

The Beneficial ~ Sacred Way of Being Spenta Mainyu

The Avestan term *spənta- mainyu-* plays a central role in Zarathushtra's thought. So it is all the more puzzling that we have such a diversity of views on both the meaning of this term, and also its place in Zarathushtra's teachings. When linguists and scholars are in disagreement, simply picking the opinion we might like is not the way to understand Zarathushtra's thinking. We need to be guided by *all* the evidence of how Zarathushtra uses a given word, in order to arrive at an understanding of what meaning he had in mind. I will first give you my conclusions, and then show you the evidence on which they are based.

Based on all the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *spənta-* and *mainyu-*, I think their meanings are as follows.

spənta- means 'beneficial'. But based on the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *spənta-*, to be 'beneficial' includes such flavors of meaning as goodness, generosity, lovingkindness, reasoning, wisdom. And *spənta-* is used to describe all of the qualities that comprise the nature of the Divine. So *spənta-* 'beneficial' is the essence of the sacred. There is no English equivalent in one or even a few words which cover all its flavors of meaning.

mainyu- means the totality of an entity's 'nature' or 'way of being',¹ ~ including thought, word and action. There seems to be general agreement that *mainyu-* derives from *man-* 'to think'. But as I demonstrate with evidence in another chapter,² in Zarathushtra's thought, the process of 'thinking' is not limited to intellectual functions as it is in English. It includes all of our abstract conscious capabilities ~ intellectual, emotional, insight, creativity et cetera. And *mainyu-*, as the 'nature' or 'way of being' of an entity, reflects this broad view of its genesis ~ Avestan *man-*.

Thus *spənta- mainyu-* means a beneficial-sacred way of being. A way of being that is the essence of the sacred.

We cannot adequately discuss the meaning of *spənta-* without knowing the meaning of *mainyu-*. Nor can we discuss the meaning of *mainyu-* without knowing the meaning of *spənta-*. So let us cut the Gordian knot by exploring *spənta-* first, and accepting (for the time being) that *mainyu-* means a 'way of being'. We will then look at the evidence for the meaning of *mainyu-*. In the same way, the meanings of other terms which comprise divine qualities (amesha spenta), are stated here as conclusions, but the evidence for such conclusions is contained in the chapters that follow, which discuss each of these other terms in detail. And just a quick reminder. I use the collective term amesha spenta as a convenient short hand way to describe the qualities of the Divine, although the term amesha spenta does not appear in the Gathas.

spənta-

Linguists and others are in disagreement about the meaning of *spənta-*.³ It has been variously translated as holy,⁴ bountiful or bounteous,⁵ incremental,⁶ progressive,⁷ prosperous, beneficent,⁸ and 'beneficial'.⁹

Insler 1975 commented that the exact determination of the meaning of *spənta-* is difficult, but he translated it as 'virtuous' because (he explained) in the Gathas, it sometimes is used interchangeably with *vohu-* 'good'.¹⁰ But the English word 'virtuous' carries cultural baggage which was not a part of Zarathushtra's thought, and more recently Insler has expressed a preference for 'benevolent' as a closer English equivalent.¹¹

Darmesteter translates *spənta-* as beneficent, in his translations of YAv. texts.¹²

Moulton 1912, translates *spənta-* as 'holy', but agrees that 'beneficent' is nearer to the meaning of the Avestan word.¹³ According to Moulton, Zarathushtra's view of 'holy' includes the idea of beneficence – a most insightful and accurate conclusion, and one that is supported by Thieme who gives us some valuable insight into the pre-Christian meaning of 'holy'.

Thieme (Insler's teacher) translates *spənta-* as 'beneficial'.¹⁴ He acknowledges that *spənta-* is related to the word 'holy' in other ancient Indo-European languages – Lithuanian *szventas*, Slavonic *svetu*, Russian *svjat*.¹⁵ But Thieme reminds us that today, the word 'holy' is heavily laden with Christian connotations, and says that if we want to know what *svetu* meant to a Slav in pre-Christian times, we have to turn to proper names. He notes that his teacher Andreas pointed to the Russian Svjatopolk, the name of a prince or Czar, which originally cannot have meant 'characterized by a holy/sacred army', but 'characterized by an army which does not devastate or ruin the country by plundering', an army that serves the benefit of the country by protecting it from foreign attacks and inner strife.¹⁶ In Thieme's opinion, the pre-Christian notion of 'holy' would have been 'beneficial'.

Because of the uncertainty of Zarathushtra's date,¹⁷ we cannot tell whether the pre-Christian notion of equating 'holy' with 'beneficial' originated with Zarathushtra, or pre-dated Zarathushtra and influenced his thinking, or arose in other areas independently of Zarathushtra. But 'being first' is totally unimportant, in my view. It is the quality of the thought that counts. The insights of Thieme, Moulton, and (more recently) Insler allow us to reconcile most (but not all) of the linguistic differences, and are consistent with the ways in which Zarathushtra uses the word *spənta-*.

'Bountiful' and 'bounteous' mean an overflowing generosity, which is consistent with Zarathushtra's use of the word *spənta-*, but it does not convey the qualities of goodness, the essence of the sacred.

Although those who favor 'progressive' or 'incremental' for *spənta-* derive it from a different Vedic cognate, these translations are not at odds with Zarathushtra's use of the word *spənta-* in that *mainyu-* (a way of being) starts out as a mix of more-*spənta-* and *angra-* 'harmful' (Y45:2), and evolves into a way of being that is wholly *spənta-*, wholly in accord with the true (good) order of existence, as the evidence below demonstrates. So Zarathushtra may have used the word *spənta-* with double entendre,¹⁸ intending it to mean a beneficial-sacredness that is incremental. But if indeed a double entendre was intended, I think 'incremental' would not have been the primary meaning, just a hinted at secondary meaning, because 'progressive' or 'incremental' do not fit all of the ways in which he uses *spənta-*.

On the other hand, the English word 'prosperous' is so different in meaning that it is more difficult to reconcile it with *spənta-* as beneficial-sacred. Although in the Gathas, material prosperity is one of the dividends of living, and creating a society that is in sync with the true (correct, good) order of existence (*aša-*),¹⁹ and although in the Gathas, there is an equivalence between this true order (*aša-*) and *spənta-* (as we see in the chapter on truth, *aša-*),²⁰ the meaning of 'prosperous' is essentially limited to the material existence, whereas *spənta-* is a quality of the Divine who is not bound by mortal, material existence (one of the 7 Divine qualities being 'non-deathness' *amərətāt-*).

A translator's dilemma is born of the fact that there often is not one word in a given language which is the exact equivalent of that word in another language. The evidence that follows will show, that in Zarathushtra's mind (based on the ways in which he uses this word) *spənta-* means a loving, bountiful, generous, reasoning, goodness (exemplifying the true (correct) order of existence), that is the essence of what

is sacred; *spənta-* is not just a quality or aspect of 'sacredness'. In the Gathas, it is the essential nature of the 'sacred'. It is the quality that makes a being 'sacred'.

In order for us to see how Zarathushtra uses the word *spənta-*, I need to give you some linguistic information, so please bear with me.

The positive, comparative and superlative forms of spənta-

In the Gathas, *spənta-* appears in its positive, comparative and superlative degrees.²¹

Its positive form is *spənta-*

Its comparative degree is *spanyah-*²² which literally means 'more-*spənta-*'.

Its most frequently used form of the superlative degree is *spəništa-* which literally means 'most-*spənta-*'.²³

We can tell what Zarathushtra thinks the meaning of *spənta-* is, by the qualities he associates with the word. *spənta-* as 'good, benevolent'.

The dictionary defines 'benevolent' as "marked by, or disposed to doing good ... marked by ... good will..."²⁴ In short, the core quality of 'benevolence' is 'goodness' or 'good will'. And as Insler 1975 pointed out, in some Gatha verses *vohu-* 'good' is used interchangeably with *spənta-* when describing *mainyu-*, "...the (correct) thinking stemming from [*vohu- mainyu-*]..." Y34:2; "...actions stemming from [*vohu- mainyu-*]..." Y48:8; "...The Wise One is Lord through such actions stemming from [*vohu- mainyu-*]..." Y45:5, Insler 1975.

Another example of *spənta-* and *vohu-* 'good' being used interchangeably appears in Y30:3 and Y45:2. In Y30:3, the opposite of the bad way of being is called *vahyah-* 'more-good' (the comparative form of *vohu-*).²⁵ In Y45:2 it is called *spanyah-* 'more-*spənta-*' (the comparative form of *spənta-*).

If Zarathushtra uses *spənta-* and 'good' interchangeably, then in his mind the meaning of *spənta-* would have to include the quality of 'goodness', 'benevolence'.

spənta- as 'beneficent'.

In some verses, Zarathushtra ascribes a meaning to *spənta-*, that is more than just 'good'. It is 'beneficent'.²⁶ The dictionary defines 'beneficence' as "...active goodness, kindness, charity; bounty springing from purity and goodness."²⁷ The word 'charity' is used here in its older sense of lovingkindness. In short, 'beneficence' adds to the English word 'goodness' the quality of a bountiful, generous lovingkindness. And in the Gathas, 'beneficence' is indeed included within the meaning of *spənta-*. For example, in Y45:6, Zarathushtra describes Wisdom (*mazdā-*) as "...Him who is beneficent [*hudāh-*]²⁸ through His [*spənta- mainyu-*]..." Y45:6, Insler 1975. If the Divine is 'beneficent' through a way of being that is *spənta-*, then the meaning of *spənta-* would have to include within it the quality of beneficence.²⁹ But more than that, we see in this verse that the nature of the sacred way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*), the nature of the Divine, is beneficent ~ a good, bountiful, generous lovingkindness.

spənta- as 'reasoning', 'intelligent'.

In Y31:9, Zarathushtra speaks of a *spənta-* way of being (*mainyu-*) as a reasoning way of being. So in his view, being *spənta-* includes the kind of beneficial reasoning that triggers insight and understanding.

And here let me say that all reasoning (and all intelligence) is relative. There is no notion in the Gathas, that a person who is 'more' intelligent, is closer to the Divine than one who is 'less' intelligent. Man's

intelligence compared with the Divine, may be as far removed as that of an amoeba from us. The idea of 'reason' as a quality of the *spənta-* way of being (*mainyu-*), is to reason as best one can, with whatever intelligence one has. We know that a beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) includes using reason, because Zarathushtra so describes this way of being.

"... that [*mainyu-*] of great reasoning [*aš.x ratuš*]..." Y31:9, my translation.³⁰

The Divine (Wisdom) is spənta-.

