 4, 5 & 6*.

62 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 215.

63 Ancient Order of Free Asiatics, *Supreme Mathematics*.

64 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 241.

65 Knight, *The Five Percenters*, p. 104.

66 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 241.

67 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 216.

While the monad is the symbol of wisdom, the duad is the symbol of ignorance, for in it exists the sense of separateness – which sense is the beginning of ignorance. The duad, however, is also the mother of wisdom, for ignorance – out of the nature of itself – invariably gives birth to wisdom.⁶⁸

As compared to the “unchangeable” sun, the moon is going through a permanent process of waxing and waning, reflected in the female cycle of fertility. The definition of *Be/Born* for the second letter in the *Supreme Alphabet* similarly fits this perspective. As a matter of fact, Hall’s following remark reveals an important correspondence between the sequence and attribution of the numbers Two and Three in *Supreme Mathematics*: “In the Cabala it is also declared that Chochmah flows into Binah; that is, Wisdom flows into Understanding.”⁶⁹

Not surprisingly, the quality of *Understanding*, represented by the number Three in *Supreme Mathematics* equally fits with the Pythagorean determination, which Busenbark characterized as “identified with creation and resurrection or renewal, the third member in the trinity.”⁷⁰ As for Hall, who refers to the triad as the “cause of wisdom and understanding,”⁷¹ the relation between the first three numbers symbolized by the image of *Man, Woman and Child*, or *Sun, Moon and Stars* once again clearly resonates with his explanations:

The sacredness of the triad and its symbol – the triangle – is derived from the fact that it is made up of the monad and the duad. The monad is the symbol of the Divine Father and the duad of the Great Mother. The triad being made of these two is therefore androgynous and is symbolic of the fact that God gave birth to His worlds out of Himself, who in His creative aspect is always symbolized by the triangle.⁷²

It is also associated with the alphabetical interpretation of *Cee* or *See*, hinting towards comprehension, and the aspect of *Priorities* as a result of *Values* derived from *Principles* among Five Percenters.

As a logical prolongation, the number Four – associated with the fourth letter *D* or *Divine* in the *Supreme Alphabet* – calls for the acknowledgement, embrace and extension of the divine nature of man into an all-encompassing

68 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 216.

69 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 210.

70 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 241.

71 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 217.

72 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 217.

lifestyle or *Culture*. According to Saladin Allah, the paired aspect of *Freedom* hints towards the possibilities to actively choose one's habits regarding behavior, diet, sexual activity etc.,⁷³ while acknowledging the restrictions defined by the four natural elements and fundamental forces. Hall's comments on the tetrad seem to reflect the considerations of the *I-God* as the divine "soul of man" and the dependency of everything in nature on the number, from the four elements to the four directions, seasons, and so on: "Pythagoras maintained that the soul of man consists of a tetrad, the four powers of the soul being mind, science, opinion, and sense. The tetrad connects all beings, elements, numbers, and seasons."⁷⁴ These aspects are also incorporated in Busenbark's elaborations on the number:

Is identified with the material world and its divisions; the 4 corners and 4 winds of the earth, the 4 rivers of Eden and the 4 rivers of the old Babylonian mythology. The mysterious Pythagorean Tetractys or 4 rows of dots increasing from 1 to 4 was symbolic of the stages of creation.⁷⁵

However, Hall also notes the following in this regard, which very much captures the qualities of *Culture* and *Freedom* – the field "in whom we live and move and have our being" – within the confinements of natural existence as a result of the "mundane fabrications" of "the Demiurgus:"

The nature of the tetrad being that of the first solid or body, reveals why it is declared to be the symbol of God. The 4 is the Demiurgus, whose substantial nature is the proper field of mundane fabrications. As four surfaces are the least number that can enclose an area, so the Demiurgus is the first of areas or fields; and consequently the one in whom we live and move and have our being.⁷⁶

The number Five is linked to the concept of *Power/Refinement* as well as to the aspect of *Senses*, truth, fire, and cleansing, which matches Busenbark's accentuation of its Greek interpretation as "a symbol of light, health and vitality."⁷⁷ In an additional similarity to the aspect of *Power*, he points out that among "the Israelites it was the number of military organization."⁷⁸ Hall

73 Allah, *Supreme Mathematics 4, 5 & 6*.

74 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 217.

75 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 242.

76 Hall, *Lectures*, p. 260.

77 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 243.

