

### The Freedom To Choose & The Inevitable Good End.

You well may question: If we have the freedom to choose, how can the eventual good End be certain? Well, this paradox is one of Zarathushtra's life affirming, beautiful teachings that has long been forgotten under the influence of other religious paradigms.<sup>1</sup> So let us liberate it.

The freedom to choose is a hallmark of his teachings.<sup>2</sup> For example, he says,

"... Him who left to our will (to choose between) the [*spencha* 'beneficial'] and the [*aspencha* 'non-beneficial']..." Gathas, Yasna 45, verse 9, Insler translation 1975.

"... Reflect with a clear mind – man by man for himself -- upon the two choices of decision ..." Gathas, Y30:2, Insler 1975. The **two choices of decision** are between truth and untruth.

So if people are free to choose what is false, wrong (untruth), doesn't that mean we can never be certain that good will prevail and evil will be defeated? Yet Zarathushtra says the exact opposite -- that the good End -- the true (good) order of existence (*asha-*) -- 'truth' for short -- eventually, is a certainty for existence as a whole.<sup>3</sup> He says,

"However, it has been fated for this world, ... that the truth [*asha-*] is to be saved for its (good) preference, that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession..." Gathas, Y49:3, Insler 1975 ("profession" is used here in the sense of what is professed).

As I discussed in the last Session, this idea of the certain good End is so foundational that we find it even in later Avestan and Pahlavi texts as *frasho.kereiti*, and *frashgard/frashkart*, respectively.

So, how are we to understand this paradox -- the freedom to choose, and the inevitable good End?

Let us first recall Zarathushtra's notions of 'good' and 'evil',<sup>4</sup> which I will summarize here. Zarathushtra does not give us a dictionary definition of 'good' and 'evil'. But in the Gathas, all descriptive references to 'good' and 'evil' are the products of choices in thought, word and action.

'Good' is the product of choices that are in accord with an order of existence that is true, (*asha-*) - factual truths, as well as the truths of mind/heart/spirit -- all that is 'right', which in the Gathas includes such qualities as honesty, generosity, lovingkindness, friendship, compassion, et cetera. In fact, Zarathushtra calls this order of existence the superlative degree of intrinsic goodness (*asha- vahishta-*).

And 'evil' is the product of choices that are untruths -- all that is factually false, as well as what is 'wrong'. In the Gathas, this includes such things as lies, deceit, anger, violence, murder, cruelty, bondage, tyranny, corruption, theft, ignorance, et cetera.

Now, if evil is the product of wrongful choices, then when we stop choosing evil, we deprive it of substance. It ceases to have reality in our preferences, and in the thoughts, words and actions that express our preferences.

Let us take it a step further. We become what we choose. So the more we choose truth (*asha-*) the more truth-filled (*ashavan-*) we become, until eventually we personify truth completely (*haurvatat-*) -- the wholly good, beneficial, way of being (*spenta- mainyu*).<sup>5</sup>

So wouldn't it be equally possible for a person to eventually become completely evil through his wrong choices? The answer (as I see it in the Gathas) is: this is not possible. Let us consider Zarathushtra's reasoning, step by step.

According to him, the good and evil ways of being (*mainyu-*) are a part of our original nature. He says,

"Yes, there are two fundamental [*mainyu-* 'ways of being'], twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action they are two: the [*vahyo* 'more good'] and the bad. ..." Gathas, Y30:3, Insler 1975.

So, as long as evil remains a preference in anyone's way of being, and finds expression in that person's thoughts, words and actions, it cannot be defeated.

Therefore it is apparent, that evil cannot be defeated by a Divine decree that abolishes evil -- because evil is a part of the nature of living beings. (If you are wondering how this squares with the notion of 'creation' in Zarathushtra's thought, it is discussed in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of Creation*).

Nor can evil be defeated by punishment. The fear of punishment may cause a person to hide his evil inclinations. But once that fear is removed, the inclination would again express itself in thought word and action. And evil would still be with us.

A way to defeat evil, therefore, would be to change, eliminate, evil preferences in all the living. And this change, to be effective, real, would have to be something that is made from within, freely, without compulsion.

And that is Zarathushtra's solution for defeating evil. It is not punishment in a hell of tortures. It is changing minds, changing preferences. In his thought, this change is accomplished through certain factors, all of which are a part of the true (correct, good) order of existence, and all of which occur concurrently.

*The first factor* is the freedom to make our own choices, because that is how we learn -- even the failure to choose, is a choice.

*The second factor* is our many experiences. In Zarathushtra's thought, the acquisition of wisdom is experience based (indeed, the material existence is the arena for the process of spiritual evolution).<sup>6</sup> These experiences include,

- **earned** experiences (in which we experience the consequences of our choices);
- **unearned** experiences; and
- **mutual, loving help**.

