

## Yasna 45.6

I have chosen this verse partly to support my translation of it in other chapters,<sup>1</sup> partly because it mentions a key aspect of Zarathushtra's thought which tends to be overlooked, and partly because I rather like it.

Teachers of Zarathushtra's thought emphasize 'the mind' ~ giving 'mind' its more limited meaning in English, whereas in the Gathas (based on the ways in which Zarathushtra uses 'mind') it has a much broader meaning.<sup>2</sup> In a similar way, *mazdā-* is sometimes freely translated as 'Super Intelligence' ~ which in a way is true, because Zarathushtra's perception of the Divine is Wisdom personified, which is the epitome of intelligence. But there is so much more to 'wisdom' than intelligence, as this verse shows us.

In addition, reading this verse with the mind-set of our times, cultures, and English equivalents, we may misunderstand some of what Zarathushtra says, which I will get into in the *Discussion* section (below). So when you first read this verse in translation, please withhold judgment.

Finally, you may notice that a masc. pronoun 'His' is used to refer to the Divine (in lines c. and e.). Needless to say, gender is a quality of our physical shells. The existence of the Divine is not limited to the physical.<sup>3</sup> In addition, in Zarathushtra's thought the Divine is immanent in all that exists.<sup>4</sup> So the Divine cannot have a specific gender. But in Avestan, all nouns and pronouns have grammatical gender, and the masc. gender in Avestan is also used generically (as it is in English).<sup>5</sup>

The translations and comments of the linguists in our group are referenced here to avoid repeated citations.<sup>6</sup>

- a. *aṭ fravax šyā vīspanqm mazištəm*
- b. *stavas ašā yē hudā yōi hənī*
- c. *spəntā mainyū sraotū mazdā ahurō*
- d. *yehyā vahmē vohū frašī manajhā*
- e. *ahyā xratū frō.mā sāstū vahištā*•• Y45.6. Geldner 1P p. 157.

My translation.

- a. 'Now I shall speak out (about) the Greatest-One of all
- b. praising through truth (the One) who (is) beneficent (to all) that exists
- c. through (His) beneficial way of being. May Wisdom, the Lord, listen,
- d. in whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking.
- e. Through His reasoning, may He teach me (all that is) most-good.' Y45.6.

*Discussion:*

In identifying the Divine as '(the) Greatest-One of all' what was Zarathushtra's intent? Well, *mazišta-* 'greatest' is the superlative degree of *maz-* 'great' (Skjaervo 2006). In Avestan, the notion of 'great' is used in the sense of 'great heart', 'great soul' ~ an expansive greatness of quality. And in Avestan the superlative is often used as a crescendo of expression ~ an epiphany,<sup>7</sup> ~ just as he calls the Divine *Most Good One (vahišta-)* in Y28.8 ~ the superlative of intrinsic goodness *vohu-* ~ as a crescendo of expression. So the superlative *Greatest-One* is not used in a competitive sense ~ *my god is the greatest* (and by implication *yours is not*). It is used as an expansive greatness of being. Which brings us to the next question: What is the quality that comprises this '*Greatest-One of all*'?

Zarathushtra does not describe this *Greatest-One* as 'intelligent', or even as 'righteous', but as 'beneficent' (*hudā*) through (His) beneficial way of being.' The stem *hudāh-* (in its many

grammatical forms) has variously been translated as 'good-giving', 'generous', 'beneficent'. Based on a Vedic word he thinks is cognate, Insler's translation is 'beneficent'. The dictionary defines 'beneficence' as

"... active goodness, kindness, charity; bounty springing from purity and goodness."<sup>8</sup>

The word 'charity' is used here in its older sense of being loving.

So in this verse, the quality that Zarathushtra associates with the superlative degree of divine 'greatness' is a good, loving, generous, way of being. And lest you think I am jumping to an uncorroborated conclusion, this is exactly how he also describes a person who chooses correctly.

"... the beneficent [*hudāñhō*] have correctly chosen ..." Y30.3, Insler 1975.

This good, bountiful generosity that is lovingkindness, is at the heart of Zarathushtra's teachings, and so often is overlooked by the many who see his perception of the Divine as primarily intellectual.

But a word of caution. 'Beneficent' does not mean telling others what is 'good' for them, or (even worse) enforcing on others our notion of what is 'good' for them. One of Zarathushtra's key teachings is that in searching for truth, each of us should make our own choices, independently, because it is only through making choices and experiencing their consequences that we grow.