By far the most frequent use of the word *spənta-* occurs, not with *spənta- mainyu-*, nor with *spənta- armaiti-*, as is popularly believed, but as an adjective describing the Lord, Wisdom. For example: in Y43, using almost exactly the same phrase, Zarathushtra professes ~ six times ~ his understanding that the Lord Wisdom is *spənta-*. In verse 5, he says, "But, I have already realized Thee to be [*spənta-*], Wise Lord ..." Y43:5, Insler 1975. This phrase is repeated at the start of verses 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15 of Yasna 43, indicating perhaps (in addition to poetic alliteration) that Zarathushtra really wants us to get the point that the nature of the Divine (the essence of the sacred) is *spənta-* 'beneficial'. And the Lord Wisdom is described as *spənta-* in other verses as well. Here are a few examples. There are many more.³¹

"...the truthful Lord, [*spənta-*] in His action..." Y46:9, Insler 1975.

I translate this '...the truthful Lord, beneficial in His action...'. It is worth noting that here, the Lord who is beneficial [*spənta-*] in His action, is described as 'truthful' (*ašavan-*), i.e. in accord with the true (correct, good) order ~ a beneficial order. In the Gathas, *spənta-* and *aša-* are equated.³²

"...He is [*spənta-*] to the needy..." Y29:7, Insler 1975. As you can see, 'holy to the needy' or 'prosperous to the needy' or 'incremental to the needy' do not fit.

I translate this '... He is beneficial to the needy...' (which fits).

The next most frequent use of *spənta-* as well as its superlative form *spəništa-* are adjectives describing Wisdom's way of being (*mainyu-*).

"...Thou, the Wise One, hast come into the world with Thy [*spənta- mainyu-*]..." Y43:6, Insler 1975,

I translate this 'You (who are) Wisdom, ... have come into this world with Your beneficial way of being...'.
"

"...Him who is beneficent through His [*spənta- mainyu-*] to those who exist..." Y45:6, Insler 1975,

I translate this '...(Him) who is beneficent (good, generous, loving) through His beneficial way of being, to (those) who exist...".

"Therefore, Lord, this Zarathushtra chooses that very [*mainyu-*] of Thine which indeed is the most virtuous [*spəništō*] of all, Wise One....." Y43:16, Insler 1975,

I translate this 'Therefore Lord, Zarathushtra chooses that way of being of Thine, which indeed is most beneficial ...'. And there are other examples as well.³³

The truthful man is spənta-

spənta- is used to describe a person who acts in accordance with the true (correct, good) order of existence *aša-*, (even though temporarily or incompletely).

"...by the action of the [*spənta-*] man whose soul is in alliance with truth [*aša-*]..." Y34:2, Insler 1975.

I translate this '...by the action of the beneficial man whose soul is in alliance with the true order of existence [*aša-*]...'.
"

"... For such a person, [spənta-] through truth [aša-],... Y44:2), Insler 1975,

I translate this '...for such a person, beneficial through the true order of existence...'. And there are other examples as well.³⁴

And in Y43:3 *spənta-* describes both a good person and Wisdom, "... he being ... [spənta-] like Thee, Wise One." Y43:3 Insler 1975; I translate this '...he being beneficial like Thee, Wisdom...'. This linking of *spənta-* with a person who is in accord with the true (correct, good) order of existence (*aša-*), corroborates the evidence that demonstrates an equivalence between *spənta-* and *aša-*, which is discussed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

A way of being (mainyu-) can be spənta-

spənta- in its positive, comparative and superlative forms is used to describe the concept of a way of being, (*mainyu-*).

As *spənta-* the positive form:

"...the [mainyu-] [spənta-] through truth [aša-] ..." Y28:1, Insler 1975,

I translate this '...the way of being, beneficial through the true (wholly good) order of existence...'.
"Through a [spənta- mainyu-] and the best thinking, ...they shall grant..." Y47:1, Insler 1975,

I translate this '...through a beneficial way of being and the most-good thinking ...they shall grant...'.
"... those who are properly truthful [ašavan-] from this [spənta- mainyu-] ..." Y47:4, Insler 1975,

I translate this '...those who are properly truth-possessing, from this beneficial way of being...'.
As *spənyah-*, 'more-*spənta-*', the comparative form of *spənta-*

'Yes I shall speak out (about) the two primeval ways of being of existence [aṇhəuš], of which the more-beneficial one [spənyā] would thus have spoken to (the one) who (is) harmful, ...' Y45:2, my translation.³⁵

It is worth noting that the words 'of existence [aṇhəuš]' includes all that exists, not just the two deities of cosmic dualism.

As *spəništa-* 'most-*spənta-*', the superlative form of *spənta-*

"...the [mainyu- spəništa-] ... chose the truth [aša-],..." Y30:5, Insler 1975,

I translate this "...the most beneficial way of being chose the true (wholly good) order of existence...".

spənta- and its opposite as alternative objects of choice:

spənta- is an adjective. Its noun form (thought to be *spən-*),³⁶ and its opposite are used for the two alternatives which form the basis of choice, "... Him who left to our will (to choose between) the [spəṇcā] and the [aspəṇcā] ..." Y45:9, Insler 1975;

I translate this '...Him who left to our will (to choose between) the beneficial and the non-beneficial...'. In the word *aspəṇcā*, the prefix *a-* is simply a negative prefix. The *-cā* at the end of each of these words simply means 'and').

spənta- describes Wisdom's attributes (the amesha spenta).

Now, if *spənta-* is used to describe Wisdom (*mazdā-*) and His way of being (*mainyu-*) as shown above, it is not surprising that *spənta-* is also used to describe the qualities of His nature (amesha spenta).

aša-. The chapter on *Truth, Asha* demonstrates that *spənta-* is equated with *aša-*. One well may question: If Zarathushtra sees an equivalence between *spənta-* and *aša-*, what was his purpose in using these two separate words? Are they synonyms? Well, no. By showing an equivalence between *spənta-* and *aša-* Zarathushtra demonstrates:

(1) that the true (correct) order of existence is a beneficial, good order, and

(2) that his notion of the sacred is beneficial, ~ a life force that personifies the beneficial values that comprise the true (correct) order of existence – honesty, goodness, generosity, friendship, compassion, justice, not injuring, not harming, being constructive et cetera – qualities that Wisdom possesses wholly, completely, and that man possesses imperfectly. This conclusion is consistent with the connection between *spənta-* and its cognates in other ancient Indo-European languages, which cognates, as Thieme has pointed out, mean 'beneficial' in the pre-Christian sense of 'holy'.

armaiti- (which is the embodiment of the true order of existence in thought, word and action) is frequently called *spənta-* 'beneficial'. For example: "...With whom is [*spənta- armaiti-*] allied?... Y51:11; "Where shall there be protection instead of injury?... Where [*spənta- armaiti-*]? ..." Y51:4, Insler 1975. And there are many other examples.³⁷ And in one verse, the superlative form, *spəništa-* is also used with *armaiti-* "... and bring to realization the [*spəništa-*] and blessed (acts) of [*armaiti-*]." Y53:3, Insler 1975; I translate this '...and bring to realization, the most beneficial and generous (acts) of embodied truth...'.

And *spənta-* is used once to describe the rule of good thinking "...[*spənta-*] is truth [*aša-*] and the rule [*xšaθra-*] of good thinking [*vohu- manah-*]..." Y51:21. This is consistent with the true order of existence ('truth' for short) and embodied truth (*armaiti-*) being *spənta-* 'beneficial', because good thinking is the comprehension of truth, and good rule is the rule of truth, its comprehension (most good thinking), and its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- armaiti-*) (Y51:4).³⁸

spənta- is also used to describe good envisionment (*vanuhī daēnā*). In the Gathas, envisionment (*daēnā*) can be good or its opposite, so (with respect) the word cannot mean 'conscience'.³⁹ Good envisionment, (*vanuhī daēnā*) is the envisionment of existence governed (*xšaθra-*) by the true (good) order of existence (*aša-*), its comprehension, (good thinking *vohu- manah-*), and its embodiment in thought, word and action (*armaiti-*), ~ a governance that is good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*). So we see that good envisionment encompasses an existence that comprises the first four divine qualities (amesha spenta). It is not surprising, therefore, that this good envisionment is described as *spənta-* 'beneficial', which is the essence of the sacred.

"...such a person, by reason of his [*spənta- daēnā-*],..." Y45:11", Insler 1975,

I translate this '...such a person, because of his beneficial envisionment...';

"[*spənta-*] is the man of [*armaiti-*]. "He is so by reason of his understanding, his words, his actions, his [*daēnā-*]..." Y51:21, Insler 1975,

I translate this '...beneficial is a man of embodied truth [*armaiti-*], he is so because of his understanding, his words, his actions, his envisionment [*daēnā-*]...'.

We can see from the above evidence that the meaning of *spənta-* describes each of the other 6 qualities of the Divine (amesha spenta), in Zarathushtra's new envisionment ~ the true (good) order of existence, its good comprehension, its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action, its good rule.⁴⁰ This is not surprising when you consider that the very term 'amesha spenta' describes all of these attributes of the divine as *spənta-* (although the collective term 'amesha spenta' does not appear in the Gathas).

Understanding is achieved through Wisdom's most beneficial way of being (spāništa- mainyu-)

In Y43:2, Zarathushtra tells us that understanding (which is another way of saying good thinking) comes from Wisdom's most beneficial way of being (*spāništa- mainyu-*), "Moreover, (I wish) for this person ... to be understanding all his days, ... understanding through Thy [*spāništa- mainyu-* most beneficial way of being], Wise One..." Y43:2, Insler 1975.⁴¹ In other words, it is Wisdom's most beneficial way of being that generates an understanding of the true (correct, good) order of existence ~ a beneficial order, the essence of the sacred ~ which Wisdom personifies. An interesting circle of thought.

Summarizing the ways in which Zarathushtra uses spānta-

- (1) It is used interchangeably with 'good';
- (2) Its meaning includes 'beneficence' – a good, generous, bountiful, lovingkindness;
- (3) Its meaning includes abundant reason, intellect (*aš.x ratu-*);
- (4) It describes, and is equated with, the true (correct) order of existence *aša-*, (which is a beneficial order of existence ~ the essence of the sacred);
- (5) It is used to describe the divine ~ Wisdom and His way of being (which is the essence of the sacred);
- (6) It is used to describe the qualities that define the nature of the divine (amesha spenta) – confirming the conclusion that Zarathushtra's notion of the 'sacred' or the 'divine' is generous, bountiful, loving, caring ~ the essence of all that is good and right, the true (correct, good) order of existence (*aša-*);
- (7) And it is not without interest that Zarathushtra also uses *spānta-* to describe a person who acts truthfully, and his way of being (*mainyu-*). Indeed, in Y47 (the first song in the Spenta Mainyu Gatha), there is a playful, alternating complementation of *spānta- mainyu-* 'the beneficial-sacred way of being', in Wisdom and in man,⁴² indicating that in Zarathushtra's thought, man is not born inherently corrupt and sinful, but rather that his being is a mix of two capabilities ~ two ways of being ~ the divine (imperfectly) and its opposite.