78 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 243.

introduces the corresponding figure of the pentagram as composed of the tetrad, representing the four elements plus the monad:

It was customary for the ancient philosophers to conceal the element of earth under the symbol of the dragon, and many of the heroes of the antiquity were told to go forth and slay the dragon. Hence, they drove their sword (the monad) into the body of the dragon (the tetrad). This resulted in the formation of the pentad, a symbol of the victory of the spiritual nature over the material nature.⁷⁹

He furthermore draws a line between the “spiritual nature” of the monad and the ether, or the pure aspect of *Knowledge* in Five Percenter terminology, that bears in it the power to refine the “material nature” of the body.⁸⁰

As for the number Six, which is associated with *Equality* and the aspect of *Balance* by Five Percenters, Hall’s associations of “harmony” and “marriage” provide for correspondences of striking similarity: “Among the Greeks, harmony and the soul were considered to be similar in nature, because all souls are harmonic. The hexad is also the symbol of marriage, because it is formed by the union of two triangles, one masculine and the other feminine.”⁸¹ He furthermore links it to the concept of “balance” and “equilibrium” as a precondition for health: “Among the keywords given to the hexad are: time, for it is the measure of the duration; panacea, because health is equilibrium, and the hexad is a balance number.”⁸²

As a direct result, the subsequent Seven with its associated aspects of *Supreme Intelligence* and God-orientation⁸³ not only mirrors divine qualities as a numerical expression of God in the *Supreme Alphabet*, but likewise resonates with the *Tetractys*. Busenbark noted the following: “One of the most venerated and most magical of numbers, the number *par excellence* among the nations of antiquity. Pythagoras called it ‘the vehicle of life’. It contains body and soul, spirit and matter, since it contains the triangle and the square.”⁸⁴ The notion of “the vehicle of life” directly translates to the Five Percenter self-perception as the *God Body*, symbolized by the number Seven, which can be seen as a variation of the hermetic principle of divine spirit encapsulated in its vehicle of matter, the tetrad – represented by the union of the Three and the Four, the

79 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 218.

80 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 218.

81 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 219.

82 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 219.

83 Allah, *Supreme Mathematics* 7, 8, 9, 0.

84 Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 243.

triangle and the square in Pythagorean geometry.⁸⁵ Similarly, Hall points out that Pythagoreans called the heptad “worthy of veneration”⁸⁶ and relates it to the seven Elohim in Judaism. He furthermore gives the following explanation that is in line with the *God Body* of the Five Percenter: “The 3 (spirit, mind, and soul) descend into the 4 (the world), the sum being the 7, or the mystic nature of man, consisting of a threefold spiritual body and a fourfold material form.”⁸⁷

In consequence of the divine quality manifested by the Seven, the number Eight signifies the corresponding responsibility that accompanies such a high station by the pair of *Build or Destroy* as signifying the potential outcomes. As noted by Five Percenter Saladin Allah, its double function as a lemniscate hints towards its aspect *Inifinty*, as does its shape portray the two interconnected spheres of *interior* and *exterior*.⁸⁸ He furthermore links it to the infinite cycle of creation and degeneration, Shiva and Vishnu, or *Generate Observe Destroy*, as in another Five Percenter backronym for GOD.⁸⁹ Busenbark points out that the number is related to the Deluge in the Chinese tradition, which would likewise fit these interpretations.

According to Oliver,⁹⁰ this “shows that eight was esteemed a sacred number; for the tradition was universal, that the world had been destroyed by a deluge of waters, and eight persons preserved in a vessel which floated on its surface.”⁹¹ He similarly points out that “with the cabalists it was the number of Jesod or Mercury, the dry water, or water of immersion, in which lay the whole foundation of the art of transmuting metals.”⁹² In other interpretations, the alchemical process of turning lead to gold has been associated with tantric practices aiming at the transmutation of sexual hormones, as captured in the following excerpt of the *Nei Jing Tu*,⁹³ a Taoist classic on the subject: “The swallowing of saliva (Yin; mercury) and the moderation of the dispersals of semen (Yang; lead) was believed to preserve the qi, which forms the essential ingredients for the internal elixir.”⁹⁴ This interpretation is further in line with Five Percenter rapper Saladin Allah’s following remarks on the significance of

85 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 195.

86 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 219.

87 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 220.