Now you may object that *hudāh-* is not identified as one of the qualities of the divine (*amesha spenta*), so it cannot be a defining quality. But that objection (with respect) is not well founded. In Zarathushtra's view, this quality of *beneficent ~ a bountiful, generous, lovingkindness ~* is a quality of the true (good, correct) order of existence (*aša-*), which is beneficial way of being [*spānta-mainyu-*]. This fact has been detailed in another chapter,<sup>9</sup> but here are two quotations from the Gathas which establish that this is so.

"... the Lord, beneficent [*hudā*] through truth [*aša-* 'through the true order of existence'], ..." Y48.3, Insler 1975;

"...Him who is beneficent [*hudā*] through His [*spāntā mainyū* 'beneficial way of being]..." Y45.6, Insler 1975.

And of course, in our verse Y45.6 the 'Greatest-One of all' is 'beneficent (to all) that exists, through (His) beneficial way of being [*spāntā mainyū*]...', my translation. The translations of the linguists in our group are shown at the end of this chapter.

So we see in our verse (Y45.6) that the Greatness of the Divine comes from 'beneficence' ~ a bountiful, generous, lovingkindness, which (by definition) does not require a quid pro quo. It does not have to be earned.

When I think of my many faults and inadequacies, I often wonder how the Divine puts up with me. And then I remember this verse ... that His greatness springs from a loving, generosity. The highest (greatest) step in the evolution of being.

One of the things I love about Zarathushtra's teachings is that on the path of spiritual growth, being 'just' (as in 'being fair') is a good first step. But an even higher step is being loving, generous. In the continuum that is existence, the loving generosity of the Divine is the perfected end. And along the way we have the generosity of good people making loving, generous choices (Y30.3) ~ the opposite of choices that are ego-centric, greed-driven, power-hungry, uncaring, etc.

An idea that is as relevant today as it was millennia ago in Zarathushtra's time.

Try an experiment. Call to your mind, one by one, each of the many problems that plague our societies today. Then think how a generous, bountiful lovingkindness would affect them ~ delivered through good thinking! Would this help to cure such problems? Would this take us a step closer to making real, the true (good, correct) order of existence? I leave it to your imagination.

To me, it is a lovely paradox that there is a (humble) greatness in a generous lovingkindness ~ in our relations towards each other, towards other life forms, towards our environment ~ towards all existence. And this generous lovingkindness is the greatness of the Divine.

The meaning of *huda* is explored in more detail in the linguistics section (below). Even if you are not interested in linguistics, you may wish to check out this explanation of its meaning.

Next, in line b., we have the phrase 'praising through truth [*aša-*] ...' It is significant that the Avestan word 'praising' *stavas* is the praise of 'worship'. So with this phrase 'praising through truth [*aša-*] ...' Zarathushtra reminds us of his new way to worship ~ that we praise, we worship the Divine, by embodying the true order of existence (*aša-*) with each beneficial thought, word and action [*armaiti-*], in the day to day circumstances of our lives.<sup>10</sup>

And here we have a double entendre because the true order of existence is the nature of the Divine, which man also has (incompletely). So in this verse, the Divine is 'beneficent to all that exists', and we in turn praise the Divine through truth ~ through our thoughts, words and actions which embody the true order of existence (which is being beneficent to all that exists ~ "... the beneficent have chosen correctly..." Y30.3, Insler 1975 ).

Then in lines c. and d., Zarathushtra prays '... May Wisdom, the Lord, listen, in whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking; ...' Y45.6. In the Gathas, he often speaks to the Divine in ways that teach us. What does he mean by the 'glory' of the Divine? Well, (forgive the repetition), throughout the Gathas and later Avestan texts, 'light' words are used as symbols or metaphors for the true order of existence ('truth' for short). So the 'glory' of Wisdom the Lord (who is truth personified), is truth.

And Zarathushtra tells us that he has 'taken counsel ... with good thinking...' in the glory (truth) of the Divine. Or stated in a less poetic, less beautiful way, he has used his own good thinking to try to access, consult with, Wisdom's truth, and he concludes the last line (e.) with a wish that reflects another key aspect of his thought ~ that 'reason' is not inconsistent with (Zarathushtra's perception of) religion ~ searching for the Divine, and the way to live our lives.

So in line e. (literally), 'Through His reasoning, may He teach me the most-good (things) (*vahištā*).' The word *vahištā* here is plural, so more fluently, 'Through His reasoning, may He teach me (all that is) most-good.'

In the Gathas *vahišta-* words are used for all that is 'good' in existence ~ the nature of the Divine, the way we live our lives (the path), and the consequences of so doing (the reward),<sup>11</sup> ~ each of which is the true (most good, correct) order of existence,<sup>12</sup> ~ the glory, the the enlightenment, of Wisdom who has attained Lordship (rule) over this quality of existence (truth) and its component qualities - its comprehension, its embodiment.