The **earned experiences** are what I call the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow), which, in Zarathushtra's thought, is a part of the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence (*asha*-).<sup>7</sup>

In fact, when describing the agent that delivers the law of consequences, he frequently uses fire. Now it is important to be aware, that fire is never used in any Avestan or Pahlavi text, (that I am aware of) as an agent of punishment. Even in the very **un**Zarathushtrian Pahlavi text we discussed in the last Session, that specializes in the punitive torments of hell,<sup>8</sup> there is no mention of fire as a punitive instrument of torment. In the Gathas and in later Avestan and Pahlavi texts, fire is a symbol and metaphor, for three perspectives of one thing -- truth, its comprehension, its personification -- an enlightened, or light--filled, state of being -- which is wisdom/Wisdom. But the mind-sets of many translators and readers of the Gathas, conditioned by other religious paradigms, associate fire with the punitive fires of hell, which has distorted Zarathushtra's teachings. Here are a few examples of how Zarathushtra uses fire with the law of consequences. Addressing the Divine, he says,

"Now, we wish Thy fire, Lord, which possesses strength through truth [*asha*-] and which is the swiftest, forceful thing, to be of clear help to Thy supporter but of visible harm, with the power in its hands, to Thy enemy, [*mazda*- 'Wisdom']." Gathas, Y34:4, Insler 1975.

Here we know that fire is a metaphor, because physical fire is not made strong through truth. But, *understanding* is made strong through truth. And throughout the Gathas, the '**enemy**' of Wisdom (*mazda*-) is not another person or tribe. The enemy of Wisdom is what is false, wrong, ignorant. So in this verse, Wisdom's **enemy** -- all that is false, wrong, ignorant -- is harmed by the powerful light of truth and its comprehension -- expressed through the metaphor, fire,<sup>9</sup> -- the only source of light that mortals could make in that ancient time period. Another example: He says,

"...those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat [*garema*] of Thy truth-strong fire, to the deceitful [*dregvaite* 'for deceitfulness'] and to the truthful [*ashaunaecha* 'and for truthfulness'],<sup>10</sup> ..." Gathas, Y43:4, Insler 1975.

Here '**fire**' is Wisdom's **truth-strong fire**. So once again we see that fire is a metaphor for truth. Now in the Gathas, the '**rewards**' that are given **through truth**, are (incremental) steps of increased understanding.<sup>11</sup> And here fire cannot be a punitive agent, because Wisdom delivers rewards through truth not only for deceitfulness but also for truthfulness. And here, the "**heat**" of Wisdom's "**truth-strong fire**" reflects one of Zarathushtra's metaphors for the soul refining process, which in 3 other verses he compares with metal ore being made molten, glowing, through the heat of fire, to eliminate the 'impurities' in the ore, and produce metal.<sup>12</sup>

Summarizing in a rather general, over-simplified way, how the law of consequences works to change our wrongful preferences: When the good we do comes back to us, we realize that this is the way we want things to be -- it reinforces our good preferences. When the wrongs we do come back to us, we don't like being on the receiving end of such experiences, we realize that this is not the way we want things to be, that this is not the way things *should* be.

These experiences inform our preferences, they enlarge our understanding, so that (incrementally) we come to want what is true, good, right, because that is the way we want things to be. This change does not occur overnight, or with one or two experiences. It occurs over a very long period of time, through multiple experiences, as a later Avestan text implies (I have footnoted quotations).<sup>13</sup> And we should not beat ourselves up when we make mistakes -- as all of us inevitably will. The key is to recognize our mistakes and learn from them -- not keep repeating them over and over again.<sup>14</sup>

You may object, that being on the receiving end of evil does not necessarily change preferences. It often generates hatred, revenge, or a desire to identify with, and imitate, the abuser. That is true. Hold that thought for a moment. We will get to it.

Unfortunately, many linguists have translated certain Avestan words in the Gathas as 'punishment', 'retribution' et cetera. These translation choices are inconsistent with what Zarathushtra specifically says in the Gathas. But if we translate these Avestan words more literally, as 'adverse consequences' or similar English equivalents, without the added interpretation that these adverse consequences are given for 'punishment', instead of for enlightenment, then these verses -- like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle -- fall into place.<sup>15</sup>

Here are a few examples which demonstrate that in Zarathushtra's thought, the law of consequences is administered in a **good** way (not through punitive anger), to bring about a **good** end -- for everyone, for those who choose wrongfully and for those who choose truth. Zarathushtra says,

"...May He dispense through His **good** thinking [*vohu- manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Gathas, Y43:16, Insler 1975.

"...when the distribution in the **good** [*vanghau* locative **sg.**] shall occur to both factions [*raanayau* 'for both types (of conduct)]<sup>16</sup> through Thy **bright** fire, [*mazda-* 'Wisdom']." Gathas, Y31:19, Insler 1975.

