Good and Evil

What is 'good'? What is 'evil'? Theologians and philosophers have debated these questions for millennia.

In law we have the concepts of *malum in se* (that which is inherently wrong) and *malum prohibitum* (that which is wrong because it is prohibited by law). To illustrate: In times past in the United States, many states had what were called the 'Blue Laws', which prohibited bars, shops, and places of entertainment from being open on Sunday. This was an example of *malum prohibitum*, because there is nothing intrinsically wrong with shopping, or having a drink, or going to the movies, on a Sunday. The Blue Laws reflected the prevailing religious belief of that time, that it was 'wrong' to engage in things that gave us pleasure on the day set aside for divine worship and the contemplation of our 'sins', ~ despite the fact that the Constitution of the United States requires separation of Church and State.[1] As times and perceptions changed, most people came to think that the Blue Laws did not reflect what was intrinsically right or wrong and these laws were eventually repealed.

On the other hand, laws such as those against murder, fraud, theft, assault and battery are *malum in se* ~ because such actions are inherently wrong (although in some instances we might agree or disgree on degrees and defenses).

In many later Zoroastrian texts (as indeed in many other religions as well), 'good' and 'evil' are often fact-specific. Certain later Zoroastrian texts do indeed enumerate some 'wrongs' that are inherently wrong (*malum in se*), but they enumerate many, many, 'wrongs' that are *malum prohibitum*. In the Gathas, all of the 'wrongs' mentioned are *malum in se* ~ inherently wrong. There are no *malum prohibitum* wrongs mentioned in the Gathas.

Zarathushtra does not define 'good' and 'evil' specifically.   The Gathas are not didactic. They are not a catechism. But they contain descriptive references that give us clues about Zarathushtra's ideas regarding what is 'good' and what is 'evil'.

Good

If we look at each descriptive reference to 'good', in the Gathas, we see that it is the product of choices that promote or are in accord with the true (correct), good order of existence (*aša-*) – an order of existence which in the Gathas includes the truths of mind/heart/spirit, including such qualities as integrity, honesty, knowledge, generosity, lovingkindness, solicitude, friendship, compassion, justice, et cetera. These 'good' qualities have already been discussed in some detail in another chapter.[2]

Evil

In certain later texts, written many, many centuries after Zarathushtra, the classifications of 'good' and 'evil' are almost entirely homocentric. The things that were pleasant or useful to man were considered 'good'. And everything that was unpleasant or harmful to man was considered 'evil'. Their perceptions of 'good' and 'evil' were not limited to abstract qualities or ethical values. They included the entire material existence. Physical darkness, wolves, frogs, drought, and many other physical phenomena which were not beneficial to, or liked by, humans were all deemed 'evil', ~ the creations of the all-evil Entity of cosmic dualism.[3]   As Mardan-farukh, (the author of one such later Pahlavi text) assures us, a wolf is a noxious creature and those who hold otherwise lack understanding.[4]   Mardan-farukh's perceptions were time bound and culture bound. In those ancient times, in the bitter winters when food became scarce, wolves (and other predatory animals) came down to hunt for food near villages.   And children, adults, and livestock became their prey

Updated 2025.

(a horrible death!). But today (far removed from such experiences), we might think that it was Mardan-farukh himself who lacked understanding, because now we are increasingly aware of how everything in the eco-system is inter-connected and inter-dependent ~ including the 'noxious creatures' of the Pahlavi texts. Death also was considered 'evil' in the later texts ~ a creation of the all-evil uncreated deity of cosmic dualism,[5] whereas in reality, death is a natural and necessary part of life (and of the evolution of the soul).[6]

This perception of 'evil' in the later texts is very different from Zarathushtra's thought. In the Gathas, material things are not 'evil'. There is no mention of death as 'evil'. Nor is physical darkness 'evil'. The luminous bodies of the night sky and the dark spaces between them are treated with the same sense of wonder. He asks (rhetorically) "...Which craftsman created the luminous bodies and the dark spaces?..."Y44:5, Insler 1975; "craftsman" is sg. ~ one craftsman 'created' both.[7] Wolves, frogs, drought, and other things that were deemed 'evil' in the later texts are not mentioned in the Gathas,[8] which do not describe any aspect of the material existence as evil or bad.