The thoughts expressed in line e. of our verse are expressed (from a slightly different perspective) other Gathas verses, for example:

Line e. of our verse (Y45.6) 'Through His reasoning, may He teach me (all that is) most-good.'

Y34.12, "... Instruct us to those paths of good thinking, easy to travel in alliance with truth," Insler 1975 translation. Here, the instruction requested is for the paths of good thinking (which includes 'reason'),<sup>13</sup> which is the comprehension of (the glory of) truth (which is most good *aša- vahišta-*).

Y28.11, "...do Thou, Wise Lord, instruct me ... through the eloquence befitting Thy spirit [*mainyu-*'way of being'] ... the things by means of which the foremost existence shall come about here." Insler 1975. Here the instruction requested is how to bring about the reward ~ the foremost existence (paradise), the state of being that is (the glory of) the true order of existence (which is 'most good' *aša- vahišta-*), (also called the paradise of the most good existence *ahu- vahišta-*).<sup>14</sup>

Here again is our entire verse.

See what you think, when you read it with all the above understandings.

- a. 'Now I shall speak out (about) the Greatest-One of all
- b. praising through truth (the One) who (is) beneficent (to all) that exists
- c. through (His) beneficial way of being. May Wisdom, the Lord, listen,
- d. in whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking.
- e. Through His reasoning, may He teach me (all that is) most-good.' Y45.6.

A lovely multi-dimensioned verse that tells us so much.

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Let us now consider the linguistics of this verse (Y45.6), because of course, if our linguistics are not accurate, how do we discover Zarathushtra's thoughts?

- a. *aṭ fravax šyā vīspanəm mazištəm*
- a. 'Now I shall speak out (about) the Greatest-One of all'

*aṭ* 'now'

*aṭ* is one of those flexible Avestan words which has a number of English equivalents. Skjaervo 2006 says that it is a participle, used to connect a statement with what precedes it 'then, so, thus, but.' However, Insler 1975 also translates it as 'yes' and 'now', which are a common stylistic way to start a statement, even today, in languages (such as Hindi and Gujarati) that have descended from the ancestral Indo-Iranian language. In our verse, none of the translators in our group think that *aṭ* is used to connect it with the immediately preceding verse. They either translate *aṭ* as 'now' (Insler, Humbach 1991), or as 'and' (Taraporewala), or ignore it (Humbach/Faiss, Moulton and Bartholomae).

I agree that *aṭ* does not connect our verse with the immediately preceding verse. Our verse starts a new line of thought.

*fravax šyā* 'I shall speak out (about)' or 'I shall speak forth (about)';

The prefix *fra* is often used in the sense of 'forth'. For example, Skjaervo 2006 shows *fra.aēš-* 'to send forth', *fra.dax š-* 'to launch'. And he shows *vax šyā* as 1p sg. future of *mrao-* 'to say, to speak'. Thus *fravax šyā* 'I shall speak out (about)'.

*vīspanəm mazištəm* '(the) Greatest-One of all';

There are no capital letters in Avestan script. I use these initial caps to indicate that Zarathushtra is speaking of the Divine.

*mazištəm* is acc. sg. masc./ntr. of the stem *mazišta-* 'greatest' which is the superlative degree of the adj. *maz-* 'great' (Skjaervo 2006), and here *mazištəm* is used as a noun 'greatest-one'.

*vīspanqm* 'of all' is gen. pl. masc./ntr. of the adj. stem *vīspa-* 'all' (Skjaervo 2006).

The translators in our group are (more or less) in agreement in translating line a.,

a. *aṭ fravax šyā vīspanqm mazištəm*

Insler 1975 "Now, I shall speak of the Greatest One of all,"

Humbach 1991 "I shall now proclaim the Greatest One of all,"

Humbach/Faiss 2010 "I will proclaim the Greatest One of all,"

Taraporewala 1951 "And I-will-explain about-the-Greatest of All,"

Bartholomae and Moulton 1912 "I will speak of him that is greatest of all,"

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b. *stavas ašā yā hudā yōi hənī*

c. *spəntā mainyū ...*

b. 'praising through truth, (the One) who (is) beneficent (to all) that exists,

c. through (His) beneficial way of being...'

*stavas ašā* 'praising through truth';

*stavas* 'praising' is the present participle (nom. sg. masc.) of the verb stem *stao-* 'to praise' (Skjaervo 2006). In English, the present participle of a verb is formed by adding '-ing' to it; thus 'praising'.

