

# D G McIntyre - Metaphor in the Gathas - Part 1. The Natural Metaphors

1.1 Introduction and Pastoral Metaphors.

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## 1.1. Introduction and Pastoral Metaphors

What is a metaphor? A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word is used in a way that is not intended to be literal, in order to evoke an idea or an impression. In his poem "Ars Poetica" the poet Archibald MacLeish describes the way a metaphor works as follows.

"For all the history of grief,  
An empty doorway and a maple leaf."

Poetry is full of metaphor. For example, Wordsworth describes a field of daffodils as:

"A host of golden daffodils,  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

Daffodils don't really "dance". The word is a metaphor which evokes the poet's impression. Similarly, Carl Sandburg, in his poem Chicago, describes the city as:

"Stormy, husky, brawling,  
City of the Big Shoulders."

And Zarathushtra speaks of:

"... the pasture of truth and good thinking." (Y33.3).<sup>1</sup>

When a metaphor is descriptive, such as the examples given above, we immediately understand the poet's intention. But when a system of metaphors is used, almost as a code, to express a system of ideas, they present a mystery which is not as easy to unravel. Some such metaphors are more accurately called allegories.

What is an allegory? An allegory is a reference to one thing, using the form of another. For example, the famous piece of sculpture, "The Winged Victory of Samothrace" uses a winged human form to describe the concept of victory. An allegory is an extended metaphor so for convenience, I will use the term metaphor to describe both.

The society in which Zarathushtra lived was an agrarian one, and the images which were most meaningful to his people were agrarian images -- the cow, cattle, draft-oxen, pastures, milk and butter, the sun, fire, plants, waters, camels, horses -- so it is not surprising that he chooses these agrarian images for his poetry.

The question that arises is: Why? Why does Zarathushtra use these images in the Gathas? Is he advocating an agrarian way of life? Does he intend us to take these images literally? Does he use them as metaphors? As with so many Gathic puzzles, opinions differ. For my part, I would like to demonstrate, with evidence from the Gathas, that Zarathushtra uses these images as metaphors, and that he does so as a means of expressing his profoundly moving vision.<sup>2</sup>

A word of caution. We all are (to a greater or lesser extent) prisoners of the conditioning we have experienced in the societies and cultures in which we have been raised. This is a perfectly natural thing. But to truly appreciate the beauty and relevance of Zarathushtra's thought, we need to set aside such conditionings (and the self-conscious feelings they may generate) and look at his images with fresh eyes and open minds. Although Zarathushtra's uses of sun / light / fire may be more pleasing to us, I will begin with the pastoral metaphors (to which the reader may feel more cultural resistance) because they are foundational.

For those who are interested, a brief explanation of the meanings of each of the amesha spenta appears in Part 3.1 which is about the amesha spenta.

Let us first consider whether Zarathushtra intends us to take his images literally, or as metaphors. Before we start, it would be well to acknowledge one of the most controversial images that Zarathushtra uses – "gao" (the singular stem) and its variants. Some scholars translate this as "cow". Others translate it as "world" or "earth". I am inclined to think that "cow" is the correct translation, and that Zarathushtra uses "cow" as a metaphor (or allegory) for the good vision – the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking,<sup>3</sup> although it is possible that Zarathushtra, in his typical multi-dimensional style, intends to give the word a double (or triple) meaning, as we will see.

Many noted scholars have expressed the opinion that Zarathushtra's imagery should be taken literally, as advocating an agrarian way of life. So the first question we must answer is: Did Zarathushtra intend us to take these images metaphorically, or literally? He shows us his intention in a number of ways – some obvious, some not so obvious. For example: In Yasna 49.5 he says:

"But that man, Wise One, is both milk and butter (for Thee), namely, the one who has allied his conception with good thinking...." (Y49.5).

Now, it is obvious that a good thinking man is not, literally, "milk and butter". Therefore it is easy to see that the term "milk and butter" is being used metaphorically here, and is related to good thinking, because it is not every man who is "milk and butter" for the Wise Lord, but only "the one who has allied his conception with good thinking." Similarly, in Yasna 29.7 Zarathushtra says:

"The Wise Lord, who is of the same temperament with truth, fashioned that promise of butter and milk for the cow. He is virtuous to the needy in accord with His commandment. (He said): 'Who has (been found) by thee, good thinking, who might give these things to the mortals below?' " (Y29.7).

Obviously, real cows don't require a promise of butter and milk,<sup>4</sup> so this verse is a clear signal that both "butter and milk" and "cow" are being used metaphorically. And once again, the "promise of butter and milk" is related to good thinking, the means by which the Wise Lord chooses to instruct man, as shown in the last sentence of the verse. Reading both these verses together (Y49.5 and Y29.7 quoted above), it would be reasonable to conclude that milk and butter refers to the person who, with his good thinking, pleases and strengthens the Wise Lord by nourishing the metaphoric cow (the good vision – the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking). This idea is carried further by Zarathushtra's related imagery of the "pasture". In Yasna 33.3, he says:

"...The person who is very good to a truthful man, ..... such a person shall be on the pasture of truth and good thinking." (Y33.3).

A pasture, taken literally, is made up of grass, not of truth and good thinking. So it is obvious that Zarathushtra is using "pasture" in a metaphoric sense, indicating that truth and good thinking both nourish and reward the truthful man. This conclusion is corroborated by the parallel thought in Y34.3, where Zarathushtra says, without metaphor:

"Therefore, let us reverently give an offering to Thee, Lord, and to truth, all of us creatures under Thy rule whom one has nourished with good thinking...." Y34.3

Zarathushtra's use of the term "the pasture of truth and good thinking" in Yasna 33.3 is significant when you see that in the very next verse, he uses the parallel imagery of "the pasture of the cow." In Yasna 33.4 he says:

"Wise One, (it is) I who, through worship, shall turn away disobedience and bad thinking from Thee, ..... and the worst counselor from the pasture of the cow." (Y33.4)

It is clear that the "worst counselor" (presumably someone lacking in good thinking), has nothing to do with literal grass and literal cows. Therefore it is obvious that "pasture of the cow" is being used metaphorically. Not so

obvious is the parallel usage of "the pasture of truth and good thinking" in the preceding verse, and "pasture of the cow" in this verse, indicating, perhaps that the metaphoric (or allegorical) nature of the cow has something to do with what nourishes it -- truth and good thinking.<sup>5</sup>

The above examples are enough to illustrate some of the techniques which Zarathushtra uses to alert us to the fact that these images are metaphors, and are not intended to be taken literally. The above examples also make clear the indispensable importance of a sound, state of the art, knowledge of Gathic grammar and vocabulary, if we are to understand the subtleties of Zarathushtra's own thoughts (as distinguished from the thoughts we might like to project on to him).