Indeed, after a series of questions about how the material existence was generated, ordered, and crafted, Zarathushtra concludes that it was all done by Wisdom (*mazdā-*) through its beneficial way of being (*spəṇta-mainyu-* Y44:7).[9]

Now, a beneficial way of being (*spəṇta- mainyu-*) in the Gathas is equated with goodness.[10] And 'good' cannot, by definition, create evil. So in whatever way the material 'creation' might have been accomplished (evolution is consistent with Zarathushtra's thought) it is clear from Yasna 44 that Zarathushtra did not regard the material existence as 'evil', because in his view, it was generated by a 'beneficial' way of being (for a beneficial purpose).[11]

So we return to the question: What was Zarathushtra's understanding of 'evil'? It is interesting that the Old Avestan word *aṇgra-* which Insler translates as 'evil' (Y45:2) is translated by other scholars as 'harmful, inimical, pain-causing, hate-filled'.[12] So we see, from the word he chooses, that Zarathushtra's notion of 'evil' is something that is hate-filled, harmful, pain-causing, inimical ~ the opposite of beneficial (Y45:2), the opposite of the qualities that comprise the true (correct) good, order of existence.[13] Indeed if we look at each descriptive reference to 'evil' in the Gathas, we see that it is the product of wrongful preferences and choices ~ those that are not in accord with the true (correct) good order of existence. For example:

~ lies and ignorance "...be he false-speaking or true-speaking, be he knowing or unknowing..." Y31:12, Insler 1975; indeed, Zarathushtra calls his notion of 'hell' "the House of Worst Thinking" Y32:13, and "the House of Deceit" Y46.11, Insler 1975; 'house' is a metaphor for a state of being that houses such qualities;[14] the word that Insler translates as 'deceit' (*druj-* 'untruth') is a state of mind that in the Gathas is the opposite of the true order of existence (*aša-*),[15] and the 'worst thinking' is the opposite of the most-good thinking (the comprehension of truth);

~ cruelty, fury, violence, bondage[16] "...For whom did ye shape me? Who fashioned me? (For) the cruelty of fury and violence, of bondage and might, holds me in captivity..." Y29:1, Insler 1975, the speaker being the soul of the allegorical cow ~ an allegory for the beneficial in mortal existence;[17]

~ tyranny and oppressive rule "...the rich Karpan [a type of priest] chose the rule of tyrants and deceit rather than truth." Y32:12, Insler 1975;

~ theft and greed "...they have ruined this life by stealing the property of the (true) inheritor,..." Y32:11, Insler 1975;

~ murder and mind-altering drugs, "When, Wise One, shall men desist from murdering? When shall they fear the folly of that intoxicating drink, through the effects of which the Karpans as well as the evil rulers of the lands torture our (good) intentions in an evil way?" Y48:10, Insler 1975;

~ selling out one's principles for fame, "Shameful are the many sins by which one attains fame, if at all by such things ... fame is to serve Thee and the truth, Wise One, under Thy rule." Y32:6, Insler 1975;

~ opposition to the values that comprise the true (correct), good order of existence and its component parts (amesha spenta Yasna 32); ~ the existence of the Divine, qualities that make a being divine;

~ and above all, what is false/wrong, untruth (*druj-*), which in the Gathas is used in the sense of the opposite of the true (correct) good order in the existences of matter and mind (but which Insler 1975 translates as 'deceit'), "... How might I deliver deceit [*druj-*] into the hands of truth [*aša-*], ..." Y44:14 Insler 1975.[18]

In short, the only 'evils' described in the Gathas are the products of preferences and choices in thought, word and action, that are inherently wrong (*malum in se*) ~ not in accord with the true order of existence, which is wholly good (*aša- vahišta-*).

