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Frashokereti: Restoring the Creation from a Zoroastrian Eschatological Perspective

Georgios Kakouris¹ 

Abstract

The paper at hand deals with Zoroastrian eschatology. Frashokereti, as it is called, is the term which is used in Zoroastrianism in order to express the end of times. This being the main focus of the current paper, the topics that will be unfolded are the arrival of the Saoshyant, who is the central Zoroastrian salvific figure and Zarathustra's biological descendant who has been miraculously born of a virgin, the resurrection of the dead, their last judgement and the final battle between the forces of good and evil. The general clash between good and evil acquires a more precise character and becomes personified in the deities of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman respectively, the fundamental sources of morality and immorality. Regarding the above, the interrelated themes of man's salvation and the restoration of the universe to its primary undefiled state are presented as results of the victory of good over evil. It will also be displayed how the concept of universal renewal is viewed not merely as a countdown, but moreover as a stepping-backwards to the conditions of the first state of creation, Frashokereti becoming thus a mirror of the first things in terms of Zoroastrian cosmogony. At the same time, other aspects, namely the Zoroastrian story of creation, its corresponding cosmology, the dichotomization of the world into two opposite spheres and the dualism that penetrates the universe in relation to the free will of man are introduced to the reader, so that a deeper understanding may be acquired in regard to the ways, the quality and the content of universal purification and renovation.

Keywords: Dualism; Eschatology; Mirror; Renovation; Resurrection; Salvation.

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Introduction

Zoroastrianism is an ancient Iranian religion. It was named after its prophet, Zoroaster or Zarathustra, who established it. The central deity of Zoroastrianism is Ahura Mazda. His name means "Lord Wisdom" (Jackson, 1899: 164). However, he is not a deity, which has been 'invented' by Zarathustra; he is rather a god who was already existent centuries before the time of his prophet (Carnoy, 1917: 62). Zarathustra lived somewhere between today's Afghanistan and Iran (Smart, 1994: 33). It is not clear when Zarathustra lived though. While Smart (1994: 33), for instance, supports that Zarathustra was born around 600 B.C., Boyd (1985: 110) places the prophet's birth between 1500 and 1000 B.C. and Nanavutty (1968: 8) between 6000 and 600 B.C.

Legends surround his birth and his later life. First of all, it is believed that when his mother was pregnant to him, she had a dream in which it was announced to her that "her son will be a great prophet" (Boyd, 1985: 110-111). Another story says that three days before Zarathustra was born, his mother was shining to such an extent that the people of her village thought that a big fire had erupted; in reality it was the luminous properties of *xvarenah*, a sacred essence which she had received "from on high" and that would sanctify the body of Zarathustra (Eliade, 1971: 13).

During Zarathustra's childhood many efforts were made to kill him, but every time he was miraculously saved (Nanavutty, 1968: 10). When he reached the age of thirty, he received his first vision (Kent, 1918: 186). It was Ahura Mazda who had revealed himself and gave Zarathustra

the Zend Avesta, Zoroastrianism's holy book (Boyd, 1985: 111). After this revelation, Zarathustra started preaching the new faith, while being critical towards the religious practices and beliefs of his time (Bradley, 1963: 39). Moreover, it has been stated that he 'reformed' his contemporary polytheism to monotheism (Foltz, 2013: 35).

Fire holds a remarkable position in Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians venerate fire (Boyce, 1969: 13). It is called Atar and it is a holy symbol; it is also believed that it is the son of Ahura Mazda (Winston, 1966: 187). There is a strong connection between Ahura Mazda, life, fire and light. Light is conceived as cosmogonic (Eliade, 1971: 16). It is used by Ahura Mazda to create life and its source is the sun (Eliade, 1971: 14). The light of the sun also cleans the earth and protects the whole creation from the influence of evil (Müller, 1883: 85-86). In regard to this, Zoroastrians have been making fire temples, in which "the sacred fire was enthroned" and venerated (Boyce, 1975b: 463-464). Fire can be found being preserved among Zoroastrians on a family level too (Nigosian, 1994: 315).

From cosmogony to eschatology Zoroastrianism conceives the world as a battlefield, in which the forces of light and the forces of darkness come into conflict. Being a religion which encourages good thoughts, good words and good deeds, as we shall see, Zoroastrianism believes in the eschatological triumph of light and goodness. This is a vision of restoration; a hope for the creation to return to its initial good state, where evil is totally terminated. Zoroastrians call this hopeful event of restoration *Frashokere-*

ti, a word which means “making perfect” (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 36).