Let us turn to Zarathushtra's pastoral metaphors. Insler, citing Lommel, has suggested that the association which appears in the later Zoroastrian literature between each amesha spenta and objects in the material world, are a key to understanding the system of metaphors used by Zarathushtra in the Gathas.<sup>6</sup> I agree (except that I have found only circumstantial (not direct) evidence in the Gathas, of the association of aramaiti and earth, and no evidence at all of the association of xshathra and metals). The association between each amesha spenta and objects in the material world, as it appears in the later texts, is as follows:

Vohu mano (good thinking)	cow, cattle,
Asha (truth, right)	fire
Spenta aramaiti	earth
Vohu Xshathra (good rule)	metal
Haurvatat (completeness)	Water <sup>7</sup>
Ameretat (non-deathness, immortality)	plants

Let us consider how Zarathushtra uses a few of these material images in the Gathas, and see whether the above associations enhance our understanding of the ideas behind the images.

**The Cow.** We have seen from the examples given above, that Zarathushtra's use of the term "cow" is related to good thinking (Y29.7, Y49.5), and to truth and good thinking (Y33.3, Y34.3). Insler is of the opinion that the "cow" is a metaphor for *vanguhi daena* – the good vision – the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking. He arrives at this conclusion using the following line of reasoning.

"...Zarathushtra makes it quite clear in his poetry that the cow is a benevolent force which must be sought after by the truthful man (50.2), and which shall be given to the honestly living person as a reward in order to save his fellowman from the forces of deceit (50.3). In this way the figure of the cow approaches in essence the Lord-created values of truth and good thinking, whose quest for and realization on earth is the task of the righteous man (29.10, 31.4, 47.2, 51.1 etc.), and which shall bring on the defeat of deceit (31.4, 48.1 etc.).

"Similarly, when 51.5-6 juxtapose in antithetical fashion the notions of a person who shall serve the cow in accordance with truth and of a person who shall not serve the Wise Lord, the reverence to be allotted to the cow comes very near to that of Ahura Mazda himself in importance. Thus the cow in origin seems to belong to a higher world than that of man, and her appearance on earth and her required attention are for the purposes of bringing nourishment and peace to the faithful (48.5-6), much as the attainment of good thinking and truth in the mortal world are to accomplish these very aims (29.10, 33.5, 34.12-14, etc.).

"This line of reasoning leads me to believe that the cow is an allegorical figure for the vanuhi daena 'the good vision' (51.17, 53.1, 3). the conception of the foremost existence belonging to the immortal forces (45.11, 49.6), and one

which the Wise Lord granted to the savior Zarathushtra (53.2). It is the conception which is best for those who exist (44.10), .....

"...When the Gathas constantly stress the message, as we remarked above, that only the good vision, that is, the view of the world governed by truth and good thinking, shall prosper the creatures, is the best for those who exist, shall bring good fortune to the peoples, etc., then can we not conclude that the cow and the good vision are equivalent entities? The parallelism of both sets of terms cow: butter and milk and good vision: peace, tranquility prosperity etc. speaks for just this identification... in reaching a proper understanding of the message of Y29." Insler The Gathas of Zarathushtra, pp 141-143.

If Insler is correct (and I think he is), it is important to note that the cow is the masked or allegorical form of truth and good thinking, not in the abstract, but as those concepts relate to this world. Which brings us back to the question: is the proper translation of the word gao and its variants, "cow" or "world".

In a given language, it is not uncommon for one word to have two entirely different meanings. For example, in North America, the term "northern spy" means a type of apple. It also means a person engaged in espionage who comes from (or lives in) the north. How someone would translate the term "northern spy" into another language, when it appears in an American poem<sup>8</sup> would depend on its contextual use. Martin Haug, writing in 1907, notes:

"Gaus has in Sanskrit the two meanings 'cow' and 'earth'."

Haug, Essays on the Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis, p148, footnote 1, (Philo Press, Amsterdam, reprint, 1971) .

He translates and interprets geush urva appearing in Yasna 29 as follows:

"*Geush urva* means the universal soul of earth, the cause of all life and growth. The literal meaning of the word, 'soul of the cow' implies a simile; for the earth is compared to a cow." Ibid. p148.

If in the Gathic language the stem gao and its variants (such as geush urva), could mean either "cow" or "earth" it is possible that Zarathushtra chose the word, in part for its double meaning, to indicate, metaphorically, the good vision on earth. This of course pre-supposes that Zarathushtra intended to use the word gao to mean "cow" and intended further to use "cow" as an allegory for a vision of the world governed by truth and good thinking. In deciding what Zarathushtra had in mind, we have to look at the context in which the word appears. The literal cow does not fit at all. The metaphoric cow (good vision) fits well in all the verses where that word is used or referred to. There are many verses in which either the metaphoric cow (good vision), or "world" fit well. However, there are some verses in which "world" or "earth" simply does not fit the context. Here are some examples. Let us first substitute "good vision" for the word cow, and then substitute "earth" or "world" for that word, so you can see how each suits the context.

First example:

"Thou art the virtuous Father of this spirit [spenta mainyu], the spirit who fashioned the joy-bringing cow [good vision] for this world. Moreover, Thou didst create tranquility and [aramaiti] for her pastor when he took counsel with good thinking, Wise One." (Y47.3).

"Thou art the virtuous Father of this spirit [spenta mainyu], the spirit who fashioned the joy-bringing [world] for this world. Moreover, Thou didst create tranquility and [aramaiti] for her pastor when he took counsel with good thinking, Wise One." (Y47.3)

Clearly, "world" or "earth" would not fit in the context of this verse. "Cow" taken literally makes no sense either. Zarathushtra could not have intended a literal pastor and a literal cow, because the pastor's effectiveness is related

to the fact that he "took counsel with good thinking", and the Wise Lord created tranquility and [aramaiti] for her pastor. Such abstract ideas bear no relation to the tasks required to care for real cows.

"Cow" as a metaphor for Zarathushtra's good vision, the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking, fits well contextually, for at least two reasons. First, spenta mainyu is identified as the fashioner of the cow. We know from other parts of the Gathas that spenta mainyu (the spenta way of being) is "spenta" through asha (Y28.1), and inspires understanding of the good vision in Zarathushtra (Y43.2).

Second (going back to Yasna 47.3, quoted above), "cow" as a metaphor for the good vision fits the context well when we consider the related imagery of the pastor for the cow. A person who takes counsel with good thinking, and for whom the Wise Lord created the concept of aramaiti [bringing truth and good thinking to life with thoughts words and actions], nurtures and promotes [is a pastor for] the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking [the metaphoric cow]. We see here Zarathushtra's typical technique of compacting a lot of meaning into a few words, with the use of a system of metaphors. Let us return to examples of verses substituting "good vision" and "world" for "cow" to see how they fit contextually.

Second example: In this verse, the word "she" refers to "cow" in the preceding verse.