In the Gathas, there is no mention of ritual defilement, nor is there any mention of any spiritual defilement by any physical means. In fact, Zarathushtra complains to Wisdom (*mazdā-*) that he himself has been condemned as the greatest defiler.

"Yes, throughout my lifetime I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, Wise One..." Y49:1, Insler 1975.

And he concludes that the real defiler is the deceitful person who deflects others from truth, its comprehension, its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action,

"Yes, the deceitful ... [person] resembles the defiler, as he deflects (others) from the truth by himself. Neither has he supported [*spəṇta- ārmaiti-*]..., nor has he taken counsel with good thinking." Y49:2, Insler 1975; For mortals, *spəṇta- ārmaiti-* is the (incremental) beneficial embodiment (personification) of truth in thought, word and action;[19] 'good thinking' is the (incremental) comprehension of truth.[20]

There are those who contend that to define evil only as the product of wrongful choices is simplistic and insufficient, because it does not take into consideration the so-called 'natural evils' such as earthquakes, floods, famine, disease, physical debility, and the other calamities that beset us.

This raises an interesting question. Is everything that causes us discomfort, displeasure, grief, pain, or harm, intrinsically 'evil' for that reason alone? Natural calamities, illness, injury, disease, the loss of loved ones, can cause incredible anguish, great suffering. But does that necessarily (for that reason alone) make them 'evil'?

In the Gathas, there are no verses which describe natural phenomena and calamities as 'evil'. There is no evidence in the Gathas that Zarathushtra subscribes to the view (as did some later texts) that anything which causes human beings inconvenience, or grief, or suffering, or loss, or damage, is, for that reason alone, 'evil'. And there is evidence to the contrary.

Although I had a very hard time agreeing with it (and sometimes still feel rebellious), I think under the evidence, all such experiences are a necessary part of transforming us from a mixed state of being ~ one that is more-good and bad (Y30:3), more-beneficial and harmful (Y45:2) ~ to one that is wholly good (*vahišta-*), because when we experience such grief, suffering, loss, damage, (et cetera), it increases our

empathy, our understanding. We know that this is not the way we want things to be, and over time, such experiences change our preferences.

There are those who contend that to Zarathushtra, 'evil' is not a real force, it is simply a negative ~ the absence of 'good'. This may be true in some (passive) instances. For example, ignorance, which Zarathushtra considers to be not good, is certainly an absence of knowledge. But there are many other instances of 'evil' in the Gathas which are not merely negative ~ the absence of 'good' ~ but which are forces that actively harm; for example cruelty, violence, tyranny, murder, deceit, bondage, and the many other products of active wrongful choices detailed in the Gathas.

There are those who contend that in Zarathushtra's thought, 'good' and 'evil' are natural complements ~ each is necessary for the other's existence. The Gathas do not wholly support this idea. It is true that if (for example) we see or experience an injustice, that may help to clarify our ideas as to what justice should be (in that situation).   But a moment's reflection makes it clear that the idea that good and evil are complements, each necessary for the other's existence, is neither accurate nor logical.

A complement is one of two (or more) mutually completing parts. Each part is necessary to complete the whole. For example, words and music are complements in creating a song. Complements may be different from each other (like words and music) but they must be mutually supportive. If they are to form a whole, they cannot be mutually destructive, or mutually exclusive. Good and evil are mutually destructive. They are mutually exclusive. Where knowledge is present in a specific matter, ignorance (with regard to that matter) vanishes. When anger is present, good thinking is absent. The existence of truth in a given instance precludes the existence of what is false in that instance. The Gathas are full of verses in which good and evil are described as being mutually destructive, and mutually exclusive. Therefore they cannot, by definition, be complements in Zarathushtra's thought.

There are those who contend that there is no such thing as 'good' and 'evil' because such characterizations are purely subjective. It is true that what is deemed 'good' or 'evil' in one time period or in one culture, may be very different from what people in another time period or culture may think is 'good' or 'evil'.   But most of these differences result from 'fact~specific' applications of general principles. Zarathushtra's descriptions of good and evil are of general principles that are universal ~ although their application to the facts of a given situation may vary from one mind~set to another, or from one time period or culture to another.