"That **satisfaction** [*xshnutem* acc. **sg.**] which Thou hast created for both factions [*ranoibya-* 'for both types (of conduct)'] together with Thy [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] and hast promised through fire and truth [*asha-*] ..." Gathas, Y31:3, Insler 1975.<sup>17</sup>

"... together with this [*spenta-- mainyu--* 'beneficial way of being'], Thou shalt give the distribution in the **good** [*vanghau* loc. **sg.**] to both factions [*ranoibya-* 'for both types (of conduct)']<sup>18</sup> through Thy fire, ..." Gathas, Y47: 6, Insler 1975.

In these verses the law of consequences is implemented by Wisdom through His **good thinking**, His **beneficial way of being**, and it delivers an end result that is **good**, and brings **satisfaction** to those who do good and those who do wrong. The Avestan words for 'in the good' and 'satisfaction' are not plural, they are singular -- *one* satisfaction, *one* good (end) for both types of conduct.

Here is one more Gatha verse on this subject. This time, I give you my more literal translation, because (with respect) I think Insler's is too interpretive.<sup>19</sup>

'The satisfaction [*xshnutem* acc. sg.] which you, Wisdom, give for both types (of conduct) [*raanoibyaa*], through your **bright** fire, through molten metal, (is) to be given for clarification [*daxshtem*] among living beings, (is to be given for) **untruthfulness** [*dregvantem* sg.] to be destroyed'. (Thus) You save truthfulness [*ashavanem* sg.].' Gathas, Y51: 9, my translation.

How does Zarathushtra describe Wisdom's fire? As **bright**, -- a fire that clarifies, illuminates -- not an instrument of punishment. And molten metal is a metaphor used more than once in the Gathas, for the soul refining process.<sup>20</sup>

To summarize: In the Gathas, the law of consequences is not a punitive process. It is a process that enlightens -- implemented by Wisdom **through His good thinking** (Y43:16), **through His beneficial way of being** (Y47:6), to help us increase our understanding, increase our compassion which, over time, eliminates our wrongful preferences. In this way, the law of consequences *eventually* delivers an end result -- the "good" (Y47:6, Y31:19), and "satisfaction" (Y31:3, Y51:9) -- to everyone, for both our truthful and untruthful choices.

A brief reminder: In the Gathas, the process of generating the law of consequences -- that we reap what we sow -- is reserved for the Divine alone. Our good thinking is not so perfected as to be an effective instrument for delivering the law of consequences so as to bring about enlightenment, rather than repeated cycles of abuse or a thirst for revenge, on the part of the recipient. In the Gathas, the human soul is judged by Wisdom, and by the soul itself, -- not by its fellow human beings, nor by any human religious authority.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, let us remember, that this evolutionary process is a *spiritual* process. But we humans live in many different social units. If each person were free to translate his wrongful preferences into words and actions that harm others, -- without social consequences, -- we would have anarchy, chaos. No person's life or property would be safe. So the rule of law -- a system of (hopefully) just laws, applicable to all, without prejudice or favor, that (with human limitations) prevents people from continuing to harm others -- is necessary for the protection of individuals, and our societies. This is in accord with Zarathushtra's teaching that we should actively oppose what is wrong, harmful. Let us next consider the 2d type of experiences that bring about the certain good ends/End:



**Unearned experiences.** Not all the hardships and difficulties we experience are the consequences of our own past wrongful conduct. The wrongful choices of others often impact the innocent; so too do many factors beyond our control -- illness, the death of loved ones, poverty, hardship, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, to give just a few examples. But if, (as Zarathushtra teaches), life is an evolution to enlightenment, (to wisdom/Wisdom), and acquiring wisdom is experience based, then it stands to reason that we would have to experience a huge variety of experiences -- earned and unearned -- to enlighten our thinking, change of wrongful preferences.

So now, when I experience difficulties or crises, instead of getting angry at the unfairness or the senselessness of the situation, I ask for understanding (which is good thinking).

This I learned from Yasna 29,<sup>22</sup> -- a mini-drama which includes an allegory with which so many of us are uncomfortable, -- the "soul of the cow". Zarathushtra lived in a society that raised horses and cattle. And the cow was a hugely beneficial part of their lives -- filling a great many of their needs, enabling them to survive, in a time period when there were no grocery stores, no no social safety net. Zarathushtra had to pick symbols and allegories that were relevant to the people of his society.

In my view, the soul [sg.] of the cow is an allegory for the universal soul of the beneficial way of being (all that is good) in mortal existence. The cast of characters in Yasna 29 includes Wisdom and 3 of Its divine qualities which are shown there as (allegorical) entities -- truth, good thinking, and a beneficial way of being.<sup>23</sup> Why? I think because Zarathushtra wanted to acknowledge and then reconcile (in dramatic form), the apparent conflict that an order of existence which is supposed to be wholly good, nevertheless includes so much suffering. He starts this song with a cry of suffering, and a plea from the beneficial in mortal existence (the allegorical cow), to the Divine and Its 3 qualities, for help,

"... the cruelty of fury and violence, of bondage and might, holds me in captivity. I have no pastor other than you. Therefore appear to me with good pasturage..." Gathas, Y29:1, Insler 1975.

