

The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis.

This chapter is for those who want to dig into the linguistics of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) and modern and ancient translations and interpretations, so that you can evaluate them and arrive at your own conclusions regarding what the composer had in mind when he crafted this foundational poem. This chapter supplements (but does not replace) the discussion of this manthra in *Part One*. To place ideas in context, some repetition is necessary, for which I ask your indulgence. Some ancient commentaries on this manthra are discussed in a following chapter, including the most ancient commentary (Yy20) which you may find interesting (§ 4 of this commentary is a particular favorite of mine). I ask you to resist the temptation to read these ancient commentaries first, because you will better understand them if you understand the linguistics of the manthra itself.

Because this manthra is so very much like the Gathas in its ideas and its cryptic, multi-dimensional style of composition, many scholars believe that it was composed by Zarathushtra himself. And I agree 100%. It's style and thoughts are pure Zarathushtra.¹ Therefore, when we make choices between (linguistically valid) translation alternatives, we should not just pick the one that most appeals to us. If we want to understand Zarathushtra's intent we should look to the Gathas (and corroborating later texts), in making our translation choices.

In all Avestan texts (which appear in Geldner), this manthra is called the "Asha Vahishta".² During Sasanian times, it was recited as a prayer at many different parts of the ritual, and in the mss. the notations for such recitals call it by its first two words 'Ashem Vohu', which is how it came to be so called today. It is puzzling that although scholars today call the Yatha Ahu Vairyō by its Avestan name (Ahuna Vairya), they do not call the Ashem Vohu by its Avestan name (Asha Vahishta). This is unfortunate because the original title of a piece reflects something of its essence, which should impact translation choices. The title Asha Vahishta more accurately reflects the original meaning of this manthra, and is more beautiful (in meaning) than the title Ashem Vohu. But to avoid confusion, I will call the manthra by both names ~ Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu).

The centerpiece of this manthra is *aṣa-* 'the **true (correct, good) order of existence**' for which I will sometimes use the short-hand word '**truth**'. And I have kept the translation as close to the original as I can, so that you can get the flavor of its poetry. And yes. Contrary to general opinion, I think it is a poem. Also (contrary to general opinion), I think line a. forms 2 units of meaning, which I will explain.

Here it is.

a. *aṣəm. vohū. vahištəm. asī.*

b. *uštā. asī. uštā. ahmāi.*

c. *hyaṭ. aṣāi. vahištāi. aṣəm. ••* Y27.14. Geldner 1P p. 98.³

My translation.

a. The true order of existence (is) good; the most-good (existence) it is.

b. Desire it! /under will it is, (double entendre for the first *uštā*)

happiness ! bliss! / enlightenment ! (it is) (double entendre for the 2d *uštā*); for that (existence)

c. which (is) truth, for (the sake of) the most good truth.' Y27.14.

Or, line c. more literally,

- c. *which (is) the true order of existence, for (the sake of) the most good true order of existence.'*
Y27.14.

This simple verse of three lines,⁴ has generated many different translations. Insler has not, to date, published a translation of it so far as I am aware. But, through his kindness, I have benefitted from some of his unpublished views which I will acknowledge in the course of this discussion.

The principle reasons for translation differences are ambiguities inherent in the Avestan language itself caused by the (linguistically valid) different possible meanings and grammatical values of some of its words as well as its syntax (the way in which words are arranged to create an intended sentence or phrase).

Some of these ambiguities would have generated multiple meanings that would have been well known to, and deeply appreciated by, Zarathushtra's contemporaries who were fluent in the language. These are precisely the kinds of things that create the multi-dimensioned architecture of this poem which is so typical of the poetic techniques we find in the Gathas.

Therefore, we should not diminish this manthra by adopting an attitude in translating a given word, that: *If it is this, then it cannot be that.*

The translation choices I suggest are linguistically accurate (based on the opinions of eminent linguists) and are consistent with the micro context of this manthra and the macro context of Zarathushtra's thought in the Gathas. You may see dimensions that I have missed, or disagree with my perceptions. And that is fine. A variety of opinions is nothing to fear, so long as our various alternatives are linguistically accurate, are sound in their reasoning, and are consistent with micro / macro contexts.

Let us first do a line by line analysis, considering for each word, its grammar, its meaning(s), and how these words should be put together (syntax). We can then look at the rhythmic cadences and architecture of the poem; and some other translations for comparative purposes.

I have already detailed the multi-dimensioned ways in which Zarathushtra uses *aša-* and *vahišta-* in the chapter on this manthra in *Part One*, so I will not repeat that information here. But the different meanings of *uštā* (lightly touched on there) are linguistic, so I will substantiate my translation choices in more detail here, with references to some YAv. texts.

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Line a: *ašəm vohū vahištəm asfī*

'The true order of existence (is) good; the most-good (existence) it is,'

ašəm '(the) true order of existence (is)'

ašəm is the form for both nom.sg. and acc. sg. of the ntr. stem *aša-*.⁵ Here, *ašəm* has to be nom. sg. because there is no verb which would support *ašəm* as an accusative object, and there is no reason (consistent with normal Avestan usage) to imply such a verb. The verb *asfī* which does appear in line a. is a conjugation of the verb 'to be' and therefore does not support an accusative object.⁶ Its object would have to be nom. So *ašəm* can only be nom. here.

(is): I have implied the verb '(is)' *astī* in lines a. and c., for the following reasons.

(1) In the Gathas, various conjugations of the verb *ah-* 'to be' almost always are implied,⁷ (except when expressly stated for some particular reason, such as emphasis, or when used as 'to exist'); and
(2) In normal Avestan usage, a word sometimes is implied which has been (previously or subsequently) stated. Linguists call this elipsis.

In line a. I think the verb *astī* 'is' is first implied, and then stated to achieve the crescendo (explained below under *Syntax*). In line c. I think *astī* 'is' is implied because the line needs a verb, as almost all translators agree (and many of them have also chosen an implied 'is').

vohū 'good'

vohū is nom./acc. ntr. sg./pl. of the adjective stem *vohu-*.⁸ Here *vohū* is nom. for the same reason that *ašəm* is nom. And *vohū* is ntr. sg. because it describes *ašəm*, a ntr. sg. noun (in Av. an adj. has to be in the same case, number, gender as the noun it describes).

vohū is an adjective 'good' (Skjaervo 2006), which in Avestan can also be used as a noun 'good (thing)', or 'good (person)', indicating a thing or person that has the qualities of the adjective.

In English, 'good things' can be abstract things (like qualities or concepts), and also material things (as in *a shipment of goods*, where the word means physical property that can be bought, sold, and owned). And some translators have translated *vohū* in this manthra as physical property. With respect, I do not agree for the following reasons.

In the Gathas *vohu-* means intrinsic goodness. Zarathushtra sometimes uses *vohu-* as a noun for a person or thing which has the quality of the adjective.⁹ But I have seen no evidence in the Gathas of *vohu-* being used as a noun for material 'property' (as in the English *goods*) or as any noun that has nothing to do with the quality of intrinsic 'goodness'. Each Gatha verse in which *vohu-* is used as a noun is footnoted here, so you can see for yourself.¹⁰ We therefore are not justified in ascribing to *vohu-* the meaning 'possession', 'acquisition', 'wealth', 'goods', 'property [estate]',¹¹ (as some translators have done).

So the questions arise: In the context of line a., did Zarathushtra intend to use *vohū* as an adj.? A noun? And if a noun, as a concept? A thing that is intrinsically good? Let us set those questions on the back burner until we consider line a. as a whole (syntax).

vahištəm 'most good'

vahištəm is the form for both nom. and acc. sg. ntr. of the adjective stem *vahišta-*.¹² Here, it would be nom. sg. ntr., (the same grammatical value as *ašəm*) because there is no verb in line a. which would support an acc. object.

vahištəm is the superlative degree of *vohu-* 'good', and therefore means 'most good'.

Many translators have translated *vahištəm* as 'best', which is not an accurate English equivalent because the English 'best' has acquired a competitive meaning which has nothing to do with intrinsic goodness, as I have already demonstrated.¹³ Therefore (with respect) I do not think Zarathushtra's thought is accurately conveyed when *vahišta-* is translated as 'best' either in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), or in the Gathas. So let us think of *vahištəm* in its Avestan meaning, as the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness ~ 'most good'.

As an adjective, *vahištəm* (like *vohū*) can also be used as a noun 'most good (thing)', or 'most good (one)', indicating a thing, or a being, that exemplifies the quality of intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree.

So the questions arise: In the context of line a., did Zarathushtra intend to use *vahištəm* as an adj.? A noun? And if a noun, as a thing? a being? Let us set those questions on the back burner until we consider line a. as a whole.

asī 'it is'

asī means '(it) is'. The word *asī* is 3p sg. present tense (indicative) of the verb *ah-* 'to be' ~ the 3d person pronoun (*it*) being part of the verb form.¹⁴ Here the subject of this verb is the previously mentioned ntr. *ašəm*, hence the pronoun '(it)'.

Syntax.

How these four words ~ *ašəm vohū vahištəm asī* ~ are put together in English, significantly affects their translation and the meaning of the manthra as a whole. So before you read further, fool around with these 4 words, the way you would with 4 pieces of a jig saw puzzle, and see how you can put them together in a way that is grammatically accurate, and also consistent with the Gathas. My solution is as follows ~ with *vohū* and *vahištəm* both used as adjectives.

I think Zarathushtra intended this first line to be structured in two units of meaning.