To illustrate: A couple of hundred years ago in Europe and the United States, women were not allowed to vote, or serve on juries, or pursue careers, and after marriage a woman's property belonged to her husband (although after he died, his debts were hers). That was their idea of 'justice' and 'good social order'. Our generation, however, would consider such ideas to be 'unjust' and a 'bad social order'. Yet those people two hundred hundred years ago believed as sincerely in the idea of 'justice' and 'good social order' as we do.

The beauty of Zarathushtra's thought is that he describes certain universal qualities (like 'justice' and 'good social order') as 'good'.   But he also tells us to use our minds to figure out what is 'good' ~ what is the true order of existence (*aša-*) ~ in a given situation. He gives us certain general principles regarding what is, and what is not, included within the meaning of the true order of existence.[21]   But he does not give us fact~specific definitions (or directives).   He tells us to search for answers.[22]   So his system of ideas includes within it the capacity for growth and change in the application of universal principles (like 'justice' and 'good social order') to specific factual situations, as our experience~based understanding increases.

In addressing the problem of evil, Zarathushtra's thought does not focus on punishment, forgiveness, and redemption.   In the Gathas there is no notion of damnation, or a hell of torture and suffering ~ whether

<div style="text-align:center">4</div>

eternal or temporary.[23] Unfortunately, many modern translators of the Gathas interpret them through the spectacles of certain dominant religions of today reinforced by later Pahlavi texts ~ ignoring the absence of a 'hell' of tortures in even later Avestan texts.[24] A moment's reflection makes it clear that the existence of such a 'hell' would not defeat or eliminate evil. The existence of such a 'hell' would in fact perpetuate evil. Is it 'bad' for a man to throw an adult or a child into a fiery furnace, but 'good' for 'God' to do so? Is it 'bad' for a man to torture a person but 'good' for 'God' to do so? In Zarathushtra's thought, there is no notion of a hell of tortures.[25] The Gathas do indeed speak of the law of consequences ~ that we reap what we sow, that everything we do comes back to us. But when the 'bad' things we do come back to us, it is not for punishment. Its purpose is enlightenment ~ to increase understanding, to enable transformation, to change minds ~ which is also true of the 'bad' things that happen to us which are not earned.[26]

In Zarathushtra's thought, 'good' and 'evil' are concepts. As such, they have no life, no substance. They are brought to life, given form, given substance, through choices in thought, word and action.   When we stop choosing 'evil', it ceases to have substance. It may exist as a theoretical alternative, but it lacks existence in the reality of thought, word and action. So the way to eliminate evil is to stop giving it life, existence, with our choices in thought, word and action. When confronted by a choice, if we choose what is 'good', we defeat what is 'bad' in that instance. As Zarathushtra poetically describes it, we "deliver [*druj*- 'untruth'] into the hands of truth" Y30:8, Y44:14, Insler 1975. And indeed, this teaching of Zarathushtra is corroborated in later texts.[27]

But as long as we are a mix of two ways of being ~ the more-good and the 'bad' (Y30:3), the more-beneficial and the inimical or harmful (Y45:2), our 'bad', inimical preferences will generate the thoughts, words and actions that bring 'evil' to life.

To Zarathushtra, the 'enemy' is not a different clan or tribe, or belief system. The 'enemy' is what is false, wrong, harmful, hate-filled, pain-causing, destructive ~ all that is not consistent with the true (correct) good order of existence.   One of the (communal) prayers in the Gathas says, "Come Thou, together with good thinking. Along with truth, grant ... Wise One [*mazdā*- 'w/Wisdom'], the long-lived gift of strong support to Zarathushtra and to us, Lord, through which we shall overcome the enmities of the enemy." Y28:6, Insler 1975.