Conclusion: *spānta-*, as used by Zarathushtra, means a good, generous, bountiful, reasoning, insightful, lovingkindness that is the essence of the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*) ~ the essence of what is sacred. And the same word *spānta-* is used to describe what is sacred (divine) in both Wisdom (*mazdā-*) and man ~ the difference being that man still is a mix of the more beneficial-sacred and its opposite, whereas the Divine is completely, wholly, beneficial-sacred ~ a state of being that mortals are capable of attaining.

An English equivalent for spānta-

I cannot think of a one-word English equivalent that exactly expresses the meaning of *spānta-*. Indeed, there may not have been one Avestan word that adequately expressed what Zarathushtra intended to convey through this word. And the many ways in which he uses *spānta-* may have been his way of expanding the meaning of 'sacred' in the vocabulary that was available to him.

'holy' or 'sacred'. These two words alone are not a satisfactory translation for *spānta-*. The notion of 'holy' is essentially subjective. I agree with Thieme that it brings a lot of inaccurate baggage into the context of Zarathushtra's thought, depending on the pre-conceived mind-set of the reader and his own religious views. 'Holy' also lacks the idea that the sacred is equated with all the qualities that are a part of the true (correct, good) order of existence (*aša-*). 'Holy' would not at all convey Zarathushtra's meaning in many verses, for

example: "...He is [*spənta-*] to the needy..." Y29.7 Insler 1975, would have to be translated as 'he is holy to the needy...'. In short, to translate *spənta-* as 'holy' would not accurately convey Zarathushtra's meaning to a reader who has today's mind-set. 'Sacred' (used alone) suffers from many of the same drawbacks as 'holy'.

'incremental' and 'progressive' miss the essential quality of *spənta-* which is a beneficial, good, generous, bountiful lovingkindness that is the essence of the sacred, the essence of the true (correct) order of existence, the essence of the Divine. What is 'harmful' can also be incremental and progressive. But I think that Zarathushtra did indeed intend, with double entendre, to indicate that *spənta-* as he uses it includes an incremental, evolutionary quality (from which the Divine is not exempt!).⁴³

'benevolent' is indeed close. It reflects Zarathushtra's most basic idea that the Divine is wholly good ~ not a mix of benevolent qualities, and wrathful, cruel, vengeful qualities. And *vohu-* 'good' is the only word that is interchanged with *spənta-*, in the Gathas. But 'benevolent' essentially means a person of good will, whereas in the Gathas, *spənta-* is not limited to the 'will'. Benevolent also lacks the quality of generosity, the bountiful, lovingkindness that is the essence of the true (correct) order of existence (*aša*), and is the essence of what is sacred, Divine.

'beneficent' is very close in meaning, although beneficence may not always be beneficial; nor is beneficence the only way of being beneficial. In addition, 'beneficence' today has acquired a somewhat condescending overtone which is absent from the way in which Zarathushtra uses *spənta-*. And the Humbach/Faiss perception that *spənta-* means 'beneficent' as in 'fortunate', has restricted its meaning in a way that is limited to the material existence and (with respect) does not accord with the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *spənta-*.

'beneficial'. I am inclined to think that Thieme's choice of 'beneficial' is the most accurate one-word English equivalent ~ combining as it does, the notions of 'goodness', of benefit, and the bountiful, generous, lovingkindness of beneficence (without the condescension), that are a part of the meaning of *spənta-*. As such, it reflects the salient quality of the true (correct) order of existence in Zarathushtra's thought, although 'beneficial' does indeed lack the quality of reasoning, and that *spənta-* is the essence of what is sacred, Divine.

To truly appreciate Zarathushtra's thought therefore, we need to remember ~ each time we see *spənta-* in a quotation, or use it in a discussion ~ that it means 'beneficial', in the sense of a good, generous, bountiful, reasoning, intelligent, lovingkindness that is the essence of the true (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), the essence of what is sacred, Divine. Sadly, 'beneficial' is a pale equivalent.

mainyu-

Linguists are in spirited disagreement (no pun intended) over the translation of *mainyu-*. It has been variously translated as 'spirit',⁴⁴ 'spirit or inspiration',⁴⁵ 'intention or spirit',⁴⁶ 'thought',⁴⁷ 'mentality or way of thinking',⁴⁸ and 'mind'.⁴⁹

Humbach/Faiss 2010 state that as a common noun, *mainyu-* is 'spirit' in the sense of the moral disposition of an individual.⁵⁰ The word 'disposition' reflects (in part) a person's nature. Equating 'spirit' with a 'disposition' is I think a valuable insight.

Insler 1975 translated *mainyu-* as spirit, without explanation. More recently he has expressed the opinion that the Vedic cognate is *manyu* which means 'anger', 'pride', and that the Vedic meanings are derived from 'spirit' but express its more belligerent aspects, whereas Gathic Avestan has preserved the older, more general

application of the word. He is now of the opinion that *mainyu-* is an elemental nature, or character, or instinct ~ the attitude that precedes and generates thought.⁵¹

I think the more recent insights of Insler and Humbach/Faiss accord more closely with the ways in which Zarathushtra uses the word *mainyu-* in the Gathas – as an elemental 'nature', 'character', 'moral disposition' ~ or, as I would put it, a 'way of being'. In a commentary (in another context) Insler points out that in some instances, one Gathic Avestan word can be used in three ways ~ as faculty, process and object. Thus in his view, the same word *manah-* means 'mind' (faculty), 'thinking' (process), and 'thought' (object).⁵² I think the same is true of *mainyu-* (although Insler does not give *mainyu-* as an example of such usage). As faculty, *mainyu-* is 'nature', 'character', 'moral disposition', 'being'. As process it is a 'way of being'.⁵³ Based on the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *mainyu-* in the Gathas, it encompasses an entire way of being ~ including thought, word and action. Let us consider the evidence.

Two Uncreated Gods?

Unfortunately, some encyclopedias, influenced no doubt by certain later (Pahlavi) Zoroastrian texts,⁵⁴ show Zoroastrianism as a religion that believes in two uncreated 'gods' ~ one all good (*ahura- mazdā-*) and one all evil (YAv. *angra- mainyu-*, Pahl. Ahriman) ~ a belief system which for convenience, I will call 'cosmic dualism'. Bear in mind, there are no capital letters in Avestan script, such as might help us determine whether a word is being used as a name or a concept.

In the later texts, the term *spənta- mainyu-* (which unfortunately is often translated as the 'Holy Spirit') is a synonym for the uncreated all-good 'god', and the term *angra- mainyu-* (which unfortunately is often translated as the 'Evil Spirit') is the name of the uncreated all-evil 'god'.⁵⁵

Is this cosmic dualism to be found in the Gathas? Is it what Zarathushtra has in mind when he uses this compound term ~ *spənta- mainyu-* ?

In their anxiety to repudiate this belief in cosmic dualism, some Zoroastrians today assert that in the Gathas, *spənta- mainyu-* is completely separate from Wisdom. But (with respect) that does not accord with the evidence. It is true that *spənta- mainyu-* is not one of the Wisdom's names in the Gathas, but (in its positive and superlative forms) *spənta- mainyu-* is indeed a part of Wisdom ~ His beneficial way of being:

"...Him who is beneficent through His [*spənta- mainyu-*] to those who exist..." Y45:6, Insler 1975,
I translate this '...Him who is beneficent through His beneficial way of being [*spənta- mainyu-*] to those who exist ...'.

"...Thy [*spənta- mainyu-*]..." Y43:6, Insler 1975,
I translate this '...Thy beneficial way of being...'.

"...to be ... understanding through Thy [*spəništa- mainyu-*] Wise One..." (Y43:2), Insler 1975,
I translate this '...to be ... understanding through Thy most beneficial way of being, Wisdom,...'.⁵⁶

So did Zarathushtra believe in two uncreated 'gods' ~ one all good and one all evil? Let us look at the evidence, starting with the famous Y30:3. "Yes, there are two fundamental [*mainyu-*], twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action, they are two: the good [*vahyō*] and the bad. And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen, not the maleficent." Y30:3, Insler 1975. My translation is somewhat different,⁵⁷ but let us stay with the Insler 1975 translation for the time being.

At first glance, we might think that the two *mainyu*- here are two Beings or Entities. And when we call to mind the verses in which Wisdom's *spənta- mainyu*- is mentioned, we well might wonder if cosmic dualism did indeed originate with Zarathushtra. But this conclusion is not consistent with the rest of the evidence.

The first doubt that the two *mainyu*- in Y30:3 might mean two dualistic Entities ~ one all good and the other all evil ~ arises from the wording of Y30:3 itself. Although Insler has translated *vahyō* as 'good', its literal meaning is 'more-good'; (*vahyō* is the nom. sg. form of the stem *vahyah-* which is the comparative degree of *vohu-* 'good'),⁵⁸ and in Y30:3 *vahyō* is so translated (in its comparative form as 'better') by Bartholomae, Moulton, Humbach (1991), and Humbach/Faiss (2010). Taraporewala translates the word as 'good' but acknowledges in his comment that it is the comparative degree of *vohu-* 'good'. Their translations are footnoted.⁵⁹

So if the two *mainyu*- of Y30:3 are entities, we would have one that is bad and one that is only comparatively more good ~ hardly consistent with the cosmic dualism projected by the later texts and some encyclopedias. (A good example of the value of as literal a translation as possible).

The same is true of the equally foundational verse Y45:2. Here, the two *mainyu*- are described as *spanyā* 'more *spənta*-' and *angra*- 'harmful', 'inimical', 'pain-causing', 'hurtful';⁶⁰ *spanyā* is the nom. sg. form of the stem *spanyah-* which is the comparative degree of *spənta*- (Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index) and therefore means 'more *spənta*-'.⁶¹ So if the two *mainyu*- of Y45:2 are entities, we would have one that is harmful, inimical, hurtful, and one that is only comparatively more beneficial ~ again, hardly consistent with the cosmic dualism projected in certain later texts and some encyclopedias.

Returning to Yasna 30, we are confronted by more evidence that casts doubt on the idea that the two *mainyu*- are two uncreated entities or 'gods'. There is no dispute that in Y30:3 (quoted above) the two *mainyu* are the *objects* of choice ~ one of which is 'bad'. This is paralleled three verses later, in Y30:6 where the object of the 'bad' choice is called 'the worst thought'. 'Thought' is part of a way of being.

"...Since they chose the worst thought [*acištəm manō*], they then rushed into fury, with which they have afflicted the world and mankind." Y30:6, Insler 1975.