*ašā* 'through truth' is instr. sg. of the ntr. noun *aša-* 'truth' (the true (good, correct) order of existence'); thus literally 'praising through the true order of existence...!'

*yā* '(the One) who (is)

*yā* is a relative pronoun, nom. sg. masc./ntr. (in GAv.) of the stem *ya-*,<sup>15</sup> which can be translated as 'who, that, which' etc. Because *yā* is nom. sg. it cannot belong with the preceding phrase (as the object of the verb), but must belong with the phrase that follows, and adding the implied '(the One)' makes it clear that 'who' here is nom. - *yā hudā* '(the One) who (is) beneficent ...!'

Sometimes, the way GAv. syntax works, it is 'normal' to not have certain words in GAv., which are necessary to make an English translation fluent. In such instances we have to add implied English words. This phrase in line b. is an example.

Translated literally, we would have ; 'praising through truth, who beneficent ...!'

But in fluent English 'praising through truth, (the One) who (is) beneficent ...!'

*hudā* 'beneficent (a bountiful, generous, good-giving, lovingkindness)'.

Skjaervo 2006 says that *hudā* is nom. sg. masc. of the adj. stem *hudāh-* and means "who gives good gifts, generous". He does not cite any Vedic or Indo-European cognate in support of his definition.

Humbach 1991 and Humbach/Faiss 2010 have translated *hudāh-* as "munificent" which also means 'generous' (but perhaps in a more material way ~ material bounty). They do not cite any Vedic or Indo-European cognate in support of their view.

Insler 1975 disagrees. Commenting under Y30.3 he says that *hudāh-* is not cognate with Ved. *sudās* 'of good gifts', but instead corresponds "quite clearly" to Ved. *sukrt-*,<sup>16</sup> which he says "equally applies to men and gods" and means 'beneficent', giving many Ved. and Av. examples in which he thinks 'beneficence' is the appropriate English equivalent (p. 166). As I understand his argument, the notion of beneficence goes beyond mere generosity, or gift-giving'. It includes a quality of blessedness. And indeed in Y31.16 he translates the related *hudānuš* as the "blessed one".

Taraporewala 1951 translates *hudā* in our verse as "Lord-of-Wisdom". He comments that Lommel translates the word as 'benevolent', and "alternately suggests 'the good Creator'. He comments that

Mills translates *hudā* as 'benignant', and Kanga (following the Pahlavi tradition) translates it as 'wise', 'full of wisdom'. Taraporewala concludes that (in this instance at least) he thinks it best to "adhere to the traditional view as expressed by Kan[ga]."

Bartholomae translates the word as "bounteous". And so does Moulton 1012.

As you can see, (setting aside the Pahlavi tradition), even the most recent generation of linguists in our group have given this one word *hudāh-* different flavors of an underlying meaning.

In my view, the stem *hudāh-* itself gives us its meaning, but that meaning has to be understood in the macro context of the Gathas. This has been discussed in other chapters,<sup>17</sup> but to understand our verse (Y45.6), I need to repeat some of that information here. So I hope you will bear with me.

*hu-* is a prefix. There is no doubt that it means 'good'. For example:

*hucisti-* 'good understanding' Y34.14c, Y46.4e;

*hušyaoθana-* 'good action';

*hujīti-* 'good (way of) life' Y33.10a, Y32.5a;

*hušana-* 'good gain' Y53.5;

*hux šaθra-* 'good rule, good ruler', Y44.20a, Y48.5a).

And the verb *dā-* means 'to give, to make, to establish' (etc.) from which Skjaervo 2006 says that the noun *dāh-* 'gift' is derived. But he shows that *hudāh-* is an adjective, not a noun.

So in my view, as an adjective, *hudāh-* would (literally) mean 'good giving'.

In the macro context of the Gathas, this 'good giving' which is a quality of the Divine, and also of a person who chooses correctly (Y30.3) is a larger, more spiritual concept than just 'gift giving' or (material) 'generosity'.

A key concept in Zarathushtra's thought is the idea of mutual, loving, help ~ which the Divine gives to all that exists, and which we and all that exists mutually give to each other, (including the Divine!). Mutual, loving help is indispensable for bringing about the evolution of existence from a mixed (bad/more good) state of being to one that is wholly good, the complete attainment of the true order of existence.<sup>18</sup> And mutual, loving help ties into Zarathushtra's notion of 'good giving', and ties into Insler's view that *hudāh-* is a beneficence that is 'blessed', because the definition of 'beneficence' in English is something more than giving gifts, or material generosity. It is a bountiful, generous lovingkindness, as we have already seen (in its dictionary definition).