"For she [the good vision] shall bring peace to us, she [the good vision] shall grant to us the enduring and esteemed strength of good thinking. And the Wise One shall increase the plants for her [the good vision] through truth, He (who is to be) Lord at the birth of the foremost existence." (Y48.6).

"For she [the world] shall bring peace to us, she [the world] shall grant to us the enduring and esteemed strength of good thinking. And the Wise One shall increase the plants for her [the world] through truth, He (who is to be) Lord at the birth of the foremost existence." (Y48.6).

It is clear that the earth or world does not fit the context. The earth or the world does not bring peace to us. The earth or world does not grant to us the enduring and esteemed strength of good thinking. But these are precisely the gifts of the good vision – the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking.<sup>9</sup>

And if the later texts do indeed provide us with a code for understanding the metaphors of the Gathas, the "plants" referred to in the above verse would be the masked form of ameretat, immortality. If that is so, this verse tells us that through the gifts of the good vision [i.e. truth and good thinking], the Wise One will increase the number of persons who reach ameretat [plants], which in turn nourish the good vision [cow], making it possible for the good vision -- the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking -- to become a reality.

The "foremost existence" is another way of saying the same thing -- a world governed by truth and good thinking<sup>10</sup> - when the good vision becomes a reality – the frashokereti of the later texts. This verse expresses a theme that is found in a thousand and one ways in the Gathas – that the means and the end are the same. The end here is a world governed by truth and good thinking – the good vision. And it is brought about by persons who think, speak and act, with truth and good thinking. The idea is so subtle. So profound. Yet so simple. And, (once we discover it) so obvious.

One final example (there are many more):

"For she [the good vision] indeed, whom one has promised with good thinking to him during the rule of truth and good thinking, she [the good vision] shall belong to that person who would strengthen, with the power of such a reward, his nearest fellow creature, whom the deceitful one shall (otherwise) appropriate." (Y50.3).

"For she [the world] indeed, whom one has promised with good thinking to him during the rule of truth and good thinking, she [the world] shall belong to that person who would strengthen, with the power of such a reward, his nearest fellow creature, whom the deceitful one shall (otherwise) appropriate." (Y50.3).

In the above verse, we see that the "she" referred to is both the means of strengthening our fellow creatures, and also our reward for doing so. Once again, the metaphoric good vision fits, especially in light of the alternative "whom the deceitful one shall (otherwise) appropriate." The "earth" or "world" does not fit the context. And once again, we see the idea expressed that truth and good thinking are both the reward and the way to earn the reward – the means and the end.

That "cow" is a metaphor for the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking is further suggested by a group of parallel verses in which Zarathushtra states that the Wise One fashioned the cow by reason of His spenta mainyu (His spenta way of being). In the first two verses, quoted below, that thought appears using "cow" as a metaphor for truth and good thinking. In the last verse quoted below, the idea appears without metaphor.

"...the spirit who fashioned the joy-bringing cow [good vision] for this world..."Y47.3

"Thou, Wise One, who hast fashioned the cow [good vision] ...by reason of Thy most virtuous spirit..."Y51.7.

"...Thy most virtuous spirit, Wise One, by reason of which Thou didst create the wondrous powers of good thinking allied with truth." Y43.2.

The conclusion that "cow" is a metaphor for the vision of a world governed by truth (asha) and its comprehension, good thinking (vohu mano) fits well with other instances of ancient (pre-Islamic) Persian usage. For example, in the Shahnameh, it is the "milk" (good thinking?) from a very special cow (the good vision?) which nourishes Faridun while he is raised to manhood. If Faridun's adversary, Zohak, is the embodiment of evil, it is again interesting that it is a cow-headed mace (the vision of truth and good thinking?) with which Faridun slays Zohak (evil). And in certain Sassanian and post-Sassanian pictures, Zarathushtra also is shown carrying a cow-headed mace, warranting the inference that the weapon with which he destroys evil is the good vision – the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking – the metaphoric (or allegorical) cow.

One cannot help but wonder why Zarathushtra chose "cow" as the material metaphor (or allegory) for the good vision. Perhaps it was because in his society, possessing cows or cattle were what gave a man and his family material prosperity, material well-being, just as truth and good thinking prosper the mind and bring well-being to our souls.

Let us move on to see how the metaphoric cow (good vision) fits with Zarathushtra's system of related pastoral metaphors.

Milk and Butter. Milk and butter are metaphors for good thinking, and also for the person who personifies these values (Y29.7 and Y49.5). Milk and butter come from the cow, just as truth and good thinking come from the good vision. Milk and butter nourish and strengthen, just as truth and good thinking nourish both man and the Wise Lord, and bring about His good rule (which is the rule of truth and good thinking Y29.10, 30.7, 33.10, 34.11, 50.3), thereby making the good vision a reality.

The idea that Zarathushtra uses milk as a metaphor for good thinking, is further suggested by his technique of interchanging the two terms. For example: He expresses the thought, without metaphor, that we serve the Wise Lord and his divine values (the amesha spenta) with good thinking (Y28.2) and with truth and good thinking (Y50.4):

"I who shall serve all of you, Wise Lord, with good thinking....." Y28.2.

"...I shall always worship all of you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking..." Y50.4.

In Y50.8, and Y51.1, he expresses the same concept, but interchanges milk for good thinking:

".....Wise One, I shall serve all of you with the renowned footprints of milk ....."Y50.8.

"That good rule is to be chosen which best brings good fortune to the man serving it with milk..." Y51.1.

Re-echoed without metaphor in:

"...Such is the rule for the Wise One, that one shall increase it for Him through good thinking." Y31.6

"...One chooses that rule of good thinking allied with truth in order to serve..."Y51.18.

"...I ...shall serve all of you, Wise Lord, with good thinking....." Y28.2.

Beautiful point-counterpoint, which, paradoxically, has a lovely abstract, impressionist quality.

Pasturage. In Yasna 29.1, the cow (the good vision), asks the Wise Lord for "pasturage" i.e. nurture, care. He responds by providing good thinking as the promised solution to the problems of the cow (the good vision) (Y29.7). Thus, in Yasna 29, good thinking (the comprehension of truth, *asha*) is the pasturage with which the Wise Lord promises to nurture or nourish the metaphoric cow (the good vision). This ties in with "the pasture of truth and good thinking" referred to in Yasna 33.3,11 and "the pasture of the cow" in Yasna 33.4. It also corroborates the conclusion that the vision of truth and good thinking (cow) are nourished by truth and good thinking (pasture of truth and good thinking). The means and the end are the same. The metaphoric pastures are also related to the metaphor for *ameretat*, plants, indicating that those who have attained *ameretat* nourish and strengthen the good vision.