The present paper aims to approach the subject of *Frashokereti* from the descriptive perspective of the study of religions through primary sources (i.e., the collection of data from the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism) as well as other secondary sources, which might be useful to provide us with further explanations when necessary. For the selected angle of the study of Zoroastrian eschatology, therefore, the first chapter examines the origin of good and evil. It also attempts to figure out how Zoroastrianism’s moral dualism accompanies humankind by providing each individual with the freedom to choose between sin and virtue. It is a choice of decisive significance for the outcome of the eschatological battle of the confronting opposite powers. From the same viewpoint, the second chapter refers to the Zoroastrian narrative of creation. Creation, from a Zoroastrian perspective, is here seen as a stage of paramount importance in world’s history, since it shows not only the invasion of evil in the world, but also the necessity of the *Frashokereti*.

The third chapter deals with the way the eschatological hero *Saoshyant* will restore the world. Throughout the Zoroastrian sacred writings, the *Saoshyant* is portrayed as the one to come and bring redemption. Lastly, the fourth chapter concerns the events in the eschaton. It will be shown that themes, such as the resurrection of the dead and the final victory of good, are crucial for the *Frashokereti*. Based on these assumptions, the purpose of the current essay is to discuss how Zoroastrian eschatology mirrors a return to the purity of creation.

Spirits, Ethics and the Human Will

“The twain spirits which appeared in the world of thought in the beginning,” says Zarathustra in the Gathas, “were good and evil in thoughts, words and deeds” (Y. 30:3). “When these two spirits reached together,” Zarathustra adds to the same Yasna, “life and not-life were created” (Y. 30:4). This is the story which describes the world’s origin in Zoroastrianism (Fox, 1967: 130). But who are these twin spirits? And why are they so important? According to the above description, in the very beginning there were two spirits: a good and an evil one. The good one is called Spenta Mainyu and the evil’s name is Angra Mainyu (Boyd and Crosby, 1979: 559). Spenta Mainyu is “the manifestation and projection of creative will and thought of Ahura Mazda” (Masih, 1990: 30). Ahura Mazda is the source of “light and goodness,” while Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman) is the cause of “darkness and evil” (Nilsen, 2008: 22).

Both Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu exist since the dawn of creation. It is mentioned in the Gathas that the good spirit said to the evil one that “between us two, neither thoughts, nor teachings, neither will, nor beliefs, neither words, nor inner selves accord,” pointing thus to the differences and the separation between the twin spirits (Y. 45:2). Such is the dualistic doctrine of Zoroastrianism. The two spirits do not stand for persons, but principles; forces between which people must make the right decision (Mills, 1910: 48). According to Nanavutty (1968, 20), through these twin spirits the two facets of the human intellect are represented; and, consequently, a choice which every person has to make between good and evil.

The spirits, being real entities and not just elements which are restricted to the choice of the human mind, are the original causes of goodness, on the one hand, and evil, on the other. Thus, this doctrine of dualism explains that “a good god cannot be responsible for permanent evil,” because “evil was the work of an independent being,” as Mills (1910: 41) notes. After all, according to Langdon, that is what the term dualism describes: “the independent existence of good and evil” (Langdon, 1934: 45).

Hence the twin spirits symbolize powers that “battle against each other” (Nilsen, 2008, 23). Spenta Mainyu and Ahriman represent two opposite camps of spiritual beings, namely, the *ahuras* and the *daevas* (Blois, 2000: 3). It is written that from these spiritual entities “the false ones did choose the worst deeds but the holiest spirit (...) chose the truth” (Y. 30:5). In his battle against darkness, Ahura Mazda receives the help of the Amesha Spentas or the ‘Immortal Holy Ones; an idea that corresponds to the concept of the archangels (Jackson, 1906: 337). Those are Vohu Mana, Asha, Armaiti, Kshathra, Haurvatat and Ameretat (Flower, 1997: 56). Each spirit is responsible for a part of the creation: Vohu Mana for the cattle, Asha for the fire, Armaiti for the earth, Kshathra for the metals, Haurvatat for the water and Ameretat for the plants (Barr, 1985: 207). As Jackson (1906: 337) observes, the names of the spirits “are personifications of abstract ideas.” The first one is translated as Good Intent, the second as Truth, the third as Devotion, the fourth as Dominion, the fifth as Wholeness and the sixth as Immortality (Flower, 1997: 56). Furthermore, these be-

ings can also be worshiped as aspects of Ahura Mazda himself (Flower, 1997: 56).