The parallel between choosing the bad *mainyu*- in Y30:3 and choosing the 'worst thought' in Y30:6 is compelling, and it is corroborated by similar parallels which are found in Y31:2, and Y45:9, where the objects of choice are not 'Entities', but alternatives, or concepts, (or ways of being).

"...that judgment between the two alternatives by which we are going to live in accordance with truth." Y31:2, Insler 1975.⁶²

"...Him who left to our will (to choose between) the [*spəncā*] and the [*aspəncā*]..." Y45:9, Insler 1975, Insler 1975, I translate this '...Him who left to our will (to choose between) the beneficial and the non-beneficial' ~ a choice between two alternatives.

In light of these parallels in Y31:2 and Y45:9, it would be reasonable to conclude that the choice referred to in Y30:3 and Y45:2, must likewise be between two alternatives. So we see that the more-good and bad *mainyu*- of Y30:3, and the more-beneficial and harmful *mainyu*- of Y45:2, are alternative ways of being,⁶³ not 'gods' or 'entities'. Indeed, I can think of only three possible examples of *mainyu*- which might be interpreted as an entity in the Gathas, and each may reasonably have either a grammatical or an allegorical explanation.⁶⁴

The notion that *mainyu-* are the two uncreated 'gods' of cosmic dualism is not consistent with the verses in which man has *mainyu-*. For example, "...I lament these words of my [*mainyu-*]..." Y32:9, Insler 1975; *mainyu-* here is Zarathushtra's way of being. Additional examples of verses with man's *mainyu-* are footnoted.⁶⁵

In light of the fact that man has within him the capacity for both a more-beneficial (*spanyah-*) and an 'inimical', 'harmful', 'hurtful' (*angra-*), way of being, unless we believe in demonic possession, and divine possession occurring simultaneously in man, it is clear from these (and similar) verses, which speak of man's *mainyu-* that Zarathushtra cannot have intended *mainyu-* to mean two uncreated 'gods'. If the two *mainyu-* in man were two uncreated 'gods' possessing man, then man would not be responsible for the good and evil he does, because the sources of such thoughts words and actions would be the more-good and bad Entities that possess him. There can be no dispute that this is contrary to one of Zarathushtra's most basic teachings which is individual responsibility. We are free to choose, and are responsible for the consequences of our choices.

In short, any insistence that *mainyu-* means an uncreated 'god' in the Gathas, would require the conclusion that Zarathushtra advocated, not a Dualism but a Mutiplicity which would include not just the *mainyu-* of two 'gods' (one only comparatively good and one bad), but also the mixed *mainyu-* of billions of humans.

So we return to the question: What exactly does Zarathushtra intend when he uses the word *mainyu-*? What does *mainyu-* mean to him?

In Y30:3, we see that the concept of *mainyu-* includes within it, thought, word, and action, "Yes, there are two fundamental [*mainyu-*], twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action they are two..." Y30:3, Insler 1975. I translate this 'Now there (are) two primeval ways of being, which (are) twins, renowned in conflict. In thought and in word, in action they (are) two ~ the more-good and the bad...' Notice, Zarathushtra uses the locative case for 'thought', 'word' and 'action' '*in-thought-and* [*manahicā*] *in-word-and* [*vacahicā*], *in-action* [*šyaoθanōi*], they are two' (italics added) indicating that thoughts, words and actions are inherent in, or part of the nature of, these two ways of being.⁶⁶ Parenthetically, 'thoughts, words and actions' are not necessarily limited to those of this physical existence. A being who has achieved non-deathness (*amərətāt*), i.e. who is no longer bound by mortality, may have its own thoughts, words and actions, as is evident from the many references in the Gathas to Wisdom's thoughts, words and actions.

It is interesting that in Y30:3 these two primeval ways of being are called 'twins'. In the beginning, 'twins' exist in one womb, thus giving us the idea of these two ways of being existing in one 'container' or being. It could not have escaped Zarathushtra's attention that (in our reality at least) all of us have some 'bad' qualities, and some 'more-good' qualities. To translate *mainyu-* in a way that divides 'spirits' or 'mentalities' or 'natures' (or 'ways of being') into two separate categories ~ one bad, and the other more-good, would not only be contrary to the evidence of the words chosen by Zarathushtra, but would not reflect the reality of existence, and as such would be a poor reflection on Zarathushtra's intelligence (which was of a high order, as the puzzles in *Part Two* demonstrate).

In Y45:2 we see this same idea, that the concept of *mainyu-* includes within it, thought, word, and action. Here, the two ways of being are described as allegorical entities which are opposites.

"Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental [*mainyu-*] of existence, of which the [*spanyā*] 'more beneficial one' would have thus spoken to the evil one [*angrəm*]: 'Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions,

neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conception [*daēnā-*] nor our souls [*urvan-*] are in accord'.⁶⁷ Y45:2, Insler 1975. My translation is somewhat different,⁶⁷ but let us stay with Insler's for the time being.

Here the two fundamental (or primeval) *mainyu-* consist of thoughts (including intentions, preferences and envisionment), words (including teachings), actions, and 'souls' (*urvan-*). According to Insler (commenting on another verse), *urvan-* appears in the Gathas in both meanings 'soul' and 'self' ~ a usage which he says parallels the Vedic *atmán-*.⁶⁸ If *urvan-* here is used in the sense of 'self' it is consistent with the conclusion of Y30:3, that *mainyu-* in this verse (Y45.2) means the totality of a way of being which includes two opposite, conflicted 'ways of being'.

If *mainyu-* includes thoughts, words and actions (Y30:3 and Y45:2), it cannot mean 'mentality' or 'thought' alone, which is only a part of the meaning of *mainyu-*.

And if words and actions are a part of the meaning of *mainyu-*, then it cannot mean 'spirit', unless by 'spirit' we mean a 'way of being', as in 'the spirit of liberty', or 'the spirit of friendship'.

In later texts, the word *mainyu-* did indeed evolve to mean the spiritual existence only (as other Old Av. words also evolved in meaning in YAv.).⁶⁹ But in the Gathas, *mainyu-* is not so limited. It is the way of being that (like *aša-*) applies to the existences of matter and mind.

If we study each use of the word *mainyu-* in the Gathas, the only meaning that fits all of them is a 'nature' or 'way of being' that consists of preferences, thoughts, words, and actions, ~ the totality of a way of being. Thus *mainyu-* is used for:

- (1) Wisdom's way of being, and man's way of being;
- (2) A way of being that is *vohu-* ('good' Y34:2, Y45:5, Y45:8),⁷⁰ *vahyah-* ('more-good' Y30:3), and *vahišta-* ('most-good' Y33:6);⁷¹
- (3) A way of being that is *spənta-* ('beneficial' Y28:1, Y47:1, Y47:4, 6);⁷² *spanyah-* ('more beneficial' Y45:2); and *spəništa-* ('most beneficial' Y33:12, Y47:2, Y51:7, Y43:2);⁷³
- (4) A way of being that is to be chosen (Y30:3, Y43:16);⁷⁴
- (5) And a way of being that chooses truth (Y30:5);⁷⁵
- (6) A way of being that can be bad (Y30:3), deceitful (Y30:5), evil or harmful (Y45:2), that afflicts this world and brings to realization the worst things (Y30:6);⁷⁶
- (7) And a way of being that can be truthful, beneficial, good, generous, bountiful, loving, ~ the essence of the true order of existence (*aša-*), the essence of what is sacred, divine ~ a way of being that heals this world (Y44:2),⁷⁷ the *spənta-* way of being.

I cannot think of a one-word English equivalent that exactly expresses the meaning of *mainyu-* in all of the ways in which it is used in the Gathas. But it is dangerous to leave Avestan words untranslated, because then a reader tends to ascribe to the word whatever subjective meaning is in his mind.

'Spirit': It is true that 'spirit' is part of the meaning of *mainyu-*. But 'spirit' inclines the reader to think of *mainyu-* as an existence that is only non-material, whereas in the Gathas, it is a disposition, a nature, a way of being, that applies to the existences of matter and mind (as does *aša-*). As used in the Gathas, *mainyu-* as a 'way of being' includes the material existence (with its material thoughts, words and actions) and also

an existence that is not bound by mortality ~ an existence which has attained the attribute *amərətāt-*, non-deathness ~ an existence that is Divine. In addition, 'spirit' carries with it connotations from other religious paradigms (and later Zoroastrian texts) which are not consistent with the ways in which *mainyu-* is used in the Gathas, and leads to a distortion of Zarathushtra's thought. 'Spirit' inclines the reader to think of the beneficial and harmful *mainyu-* as discrete cosmic entities, whereas we know that in the Gathas, that is not so (as the above evidence details). And in using *mainyu-* for man, it cannot have escaped Zarathushtra's attention that no human entity is entirely good or entirely bad (as the two *mainyu-* are said to be). Each of us (primordially) has within us, ways of being that are both bad and more good, both harmful and more beneficial. Therefore 'spirit' in my view is not an accurate translation of *mainyu-* based on how Zarathushtra uses that word.

'Nature' / 'way of being': The faculty aspect of *mainyu-*, is 'nature', and it is true that in some verses, 'nature' does indeed fit well. But this word implies a static condition, the consistent use of which in translating *mainyu-*, changes the focus of Zarathushtra's thought in a material way, because *mainyu-* is most often used by Zarathushtra to express an evolving process of existence (*vohu-* 'good', *vahyah-* 'more good', *vahišta-* 'most good'; *spənta-* 'beneficial', *spanyah-* 'more beneficial', *spəništa-* 'most beneficial'). In the same way, *manah-* is also used to express an evolving process of thinking (*vohu-* *manah-* 'good thinking', *vahišta-* *manah-* 'most-good thinking').⁷⁸ A central theme of the Gathas, is the process of change from a mixed, conflicted way of being, to one that personifies the complete attainment of the true (good) order of existence (as many of the puzzles in *Part Two* demonstrate). Therefore, to consistently use the static word 'nature' (which is faculty) for *mainyu-* does not fit most of the ways in which Zarathushtra uses the word. In addition, the use of 'nature' for the two *mainyu-* implies a fixed classification of beings as bad/harmful or more-good/more-beneficial, whereas all human beings (at least in our present, material reality) are a mix of these two opposing ways of being. Using only the static word 'nature' is not in accord with another unique and foundational thought of Zarathushtra ~ his solution for defeating evil by changing minds, changing preferences.⁷⁹ In a majority of instances, translating *mainyu-* as process ~ a 'way of being' ~ rather than as faculty ('nature'), cures all these objections, even when used for Wisdom's way of being which is the apex of the evolutionary process,⁸⁰ just as the superlatives used with *manah-* indicate the apex of the evolutionary process of thinking ~ enlightenment.