Pastor. In some verses, man is the pastor who nurtures the metaphoric cow (the good vision) with good thinking, truth, and the Wise Lord's other immortal forces (Y31.10, Y51.4-5).12 In Yasna 29.1, the Wise Lord and his cardinal forces13 are the pastor of the metaphoric cow (the good vision). These verses reflect the well accepted view that in Zarathushtra's thought, the Wise Lord and man are partners in bringing to reality a world that is governed by truth and good thinking (the good vision). And it is significant that whether the nourishing is done by man or the Wise Lord, the means of nourishing the good vision are the same – the Wise Lord's immortal forces, truth, good thinking, and those who personify these values.

Cattle/Draft-Oxen. There are some verses in which "cattle" appears to be used in its literal sense, as a material asset, the possession of which would give a person worldly power in an agrarian society (Y46.2). But there are other verses in which Zarathushtra appears to use the word "cattle" and "draft-oxen" in the same way as Christian literature uses the word "flock of sheep", to indicate the followers of Zarathushtra's good vision – the community of the good vision – those who work to make the good vision a reality here on this earth.

"Does my person have control over anyone who can offer help? Who has been found to be the protector of my cattle? [followers of the good vision] Who of me? Who other than truth and Thee, Wise Lord, and best thinking, when my summoning really occurs?" (Y50.1)

"...(those) who through their action stemming from good thinking, indeed exist in the community of the fertile cow, as they further the good understanding of your will with truth, Lord, throughout the (whole) community." Y34.14.

"Community of the fertile cow" is another way of saying community of those who further the good vision (whose increase brings about the foremost existence).

In Yasna 46.4, Zarathushtra refers to the followers of the Wise Lord and His immortal forces as the "draft-oxen of truth."

"Yes, the deceitful one has guarded the draft oxen of truth -- either those of the district or those of the land -- from arising, being, as he is, difficult to challenge and contentious by reason of his actions. Whoever shall expel him, Wise One, from rule or from life, that person shall free the oxen for the flight of good understanding." (Y46.4).

The use of the term "deceitful one" in this verse (and some others) does not, in my view, indicate that Zarathushtra believed in the "devil" as a living entity. In the Gathas he frequently refers to the concept of truth (asha) as an allegorical entity (discussed in Part 3 of this piece Metaphor in the Gathas). I think his use of "deceitful one" is likewise a reference to the concept of deceit (i.e. the opposite of asha) as an allegorical entity, to illustrate, perhaps his view that good and evil acquire life, substance, only when they are expressed in the thoughts, words and actions of living beings.

Waters and Plants. In a Pahlavi fragment translated by E. W. West<sup>14</sup> we are told that the waters and plants are "counterparts" of "Horvadam and Amerodad" (Gathic *haurvatat* and *ameretat*).

In the Gathas, we have already seen that "plants" as a metaphor for *ameretat* (the concept, as well as those who have attained it) fits well with the pastures of truth and good thinking which nourish the metaphoric cow – the good vision. This conclusion is corroborated in Yasna 8.3 (not a part of the Gathas, where just men and just women who "practice the liberality of asha are referred to as "who are the waters and plants," (although presumably they may not yet have completely attained *haurvatat* and *ameretat*):

"...ye just men and just women, and ye Zaothras, whoever among these Mazdayasnians would call himself a Mazdayasnian desiring to live in the practice of the liberality of Righteousness [asha]...do ye cause (such an one) to be (still further) taught, (ye), who are the waters, the plants, and the Zaothras!" Y8.3, SBE Vol. 31, page 229 (Mills tr.).

A similar thought is also expressed in the Gathas in Y34.11 without metaphor:

"Yes, both completeness [*haurvatat*] and immortality [*ameretat*] are for Thy sustenance. Together with the rule of good thinking allied with truth (our) [*aramaiti*] has increased these two enduring powers (for Thee). Because of these things, Wise One, Thou dost terrorize the enemy." Y34.11.

The "enemy", it should be remembered, is deceit, ignorance, cruelty – all of the things that harm the good vision (so graphically enumerated in Y29.1). To "terrorize" the "enemy" is a metaphor, meaning to bring about the end of such things.

"Waters" and "plants" are mentioned in Y51.7, along with the metaphoric cow (good vision).

"Thou, Wise One, who hast fashioned the cow [good vision] as well as the waters [*haurvatat*] and the plants [*ameretat*] by reason of Thy most virtuous spirit, grant Thou to me immortality [*ameretat*] and completeness [*haurvatat*], those two enduring forces which are to be praised with good thinking." Y51.7.

This verse finds an echo in a Later Yasna, Y65.15 – not a part of the Gathas, where the unknown author of this Yasna says:

"...Thou, who art the maker of the Kine, the plants, and the waters, Immortality and likewise Weal [Mills' translation of *haurvatat*], O Ahura Mazda, Thou most bounteous Spirit [Mills' translation of *spenta mainyu*]. And grant me these two eternal gifts through Thy Good Mind in the doctrine." [Mills' footnote : "see Y51.7"] Y65.15, (SBE Vol. 31, page 320).

And this thought is also found without metaphor in the Gathas, see for example:

"The Wise Lord, in consequence of His abounding authority of rule over completeness and immortality and over truth, shall give the permanence of good thinking's alliance to him, the one who is His ally in spirit and actions." Y31.21.

In these verses, we once again see a type of incremental partnership in the evolutionary path, that appears so often in the Gathas – our thoughts, words and actions of *asha* increase completeness and immortality for the Wise Lord

(Y34.11). And the more we so strive, the more the Wise Lord gives us understanding (vohu mano – good thinking), and so completeness (haurvatat) and immortality (ameretat) (Y51.7, and 31.21).

Finally, "waters" and "plants" appear in Y44.4, an enigmatical verse, in which they could refer to literal waters and plants, or to the concepts of haurvatat (completeness, perfection) and ameretat (non-deathness, immortality), or to those who have attained and personify these attributes of divinity, or possibly to all three.

"This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. Which man has upheld the earth below and the heavens (above) from falling? Who the waters and the plants? Who yoked the pairs of swift (steeds) to the wind and to the clouds? Which man, Wise One, is the creator of good thinking?" Y44.4

The Gathas contain some other pastoral metaphors that do not appear to be related to the set of metaphors discussed above.

Horses/Racing. In two racing metaphors, Zarathushtra compares those who are strong with truth and good thinking, to swift steeds, winning the race for the Wise Lord and the values that make for divinity.

"...there shall be yoked from the good dwelling place of good thinking the swiftest steeds, which shall race ahead unto the good fame of the Wise One and of truth." Y30.10.

"Yes, I shall yoke for you the swiftest steeds, those wide (going) with the victories of your glory and strong with both truth and good thinking, the steeds with which ye shall race (ahead), would ye be ready for my help." Y50.7.

