

Good Thinking, Vohu Manah

In order to explore the meaning Zarathushtra has in mind when he uses the words *vohu-* *manah-*, it is necessary to give you a little linguistic information. So please bear with me.

vohu- / *vahu-*¹

vohu- is a key concept throughout Zarathushtra's thought. So it is important to understand what he has in mind when he uses the word. Linguists generally agree that *vohu-* means 'good'.² In English, 'good' can mean many different things. For example, 'obedience to the rules of a parent, religion, or society (*don't do this, don't do that, be a good girl*); 'competence' (*that computer programmer does a good job*); 'an approved quality' (*this food is good*); 'being kind, loving' (*our children are good to us*); 'being beneficial' (*that charity does a lot of good*); and other ways of using 'good' in English that do not immediately occur to me.

In Avestan, based on the ways in which it is used in the Gathas, (and also later Avestan texts) *vohu-* 'good' does not have so many varied meanings that are unrelated to intrinsic goodness. It means intrinsic goodness ~ in all its varied forms. Let us first look at how Zarathushtra uses the word.

In the Gathas, *vohu-* 'good' is used interchangeably with *spənta-*, its meaning therefore includes a goodness that is generous, bountiful, loving, reasoning, beneficial (which is the meaning of *spənta*).³

And *vohu-* 'good' is also used to describe the true/right (correct) order of existence (*aša-*), which is a beneficial (*spənta-*) order, as we already have seen.⁴ Therefore the qualities inherent in the true/right (correct) order of existence inform our understanding of the meaning of *vohu-* 'good'. In the Gathas, these qualities include knowledge (factual truths) as well as concepts (all that is right) such as honesty, generosity, lovingkindness, friendship, caring, compassion, justice, being constructive, and all the other concepts included within the meaning of the true/right (correct) order in the existence of mind.⁵ So we see that in the Gathas, intrinsic goodness (*vohu-*) means that which is beneficial, true/right (correct).

When Zarathushtra speaks of 'good thinking' (*vohu-* *manah-*), he intends a mind or thinking that comprehends, (and is in accord with), the true/right (correct) order in the existences of matter and mind ("Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire ... good thinking..." Y28:5 Insler 1975).

Now, we have already seen that the comparative and superlative degrees of *vohu-* are: *vahyah-* 'more good', (sometimes unfortunately translated as 'better'), and *vahišta-* 'most good' (sometimes unfortunately translated as 'best'). Just as with 'good', in English 'better' and 'best' are used in many ways that are unrelated to the concept of intrinsic goodness (*this restaurant is better than that one; this orchestra is the best*). So 'better' and 'best' do not accurately express the meanings of *vahyah-* and *vahišta-*. When so translated in a given quotation from the Gathas, we need to remember that these words are not 'better' and 'best' in any sense other than as the quality of intrinsic 'goodness'.

vohu- is an adjective.⁶ So when used with *manah-*, it describes the quality of mind/thinking/thought. But in Old Avestan (Old Av. ~ the language in which the Gathas are composed), an adjective can also be used as a noun, indicating a thing (person, concept, conduct) that has the qualities of the adjective. And in some instances, the context of a given verse seems to fit translating *vohu-* as a noun, which is what Insler 1975 sometimes does. For example, in the following verses, he translates *vohu-*, *vahyah-*, and *vahišta-* as nouns, although in all but the last example, its meaning could be an adj.:

"...when the distribution in the good [*vohu-*]⁷ shall occur to both factions ..." Y31:19 Insler 1975; here 'good' means the distribution in goodness (a concept, noun); or more literally as an adj. the distribution in '(what is) good'.

"...to discern that very good thing [*vahyah-*]..." Y31:5 Insler 1975. There is no word 'thing' in the Avestan text. The adj. *vahyah-* is used here as a noun, describing a thing that is good to a heightened degree.⁸

"Thee, Best One [*θwā vahištā*] ... do I lovingly entreat..." Y28:8 Insler 1975. There is no word 'One' in the Avestan text. So literally 'Most-Good-(One) ...'. The adj. *vahištā* (voc. sg.) is used here as a noun indicating that Wisdom (*mazdā*) personifies the quality of intrinsic goodness in the superlative degree 'most-good'.⁹

manah-

Linguists are in minor disagreement over *manah-*, translating it variously as 'mind', 'thinking', and 'thought'. Insler has reconciled these differences. In an insightful commentary, he expresses the opinion that in the Old Avestan language, the same word often is used in three ways ~ for the faculty, for its process, and for its object ~ and *manah-* is one of these words.¹⁰ Thus: *manah-* means 'mind' when used as faculty; 'thinking' when used as its process; and 'thought' when used as its object. This insight helps to reconcile the various translations of *manah-* as 'mind', 'thinking', and 'thought'.

Here are some examples of *manah-* used in these three ways.

manah- as faculty 'mind':

"... Reflect with a clear mind [*manah-*]¹¹ ~ man by man for himself ~ ..." Y30:2;

manah- as process, 'thinking':

"Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire ... good thinking [*manah-*]¹² ..." Y28:5;

And *manah-* as object, 'thought':

"... In thought [*manah-*]¹³ and in word, in action, they are two..." Y30:3.

So linguists are not in material dispute. They all agree that *manah-* pertains to the mind – but may disagree as to whether it should be translated, in a given instance, as 'mind' (faculty), 'thinking' (process), or 'thought' (object).

Insler 1975 most often translates *vohu- manah-* as 'good thinking' the process ~ a choice with which I agree, because it is this dynamic, evolving, aspect of *manah-* as process that is a key element of Zarathushtra's teachings. So unless the context of a given verse requires otherwise, I think 'good thinking' for *vohu-manah-*, most closely approximates Zarathushtra's thought.

So much for the linguistics and the general meaning of *vohu- manah-*. Let us consider next, the role played by good thinking in Zarathushtra's thought, and then take another look at the meaning of *manah-*, based on how Zarathushtra uses that word in the Gathas ~ which may surprise you.

Good thinking, (like truth *aša-*), appears in the Gathas as an attribute / activity of Wisdom (*mazdā-*), as well as of man. It also appears as a concept, and in fewer instances, as an entity:

As an attribute of Wisdom.

It probably is not significant, but (in the interests of accuracy), I have to say that (as with *ārmaiti-*), I have found no verse in which *vohu- manah-* is specifically described as an attribute of Wisdom. However, there are verses in which this is implied.¹⁴ In addition, there are many verses in which 'good thinking' is an activity

of Wisdom, and therefore would have to be one of His attributes. And of course, the name ~ *mazdā-* ~ means personified Wisdom,¹⁵ which would include personifying the comprehension of the true (correct, good) order of existence, which is 'good thinking' (*vohu- manah-*). So it would be accurate to say that *vohu- manah-* ('good mind', 'good thinking', 'good thought') is an attribute of Wisdom (*mazdā-*).¹⁶

As an activity of Wisdom

Here are a few examples:

The Divine instructs through good thinking, "... instruct through good thinking (the course) of my direction ..." Y50:6;

Divine revelation is not a factual revelation, but a means of discovery ~ good thinking, "...Be for us, Wise Lord, the revealer of good thinking." Y31:17;

The Divine helps and protects through good thinking, "What help by good thinking hast Thou for me...?" Y49:12; "...have ye the power, Wise One ... to protect your needy dependent ~ as I indeed am ~ with truth and good thinking?..." Y34:5;¹⁷

The Divine promotes what is most healing for our world through good thinking, "...Through good thinking, the Creator of existence shall promote the true realization of what is most healing according to our wish." Y50:11 Insler 1975 ~ bear in mind, Zarathushtra's notion of 'Creator' is not the conventional notion;¹⁸

The Divine prospers existence with good thinking, "...the Wise Lord... prospered his creatures with good thinking..." Y46:13;

The Divine operates the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow) through thinking that is good "...May He dispense through His good thinking [*vohu- manah-*] (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43:16;). This is consistent with the conclusion that the law of consequences is not for vengeance or punishment, but for the good purpose of enlarging understanding, changing mixed (good/bad) preferences to wholly good ones.¹⁹

As an activity of man

There are many verses in which this divine quality, *vohu- manah-* is an activity of man. (In Avestan as in English, 'man' is used generically to include all genders).

Man has an obligation to think for himself, "...Reflect with a clear mind [*manah-*] ~ man by man for himself..." Y30:2.