The beneficial way of being is troubled by such suffering, and asks truth, if this is a true, correct, right way for things to be.

"... they replied through truth [asha-]: *There is no help free of enmity for the cow...*" Gathas, Y29:3, Insler 1975. (Because all mortals have within them a mix of good and evil preferences which they express in their thoughts words and actions).

At that point, Wisdom (*mazda*-),<sup>24</sup> -- faced with an apparent impasse (between the beneficial way of being's objection to suffering, and truth's reply) -- sets the stage for the solution, giving reassurance that there is indeed a beneficial design at work. But first, what is so interesting is

this: To whom does Wisdom turn for the solution? He turns to good thinking (an allegory here). He says,

"... Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking, who might give these things to ... mortals...?"  
Gathas, Y29:7, Insler 1975.<sup>25</sup> The words 'these things' refer to Wisdom's teachings -- the path of truth -- through which (by comprehending, embodying, and ruling in accordance with truth) suffering is eliminated. And good thinking informs Wisdom that it has found Zarathushtra (i.e. a person who thinks).

The genesis of Wisdom's solution for the sufferings that afflict existence, is good thinking -- an understanding of what is true, good, right, which enables us to make choices that are beneficial in thought, word and action which embody truth (*spenta- aramaiti-*), and establish its good rule (*vohu- xshathra-*), thereby helping to eliminate the many wrongs that cause suffering -- lies, deceit, cruelty, corruption, predatory violence, bondage etc.

But Zarathushtra takes us a step further. In Yasna 29 he teaches us that, it is not suffering alone that is contrary to the true (correct, good) order of existence. Such suffering enlarges our understanding, helps us to change our wrongful preferences, and enables spiritual growth. What is contrary to the true (good) order of existence, is suffering without help, without nurture.

Which brings us to the 3d kind of experiences, necessary for bringing about the certain good ends/End, which is,

### Mutual, loving help.

Reaping what we sow, and unearned difficulties alone, are not enough to change minds, change preferences. All too often, when a person is on the receiving end of injustice and other wrongful conduct, it does indeed generate hatred, anger, violence, a desire for revenge. And those exposed to abusive behavior sometimes do indeed identify with, and repeat in their own lives, the abusive patterns to which they have been subjected. Clearly something more is needed to change our preferences, breaking the cycles of revenge, hatred, abuse, despair. That 'something more' is the other good qualities that are a part of the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*). These qualities generate and express the mutual, loving help we need to make it through the refiner's fire.<sup>26</sup>

None of us can make it on our own. To make it, each of us must both give and receive help with a generosity that does not look for an exact exchange -- or any exchange at all.

Yasna 29 teaches us, that whether we are going through small difficulties, or an overwhelming dark night of the soul, there will always be help at hand. It may not take the form we expect, or want, but it will be there. And in the long run, such help will be better, -- will help us more -- than anything we could have asked for.

So where does all this help come from? Many sources, one of which is the Divine.<sup>27</sup> Referring to his own suffering, Zarathushtra says,

"...Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend ..." Gathas, Y46:2, Insler 1975;

We are told that the Divine offers solicitude, (which means loving care, concern),

"...Him, the one who offers solicitude..." Gathas, Y45:7, Insler 1975;

"...the glories of Him who offers solicitude (to us), ..." Gathas, Y46:17, Insler 1975.

And we are told that He is the first to help, protect, when we experience the difficulties of the refiner's fire -- including the law of consequences ("repayments").

"... He shall be here for the protection of these ... [mortals], just as (He shall be) the first (to do so) during the repayments with (molten) iron.' Gathas, Y30:7, Insler 1975.<sup>28</sup>

And as we have seen in Session 3, Wisdom helps, supports, protects, with truth (*asha-*) and its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*). The loving angels that come to help us are His thoughts, the understanding He helps us to attain.

Other angels come to help as well -- friends, neighbors, strangers (our pets) -- all part time angels.

Each of us, all the living, are a part of this fellowship of part time angels -- helping in a huge variety of ways, in the reality of our day to day lives -- from something as small as a joke to cheer someone up, to more significant ways of helping. The compassionate, generous, loving, thoughtful, intelligent help we give each other is as important, and as indispensable, as the law of consequences and unearned calamities, in changing our wrongful preferences, and breaking repeated cycles of revenge and abuse. We grow by both giving and receiving help, and in the process we help to change existence. We make things 'more good' (the *vahyah--* of Y30, verse 3), 'more beneficial' (the *spanyah--* of Y45, verse 2) for ourselves, for each other, for other life forms, for the environment. We help to heal existence.

So once again we see that we are not Wisdom's slaves, servants, or children. We are Wisdom's partners in bringing about the mutual, loving help, -- the beneficial thoughts, words and actions -- that heal existence. As Zarathushtra says,

"...the loving man (*kathe* 'loving (one)') ...  
[*spenta--* 'beneficial'] through truth [*asha--*],  
watching over the heritage for all,  
is a world--healer [*ahum.bish* '(an) existence--healer']  
and Thy ally [*urvatho*] ... [*mazda--* 'Wisdom']."  
Gathas, Y44:2, Insler 1975.