We know that Zarathushtra is using "horses" metaphorically here, because real horses do not live in the "good dwelling place of good thinking" and are not "strong with both truth and good thinking" Y50.7 above. That Zarathushtra chose "horse" as a metaphor for those who are strong with truth and good thinking, thus winning the race for the Wise Lord, may have been a graceful compliment to Vishtaspa and Jamaspa (aspa being horse in Gathic).

In Y48.2 Zarathushtra uses a racing metaphor almost as a manner of speech.

"Tell me what things Thou dost know, Lord, before the far end of the course shall come...." Y48.2

By this phrase, Zarathushtra meant, "before I reach the finish line", i.e. before I die.

These metaphors give us a sense of the society in which Zarathushtra lived – one which was agrarian, and also had warriors who fought on horseback, and whose games, to sharpen their skills, included racing, as we see in the Shahnameh. That horses, here mean those whose truth and good thinking win the race for the Wise Lord, against His enemies (deceit, cruelty, oppression et cetera), is apparent. It is not unlike the way the term "horse" was used in Europe, from the Middle Ages, (where it signified the number of mounted warriors a feudal lord or king could command), down to Victorian times, (where "horse" was used as a cavalry term, indicating a martial resource – a soldier who fought on horseback).

Puzzling Metaphors. There are a few metaphors which are a continuing puzzle, although many opinions have been expressed in an effort to explain them. One such set appears in Y44.18. To appreciate the metaphors in this verse, we need to consider the verse that goes before it, and the verse that follows it. Here they are:

"This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. Wise One, how shall I, with your accord, impassion your following, so that my voice might be powerful (enough) to strive for alliance with completeness and immortality (for Thee) in accordance with that precept which adheres to the truth? Y44.17.

"This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. How shall I win through truth this prize, namely, ten mares together with their stallions and a camel, a prize which is to inspire completeness and immortality in me, just as Thou hast received these two for Thyself." Y44.18.

"This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. The person who shall not give that prize to the one winning it, namely, to the man who should receive it in accord with (our) promise – what shall be the first punishment for such a person? I know the final one which shall befall him." Y44.19.

Professor Duchesne Guillemin has expressed the opinion that the ten mares, their stallions and the camel in Y44.18 refer to a priestly fee that was due to Zarathushtra (The Hymns of Zarathushtra, page 72-73, John Murray, 1992, as translated from the French by Mrs. Henning). With due respect, I disagree. A priestly fee simply does not fit the context.

That Zarathushtra is using "ten mares together with their stallions and a camel" as metaphors is apparent from the fact that real mares, stallions and camels are not a prize that is won through truth (asha). Priestly fees are given for the performance of rituals, not for the attainment of truth (sadly). Nor are mares, stallions and camels – literally or as a priestly fee – capable of inspiring the two ultimate divine attributes – completeness (haurvatat) and immortality (ameretat) in Zarathushtra, let alone accounting for the receipt of these divine attributes by the Wise Lord.

Acknowledging that these animals are being used metaphorically, the question arises: what are they metaphors (or allegories) for?

Taraporewala (who earned a tripos in Sanskrit from Cambridge University) has an ingenious suggestion, based on three pieces of ancient Indian literature. He cites the Kathopanishad, in which the senses are likened to horses rushing outwards trying to reach various material sense-objects that attract them, unless they are "reined in" by the Mind.

Taraporewala also cites a Rig Vedic verse in which a mare "obedient to the rein and whip" is "accompanied by a stallion", and he cites a later Indian commentary on this Vedic verse which states that there are five "senses of knowing" (such as hearing, so called because they produce knowledge) and five senses of "action" (such as speech and hand, so called because they perform action), and the eleventh sense is "Manas", which is composed of thoughts. From these sources Taraporewala concludes that the "ten mares" of Y44.18 are Zarathushtra's senses, and the stallion is his mind, which, when it reins in or controls his senses, enables him to understand completeness and immortality. (Taraporewala, The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra, pages 524- 525 (1993 reprint).

I have some problems with Taraporewala's suggestion.

First, in the Kathopanishad example given by Taraporewala, the horses are "reined in" by the Mind. Stallions do not use reins, therefore the reining in of the senses could not have been done by a stallion (a stallion is not mentioned in Taraporewala's description of that Kathopanishad verse, in any event). In the Vedic verse, where a stallion is indeed mentioned, it is not the stallion who controls with "the rein and the whip". The stallion is described as accompanying one mare (not ten). Moreover, the whole concept of controlling the senses with "the rein and the whip" is alien to Zarathushtra's thought. His teaching does not advocate punishing the body or depriving the senses to control them, although such asceticism is indeed a part of Indian religious thought – except for Buddhism.

Second, if indeed the essence of the analogy is the mind controlling the senses, the words chosen by Zarathushtra do not convey this idea of control. Although Insler in his commentary acknowledges that the Gathic word for "stallions" could be either singular or plural, the verse itself does not speak of ten mares controlled by a stallion. It speaks of ten mares accompanied by their stallion(s).

Third, Taraporewala's explanation does not satisfactorily account for the camel. He answers this by translating "ushtra" as light or illumination, deriving it from the sanskrit "vas-(us-) to burn, to shine" although he acknowledges that in sanskrit texts, "ushtra" means bison, pages 73-74. Thus, Taraporewala's interpretation of this verse is: when Zarathushtra's mind (stallion) controls his senses (ten mares) he obtains illumination (ushtra). As appealing as "illumination" might be, one has to question: Is it accurate? It has several problems. Its use does not square with the generally accepted grammatical structure of the sentence. In addition, as Taraporewala (with an honesty that can only generate affection and respect) acknowledges, "ushtra" has never been used in the Avesta to mean

anything but camel, and he admits that the Pahlavi translation and Neriosangh's Sanskrit translation are identical to the translations of the European scholars. As Mills (sensitive perhaps to the charge that European scholars are obtuse in their perceptions) notes: "It means a camel; so the Pahlavi translator rendered many centuries ago before Europeans even knew what the Indian "ushtra" meant, which simple analogy Neryosangh first drew." SBE Vol. 31, page 120, footnote 1.

Finally, Taraporewala's suggestion is not consistent with the verse that follows, in which Zarathushtra asks what punishment will be given to the person who withholds the prize (ten mares etc.) from him. If indeed those metaphors mean what Taraporewala says they mean, then no other human being could withhold from Zarathushtra the prize of his mind controlling his senses and the resulting illumination. That is something only Zarathushtra himself would have control of. For all these reasons, I do not, with due respect, find Taraporewala's idea persuasive.