There is no one English word that conveys the full meaning of *hudāh-*. I have (reluctantly) chosen 'beneficence' but I ask that you think of its meaning as a bountiful, loving generosity which is an expression of the beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) which is the true order of existence, and includes the mutual, loving help that we all need to make it.

*yōi hən̄tī* '(to all) that exists'

*yōi* is nom. pl. masc. of the relative pronoun *ya-*,<sup>19</sup> which in English means any one of the following relative pronouns 'who, that, which'. In this context, I have selected *that*.

*hən̄tī* is 3p. pl. present (indicative) of the verb *ah-* 'to be'. Therefore (normally), *hən̄tī* would be translated as 'they-exist'; but because it is preceded by the relative pronoun *yōi* 'who, that, which' I have indicated the plural (for both the pronoun *yōi* and the verb *hən̄tī* by adding '(to all)').

Thus *yōi hən̄tī* '(to all) that exists'.

*spəntā mainyū* 'through (His) beneficial way of being'.

Both words are instr. sg. ('through/by/with \_\_\_') and belong together.

As for their meanings, *spəntā* 'beneficial' is an adj. which describes *mainyū* 'way of being' a masc. noun. This definition of *mainyu-* is the only one which fits each instance of its use in the Gathas, where it is used for the way of being of the Divine and man, and is expressed "...in thought and in word, in action..." Y30.3, and therefore cannot mean 'spirit', or 'mentality'. The meanings of these two words has been explored in depth, with evidence, in another chapter.<sup>20</sup>

This gives us,

- b. *stavas ašā yā hudā yōi həntī*
- c. *spəntā mainyū ...*
- b. 'praising through truth (the One) who (is) beneficent (to all) that exists,
- c. through (His) beneficial way of being'.

\* \* \*

- c. ... *sraotū mazdā ahurō*
- d. *yehyā vahmē vohū frašī manəhā*
- c. ... 'May Wisdom (the) Lord listen,
- d. in whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking.'

*sraotū mazdā ahurō* 'May Wisdom (the) Lord listen,  
*mazdā ahurō* 'Wisdom (the) Lord' is nom. sg. ~ the subject of the verb *sraotū* which is 2p. aor. imp. of *srao-/sru-* 'to listen' (Skjaervo 2006); thus 'may (he) listen'. Thieme (Insler's teacher) has expressed the view that *mazdā-* is a noun 'Wisdom', not an adjective 'Wise'. The meaning of the name *mazdā-* is explored in detail in another verse.<sup>21</sup>

*yehyā vahmē* 'in whose glory'  
*yehyā* 'whose' gen. sg. masc. of the relative pronoun *ya-*;

*vahmē* 'in [whose] glory'. There is general agreement that *vahmē* is loc. sg. of the masc. noun *vahma-*. The loc. is translated into English with such words as 'in, on, at, under, among' etc.

Skjaervo 2006 thinks *vahma-* means "hymn". Beekes 1988 thinks it means 'glorification' p. 130. Skjaervo does not show any verb which he identifies with *vahma-*, but he does show the verb *vah-* 'to shine' (which corroborates Bartholomae's opinion given below).

In our verse, the linguists in our group translate *vahmē* as follows:

Humbach 1991, and Humbach/Faiss 2010: "at whose laudation" (loc. sg.) without comment on how they derived this meaning for *vahmē*.

Taraporewala 1951: "to attain devotion"; commenting that *vahmē* is loc. sg. 'adoration, devotion' (although his translation is not loc. sg.). However he states that the word is derived from *vah-*, (Skt. *vas-*), and that according to Bartholomae there are 3 Avestan roots *vah-*: meaning (1) 'to shine', (2) to dwell, and (3) 'to dress'. But Taraporewala sees additional meanings in Ved. *vas-* one of which he says means 'to love', from which he derives 'devotion'.

Bartholomae: "in whose adoration" (loc. sg.); Moulton's 1912 is the same.

If Bartholomae is correct, that one of the meanings of Ved. *vas-* is love, one can see that it might have generated the flavor of meaning 'praise' for *vahma-*. The word 'adoration' is used for both a high degree of 'love' and also for the kind of 'praise' of the Divine that is infused with a high degree of love. So (of the many meanings for Ved. *vas-*) the meaning 'love' may have generated the flavor 'adoration' which in turn may have been the basis for translating *vahma-* words as 'praise'.