Line a: *ašəm vohū / vahištəm asī*

'The true order of existence (is) good; / the most-good (existence) it is,'

Translating line a. in this way ~ as 2 units of meaning with an implied (*is*) in the first unit ~ was the syntactic choice of some outstanding linguists of an earlier generation,¹⁵ but it was disputed by other linguists of that generation, and has fallen out of favor with many of today's linguists, who think line a. should be translated as one unit of meaning with *vohū* used as a noun, and *vahištəm* as an adjective describing *vohū*. Here are a few such examples (with which I disagree) from the many translations given at the end of this chapter.

The Pahlavi translation:¹⁶ "Truthfulness [*ašəm*] is [*asī*] the foremost [*vahištəm*?] boon [*vohū*?]."

The word 'boon' means a gift, a wish to be granted. And it is possible that the Pahlavi translator(s) were influenced by *uštā* in the next line (one meaning of which derives from 'wish'). But there is no evidence whatsoever that in the Gathas *vohū* is used to mean a 'gift' or 'wish' in any sense, or that *vahišta-* is used to mean 'foremost' (the Av. word for which is *paourvya-*). Nor (based on my best recollection) do *vohu-* and *vahišta-* have these meanings in YAv. texts. So, with respect, 'boon' and 'foremost' are not correct translations of *vohū* and *vahišta-*.

Humbach 1991: "Truth is the best (part of all that is) good."¹⁷

Humbach/Faiss 2010:¹⁸ "Truth is the best/highest good/possession."

There is no evidence in the Gathas that *vohū* is ever used in the sense of 'possession'.

Jafarey 1989:¹⁹ "Righteousness is the best good."

Taraporewala 1951:²⁰ "Righteousness is the highest Good."

The syntax of all such translations (which translate line a. as one syntactic unit) are (with respect) incorrect for many reasons. Here are a few.

This syntactic choice which shows *vahišta-* is an adjective describing *vohu-* is not consistent with the title of the manthra, Asha Vahishta, in which *vahišta-* is an adjective describing *aša-*. Nor is there any instance in the Gathas, in which *vahišta-* is used as an adjective to describe *vohu-* (which is what the foregoing translations do). If we give *vahišta-* (the superlative of 'good') its correct translation 'most good' instead of the competitive 'best', then this translation choice results in 'truth is the most-good good.'

But even more important: this syntactic choice is not consistent with a frequently used style of Avestan syntax in which a positive and superlative adj. in the same sentence form 2 syntactic units, with the superlative functioning as a crescendo of expression. For example:

The YAv. *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, is full of such examples in which the author has Ahura Mazda (purportedly) giving His names (thus the author reveals His nature). Here are a few. There are many, many more in this Yasht, and in other YAv. texts as well (samplings of which are footnoted).²¹ In understanding the last example here, please bear in mind the meaning of 'glory [*xʷarənah-*]' in Avestan texts.

... *baēšazya nqma*²² *ahmi baēšazyōtəma nqma ahmi*
'...healing by name am I, most-healing by name am I';

... *ašava nqma ahmi ašavastəma nqma ahmi*
'... truthful by name am I, most-truthful by name am I';

... *xʷarənaṅha nqma ahmi xʷarənaṅhastəma nqma ahmi...*
'... glorious by name am I, most-glorious by name am I...'. Yt. 1.12.²³

In each of these lines (and the additional footnoted examples), the positives and the superlatives form 2 syntactic units which are equated ~ with the superlatives functioning as a crescendo.

And indeed we see somewhat the same idea in the Gathas as well (although not in the exact style of the foregoing YAv. examples). For example.

"... those who rule over life at will in the House of Good [*vohu-*] Thinking. This is equal to the best indeed [*vahištācī* 'the most good indeed'] ..." Y32.15 - 16, Insler 1975. Here, *vohu-* and *vahišta-* are equated, with *vahišta-* representing a crescendo of expression, not a difference in kind.

In addition, the House of Good [*vohu-*] Thinking is one of Zarathushtra's names for paradise. And *ahu- vahišta-* 'the most good existence' is also one of his names for paradise.²⁴ So we see again the equating of *vohu-* and *vahišta-* with the latter functioning as a crescendo of expression, because these two terms do not describe two separate paradises, but just one state of being that is paradise. In fact, there are verses in the Gathas in which (with deliberate ambiguity) *vohu-* and *vahišta-* each could be the path and the end,²⁵ which is consistent with Zarathushtra's teaching that the path and the reward for the path are the same.²⁶

I think that the foregoing facts require that we choose the syntax of line a. as two units, with *vohu-* and *vahišta-* equated, ~ both adjectives describing *aša-* ~ but in the 2d unit with the superlative *vahišta-* functioning as a crescendo of expression, giving us,

Line a. *ašəm vohū / vahištəm astī*

'The true order of existence [*ašəm*] (is) good [*vohū*] / the most good [*vahištəm*] (existence) it is [*astī*];'

This syntax has the following advantages.

1. It accords with a well established style of Avestan syntax;
2. It accords with the title of this manthra ~ Asha Vahishta;
3. It accords with the ways in which *vohu-* and *vahišta-* are used in the Gathas, and with central role that Zarathushtra gives *vahišta-* in the Gathas ~ employing it almost as a word of art;²⁷
4. It gives each Avestan word its correct grammatical value, and avoids adding implied words to make the translation work (other than according to well established Av. usage); and
5. It fits the cadences of lines a. and b., and the architecture of the manthra (discussed below).

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Line b. *uštā astī uštā ahmāi*

b. desire it! /under will it is, (double entendre for the first *uštā*)
happiness ! bliss! / enlightenment ! (it is) (double entendre for the 2d *uštā*); for that (existence)

uštā

uštā is used twice in line b. In GAv., (as in English) some words have more than one meaning, and can be used with double (or multiple) entendre, ~ a well known technique of Zarathushtra's. And I think that *uštā* in this manthra is one of these words. And it is a word that has more than one grammatical value ~ a verb a noun, and also an interjection.

(1) *uštā* 'desired' is a past participle ('desired') of the verb *vas-* 'to wish, to desire',²⁸ which can be used as a noun, generating the meaning 'desired (things)', (*uštā* being the nom./acc. pl. form).²⁹

Humbach 1991 translated *uštā* in this way in line b.

"As desired (all) the desired (things) are available (as) truth".³⁰

I find this translation troubling. I am puzzled about the meaning of the line (when so translated). In addition, in line b., the verb *astī* is 3p sg. and governs the first *uštā*. In this translation, the verb governs the 2d *uštā*. But in either event *uštā* cannot be pl. "desired things" if the verb is sg. A pl. *uštā* would require a pl. verb form (which *astī* is not). And to make it work, this translation adds the word "available" which is not in the GAv. text of line b., (and does not fit the normal usage for implied words in Avestan).

The translation of Humbach/Faiss 2010 suffers from the same objections. The only differences are that they see a double entendre for the first *uštā*, they place "(available)" in round parentheses to indicate an interpretative addition and they omit "(as) truth", which they place in line c.

Humbach/Faiss 2010: "As desired/at will [*uštā*] the (things) desired [*uštā*] are [*astī* ?] (available)".

(2) *uštā* is the imperative form of the verb 'to wish, to desire' ~ thus 'wish (it)! desire (it)!',³¹ and I think this is part of a double entendre for the first *uštā* in line b.

(3) *uštā* is also the loc. sg. case form of the noun *ušti-* 'desire, wish, will', (Skjaervo 2006). As loc. sg. it could mean 'at wish,' or 'under wish/will'; thus *uštā asfī* 'it (truth) exists [asfī] under (our) will' i.e. we can achieve it, we are capable of willing into existence our wish for the true order. I am indebted to Professor Insler for this insight. And I think this is one of the ways in which Zarathushtra uses the first *uštā*.

(4) *uštātāt-* (a state of '*ušta*-ness') in YAv. texts means a state of 'happiness', blessedness, a benediction.³² The suffix *-tāt* '-ness' stands for a condition or state of being (as in *aməratāt-* non-death-ness). The Younger Avestan commentary on the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) explains that the line *uštā asfī uštā ahmāi* describes this state of being, ~ *uštātāt-*, 'happiness, blessedness'.³³ Now it is true that in line b. of this manthra, *uštā* is not a form of the stem *uštātāt-*. But the commentary is not a translation (being in a younger version of the same language). It is intended as an explanation, expressing the opinion that *uštā* in line b describes a state of being that is a joyful blessedness ~ *uštātāt-*. That idea is corroborated by another meaning of *ušta* which is an interjection 'happiness!', described next. And I think these meanings also add a flavor of meaning to the 2d *uštā* in line b.

(5) *ušta* (in YAv.) is an interjection. As such, it has no case forms.³⁴ An interjection is an exclamation (like "Cheers!"). In the YAv. *Tir Yasht*, Yt. 8.29, the author uses *ušta* as an interjection which means 'happiness!' The long final vowel in GAv. (*uštā*) is shortened in YAv. (*ušta*).

"... *ušta mē ahura mazda ušta āpō urvarāscā ušta daēne māzdayasne ušta ā.bavaṭ daiñhavō* ...

"... Happiness for me, O Lord, Wisdom! happiness, O waters and plants! happiness, O wisdom-worshipping envisionment! happiness O lands!", my translation.

And the happiness (*ušta*) mentioned in this passage of the *Tir Yasht* is described by the author of the Yasht as *uštātāt-* ~ giving us the flavor of a 'blessed-happiness!'³⁵

Whether the YAv. interjection *ušta*, was also a GAv. interjection *uštā*, we cannot say for certain. But it would be reasonable to conclude that it was, because the YAv. commentary (Yy20.2) on the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), explains *uštā* as a state of *uštātāt-*,³⁶ which the *Tir Yasht* equates with the interjection *ušta-* 'happiness! bliss (that is a blessing)!'.