To prevent Ahura Mazda’s work, Ahriman has created six demons to aid him in fighting back the powers of light (Blois, 2000: 4). Namely, they are Akoman, Andar, Sovar, Nakahed, Tairev and Zairik (Müller, 1880: 10). Those are also attributes of Ahriman; features opposite to Ahura Mazda’s above-mentioned aspects (Mills, 1908: 84). Consequently, the whole cosmos is divided into two parts and becomes an arena, in which the forces of evil battle against the forces of goodness (Fontaine, 1990: 20). The question that emerges here is a question of power: Are good and evil co-equal? Or is the one stronger than the other?

As it is already shown, the dualistic principle of Zoroastrianism is based on the coexistence and the general relationship of the two aforementioned spirits, Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu. Angra Mainyu is the author of all evil, disease, cold and darkness (Carpenter, 1920: 212). However, the same thing cannot be implied for Spenta Mainyu’s position on the side of goodness. Spenta Mainyu is not identifiable with Ahura Mazda, because it is only an aspect of him. It is, moreover, clearly stated that Ahura Mazda is the Father of Spenta Mainyu (Fox, 1967: 132). This places Ahura Mazda hierarchically higher than Spenta Mainyu in the order of creation. Since the two spirits are twins, then Ahura Mazda is not only Spenta Mainyu’s father, but also Ahriman’s, the latter being thus placed lower than his Creator.

Yasna 44 provides us with a persuasive argument on the topic. Specifically, Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazda “Who is

the Creator of light and darkness? What architect has fashioned sleep and awakening, rest and activity?" (Y. 44:5). The prophet makes this "rhetorical question as a mode of affirmation" (Fox, 1967: 131). He does not ascribe creation to two creators. On the contrary, Ahura Mazda alone is considered by Zarathustra the Creator of both light and darkness and, in consequence, of both spirits. However, this does not mean that Ahura Mazda is neutral; he is a good God (Kronen and Menssen, 2010: 188). Thus, he rejects evil in favor of goodness (Y. 32:2).¹

What is certainly expressed and supported through such an ethically dualistic (although theologically monistic) belief is the Zoroastrian code of morality (Menant, 1912: 127). It is an ethical system, which extends to the conflict of the two opposing cosmological forces (Jackson, 1913: 196). The central value in this system is purity, something which has to be willingly maintained by each human in order for the individual to be rewarded in the afterlife (Jackson, 1913: 196-197). Human beings play a role of paramount importance in this fight. Like the spirits, the people can be categorized in the followers of Truth, on the one hand, and the followers of Lie on the other (Y. 51:9). In contrast to animals, humans are made with free will (Kronen and Menssen, 2010: 190; Nanavutty, 1968: 25). This points straight to man's freedom of choosing between the good and the evil spirit (Kent,

1918: 200). Characteristically, Zarathustra says to Ahura Mazda that "since Thou didst place life within the corporeal body and didst bestow to mankind the power to act, speak and guide, you wished that everyone should choose his or her own faith and path *freely*" (Y. 31:11).

Therefore, the choice to be made by human beings has a significant position in the Zoroastrian theology. According to Horton, prophetic religions, such as Zoroastrianism, consider history a "real fight' (...) where much depends upon the loyalty and valor of each participant" (Horton, 1942: 33). Only if humans turn willingly to Ahura Mazda the *Frashokerti*, the regeneration and the perfecting of the world, can really take place (Nanavutty, 1968: 24). The conclusion is twofold. First, the Zoroastrian God of goodness needs mankind to assist him in the battle against Ahriman (Flower, 1997: 56). Secondly, since humanity is equipped with the free will to make morally good or bad decisions, the existence of evil is the will of Ahura Mazda only in the sense that he wants to provide people with the freedom of choice (Fox, 1967: 136). The dilemma between good and evil is expressed in terms of struggle between light and darkness which tends to "localise in space the two contrary classes of supernatural powers: on the one side life shines (...), on the other it descends" (Hertz, 1960: 96).