Conclusion: In essence, *spənta-* *mainyu-* comprises a way of being that personifies the true (correct, good) order of existence (*aša-*), its comprehension (good thinking *vohu-* *manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta-* *ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu-* *xšaθra-*), its complete attainment (*haurvatāt-*), resulting in a way of being no longer bound by mortality (*amərətāt-*), ~ all of which comprise the wholly, completely, beneficial (*spənta-*), truthful (*ašavan-*) way of being ~ the essence of the sacred, the Divine ~ a way of being that man has imperfectly, and is capable of attaining completely.

* * * * *

¹ *mainyu-* as 'nature' or 'way of being' refers to the qualities of a living being, not the 'living being' itself (which is *haṇt-* 'being' Skjaervo, *Introduction To Young Avestan*, Lesson 11, p. 99 ~ the gen. pl. of which is *hātqm* 'of living beings' or 'of those who exist').

² See *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah-*.

³ Part of the reason for this disagreement is that linguists cannot agree on the applicable cognate from Vedic or other ancient Indo-European languages, which would assist in de-coding the meaning of Old Av. *spənta-*. For example:

Insler 1975, citing Lommel 1971, acknowledges that the exact meaning of *spənta-* is difficult to determine (p. 117).

Taraporewala 1951 prefers 'holy' pp. 91 - 92.

Jafarey 1989, believes that *spənta-* derives from the Avestan / Vedic *spi* / *svi* which he says means 'to expand, swell, increase'. Jafarey, *Spenta Mainyu* in *An Introduction to the Gathas*, No. 3, p. 1. This publication may be viewed at www.zarathushtra.com. The conclusion that *spənta-* derives from *spi* / *svi* results in the translation of 'progressive' or 'incremental' for *spənta-*. But some linguists do not agree that *spi* / *svi* is the correct cognate.

⁴ The following translators translate *spənta-* as 'holy',

Azargoshasb 1988; Bartholomae, according to Taraporewala 1951; Moulton 1912; Sethna 1975 and others.

Taraporewala 1951 states that the Pahlavi translators, and also the Sanskrit translation of Nairiosang Dhaval, imply that "helping the onward progress of creation is the best form of holiness." (p. 356).

Bartholomae (according to Taraporewala) understands *spəntvaṭ* in Y51:21 to derive from *spā-* 'to further, to advance' stating that this root is also connected with *spənta-*; (Taraporewala 1951 p. 820).

⁵ Mills 1887 translates *spənta-* as 'bountiful'; Hintze 1994 as 'bounteous', in the Glossary of her *Zamyad Yasht* p. 51. When used in connection with *spənta- mainyu-* she translates *spənta-* as 'bounteous' (§ 44, p. 24; § 46, p. 25), but when used in connection with the amesha spenta, she translates *spənta-* as 'incremental' (e.g. § 15 "Which belongs to the Incremental Immortals [*aməša- spənta-*]..." p. 16).

⁶ Gershevitch 1959, translated *spənta-* as 'incremental' in his *Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, p. 157, based on the Pahlavi translation, *awzonik*.

Hintze 1994 also translates *spənta-* as 'incremental' when used in the term amesha spenta, but not when used with *mainyu-* (detailed above).

Farrokh Vajifdar also translates *spənta-* as 'incremental'.

⁷ Jafarey 1989, p. 89.

⁸ Darmesteter (more than a century ago), translated *spənta-* as 'beneficent'. For example, the YAv. *Farvardin Yasht*, repeatedly says *ašāunqm vañuhīš sūrā spəntā fravašayō yazamaide* which Darmesteter translates as "We worship the good, strong, **beneficent** fravashis of the faithful [*ašāunqm* = 'of the truthful']..." § 26, SBE 23, p. 186. Avestan words from Geldner 2P, p. 173. This phrase is repeated in many, many other verses of this Yasht.

Humbach (1991) translates *spənta-* as 'prosperous', then later as 'holy' in Humbach & Ichaporia, *The Heritage of Zarathushtra*, (Heidelberg, 1994). But more recently, in Humbach/Faiss 2010, as 'beneficent', but in the sense of 'fortunate', §23.1, p. 38. They do not explain the etymology of the word *spənta-* in other Indo-European languages, stating only that the adjective *spənta-* derives from the noun *spən-* which in their opinion means 'fortune', thus *spənta- mainyu-* would in their opinion literally be 'Fortunate Spirit' which they explain as the spirit who is fortunate himself, and grants fortune to men. (p. 38, ft. 63). In the Gatha verse Y45:9, Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate *spəntcā* and *aspəntcā* as "fortune and misfortune" (p. 131).

⁹ Thieme, *Reflections on the Vocabulary of Zarathuštra's Gathas*, appearing in *Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium*, 1993, (WZO 1998), p. 202.

¹⁰ Insler 1975, p. 117.

¹¹ See Insler, *Human Behavior and Good Thinking*, 1989, appearing in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*, No. 1, p. 5, Shahriar Shariari's website which may be viewed at www.zarathushtra.com.

¹² Darmesteter's translations of the YAv. texts appear in SBE 23.

¹³ Moulton 1912, p. 145.

¹⁴ Thieme, *ibid.* p. 202.

¹⁵ Taraporewala 1951, his mentor Bartholomae, and Moulton also believe that *spənta-* is cognate with "Old Church Slavic" *svetu* and Lithuanian *sventas* both of which mean 'holy', p. 356; Moulton 1912 pp. 144 et seq. Avestan belongs in the Indo-European family of languages.

¹⁶ Thieme, *ibid.*, page 204.

¹⁷ Opinions of Zarathushtra's date vary from 6,000 BCE (ancient Greek historians), to 589 BCE (Pahlavi and Arabic writers).

Skjaervo in his Old Avestan primer in which he has lessons on the Old Avestan language, estimates that Old Avestan (the oldest surviving form of Avestan, in which the Gathas were composed) dates from 1,700 to 1,200 BCE. Skjaervo, *Introduction To Old Avestan*, (updated to Feb. 24, 2022), p. xii.

Based on the internal evidence of the Gathas, and archeological evidence, I do not think Zarathushtra could have lived earlier than 2,000 BCE or later than 1,700 BCE. Detailed in *Part Four: Zarathushtra's Date & Place*.

¹⁸ The term 'double entendre' means that the author intends two meanings for one word or phrase ~ a technique that is frequently found in the Gathas, as demonstrated in many of the chapters in *Part Two*.

¹⁹ Detailed in *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*.

²⁰ See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

²¹ Beekes 1988 pp. 135 - 136; although Beekes' spellings are different, probably because his purpose is an attempt to reconstruct the original Old Av. version of a given word, based on phonemics (according to Humbach (1991) Vol. 1, pp. 6 - 7 ft. 7).

²² Humbach/Faiss 2010 show the stem *spanyah-* p. 38, ft. 63; so too does Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index with the alternative spelling *spānyah-* (with a long first *ā*).

²³ Beekes 1988 pp. 135 - 136 (although he spells it differently). But Beekes states that at least once the superlative form of *spənta-* appears in Old Av. with the less used superlative suffix *-tama-* (written *-tāma-* in the texts) instead of the more common suffix *-išta*, p. 136. See Y45:5a where the superlative (in its case inflected form) is *spəntō.tāmō*.

²⁴ Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1988.

²⁵ Beekes 1988 pp. 135 - 136; Jackson 1892, § 365, p. 104; Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index.

²⁶ The Old Av. word which Insler translates as 'beneficent' is *hudāh-*.

²⁷ Webster's International Dictionary, 2d Edition, 1956.

²⁸ Linguists are in disagreement as to the genesis of *hudāh-*, believing it to correspond to different Vedic cognates generating the following meanings,

'wise' Bartholomae/Taraporewala in Taraporewala 1951 p. 139,

'of good gifts' Humbach 1991 Vol. 2, p. 49),

'who gives good gifts, generous' Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index, and

'beneficent' Insler 1975 p. 166.

For a more detailed discussion of the flavors of meaning in *hudāh*, see *Part Six: Yasna 30:3 and 4*.

²⁹ Here is another example of the equivalence between 'beneficent' and *spənta-* (in its superlative degree *spāništa-*). In Y30:3 the correct choice is made by the beneficent ("... the beneficent [*hudāhō*] have correctly chosen..." Y30:3).

In Y30:5, the correct choice is made by the *spəništa-* ('most beneficial') way of being (*mainyu-*) ("... the [*mainyu-spəništa-*] chose the truth..." Y30:5).

So we see again, that 'beneficence' is included in the way of being that is *spənta-*.

³⁰ Insler 1975 translates the first part of Y31:9 as follows: "Thine was to be [*ārmaiti-*], Thine the fashioner of the cow, namely that [*mainyu-*] of great determination [*aš.x ratuš*]..." Y31:9. The fashioner of the cow is identified in the Gathas as being *spənta- mainyu-* (the 'beneficial way of being') and also as Wisdom (whose way of being is beneficial), these verses are detailed in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network*. So in Y31:9 quoted above, it is *spənta- mainyu-* (the fashioner of the cow) who is described as having great reasoning *aš.x ratu-*. Insler 1975 in his Addenda (p. 327) states that in his view *x ratuš* [nom. sg. of the stem *x ratu-*] means 'will, determination, intention', but recognizes that H. P. Schmidt (and others) understand the word to mean 'reason, intellect' ~ the quality that triggers one's insight (*daēnā-*) and cognition or understanding (*cisti-*). If indeed Schmidt and many other scholars are correct and *x ratu-* means 'reason, intellect, discernment', then Y31:9 shows us that one of the qualities of the beneficial (*spənta-*) way of being (*mainyu-*) ~ *aš.x ratu-* ~ is a high degree of 'reason, intellect, discernment' (the prefix *aš-* means 'great'). For a discussion of the meaning of *x ratu-* and how it evolved from the Old Avestan of the Gathas to the YAv. texts, see *Part Three: Xratu-*.

³¹ For other verses in which Wisdom the Lord is *spənta-* see (Insler 1975): "... the Lord, beneficent through truth [*aša-*], [*spənta-*] and knowing..." Y48:3; "...The Wise Lord is [*spənta-*]..." Y51:16.