Man serves the Divine with good thinking, "I who shall serve ... you with good thinking..." Y28:2;²⁰ we serve the Divine by comprehending the true order (*aša-*) in the existences of matter and mind.

Man pleases the Divine ~ not with blind obedience, but with good thinking ~ by comprehending truth ~ "I shall try to gratify Him for us with good thinking..." Y45:9.

Man worships the Divine with most good thinking, "...I shall always worship ...²¹ you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-* '(the) most-good thinking'] ..." Y50:4.

Interestingly, man protects the Divine through good thinking, "...Wise One, receive ... protection through (our) good thinking." Y33:12. That is worth thinking about for a moment.²²

We nourish (nurture) each other with good thinking, "...all of us creatures under Thy rule whom one has nourished with good thinking..." Y34:3.

Man increases the Wisdom's rule with good thinking, "...Such is the rule for the Wise One [*mazdā-*] that one shall increase it for Him through good thinking." Y31:6.

A wise (human) ruler's rule is the path of good thinking, "Through his rulership (following) along the paths of good thinking, Kavi Vishtaspa reached this understanding..." Y51:16).²³ 'Kavi' means 'prince' or 'king' and Vishtaspa was the name of the king who befriended and supported Zarathushtra.

Man's allegiance is given ~ not to a religious authority, but to good thinking. Zarathushtra says: '...Teach life healing judgment, then to it, let listening come through good thinking...' Y44:16 my translation.²⁴ The GAv. word *səraoša-* means 'listening to and implementing',²⁵ which should be done after reflecting with a light-filled mind (Y30:2).

We uplift ourselves, not by fame or wealth, but with good thinking, "...I who shall thoroughly bear in mind to uplift myself with good thinking ..." Y28:4.²⁶

Good thinking is the instrument through which we search for, and understand, the true/right (correct), good order of existence (*aša-*) ~ however incrementally ~ ("Truth [*aša-*], shall I see thee as I continue to acquire ... good thinking..." Y28:5), a rhetorical question which contains its own answer.

Indeed, man is capable (now and then) of even the superlative most good thinking (*vahišta- manah-*), which is how he conquers untruth, all that is false, wrong (incorrect) ~ that which is the opposite of the true/right (correct) good order of existence,²⁷ "... (And) through the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*] I shall seek for myself their rule of strength, through whose growth we might conquer deceit [*druj-*]." Y31:4; the words 'their rule of strength' in this verse refers to the rule of Wisdom, His divine attributes and perhaps those who have attained them.²⁸

And thinking that is most-good (*vahišta-*) ~ which is wisdom ~ is man's ultimate attainment, "...at the end, ... the best thinking [*vahišta- manah-* (the) most-good thinking] for the truthful person [*ašāunē*]." Y30:4, an attainment that is also called the "House of Good Thinking" Y32:15 ~ the state of being that houses good thinking ~ one of Zarathushtra's terms for paradise.³⁰ A state of being that Wisdom (the Divine) personifies.

In short, good thinking is the key to understanding the Divine, and solving the problems that beset us as individuals and as societies, problems caused by ignorance, falsehood, wrongdoing, oppression, greed, violence, fury, tyranny, injustice, et cetera ~ activities that are not in accord with the true/right (correct), good order of existence.³¹

Good thinking *vohu- manah-*, is the incremental, and ultimately the complete, comprehension of the true (correct) order of existence, "Give, o truth [*aša-*], this reward, namely, the attainments of good thinking..." Y28:7, Insler 1975. And the complete comprehension of this true order of existence is Wisdom personified (*mazdā-*), the name by which Zarathushtra most often calls his conception of the Divine.

So we have here, a teaching that values the good mind and its workings, as an attribute of the Divine, and also as the path to the Divine ~ the way for man to comprehend truth in all aspects of our existence ~ factual truths (not telling lies, knowledge, the laws that order our universe), as well as the abstract truths of mind/heart/spirit (all that is true, good, and right).

It is interesting, (is it not?) that there are so very many instances of this Divine attribute ~ good thinking in man (even though imperfectly).³² It demonstrates (as with truth *aša-*) that in Zarathushtra's thought, man is not born evil, corrupt, incapable of redeeming himself. Instead, man is a mix of divine qualities, and their opposites.

As a concept.

In many verses, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) and the most-good thinking (*vahišta- manah-*) are concepts.

For example: "... paths of good thinking..." Y34:12; Y51:16; "... the road of good thinking..." Y34:13.

"... let that salvation of yours be granted to us: truth allied with good thinking! ..." Y51:20;

"... they have tried to deflect the truthful from the very best thinking (*vahišta- manah-*)." Y32:11.

And there are many, many more which I have footnoted for your convenience.³³

As an entity.

In fewer verses, good thinking is referred to as an entity (sometimes ambiguously)

"... Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking,..." Y29:7;

"Come hither to me, ye best ones ... Thou, Wise One, together with truth and good thinking ..." Y33:7;

"... Cut away cruelty, ye who wish to attract the attention of good thinking..." Y48:7;

"... delight in the counsel of good thinking..." Y44:13. Additional examples are footnoted here.³⁴

Now, if Zarathushtra uses good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) as an attribute / activity of both Wisdom and man, and also as a concept, then (as with truth *aša-*) his references to good thinking as an entity, can only be allegorical, (as the context of such verses often make clear). So the perception that good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) is a real, living 'angel' entity ~ a separate, living being ~ who is Wisdom's helper and who rules over and protects the animal kingdom, as we see in some of the later texts, is not consistent with the way in which Zarathushtra uses *vohu- manah-* in the Gathas. However (as with truth *aša-*) good thinking *vohu- manah-* (the comprehension of truth), is indeed an object of reverence and worship/celebration, in the Gathas.³⁵ Good thinking (the comprehension of truth) would indeed be a benefit to other life forms (the animal kingdom with which it is metaphorically linked), and would help the Divine in bringing about the forward progress of existence, all of which fit the idea that good thinking is an allegory. But with the passage of time, and destructive wars in which much knowledge was lost, the allegory came to be taken literally ~ as a living being to be worshipped, a helper of Wisdom the Lord, instead of the form of a being which stood for an idea ~ good thinking, the comprehension of truth.

Let us now take another look at the meaning of *manah-* based on how Zarathushtra uses the term in the Gathas.

The meanings of manah- based on its contextual use.

Zarathushtra's understanding of 'mind', 'thinking', and 'thought', is not as limited as the meanings that we have traditionally and culturally, ascribed to these words in English and possibly other modern languages.

To some extent, we all are prisoners of the languages and cultures in which we have been raised. They tend to condition our thinking, often unconsciously. Zarathushtra's language and culture were very different from ours today. It is true that Avestan is in the Indo-European family of languages. But even within this group of languages, meanings change over time, as we have seen with the meaning of *spənta-*, and *mainyu-* and their cognates in other Indo-European languages,³⁶ to name but two examples out of many. So (as I often say) to understand Zarathushtra's thought, we need to remove the spectacles of our linguistic and cultural conditioning and see his thought with fresh eyes.

Zarathushtra speaks of the existences of 'matter' and 'mind' (Y28:2, Y43:3) ~ the physical and abstract existences. What does he mean by the existence of 'mind' (*manah*-)?

Historically, in the traditions and cultures that have used the English language, 'mind' has been associated with intellectual functions ~ intelligence, the ability to reason, to analyze, to discern, to judge what is accurate or inaccurate, et cetera. Applying this mind-set to Zarathushtra's thought, there are those who contend that Zarathushtra valued 'intellect' above emotions, creativity, insight and other so-called 'non-intellectual' functions ~ as though such things are somehow less desirable, or less worthy. Saddest of all is the inaccurate conclusion that in Zarathushtra's thought, intellect is valued above such emotions as love, friendship, compassion, generosity et cetera. Such contentions and conclusions are not consistent with Zarathushtra's thought, in which these qualities (that are a part of the truths of mind/heart/spirit) play a central role.³⁷ Nor are they consistent with the ways in which Zarathushtra uses 'mind', 'thinking' and 'thought' in the Gathas.

Historically, the traditions and cultures that use the English language have associated the 'heart' with emotions, creativity, intuition, feelings, et cetera. But we now know through the discoveries of science, that although the heart is a wonderful and indispensable organ, it is nothing more than a pumping machine, responsible for pumping our blood through our bodies. The heart (as an organ) has nothing to do with emotions. Even when the heart pounds with love or fear, we know that it's muscles are merely responding to chemicals and signals from the brain which accelerate the heart's pumping action.