And in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), *uštā* has indeed been translated as 'happiness', (although not always as an interjection) by Spiegel, Kanga, Dhalla, Irani, and Dadachanji; Mascaro translates it as 'joy'; Haug as 'a blessing', Mills and Anklesaria as "weal", which means 'well-being' ~ another (slightly different) perspective of the state of being that is 'joyful blessedness', and Khabardar as "Eternal Light (or Bliss)".

According to Taraporewala, *uštā* can mean more than 'happiness'. He thinks it also means 'illumination', implying a state of bliss which is the illumination of the soul in the fulfillment of

earthly life (which accords well with the meaning 'joyful blessedness', and also accords with one of Zarathushtra's names for the joyful enlightened state of being that is paradise ~ the house of song, representing the high we experience when singing beautiful music). Taraporewala recognizes the other meanings of *uštā*, including 'wish', et cetera in various verses of the Gathas, but he thinks that in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) and certain Gathas verses, *uštā* is nom. sg. fem. and means 'illumination', deriving from the root *vah-*, *uš-*, 'to shine'.³⁷ Unfortunately, Taraporewala does not identify the fem. noun stem which he says generates *uštā* as its nom. sg. form, so it is difficult to analyse or corroborate his conclusion. But his opinion is certainly corroborated by the context in which *uštā* is used in this manthra. Specifically:

In the Gathas, both *aša-* and *vahišta-* are used for Zarathushtra's notion of paradise, ~ also called the house of good thinking, an enlightened existence.³⁸ And light is specifically used in the Gathas as a material metaphor for the true order of existence (*aša-*) and its comprehension good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) ~ an enlightened existence.³⁹ Applying these facts to the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), *uštā* in line b. refers to *aša-* and *vahišta-* (in lines a. and c.). Therefore, I think that the joy/ bliss of enlightenment which the true order of existence brings ~ in mortal existence and in paradise ~ is a meaning Zarathushtra intends for the 2d *uštā* in line b. ~ as an interjection 'happiness/bliss! ... enlightenment!'

It is not without interest that the GAv. stem *uśah-* means 'dawn' ~ the beautiful, quiet joy of a spreading, increasing light, at the end of night. If Taraporewala is correct that one of the meanings of *uštā* is the joy of illumination, then the play on words evoked by the associated imagery of dawn is would not have been lost on Zarathushtra's contemporaries.

asī 'it is'

asī has the same meaning in line b. as it does in line a., discussed above 'it is' / it exists' ~ 3p sg. present tense (indicative) of the verb *ah-* 'to be'. The verb 'to be' represents a way of expressing 'existence' as (millennia later) Descartes did in his famous philosophical conclusion *I think, therefore I am* (meaning *I think, therefore I exist*). In many verses of the Gathas, various forms of the verb *ah-* 'to be' have been translated by Insler (1975) as forms of the verb 'to exist'.⁴⁰ And indeed, the Av. *sti-* is a fem. noun which means 'existence' ~ derived from *ah-* 'to be', Skjaervo 2006.

In line b. the first *uštā* coupled with *asī* includes the meaning 'under will/wish [*uštā*] it exists [*asī*] ~ the 'it' referring to *ašəm* in the preceding line a. And the 2d *uštā* with an implied *asī* describes an existence that is happiness, enlightenment 'happiness/bliss! enlightenment! (it is)' ~ referring to *aša-* the true order of existence.

ahmāi 'for that (existence)

ahmāi can have more than one meaning. It is the dat. sg. masc./ntr. form of the demonstrative pronoun *a-*.⁴¹ In English, the dat. sg. is indicated by adding before the pronoun the word 'to' or 'for'. Thus *ahmāi* could mean 'to/for this, or 'to/for that'.

In GAv., demonstrative pronouns are also used for 3d person pronouns,⁴² so the dat. sg. masc./ntr. *ahmāi* could with equal accuracy mean 'to/for him, to/for it'.⁴³ Thus in line b. *ahmāi* could mean generic man. And many translators have so translated *ahmāi*. However although 'to/for him' might fit the context of *uštā ahmāi* in line b., I doubt that it ties in to the context of line c. which has the

noun *ašəm* 'truth', and not the adj. *ašavan-* 'truthful' (which would be required if a person was intended ~ as in 'for him who (is) truthful for truth's own sake').

Some translators have translated *ahmāi* as dat. pl., but the dat. pl. form would be *aēibyō* (Skjaervo 2006).

I therefore translate *ahmāi* as 'for that (existence)' referring to the existence which is *ašəm* and *vahištəm* in line a., and *ašāi* and *vahištāi* in line c.. And this I think fits Zarathushtra's intent. We see the same use of *ahmāi-* (referring to an implied 'existence') in the Gatha verse, Y30.7. In the preceding verse (Y30.6), Zarathushtra mentions *ahu-* 'existence' (in its acc. sg. form *ahūm*).⁴⁴ And in Y30.7 he starts the verse with *ahmāicā* ~ a demonstrative pronoun dat. sg. which many translators (including Insler 1975, and Humbach/Faiss 2010) think refers to *ahūm* 'existence' in the preceding verse, thus literally *ahmāicā* 'but to this (existence)...'. Y30.7.⁴⁵

The words *uštā ahmāi* also appear in the Gathas (Y43.1a), translations of which differ.⁴⁶ But in any event the words *uštā ahmāi* in Y43.1 are used in a different context than in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), and therefore these words in Y43.1 can have grammatical values and meanings that are different from their meaning in the Asha Vahishta,⁴⁷ so (because of the different contexts) we cannot say that Zarathushtra intended *uštā ahmāi* to mean the same in both Y43.1 and the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu).

Thus, line b. *uštā. astī. uštā. ahmāi.*

'desire it! /under will it is [*uštā astī*];

happiness ! bliss! / enlightenment ! (it is); for that (existence) [*uštā ahmāi*]

Line c. *hyaṭ ašāi vahištāi ašəm*

'which (is) the true order of existence, for (the sake of) the most good true (correct) order of existence',
Or using the shorter form, 'which (is) truth for (the sake of) the most good truth.'

It is readily apparent that line c. *hyaṭ ašāi vahištāi ašəm* contains no verb. Many translators have supplied an implied '(is)', and in the context of line c., I agree.

hyaṭ 'which (is)'

hyaṭ means 'which', (among other meanings),⁴⁸ a relative pronoun which stands for the subsequent *ašəm* ~ 'which (is) the true order of existence [*hyaṭ ... ašəm*] ...'.

ašāi vahištāi

ašāi vahištāi go together, both being dat. sg. of the noun *aša-* and the adjective *vahišta-* respectively, and therefore mean 'for (the) most good truth' or 'for truth, (the) most good'. As such *ašāi vahištāi* would be an indirect object of the implied verb '(is)'.

GAv. has no reflexive pronouns such as 'itself, himself, herself' so when the sense of the GAv. text requires it, translators add a reflexive pronoun (although not always in round parentheses). Here, the dat. is used to express the idea of truth for truth itself. But the adj. *vahištāi* with *ašāi* makes an implied 'itself' awkward in English. Hence the implied words in round parentheses 'for (the sake of) the most good truth.' A more fluent translation would be 'which (is) truth for truth itself [*hyaṭ ašāi vahištāi ašəm*]'.
vahištāi ašəm].

ašəm

ašəm means the true order of existence. In the context of line c. it is nom. sg. of the ntr. stem *aša-* because it is the only word in line c. that could be the subject of the implied verb '(is)' in line c. (the only other words, *ašāi vahištāi* are indirect objects ~ dat. sg.).

It is a function of Zarathushtra's poetic art that he starts and ends this manthra with the same word *ašəm*.

* * * * *

Rhythmic cadences:

The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) is a melody on truth.

The rhythm (or meter) of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) is not one of the meters in the Gathas. But that does not mean this manthra is not metrical. It does in fact have a meter which, (as any Zoroastrian child can demonstrate), when recited aloud, or chanted, is as follows:

(x = light beat; 1 = emphasized beat with the syllables being 9, 8, 9, in lines a., b., and c., respectively.)

x 1 <i>a šəm</i>	x x <i>vo hū</i>	x 1 x <i>va hiš tēm</i>	x x <i>as tī</i>
1 x <i>uš tā</i>	x x <i>as tī</i>	1 x <i>uš tā</i>	x x <i>ah māi</i>
x 1 <i>hyaṭ</i>	x x <i>aš āi</i>	x 1 x <i>va hiš tāi</i>	x 1 <i>a šəm</i>

When recited, the first unit of rhythm is *ašəm vohū*. The second unit of rhythm is *vahištəm asī* which mirrors the two units of rhythm in the next line ~ *uštā asī* and *uštā ahmāi*.

In a recited piece, where the rhythmic cadence is as simple as it is here, it would certainly make the recital more meaningful if a unit of rhythm coincides with a unit of meaning. This often does not happen in the Gathas, where the meter and meanings are more complex.⁴⁹ But in a manthra which was intended to be (and was/is) recited by everyone ~ even children ~ it would make sense for Zarathushtra to unite a unit of rhythm with a unit of meaning, which would have made its recital more meaningful to people who were fluent in Avestan, as they sang or recited it.

In addition, in the Gathas, the verb 'to be' is specifically stated where emphasis is intended, or where required to give it the meaning 'to exist'.⁵⁰ Here, the specific use of *asī* in *vahištəm asī* (line a.) and *uštā asī* (line b.) is in accord with the emphasis on *vahištəm* and *uštā* ~ an emphasis of rhythm which mirrors an emphasis of meaning. And it accords with the existence that is *vahištəm* and *uštā* as well.

In light of all these factors, I think that in line a., Zarathushtra intends *ašəm vohū* and *vahištəm asfī* to be two units of meaning, matching its two units of rhythm, which also reflects the two units of rhythm / meaning in line b., as the architecture of the poem demonstrates.