³² In the Gathas, *spənta-* and *aša-* are equated. See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

³³ Here are more examples of Wisdom's *spənta-* and *spəništa-* way of being (*mainyu-*) ~ Insler 1975 translation,

"... Thy [*spənta- mainyu-*] ..." Y44:7;

"...Thy [*spəništa- mainyu-*]..." Y33:12;

"...Thy [*spəništa- mainyu-*]..." Y51:7;

"...His [*mainyu- spəništa-*]..." Y47:2;

"And through this [*spənta- mainyu-*], Wise Lord, Thou hast promised..." Y47:5;

So in the Gathas, both *spənta-* and *spəništa-* are used for Wisdom's way of being, Its *mainyu-*. Interestingly, I do not recall any instance of the comparative degree *spanyah-* 'more *spənta-*' being used to describe Wisdom's *mainyu-*, perhaps because He has already evolved from a mixed way of being to one that is wholly *spənta-*. See *Part Two: Did Wisdom Choose Too?*

In Y45:5, the adjective *spənta-* (in one of its superlative forms) is used as a noun (a grammatical practice that is common in Old Av., and also other Indo-European languages). "And now, I shall speak of what the most virtuous one [*spəntō.təmō* 'the most-beneficial (one)'] told me, that word which is to be heard as the best [*vahišta-* 'most-good'] for men [*marətaēibyō* 'for mortals'] ..." Y45:5. The identity of 'the most virtuous one [*spəntō.təmō*]' is not specified. It is either Wisdom Itself, or the most beneficial way of being (*spəništa- mainyu-*) as an allegorical entity ~ which makes no substantive difference because the *spənta-* / *spəništa-* way of being is Wisdom's way of being.

³⁴ Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

³⁵ See *Part Six: Yasna 45:2* for the basis of this translation and comparative translations.

³⁶ Humbach 1991 believes *spən-* to be the noun form of *spənta-*, Vol. 2, p. 172.

³⁷ For other examples of *spənta-* being used to describe *ārmaiti-* as a concept, see also:

"Those... who have abandoned [*spənta- ārmaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth']..." Y34:9, Insler 1975;

"...neither has he supported [*spənta- ... ārmaiti-* 'beneficial embodied truth'] in order that it be his..." Y49:2, Insler 1975.

ārmaiti- in humans is also called *spənta-*:

"... [*spənta-*] is the man of [*ārmaiti-*] ..." Y51:21, Insler 1975;

Wisdom, truth, and good thinking speaking to man "... We have chosen your good and [*spənta- ārmaiti*] ..." Y32:2, Insler 1975;

"...a man... has expressed his understanding and his [*spənta- ārmaiti-*]..." Y34:10, Insler 1975.

In Y43:3 Zarathushtra speaks of a person who is "...sincere, of good lineage, and [*spənta-*], like Thee, Wise One." Y43:3, and in Y49:5 such "good lineage" is equated with a person of *ārmaiti-* whose genesis ('lineage') is truth (*aša-*) and all the other qualities comprising the divine "...Any such person of [*ārmaiti-*] is of the (same) good lineage which truth [*aša-*] and all those (other forces) existing under Thy rule, Lord." Y49:5, Insler 1975.

³⁸ See Part One: Good Rule, Vohu Xshathra, and Power.

³⁹ See Part Three: Daena.

⁴⁰ I have found no verse in the (extant) Gathas in which completeness (*haurvatāt-*) and non-deathness (*amərətāt-*) are specifically called *spənta-*. However if completeness is the complete attainment of the foregoing amesha spenta ~ a way of being that is wholly, completely, in accord with the true most good order of existence (*aša- vahišta-*), which in the Gathas is a beneficial [*spənta-*] order of existence, then completeness (*haurvatāt-*) would have to be a *spənta-* way of being. In other words, I do not think the omission was intended by Zarathushtra to be significant. See Part One: Completeness and Non-Deathness *Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

⁴¹ In this same Yasna 43, in verses 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15, (in the Insler 1975 translation) there is an enigmatical 'he' who attends with good thinking. This cannot be a reference to Wisdom the Lord Itself, because in each of these near identical phrases, Zarathushtra addresses the Divine directly ("And I have already realized Thee to be [*spənta-*], Wise Lord, when he attended me with good thinking..." Y43:7, 9, 11, 13, 15, Insler 1975. Insler believes this he refers to *spənta- mainyu-* (*mainyu-* is a grammatically masculine noun, hence Insler's choice of the masculine pronoun he). I agree that the 3p pronoun implied in the verb here refers to *spənta- mainyu-*. If so, then in these verses Zarathushtra says in effect, that a beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) attends with good thinking – an allegorical way of saying, a beneficial way of being [*spənta- mainyu-*] generates good thinking, (the comprehension of the true order of existence), which includes an understanding that the nature of the Divine is beneficial [*spənta-*].

⁴² The alternating complementation of the beneficial-sacred way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) in the Divine and man in all 6 verses of Y47 is as follows:

Verse 1: in man, "Through a [*spənta- mainyu-* 'a beneficial way of being'] and the best [*vahišta-* 'most good'] thinking, through both action and the word befitting truth, they shall grant completeness and immortality to Him ..." Y47:1, Insler 1975;

Verse 2: in Wisdom, "A person shall bring to realization the best [*vahišta-* 'most good'] for His [*mainyu- spəništa-* 'most beneficial way of being'] ..." Y47:2, Insler 1975.

Verse 3: in Wisdom, "Thou art the virtuous [*spənta-* 'beneficial'] Father of this spirit [*mainyu-* 'way of being'], ..." Y47:3, Insler 1975; The word "Father" does not appear in the Old Av. text in any extant ms. Translators arrive at Father by emending *tā* to *ptā*, in the Old Av. text. Geldner shows no ms. that has *ptā*, Geldner 1P p. 166, ft. 3 to Y47:3. With respect, I do not agree with this emendation of *tā* to *ptā*. I think here Zarathushtra was expressing the idea that Wisdom is in fact this beneficial way of being, which is consistent with the many verses which express this idea.

Verse 4: in man, "...those who are properly truthful from this [*mainyu- spənta-* 'beneficial way of being']..." Y47:4, Insler 1975.

Verse 5: in the Lord (who is) Wisdom (and man?), " And through this... [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being'], Wise Lord, Thou hast promised for the truthful person what indeed are the very best things [*vahišta-* 'most good (things)']... "Y47:5, Insler 1975.

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

⁴³ See in *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*, and in *Part Two: Did Wisdom Choose Too?*

⁴⁴ Most scholars translate *mainyu-* as 'spirit'. For example, Insler 1975, Azargoshasb 1988, Taraporewala 1951 and his mentor Bartholomae, Humbach 1991, Humbach/Faiss 2010, Mills 1894 *Study*, and Moulton 1912. But Insler has since changed his mind as mentioned herein.

⁴⁵ Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index, who conjectures that the stem is *manyu-*.

⁴⁶ Thieme, *ibid.*, at p. 204.

⁴⁷ Gershevitch, *Dissent and Consensus on the Gathas*, which appears in *Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium 1993* (WZO 1998). Gershevitch is of the opinion that *manah-* means 'act of thinking', *mainyu-* means 'thought', and *man-* means 'to think', p. 24.

⁴⁸ For 'mentality' Jafarey 1989, p. 89; for 'way of thinking' Jafarey, *Spenta Mainyu*, which appears in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (1989 - 1990) No. 3, p. 2, in www.zarathushtra.com.

⁴⁹ Sethna, *ibid.*, p. 17. Sethna translates *mainyu-* as 'mind' without explaining how in his view, it differs from *manah-* which is 'mind', 'thinking', 'thought' (see *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*).

⁵⁰ Humbach/Faiss 2010, p. 40.

⁵¹ See Insler, *Human Behavior and Good Thinking*, in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra* (1989 - 1990), No. 1, p. 1, www.zarathushtra.com. And (for those who have the original hard copy publication) see also Insler's comments in the same series, No. 3, p. 16 (which comments are not on the web version).

⁵² In his commentary at p. 118 (discussed in *Part One: Good Thinking, Vohu Manah*), Insler 1975 shows that certain stem words in Avestan are used to express a faculty, its process, and its object. For the word *manah-* this three-fold translation is 'mind' (faculty), 'thinking' (process), and 'thought' (object). In translating *manah-* Insler most frequently uses, not the faculty 'mind' but the process 'thinking', even when referring to Wisdom's *manah-* ("...Thy thinking..." Y31:11), and to the personified wisdom that is paradise ("...the House of Good Thinking..." Y32:15) ~ an insightful choice on his part, because (in my view) Zarathushtra's focus in using *manah-* is to convey an active and on-going process of using the mind, (and for imperfect mortals, also incrementally comprehending the true order of existence (*aša-*)).

The use of *mainyu-* as a process is corroborated by the fact that Zarathushtra uses it as an activity. To give a few examples:

"Through a [*spənta- mainyu-*] and the best thinking... they shall grant..." Y47:1, Insler 1975; I would translate it, 'Through a beneficial way of being and the best thinking ... they shall grant ...' Y47:1.

"...Through this [*mainyu-*] Wise One, Thou art to grow..." Y31:7, Insler 1975; I would translate it, 'Through this way of being, Wisdom, Thou art to grow...' referring to the previously mentioned truth and good thinking (which define this way of being). For Zarathushtra's thoughts on how Wisdom grows, see *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*.

"...the deceitful are not able to deflect those who are properly truthful from this [*spənta- mainyu-*] ..." Y47:4, Insler 1975; I would translate it, '...the untruthful are not able to deflect those who are properly truthful from this beneficial way of being...' Y47:4.

⁵³ That 'way of being' is not linguistically off the wall in meaning, is demonstrated in other Gatha verses which express the same idea (but with a different word). For example: in Y46:8 d. and e., we have the words *hujoyātōiš* and *dužjoyātōiš* which are the ablative sg. ('from___') case of the stem *joyāiti-* 'life', with the prefixes *hu-* 'good' and *duž-* 'bad'. In this verse Insler 1975 translates *hujoyātōiš* as "from a good way of life", and *dužjoyātōiš* as "from a bad way of life".

⁵⁴ In later (Avestan and Pahlavi) texts, Wisdom the Lord (Ahura Mazda) and Spenta Mainyu were considered to be the same which is consistent with the Gathas because *spənta- mainyu-*, a 'beneficial-sacred way of being' is Wisdom's way of being, as shown in the main part of this chapter. Here are some YAv. examples of the Wisdom the Lord described as the most beneficial being. All quotations are from Mills' translation and the Avestan words in square brackets have been transliterated by me from Geldner.

Yy1:1, "... to Ahura Mazda ... who is the most bounteous spirit [*ahurahe mazdā ... yō mainyuš spəntōtəmō*]." SBE 31, p. 196; Geldner, 1P, p. 7; the word *spəntōtəmō* 'most-beneficial' is one of the superlative forms of *spənta-* 'beneficial'.

Yy65:15, "... O ... Mazda, Thou most bounteous spirit [*spəništā mainyū mazdā*]. ..." SBE 31, p. 320; Geldner 1P, p. 222.

However, the later texts mistakenly used the original premise in the Gathas ~ that Wisdom's way of being is beneficial ~ as a basis for cosmic dualism ~ which is based on the (later) idea that Divine is a being separate and apart from Its creation, which is inconsistent with the evidence of the Gathas in which the Divine is in-dwelling in existence, detailed in *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*, and in *Part Two: A Question Of Immanence*.