It is the brain that governs such functions as logic, analysis, reasoning, judgment, what is accurate or inaccurate, et cetera (intellectual functions). And it is also the brain that governs such functions as emotions, creativity, music, and other functions that our cultures today do not regard as functions of the 'mind'.

Zarathushtra may not have known that this one organ, the brain, controls or affects such different functions. He may not even have been aware of the functions of the brain as an organ. But the evidence of the Gathas establishes, that what Zarathushtra calls 'the existence of mind' is not limited to intellectual functions alone. 'The existence of mind' also includes such functions as goodness, lovingkindness, friendship, generosity, compassion, caring, nurture, creativity, insight, and other non-intellectual functions, (and their opposites) as well.

The distinction he makes is not between intellectual and non-intellectual functions, but between the good and wrongful use of all of the many functions that make up our conscious (abstract) capabilities ~ our minds/thinking/thoughts. Let us consider the evidence:

Let us start with the opposite of 'good thinking'. To Zarathushtra, 'bad thinking' is ignorance, false understanding, wrong judgment (intellectual functions) as well as fury/rage, tyranny, cruelty et cetera (emotional functions). For example in Y30:6, an expression of the "worst thought" is "fury" which is an emotion, "...Since they chose the worst thought, they then rushed into fury, with which they have afflicted the world and mankind." Y30:6, Insler 1975.³⁸

In the same way, Zarathushtra tells us that in making our choices, we should reflect with a clear mind, "...Reflect with a clear mind ~ man by man for himself ~ upon the two choices of decision..." Y30:2, Insler 1975.

Yet he tell us that the correct choice between two ways of being ~ the choice that is made with this "...reflect[ing] ... clear mind" ~ is made by the beneficent, "... and between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen..." Y30:3. Beneficence means "... active goodness, kindness, charity; bounty springing from

purity and goodness",³⁹ indicating that these emotions ~ goodness, kindness, generosity, the charity that is lovingkindness ~ all non-intellectual functions ~ are involved in the functions of the 'clear mind' in making the right choices between two ways of being in thought, word and action.

We have already seen that good thinking *vohu- manah-* means understanding the true order of existence *aša-*, even though such understanding is incremental. And we know that the true order in the existence of mind, *aša-*, includes such things as friendship, compassion, generosity, solicitude, lovingkindness, goodness, and other such qualities,⁴⁰ which are not intellectual functions. So if good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) means understanding the true order of existence (*aša-*), then good thinking, of necessity, would have to include within its meaning an understanding of such non-intellectual functions. This conclusion is corroborated by ample evidence. Here are a few examples:

First example: According to Zarathushtra, the world is healed by good thinking *vohu- manah-* "...Through good thinking the Creator of existence shall promote the true realization of what is most healing according to our wish." Y50:11. Intellectual functions (reason, logic, knowledge, good judgment et cetera) are indeed valuable and indispensable qualities for healing our world. But we cannot heal all the pain and grief in our world with intellectual functions, alone. It also takes non-intellectual functions ~ solicitude (caring, lovingkindness), insight, generosity, goodness, friendship, compassion, being fair, all that is good and right, ~ all of which are a part of the meaning of the true (correct) order in the existence of mind (*aša-*), and therefore are a part of the meaning of its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu- manah-*), and its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action, (*spənta- ārmaiti-*).⁴¹ This conclusion is corroborated in Yasna 29, where the sufferings of the allegorical cow require nurture, care, which is provided through 'good thinking'.⁴² Nurturing, caring, are activities which require more than intellectual functions alone. They also require emotions, insight, empathy, creativity.

Second example: among Zarathushtra's terms for paradise are 'the most-good thinking [*vahišta- manah-*]' Y30:4 (once), 'the house of good thinking' Y32:15 (once), and 'the house of song' Y45:8, Y50:4, Y51:15 (three times).⁴³ 'House' often is used in the Gathas as a metaphor for a state of being that houses certain qualities. And 'the most-good thinking', 'the house of good thinking', and 'the house of song' all describe one state of being that is Zarathushtra's notion of paradise.⁴⁴

What quality of that state of being does "the House of Song" express? It is readily apparent that "song" involves creativity. It expresses and evokes emotions. Although music can evoke a range of emotions, it would be reasonable to conclude that in using the term "house of song" for paradise, Zarathushtra is describing a state of being that houses the kind of high generated by beautiful music ~ a sublime joy.

Now, there can be no dispute that in the Gathas, 'the most-good thinking', 'the house of good thinking', and 'the house of song' are not three different 'heavens'. These three terms describe Zarathushtra's notion of one paradise ~ one state of being which is the creative, joyful, enlightened existence that is wisdom, one state of being that comprehends and personifies the true good order in the existence of mind, and therefore includes all of the good qualities that are included in that beneficial order (and as such, one state of being that is Divine).

To summarize: based on how Zarathushtra uses the term *vohu- manah-* ('good mind, good thinking, good thought'), its meaning integrates all the intrinsically good functions of our conscious (awake) capabilities,⁴⁵ ~ good intellectual functions, as well as good non-intellectual functions (such as emotions, creativity, intuition et cetera) ~ to the extent that a life form is capable of such functions ~ in man, in the Divine and in other life forms.⁴⁶

It is not without interest that in composing the Gathas ~ surely an expression of good thinking (*vohu-manah-*) ~ Zarathushtra himself unites such intellectual and non-intellectual functions. On the one hand, in content, the Gathas contain reasoning, and intellectual ideas of a high order (among other things). On the other hand, they are composed in poetry, as songs, (an exercise in creativity), which evoke emotions, express feelings. Indeed, he describes his teachings as joyful, "... which things are to be looked upon in joy throughout your days." Y30:1. Joy, happiness, are brought about by being in sync with the true (correct), good order of existence (*aša-*), its comprehension, good thinking (*vohu- manah-* an enlightened existence), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- ārmaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu-x šaθra-*).⁴⁷

There is only one verse, Y31:12, in which Zarathushtra mentions 'heart' and 'mind' separately, but in tandem, which might lead our culturally conditioned minds to jump to the conclusion that to Zarathushtra the 'heart' represents emotions and the 'mind' represents intellect. "Therefore, one raises his voice in accord with both his heart and his mind [*zərādācā manajhācā*], be he false-speaking or true-speaking, be he knowing or unknowing ..." Y31:12. Insler 1975. Humbach/Faiss 2010, Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index, Taraporewala 1951, Moulton 1912, Bartholomae and others, also translate *zərādācā* as 'with heart and'. I do not contend that 'heart' is an incorrect translation. Taraporewala and Humbach both recognize a Vedic cognate in translating the word as 'heart'.⁴⁸ But none of these scholars (so far as I am aware) discusses any cultural significance attached to the meaning of 'heart' in ancient Indo-Iranian or its ancestral Indo-European, cultures.

The language of ancient Egypt is not in the Indo-European family of languages,⁴⁹ but just to illustrate an ancient cultural perception of 'heart' that is different from our perceptions today in English, in ancient Egypt the heart was thought to be the seat of intelligence and emotions.⁵⁰ What was the 'heart' the seat of in Zarathushtra's culture? This is difficult to determine, because we do not know his date for certain ~ estimates of which span more than a millennium.⁵¹ We should also be cautious in ascribing, automatically, whatever usage(s) for 'heart' may have existed in the Vedic literature. More often than not, the meaning of a Vedic word is a good guide, but there are a few material differences between Vedic and Gathic Avestan meanings.

Assuming that *heart* is a correct translation of the stem *zərād-*, in trying to figure out what meaning 'heart' may have had in Zarathushtra's culture, let us again look at the way it is used in the only verse in the Gathas in which this word appears. In Y31:12 the conclusion that 'heart' represents emotions and 'mind' represents intellect, is contradicted by the very sentence in which 'heart' and 'mind' appear together. Here it is again: "Therefore, one raises his voice in accord with both his heart and his mind [*zərādācā manajhācā*], be he false-speaking or true-speaking, be he knowing or unknowing ..." Y31:12.