The Zoroastrian Story of Creation

In Zoroastrianism Ahura Mazda is considered as the Creator (Y. 46:9; 51:7). In the Bundahis, where the Zoroastrian story of the world's creation is narrated, it is clear, already from the first chapter, that the region of Ahura Mazda is the place of

¹ In addition, the birth of life and not-life through the encounter of the two Spentas as well as Ahura Mazda's superiority to both of them and also his inclination to the good spirit are manifested in the Zoroastrian God's titles as 'Lord of Life' and 'Omnipotent' in Yasna 45:4 in Azargoshasb's (1988) translation.

light, while the abode of Ahriman is the dark (Müller, 1880: 3-4). When Ahriman discovered the existence of Ahura Mazda and his creation, which at that time (during the first three thousand years of the world) was only spiritual, a desire emerged from the side of the evil spirit to destroy them both (Müller, 1880: 5-7).

Ahura Mazda, being omniscient, made a deal with Ahriman that a “conflict may be for nine thousand years” between the powers of goodness and evil, because he knew that “by appointing this period the evil spirit would be undone” (Müller, 1880: 7). After that, Ahura Mazda chanted the foretelling *Ahunavar* prayer, revealing to the evil spirit that at the end of the fight goodness will triumph; and Ahriman realized “his own impotence and (...) fell back to the gloomy darkness” (Müller, 1880: 8).

This was the point when each of the two rivals started creating their archangels and their demons, as it is already mentioned (Müller, 1880: 9-10). Regarding the creatures of the world, Ahura Mazda created first the sky and then the water, the earth, the plants, the animals and the humankind (Müller, 1880: 10). The seventh creation was the fire, which set the world in motion (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 34-35). In the end, Ahura Mazda performed the *Yazisn* ceremony and invited the *fravashi*, the guardian spirits of human beings, to join him in the battle against evil in the millenia to come; a proposal, which the guardian spirits accepted (Müller, 1880: 14).

The first man ever created was Gaya Maretan (Creed, 1925: 123). He was made of fire, earth, air and water and his soul was created immortal (Edgeworth, 1852:

41). Gaya Maretan, who is also known as Gayomard, was the one “from whose seed the human race is derived” (Creed, 1925: 123). According to Edgeworth (1852: 43-44), since Gayomard was made for eternal life, “the mixture of evil with good had no place” in him. Ahura Mazda foresaw that “man could not resist the efforts of Ahriman” (Edgeworth, 1852: 44). When Ahriman decided to invade the world, first he entered the sky and then the water, the earth, the plants, the ox, Gayomard and fire (Müller, 1880: 17).¹ At the place where he and his demons pierced the earth, hell was created (Müller, 1880: 19-20). Gayomard, not being able to withstand the strikes, passed away (Edgeworth, 1852: 45). But his seed, being cleansed by the sunlight, was preserved and gave birth to the first couple of mortal human beings, Mashya and Mashyana, who sprung up from the earth in the form of a plant, until they took their human form (Müller, 1880: 52-54).

Mashya and Mashyana were made for being happy (Edgeworth, 1852: 46). Ahura Mazda, who created them, told them to “think good thoughts, speak good words,

¹ In other words, when the invasion of evil took place, Ahriman followed the same order that Ahura Mazda used in the process of creation. Keeping in mind the central position that fire holds in Zoroastrian worship and remembering that light is a symbol of Ahura Mazda, one can suggest that the order of creation points at an escalation, with fire being its culmination and, consequently, the purest of all things at that time. After Ahriman's invasion and since it is the same order of elements that the evil spirit's incursion follows, the meaning is probably that even the purest things of the world could not stay unaffected after such an attack. It shows the depth of the corruption, which took place in the universe, and gives the reader a foretaste of the necessity of the *Frashokereti*, the renovation of the world.

do good deeds, and worship no demons” (Müller, 1880: 54). So they did in the beginning; but, afterwards, their minds were polluted by hostility and, being misled by the demons, they proclaimed the evil spirit as creator (Müller, 1880: 54-55).¹ Thus they sinned. When Mashya and Mashyana arose from the earth, first they “fed upon water, then plants, then milk, and then meat” (Müller, 1880: 120-121). Through food and drink, greed entered the world and sin started taking its first steps (Hinnells, 1969: 170).