And Insler points out, in a footnote "The enemy is deceit and its followers, the deceitful ones, who have ruined the present world."[28] A conclusion that is corroborated in some later texts.[29] Notice, the foregoing prayer asks the Lord, Wisdom, for support. And how does He support?   With truth and good thinking. Here are some other examples,

"... I lament to Thee. Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend. Let me see the power of good thinking allied with truth!" Y46:2, Insler 1975.

"... Wise One ... be present to me with support and with truth, so that one shall become convinced even where his understanding shall be false." Y30:9, Insler 1975.   Notice, he does not say 'so that I may convince...' True conviction has to come from within a person ("...so that one shall become convinced..."). *One* may lead a horse to water, *twenty* cannot make it drink.

Zarathushtra's solution for eliminating evil is to change wrongful preferences to good ones, change minds, from within, as part of an on-going evolutionary process. The factors that bring about this change are:
(1) the ability to think, to reason, to feel, to understand (*manah*-),[30]
(2) wisdom acquired by listening to what is good from others and reflecting on what we hear,

(3) innate wisdom ~ the wisdom within,[31]

(4) the educational effects of experiences ~ both earned experiences (reaping what we sow), and also unearned experiences, and

(5) one other very important factor – mutual, loving help, between man, the Divine, and all the living, which helps to break the destructive cycles in which we tend to get trapped, such as the abused abusing others, cycles of injustice and revenge, of ignorance, fear and prejudice. The Gathas are full of interesting paradoxes, and one of these is that on the one hand, Zarathushtra teaches individual choice, individual judgment, and individual responsibility (reaping what we sow). On the other hand, he also teaches that none of us can make it on our own. Each of us, to make it, must both give and receive help.[32]

Conclusion: The Gathas do not specifically define good and evil. But in all its descriptive references, good and evil are the products of preferences and choices: 'good' is the product of choices that are in accord with, and promote, the true (correct), good order of existence ('truth' for short' *aša-*); and 'evil' is the product of choices that are not in accord with truth ~ choices that are false, that are inherently wrong ~ deceit, lies, ignorance, fury, cruelty, violence, bondage, tyranny, murder, theft, corruption, and all the other wrongful choices mentioned in the Gathas.

But (in a delightful paradox), 'good' comes even from the 'evil' of wrongful choices.   Wrongful choices (whether our own or someone else's) are effective (if painful) teachers. They are a part of the process of changing minds, changing preferences, which is Zarathushtra's solution for the defeat of evil. Which solution, paradoxically, is a part of the true (good) order of existence (*aša-*).[33]

* * * * * * *

---

[1] When originally challenged in the Courts, these blue laws were sometimes upheld by the Courts on the basis that it was the will of the Legislature that all employees should have a day of rest, and the Legislature had the right to pick Sunday as that day of rest.

[2] See *Part One: Truth, Asha.*

[3] See *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu.*

[4] *Sikand Gumanik Vijar,* Chapter III, § 19, as translated by E. W. West, in SBE 24, p. 125. This treatise is a Pahlavi text, written some time in the 9th Century CE. Similar ideas are expressed in other Pahlavi texts which were written around the same time ~ roughly 200 + years after the Arab invasion of Iran. Such Pahlavi texts would have been written more than 1,000 after Zarathushtra's time. See *Part Four: Zarathushtra's Date and Place.*

The idea that animals harmful to man were 'evil' also appears in some YAv. texts. For example, in Yy9:21, the wolf is mentioned in tandem with a murderer and a thief. Here, one of the blessings asked of a pre-Zarathushtrian Indo-Iranian deity Haoma (Ved. Soma), is that the person praying might "get good warning of the thief, good warning of the murderer, see first the bludgeon-bearer, get first sight of the wolf. ..." Yy9:21, Mills' translation, SBE 31, p. 237.