Mills suggests that the animals in Y44.18 refer to animals for sacrifices, noting that "Horses were material for sacrifice among the Persians according to Herodotus." (SBE Vol. 31, page 120, footnote 1). Even if we accept (for the sake of argument) that Herodotus was accurate in his observations, Mills' suggestion also does not account for the camel. In addition, blood sacrifice is alien to both the text and the spirit of the Gathas, and could not possibly inspire completeness and immortality, if this verse is to be consistent with the rest of the Gathas. In the Gathas, we are repeatedly told that it is good thinking (vohu mano) and words and actions stemming from good spirit, that bring about completeness and immortality (Y31.21, 34.11, 45.5, 45.10, 47.1), which are the offerings for us to give the Wise Lord (Y33.8, 47.1). I do not, with due respect, find Mills' suggestion persuasive.

Insler believes that "ten mares together with their stallions and a camel", is a metaphor for a group of diverse adherents to the prophet's message. He notes that the pointed use of aspao and ushtrem, immediately suggests Vishtaspa, Jamaspa, and Frashaoshtra, and concludes that Zarathushtra may well have intended to describe their families in this manner. Tentatively, this is the suggestion I find most persuasive because it fits the context in all respects, as the following demonstrates.

In Y44.17, the verse before this one, Zarathushtra asks the Wise Lord how he can impassion other people – win them over – with the teaching that is in accord with truth (asha) with a voice powerful enough to strive for alliance with completeness and immortality.

It makes sense that the people he is hoping to win over are king Vishtaspa, the queen, their powerful families and the men and women of Vishtaspa's circle, winning them over through truth (asha) a core concept of Zarathushtra's teaching. And if he were to win over the royal circle through truth, such truth-filled actions would advance him in his own quest for completeness and immortality (individually as the preceding verse suggests), and would also help to bring about completeness and immortality collectively, because (although opinions differ here), in my view, as Zarathushtra sees it, ultimate completeness is achieved only when everyone makes it.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Insler's suggested interpretation of the metaphors in Y44.18 is consistent with the verse that follows. In the later literature we are told that the priests of Vishtaspa's court did their utmost, through fraud, false accusations, planting false evidence, et cetera, to discredit Zarathushtra in Vishtaspa's eyes, to prevent Vishtaspa and his circle from being won over by Zarathushtra. I think this may have been what Zarathushtra was referring to in Y44.19, when he asks what the punishment will be for the person who tries to keep Zarathushtra from winning that prize (the ten mares et cetera – i.e. the royal circle). A thought corroborated in the last verse which refers to the Karpans and the Usigs – types of priests – who together with an unnamed kavi (prince) ["have delivered the cow \[good vision\] into fury.....They have not been eager to prosper her and her pasturage with truth."](#) Y44.20.

Even if this interpretation of the metaphors in Y44.18 is accurate, the question arises: Why did Zarathushtra feel the need to use these metaphors – ten mares accompanied by their stallions and a camel – for the royal circle? Perhaps it was to maintain the anonymity of the reference, or veil it in a socially acceptable manner, if this Yasna was composed before the queen, Vishtaspa and their circle, were completely won over, and while the Karpans and Usigs were still trying to undermine Zarathushtra's influence. I do not know. It is one of the Gathic puzzles I have not (yet) found a sure answer to. A back burner question.

## 1.2 Sun, Light, Fire, and the Checkmate Solution.

In this section, we will explore how Zarathushtra uses the sun, light, and fire in the Gathas, and, in the process, consider his solution for defeating evil.

Because the notion of asha is central to this discussion, let us start with a brief explanation of what Zarathushtra means by the word asha.

Asha literally means “what fits”. Zarathushtra sees the material and abstract worlds (what he calls the worlds of mind and matter Y28.2) as complementary and interactive parts of our reality, rejecting neither. In the world of matter, “what fits” is what is correct – truth, the natural laws that order the universe, the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, et cetera. In the world of mind (i.e. the world of abstract ideas), what “fits” is also what is correct – i.e. what is right, which, in the Gathas, includes such notions as truth, justice (including the law of consequences), goodness, beneficence (generosity), solicitude, friendship, loving-kindness, et cetera. So in essence, asha comprehends the truth of things (or the true order of things) in the worlds of mind and matter. And asha also is a divine quality. An attribute of the divine.<sup>16</sup> There is no one English word that captures the full meaning of asha. “Truth” is the closest in my view, although it should be remembered that this is not just a dry factual truth. It also includes the truths of mind and spirit, i.e. goodness, beneficence, what’s right.<sup>17</sup>

Does Zarathushtra use the sun, light, and fire literally or as metaphors? And if he uses them as metaphors, then what are they metaphors for? And why does he do so? What is his purpose? Let us consider the evidence.

Sun. “Sun” is sometimes used literally, as a natural phenomenon, though not as an object of worship. For example, in Yasna 44.3, Zarathushtra asks Ahura Mazda:

“...Which man did fix the course of the sun and of the stars?” Y44.3.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, “sun” is sometimes used as a simile.<sup>19</sup> The word “sunlike” is used twice – once to describe truth (asha), and once to describe good thinking (vohu mano – the comprehension of asha).

“.....He who is allied with good thinking and the good companion of sunlike truth.....” Y32.2.

“.....the sunlike gain of good thinking.....” Y53.4.

And the word “sun” is used once, to describe the Wise Lord Himself.

“.....Him who has the appearance of the sun.....” Y43.16.

It is clear that the words sunlike and sun are used to evoke the glory or enlightenment that is associated with truth and good thinking, and with the Wise Lord who personifies these divine values. (“Enlightenment” itself is a metaphor, describing a mind that understands truth as being full of light – enlightened).

One might wonder: Why does Zarathushtra call only truth (asha), good thinking (vohu mano) and the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazda) “sunlike”? Why not also the other attributes of divinity (the amesha spenta)? Well, the concept of asha and its comprehension, vohu mano, are an integral part of each amesha spenta. Specifically, asha is truth, what’s right, what “fits” in the worlds of mind and matter. Vohu mano is its comprehension. Aramaiti is its realization (giving it substance)<sup>20</sup> with thoughts, words and actions of asha and vohu mano. Xshathra is its rule (the rule of truth and good thinking). Haurvatat is its complete attainment (perfection, completeness). Ameretat, is the non-deathness that results from its attainment. And spenta mainyu is the benevolent way of being that is spenta through truth (asha) (Y28.1), and personifies all of the amesha spenta. It is clear, therefore, that truth (asha) and its comprehension (vohu mano) are an integral part of each amesha spenta. So the metaphors or similes that are used for truth (asha) would, of necessity, be applicable to all of the amesha spenta.<sup>21</sup>

Glory, Light.<sup>22</sup> Glory as used in the Gathas corroborates the conclusion that Zarathushtra uses light, in its various forms, to describe the divine. Glory is used more frequently in the Gathas, than any other light form (including fire).<sup>23</sup>

Most frequently, glory is used to describe Ahura Mazda. For example:<sup>24</sup>

“.....May the Wise Lord listen, in Whose **glory** I have taken counsel with good thinking.....” Y45.6.

“.....Yes let us set down **His glories** in the House of Song.” Y45.8.