It is believed that when the time of Judgement Day approaches, people's appetite will decrease. They will stop eating food in the opposite order that they began eating it. Specifically, first they will quit meat and gradually will give up milk and vegetables (Müller, 1880: 121). They will also stop drinking water (Hinnells, 1969: 170). Hunger and thirst, being caused by evil, will extinct (Müller, 1883: 308). This reflects a ‘countdown’ and a return to the initial state that the *Frashokereti* will bring in the end of times, in order to renovate the universe and transform it into a creation without evil.

Saoshyant: The Arrival of the Great Saviour

From an eschatological perspective, Zoroastrians divide the lifetime of the world in four periods of three millenia each (Toy, 1910: 71). According to Kreyenbroek (2002: 39), before the final restoration of the world is achieved, the world will have lived for twelve millennia. The first three millennia are the period of Ahura Maz-

da's spiritual creation, as written above. At the end of this period, Ahriman falls back into darkness. The next three millennia are the era of Ahura Mazda's material creation, the making of the Amesha Spentas and the invitation of the *fravashi* to the battle against Ahriman's army. The time from the sixth to the ninth millennium is a period marked by Ahriman's invasion and attack on the world. It ends with Zarathustra's appearance (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 37). The final period of three thousand years starts with Zarathustra and ends with the *Frashokereti* (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 37).

The *Frashokereti*, the renovation of the world, is not accompanied only by the battle of good and evil and the triumph of goodness, but also by the coming of the *Saoshyant* and the resurrection of the dead (Jackson, 1896: 156). As it will be displayed, the *Saoshyant* has the leading role of the person who restores everything forever. He is considered as a virtuous man with divine grace, representing the image of the person who comes “in order to fulfill a potentiality” (Thomas, 1982: 48). He is the one, who “shall raise the dead again to life; shall banish the Devil (...) from the earth; and shall restore the world”, as Jackson (1893: 429) writes.

Saoshyant is not the name of a specific person; it is a title (Dhalla, 1938: 108). According to Guthrie (1914: 200), the term itself derives from the verb *sao*, which means “to profit.” In this sense, salvation is brought as a profit through the help of the *Saoshyant*, who thus becomes a messianic figure. Depending on the context, the term in question can refer to different persons and has a variety of

¹ It is also written that “the followers of Daeva did not choose the right path, because they were (...) deceived” in Yasna 30:6.

meanings. Guthrie (1914: 200) supports that when the word is used in its singular form, it refers to Zarathustra; and when in plural, to assistants of his. As one reads, for instance, in Yasna 48, the word *Saoshyant* can be found being used in singular form for Zarathustra in verse 9, even though in verse 12 it is used in plural for his partners. Therefore, the *Saoshyant* is the personification of the Zoroastrian concept of saviour as well as “the future benefactors of the Good Religion” (Hinnells, 1969: 165).

In addition, Jackson traces an even wider use of the term and shows that the title *Saoshyant* can indicate a priest, an apostle, a saint; a holy man who will be or has been already born and will help at the *Frashokereti*; the final *Saoshyant* who, being the last in line, is expected as the *supreme* Saviour (Jackson, 1896: 157). However, it is taken for granted that “the *Saoshyant par excellence*” has tasks and virtues not so different from those of the many *Saoshyants* (Hinnells, 1969: 169). There is some sort of identification between the goals of the many and the one. In short, all of them are helping each other in order to achieve a common purpose: The *Frashokereti*.

In the final three thousand years, before the carrying out of the *Frashokereti*, there will be three saviours, one for each of the three millennia (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 38-39). The first saviour's name will be Ushedar, the second's name Ushedarmah and the last one's Astvat-ereta (Boyce, 1984: 67-68). Ushedar and Ushedarmah can bring victories against evil, but they function more as forerunners of Astvat-ereta, the only one who can defeat it once and for all (Boyce, 1984: 68). Astvat-ereta means “he who embod-

ies righteousness” (Boyce, 1975a: 282). Linguistically, *astvat* is related to righteousness, while *areta* can be rendered as “proper” (Dhalla, 1938: 165). He is the one for whom it is written in the Gathas that through him “may truth and righteousness strengthen our material lives” (Y. 43:16). The Gathas refer to him when it is said that “the person who shows us the path of truth and happiness in the corporeal world and saves the soul in the spiritual one shall attain the highest good” (Y. 43:3).