It is mutual, loving help between the Divine, and man, and all the living that holds everything together.<sup>29</sup>



Given the ability to think/feel,<sup>30</sup> it is the freedom to choose that starts, and eventually brings to completion, the process of an experience based spiritual evolution to the inevitable good End -- thus reconciling the paradox with which we started this Session. The freedom to choose is an indispensable part of bringing about the inevitable good ends/End.

I would like to leave you with a question. Place it on the back burner of your mind, and let your mind play over it.

If (as Zarathushtra teaches) originally, there were two ways of being -- the more good and the bad (Y30:3), the more beneficial and the harmful (Y45:2), and if (as he says) we are capable of attaining all 7 qualities of the Divine completely, through an evolutionary process that requires making choices, how did the Divine acquire these 7 qualities? Did Wisdom choose too? Was Wisdom a part of this evolutionary process? We will consider this in the next Session.

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed in *Part One: A Friendly Universe*; and in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed in *Part One: The Freedom To Choose*.

<sup>3</sup> It is not without interest that in a YAv. text, the victory of good over evil does not seem to be limited to human beings. 'Bahram' is the Pahlavi word for the Avestan *Verethraghna* (which in Avestan texts is the concept of the victory of good over evil). The titles of the Yashts (which were collected and collated during Pahlavi times) are in Pahlavi, but the Yashts themselves are in YAv. Darmesteter in his introduction to the *Bahram Yasht* (Yt. 14), says that *Bahram* (Av. *Verethraghna*) is the "Genius of Victory", and that §§ 1 - 28 are an "enumeration of the ten incarnations in which Verethraghna appeared to Zarathushtra" -- as wind, as a bull, as a horse, as a camel, as a boar, as a youth, as a raven, as a ram, as a buck, and as a man. SBE 23, p. 231.

These enumerated parts of existence are the ones that were most commonly a part of the lives (and myths) of the people who lived in those (YAv.) times (except that including 'a youth' and 'a man' without also including 'a girl' and 'a woman' is unusual for an Avestan text, in so many of which men and women are routinely mentioned in tandem -- even when describing enemies, detailed in *Part One: Gender Equality*).

If we look past the allegory of Victory in these ten "incarnations" (as Darmesteter calls them -- I call them "personifications" of Victory) what does this Yasht tell us?

It tells me (in part) that during YAv. times, the problems of good and evil, and the idea that good will prevail -- the Victory of good -- were thought to apply to other life forms as well (not just to human beings) which is consistent with the idea of the immanence of the Divine in all things -- also implied throughout certain YAv. and Pahlavi texts (see in *Part One: The Fire In All Things*; and in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*; and *A Question of Immanence*).

In later times, the recital of the *Bahram Yasht* as a prayer acquired the reputation for bringing 'success' in times of difficulty. I think the reason for this may have been as follows:

Originally, the *Bahram Yasht* represented the 'success' -- the 'victory' -- of good over evil in all the living -- an expansive, comprehensive 'success' or 'victory'. But in later times, the notion of 'success', 'victory' evolved to include other kinds of 'success' -- success in business, success in an examination, success in overcoming an illness, success (a good outcome) in something that was worrying the person who was praying.

This does not mean we should denigrate (or abandon) such prayers. The prayers of imperfect mortals are, by definition, imperfect.

I think the Divine takes all our (imperfect) prayers, and turns them to good purpose. Which may be why we think such prayers are often "answered". Zarathushtra describes Wisdom as beneficial (*spenta-*), beneficent (*hudah-* literally 'good-giving'). As used in the Gathas, these words mean a bountiful generosity, stemming from goodness, lovingkindness. Wouldn't a bountiful, generous, loving, Divine give us freely (without any tit for tat exchange) what we ask for, if doing so would not harm us (in any way)? I think the Divine would. I think the Divine gives with bountiful generosity even when we don't ask. That is just my opinion. But it is based on what I see in the Gathas, validated in my own life experiences.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed in *Part One: Good & Evil*.

<sup>5</sup> For the reasoning and evidence that require the conclusion that truth (*asha-*) is equated with a beneficial way of being, see *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

<sup>6</sup> See *Part One: The Paradox of the Material & The Spiritual*.

<sup>7</sup> We know that the law of consequences is part of the true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha-vahishta-*), because Zarathushtra says so. For example, in the following verse he says,

"As in harmony with those things which are the laws of the foremost existence, ... [*ratuš* '(good judgment)] thus shall bring to realization the most just actions for the deceitful as well as for the truthful ..., and for the person for whom falsity and honesty are held to be indifferent." Gathas, Y33:1, Insler 1975. The first string of dots indicates that I have omitted the word "(final)" which Insler has added which is not in the Avestan text. The Gathas do not express the notion of any 'final' judgment -- whether end of life or end of times. The word judgment [*ratuš*] in this verse is a mental quality, a mental capability -- as in *having good judgment* (which is a part of good thinking, which is the comprehension of truth -- the laws of the foremost existence).