“..... I shall declare to you in verse.....**the glories of Him** who offers solicitude ... the Wise Lord .....” Y46.17.

The later Avestan texts also are full of references to Ahura Mazda as radiant and glorious.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to using “glory” to describe the Wise Lord, Zarathushtra uses “glory” to describe that which is of a kind with Ahura Mazda.

“.....songs of praise (sung) in universal glory of your kind, Wise One.” Y34.2.

“Wise Lord, whoever – be it man or woman – would grant to me those things which Thou dost know to be the best for existence, namely, the truth for the truth and the rule of good thinking (with that person) as well as those whom I shall accompany in the glory of your kind – with all these I shall cross over the Bridge of the Judge.” Y46.10.

In these verses, what does Zarathushtra mean by the “glory of your kind”? I think he means the amesha spenta, as well as those souls who have attained them (the state of being which is haurvatat perfection, completeness), and therefore are glorious like Ahura Mazda (discussed in Part 3.2.2). Such souls would make the transition from the material to the spiritual, a transition which is described through the metaphor of a bridge – the Chinvat Bridge.

Zarathushtra also uses glory to describe truth, (asha).

“Where shall there be protection instead of injury? Where shall mercy take place? Where truth which attains glory?<sup>26</sup> Where virtuous [aramaiti]? Where the very best thinking? Where, Wise One, through Thy rule?” Y51.4.

This too is reflected in the later Avestan texts. For example, in Yasna 37.4 (the *Haptanghaiti*, not a part of the Gathas, but written (mostly) in the Gathic dialect), referring to the best truth, asha vahishta, the unknown author of this Yasna writes:

“We worship best truth which (is) most beautiful, ..... which (is) full of light,.....”<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Zarathushtra uses the metaphor of light or glory in connection with a human being. He calls Jamaspa, the vizier or prime minister of King Vishtaspa “glorious”.<sup>28</sup>

“Glorious Jamaspa Haugva (has displayed) this understanding of His power: ‘One chooses that rule of good thinking allied with truth in order to serve...’ ...” Y51.18.

At first thought, it might seem that Zarathushtra was just being political – calling Jamaspa “glorious” to flatter him. If flattery was his objective, he doubtless also would have called King Vishtaspa “glorious”, but he does not, even though he specifically refers to Kavi Vishtaspa in a verse (Y51.16) which is just two of verses before this one. It would therefore be reasonable to infer that in Jamaspa, Zarathushtra saw that the light of wisdom (the divine values of truth and good thinking), burned brightly, and that is why he calls him “glorious”.<sup>29</sup>

To summarize, Zarathushtra uses the sun, light, and glory, as metaphors to describe the Wise Lord and His divine values of truth and good thinking, as well as the other amesha spenta, all of which include truth (asha), its

comprehension (vohu mano), its realization in thought, word and action (aramaiti), its rule (vohu xshathra), and its complete attainment (haurvatat) or personification. And Zarathushtra also uses light or glory to describe humans who are filled with these divine values. However, nowhere in the Gathas are sun, light, or glory in their physical or literal sense described as objects of worship. Zarathushtra's worship, reverence, praise and esteem are reserved for Ahura Mazda and His divine values, alone. This is a significant difference between the Gathas and the later texts.

**Fire and the Checkmate Solution.** Let us consider fire. The first question we need to decide is: Does Zarathushtra use "fire" literally or does he have something else in mind. An answer is suggested by Y34.4 and Y43.4, where Zarathushtra describes fire in terms of asha.

".....Thy fire, Lord, which possesses strength through truth [asha]....." Y34.4.

".....Thy truth-strong fire....." Y43.4 [i.e. Thy asha-strong fire]

Now we know that actual, physical fire, may obtain its strength from oxygen, and wood, or natural gas, or anything that is flammable, but we cannot make a literal fire strong by truth or what's right. These are not qualities that affect, or are relevant to, physical, literal fire. So these verses suggest that Zarathushtra is using fire as a metaphor; possibly as a metaphor for truth (asha).

Consistent with this conclusion is the fact that in all but one reference, fire is described as belonging to the Wise Lord, just as truth is one of His attributes. And fire is also described as "bright" or "pure" (both associated with asha). For example:

".....Thy fire...." Y43.9 (also Y46.7, and 47.6).

".....Thy bright fire, Wise One." Y31.19.

".....Thy pure fire....." Y51.9.

Now it is true that all of the material world "belongs" in a sense to the Wise Lord, who is described as the craftsman or fashioner of the material world in Y44. However, we don't find Zarathushtra referring to "Thy earth" or "Thy waters" or "Thy air". The fact that he singles out fire as "...Thy truth-strong fire..." suggests that Zarathushtra is using fire as a metaphor for the Wise Lord's cardinal attribute – truth (asha), which is central to his thought.

This conclusion is reinforced by other ways in which Zarathushtra uses truth and fire in the Gathas. He sometimes uses the two as parallel concepts, and he sometimes uses them interchangeably. Here are examples:

In Yasna 43 verses 9 and 10, Zarathushtra uses fire and truth as parallel concepts.

".....To his question, 'Whom dost thou wish to serve?' I then replied 'Thy fire. As long as I shall be able, I shall respect that truth is to have a gift of reverence.

Therefore, do Thou reveal to me the truth, which I continue to summon...' ..." Y43.9-10.<sup>30</sup>

The conclusion that fire is a metaphor for truth is strengthened by the fact that Zarathushtra sometimes uses "fire" and "truth" interchangeably (a technique that he also uses with other metaphors which represent divine values). To illustrate:

Zarathushtra frequently expresses the idea that Ahura Mazda protects and supports us with truth and good thinking.

"Have ye the mastery, have ye the power, Wise One, for the act to protect your needy dependent – as I indeed am – with truth and good thinking?..." Y34.5.

“What **help by truth** hast Thou for Zarathushtra who calls? **What help by good thinking** hast Thou for me.....? Y49.12.

“.....Who has been found to be the protector.....of me? Who other than truth and **Thee, Wise Lord, and best thinking.....?**” Y50.1

The question that is asked in the verses quoted above, is the same question that is asked in Yasna 46 verse 7 (which is the first verse of the Kemna Mazda prayer), with one difference. Zarathushtra interchanges truth with fire when pairing it with good thinking.

“Whom hast Thou appointed as guardian for me, Wise One, if the deceitful one shall dare to harm me? Whom other than Thy fire and Thy (good) thinking, .....” Y46.7.<sup>31</sup>

In Y46.7 quoted above, Zarathushtra may have used "fire" in place of "truth" to place the emphasis in this verse, on that part of *asha* which is the law of consequences (as discussed below).

Here is another illustration of Zarathushtra’s technique of interchanging fire and truth. Zarathushtra frequently speaks of “serving” truth (*asha*).

“...the beneficent man...He **serves truth** during his rule, with good word and good action.....” Y31.22.