In the *Videvdat* (*Vendidad*), in addition to considering as 'evil' the animals and insects that harmed man, the notion of 'evil' included ritual defilement. This text (although written in Avestan) was written long after Avestan times (demonstrated by its materially faulty grammar). Indeed, Darmesteter thought that parts of it were written to refute Mani who lived during Sasanian times. If so, it would have been written many, many centuries after Zarathushtra. See *Part Five: The Vendidad, An Overview.*

[5] In the Gathas, *aŋgra- mainyu-* is a hate-filled, inimical, pain~causing, harmful, way of being ~ the opposite of a beneficial way of being (*spə̄nta- mainyu-*) ~ the two ways of being that characterize unperfected existence. But after

many centuries, Zoroastrians came to believe in cosmic dualism ~ two uncreated beings, one all good and one all evil ~ the latter being the 'Devil' who was named Angra Mainyu in Avestan and Ahriman in Pahlavi.

A YAv. text, the *Hormezd (Ormazd) Yasht*, in **§** 19 describes the 'fiend' Angra Mainyu as 'all death': "...that fiend who is all death, Angra Mainyu..." Yt.1:19 translated by Darmesteter, in SBE 23, p. 29. By the time of these later texts, 'death' was 'evil', a creation of the 'Devil' Angra Mainyu.

But death is simply a part of the natural order of existence. As such, death is part of the true (correct) wholly good order of existence (*aša-   vahišta-*), which in the Gathas is equated with 'good' and 'beneficial' (see *Part One: Truth, Asha*).   Indeed, mortality, far from being evil, is indispensible for the multitude of experiences that enable the perfecting process (see *Part One: A Friendly Universe;* and   *Reincarnation;* and in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution;* and *A Question Of Power*).   The notion of 'death' in the Gathas and in the later texts is discussed briefly in *Part One: Death.*

[6] See *Part One: Reincarnation.*

[7] Zarathushtra's notion of 'creation' has been interpreted through the spectacles of the dominant religions of today, which is unfortunate. His notions on 'creation' are not specifically expressed in the Gathas, but based on the words he uses, it is a creation by emanation, and then evolution. See *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation.* But Zarathushtra did not answer the question *Who/what created (or emanated) the creator (or emanator)*?

[8] In the Gathas Y28:5 and Y34:9 the word *x rafstra-* appears, the meaning of which has puzzled linguists.

Insler translates it as "fierce" Y28:5 and as "fierce beasts" Y34:9. Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate it as "noxious ones" Y28:5 and as "fierce beasts" Y34:9.

With respect, I disagree with the (many different) translations of *x rafstra-*. Based on the context of the verses in which Zarathushtra uses *x rafstra-* I am persuaded by the view of Neriosangh Dhaval, that *x rafstra-* in GAv. does not apply to 'beasts' at all, and (following his opinion) I translate *x rafstra-* as 'the paralyzed-reasoning ones' or in more fluent English 'those whose reasoning is paralysed'. To illustrate the context, this is how I translate Y28:5.

Line a. 'Truth, will I see you, (as I continue) acquiring both good thinking
Line b. and the way to the Lord, ~ listening to wisdom/Wisdom, most rich in strength?
Line c. Through His Word, by (giving) tongue (to it), we would turn (around) in the greatest way, those whose reasoning is paralysed [*x rafstra-*].' Y28:5, my translation. The reasoning of people in Zarathushtra's society was paralysed by fear ~ the fear based teachings of the priests of that culture. For a linguistic discussion on the meaning of *x rafstra-* together with other translations for comparative purposes, see *Part Six: Yasna 28:5.*

[9] "...By these (questions), Wise One, I am helping to discern Thee to be the creator of everything by reason of Thy [*spəṇta-   mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being']." Y44:7, Insler 1975. The questions that precede this statement include questions as to who generated (birthed), fashioned, crafted various aspects of the the material existence, and the divine qualities truth, good thinking, embodied truth and good rule. None of the preceding questions ask about the 'creation' of evil. This is consistent with the conclusion that the beneficial (*spəṇta-*) part of the primordial being 'created' the material (mortal) existence to enable the experiences necessary for spiritual evolution. And it is consistent with the conclusion that the primordial being (who existed before 'creation' and was a mix of harmful and more-beneficial qualities) infused itself into the material creation ~ its beneficial (*spəṇta-*) way of being therefore would be the source of the (imperfect) divine qualities in mortal existence, and its harmful (*aṇgra-*) way of being would be the source of the wrongful qualities in mortal existence. Detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation.*