Here, 'heart' and 'mind' both refer to a person who speaks falsely and a person who speaks truly, a person who is knowing, as well as one who is unknowing (ignorant). Now, accuracy or inaccuracy, and knowledge or ignorance generally are associated with the intellect, not emotions. So if 'heart' and 'mind' are both used with reference to these intellectual functions ~ knowledge and ignorance, accuracy and inaccuracy ~ then Zarathushtra could not have associated 'heart' with emotions alone. In this verse, both 'heart' and 'mind' can generate true or false speech, and can be knowing or ignorant therefore 'heart' must have represented some faculty or capability in Zarathushtra's thought, that could be accurate or inaccurate, knowing or ignorant (none of which are emotions alone). So the way 'heart' is used in this verse itself contradicts the conclusion that to Zarathushtra the heart represents emotions alone, and the mind represents intellect alone. Unfortunately, although we can say (based on the evidence of Y31:12), that 'heart' could not be the

seat of emotions alone in Zarathushtra's culture, we do not have enough evidence to conclude, with any degree of assurance, what 'heart' did represent in Zarathushtra's thought and culture.

But all of the foregoing evidence demonstrates that in Zarathushtra's thought, the meaning of 'good thinking' (*vohu- manah-*) includes good intellectual functions as well as good emotions, good creativity, good insight, et cetera, a conclusion that is corroborated by later Avestan texts,⁵² and is (in part) consistent with Taraporewala's opinion that *vohu-* is a goodness that includes love (although *vohu-* does not mean 'love' alone).

Under the evidence, the meaning of *vohu- manah-* includes the full spectrum of *all* the intrinsically good, consciousness qualities ~ intellectual and non-intellectual.

You well may ask: In light of the fact that the brain is a physical thing which generates the intellectual and non-intellectual functions that are included within the meaning of *vohu- manah-*, does *vohu- manah-* exist outside of the human brain? Is *vohu- manah-* limited to the physical or is it also abstract? An excellent question, and one that I have puzzled over for a long time. I cannot pretend that I have a certain answer. But let me suggest a possible one, based on the evidence of the Gathas.

There is no dispute that the brain is mortal. But we know from the Gathas that both *vohu- manah-* and *amərətāt* (which means non-deathness), are attributes that Wisdom presently has, and that man is capable of attaining. This means that Wisdom (presently) and man (potentially) has an existence that is not bound by mortality.⁵³ So if a good mind *vohu- manah-* is an attribute of a life force that is not bound by mortality, then to Zarathushtra, *vohu- manah-* would have to have an existence independent of the (mortal) human brain.⁵⁴

And I speculate (since Zarathushtra has not specifically addressed this question) that perhaps the brain is like a lens, one of the physical media through which each person's life force (soul) experiences and interacts with physical reality (as we know it). I am inclined to think that each life force enters this world with a material shell (body) which is like a set of tools⁵⁵ with which to enable and address the experiences which the person needs, in order to evolve or grow spiritually. The fact that one person has a specific tool (like intelligence) does not make him superior or more worthwhile than a person who has a different set of tools (like mental retardation, or schizophrenia). These tools have nothing to do with the person's intrinsic worth or value. They simply enable experience-based growth. Even what we do with the tools is just a process. If we use these tools to make 'wrong' or 'bad' choices, we reap what we sow, as part of an educational process that (with mutual, loving help) eventually increases understanding and promotes spiritual growth. If we use these tools to make good choices, (and equally important, if we overcome the shortcomings of these tools to make good choices) we reap what we sow, the good we do comes back to us, which reinforces our good preferences, which also increases understanding, and promotes spiritual growth. This is why, in discussing the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow), Zarathushtra tells us that it distributes 'the good' for both types ~ for conduct that is true/right, and for conduct that is false/wrong.⁵⁶ So in my view, the brain is simply a temporary tool, for the use of a life force to enable the experiences required for a segment of spiritual growth (including overcoming some of its shortcomings).

Returning to Zarathushtra's understanding of good thinking *vohu- manah-*, his thought enjoys many similarities with other religions. And also some differences.⁵⁷ It is good to celebrate the similarities as we do in inter-faith activities (which increases our understanding of each other). And it also is important to be aware of the differences, not for the purpose of condemning what is different in other belief systems, but in order to understand Zarathushtra's thought system (and decide if it is meaningful to our own lives).

Those religions which urge us to set aside the 'mind' and go with the 'heart' are quite different from Zarathushtra's thought. He does not condemn the intellect. Indeed, he considers good intellectual functions as Divine qualities, and the acquisition of knowledge, as an integral part of the path to the Divine.⁵⁸ This is corroborated by a later text in YAv. which Mills identifies as Miscellaneous Fragment III, which states:

"All good thoughts, and all good words, and all good deeds are thought, spoken, and done with intelligence, and all evil thoughts, and words, and deeds are thought, and spoken, and done with folly."
Mills' translation.⁵⁹

I find this quotation to be somewhat limited in its understanding, but at least it corroborates that the intellect is not shunned in Zarathushtra's thought. Nor does Zarathushtra condemn emotions, creativity, insight, et cetera. Indeed, he considers the good aspects of these functions as integral parts of the nature of the Divine, and the path to the Divine.⁶⁰

In his vision, a 'good mind', 'good thinking', 'good thought' integrates the full spectrum of conscious capabilities committed to goodness (to the true good order in the existences of matter and mind) ~ such things as reason, logic, knowledge, accuracy, good judgment, and other good intellectual functions, as well as such things as lovingkindness, friendship, generosity, compassion, insight, creativity, music, poetry, and other good non-intellectual functions ~ all of which are qualities of the true order of existence and its comprehension ~ a good mind, good thinking, good thought.⁶¹

Those religions which see 'mind' and 'spirituality' as antithetical, are also quite different from Zarathushtra's thought. The "[best thinking](#)" and the "[house of good thinking](#)" are two of the descriptions he uses for the ultimate spiritual state of being which is paradise.⁶² And he calls his notion of the ultimate spiritual Being *mazdā-* which means personified Wisdom. Indeed, in the very structure of his language, 'mind' and 'spirituality' ~ far from being antithetical ~ share a common genesis.⁶³ And in his songs, they are equated.

Finally, there are those who question whether other life forms have 'minds' (or indeed souls!). They speculate (without a shred of scientific evidence) that other life forms act only by instinct, but cannot engage in rational thought (assuming in the process, that human thought is always rational). And they conclude that therefore other life forms cannot be said to have man's crowning glory ~ a 'mind'. This conclusion bears some resemblance to the once widely held belief that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the sun revolved around the earth. A moment's reflection makes it clear how untenable this conclusion is ~ both as an expression of logic (or illogic) and as an expression of Zarathushtra's thought.

Today, scientific studies with dolphins, whales, gorillas, birds, and other life forms demonstrate that such life forms do indeed communicate, engage in rational thought, and have emotions. "Ah" (the 'crowning glory' group might argue) "but surely not at the same abstract level of brilliance and rationality as human thought".

Well, the human ability to think varies widely ~ from a person who is severely mentally retarded, to a person who might be a genius. Yet no one would contend (I hope) that a person who is mentally retarded is not 'human', or does not have a 'soul'.

And when one considers the vastness of the universe, and indeed the possibility of multiple universes ~ about which we know so little ~ one can only conclude that the understanding of even the greatest human genius must fall sadly short of the understanding of Wisdom personified (*mazdā-*), which by definition (in Zarathushtra's thought) comprehends the entirety of the true/right (correct) good order in the existences

of matter (factual truths) as well as mind (abstract truths). So having knowledge and the ability to reason, is a relative thing. If we think of this capability as a continuum, with an amoeba at one end and Wisdom personified at the other end, we humans are likely closer to the amoeba than to Wisdom personified. And we have no objective (let alone conclusive) evidence as to where on this continuum, other life forms may fit in.

Did Zarathushtra consider man as the only life form made in the image of the Divine? Did he see 'man' as somehow elevated above other life forms? Separate and apart from them? The only life form that shares characteristics of the Divine? I don't think he did.⁶⁴

It is true that he does not specifically address these questions. And it is true that in Zarathushtra's thought, man presently has within him (although less than completely) the first 5 characteristics of the Divine ~ truth, its comprehension (good thinking *vohu- manah-*), its beneficial-sacred embodiment in thought, word and action (*spənta- ārmaiti-*), its good governance (*vohu- xšaθra-*) comprising the beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) ~ and is capable of attaining all of them completely (*haurvatāt-*), at which time his existence will no longer be bound by mortality (*amərətāt-* 'non-deathness'), comprising the attainment of a wholly beneficial way of being (*spənta- mainyu-*) which is the essence of the sacred, the Divine.