Ushedar, Ushedarmah and Astvat-ereta are considered brothers, sons of Zarathustra and also miraculously-born of his seed (Boyce, 1984: 67). This is the solution to the problem of the one and the many, as described above, since all three of them are descendants of the same prophet. It can also explain how the term *Saoshyant* can refer both to Zarathustra and someone else, since the latter is a member of the family of the first. In short, Zarathustra and the *Saoshyants* are blood relatives, that is, they have in common something important and unchanged: they have the same blood. Along with it, *xvarenah*, a fluid which is “sacred, seminal (...) and fiery” and which also made Zarathustra's mother shine when pregnant, might have been transmitted from Zarathustra's body through his seed to them (Eliade, 1971: 14).

According to Eliade (1971: 15), “*xvarenah* resides in the waters.” Zarathustra's seed, being preserved inside a lake, “will impregnate three virgins who go to bathe there” (Hinnells, 1969: 166). The Bundahis describe the preservation of Zarathustra's seed. Specifically, it is noted that Zarathustra went near his wife three times, but each time that he approached

her, his “seed went to the ground; the angel Neryosang received the brilliance and strength of that seed, delivered it with care to the angel Anahid, and in time will blend it with a mother” (Müller, 1880: 144). So important is Zarathustra’s seed that guardian spirits, the *fravashi*, protect it from the powers of evil which want to harm it (Müller, 1880: 144; 1883: 195).

The three virgins, mothers of Ushe-dar, Ushedarmah and Astvat-ereta, will conceive the saviour-sons of Zarathustra from that seed in a thaumaturgic way. Astvat-ereta, the final *Saoshyant*, will be born to Vispa-taurvairi, the third of the virgins who will take bath in the lake Kasava (Müller, 1883: 307). Her name means “the all-destroying”, because “she will bring him forth, who will destroy the malice of Daevas and men” (Müller, 1883: 226). Astvat-ereta, the last of the *Saoshyants*, is portrayed not as divine, but as a virtuous human being who is the bearer of divine grace and will fulfill the role that mankind has in the process of salvation (Boyce, 1975: 282).

Hence the term *Saoshyant* can be translated as Saviour. It is believed that the *Saoshyant* “shall look upon the whole living world (...) and his look shall deliver to immortality the whole of the living creatures” (Müller, 1883: 308). After all, the final *Saoshyant* is the one who “will benefit the whole bodily world (...) because as a bodily creature (...) he will stand against the destruction of the bodily creatures” (Müller, 1883: 220-221). In other words, with the coming of the *Saoshyant* the resurrection of the dead will take place (Müller, 1880: 121).

On the basis of the belief in the resurrection of the dead is the Zoroastrian

dogma of immortality (Bettany, 1890: 354). Zoroastrian anthropology supports the tenet that the human soul is immortal and exists before the creation of the body (al-Faruqi, 1974: 135). This, the idea that death is the gate to another life, is the first foundation for the development of the doctrine which suggests that human beings, after their departure from this world, can live again.

Moreover, it is believed that, after death, the soul of the deceased stays near the head of the body for three days and three nights (Müller, 1883: 314-315). When the third night ends, it seems to the soul that a wind rises, in which its conscience takes the shape of a beautiful maiden, representing the virtuous life that the deceased man has lived (Müller, 1883: 315-316). The conscience makes the soul realize the value of good thoughts, good words and good deeds (Müller, 1883: 316-317). After that, the soul goes to Paradise (Müller, 1883: 317). Nevertheless, if the soul is wicked, it is sent to Hell (Müller, 1883: 320; Y. 30:11).

Frashokereti: A Mirror of the First Things

On the Day of Judgement, when the dead are about to be raised, the bodies will be reconstructed and brought back to life, while each human soul, recognizing its body, will enter inside of it (Edgeworth, 1852: 57). Regarding that day, Ahura Mazda is depicted saying that the bones will return from the “earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants and the life from fire” (Müller, 1880: 122-123). Gayomard will be raised first, Mashya and Mashyana will be next and, finally, the rest of humankind (Müller, 1883: 123).

In the Bundahis, where the main es-

chatological narrative of Zoroastrianism can be read, the belief in corporeal resurrection is clearly mentioned. However, in the period of the composition of the Gathas, a book older than the Bundahis, this idea of resurrection was not very clear (Mills, 1908: 39). Nevertheless, one cannot completely deny the presence of passages that helped the doctrine in question develop further. For instance, it is written in the Gathas that for the wicked “long life shall be his lot in the darkness; foul shall be his food; his speech shall be of the lowest” (Müller 1887: 51-52). If the phrase *lot in the darkness* means *punishment in hell*, then it is a punishment which, as Mills (1908: 40) observes, “implies bodily organs,” since it involves elements, such as food and speech, that point *at least* to the existence of a physical mouth. The idea of a soul, which experiences *physical* suffering in hell, prepares the ground for the concept of a world in which the dead will be resurrected spiritually as well as bodily.