[10] See *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu.*

[11] See in *Part One: A Friendly Universe;*   in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution;*   and   *A Question Of Power;* and in *Part Six: Yasna 31:11 and 12.*

[12] The linguistics of Angra Mainyu and Ahriman are discussed in *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?*

[13] See *Part One: Truth, Asha.*

[14] See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell.*

[15] The evidence supporting this conclusion is discussed in a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell.*

[16] Here are other instances of 'cruelty', 'fury', and 'violence' being considered 'evil' -- all in the Insler 1975 translation.

"Let fury be stopped. Cut away cruelty, ye who wish to attract the attention of good thinking along with (that of) truth..." Y48:7;

"Those who, with ill will, have increased fury and cruelty ... whose evil effects one has not yet defeated with good effects, ..." Y49:4;

"Which men shall stop the cruelty (caused) by the violent deceitful persons? To which man shall come the understanding stemming from good thinking..."Y48:11;

"... Since they chose the worst thought, they then rushed into fury, with which they have afflicted the world and mankind." Y30:6;

"... one who might destroy the fury (caused) by the deceitful?" Y29:2;

"Yes, those men shall be the saviors of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and with truth, Wise One. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury." Y48:12. The word men is not in the Avestan text. A more literal translation would be "those (ones)". The grammatically masc. *tōi* is used here generically to include all sexes.

[17] See *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow and Its Network.*

[18] Insler 1975 translates *druj-* as 'deceit', possibly because it means that which is false. Others translate it as the 'Lie'. Zarathushtra uses *druj-* as 'false', 'evil', 'wrong' in a broader sense than 'deceit' and 'lie'. We know this is so because in the Gathas *druj-* is in fact used -- many times -- as the opposite of the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), as detailed in a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell.*

[19] See *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being,* for a discussion on the meaning of *spəṇta-*; and see *Part One: Beneficial-Sacred Embodied Truth, Spenta Aramaiti,* for a discussion on the meaning of *ārmaiti-*.

[20] See *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah,* for a discussion on the meaning of that term.

[21] Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

[22] Detailed in *Part One: The Search for Truth*.

[23] See in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution;* and *The Houses of Paradise and Hell*; and *A Question Of Power*; and in *Part Three: The Absence of Damnation & Hell In Other Avestan Texts.*

[24] Such interpretive translations in one verse (among others) are detailed in *Part Six: Yasna 43:12*, which demonstrates the absence of evidence in the Avestan text to support any interpretation of damnation in a hell of tortures.   The notion of a temporary hell of tortures is found in some Pahlavi commentaries, and in a Pahlavi text (the *Arda Viraf Namag*) which was written some centuries after the advent of both Christianity and Islam. The tortures of 'hell' are administered by demons and demonesses, discussed in *Part Three: Heaven & Hell in Pahlavi Texts.*

[25] Certain words in the Gathas have indeed been translated as 'punishment' and 'retribution' by some linguists. However, this choice of words is not consistent with all of the ways in which Zarathushtra uses such Old Avestan words, and once again reflects the interpretive mind-set of the translator, rather than the mind-set of Zarathushtra.

8

The evidence supporting my conclusions is discussed in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*; and in *Part Three: Adverse Consequences, Not Punishment.*

[26] Detailed in *Part One: A Friendly Universe;* and in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution;* and *The Houses of Paradise & Hell,* and *The Puzzle of Creation.*

[27] Here are some YAv. examples which corroborate Zarathushtra's thought that we defeat what is false with truth, what is wrong with what is right, good.

The *Zamyad Yasht,* (a YAv. text) states the following (I give my translation, and that of Hintze 1994 for comparative purposes).