You may well question: why have I assumed that the judgment [*ratuš*] mentioned in this verse is 'good' judgment?

Well, in English, 'judgment' (a mental capability) can mean good judgment as well as bad judgment. And that is also true of a different Avestan word for 'judgment'. But the Avestan word *ratuš* means judgment that is inherently correct, right, because *ratuš* derives from the root *ar-* which also is the root for *asha-* (Vedic *rta-*, Old Persian *arta-*) The root *ar-* also generated other Avestan words that are inherently good, true, right, such as *arəzva-* and *arštāt-* both meaning 'honesty, righteousness', and *arəzu-* 'straight, true, right, honest'. Detailed in *Part Three: Ratu*. So this verse Y33:1 tells us that the law of consequences is administered, through '(good) judgment' -- judgment that is intrinsically in accordance with the laws of the foremost existence (which is the true (correct) wholly good order of existence, *aša- vahishta-*).

<sup>8</sup> The Pahlavi text *Arda Viraf Namah*.

<sup>9</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*.

<sup>10</sup> As you can see, I disagree with Insler's translation of *drəgvāitē* and *ašāunaēcā* for the following reasons. His translation gives us, "...those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire, to the deceitful [*drəgvāitē* sg.] and to the truthful [*ašāunaēcā* sg.], ..." Gathas, Y43:4, Insler 1975.

The words *drəgvant-* 'deceitful' or more literally 'possessing deceit' (of which *dregvaite* is a grammatical form), and *ašavan-* 'truthful' or more literally 'possessing truth' (of which *ašāunaēcā* is a grammatical form) are adjectives, and in the Gathas, they are treated as opposites (detailed in a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses Of Paradise & Hell* ).

In Avestan, adjectives can be used as nouns (persons, concepts, activities etc.) that have the quality of the adjective. And as you can see, Insler has translated these adjectives as plural nouns that are people "to the deceitful [*dregvaite*] and to the truthful [*ashaunaecha*]" -- a translation that makes these adjectives plural. But the grammatical form of these adjectives is **sg.**, not **pl.** I think a more accurate translation of each of these adjectives, would be a sg. noun that is a concept/activity because throughout the Gathas, Zarathushtra's focus (for purposes of 'reward') is not on dividing people into two groups -- the truthful and the untruthful -- which does not accord with reality, nor with his teachings in which each of us is a mix of qualities that are more-good and bad (Y30:3), more-beneficial and harmful (Y45:2). His focus is on the conflict between two ways of being -- two qualities of existence -- within each person. I therefore think translating these 2 **sg.** adjectives as nouns that are 2 opposing qualities -- **deceitfulness (sg.)** and **truthfulness (sg.)** are consistent with Zarathushtra's thought and linguistically accurate, whereas translating them as 2 groups of persons **pl.**, (with respect) is not, (in addition to being grammatically incorrect). For a more detailed discussion of this issue, in this and similar verses, see *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant*.

<sup>11</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: A Question Of Reward & The Path* (one of my favorite chapters!). In kaleidoscopic ways, throughout the Gathas, Zarathushtra shows that the qualities of the Divine -- truth, its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule, (which is) the beneficial way of being, are both the path and the reward for taking that path -- the means and their end/End. In the Gathas, the 'reward' that truth gives, is truth itself.

<sup>12</sup> Detailed in *Part Two: Molten, Glowing Metal*; and in *Part Six: Yasna 51:9*.

<sup>13</sup> The long, long, time required for the transformation of preferences in the soul-refining process, is hinted at in the YAv. Yy62 (a Yasna addressed to fire), which (among other things) says the following -- all of which establish that fire is used metaphorically, as an allegory. The (somewhat antiquated) translation is by Mills. It was done in around 1887 -- at an earlier stage of the decoding of Avestan. He routinely translates *ašavan-* words as holy, and 'saints' instead of 'truthful' (or 'truth-possessing'). I have omitted many of the words he has added (which he placed in round parentheses) which are not in the Avestan text. And where his translation is too interpretive, I have placed in square brackets, the Avestan words (from Geldner) with my translation. The Av. words which Mills translates as 'renovation' are *frašō.kərəiti-* words (which mean 'forwarding (existence) to truth:making it happen') and appear in

Geldner 1P p. 214 (which Geldner shows in Av. script). This translation by Mills appears in SBE 31, pp. 314 - 315.

"[2] ... O Fire, ...

[3] Be now aflame [Mills' footnote: "Or, 'for giving light'."] within this house; ... be on thy growth within this house; for long time be thou thus to the furtherance of the heroic (renovation), to the completion of (all) progress, ... even till the good heroic ... time when that renovation shall have become complete." Yy62:2 - 3.

"Give me, O Fire, ... an expanded mind, and nimbleness of tongue for soul and understanding even an understanding continually growing in its largeness..." Yy62:4.