In the *Zamyad Yast*, one can find traces of the dogma of the world’s restoration through *Saoshyant’s* decisive help, “when the dead will rise (...) and the creation will grow deathless” (Müller, 1883: 290). After the resurrection, humanity will come into an assembly. In that assembly everyone will be able to see his own good and evil actions until “the wicked man becomes as conspicuous as a white sheep among those which are black” (Müller, 1880: 123). Then, the righteous will be separated from the wicked (Müller, 1880: 124). At that point all people will receive the reward or the punishment they deserve. For three days the good will be in heaven

and the wicked in hell (Müller, 1880: 124). It is also written that, while the righteous will be rewarded, “the person who does not (...) strive for Mother Earth’s progress, shall meet his retribution at the end, on the Day of Resurrection” (Y. 51:6).

The judgement having been completed, the falling of a meteor takes place. This is the next step after the judgement is done. After meteor *Gouzher* falls on the earth, fire will be caused and the mountains will start melting (Edgeworth, 1852: 58). A river of melted metal will be made out of this, a river through which everyone without exception will pass, in order to be purified (Müller, 1880: 125-126). This is a kind of ordeal by fire. Both the righteous and the wicked “O Mazda, (...) shall be put to test by Thy Blazing Divine Fire,” writes Zarathustra, “and this fiery test shall lay bare the fate of each group” (Y. 51:9). Ahura Mazda’s divine fire is a “fire of faith, truth and purity” (Y. 47:6). It is a fire “which lives by itself, without nourishment, pure and liquid, fluid like water” (Heever, 1993: 114). For the righteous, this process will feel like a bath in warm milk, while for the wicked, it will be a tough test indeed (Müller, 1880: 126).

In the final stage, people will gather again and, being cleansed, will all together praise Ahura Mazda and his archangels (Müller, 1880: 126). The new condition of the people will be one of perfection during which it will not be necessary for Ahura Mazda “to make any effort about them” (Müller, 1880: 126). The *Saoshyant* will perform the *Yazisn* ceremony and the drink *Hush* will be prepared and offered to all people making them, thus, immortal (Müller, 1880: 126). Following Ahura Mazda’s orders, a reward will be

dispensed by the *Saoshyant* and his helpers to each person, according to his or her deeds (Müller, 1880: 127). Apparently, Ahura Mazda, the principle of all goodness, is depicted as being placed at the top of the hierarchy of the universe. Everyone's redemption is in his own hands (Y. 45:7). Since *all* people, both good and bad, are purified and the *whole* humanity is restored, it can also be added that the Zoroastrian God is 'the Supreme Judge who justifies the actions of all' (Y. 31:8).

At last, the battle between good and evil will be over with the victory of the forces of goodness (Müller, 1880: 128-129). The melted metal, which cleansed humankind, will burn and purify hell and everything in it (Müller, 1880: 129). Edgeworth writes that on that day Ahri-man himself "will become the officiating priest (...) to the Supreme Being" (Edgeworth, 1852: 58-59). The universal renovation will emerge, while the world will become immortal and return to its initial undefiled state (Müller, 1880: 129-130).

The *Saoshyant* is consequently the main figure of the *Frashokereti*. He is responsible for restoring the world. During the time of his action the whole mankind doesn't need food and water anymore; people stop dying; on the Day of Judgment, each person individually acquires self-consciousness and ethical awareness, since they are in position to distinguish between their good and bad deeds. Upon the *Saoshyant's* justice coming, the world gets rid of hunger, greed, death and hostility. In short, mankind is redeemed.

The *Frashokereti* can be approached as a reflection of the creation's early days, before the invasion of evil. Following Kreyenbroek's scheme, in the process of

the restoration of the world one can see how "the Last Things have come to mirror the First Things" (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 47). As the same author observes, the period from creation to eschatology is divided into twelve steps. The time of creation up to the appearance of Zarathustra is carried out in six stages; the same applies from the appearance of the *Saoshyant* up to the final renovation, but only in reverse mode.