Architecture of the poem:

The first unit of meaning is the foundation.

ašəm vohū 'the true order of existence (is) good' which then is refracted into a gradual crescendo of three units of meaning,

- ~ *vahištəm asfī* 'the most good (existence) it is,
- ~ *uštā asfī* 'desire it! wish it! / under will it is, (double entendre for *uštā*)
- ~ *uštā ahmāi* 'happiness ! bliss!/enlightenment! (it is) (double entendre for *uštā*) for that (existence)

which in turn are re-integrated into both the rhythm and the sense of the last line, where *ašāi* and *vahištāi* are equated, which reflects the equating of *ašəm* and *vahištəm* in line a. (as well as the title of the manthra). Thus in line c.,

hyaṭ ašāi vahištāi ašəm

'which [*hyaṭ*] (is) the true order of existence [*ašəm*], for (the sake of) the most good true order of existence [*ašāi vahištāi*].'

Or, using the shorter 'truth' for *aša-*,

'which [*hyaṭ*] (is) truth [*ašəm*], for (the sake of) the most good truth [*ašāi vahištāi*].'

To me, it is significant that the only verb expressed (and implied) in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) is *asfī* 'is' which expresses 'existence', and the poem is about the true order of existence *aša-* the amount and quality of which increase incrementally in mortal existence represented by the crescendo from 'good' *vohu-* to 'most-good' (*vahišta-*) ~ the most-good existence (*ahu- vahišta-*) which Zarathushtra equates with the Divine, the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path, the state of being that is paradise ~ which is exactly the way he treats *aša-* (the nature of the Divine, the path to the Divine, and the reward for taking that path).

Many translators have felt it necessary to fudge the translations of particular words in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) ~ not giving each word its correct grammatical value ~ in order to arrive at what they consider to be a meaningful whole. With respect, I do not think that is acceptable ~ not if we want to arrive at Zarathushtra's intent in crafting this manthra.

Consider this fact. There are many, many variations in the manuscripts in the words of the Gathas and other Avestan texts, but the fact that Geldner shows no manuscript variations ~ none whatsoever,⁵¹ ~ in Y27.14, the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), indicates that we probably have the manthra in at least the grammatical form in which Zarathushtra composed it (although there may (or may not) have been evolutions in pronunciation; and regional differences in word forms).⁵² I therefore think, if we want to understand Zarathushtra's intent, it is imperative to translate the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) in a way that is as linguistically accurate as possible ~ with no fudging in the

way any of its words are translated ~ both in their grammatical values, and their meanings, and without inserting a lot of implied words to make a given translation work.

* * * * *

Let us now look at the ways in which this mantra has been translated in both ancient and modern times. I am puzzled by what some of these translations actually mean. But you now have the grammatical and linguistic information to evaluate these translations, so you can decide for yourself. You will doubtless notice that added words (that are not in the GAv. text) are not always placed in round parentheses.

- a. *aṣṣam vohū vahištām asfī*
- b. *uštā asfī uštā ahmāi*
- c. *hyaṭ aṣṣāi vahištāi aṣṣam*

My translation.

- a. The true order of existence (is) good, the most-good (existence) it is,
- b. desire it! wish it! / under will it is; happiness ! bliss ! /enlightenment (it is) for that (existence)
- c. which (is) the true order of existence, for (the sake of) the most good true order of existence.

Or, more fluently

- c. which (is) truth, for the most good truth itself.

The Pahlavi translation.⁵³

Words in square brackets and round parentheses have not been added by me.

"Truthfulness is the foremost boon.

[Righteousness] is a virtue; virtuous (is) he
(he) who practises truthfulness (with regard to) foremost truthfulness."

Humbach 1991.⁵⁴

He offers 3 alternative translations for line c.

"Truth is the best (part of all that is) good.

As desired (all) the desired (things) are available (as) truth
for (that) which (is) the best truth.

Or: for (him) who (is) Best Truth

Or: for (him) who (represents) best truth."

In his 2d alternative for line c., his use of capital letters for **Best Truth** is interesting, and worth thinking about. But he changed it in his 2010 translation.

Humbach/Faiss 2010.⁵⁵

"Truth is the best/highest good/possession

As desired/at will the (things) desired are (available)
(as) truth to Him who (is) the Best Truth".

It is interesting that in line c. they see here the personification of the most-good truth as the Divine (indicated by their capital letters). Humbach 1991 comments that alternatively, it could also represent human beings,⁵⁶ (although in 2010 he does not offer alternative translations of line c.). I also see an interplay between the human and the Divine in the existence that is *ašəm/vahištəm* (line a.) and *ašāi/vahištāi* (line c.), although I arrive at it differently.

Jafarey 1989.⁵⁷

"Righteousness is the best good. It is radiant happiness. Radiant happiness comes to the person to whom righteousness is for the sake of the best righteousness alone."

Sethna 1980.⁵⁸

"Purity is good, it is the best,
it is happiness, happiness to him
(who is) pure for the sake of best purity."

Boyce 1975.⁵⁹

"Asha (is) good, it is best,
According to wish it is, according to wish it shall be [*hyaṭ*]⁶⁰ for us [*ahmāi* ?].⁶¹
Asha belongs to Asha Vahishta.

Moulton 1912.⁶²

"Right is the best good:
it falls [*asī* ?] by desire, it falls by desire to us [*ahmāi* ?]
even [*hyaṭ*] our Right [*ašəm*] to the best right [*ašāi vahištāi*].

Moulton's translation is very close to Bartholomae's (below), as is Moulton's translation of the Gathas in general.⁶³

Taraporewala 1951.⁶⁴

"Righteousness is the highest Good,
is the Illumination (of life), (this) Illumination (comes) to that (life),
which (is) righteous for-the-sake-of-the Highest Asa."

Haug 1878.⁶⁵

"Righteousness is the best good,
a blessing it is; a blessing be to that
which is righteousness towards Asha-vahishta (perfect righteousness)."

His comments are footnoted.⁶⁶

Mills 1887.

Puzzlingly (and without giving any reason for the omission) Mills does not translate the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) at Y27.14.⁶⁷ However, he starts his translation of § 1 of the YAv.

commentary (Yy20.1) on the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), with what appears to be his own translation of this manthra,⁶⁸ which is what I give here.

"A blessing [*vohū* ?] is Righteousness (called) the best;
there is weal, there is weal, to this man
when the Right (helps) the Righteous best [*aṣāi vahištāi* ?],
(when the pious man serves it in truth)."

Darmesteter 1887.⁶⁹

"Holiness is the best of all good.
Well is it for it, well it is for that
holiness which is perfection of holiness."

Kanga 1880.⁷⁰

"Righteousness is the best good
(and it) is happiness. Happiness (is) to him
who (is) righteous for the sake of the best righteousness.

Taraporewala 1951 gives us for comparative purposes, additional translations by other scholars,⁷¹ whose works are out of print and not available to me.

Bartholomae

"Right is the best good;
it falls [*asī* ?] by desire, it falls by desire, to our lot [*ahmāi* ?]
even our Right to the best right."

Dhalla

"Righteousness is man's best acquisition.
It is happiness. It is his happiness.
When he is righteous for the sake of Best Righteousness."

Irani, D. J.

"Truth (Righteousness) is the highest Virtue.
It is Happiness. Happiness for him or her
who stands for the Best Righteousness."

Khabardar

"Righteousness is the greatest wealth;
it is Eternal Light (or Bliss). Eternal light for him
who is righteous for the sake of Supreme Righteousness."

Mascaro, Juan

"Holiness is the greatest good;
it is eternal joy. He
who seeks holiness finds joy.

Spiegel

"Purity is the best good;
happiness, happiness is to him
namely to the best pure in Purity."

Talati,

"Righteousness is the best good,
it is blessedness. Blessed is he
who is righteous for the sake of the Supreme Truth.

Regardless of agreement or disagreement, I honor each and every one of the many people who have devoted time and effort in trying to translate this manthra. The differences are only steps in the search for truth ~ each step benefiting (in one way or another) the on-going search.

* * * * *

¹ This manthra is in pure GAv. Humbach 1991 comments that because of its style, its multiple possible meanings, and its deliberate ambiguities, the Ashem Vohu is typical of Zarathushtra's poetical technique and of the style of the Gathas as a whole, and therefore was composed by Zarathushtra himself. Vol. 2, pp. 12, 13. I agree. But Taraporewala 1951 thinks the Ashem Vohu is of later origin than the Gathas, p. 25. The earliest commentary (Y20, in YAv.) on the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) ends with the statement

"And every word (in its detail), and the entire utterance in its proclamation, is the word of Ahura Mazda."
Y20.3, translated by Mills in SBE 31, p. 267;

probably indicating that the unknown author(s) of this YAv. commentary saw it as a manthra given to Zarathushtra, to transmit Wisdom's teachings.

It is interesting that although the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) is not a part of the Gathas, the author(s) of the very late YAv. text *Vendidad* Ch. X, §§ 7 - 8 (composed long after Avestan times) considered the Ashem Vohu to be a part of the Gathas (SBE 4, p. 135), indicating perhaps that there was a well established ancient tradition that it was composed by Zarathushtra himself.

I think that Zarathushtra composed the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) and the Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo) as two stand-alone pieces ~ primers for everyone which encapsulate his teachings.

² Here are some examples of the Ashem Vohu being called the Asha Vahishta in YAv. texts. The most ancient commentary on it states, in Mills' translation,

"...We sacrifice to [*yazamaide* 'celebrate'] the heard-recital of the Asha Vahishta, to its memorising, its chanting, and its sacrificial use [*frāyastīmca* 'and its worshipful use?']." Yy20.4 (last paragraph), SBE 31, p. 268 (words in round parentheses are in Mills' translation). Avestan words are from Geldner 1P p. 81, where this passage is shown as § 5.