But it is not without interest that Zarathushtra has created a system of metaphors wherein he links these divine qualities (*amesha spenta*) to various material metaphors ~ all of which span a wide spectrum of existence ~ mortals, mankind, fire, the cow and what comes from it (butter and milk), plants, waters, metals, the earth itself.⁶⁵ And there is some evidence in the Gathas (and even more in the later texts) from which we may reasonably infer that Zarathushtra sees the Divine as immanent in all things.⁶⁶

In conclusion: Zarathushtra sees intellect, reason, logic, judgment, emotions, insight, creativity, music, poetry, spirituality, all as integral parts of existence ~ the existence of mind ~ and he tells us to commit all such capabilities to intrinsic goodness, to use mind/thinking/thought to search for, and understand, the true order of existence *aša-*, the factual truths that order our universe as well as the abstract truths of mind/heart/spirit ~ all that is true, good, right.

I do not know of any one English word that accurately captures all of the ways in which Zarathushtra uses *manah-*. The word 'consciousness' is too vague, and means too many different things to different people. It therefore is not an adequate English equivalent to convey Zarathushtra's intended meaning. The closest English equivalents are probably 'mind', 'thinking', 'thought'. But when we read these words in quotations from the Gathas, it is so very important to remember that in Zarathushtra's view, they include, not just the intellect, but the full spectrum of all of our abstract, capabilities ~ mental, emotional, creative, spiritual ~ the existence of mind.

* * * * *

¹ All Avestan stems are conjectured. Beekes 1988 (p. 126) and Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index conjecture that the stem is *vahu-*, rather than *vohu-*. Professor Elizabeth Tucker has given me the following linguistic information which throws some light on this question ~ words in square brackets are my added explanations. (And 'phonology' simply means the study of the formation of sounds in the words of a given language).

Professor Tucker explains that:

~ *vahu-* is the inherited Old Iranian form of the stem, which some scholars choose to give as the basic stem for Avestan, because all the other stems are phonologically conditioned variants;

~ in inflected forms, where the vowel *u-* immediately follows **vah-*, the *a* becomes an *o*. For example:

vohu is the nominative/accusative. sg. ntr. form of the stem *vahu-*;

vohū is the instrumental. sg. form of the stem (thus *vahu-* *manah-* becomes *vohū manañhā* in instr. sg. [in English, the instr. sg. *vohū manañhā* translates as 'by/with/through good thinking'];

~ but in inflected forms where a different vowel immediately follows **vah-*, the *a* remains unchanged, but a nasal *ŋ* developed before the *h*, for example in the dative sg. *van̄have*, [in English 'to/for good ___'], or in the locative sg. *van̄hāu*, [in English 'in/on/under/at good ___'].

These rules apply to inflected forms, not to stems. So it would probably be linguistically more accurate to show the stem as *vahu-*.

Why have I not done so?

Well, my whole intention in showing Av. words in stem form in an English quotation ~ at least in *Part One: The Basics* ~ is based on the idea that stems of well known words (*aša-* *manah-* *ārmaiti-* *xšaθra-* etc.) are more easily recognized by the reader than their inflected forms. Zoroastrians through their prayers (in all of which the inflected forms are used, not the stem) are more familiar with *vohū* ~ the inflected form for 6 declensions ~ than they would be with *vahu-*. And I am concerned that if I show the stem as *vahu-*, a reader may wonder if he has been saying this word incorrectly in his prayers, or if I have shown the (stem) word incorrectly in an English translation quotation. So I have opted to show the stem as *vohu-*, (with a mental apology to those who prize accuracy ~ as indeed I do).

Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index shows that *vohū* is the form for the following declensions (of the stem *vahu-*),

~ instr. sg. masc. and instr. sg. ntr. (2 declensions)

~ nom. sg. ntr. and acc. sg. ntr. (2 declensions)

~ nom. pl. ntr. and acc. pl. ntr. (2 declensions).

² In various Indo-European languages, there are parallel words that have the meaning 'good'. I am indebted to Professor Elizabeth Tucker for the following Indo-European words that are parallel or similar to Avestan *vohu-*. In the Rig Veda *vasu-* 'good'; Anatolian *wasu-* 'good'; and a form in a Homeric Greek phrase 'giver of good things' (*dōtēres e(w)aōn*). The reference she gives for this up to date Indo-European etymology, is M. Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* (Heidelberg, 1986 - 2001), vol. II, pp 533 - 34.

Taraporewala 1951 believes that *vohu-* derives from an ancient root *vah-* 'to love', and therefore means a goodness that is an all embracing love, thinking that Avestan *vah-* has the Skt. cognate *vas-*. p. (9). But there is disagreement amongst linguists about whether there is a GAv. stem or root *vah-* 'to love', or a Skt. root *vas-* 'love'.

Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index does not show a Av. stem *vah-* 'to love'.

The Beekes 1988 index does not show an Av. *vah-* 'to love'.

It is the contextual uses of good thinking (specific and implied through being the comprehension of truth *aša-*) which generates the conclusion that love is included in the meaning of good thinking in Zarathushtra's mind (and therefore, most probably in his culture). Detailed in *Part One: Love*.

³ The full meaning of *spənta-* is discussed in detail in *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

⁴ The evidence supporting these statements is discussed in *Part One: Truth, Asha,* and *A Friendly Universe*, and in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*.

⁵ See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

⁶ The comparative evidence from other Indo-European languages (Anatolian and Greek), points to an original Indo-European noun 'good thing', but the evidence within the Indo-Iranian branch of this family of languages shows that

vohu-/*vahu-* had come to be used as both an adj. and a noun. In the Rig Veda, *vasu-* 'good' is most often used as an adj. I am indebted to Professor Elizabeth Tucker for this information.

⁷ "...when the distribution in the good [*vaṇhāu*] shall occur..." Y31:19. The GAv. word *vaṇhāu* is the locative sg. case of the stem *vohu-* (Beekes 1988 p. 19; Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index); thus *vaṇhāu* means 'in-(the)-good', or more literally 'in-(what is)-good'.

⁸ "...to discern that very good thing [*vahyō*]..." Y31:5. In Avestan, The stem *vahyah-* is the comparative degree of *vohu-* / *vahu-* 'good', but in Avestan, the comparative adjectives with the suffix *-yah-*, and superlatives with the suffix *-išta-*, continue an Indo-European class in which such adjectives express a crescendo ~ originally indicated possession of the quality of the basic adj. to a heightened degree ~ rather than true comparative meaning. Hence Insler's translation 'that very good thing [*vahyō*]'. On the other hand, the Avestan adjs. with the suffixes *-tara-* and *-tama-* continue the Indo-European class which had a contrasting function, and was originally used in comparisons. The two classes of suffixes are not always clearly differentiated in meaning in the daughter languages, but traces of their old Indo-European function remain. I owe the foregoing information to Professor Elizabeth Tucker.

⁹ Here are a few other examples of the adjective *vohu-* in its positive, comparative and superlative degrees being used as a noun, see:

"...who shall enlighten his guest in the good [*vaṇhāu* loc. sg.] ..." Y33:2;

"Who has set his mind on the good [*vahyō*], Wise One, ..." Y48:4. Although here Insler translates the word as "good", in the Av. text it appears as *vahyō* a case form of *vahyah-* 'more good' the comparative degree of *vohu-*. Thus more literally, 'who has set his mind on (what is) more good...'. Or perhaps 'who has set his mind on (what is) very good...'. "The best [*vahištām*] shall be for him, the knowing man, ..." Y31:6. Literally, 'the most-good shall be for him, the knowing man...'. Here the adj. 'most-good' is used as a noun, and probably refers to the most-good existence *ahu-vahištā-*, which is one of the names for (what we call) paradise in the Gathas and later Avestan texts.

¹⁰ Other examples that Insler 1975 gives of Old Av. words used in those three ways are as follows (p. 118).

xšaθra- 'rulership, mastery' (faculty); 'rule, sovereignty' (process); and 'dominion, realm' (object).

cašman- 'eye' (faculty); 'in the light of their eyes; 'vision' (process, as in the process of seeing); and 'vision' (object, as in what is seen).

šyaoθana- 'action' (process, as in taking action), and '(an) action' (object, as in a single act). I am not sure what the faculty would be. Possibly 'actor'? But perhaps this usage of the stem word does not occur in the Gathas. Insler does not mention an English word for *šyaoθana-* as faculty.