Insler 1975: "in the glory" (loc. sg.) without comment on this word. He translates *vahma*- words as 'glory' in each Gatha verse in which it appears, without comment on the meaning of the word, and its derivation. But in his commentaries to a couple of verses in which *vahma*- words are used, he expresses the opinion that the word is used in the sense 'praise'.

So which is it: 'glory'? 'praise'?

Well even in English, the word can be used as a 'light' word (glory) and also for 'praise' (glorify, glorification). So once again, we have to look to the context to see what Zarathushtra may have intended. *vahma*- words appear in many Gatha verses. In some of them, 'praise' does indeed fit the context. But there are Gatha verses in which 'praise' does not fit at all. A few examples have been footnoted for your convenient reference.<sup>22</sup> Our verse, Y45.6, is one of those verses in which the loc. sg. 'in praise' does not fit the context. If we give each word its correct grammatical value, you can see that this is so.

'... May Wisdom (the) Lord listen, in whose praise [*vahmē*] I have taken counsel with good thinking...'

Praise is something we do. How can anyone take counsel with one's own praise of the Divine? But the glory of truth is indeed something in which one can take counsel with good thinking (the comprehension of truth). A beautiful fit. Which brings us to the last phrase in line d.

*vohū frašī manahā*

*vohū ... manahā* 'with good thinking'; both words are instr. sg. of their respective stems *vohu*- and *manah*- (a ntr. noun).

*frašī* 'I have taken counsel'; Skjaervo 2006 shows *frašī* is a 1p. sg. conjugation of the verb *pars*- 'to consult'. This gives us,

- c. ... *sraotū mazdā ahurō*  
 d. *yehyā vahmē vohū frašī manahā*  
 c. ... 'May the Lord Wisdom listen,  
 d. in whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking.'

\* \* \*

e. *ahyā x ratū frō.mā sāstū vahištā••*

e. Literally: 'Through His reasoning may He teach me, the most-good (things).'

Or more fluently 'Through His reasoning may He teach me, (all that is) most-good.'

*ahyā* 'His'

According to Skjaervo 2006, *ahyā* is gen. sg. masc./ntr. of the demonstrative pronoun *a*- which can also be used for a 3p personal pronoun (masc. 'his' or ntr. 'its'). Here, I think it refers to Wisdom's reasoning, hence 'His'. Of course the Divine has no gender, and whenever I can, I use "Its" for the Divine. But in Avestan masc. pronouns are often used generically. And in addition, according to Skjaervo 2006, His two names *mazdā*- and *ahura*- are both (grammatically) masc. nouns. So in deference to Avestan grammatical and generic usage, (and for ease of reading and comprehension because of our conditioned mind-sets), I have used 'His' for *ahyā* in this context.

*x ratū* 'through reasoning';

*x ratū* is instr. sg. of the masc. stem *x ratu*-.<sup>23</sup> Skjaervo 2006 shows *x ratū* as one of the forms for instr. sg., (the other form being *x ratwā*). Jackson 1892 shows *-ū* as the instr. sg. inflection for *-u*- stem nouns and adjs.<sup>24</sup> Insler 1975 has a different view of the meaning of *x ratu*- words that most of the linguists in our group, and the word evolved into a slightly different flavor of meaning in YA.



texts. In choosing 'through reasoning' for instr. sg. *x ratū* I have followed H. P. Schmidt. The meanings of *x ratu-* words have been extensively discussed in another chapter.<sup>25</sup>

*frō.mā sāstū* 'may he teach me';

*mā* 'me' is a form for a personal pronoun, 1p. acc. sg.

*frō ... sāstū* 'may he teach'. Skjaervo shows this as 3p. sg. imperative of the verb *sāh-* 'to teach, to instruct'.

*vahištā* '(all that is) most-good;

*vahišta-* is an adj. which in Avestan can also be used as a noun. In addition, according to Skjaervo 2006, *vahištā* is the form for three different declensions,

*vahištā* is instr. sg. masc./ntr. ('through/with/by\_\_\_'),

*vahištā* is nom. pl. ntr., and

*vahištā* is acc. pl. ntr.

So in translating this line, we have to decide which declension fits the context, and whether *vahištā* is used as a noun or an adj.

Here *vahištā* cannot be the subject of the verb *sāstū* 'may he teach', therefore it cannot be nom. pl.

It is possible that *vahištā* could be an instr. sg. masc. adj. describing the masc. noun *x ratū* which is also instr. sg. If so, line e. would read, 'Through most-good reasoning may he teach me'. But I do not think this alternative reflects Zarathushtra's intent because it lacks an object (acc.), in that it abruptly leaves open what exactly Zarathushtra is asking the Divine to teach him.