The Younger Avestan Yy61.1, says (referring to the three primary prayers),

"Let us peal forth the Ahuna-vairya in our liturgy between heaven and earth, and let us send forth the Asha Vahishta in our prayer the same, and the Yenghe Hâtām..." Y61.1 Mills translation, SBE 31, p. 312.

The YAv. *Aban Nyaish* says,

"... he from whom she will hear the Ahuna vairya [ft. 1]; he from whom she will hear the Asha-vahishta [ft. 2] ..." Ny. 4.8, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 355 - 356.

Darmesteter's ft. 1 says "The Yatha ahu vairyo prayer." SBE 23, p. 356

Darmesteter's ft. 2 says "The Ashem Vohu prayer." SBE 23, p. 356.

³ Geldner has a footnoted comment under the Ahuna Vairya (Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Y27.13) to the effect that the two prayers, Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu (Y27.14) are here given in full only in the mss. J2, K5, and Pt4. He states that they are seldom written in full, but also appear in certain Introductions, and in the Introductions of certain Khorda Avesta manuscripts. Geldner 1P p. 97, ft. (1) under Y27.13.

⁴ Taraporewala 1951 is of the opinion that the Ashem Vohu (which he thinks was a later composition) consists of two lines of 12 syllables each (which he calls *jagati*), pp. 864 - 865. Geldner shows it in three lines, a position that appears to be supported by the manuscripts J2 and K5. In these manuscripts the manthra is not divided into physical lines, but it is divided into three parts, with a Pahlavi translation/commentary following each of these three parts. In addition, the earliest ancient commentary (Yy20) on the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) divides the manthra into the three lines shown by Geldner.

⁵ Beekes 1988 p. 134; Skjaervo 2006.

⁶ The only verb expressly stated in lines a. and b. is *asfī* '(it) is' which does not support an accusative object. Normally, the subject of a verb is in the nominative case, and the direct object of a verb is in the accusative case. But (as in Latin ~ a language of inflection and in the Indo-European family of languages) the object of the verb 'to be' is always in the nom. case. To understand why, think of the verb 'to be' as an equal sign. Its object always describes its subject, and therefore is in the same case as the subject ~ nominative.

⁷ Examples of various conjugations of the verb *ah-* 'to be' that are implied in Gathic verses are legion. Linguists call this 'metonymy'. Here are a few in the present tense (indicative). As you can see, in just the first two chapters of the Gathas (Y28 and Y29) I was able to collect so many examples that follow.

hvō vīcirō ahurō "...He is the decisive Lord..." Y29.4c, Insler 1975. The verb 'is' (*asfī* 3p. sg. of 'to be') is not in the GAv. text, it is implied.

hvō urušaēibyō spāntō "...He is [spānta-] to the needy..." Y29.7b, Insler 1975. The verb 'is' (*asfī*) is not in the text, it is implied.

manascā hyaṭ vahištām "...that thinking which is best ..." Y28.9b, Insler 1975. The verb 'is' (*asfī*) is not in the text, it is implied.

nōiṭ sarajā advaēšō gavōi "...There is no help free of enmity for the cow.'..." Y29.3a, Insler 1975. The verb 'is' (*asfī*) is not in the text, it is implied.

...θwā vahištā yəm ašā vahištā hazaošəm ahurəm... "Thee, Best One, the Lord who art of the same temperament with the best truth,..." Y28.8, Insler 1975. The verb 'art' (*ahī* 2p. sg. of 'to be') is not in the text, it is implied.

yūžəm zəvīštyāñhō īšō xšaθrəmcā savayhqm "...ye are the strongest, (and) to mighty ones (like you) belong the powers and the mastery." Y28.9c, Insler 1975. The verb 'are' (*stā* 2p. pl. of 'to be') is not in the text, it is implied.

kudā aṣəm vohucā manō x šaθrəmcā "Where are truth and good thinking and (where) their rule...?..." Y29.11, Insler 1975. The verb 'are' (*həntī* 3p. pl. of 'to be') is not in the text, it is implied.

⁸ Skjaervo 2006 (he conjectures that the stem should be spelled *vahu-*). The form *vohū* is also instr. sg. masc./ntr. (Skjaervo 2006). But in the context of line a. the instr. ('with/by/through ___') does not fit.

⁹ As discussed in *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*.

¹⁰ Here are all the instances in which 'good' (*vohū-*) is used as a noun in the Gathas based on the Insler 1975 translation. In none of them could 'good' [*vohū-*] be used in the sense of 'property', or 'possession' or 'acquisition' or anything that does not exemplify the quality of intrinsic goodness. (The verses in which *vohū-* is used as an adj. in the Insler 1975 translation are not included here).

Y33.2 "... who shall enlighten his guest in the good [*vaṅhāu*] ~ all these shall bring success to His desire and be in the approval of the Wise Lord." Y33.2, Insler 1975; the word *vaṅhāu* is loc. sg. masc./ntr. of the stem *vohu-* (Beekes 1988 p. 19, Skjaervo 2006). It therefore means 'in-the-good' In this verse, 'in the good [*vaṅhāu*]' clearly means what is intrinsically good ~ good teachings (which are concepts). In this context, it cannot reasonably mean *goods* as in 'property'.

Y43.5 "... a good reward for the good [*vaṅhaovē*], ..." Y43.5, Insler 1975; the first *good* is an adjective (describing 'reward'), the second *good* [*vaṅhaovē*] is dat. sg. of the stem *vohu-* (Beekes, *ibid.*) meaning 'for (what is) good' ~ a quality. It cannot mean *goods* as in 'property'.

In the next two verses, 'distribution in the good [*vaṅhāu* loc. sg. masc./ntr.]' is mentioned.

Y31.19 "... when the distribution in the good [*vaṅhāu*] shall occur to both factions through Thy bright fire, Wise One." Y31.19, Insler 1975.

"Wise Lord, together with this [*spənta- mainyu-*] Thou shalt give the distribution in the good [*vaṅhāu*] to both factions through Thy fire, by reason of the solidarity of [*ārmaiti-*] and truth. For it shall convert the many who are seeking." Y47.6, Insler 1975.

In both these verses, the 'distribution in the good [*vaṅhāu*]' is brought about by fire ~ the material metaphor for the true order of existence, *aṣa-*, and refers to the end result of a process. In the Gathas, truth is both the path and the reward (end) for taking that path (see *Part Two: A Question of Reward & The Path*), and truth in Zarathushtra's thought is wholly good ~ a quality. Therefore "in the good [*vaṅhāu*]" cannot mean 'property'.

This brings us to the last verse in which "*goods* [*vohū*]" is used as a noun (in the last sentence) in a way that is ambiguous.

Y44.8 "This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord, in order for me to bear in mind Thy (every) precept and those words about which I have taken counsel with good thinking and those things which are to be correctly acquired from an existence in harmony with truth. To what *goods* [*vohū*] shall my soul proceed in the future?" Y44.8, Insler 1975.

It is clear that the '*vohū*' in the last line is used in the nature of a reward or consequence for keeping in mind the Wise Lord's teachings, speaking in accord with good thinking, and living in harmony with the true order of existence. Now the word *vohū* in the ntr. gender is the form for both sg. and pl. in the nom./acc. cases (as discussed in a footnote herein). So the last line could with equal accuracy read "...To what good (existence) [*vohū* sg.] shall my soul proceed in the future?" Y44.8, reflecting the 'existence in harmony with truth' in the immediately preceding sentence (which are both the path and its reward, *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*). Or, if we assume that Zarathushtra intended the plural *vohū* good (things), we get the same result.

because in this verse, *vohū* 'good (things)' are the reward or consequence for "good thinking" and "an existence in harmony with truth" mentioned in the preceding parts of Y44.8 And Zarathushtra's notion of reward for these qualities of the divine is their attainment.

¹¹ Humbach 1991 gives "property [estate]" as one alternative translation for *vohū* "... or 'truth is the best property [estate]', or ..." Vol. 2, p. 12 under paragraph (9).

¹² For *a-* stem words (*vahišta-* is an *a-* stem word), Jackson shows the inflection *-əm* for both nom. sg. and acc. sg. ntr. words, Jackson 1892 § 236, p. 70. Skjaervo 2006 shows many Gatha verses which have *vahištəm*, but he does not show its grammatical value (declension).

¹³ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha, and in Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta*.

¹⁴ See Skjaervo (2003) Lesson Three, where YAv. *asti* ends with a short *i*, whereas in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) *astī* ends with a long *ī*. An ending vowel that is long in GAv., often is shortened in YAv., which accounts for the difference *- astī* in Gathic Avestan (in the Asha Vahishta), and *asti* in Younger Avestan. In English, a pronoun in the singular (I, thou, he, she, it), or the plural (we, you, they), appears before a verb to indicate whether the subject of the verb is in the 1st, 2d, or 3d person, sg. or pl., because the verb form for such different persons often is the same ('we are', 'you are', 'they are'). In Gathic Avestan, however, it is the form of the verb itself that indicates whether the verb is being used for the 1st, 2d, or 3d person, sg. or pl. Therefore, in many instances (especially where the context does not require it, or where no emphasis is intended) no pronoun is used before the verb form to indicate the 1st, 2d, or 3d person, sg. or pl. Thus, the verb *ah-* 'to be' would be conjugated as follows in the present tense (indicative) ~ the pronouns being implied in the verb form:

1st person:	(I) am	<i>ahmī</i>	(we) are	<i>mahī</i>
2d person:	(thou) art	<i>ahī</i>	(you pl.) are	<i>stā</i>
3d person:	(he/she/it) is	<i>astī</i>	(they) are	<i>həṇī</i>

Returning to the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), in translating the 3p sg *astī*, the gender of the implied 'he/she/or it' would depend on the gender of the noun (or pronoun) which is the subject of the verb *astī* ~ a gender that could be grammatical (if the subject has no intrinsic gender) or real (if the subject does have an intrinsic gender. In lines a. and c. of the Asha Vahishta, the implied *astī* '(it) is', refers to the preceding *ašəm* 'the true (correct) order of existence', which is a grammatically ntr. noun.