¹¹ "... Reflect with a clear mind [*sūcā manañhā*] ..." Y30:2. Here, *manañhā* is the instr. sg. case form of *manah-* Beekes 1988 p. 117; Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index; thus 'with/through/by mind'. Its adjective *sūcā* is also instr. sg. (Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index) ~ an adjective has to be in the same case form as the noun it describes. Taraporewala 1951 tells us that the word *sūcā* is from *suc-*, 'to shine, to illumine' (p. 133). Beekes 1988 says it means 'light' (p. 132). Thus *sūcā manañhā* would literally be a 'with a mind (that is) light' i.e. with a mind that that sees clearly, with the light of truth. This verse is discussed in more detail in Part Six: Yasna 30:2.

¹² "Truth shall I see thee as I continue to acquire ... good thinking and [*manascā*] ..." Y28:5, Insler 1975. Here, *manascā* is acc. sg. of *manah-*, (Beekes 1988 p. 117), with 'and' (*cā*) tacked on. This key (and beautiful) verse is discussed in more detail, with other translations for comparative purposes, in Part Six: Yasna 28:5. For a discussion of what else (in addition to good thinking) enables us to comprehend the true (correct, good) order, see Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path, in which this verse, Y28:5 is discussed.

¹³ "... In thought and [*manahicā*] in word, in action they are two ..." Y30:3. Here, Insler construes *manahicā* as loc. of *manah-*, thus 'in-thought' with 'and' (*cā*) tacked on. Beekes 1988 agrees, showing it as loc. sg. (p. 117). Jackson (1892) also shows the *-ahi* inflection as loc. sg. for *ah-* stem words (like *manah-*, although using a different word as his example), §§ 339, 340, pp. 97 - 98. But not all linguists agree that *manahicā* is loc. sg. This issue is discussed in more detail in a footnote in *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*, and also in *Part Six: Yasna 30:3 and 4*.

¹⁴ Here are some examples which imply that good thinking is a characteristic of Wisdom.

In the enigmatical Y34:7 "Wise One, where are those sincere ones who, through their possession of good thinking, make even immoral decrees and painful legacies disappear? I know of none other than you ..." Y34:7. If Wisdom possesses good thinking, that certainly implies it is one of His attributes. Interestingly 'you' referring to Wisdom, is in the plural, see *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Singular and the Plural* (one of many bits of evidence which supports the idea that perfected fragments of existence form a union that is Zarathushtra's idea of the identity of the Divine. Detailed in *Part One: The Identity Of The Divine*.

Insler has translated the last sentence in Y43:16 as follows: "... May He dispense through His good thinking (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43:16. The word 'His' before 'good thinking' is not in the GAv. text. But it is certainly implied. If Mazda dispenses reward, then the means through which He dispenses it (through good thinking), would also have to be His.

"Since Thou, Wise One, ... didst fashion for us by Thy thinking..." Y31:11. Although the word 'good' does not appear before 'thinking', it certainly is implied, because if Wisdom is all good with no taint of evil in It, (a foundational teaching of Zarathushtra's), then Wisdom's thinking would of necessity have to be 'good' as well. (Detailed in *Part One: Truth, Asha, and The Nature of the Divine*).

¹⁵ See *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*.

¹⁶ It is important to be aware that the comprehension of the true (correct) order of existence ~ good thinking, *vohu-manah-* ~ alone is not personified Wisdom (*mazdā-*). The complete (*haurvatāt-*) attainment of beneficial-sacred embodied truth (*spənta- ārmaiti-*) and good rule (*vohu- xšaθra-*) also qualities of the Divine are necessary for the attainment of personified Wisdom. In Zarathushtra's thought, the attainment of wisdom is enabled through experiences; and wisdom is the sum total of the complete understanding generated by all our beneficial-sacred thoughts, words and actions which embody the true (correct, good) order of existence, and by ruling, possessing completely (and being ruled by) the attributes that make a being divine (the amesha spenta).

¹⁷ See also: "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 ... come to me and give support to me. Through good thinking, find a means of destruction of this." Y49:1.

¹⁸ See *Part Two: The Puzzle of 'Creation'*.

¹⁹ See *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*

²⁰ Similarly: "...Wise One, I shall serve ... you ... with truth... You, moreover, with the skillfulness of good thinking." Y50:8, Insler 1975.

²¹ Insler has translated this sentence as follows: "... I shall always worship all of you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*] ..." Y50:4. The words 'all of' are not in the GAv. text. Insler may have inserted 'all of' to indicate that 'you' is plural. See *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Singular and the Plural*.

²² Even today, human beings (impertinently) attribute the most horrific intentions and actions to the Divine ~ not the least of which are supposed divine punishments in the form of illness, hurricanes, earthquakes, damnation and the tortures of hell. It is only through independent good thinking that we can question whether a being who could engage in actions that are cruel, unjust, arbitrary, et cetera, could possibly be 'Divine' ~ worthy of worship. Thus it is through the use of 'good thinking' (the comprehension of the true good order of existence) that we can 'protect' the Divine from an incorrect understanding of Its nature ~ as Zarathushtra so courageously did in his own time period, when the deities of his society ~ whom he demoted from 'godhood' ~ were portrayed by their priests as being violent, angry, cruel, tyrannical, greedy-driven and other unpleasant things.

²³ Similarly, any human being (not only a king) increases Wisdom's good rule through good thinking in itself, and in each of our social units ~ the family, the community, the state, the nation "... Such is the rule for the Wise One that one shall increase it for Him through good thinking." Y31:6). We all in varying ways have 'power' over others ~ the power to hurt, harm, or help, nurture, benefit.

²⁴ Here, for comparative purposes is the Insler 1975 translation, "...As world-healer, promise us a judge, and let obedience [*səraoša-*] to him come through good thinking..." Y44:16. The GAv. word *səraoša-* actually means 'listening to and implementing (the Word of the Divine)' ~ which is different from the English word 'obedience'. And the notion of a 'judge' who exacts obedience from us is alien to Zarathushtra's thought. See *Part Six: Yasna 44:16*, for a discussion of this verse, with comparative translations; and see *Part Three: Ratu* for the meaning of *ratu-* as 'judgment' (a mental process that arrives at a correct, truth~possessing, conclusion) in the Gathas and the Ahuna Vairya.

²⁵ See *Part Three: Seraoša*.

²⁶ See also Y32:6, where beings uplift themselves with the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*] when they use fame to serve truth and Wisdom: "Shameful are the many sins by which one attains fame, if at all by such things. (But) Thou knowest, Lord, (only) when there is uplifting of beings with the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*]. Fame is to serve Thee and the truth, Wise One, under Thy rule." Y32:6.

²⁷ In a ft. in *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*, there is a detailed discussion of the meaning of *druj-* which is often translated as 'deceit' and 'lie', but which actually is used in the Gathas as the opposite of the true order of existence (*aša-*) ~ a much broader opposite than just deceit or the lie.

²⁸ See in *Part Two: The Lords and the Equations of* Y31:4, and *The Puzzle of the Sincere Ones and Others*.

²⁹ Regarding the phrase, "...the best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*] for the truthful person [*ašāunē*]." Y30:4, Insler 1975, there is no GAv. word *person* in this verse, and in Avestan there are no articles 'the' or 'a'. The word *ašāunē* means 'truthful'. It is an adj. (dat. sg. of the stem adj. *ašavan-*) which here is used as a noun. But what noun did Zarathushtra intend ~ a person? a concept? conduct? Many translators have chosen a person, and translate *ašāunē* as '(the) truthful (person)' or '(the) truthful (one)'. But (with respect) in the context of Y30:4, *ašāunē* as 'truthful (person)' does not fit. However, *ašāunē* as 'for (what is) truthful' (activity) fits well, which would give us, '...the best thinking for (what is) truthful [*ašāunē*]." Y30:4, or if limited to conduct, '...the best thinking for truthful (conduct) [*ašāunē*]." Y30:4.

Y30:4 is discussed in detail in *Part Six: Yasna 30:3 and 4*, so you can check it out and decide for yourself what Zarathushtra's intent may have been.

³⁰ See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise & Hell*.

³¹ See *Part Two: The Solution of* Y29.

³² Here are other examples of good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) as an activity of man:

"... the effort in harmony with good thinking..." Y31:22, Insler 1975;

"For Zarathushtra does give the breath of even his own person as a gift, in order that there be for the Wise One, predominance of good thinking ..."Y33:14, Insler 1975;

"And let a person listen to that with good thinking, Wise One ..." Y49:7, Insler 1975;

"... Which man of good thinking has shown himself to be lofty (enough) for the (great) task?" Y51:11, Insler 1975;

Referring to his daughter, "Do thou persevere, PourucistaTo thee shall He grant the firm foundation of good thinking and the alliance of truth and of wisdom..." Y53:3, Insler 1975;

I translate this verse slightly differently, 'Do thou persevere, Pouruchista ... To thee He will give the union of truth and of wisdom, the firm support of good thinking. Therefore, take counsel with thy reasoning. Bring to beneficent realization, the most beneficial (things) of embodied truth.' Y53:3, my translation. See *Part Three: Xratu* for more linguistic details.