88 Allah, *The #8*.

89 Allah, *The #8*.

90 Oliver, *The Pythagorean Triangle*.

91 Oliver, *The Pythagorean Triangle*, p. 193.

92 Oliver, *The Pythagorean Triangle*, p. 192.

93 Wang, “*Nei Jing Tu*”.

94 Wang, “*Nei Jing Tu*”, p. 141.

Build or Destroy, in which he clearly stresses the underlying aspect of sexuality and the importance of exercising control over “body fluids:”

Whatever we see being made manifest outwardly is really reflecting of what’s going on inwardly. And if we want to have the ability to build or destroy, or to construct or deconstruct, to add on and take away outside of us, we have to be able to master the ability to do that inwardly. It starts with being able to manage our emotions, being able to govern our attitudes, being able to show discipline in terms of our appetite. Because if we’re not able to control our own body, our body fluids, it’s gonna be challenging to manage or govern other bodies, especially if we’re in a position of leadership.⁹⁵

The symbolism of *Build or Destroy* also finds expression in Carey’s and Perry’s⁹⁶ esoteric allegory to the biblical *Tree of Good and Evil*, as “good, if saved and ‘cast upon the waters’ (circulation) to reach the Pineal Gland; and evil, if eaten or consumed in sexual expression on the physical plane.”⁹⁷ This perspective is supported by the attribution of H as the eighth letter to the gender relations indicated by *He/Her* in the *Supreme Alphabet*. Additionally, the Five Percenter attribution of the astrological sign of Scorpio – “the symbol of both wisdom and self-destruction,”⁹⁸ assigned to the generative system and the procreative act in the traditional interpretations⁹⁹ – to the number Eight in the Five Percenter system of the *Twelve Jewelz*¹⁰⁰ furthermore underlines the proposed accordance.

Similar correspondences in meaning can be found with the subsequent number Nine, which relates to the result of the aspect of *Build* proposed by its predecessor and hints towards the renewal process indicated by its quality as *Born*. Hall denotes the following corresponding meaning:

95 Allah, *The #8*.

96 George W. Carey (1845–1924) was an American occultist and homeopath who is mainly known for his interpretation of Schüssler’s cell-salts as biochemical aspects of human anatomy. In *God Man: The Word Made Flesh* (1920), co-authored by astrologer Inez Perry, he offers a physiological reading of the Bible that resonates with Hindu and Taoist teachings on the function of the endocrine system.

97 Carey/Perry, *God-Man*, p. 90.

98 Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 268.

99 Burgoyne, *The Light of Egypt*, p. 121.

100 Ancient Order of Free Asiatics, *Allah and Justice*.

According to the Eleusinian Mysteries, it was the number of the spheres through which the consciousness passed on its way to birth. Because of its close resemblance to the spermatozoon, the 9 has been associated with germinal life.¹⁰¹

Busenbark's comments on the Pythagorean interpretation of the number reads as follows: "It is the number of the ruling and controlling government of God, and the number of man because of the 9 months in his embryonic life."¹⁰² Interestingly, *Jesod*, corresponding to the number Nine in the Kabbalistic *Tree of Life* represents "the generative system, or the foundation of form"¹⁰³ in the interpretation of the *Sephiroth* as the human body. From a Five Percenter perspective, the number is linked to the aspect of bringing "into existence a mental birth of Self,"¹⁰⁴ as taught by *Allah*: "I is self, self is the true reality, son of man, God."¹⁰⁵

Just as in the case of the *Tetractys*, the decad completes the Five Percenter system of *Supreme Mathematics* and is therefore attributed the meaning of *Cipher*, which indicates the circular motion, or the principle of the *Caduceus*, by its realignment with the associated term for *Zero*. The same principle is pointed out by Hall: "Pythagoras said that 10 is the nature of number, because all nations reckon to it and when they arrive at it they return to the monad. The decad was called both heaven and the world, because the former includes the latter."¹⁰⁶ This matter finds a direct correspondence in Busenbark's comment on the Pythagorean understanding of the number:

Completes the symbolic alphabet of numbers and denotes completeness and finality. Pythagoras considered it "the perfect number". It represents deity, man, and the universe because it contains the sum of the 4 prime numbers, includes all mathematical and musical proportions and defines the system of the world.¹⁰⁷

The representation of "deity, man, and the universe" can likewise be found in the Five Percenter interpretation of the "360 degrees" cipher manifested in the human anatomy:

¹⁰¹ Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 220.

¹⁰² Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 245.

¹⁰³ Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 388.

¹⁰⁴ Ancient Order of Free Asiatics, *Supreme Mathematics*.