¹⁵ Humbach (1991) in his commentary on the Ashem Vohu, Vol. 2, p. 10, shows the translations (in German) of Andreas and Lentz which seem to divide the first line into two units of meaning, and also the translation of Mary Boyce, (in English), which does so as well.

Andreas in Lommel's 1927 work, p. 9. "Die Wahrheit ist das Gute, (ja) das Beste;" (it should be noted that Andreas was Thieme's teacher. Thieme was Insler's teacher).

Lentz as it appears in his 1968 work, p. 167, "Die Wahrheit (ist das) Gut(e). Sie ist das höchste Gut(e)."

Mary Boyce as set forth in *History of Zoroastrianism I*, (1975), p. 262, "Aša (is) good, it is best."

Humbach (1991) expresses the opinion that these are not appropriate translations. Vol. § (9) p. 12.

F. K. Dadachanji translates the first line as two units of meaning, "Ashem (righteousness, Sat) is good. Righteousness is best." quoted in Tarap. (1951) p. xxxiii.

Sethna translates the first line as two units of meaning, "Purity is good, it is the best,". Sethna (1980), *Khordeh Avesta*, p. 3.

¹⁶ This Pahlavi translation is in Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, p. 9. He cites as his source Dhabar's *Zand i Khurtak Avistak*, 1929, 1.

¹⁷ Humbach 1991 Vol. 1 p. 115.

¹⁸ Humbach/Faiss 2010 p. 73.

¹⁹ Jafarey 1989, *The Gathas, Our Guide*, (Ushta Inc.) p. 27.

²⁰ Taraporewala 1951, p. 23.

²¹ Here are a few additional samples. In all of the following Avestan passages (as in the *Hormezd Yasht*, quoted in the main part of this chapter ~ and there are other examples as well), the positive and the superlative form 2 syntactic units, which are equated, with the superlative functioning as a crescendo of expression ~ not as a difference in kind ~ requiring the conclusion that this use of the positive and superlative was a well established style of syntax in Avestan.

In the YAv. *Bahiram (Bahram) Yasht*, the following phrases appear in § 3. Verethraghna (an allegory for the Victory of good over evil) is the speaker. The Avestan has been transliterated from Geldner 2P p. 206; the English translation is mine.

§ 3. "... <i>ama ahmi amavastamō</i>	'strong I am, most-strong,'
<i>vərəθra ahmi vərəθravastamō</i>	'victorious I am, most-victorious,'
<i>xʷarənaŋha ahmi xʷarənaŋhastamō</i>	'glorious I am, most-glorious,'
... <i>baēšaza ahmi baēšazyōtamō</i> ••	'...healing am I, most-healing.'

Here is the YAv. *Ram Yasht*, Yt. 15.46, (the speaker is the spirit of the Wind, Vayu). Parenthetically, *Ram* is from the ntr. noun *rāman-* 'peace'.

§ 46 *aurvo nqma ahmi aurvōtēmo nqma ahmi*•• "My name is Valiant; my name is Most Valiant."
tax mō nqma ahmi tax moṭēmā nqma ahmi•• "My name is the Strong; my name is the Strongest."
dərəzrō nqma ahmi darəjištō nqma ahmi••... "My name is the Firm; my name is the Firmest..."
 English translation by Darmesteter, SBE Vol. 23, p. 259; Avestan words have been transliterated by me from Geldner, 2P. p. 225.

I rather like the idea that peace was seen ~ not as something weak, but as something strong, courageous, firm.

Here is the YAv. *Ardibehesht Yasht*, Yt. 3.5 - 6; my translation; Av. words from Geldner 2P p. 74.

§ 5 ... *mąθranąm sraēštəm mąθranąm sraēštōtaməm* '... of precepts the most beautiful, of precepts the very most beautiful,
mąθranąm uyrəm mąθranąm uyrōtaməm 'of precepts the strong, of precepts the strongest,
mąθranąm dərəzrəm mąθranąm dərəzrōtaməm 'of precepts the firm (one), of precepts the firmest,
mąθranąm vərəθrayni mąθranąm vərəθraynyōtaməm 'of precepts the victorious (one), of precepts, the most victorious (one),
mąθranąm baēšazəm mąθranąm baēšazyōtaməm•• 'of precepts the healing (one), of precepts the most healing (one).'

§ 6 *mąθranąm ašō.baēšazō ...*

'of precepts the truth-healing (one) ...'

Although this last phrase does not include a superlative, the notion of 'truth-healing' is so beautiful, that I could not resist including it.

²² Jackson (1892) describes *nąma* as an adverb 'by name' § 731, p. 202. Here it is an adverb that describes *ahmi* 'I am'; Skjaervo 2003 also shows the meaning of *nąma*, *nāma* 'by name'.

²³ The translation is mine. Avestan words are from Geldner 2P p. 62.

²⁴ We see the same idiomatic use of the positive ('good' *vohu-*) and the superlative ('most-good' *vahišta-*) as a crescendo, rather than as a difference in quality, in Zarathushtra's use of 'good thinking' and 'most-good thinking' ~ each being used as both the path and its ultimate end (detailed in a footnote in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise and Hell*). In the same way, the superlative 'most-good (*vahišta-*)' alone, is also used as the path and its ultimate end (detailed *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta*).

²⁵ Here are some examples, in which (with deliberate ambiguity) *vohu-* and *vahišta-* could be the path, or the end, or both, in the Insler 1975 translation.

"Wise Lord, whoever ~ be it man or woman ~ would grant to me those things which Thou dost know to be the best for existence [*aṅhəuš ... vahištā*], namely, truth for the truth and the rule of good thinking, (with that person) as well as those whom I shall accompany in the glory of your kind ~ with all these I shall cross over the Bridge of the Judge." Y46.10, Insler 1975. We know from other parts of the Gathas, and from the later texts that the 'most-good existence' (*ahu- vahišta-*) is one of the names for paradise (the ultimate end). And we know that glory, light is a metaphor for truth. So in this verse, the things which are the most good for existence [*aṅhəuš ... vahištā*] (which are equated with truth for the truth and the rule of good thinking) are both the path, and the glory of ultimate end. A multi-dimensioned technique.

"I know in whose worship there exists for me the best [*vahištəm* 'most good'] in accordance with truth..." Y51.22, Insler 1975. So is *vahištəm* 'the most-good' here the worship that is the path? The ultimate end as the reward for such worship? Both? For a translation and discussion of this beautiful verse see *Part Six: Yasna 51.22*.

"Wise Lord, together with this [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'] Thou shalt give the distribution in the good [*vohu-*] to both factions through Thy fire, by reason of the solidarity of [*ārmaiti-*] and truth..." Y47.6, Insler 1975. In this verse, fire is the material metaphor for *aša-*, but the "distribution in the good [*vohu-*]" is ambiguous. It could be the means of bringing about the desired end (the law of consequences and mutual loving help ~ both a part of *aša-*), or it could be the end (the true (good) order of existence itself *aša-*), or both.

²⁶ See *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*.

²⁷ Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*.

²⁸ Skjaervo (2006) shows *vas-* /*us-* (*uš-*) 'to wish', in the following forms (conjugations),

<i>vasəmī</i>	Indicative (present) 1p sg. [i. e. 'I wish']
<i>vaštī</i>	Ind. 2p sg. ['you wish']
<i>vaštī</i>	Ind. 3p sg. ['he/she wishes']
<i>usvahī</i>	Ind. 1p du. ['we two wish']

<i>usmahīcā</i>	Ind. 1p pl. ['and we wish']
<i>uštā</i>	Skjaervo expresses no opinion as to what this conjugation represents but he cites Y29.2 as an instance of its use [where Insler 1975 translates it as "...whom do ye wish..."]
<i>ušyāṭ</i>	Optative 3p sg.
<i>uštā</i>	Past participle passive, nom./acc. pl. ntr.
<i>vasaṭ</i>	Subjunctive 3p sg. (in Y29.4c Insler 1975 translates it "as He shall wish it").

²⁹ Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, pp. 11 - 12; Skjaervo (2006) shows *uštā* as a past participle passive nom./acc. pl. under the verb "vas-/us- (*uš*), 'to wish'."

³⁰ Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, p. 134 - 135.

³¹ Skjaervo 2006 does not show *uštā* as the imperative form of the verb *vas-*. But in Y30.11, Insler translates *uštā* as "...Wish it so" commenting that *uštā* is the imperative form, and that the later usage as 'hail' may simply be a reassessment of the term as a benediction. He concludes that the history of *uštā* is thus parallel to Indic *hānta*, also originally an imperative form. Insler 1975 p. 177. In Y51.16 also, Insler translates *uštā* as an imperative verb form ("The Wise Lord is [*spānta-* 'beneficial']. Therefore wish ye [*uštā*] for Him to announce Himself to us." Y51.16).

³² Humbach (1991) states that in Yy20.2 (§ 2 of the YAv. commentary on the Asha Vahishta) the line *uštā asī uštā ahmāi* is described by the commentator as *uštātāt-* which Humbach says means "ushta-ness, i.e. a benediction". Humbach (1991) Vol. 2, p. 11.