That leaves the acc. pl. ntr. declension for *vahištā*, which fits exactly, because in the Gathas, *vahišta-* ~ the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness ~ is used for a plurality of everything good in our existence ~ the wholly good nature of the Divine, the wholly good way to live our lives (the path) and the wholly good consequences of so living our lives ~ the true (most good, correct) order of existence (its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule),<sup>26</sup> ~ the glory that is truth personified ~ Wisdom.

I therefore think the adj. *vahištā* is used here as a noun, acc. pl. ntr. which gives us

Literally 'Through reasoning may He teach me (the) most-good (things).'

But in more fluent English, adding '(all that is)' expresses that *vahištā* is plural. Thus,

'Through reasoning may He teach me (all that is) most-good.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Now that you have seen the grammatical values and meanings of the words in this verse, let us look at the ways in which each linguist in our group has translated the full verse, for comparative purposes.

- a. *aṭ fravax šyā vīspanam mazištəm*
- b. *stavas ašā yā hudā yōi həṇtī*
- c. *spəntā mainyū sraotū mazdā ahurō*
- d. *yehyā vahmē vohū fraštī manajhā*
- e. *ahyā x ratū frō.mā sāstū vahištā*•• Y45.6. Geldner 1P p. 157.

My translation.

- a. 'Now I shall speak out (about) the Greatest-One of all
- b. praising through truth (the One) who (is) beneficent (to all) that exists
- c. through (His) beneficial way of being. May Wisdom, the Lord, listen,
- d. in whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking.

e. Through His reasoning, may He teach me the most-good (things).<sup>1</sup> Y45.6.

Insler 1975

a. "Now, I shall speak of the Greatest One of all, praising with truth Him who is beneficent through His virtuous spirit to those who exist. 'May [ft. 10] the Wise Lord listen, in Whose glory I have taken counsel with good thinking. May He instruct me in His best intentions'." Y45.6.

Footnote 10: "These lines and the whole verse are probably citations from a sacred prayer."

Humbach 1991

- a. "I shall now proclaim the Greatest One of all,
- b. praising with truth (Him) who (is) munificent (towards those) who exist.
- c. Let the Wise Ahura listen with prosperous spirit.
- d. He at whose laudation I take counsel with good thought,
- e. With His intellect let Him teach me the best (things)." Y45.6.

Humbach/Faiss 2010

- a. "I will proclaim the Greatest One of all,
- b. praising through truth (Him) who (is) munificent towards the existing.
- c. Let the Wise Lord, at whose laudation
- d. I hold counsel with good thought, listen (to it) by beneficent spirit.
- e. Let Him teach me the best (things) through His intellect." Y45.6.

Taraporewala 1951

- a. "And I-will-explain about-the-Greatest of All,
- b. praising (Him) Who (is) Lord-of-Wisdom through-(His)-Ašā, (and those) Who are (with Him, Lords-of-Wisdom\* [footnoted asterisk "The Amesha Spenta"]);
- c. may Mazda Ahura hearken through-(His)-Holy-Spirit,
- d. through Vohu Mano shall-I-strive to attain-devotion unto-Him,
- e. may He, in-His Wisdom, guide me onwards to-the-Highest." Y45.6.

Moulton 1912

"I will speak of him that is greatest of all, praising him, O Right, who is bounteous to all that live. By the holy spirit let Mazdah Ahura hearken, in whose adoration I have been instructed by Good Thought. By his wisdom let him teach me what is best,". Y45.6.

Moulton's translation is the same as that of Bartholomae in English (as shown in Tarap. 1951).

\* \* \* \* \*

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<sup>1</sup> My translation of the last line of our verse (Y45.6) appears in *Part One: Meditation & Contemplation*; and in *Part Three: Xratu*.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*.

<sup>3</sup> Discussed in *Part One: Gender Equality*.

<sup>4</sup> Discussed in *Part One: The Fire In All Things*; and in *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*.

<sup>5</sup> See *Part Five: Avestan Genders: Grammatical, Generic & Actual*.

<sup>6</sup> References to Skjaervo 2006 are to his on-line *Old Avestan Glossary*.

Insler 1975 ~ his translation and footnotes are at p. 77; his comments at pp. 258.  
 Humbach 1991 ~ his translation is in Vol. 1, p. 165; his comments in Vol. 2, p. 169.  
 Humbach/Faiss 2010 ~ their translation is at p. 130; they offer no comments.  
 Taraporewala 1951 ~ his translation is at p. 551; his comments at pp. 552 - 553; and he includes Bartholomae's English translation at p. 553.  
 Moulton 1912. His translation is at p. 371. His translation is identical to Bartholomae's English translation in Tarap. 1951.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of how the superlative is used as a crescendo in Avestan, are explored briefly detail in a ft. in *Part One: The Manthra of Truth, Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu)*; and in more detail in *Part Three: The Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu), An Analysis*.