"And may'st thou grant me, O Fire, [*vahištəm ahūm ašaonəm raōcaṅhəm vīspō.x'āθrəm* 'the most good existence of the truth-possessing, light, all-happiness/enlightenment']. And may I have experience of the good reward, and the good renown, and of the long forecasting preparation of the soul." Yy62:6.

See also *Part One: Reincarnation*. This chapter lays out the reasons why I think some form of reincarnation is logically and necessarily implied in Zarathushtra's thought, and it includes quotations from the only (few) surviving ancient but later texts of which I am aware which imply that reincarnation is a part of Zarathushtrian beliefs.

<sup>14</sup> There are some Gatha verses which have been translated in ways that require the conclusion that Zarathushtra advocates returning bad for the bad. But these involve translation choices that are personal to a given translator. Detailed in *Part Two: The Paradox of Bad For The Bad*.

<sup>15</sup> Detailed in *Part Three: Adverse Consequences, Not Punishment*.

<sup>16</sup> I think *rānaya* here (in Y31:19) means 'for both types (of conduct)'. True, *rānaya* is genitive. du. (which would make it literally 'of both types (of conduct)'), but I think this is one of those instances in which the Av. gen. is translated into English as dative. (See Skjaervo 2003, Lessons 12 and 13). The Insler 1975 translation of the gen. *rānaya* here also has a dat. flavor ('to/for \_\_\_') except that he translates *rānaya* as two factions ("to both factions [*rānaya*]" Insler 1975) instead of for two types of conduct.

The stem *rāna-* has not yet been decoded, and translations by professional linguists of *rāna-* words (in their various grammatical forms) are wildly different, and are at best educated guesses (as the translators themselves admit) -- which have included such guesses as 'leg', 'thigh', 'balance', 'factions', 'parties' etc. But these translations do not fit either the micro or macro contexts. To translate the word (when in dual form) as 'two types (of conduct)' -- as I do -- is also an informed guess, but one that fits well all the verses in which *rāna-* words are used in the Gathas (the micro context), as well as the macro context of Zarathushtra's thought in the Gathas as a whole, (detailed in *Part Six: Yasna 43:12*) because in Zarathushtra's thought, it is untruthful qualities (and not the persons who might have such qualities) that are destroyed (or defeated). For example,

"...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Gathas, Y43:16, Insler 1975. Here it is types of actions, not types of people (factions) that generate the 'reward'.

"... If, ... one shall defeat deceit [*druj-* 'untruth' ] by truth [*aša-*],..."Y48.1, Insler 1975. Here also, it is a quality (*druj-* 'untruth' ) that is defeated by a quality (*aša-* 'truth'). Similarly,  
"... to those, Lord, who shall deliver deceit [*druj-* untruth'] into the hands of truth [*aša-*]." Y30.8, Insler 1975;  
"... How might I deliver deceit [*druj-* untruth'] into the hands of truth [*aša-*],..." Y44.14, Insler 1975.  
See *Part Three: Ashavan & Dregvant*, for a more detailed discussion of such differences.

<sup>17</sup> In this verse Y31:3, Zarathushtra uses both 'fire' and 'truth' as the agent which delivers the end result of satisfaction, for those who choose rightly, and also (in the long run) for those who do not. "That satisfaction which Thou hast created for both factions [*rānōibyā* 'for both types (of conduct)'] together with Thy [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] and hast promised through fire and truth ..." Gathas, Y31:3, Insler 1975. You well may ask: if fire is the material metaphor for truth (*aša-*), why does Zarathushtra use both fire and truth here? Perhaps it is because fire (a material metaphor) that represents the soul refining process of the true order of existence (*aša-*) in mortal (material) existence, and truth the resulting (incremental) enlightenment (in the existence of mind/heart/spirit).

<sup>18</sup> Here are translations by Insler 1975, and by me, of this part of the Gatha verse Y47:6.

My translation "... through this beneficial way of being' [*spəntā mainyū*], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good [*vanhāu*] for both types (of conduct) [*rānōibyā*] through Thy fire, ..." Y47:6.

Insler 1975: "... together with this virtuous spirit [*spəntā mainyū*], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good [*vanhāu*] to both factions [*rānōibyā*] through Thy fire, ..." Y47:6;

Here again, we have an important translation difference. Insler thinks Zarathushtra's intent was that two factions (of people) are rewarded? I think his intent was that two types (of conduct) -- truth and untruth -- are rewarded? Discussed above.

<sup>19</sup> Other translations (including Insler's) are given for comparative purposes in *Part Six: Yasna 51:9*, where I give my translation, discuss this verse briefly, and give a word by word linguistic analysis.

<sup>20</sup> Detailed In *Part Two: Molten, Glowing Metal*.

<sup>21</sup> Evidence from the Gathas and later texts which shows that the soul is judged by the Divine and by the soul itself, is detailed in a footnote in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*; and in *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge Of Discerning*; and this idea is touched on in *Home Page: Buried Treasure In Ancient Stories*.