More precisely, Kreyenbroek's scheme has creation as its very first stage. The second stage is the performance of the *Yazisn* ceremony. The third is the invasion of Ahriman in the world. The fourth is the fire setting the world in motion. The fifth is the coming of death and sin. And the sixth is the appearance of Zarathustra. According to Kreyenbroek (2002: 47), "at the End of Time, the sequence is reversed." This means that the next six stages have similarities with the six first ones, but this time they have the form of a countdown.

Counting backwards, Kreyenbroek suggests that the sixth stage is the appearance of the *Saoshyant*, the son of Zarathustra. Then, the dead are raised up (death is, thus, defeated) and, through the Final Judgement, sin stops having an active role. The fourth stage from the end is the ordeal by fire. The river of molten metal purifies the world, "doing away with the need for further dynamism" (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 47). The third stage is the last battle between good and evil. The second stage is the performance of the *Yazisn* ceremony. And in the last stage "the Renovation Mirrors Creation" (Kreyenbroek, 2002: 47). The *Frashokereti* is eventually achieved.

Conclusion

In the Zoroastrian narrative, the creation starts with the existence of two opposite spirits, but it is the result of the same Creator's action. The dualism of Zoroastrianism is about making moral decisions or avoiding them, while its monotheism expands to a God who chooses good as its principle. Ahura Mazda is the father of the evil spirit, because he is the Creator of everything; however, his will is not an evil one. The choice of evil derives from the decision to freely opt for good or not, that is, the entire creation has been given by its Creator the freedom to choose.

Ahura Mazda is at the top of the universe and stands for goodness. The quality of goodness is superior to that of evil, because Ahriman is ontologically subject to Ahura Mazda and the latter opts for virtue instead of sin. Good and bad are two different, although possible, paths in terms of morality. However, choosing righteousness and truth is at the center of Zoroastrianism's monistic theological system. As Mills (1913: 5) observes, Ahura Mazda "is a moral God." The superiority of goodness is due to Ahura's choice of it; it is due to his greatness.

From cosmogony to eschatology, virtue is the one of the two options that mankind has. Supporting Ahura Mazda's camp is an option which can be replaced by joining the forces of Ahriman. However, for his followers Ahura Mazda is not just an option; he is *the* option. The choice of the Mazdeans, the righteous followers of the Zoroastrian God, depends strongly on their realization of Ahura's supremacy, which does not only lead to the path of truth, but also to the final victory against Ahriman and, in

consequence, to the *Frashokereti*. This eschatological battle of the forces of good and evil is of decisive significance for the fate of the universe. It is a fate that every individual can -and has to- take on his or her own hands; a fate which cannot be fulfilled without supplying Ahura Mazda with the respective means. Purity has to be maintained both for the sake of God and humans. It is a cooperation that takes place between two different, but interrelated, spheres of existence: the human and the divine. That is why the role of the human beings in Zoroastrianism is so central.

It is apparent that the eschatological events of Zoroastrianism have an ethical aspect. Man has to choose the side of Ahura Mazda, in order to help God win. The practice of the Zoroastrian moral code is important, because it has its own leading part towards the *Frashokereti*. The choice between Spenta Mainyu and Ahriman, good and evil, is a matter of life and not-life, as mentioned above. It is not random at all that the eschatological victory of goodness is the triumph of life and that the humankind becomes immortal in the end. Therefore, God, ethics and human will be all bound up together.

Humanity was initially created to live in an ideal world and be in an ideal situation. The invasion of evil changed the way that people think, speak and act, but the thing which remained unchanged is people's ability to choose. Nevertheless, it is also true that some people do not make the 'right' choice. This might also be Zarathustra's view on the world and on the existence of evil. It is a realistic view, trying to describe the evil-influenced situations of each historical

period; but having a choice is also an optimistic view, which does not eventually let the creation get estranged from its tendency to goodness.

The regeneration of the world is indeed a necessity. But the *Frashokereti* undeniably points to more things than a mere restoration. The *Frashokereti* is not a simple victory against evil. It is the end of the battle itself. It is the final defeat of hunger, greed, sin and death. It is a new

reality in which the world becomes perfect and all people, without exception, get to know the taste of eternal life, eternal goodness and eternal salvation. In other words, the *Frashokereti* is not just a return to the starting point of cosmogony, from where everything can be repeated once more; it is not limited to restoring the universe, until it needs fixing again. On the contrary, it is the act of perfecting the whole creation once and for all.

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