§ 95 Referring to the millennial saoshyant, Astvat Ereta

...vanāṯ aṣa akąm drujim... Geldner 2P p. 258;

My translation, 'Through the true (correct) good order of existence [*aṣa*], he will overcome [*vanāṯ*] the untruth [*drujim*] of evils [*akąm*], ...,'

Hintze 1994, "...He will overcome by Truth [*aṣa-*] the wicked Falsehood of evil..." (p. 40).

§ 96 (an asterisk * = Hintze's emendations; Geldner 2P p. 258 ft. 3 shows gaps in some mss.)

*vanaite akəmciṯ manō   vohu manō taṯ vanaiti·.·
 *vanaite miϑaōx tō *vāx š   ərəžux δo vāx š təm vanaiti·.·

My translation, 'Bad thinking indeed is overcome, good thinking overcomes it;
The false-spoken word is overcome, the straight-spoken word overcomes it;

Hintze 1994, "Evil thought is overcome, Good Thought overcomes it. The falsely spoken Word is overcome, the rightly spoken word overcomes it..." (p. 40).

There is another YAv. text (Yy60:5) which enumerates wrong things that are overcome by right things. It makes a lovely blessing (when not translated into antiquated English).

'In this house

may listening prevail over not-listening

peace (over) strife;

generosity (over) lack (of it);

embodied truth (over) disregard (for it);

the straight-spoken word (over) the false-spoken word.

Through truth (may) untruth (be overcome)

Yy60:5, my translation.

These YAv. passages from the *Zamyad Yasht,* and Yy60:5 are discussed in *Part One: Seven Gems From The Later Texts.* The linguistics of this blessing is detailed in *Part One: A YAv. Blessing, Yy60:5.*

[28] Insler 1975, p. 25, ft. 6.

[29] It is true that in some later texts, especially after the syncretization of Zarathushtra's teachings with pre-existing religion(s), evil is sometimes described as a failure to obey priests, a failure to perform rituals and make offerings, a failure to please various pre-Zarathushtrian deities (such as Mithra, Haoma, Vayu et cetera), and also Anahita (who may have been a post-Zarathushtra deity. But even after the syncretization, we see some of Zarathushtra's ideas mixed in with such priestly views of what is 'evil'. For example:

In Yy9:20, Haoma (a pre-Zarathushtrian Indo-Iranian deity) is asked for a blessing that includes

> "...that I may stand forth ... overwhelming the assaults of hate, and conquering the lie." (Repeated almost verbatim in the next paragraph). Mills' translation in SBE 31, p. 237.

Here also (as in the Gathas), the 'enemy' is hatred and untruth.

In Yy10:16, all of the 'good' and 'evil' concepts reflect a commitment to Zarathushtra's thought:

> "To five do I belong, and to five others do I not; of the good thought am I, of the evil am I not; of the good word am I, of the evil am I not; of the good deed am I, and of the evil, not. To Obedience [*sraošahe* 'listening'] am I given, and to deaf disobedience [*asruštōiš* 'not-listening'], not; to [*ašaonō* 'truthfulness'] do I belong, and to the wicked [*drvatō* 'untruthfulness'], not; ..." Mills' translation in SBE 31, p. 243; Avestan words transliterated from Geldner 1P p. 53. The translations of words in square brackets are mine.

Sraosha is the concept of listening to and implementing the teachings of Wisdom, the path of truth; obedience is an interpretive translation, see *Part Three: Seraosha.*

[30] *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah,* lays out the evidence that in the Gathas good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) includes more than just intellectual functions.

[31] Although the later texts often are very inconsistent with the Gathas, they also contain here and there, golden (and beautiful) strands of thoughts from the Gathas, one of which is the concept of the innate or heavenly wisdom, as well as wisdom acquired by the ear. See *Part One: Meditation, Contemplation,* for examples in later texts of this idea, and its genesis in the Gathas.

[32] See *Part One: The Nature of the Divine* for details of the concept of mutual loving help.   And for the conclusion that evil is defeated through a long, evolutionary process of changing minds through experiences, see in *Part One: A Friendly Universe*; and in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution,*

[33] See *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution.*