<sup>8</sup> Webster's International Dictionary, 2d Edition, (1956).

<sup>9</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

<sup>10</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Worship & Prayer*; and in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

<sup>11</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most Good Vahishta*.

<sup>12</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: A Question of Reward & The Path*.

<sup>13</sup> Discussed in *Part Three: Xratu*.

<sup>14</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell*.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson (1892) § 401 p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> My apologies. My fonts cannot reproduce this Vedic word accurately.

<sup>17</sup> Discussed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*; and *The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being*; and in *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*.

<sup>18</sup> Discussed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*; and *The Nature of the Divine*; and in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>19</sup> Skjaervo 2006 *Old Avestan*, Lesson 3, p. 27; Jackson 1892 § 399, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> Detailed in *Part One: The Beneficial Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

<sup>21</sup> Explored in *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

<sup>22</sup> Here are a few of the Gatha verses in which translating *vahma-* words as 'praise' does not fit the context; but 'glory' (light) as a metaphor for truth fits perfectly.

Y50.7, "Yes, I shall yoke for you the swiftest steeds, those wide (going) with the victories of your glory [*vahmahyā*] and strong with both truth and good thinking, the steeds with which ye shall race (ahead), would ye be ready for my help." Insler 1975.

Here, substituting *praise* for *glory* would give us the 'victories of your praise [*vahmahyā*] which simply does not fit. Also, there is no **and** in the GAv. text of this verse. The words "strong with both truth and good thinking" describes the preceding words 'victories of your glory [*vahmahyā*]'. The two phrases are parallels. So here Wisdom's 'glory [*vahmahyā*]', is strong through truth and its comprehension, good thinking (which is the 'glory' of enlightenment). A good fit.

Y48.1 "(to the Wise Lord). If, during the times after this (present) one which is under the workings of evil, one shall defeat deceit by truth, that hateful deceit [*druj-*] which has been taught by gods and men, for the sake of immortality [*amərətāt-* 'non-deathness'], then one shall increase Thy glory [*vahməm*], Lord, during those times of salvation." Insler 1975.

Here, defeating what is false would (of necessity) increase truth. So translating *vahməm* 'glory' as a metaphor for Wisdom's truth is a good fit. But defeating deceit (what is false) with truth would not increase the Lord's

'praise' ~ especially the way Zarathushtra defines the 'praise' of 'worship' (see *Part One: Worship & Prayer*; and *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*).

<sup>23</sup> Geldner has *x ratū*, but in his ft. 7 to this verse (Y45.6), he does not follow his normal procedure of showing which mss. have *x ratū*. His note simply shows a variation (in Avestan script which I here have transliterated) "*x ratūm* Pt4." p. 157. But *x ratūm* is acc. sg. (Skjaervo 2006), and there is no verb here (expressed or implied) which would support *x ratūm* as its object. Therefore *x ratūm* cannot be correct, and likely is a scribal error.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson 1892, §§ 262, 264, pp. 77, 78. According to Jackson's declensions for *-u-* stem words, *x raθwā* is not typical for instr. sg., but *x ratū* is. It is interesting to speculate about why the Gathas should have two forms of instr. sg. for *x ratu-*, but we have no way of knowing for certain. Were these two words originally from two different dialects? We now have the Asha Vahishta (Ashem Vohu) prayer discovered in 1976 in an Old Soghdian mss., in which the words are in exactly the same order as they appear in Av. mss. and their forms are recognizable, but a bit different ~

*ərtam wahu wahištam išti*  
*uštā išti uštā ahmāi*  
*yaṭ ərtāi wahištāi ərtam*

As shown by Gershevitch in his essay *Dissent and Consensus on the Gathas*, appearing in *Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium*, 1993 (WZO 1998) p. 20.

The GAv. word *aša-* is Ved. *rta-*, and Old Persian *arta-*. So Old Soghdian's *ərtam* in place of GAv. *ašəm*, is closer to the Ved. and Old Persian forms. Actually Beekes 1988 thinks that the true GAv. form was also closer to the Ved. and Old Persian forms, and that *aša-* was a later development.

<sup>25</sup> Discussed in *Part Three: Xratu*.

<sup>26</sup> See *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Most-Good Vahishta*.