Again referring to his daughter, "... the Wise Lord shall grant (to her) the sunlike gain of good thinking ..." Y53:4.

Additional examples of *vohu- manah-* in human beings, are found in the following Gatha verses. There doubtless are more: Y28:4, 8; Y31:5, 10; Y33:8, 9, 13; Y34:10, 14; Y43:1; Y45:6, 10; Y46:14, 18; Y47:2; Y48:3, 12; Y50:9, Y51:7, 15.

Here are some additional examples of *vahišta- manah-* the 'most-good thinking' in humans.

"...Those deceitful ones ... who have tried to deflect the truthful from the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*]." Y32:11 Insler 1975;

"... Through a [*spənta- mainyu-* 'beneficial way of being] and the best thinking [*vahišta- manah-* 'most-good thinking'], through both action and the word befitting truth, they shall grant completeness and [*amərətāt-* 'non-deathness'] to Him..." Y4:1, Insler 1975;

"... I shall always worship ... you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking [*vahišta- manah-*] and with their rule ..." Y50:4, Insler 1975.

³³ Here are other examples of good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) as a concept, all in the Insler 1975 translation:

"Give, o truth, this reward, namely the attainments of good thinking..." Y28:7.

"...those whom Thou dost know, Wise Lord, to be just and deserving ... with truth and good thinking, for them do Thou fulfill their longing with these attainments..." Y28:10;

"... the rule of truth and good thinking..." Y29:10, accord: Y30:7; Y30:10; Y34:11; Y50:3; Y51:18; "... the rule of good thinking..." Y30:8; Y43:6; Y44:6; Y46:10; Y51:21; "...the long-lived rule of good thinking..." Y33:5;

"... the pasture of truth and good thinking." Y33:3;

"... the wondrous powers of good thinking allied with truth..." Y43:2; Y46:2;

"...where sovereignty is in the power of good thinking..." Y46:16;

Additional examples of *vohu- manah-* as a concept appear in the following Gatha verses. There doubtless are more: Y30:10; Y32:4; 34:15; Y43:4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15; Y45:9; Y46:3, 9, 12; Y48:6, 11; Y49:5; Y50:7.

³⁴ For additional examples of good thinking (*vohu- manah-*) as an entity, see the following (some are ambiguous ~ concept? entity? ~ perhaps intentionally so): these are all from the Insler 1975 translation.

"The Wise One ... and [*ārmaiti*- 'embodied truth'], and truth ... and good thinking [*vohu- manah*-], and good rule ~ listen to me, ..." Y33:11;

"I who shall eulogize ... you [plural] as never before ~ thee, o truth, and good thinking and the Wise Lord..." Y28:3;

"Come Thou together with good thinking. Along with truth,..." Y28:6, (ambiguous);

"Where are truth and good thinking and where their rule?..." Y29:11;

"If ye [plural] are truly so ~ Thou, Wise One, along with truth and good thinking ~..." Y34:6;

"... I have taken counsel with good thinking..." Y44:8; "...he took counsel with good thinking, Wise One." Y47:3;

"...nor has he taken counsel with good thinking." Y49:2;

"...Let the solemn words of good thinking be truly told to me..." Y48:9.

³⁵ See *Part Two: The Puzzle of Worship*.

³⁶ See *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

³⁷ The central role played by the good emotions such as love, solicitude, compassion, friendship, (etc.) is shown throughout the chapters of this book; see for example in *Part One: Truth, Asha*; so also *The Nature of the Divine*; and *Love*, to name a few.

³⁸ In the same way, in the Gatha verses Y48:7 and Y48:11 fury, cruelty, and violence (all emotional states) are shown as the opposites of good thinking. "Let fury be stopped. Cut away cruelty, ye who wish to attract the attention of good thinking along with (that of) truth..." Y48:7; "...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, Insler 1975.

³⁹ Webster's International Dictionary (1956).

⁴⁰ See *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

⁴¹ See *Part One: Beneficial-Sacred Embodied Truth, Spenta Aramaiti*.

⁴² See in *Part Two: The Solution of Yasna 29*, and *The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network*.

In Yasna 29, Zarathushtra describes this nurture, this caring, as "...the promise [*mąθra*-] of butter and milk..." Y29:7. Although here, Insler translates *mąθra*- as "promise" he comments that it generally means the 'precept' or teaching of the Divine. Thus, more literally '*...the precept [mąθra-] of butter and milk...*'. Here Zarathushtra chooses to describe Wisdom's precept ~ His Word (which we grasp with good thinking) ~ with metaphors ('butter and milk') symbolizing nourishment, nurturing, caring ~ an idea that is echoed (without the metaphors butter and milk) in Y34:3 where he speaks of "...all of us creatures under Thy rule whom one has nourished with good thinking..." Y34:3, Insler 1975. So here again, we see the idea that 'good thinking' is nourishing, nurturing.

⁴³ Just as the opposite of paradise ~ Zarathushtra's notion of hell ~ is "the House of Worst Thinking..." Y32:13 and "the House of Deceit" Y46:11, Y49:11, Y51:14 ~ a state of being that houses what is wrongheaded, false, that does not understand clearly ~ a mind that is not in sync with the true/right (good) order of existence.

⁴⁴ See *Part Two: The Houses of Paradise and Hell*.

⁴⁵ In using "conscious capabilities" or "consciousness" I do not mean the narrow (and constantly changing) definitions arrived at by psychologists intent on the inconsequential (and dated) goal of proving man's 'mental' superiority over that of other life forms (as discussed in the interesting book by Frans De Waal, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals are?* (W. W. Norton & Co. 2016). By "conscious capabilities" or "consciousness" I mean the full spectrum of abstract capabilities ~ intellectual, emotional, creative, intuitive, and all other aspects of such abstract capabilities of which a life form is capable when awake (i.e. not sleeping or in a coma).

⁴⁶ *In man:* In the same way, referring to the 'House of Song', as a 'prize', Zarathushtra tells us that this 'prize' is earned through truth and its comprehension, good thinking ("...This prize has been promised to you during the times of salvation by reason of your good thinking, and truth." Y51:15, Insler 1975). If good thinking results in a state of being that is creative joy ~ the House of Song ~ then the meaning of good thinking would have to include within it, something of this creative joy. It is interesting that in the above quoted verse (Y51:15) the 'prize' is awarded 'during the times of salvation'. And how does Zarathushtra define salvation? As truth (*aša-* i.e. the true (good) order of existence), its comprehension, good thinking *vohu- manah-*, its embodiment (see *Part One: A Question of Salvation*). In light of this fact (in Zarathushtra's thought), it is significant indeed that Zarathushtra describes a person to whom 'salvation' is granted as 'beneficent' and 'loving' ("...Indeed, let salvation be granted to the beneficent man..." Y34:3; "...that the loving man who shall seek after these things is to be saved?..." Y44.2, Insler 1975). So once again, we see that the comprehension of the true order of existence ~ good thinking *vohu- manah-* ~ includes beneficence and love.

In Wisdom (mazdā-): In a parallel way, *vohu- manah-* 'good mind, good thinking, good thought, is a quality of Wisdom ~ a name which, in a religion without images of the Divine, identifies the nature of the Divine and therefore means 'Wisdom personified' (as Thieme has pointed out). And to Zarathushtra, the quality of being which is Wisdom personified, includes such non-intellectual functions as caring, generosity, lovingkindness, friendship, ("...Him, the One who offers solicitude..." Y45:7; "... Him who is beneficent ..." Y45:6; "...Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend [*fryō*] should grant to a friend [*fryāi*] ..." Y46:2. Some translators translates *fryō fryāi* as 'a beloved to a beloved' (see *Part One: The Nature of the Divine*). So we see that Zarathushtra's notion of Wisdom personified (*mazdā-*) ~ his most frequently used name for the Divine ~ comprises the workings of the whole mind, committed to goodness, which includes intellect, logic, reason, judgment, as well as solicitude, caring, lovingkindness, beneficence, friendship, joy, insight, creativity, and all the good emotions.