Mills translates *uštātāt-* in this Younger Avestan commentary as "blessedness" (Y20.2. SBE 31, p. 267). In the *Tir* and *Farvardin Yashts* (quoted in this chapter), *uštātāt-* is a state of "happiness". These two meanings ~ happiness and blessedness are simply two flavors of the same quality of being, because in the Gathas, one of Zarathushtra's names for paradise is the House of Song, reflecting the happiness (the high) of singing (or creating) beautiful music. Happiness, is a core quality of his teachings. It is the happiness/blessedness of following the path of truth in mortal existence. And it is the happiness/blessedness of the state of being that is paradise ~ truth personified (detailed in *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*). So *uštātāt-* means happiness/blessedness.

³³ As Humbach (1991) points out, Vol. 2, p. 11; and see the translations of this commentary Yy 20 in *Part Three: Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) Ancient Commentaries*.

³⁴ Jackson identifies *ušta* as an interjection, and therefore indeclinable (it has no case forms) Jackson (1892) §§ 741 - 742, p. 206.

³⁵ Here is the *Tir Yasht*, Yt. 8.29, showing how it describes the happy, blessed, state of being that is *uštātāt-*. Bear in mind, *Tishtrya* is the star (and its spiritual essence) associated with bringing rain, on which all living things thrive and are joyful, and therefore is the enemy of drought, which withers and kills. But notice the double meaning of 'waters' and 'plants' which are also the material metaphors for completeness and non-deathness (*haurvatāt- amərətāt-*).

... *uštātātəm nimravavaite tištryō raēvā xʷarənaṇuhā*
ušta mē ahura mazda
ušta āpō urvarāśca

ušta daēne māzdayasne
ušta ā.bavaŋt daijŋhavō ... Yt. 8.29, Geldner 2P p. 112

'...Tishtriya, (full) of radiance and of glory, calls down joyful blessedness [*uštātātəm*]
happiness for me, O Lord, Wisdom!
happiness, O waters and plants!
happiness, O wisdom-worshipping envisionment!
happiness has become present, O lands!...' my somewhat literal translation.

Here, for comparative purposes is the Humbach (1991) translation,

"Tishtriya will pronounce for himself [mid.] the following **Ush**-ness: **Happiness** has arisen for me, O Ahura Mazda, **happiness**, O waters and plants, **happiness**, O Mazdayasnian religion, **happiness** has arisen, O lands!" *Tir Yasht*, Yt. 8.29.

Humbach (1991) translation, Vol. 2, p. 11 (6).

Darmesteter translates both *uštā* and *uštātāt-* in this passage from the *Tir Yasht* as "Hail" (SBE Vol. 23, pp. 100 - 101); but in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) he translates *uštā* as "well").

uštātāt- also appears in the following YAv. texts, which I give you in Darmesteter's translation. In these quotations, *uštātāt-* appears in various case forms. However, an interjection (like **Hail!**) is indeclinable (it has no case forms), Jackson (1892), §§ 741 - 742, p. 206. So Darmesteter's translation of *uštātāt-* as an interjection "Hail", cannot be correct. But if *uštātāt-* is translated as the state of being that is 'happiness' replacing Darmesteter's "Hail", you can see how well it fits the context in which *uštātāt-* is used in these texts.

In the *Farvardin Yasht*, Yt. 13.93, which Darmesteter translates as follows. The reference here is to Zarathushtra.

yehe zqθaēca vax šaēca urvāsən āpō urvarāscā
yehe zqθaēca vax šaēca ux šin āpō urvarāscā ••
yehe zqθaēca vax šaēca uštātātəm nīmravaŋta vīspā spəŋtō.dātā dāmən •• transliterated from Geldner 2P p. 188.

"In whose birth and growth the waters and the plants rejoiced;
in whose birth and growth the waters and the plants grew;
in whose birth and growth all the creatures of the good creation
cried out, **Hail!**" SBE 23, p. 202;

As you can see, the interjection '**Happiness!**' is a better fit than '**Hail!**' both linguistically and in meaning.

In the *Farvardin Yasht*, Yt. 13.94, which Darmesteter translates as follows.

uštātō zqθō āθrava yō spitāmō zaraθuštrō ... Geldner 2P p. 188.

"**Hail to us!** for he is born, the Athravan, Spitama Zarathushtra. ..." § 94, Darmesteter translation SBE 23, p. 202.

'**Happiness!**' fits better ~ both linguistically and in meaning.

³⁶ Detailed in *Part Three: Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) Ancient Commentaries*.

³⁷ Tarap. (1951) p. 25. Skjaervo (2006) shows *vah-* as follows:
"*vah-*, pres. *vəŋgha-* act.: to shine(?)", under which he shows "vī: to illuminate" (without adding a question mark).

³⁸ Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good, Vahishta*; and *The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

³⁹ Detailed in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*.

⁴⁰ Here are examples of forms of the verb 'to be' translated by Insler (1975) as 'to exist'.

43.6 a: *yahmi spəntā θwā mainyū urvāēsē jasō*

b: *mazdā xšaθrā ahmī vohū managhā*

"(But) at this very turning point in which I exist [*ahmī*], Thou, the Wise One, hast come into the world with Thy virtuous spirit [*spəntā θwā mainyū*] (and) with the rule of good thinking,..." Y43.6a-b. The word *ahmī* '(I) am' is 1p sg. of the verb 'to be'. Insler comments (in pertinent part) "...Zarathushtra means, on the one hand, *yahmi ... urvāēsē ... ahmī* 'at which turning point I exist (am)' ..." Insler (1975) p. 233. In the context of this verse, the English '(I) exist' is more fluent and accurately captures Zarathushtra's meaning.

Y44.16 b: ... *θwā pōi sānghā yōi hənī*

c: *ciθrā mōi dām ...*

"... in order to protect, in accord with Thy teaching, (those) pure ones who exist [*hənī*] literally 'are' in my house..." Y44.16b-c. The translation is from Insler's commentary (Insler (1975) p. 250). In line b of the Gathic text, the words *yōi hənī* '(those) who are' (*hənī* = 3p pl. of the verb 'to be') is translated by Insler as "(those) ... who exist...", which is more fluent and accurately captures Zarathushtra's meaning in this context.

Y45.6b *yā hudā hənī* "... Him who is beneficent ... to those who exist [*hənī*]...". In the first part of the Gathic text, the verb 'is' is not specifically stated. It is implied (which is common for the verb 'to be' in Gathic Avestan). In the second part of this quotation the word *hənī* 'are' (3p pl. '(those) are' of the verb *ah-* 'to be') is translated by Insler as 'exist', which more accurately captures Zarathushtra's meaning in this context.

Y51.10b *tā duždā yōi hənī* "...and thereby maleficent (to those) who exist [*hənī*]...". In the Gathic text, the word *hənī* is 3p pl. '(those) are' of the verb 'to be'. Insler's 'exist' ~ is a more accurate English equivalent in this context.

Y51.22b *yōi ānharēcā hēnticā* "those who have existed [*ānharēcā*] and (still) exist [*hēnticā*]...". The Gathic words *ānharēcā hēnticā* are both 3p pl forms of *ah-* 'to be', (although in different tenses, with *cā* 'and' tacked on). Insler's translation "have existed [*ānharēcā*] and (still) exist [*hēnticā*]", more accurately captures Zarathushtra's meaning.

⁴¹ Skjaervo (2006)

⁴² Beekes 1988 p. 137.

⁴³ Beekes 1988 p. 137.

⁴⁴ Skjaervo (2006) shows *ahūm* as the acc. sg. form of the stem *ahu-*, one of the meanings of which is 'existence, life'.

⁴⁵ Insler 1975, "But to this world..." and his comment on p. 168.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate more literally "... to this (existence/world)..." p. 82.

⁴⁶ Here is Y43.1. It should be noted that *yahmāi* in line a, is dat. sg. ('to/for whom') of the relative pronoun stem *ya-*, not instr. sg. ('through/by/with whom', which would be *yā*), Jackson (1892) § 399, pp. 113 - 114.

And the word *rāyō* in line e, is not here material wealth, it is the 'wealth' of truth, as detailed in a footnote in *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*.

- a. *uštā ahmāi* / *yahmāi uštā kahmāicī*
- b. *vasē x šayqs* / *mazdā dāyā* *ahurō*
- c. *utayūit* / *tāvīšim ga* *tōi vasēm*
- d. *ašəm dərāidyāi* / *ta* *mōi dā ārmaiti*
- e. *rāyō ašiš* / *vaṅhəuš gaēm manəṅhō* Y43.1.

Insler 1975 p. 61.

[a.b.] "May the Wise Lord, who rules at will [*vasē x šayqs*], grant [*dāyā*] wishes [*uštā*] to him [*ahmāi*], to the person whosoever [*yahmāi ... kahmāicī*] has wishes [*uštā*].

[c. and 1st half of d.] I therefore wish enduring strength to come, in order to uphold the truth.

[d. 2d half, and e] By reason of my [*ārmaiti*-] grant [*dā*] this to me: the rewards of wealth and a life of good thinking." Y43.1.

Taraporewala (1951) p. 401.

[a.b.] "May Mazda Ahura, Ruler-at-will, grant Illumination [*uštā*] unto him through-whom [*yahmāi*] illumination [*uštā*] (cometh) to-any-one-else [*kahmāicī*];

[c.] for progress do-I desire Life-renewed-(and)-Strength-of-Soul,

[d.] for the upholding of Eternal-Law [*ašəm*] grant this unto me, O Armaiti,

[e.] the blessings of Divine-Splendour, the Life of Vohu Mano." Y43.1.

Humbach/Faiss (2010), p. 114. The lines of their translation are intermingled so that I cannot ascribe a given GAv. line to a line in their English translation.

"I wish bodily strength along with youthfulness to come as desired [*uštā*] to whomsoever the Wise Lord ruling at will, would accord (the things) desired [*uštā*].