<sup>22</sup> The beautiful teachings of Yasna 29, are detailed in *Part Two: The Solution Of Yasna 29*.

<sup>23</sup> In this Yasna, the 3d quality of the Divine (in addition to truth and good thinking) that is included (as an allegorical entity) in the cast of characters, is called 'the fashioner of the cow' (i.e. the fashioner of all that is beneficial in mortal existence, the allegorical cow). In other verses of the Gathas, the beneficial way of being (*spenta-mainyu-*) is identified as the fashioner of the cow, and in yet other verses, Wisdom (*mazda* -- whose way of being is beneficial, *spenta-mainyu-*) is identified as the fashioner of the cow (detailed in *Part Two: The Solution of Yasna 29*; and in *The Puzzle Of The Cow & Its Network*). So here we have a subtle and lovely circle of thought -- the beneficial way of being (*spenta-mainyu-* which exists in the Divine and in mortals fashions the beneficial in mortal existence (the allegorical cow). If



you are interested in how this squares with Zarathushtra's notion of 'creation', see *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*.

<sup>24</sup> In this instance, Zarathushtra calls the Divine *mazdā*- 'Wisdom'; and also *ahura*- 'Lord' which he uses in the sense of one who has obtained lordship over the qualities that make a being divine (as detailed in quotations in both Sessions 1 and 2 of this collection, *Liberating Zarathushtra's Relevance*).

<sup>25</sup> The full verse reads as follows: "The Wise Lord, who is of the same temperament with truth, fashioned that promise [*mąθra*- 'precept'] of butter and milk for the cow. He is [*spənta*- 'beneficial'] to the needy in accord with His commandment [*sāsnā*- 'teaching']. (He said): 'Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking, who might give these things to the mortals below?' Gathas Y29:7, Insler 1975.

The words **butter and milk** are metaphors for nurture -- the *mąθra*- 'precept'] of **butter and milk** being the teachings of Wisdom -- the path of truth -- which nurtures, gives strength to, the beneficial in mortal existence (the allegorical **cow**).

Also, in this verse (Y29:7), 'below' is not a physical location. In the Gathas, 'uplift' is associated with good thinking, ("I who thoroughly bear in mind to uplift myself with good thinking,..." Gathas Y28:4, Insler 1975; "... Thou knowest, Lord, (only) when there is uplifting of beings with the very best [*vahishta*- 'most good'] thinking,..." Gathas Y32:6, Insler 1975).

Allegories and metaphors are beautiful tools of poetry (and communication), but I have to admit that with the passage of millennia, especially after wars in which the learned were killed and books burned, the metaphors and allegories which Zarathushtra used, are not as readily apparent to us as they may have been in his time period, and therefore have been the cause of much misunderstanding. And I begin to understand J. R. R. Tolkien's dislike for allegories (expressed in another context).

<sup>26</sup> The notion of mutual loving help to and from all the living -- including the Divine -- is detailed in many chapters, but see particularly in *Part One*:

*The Nature Of The Divine*; and  
*Love*;

And in *Part Two: Asha & The Checkmate Solution*; and  
*The Solution Of Yasna 29*.

<sup>27</sup> A mini puzzle in the Gathas, seems to suggest that perfected souls who are no longer bound by mortality (and are part of the Divine), are free to come back to mortal existence to help us make it -- not to do our thinking for us, not to dictate what we should believe, but to fill our needs for spiritual growth, nurture, guidance, a helping hand, whatever. A simple version of this mini puzzle is discussed in *Part One: The Angels Among Us*. A more detailed discussion appears towards the end of *Part Three: Chinvat, The Bridge Of Discerning*.

As I understand Zarathushtra's teachings, these perfected fragments of existence (in union) are Zarathushtra's notion of the Divine, (detailed in *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*; and in *Part Two: The Puzzle Of The Singular & The Plural*). So in addition to (imperfect mortal) angels, perfected fragments of the Divine also help us to make it -- one of the many ways in which Wisdom (the Divine) renders mutual, loving help.

<sup>28</sup> This verse has lovely multi-dimensioned meanings which are discussed in *Part Six: Yasna 30:7*, along with my (more literal) translation, as well as translations by eminent linguists (including Insler 1975) for comparative purposes.

<sup>29</sup> It is a great loss that so many Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrian scholars have forgotten the central role that lovingkindness plays in Zarathushtra's teachings. That 'love' is at the very core of his teachings is detailed (with evidence) in *Part One: Love*.

<sup>30</sup> The word 'mind' (*manah-*) in English means primarily intellectual functions; whereas in Avestan, based on the ways in which *manah-* words are used in the Gathas, it means the full spectrum of conscious (awake) capabilities -- intellectual, emotional, creative, insightful, spiritual etc. detailed in *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*. This too we need to be aware of, and bear in mind, if we wish to understand Zarathushtra's teachings accurately (and liberate their relevance).