¹⁰⁵ Ancient Order of Free Asiatics, *Allah the Father*.

¹⁰⁶ Hall, *The Secret Teachings*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁷ Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 245.

The foundation of all life, the Father of reality and knowledge of the Sun, the following diagram shows the complete realm or cipher of the Asiatic Man's body that keeps everything pure, true and living. The blanket of protection is 5 times 72 this equals 360 degrees. The power of God's wisdom shows forth the understanding of his equality that is added to his cipher. A – Arm = 72 degrees, L – Leg = 72 degrees, L – Leg = 72 degrees, A – Arm = 72 degrees and the supreme H – Head = 72 degrees.¹⁰⁸

In alignment with the above calculation, Busenbark's comments on considerations of macrocosm and microcosm in early astrology reveal that "(t)he zodiac was regarded as the prototype of the human body, the divisions of the zodiac corresponding to 12 divisions and 36 subdivisions of the body,"¹⁰⁹ and that "(t)he solar year of 360 days was further divided into 36 decans of 10 days each and 72 dodecans, or weeks, of 5 days each."¹¹⁰

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this contribution is to put forth evidence that allows exploration of the link between core concepts of the Five Percenter model and hermetically transmitted teachings in traditional knowledge systems. As such, the correspondence of *Supreme Mathematics* as a path towards gnostic self-realization with various other tenfold systems based on the heptad symbolism of Emanationism has been pointed out. It is obvious that the perspective introduced in this contribution opens extended possibilities for the exploration of further correspondences with source material of similar nature, as in Christianity, the Hindu tradition, the Jewish Sephiroth, Islamic mysticism, or more recent interpretations of Western esotericism.

However, in order to clearly illustrate the significant similarities which can be attested for the attributed principles, a juxtaposition of *Supreme Mathematics* with interpretations of Pythagoras' *Tetractys* in Western Esotericism has been provided. In direct comparison, the discussion of the qualities and concepts linked to the numbers revealed to be consistently aligned with each other in sequence and meaning. As such, *Supreme Mathematics* as a model of self-realization may be considered to be thoroughly based on eminent historic predecessors and shaped after principles transmitted throughout centuries

¹⁰⁸ Ancient Order of Free Asiatics, *Supreme Mathematics*.

¹⁰⁹ Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 284.

¹¹⁰ Busenbark, *Symbols*, p. 286.

in numerous cultures and traditions. In consequence, the inner coherence of *Supreme Mathematics* with historical predecessors asks for a reconsideration of the common estimation of Five Percenter as a creative backdrop for a socio-politically oriented empowerment movement. The explicit rejection of involvement in mundane realities in favor over an ethical self-formation is further demonstrated by *Allah's* instruction to “not be antiwhite nor problack,”¹¹¹ but rather strife for “antidevilishment and prorigteousnes.”¹¹²

In reference to Gray's suggestion of a “Mystical Non-Mysticism” one might even point towards the Five Percenter approach as a “Political Non-Activism.” As compared to the organized structure and outspokenly political commentary associated with the Nation of Islam and its recognized leaders – from Malcom X, Elijah Muhammad, to Louis Farrakhan – the subtle subversion of the esotericism taught by Five Percenter operates on the individual level of profound personal transformation. Nevertheless, or rather due to that circumstance, Five Percenter have experienced a considerable social mobility during the last decades, with every single *God* graduating from universities or successfully running businesses demonstrating the efficiency of the teachings.¹¹³

Biography

Martin Abdel Matin Gansinger studied Communication Science and Political Science at the University of Vienna. He conducted lengthy ethnographic research on improvised music in Ghana and among the Bobo Shanti Mansion of Rastafari, as well as at the convent of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order in Lefke/Cyprus. He currently holds the position of Assistant Professor at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane/Morocco and works as a certified health practitioner using Taoist manual therapy. Latest publications include “From Ghetto to Gods: The (pro)creative transformation of Self in Five Percenter Rap and its analogies to sapiential traditions in Islamic theology,” “The Influence of Islam on Black musical expression and its re-contextualization as hybrid Gnosticism in Hip Hop culture,” “Sufferers in Babylon. A Rastafarian perspective on class and race in Reggae,” or “Intuitive Instructional Speech in Sufism. A Study of the Sohbet in the Naqshbandi Order.”

¹¹¹ Macintosh, *The Bomb*, p. 4.

¹¹² Macintosh, *The Bomb*, p. 4.

¹¹³ Allah, *The Bomb*, p. 8.

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