⁵⁵ The name Angra Mainyu which appears in later texts, is not found in the Gathas (in which *angra-* 'harmful' 'inimical' is used as an adj. describing a quality). In the Gathas, there are no descriptions of an evil Mainyu-Entity spawning an evil creation parallel to that of Wisdom's good creation, (as we find in the later texts). Nor are there any references in the Gathas to any aspect of the material creation as 'evil' (as we find in the later texts). (See in *Part One: Does the Devil Exist?* and in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*). In fact, each descriptive reference to evil in the Gathas, describes the product of wrongful choices, (see *Part One: Good and Evil*).

⁵⁶ Zarathushtra also mentions Wisdom's *mainyu-* ~ His way of being ~ alone, without the adjectives *spənta* or *spəništā-*: "...through the eloquence befitting Thy [*mainyu-* 'way of being']..." Y28:11; "...with Thy [*mainyu-* 'way of being']..." Y31:3; Insler 1975.

⁵⁷ Here is my translation of Y30:3. A detailed analysis with comparative translations appears in *Part Six: Yasna 30:3 and 4*.

a. *aṭ. tā. mainyū. paouruyē. yā. yēmā. xʷafənā. asrvātəm.*

b. *manahicā. vacahicā. šyaodanōi. hī. vahyō. akəmcā.*

c. *āscā. hudāṇhō. ərəš. vīšyātā. nōiṭ. duždāṇhō. •: Y30:3. Geldner 1P p. 106.*

My translation.

a. 'Now there (are) two primeval ways of being, which (are) twins, renowned (to be) in conflict.

b. In thought and in word, in action they (are) two ~ the more good and the bad.

c. And between these two, the beneficent have chosen correctly, not the maleficent.' Y30:3.

⁵⁸ Beekes 1988 pp. 135 - 136; Jackson 1892, also shows *vahyah-* as the comparative form of *vohu-* in Old Av., p. 104, § 365.

⁵⁹ In the following translations, 'better' as the comparative degree of 'good' is used in the sense of 'good, better, best' (which more literally would be 'good, more-good, most-good').

Bartholomae: "Now the two primal Spirits, ... are the Better [*vahyō*] and the Bad, in thought and word and action..." Y30:3, (Tarap. (1951) p. 139).

Moulton 1912: "Now the two primal Spirits, ... are the Better [*vahyō*] and the Bad, in thought and word and action ..." Y30:3, (p. 349).

Humbach 1991: "These (are) the two spirits ... the better [*vahyō*] and the evil..." Y30:3, Vol. 1, p. 123.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 translate the comparative *vahyō* as 'very good', "These are the two spirits ... the very good and the evil one..." Y30:3 p. 81. In Avestan the comparative and superlative degrees often are used as a crescendo of expression rather than a difference in kind. But I do not think the context of this verse fits a crescendo type of translating *vahyō*.

Taraporewala 1951 in his translation uses 'good'. But in his comment he states that *vahyō* is nom. sg. of the comparative form of *vohu-* p. 139.

⁶⁰ Karl Hoffmann, *Vedica 2. asra-*, *Munchener Studien zum Sprachwissenschaft* 41, 1982, p. 62. I owe this reference to the generosity of Professor Elizabeth Tucker.

⁶¹ Insler (1975) in Y45:2 again uses the English positive form instead of the Avestan comparative *spanyā*. "Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental spirits of existence of which the virtuous one [*spanyā*] would have thus spoken to the evil one ..." Y45:2.

But Bartholomae, Moulton and Humbach use the comparative form in their respective translations as follows:

Bartholomae usually translates *spənta-* as 'holy' and in Y45:2 he translates the comparative form *spanyah-* as 'holier': "I will speak of the Spirits twain ... of whom the holier [*spanyā*] spoke thus to the enemy..." Y45:2, Bartholomae's translation in Tarap. 1951 p. 539.

Moulton 1912 also usually translates *spənta-* as 'holy' and the comparative form *spanyah-* as 'holier': "I will speak of the Spirits twain ... of whom the holier [*spanyā*] spoke thus to the enemy..." Y45:2, EZ p. 370.

Humbach 1991 translates *spənta-* as 'properous' and uses the comparative 'more prosperous' for *spanyah-*: "I shall (now) proclaim the two spirits ... of whom the more prosperous one [*spanyā*] shall address the harmful one..." Y45:2, Vol. 1, page 164.

Humbach/Faiss 2010 also use the comparative 'more beneficent' for *spanyah-*: "...the more beneficent one [*spanyā*] of whom shall address the harmful one as follows..." Y45:2, p. 128.

Taraporewala 1951 also translates *spanyā* as a comparative 'holier' in both his translation and his commentary "And I-will-explain about-the-Twin-Spirits ... of whom the Holier [*spanyā*] spoke to-the-other ~ the Evil One ~ thus ..." Y45:2, p. 537 - 538.

Mills 1887 routinely translates *spənta-* as 'bountiful', and *spanyā* as 'more bountiful'.

⁶² See also the parallel thought in Y51:5: "...one who, although having the power over (the choice of) both rewards, has correctly understood the (proper) judgment for the just people." Y51:5, Insler 1975. I think "the (proper) judgment" here, means the correct mental conclusion (not an end of life or end of times judgement preceding reward or punishment). See in *Part Two: A Question of Reward & the Path*, and *The Houses of Paradise & Hell*; and in *Part Three: Apema, One of Many Ends*.

⁶³ Here are some additional examples of *mainyu-* being used as a concept ~ a way of being ~ in the Gathas.

"The priest who is just, in harmony with truth, is the offspring from the best spirit [*vahišta- mainyu-* '(the) most-good way of being']..." Y33:6, Insler 1975. Clearly such priests are not literally born from a *mainyu-* entity. The 'most good way of being' (*vahišta- mainyu-*) here is used as a concept, a very good way of being which generates a priest who is in harmony with the true (correct, good) order of existence.

"... the correct thinking stemming from good [*mainyu-*] ..." Y34:2, Insler 1975;
which I would translate '... the (correct) thinking stemming from a good way of being...'

"...the word and deed stemming from good [*mainyu-*] ..." Y45:8, Insler 1975; and "... for actions stemming from good [*mainyu-*]..." Y48:8, Insler 1975. These words and actions stem from a good way of being.

In Y31:21 and Y44:2 Zarathushtra uses *mainyu-* to describe the concept of a way of being that belongs to an ally of Wisdom, "... him, the one who is His ally in [*mainyu-* 'in (his) way of being'] and actions." Y31:21, Insler 1975; "... For such a person, [*spənta-* 'beneficial'] through truth, watching over the heritage for all, is a world healer and Thy ally in [*mainyu-* 'in (his) way of being'], Wise One." Y44:2, Insler 1975.

And in Y31:7, Zarathushtra refers to the concept of a way of being (*mainyu-*) that is truth and good thinking. "He who first thought thus, 'They are to be joined with happiness throughout their days', He created truth in accordance with this very intention, by reason of which He has (also) upheld the very best thinking. (To the Wise Lord) Through this [*mainyu-* 'through this way of being'], Wise One, Thou art to grow, ..." Y31:7, Insler 1975.

And the enigmatical Y33:9: "Yes, for Thee, Wise One, let a person support with good thinking [*vahišta- manah-*] the very [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] of these two companions who increase truth through that happiness consisting of change. The association of these two has already arisen, under whom (all) souls are in harmony." Y33:9, Insler 1975. I think the "two companions" refer to two Divine qualities ~ completeness and non-deathness ~ mentioned in the preceding verse (Humbach/Faiss 2010 think so as well p. 176; others do not). The 2 companions in this verse "increase truth" and therefore their *mainyu-* cannot be two Dualistic Entities – one more-good / more-beneficial and one all bad / harmful (Y30:3, Y45:2). Thus I would translate this phrase '...let a person support with most-good thinking, the way of being [*mainyu-*] of these two companions who increase truth through (that) happiness consisting of change...'; ~ once again demonstrating that Zarathushtra's solution for defeating evil is changing minds, changing preferences (detailed in *Part Two: Asha & the Checkmate Solution*).

⁶⁴ In Y45:2 *mainyu-* is clearly treated as an allegorical entity. Here we have the famous declaration by the *spanyah-* (more beneficial) way of being (*mainyu-*) to the harmful [*angra-*] way of being. "Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental [*mainyu-* 'ways of being'] of existence of which the virtuous one [*spənyā* 'the more-beneficial (one)'] would have thus spoken to the evil one [*angrām* 'evil (one)']: 'Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conceptions nor our souls [*urvan-*] are in accord.' " Y45:2, Insler 1975. In essence, treating the two *mainyu-* as (allegorical) entities here, is a poetic way of expressing the thought that these two ways of being ~ more-beneficial (*spanyah-*) and harmful (*angra-*) ~ are complete opposites in the ways in which they manifest themselves, all of which are variations of thoughts, words, actions, ~ the totality of each way of being (that is not sleeping).

In Y28:1 we have a possible instance of *mainyu-* ('way of being') used as an allegory, "With hands outstretched in reverence of him [*ahyā*], (our) support, the [*mainyu-*] [*spənta-*] through truth..." Y28:1, Insler 1975. The word *ahyā* which Insler translates as 'of him' is the gen. sg. form of the demonstrative pronoun stem *a-* ('this/that/these/those'). In Avestan, demonstrative pronouns are also used as 3d person personal pronouns ('he/him, she/her, it, they/them'); and *ahyā* is the gen. sg. form for both masc. and ntr. genders.⁶⁴ Therefore the above phrase could with accuracy be translated, 'Hand outstretched, with reverence of this [*ahyā*], (our) support, the way of being [*mainyu-*] beneficial-sacred [*spənta-*] through truth ...' in which event *mainyu* here would not be an entity (see *Part Six: Yasna 28:1*); or as Insler has done "...in reverence of him [*ahyā*], (our) support,..." , in which event it could be

an allegorical entity. But whether we translate *mainyu-* as 'spirit' or 'mentality' or a 'way of being', there is no dispute that it has no *actual* gender, and grammatically masc. pronouns (he/him) that stand for nouns which have no actual gender are routinely translated into English as 'it'. For example, in French, *chapeau* 'hat' is a grammatically masc. noun. and a pronoun referring to this noun would also be masc. *il = he*. So literally the phrase *mon chapeau, il est beau*, would be *my hat, he is beautiful*. But in English, we would translate that phrase as *my hat, it is beautiful*. Since a 'way of being' (or even 'spirit' or 'mentality') has no intrinsic gender, if *ahyā* is translated into English as a 2p personal pronoun the (above) phrase should be translated as follows: 'Hand outstretched, with reverence of it, our support, the way of being (*mainyu-*) beneficial/sacred through truth...' Y28.1, my translation; although I think a demonstrative pronoun for *ahyā* here is a better fit, "... with reverence of this, our support ...".