I wish to take possession of truth, grant it to me, O Right-mindedness, (grant me) rewards (consisting) of wealth and a life in good thought." Y43.1.

⁴⁷ In Y43.1a, Insler (1975) translates *uštā* as acc. pl. "wishes" (probably in the sense of 'desired (things)',) and as the direct object of the verb 'may (he) grant (*dāyā*)', "May the Wise Lord ... grant wishes [*uštā*] to him [*ahmāi*]..." Y43.1.

By contrast, in line b. of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), *uštā* is the subject of the verb *asī* 'it is' (3p. sg.). Humbach/Faiss 2010 give both *uštā* and its verb a pl. translation, "As desired/at will the (things) desired are (available)". But if *uštā* were pl., the verb would have to be pl. as well. But *asī* 'it is' is 3p. sg. So I do not think *uštā* can be the pl. in line b. of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu).

In addition, the context of *uštā ahmāi* in Y43.1 does not parallel the context in which *uštā ahmāi* in the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) is used.

⁴⁸ *hya* is one of those flexible GAv. words that serve more than one function and have more than one meaning. As a relative pronoun, (nom./acc. ntr. of the stem *ya-* Jackson 1892 § 403, p. 115), it means 'which, that' etc.. And *hya* is also a conjunction, which can mean 'when, because, (so) that,' (Beekes 1988 p. 146); or 'that, because, as' (Skjaervo 2006).

In the context of the 3d line of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), the function of *hya* is a relative pronoun, nom. sg. masc./neut., meaning 'which' or 'who' depending on how one translates *ahmāi* in the context in the preceding line b..

(1) *ahmāi* ['for that (existence ~ masc. noun)'] *hya* [which], or

(2) *ahmāi* [for him] *hyat* [who].

⁴⁹ In the Gathas, where the meters and meanings are more complex, a unit of meaning often does not match a unit of rhythm. For example, in Y51.22, the verb *vaēdā* 'I know' which belongs (in meaning) with line 1, appears at the start of line 2. See *Part Six: Yasna 51.22*.

⁵⁰ Here are a few examples of various conjugations of the verb *ah-* 'to be' which are not implied, but are explicitly stated in the text ~ where required for emphasis or where required by the context.

For emphasis: *yaθā vā ahmī* "...as I indeed am..."Y34.5; the word *ahmī* 'I am' is explicitly stated. Insler 1975 favors those mss. (S1, O2, etc.) that have *ahmī*, rather than *hahmī*, p. 222. Beekes 1988 states that *vā* is an emphasizing particle. (p. 146). Thus literally "...as [*yaθā*] indeed [*vā*] I-am [*ahmī*]..."Y34.5. The pronoun "I" is a part of the verb form *ahmī* (1p. sg of *ah-* 'to be').

Required by the context: ... *ciš ahī kahyā ahī*... which Insler 1975 translates "... 'Who [*ciš*] art thou [*ahī*]? To which side dost thou belong?..." Y47.3; The second question, *kahyā ahī* literally, means 'whose art thou'. In each of these questions, *ahī* (2p sg. of *ah-* 'to be') is required by the context.

⁵¹ Although Geldner shows no manuscript variations for the Asha Vahishta as it appears in Y27.14, the well regarded manuscript J2 (of which I have a copy) does indeed show an additional word *ahmā* in line 2, which reads *uštā ahmā astī uštā ahmāi*, which probably was a scribal error, because (a) the added *ahmā* spoils the meter, (b), it is not the way in which any group of Zoroastrians (in Iran or India) are known to have recited this manthra, (c) the additional word *ahmā* is not in the Old Soghdian version of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) discovered in 1976, (given in full in a following footnote), and (d) the added *ahmā* has no meaning (at least in this context).

⁵² For example, some linguists think that *vahišta-* was originally pronounced *wahišta-*. And the oldest surviving version of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) appears, not in any Avestan text, but in a Soghdian text dated at around the 9th or 10th century CE, which was found in 1976 in Dunhuang China (whereas the dates of the oldest surviving Avestan texts are after 1,300 CE). This Soghdian ms. may be viewed at the website of the British Library at www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/ashem.html, which also has a worthwhile explanation. (You can also access the site through s-s-z.org under 'Vignettes' and then 'Zoroastrian manuscript'.

Based on Professor Gershevitch's transliteration, this Soghdian Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) reads as follows.

ərtam wahū wahištam išfī
uštā išfī uštā ahmāi
yat ərtāi wahištāi ərtam

Gershevitch, *Dissent & Consensus on the Gathas*, appearing in *Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium*, 1993 (WZO 1998), p. 20.

It appears that the Soghdian form of Avestan *aša-* is closer to the Old Persian (*arta-*) and the Ved. *rtá*, and there are linguists today who conjecture that in Zarathushtra's day, the word in GAv. was actually *arta-* not *aša-*. Beekes 1988 surmises *ártavan-* 'truthful' (p. 120), and *árta-* (p. 131) instead of *ašavan-* and *aša-*.

⁵³ Humbach (1991) Vol. 2, p. 9. For the Pahlavi translation he cites as his source Dhabar's *Zand i Khurtak Avistak*, 1929, 1. Humbach also adds a Sanskrit version, which he does not translate. He cites as its source, Bharucha, *Collected Sanskrit Writings I*, 1906, 1.

⁵⁴ Humbach 1991 Vol. 1, p. 115, and Vol. 2, pp. 8 - 12.

⁵⁵ Humbach/Faiss 2010 p. 73.

⁵⁶ Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, p. 12, paragraph (9), section c.

⁵⁷ Jafarey, *The Gathas, Our Guide*, (Ushta Inc. 1989) p. 27.

⁵⁸ Sethna 1980 *Khordeh Avesta*, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Mary Boyce 1975, as set forth in *History of Zoroastrianism I*, p. 262, and referenced by Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, p. 10.

⁶⁰ Humbach 1991 is of the opinion that instead of the relative particle *hyaṭ*, which forms the first word of line c., Boyce conjectures **hyāṭ* (a form which Humbach states is unknown elsewhere) meaning 'may it be'. He does not approve of the Boyce translation. Vol. 1, p. 10.

⁶¹ Boyce seems to translate *ahmāi* as 'for us' (i.e. 1p dat. pl.). But demonstrative pronouns are not used for 1p personal pronouns ~ only for 3p pronouns. And *ahmāi* is dat. sg. masc./ntr. (Skjaervo 2006). As a demonstrative pronoun it would be translated 'to/for this', or 'to/for that'; as a 3p sg. masc./ntr. personal pronoun it would be translated 'to/for him', or 'to/for it'.

⁶² Moulton 1912, p. 390.

⁶³ In Moulton 1912, pp. 343 et seq., acknowledges that his translation is close to that of Bartholomae, but cautions that he has not followed Bartholomae "slavishly".

⁶⁴ Taraporewala 1951 p. 23.

⁶⁵ Haug 1878 *Essays*, p. 141, fn. 2.

⁶⁶ Haug comments "It is to be understood that 'righteousness' here and elsewhere where it translates *ashem* means 'what is right or meritorious' in a ritualistic or materialistic sense, and does not necessarily imply holiness..." Ibid. I have great respect (and affection) for Haug, but there is no instance in any GAv. text in which *aša-* is used in a context that could mean what is right or meritorious in a ritualistic or materialistic sense. Even in the later YHapt. which is in Gathic Avestan, there is no ritual use of *aša-*, as the following few examples demonstrate.

ahurā mazdā aša srīrā YHapt.35.3, Geldner 1Pt. p. 129;
'...O Lord, Wisdom, beautiful through truth...'Y35.3, my translation.

ašəm aṭ vahištəm yazamaidē hyaṭ sraēštəm hyaṭ spəntēm aməšəm hyaṭ raocōṅhvaṭ [mss. variations in spelling] *hyaṭ vīspā vohū* YHapt.37.4 Geldner 1P p. 133;
'We worship/celebrate the most good truth, which (is) most beautiful, which (is) beneficial, non-dying, which (is) light-filled, which (is) all good.' Y37.4, my translation.

"Do Thou grant (us) O Wise Ahura, men (who are) truthful [*ašāunō*], loving truth [*ašacinayhō*], good-natured herdsmen, (with a view) to a long-lasting, abundant, (and) permanent fellowship, (men) who offer (support) to us and who enjoy (support) from us." YHapt. 40.3 Humbach 1991 translation, Vol. 1, p. 149.

These YHapt. examples are not ritualistic uses of *aša-*. Indeed, the Gathas do not require, describe, nor even mention, any rituals. Zarathushtra only mentions certain elements of the ritual, such as milk, butter, and the sacred bread offering, which he uses as metaphors for truth, good thinking, a person who has these qualities, and for worshipping with completeness and non-deathness, see in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*; and *The Puzzle of the Cow and Its Network*.

Mills also, in his translation of many Avestan texts also sometimes translates *aša-* as having to do with rituals.

I can only surmise that the many rituals in the YAv. texts influenced both Haug's and Mills' interpretations of worship in the Gathas and other GAv. texts - which simply is not borne out by the evidence in those texts.

⁶⁷ As given in SBE 31, p. 281. Mills' translation of Y27.14 is not a translation of the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu). But as Geldner has pointed out, only a few mss. have the Ahuna Vairya and the Asha Vahishta in full at Y27.13 and 14 respectively. So it is possible that the mss. on which Mills' based his translation of Y27.14 are one of the many which do not give the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) in full.

⁶⁸ Yy20.1 SBE 31, p. 266.

⁶⁹ SBE 23, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Kanga 1880, *Khordeh Avesta*, (1995 reprint) p. 1.

⁷¹ All these translations (except Bartholomae's) appear in Taraporewala 1951 p. xxxiii. For Bartholomae's, I have used the translation given by Taraporewala at p. 25.