In other life forms: It is not without interest that among Zarathushtra's material metaphors for good thinking and truth are milk and butter which are derived from an allegorical animal ~ the cow. It is even more significant that he uses an animal ~ the cow ~ as an allegory for the beneficial-sacred (i.e. the divine) in mortal existence (its fashioner being the beneficial-sacred way of being, *spənta- mainyu-*). And indeed, each attribute of the Divine in Zarathushtra's poetry has a counterpart which is a material metaphor, although in the Gathas, these links are not rigid ~ one to one (as they are in later texts). In the Gathas, these links are kaleidoscopic, some expressed and some implied. See in *Part Two: The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network; Earth, Waters and Plants; Molten Metal; and A Question of Immanence*.

⁴⁷ See *Part One: Joy, Happiness, Prosperity*.

⁴⁸ The form of these words *zərādācā manayhācā* merely reflects the instr. sg. case ~ 'with/by/through heart and mind'. Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index shows *zərādācā* as instr. sg. of the stem *zərād-* 'heart', (thus 'with-heart'). The suffix *-cā* simply means 'and'.

Professor Elizabeth Tucker explains that GAv. *zərādā* instr. sg. in Y31:12 corresponds to Vedic *hrdā* instr. sg., from the root noun *hrd-* 'heart'. This root noun is a linguistic archaism which both branches of Indo-Iranian share. I question, not the literal meaning of the word, but what, in the context of this verse, Zarathushtra intends it to mean.

⁴⁹ Egypt is not included in Kent's list of Indo-Iranian provinces (Kent 1950 *Old Persian*, pp. 55 - 56), although it was part of the Achaemenian Empire of Darius I (the Great) as shown in the translation of Naqsh-e Rostam inscription DNa § 3, lines 15 - 30, (Kent p. 138). Even if ancient Egypt was not an Indo-Iranian culture, in terms of antiquity it is close to some of the earlier dates ascribed to Zarathushtra by Greek writers. And long before the Achaemenians, (according to Frankfort 1939 *Cylinder Seals*), some cylinder seals of the Mittanis (an Arya culture) demonstrate that there may have been some intermixing between the Egyptian and Arya cultures, as demonstrated by the pictorial representation of the winged symbol in Mittani cylinder seals and Egyptian artifacts. See *Part Four: The Winged Symbol*.

⁵⁰ Barbara Mertz, in her excellent book on Egyptian culture and society, *Red Land, Black Land, Daily Life in Ancient Egypt*, (1966, 2008 reprint HarperCollins) explains more than once that in the Egyptian culture and mind-set, the heart was associated not only with emotions but also with intellectual functions ("... the heart was thought to hold not only the emotions but also the functions we know to be connected with the brain." p. 256; "For 'heart' read 'brain' or 'mind';..." p. 265; "The heart was the seat of the emotions and the organ of intelligence, memory and will..." p. 384). I offer this to show only that the perception we have today, that the 'heart' as the seat of love and other such emotions, was not necessarily the perception of its meaning in other ancient cultures.

⁵¹ See *Part Four: Zarathushtra's Date and Place*.

⁵² In a later, Younger Avestan text, *Sirozah*, Section 2 (in both *Sirozah I* and *Sirozah II*) is dedicated to *vohu- manah-* good mind/thinking/thought, and shows some rather lovely understandings of this term that are consistent with the thought of the Gathas. As translated by Darmesteter, *Sirozah I.2* states,

"To Vohu-Mano; to **Peace** [ft. 2], whose breath is **friendly**, and who is **more powerful to destroy** than all other creatures [ft. 4]; to the **heavenly Wisdom** [ft. 5], made by Mazda; and to the **Wisdom acquired by the ear**, made by Mazda." *Sirozah I.2*, SBE 23, p. 4;
vahave manahē āx štōiš hām.vaiṇtyā tarəδātō anyāiš dāman āsnahe xraθwō mazdadātahe gaoš.srūtahe xraθwō mazdadātahe, transliterated from the Avestan script in Geldner 2P, p. 260 (the YAv. words *vahave manahē* are just different case forms (in YAv.) of the stem words *vohu- manah-*.

Darmesteter's ft. 2 to the word "**Peace**" says, "Akhshti does not so much mean Peace as the power that secures peace; ...". And the phrase "**more powerful to destroy**" is used in the sense of destroying all that is evil, harmful, violent. I would use "**to eliminate**", rather than "**to destroy**".

The idea that *vohu- manah-* is a mind-set that is friendly, and secures peace, is consistent with the Gathas in which *vohu- manah-* is thinking that understands and is in accord with the true (correct, good, right) order of existence ~ an order that is beneficial, friendly, peaceful, loving, see *Part One: Truth, Asha*.

Darmesteter's ft. 4 explains the phrase "who is **more powerful to destroy than all other creatures**" by quoting the Pahlavi commentary which he translates into English as follows,

"... (Phl. Comm.), 'more destroying than other creatures, to make Non-peace (Anakhshti) powerless.'".

In other words, (with a play on words), good thinking (peaceful and friendly) destroys what is destructive, violent (non-peace). This also is consistent with the Gathas, in which the 'enemy' is not an opposing tribe or nation or religion. The 'enemy' is untruth (the opposite of the true (correct, good) order of existence). The 'enemy' is falsehood, ignorance, violence, cruelty, destruction, tyranny, greed, corruption, et cetera, which is destroyed by a good mind, good thinking ~ that comprehends the true (good) order of existence).

Returning to *Sirozah I.2*, Darmesteter's ft. 5, explains the words "**heavenly Wisdom**" as follows, "Asnya khratu, the inborn intellect, intuition, contrasted with gaosho-sruta khratu, the knowledge acquired by hearing and learning. ...[commenting on what he deems a near parallel in Indic texts]...". This is consistent with the Gathas, where the divine quality, good thinking, is also innate in man (however incompletely). Thus 'good thinking' includes accessing the innate wisdom that is the Divine within, as well as listening to the wisdom of others. See *Part One: Meditation and Contemplation*.

⁵³ See *Part One: Completeness and Non-Deathness, Haurvatat, Ameretat*.

⁵⁴ This is corroborated by the collective name 'amesha spenta' which includes 'good thinking' *vohu- manah-*. The word 'amesha' means non-dying, in the sense of non-mortal.

⁵⁵ We see this in Y31.11, which is discussed in depth in *Part Six: Yasna 31:11 and 12*.

⁵⁶ Detailed in *Part Two: Asha and the Checkmate Solution*.

⁵⁷ Detailed in *Part One: Differences in the Spirit of Friendship*.

⁵⁸ See *Part One: The Search for Truth*.

⁵⁹ Miscellaneous Fragment III, Mills translation in SBE 31, p. 390.

⁶⁰ See *Part One: Love*.

⁶¹ *Part One: Asha, Truth*.

⁶² See in *Part Two: A Question of Reward and the Path*; and *The Puzzle of the Most-Good, Vahishta*; and *The Houses of Paradise and Hell*.

⁶³ According to Beekes 1988, the adjective stem *manahiā-* means 'spiritual' (p. 132); Taraporewala 1951 gives the stem as *manahya-* (p. 846); and so too does Skjaervo's Old Avestan Index. And in Y53:6 it appears in its acc. sg. case form "...happiness has been lost to the deceitful who violate truth [*aša-*]. In alliance with them, ye are going to destroy the spiritual existence [*manahīm ahūm*]." Y53:6, Insler 1975. In these words, Zarathushtra tells us that we cannot be happy (in the long run) when we violate the true (correct, good) order of existence; and if we ally ourselves with those who violate it, we harm the spiritual existence. So here, as in Zarathushtra's descriptions of paradise, we see that the spiritual existence is a part of the true order of existence (which includes a mind that comprehends and accords with it). It is worth noting that many translators have translated *mainyu-* as 'spirit', and some have translated it as 'thought' or 'mentality'. These meanings are indeed a part of the meaning of *mainyu-*, but not its entire meaning. For the evidence on this point, see *Part One: The Beneficial-Sacred Way of Being, Spenta Mainyu*.

⁶⁴ See in *Part Two: The Puzzle of Creation*, and *A Question of Immanence*.

⁶⁵ See in *Part Two: Light, Glory, Fire*; *The Puzzle of the Cow and its Network*; *Earth, Waters and Plants*; and *Molten Metal*.

⁶⁶ See *Part Two: A Question of Immanence*.