More ambiguous (as to whether *mainyu-* is treated as an entity) are Y43:7, 9, 11, 13, 15, where Insler has added a pronoun 'he' (as the 3p pronoun implicit in the verb 'attended') which Insler believes refers to *spənta- mainyu-* ("... when he attended me with good thinking..." Insler 1975). Insler has chosen to translate the 3p pronoun implicit in the verb form "attended", as "he" because Insler thinks it refers to *mainyu-*. ~ a grammatically masc. noun. But since *mainyu-* a 'way of being' (or even 'spirit' or 'mentality') has no intrinsic gender, it would be translated into English as 'it' (explained above). Other translators have translated this phrase somewhat differently. I agree with Insler that in this verse, Zarathushtra is referring to *spənta- mainyu-*. His conclusion is corroborated by the internal evidence of Y43 itself, and is consistent with the rest of Zarathushtra's thought. But in essence, if you look past the allegory, the phrase is a way of expressing the idea that it is a beneficial way of being that generates, or brings about, good thinking (the comprehension of the true order of existence, which is a beneficial order of existence).

In any event, in light of the fact that in multiple instances in the Gathas, Wisdom and mortals both have *mainyu-* and the word is also used as a concept, the conclusion is inescapable that any reference to *mainyu-* as an entity can only be allegorical.

⁶⁵ For additional examples of man's *mainyu-*, see also:

Insler 1975: "Wise One, the deceitful are not able to deflect those who are properly truthful from this [*spənta-mainyu-*] Y47:4;

My translation: 'Wisdom, the deceitful are not able to deflect (those) thus truthful from this beneficial way of being [*spənta- mainyu-*]. Y47:4.

Translating *mainyu-* as way of being fits well.

Insler 1975: "...But in due course, [*ārmaiti-*] shall come to terms with one's [*mainyu-*] where there has been opposition." Y31:12;

My translation: '...In due course, embodied truth counsels with one's way of being [*mainyu-*] where (there has been) inconstancy." Y31:12,

Translating *mainyu-* as way of being fits well.

⁶⁶ "Yes, there are two fundamental [*mainyū-*] ... In thought [*manahicā*] and in word [*vacahicā*], in action [*šyaoθanōi*] they are two....." Y30:3, Insler 1975. The loc. sg. case is translated 'in/on/under/at/upto ____' et cetera. So 'in-thought' 'in-word' 'in-action' are loc. sg. translations. A few translators do not construe these words as loc. sg. but with respect, I do not find their views persuasive. These words and this verse Y30:3, are discussed detail in *Part Six: Yasna 30:3 and 4*, with comparative translations.

⁶⁷ Here is my translation of Y45:2.

a. <i>aṭ fravax šyā</i>	<i>aṭhəuš mainyū paouruyē</i>
b. <i>yayā spanyā</i>	<i>uīti mravat yəm angrəm</i>
c. <i>nōiṭ nā manā</i>	<i>nōiṭ sēnghā nōiṭ xratavō</i>
d. <i>naēdā varanā</i>	<i>noīṭ ūx da naēdā šyaoθanā</i>

e. *nōiṭ daēnā* *nōiṭ urvqnō hacaintē* ♫ Y45.2

- a. Yes, I shall speak out, (about) the two primeval ways of being of existence,
- b. of which the more-beneficial (one) [*spanyā*] would thus have spoken to (the one) who (is) harmful [*angrām*],
- c. not our thoughts, nor teachings, nor reasonings [*x ratavō*],
- d. neither our choices, nor words, neither (our) actions,
- e. nor envisionments, nor selves, are in accord. Y45.2, my translation.

Humbach (1991) raises a significant point. He comments that the words in Y45:2 (giving his translation) thoughts [*manā*], pronouncements [*sānghā*], statements [*ux δā*], actions [*šyaoθanā*], intellects [*x ratavō*], choices [*varanā*], views, [*daēnā*], souls [*urvqnō*] are all plural, not dual (Vol. 2, p. 166). In light of the fact that these words all refer to the two *mainyu-*, one would expect each to be dual. So why the plural?

Well, if the two *mainyu-* are entities, I suppose it could be argued that the plural reflects the multiple thoughts, teachings, words, actions, reasonings, choices, envisionments, of each entity. But could each of the two entities have multiple 'souls' (or selves)? Not a logical argument.

On the other hand, the plural is consistent with the conclusion that the two *mainyu-* are two ways of being in the plurality of all that exists ~ the 'more beneficial' *spanyā*, and the 'harmful' *angrām* ~ each to be found in the many (pl.) units of existence that have thoughts, teachings, words, actions, reasonings, choices, envisionments, and selves (or souls).

⁶⁸ Insler 1975 p. 123, in his comment on Y28:4.

⁶⁹ In later texts, composed many centuries after Zarathushtra, the concept of *mainyu-* did indeed evolve into the idea of the purely spiritual existence and was contrasted with the physical existence (Av. *gaēθā-*, Pahl. *getig*, see Part Six: Yasna 31:11 and 12 where the meaning of *gaēθā* as 'physical life' is discussed). For example, in the YAv. *Farvardin Yasht*, *mainyu.šūtā* ~ a blessed state of being ~ a non-corporeal existence (Darmesteter's translation 'bliss in the heavens' is a 'free' or interpretive one).

"Who, when invoked enjoy bliss in the heavens [*yā uzbātā mainyu.šūtā* 'a blessed state of being']..." Yt.13.42, Darmesteter translation, SBE 23, p. 190; Avestan words from Geldner 2P, p. 177.

But to think of *mainyu-* solely as the good spiritual existence (as do the later texts) is not consistent with the Gathas where

- (1) *mainyu-* is used for both a good and bad way of being,
- (2) man (who is corporeal, and a mix of good/bad capabilities) has *mainyu-*, and
- (3) *mainyu-* includes thoughts, words and actions which certainly can be a part of the material existence (although the non-mortal existence would have its own thoughts, words and actions).

That the meanings of words do evolve or change over time is what the study of etymology is about. And we see examples of such changes in the meanings of other Gathic Avestan words ~ for example the word *daēnā-*. In the Gathas *daēnā-* is used for an envisionment that can be good or bad, whereas in the later texts the word came to be used only for the w/Wisdom-worshipping religion i.e. only for good envisionment, (so also the later Pahl. *dīn*). See Part Three: *Daena*. An evolution in meaning is also demonstrated in the word *x ratu-*, see Part Three: *Xratu*.

⁷⁰ "...the (correct) thinking stemming from good [*mainyāušcā*] and ..." Y34:2, Insler 1975;

"... actions stemming from good [*mainyāuš*]." Y48.8, Insler 1975;

"... The Wise One is Lord through such actions stemming from good [*mainyāuš*]." Y45:5, Insler 1975.

The words 'stemming from' indicates the case. The form *mainyāuš* is used for both the abl. case ('from___' etc.) and the gen. case ('of___'). In translating these three verses, Insler thinks the abl. best describes Zarathushtra's intent here.

But if Zarathushtra intended *mainyāuš* here to be gen., the above quotations could, with equal accuracy be translated as I do, as follows,

"...the (correct) thinking of a good way of being [*mainyāušcā*] and ..." Y34:2;

"... the actions of a good way of being [*mainyāuš*]." Y48:8;

"... Wisdom is Lord through such actions of a good way of being [*mainyāuš*]." Y45:5.

⁷¹ "... The priest who is just, in harmony with truth [*aša-*], is the offspring from the [*mainyāuš ... vahištā*]..." Y33:6, Insler 1975; I translate '...is the offspring from a most good way of being'. In his commentary, Insler gives his thoughts on the Skt. cognate and Av. etymology of *kayā* as 'seed (offspring)', (p. 214), but some uncertainty exists.

⁷² "...of ... the [*mainyāuš ... spəntahyā*] through truth [*aša-*]..." Y28:1, Insler 1975, I translate it '...of ... the way of being beneficial-sacred through the true order of existence [*aša-*]...'.

"...through a [*spəntā mainyū*] and the best thinking..." Y47:1, Insler 1975, I translate it '...through a beneficial-sacred way of being and the most-good thinking...'.

"...those who are properly truthful from this [*mainyāuš spəntā*]..." Y47:4, Insler 1975, I translate it '...those who are properly in accord with the true (correct) order of existence from this beneficial-sacred way of being...'.

"Wise Lord, together with this [*spəntā mainyū*] Thou shalt give..." Y47:6, Insler 1975. There is no separate word 'together' in the Gathic text; the words *spəntā mainyū* are instr. sg. 'with/through/by____' so more literally, I translate this 'Wisdom, Lord, through this beneficial way of being, Thou shalt give...'.

⁷³ "...Thy [*spəništa- mainyu-*]..." Y33:12, Insler 1975;

"...His [*mainyu- spəništa-*]..." Y47:2, Insler 1975;

"...Thy [*spəništa- mainyu-*]..." Y 51:7, Insler 1975;

"Moreover, (I wish) for this person the best of all things, ... to be ... understanding through Thy [*spəništa- mainyu-*], Wise One..." Y43:2, Insler 1975;

In each instance *spəništa- mainyu-* is Wisdom's most-beneficial way of being.

⁷⁴ "Therefore, Lord, this Zarathushtra chooses that very [*mainyu-* 'way of being'] of Thine which indeed is the [*spəništa-* 'most beneficial'] of all, Wise One [*mazdā* Wisdom]..." Y43:16, Insler 1975.

⁷⁵ "...But the [*mainyu- spəništa-*]... chose the truth [*aša-*]..." Y30:5, Insler 1975; I translate this '...the most-beneficial way of being ... chose the true order of existence [*aša-*]...'.

⁷⁶ "Of these two [*mainyu-*], the deceitful one chose to bring to realization the worst things..." Y30:5, Insler 1975; I translate this 'of these two ways of being, the deceitful (way of being) chose to bring to realization the worst things...'.

⁷⁷ "... the loving man... For such a person [*spənta-*] through truth, watching over the heritage for all, is a world-healer, and Thy ally in [*mainyu-*] Wise One." Y44.2, Insler 1975; I translate this '... the loving (one)... beneficial through the true order of existence, watching over the heritage for all, is a world-healer and Thy ally in (his) way of being, Wisdom.'

⁷⁸ It is true that in Avestan, in certain contexts the superlative degree is often used as a crescendo of expression, rather than a difference in kind. But the use of the positive, comparative and superlative degrees in certain contexts suggests an incremental evolution in being.

⁷⁹ See in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*; and *Part One: A Friendly Universe*.

⁸⁰ See *Part Two: Did Wisdom Choose Too?*