“...fame is to **serve Thee and the truth**, Wise One, under Thy rule.” Y32.6.

And in Y43.9, he interchanges fire for truth (in addition to using the two as parallel concepts, as we have seen above).

“.....To his question, ‘**Whom dost thou wish to serve?**’ I then replied ‘**Thy Fire**. As long as I shall be able, I shall respect that truth is to have a gift of reverence.’” Y43.9

Each of the above examples, taken individually, might not be conclusive. But taken together, they warrant the inference that Zarathushtra uses “fire” as something more than a simple, natural phenomenon, that he uses it as a metaphor or counterpart for truth – a conclusion that is corroborated in the later texts.<sup>32</sup>

If Zarathushtra uses fire as a metaphor for truth, we naturally wonder: Why? Is this merely a poetic device? Or did he use this technique to express certain ideas. To answer these questions, we need to look at how Zarathushtra uses fire. In all but two instances, he uses fire in connection with the law of consequences – the idea that everything we do comes back to us, that we reap what we sow.

The law of consequences is a part of the laws (or order of things) that govern existence.

“...As in harmony with those things which are **the laws of the foremost existence**, the ...<sup>33</sup> judgment thus shall bring to realization the most just actions for the deceitful as well as for the truthful man, and for the person for whom falsity and honesty are held to be indifferent.” Y33.1.

And we know that to Zarathushtra, the laws that govern existence, is the concept of *asha* in the worlds of both mind and matter. So the law of consequences is a part of *asha*. And when describing the agent that delivers the law of consequences, Zarathushtra most frequently uses the material metaphor for *asha* – fire.

“.....those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire, to the deceitful and to the truthful, .....” Y43.4.

“Now, we wish Thy fire, Lord, which possesses strength through truth and which is the swiftest, forceful thing, to be of clear help to Thy supporter but of visible harm, with the power in its hands, to Thy enemy, Wise One.” Y34.4 [the “enemy” is evil and ignorance].

Now, we know that justice is a part of asha (Y46.17).<sup>34</sup> But the notion of beneficence (which means goodness, generosity, lovingkindness) is also a part of asha.<sup>35</sup> Do we have an inconsistency here?

How can justice, with its relentless law of consequences, and beneficence, both be included within the meaning of asha?

The answer lies in setting aside our conventional notions and attempting to ascertain Zarathushtra's thought.

The notion of "justice" which has punishment as a means of dealing with wrongdoing, is a human, revenge-based notion of justice. Revenge is not a part of asha. Enlightenment is.<sup>36</sup> If the law of consequences is a part of asha, (delivered through its material metaphor, fire) then the process can only deliver enlightenment, understanding, the comprehension of what is true and right (which is vohu mano<sup>37</sup>).

It takes only a moment's reflection to appreciate that a fear-based control mechanism like punishment is a temporary solution at best. It is not an effective way to defeat evil on a permanent basis, because when the fear is removed, the inclination to evil would still be there. As the old adage goes: He who complies against his will, is of his own opinion still.

Evil as an alternative, as a possibility, is empty, without substance. It can only "exist" in the reality of inclinations that are translated into thoughts, words and actions. Zarathushtra implies that evil is brought to life, is given substance, reality, through wrongful choices in thoughts, words and actions. Therefore, the only effective way to eliminate evil, is to change minds, so that we stop choosing evil with our thoughts, words and actions – not out of fear of punishment, but out of inclination.

And this is precisely what asha does – through the law of consequences and through beneficence, both working in complementary fashion, both an indispensable part of the solution.

So far as the law of consequences is concerned, there is nothing like being on the receiving end of injustice, cruelty, or other wrongful conduct, to make a person aware that such conduct is not right. Of course, not every difficulty that we experience is the result of some previous wrongful conduct of ours.<sup>38</sup> But let us limit ourselves to the law of consequences for this discussion. When we experience the same kind of wrongful thoughts, words and actions that we have done to others, we realize that this is not the way we want things to be. Our experiences increase our understanding and compassion, so that we do not make such choices again, not out of fear of punishment, but because our new understanding informs our preferences, causing us to make the right choices, all of which help us to realize the divine.

The justice which is the law of consequences is also an expression of beneficence, because it enables the spiritual growth that defeats evil and brings us to haurvatat. It eliminates evil by helping to change our preferences. It is the refiner's fire that helps to transform us from an admixture of light and dark, to pure light, through a long, slow process of choices and experiencing their consequences.<sup>39</sup>

This, perhaps, is why the delivery of the law of consequences is also associated with the beneficent way of being (spenta mainyu), and with the Wise Lord's good thinking (vohu mano). This, perhaps is also why the law of consequences is said to distribute “the good”, and give “satisfaction” – not only to those who do good but also to those who do wrong.

"...May He dispense through His good thinking (each) reward corresponding to one's actions." Y43.16.

".....when the distribution in the good shall occur to both factions through Thy bright fire, Wise One." Y31.19.

“Wise Lord, together with this virtuous spirit, Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions through Thy fire, by reason of the solidarity of [aramaiti] and truth. For it shall convert the many who are seeking.” Y47.6.

“The satisfaction which Thou shalt give to both factions through Thy pure fire and the molten iron, Wise One, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful and to save the truthful. Y51.9.

Parenthetically, in Y51.9 quoted above, by “destroy the deceitful” and “save the truthful” I think Zarathushtra was referring, not to people, but to qualities – to destroy what is deceitful, and save what is truthful, in all of us.

In the Later Yasnas, fire (asha) is called "good and friendly".<sup>40</sup> As the law of consequences, asha (fire) returns abundant good for the good done, and changes evil into good as well – thus "distributing the good" and "satisfaction" to all.

This brings us back to the question: In describing the law of consequences, why does Zarathushtra use a material metaphor for asha (fire) at all? Why not just use asha to describe the law of consequences? Perhaps one reason why he chooses a material metaphor is that he wants to convey the idea that the law of consequences operates in the material reality – as part of our life experiences in the material world. This conclusion is suggested in Y51.9.

“The satisfaction which Thou shalt give to both factions through Thy pure fire and the molten iron, Wise one, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful and save the truthful.” Y51.9.

So Zarathushtra uses a material metaphor, fire, to describe this aspect of asha – the law of consequences – a law that helps to bring enlightenment through our choices and experiences in the material world.

However, the law of consequences alone is not enough to enlighten, or change minds. Often, injustice or wrongful conduct generates a corresponding desire for revenge. In addition, those exposed to abusive behavior sometimes identify with and repeat in their own lives and actions the abusive patterns to which they have been subjected. Clearly something more than reaping what we sow is needed to break such cycles of revenge, hatred and abuse. And that something is the beneficence – the goodness, the generosity, the lovingkindness that also is included in the concept of asha. None of us can make it on our own. Each of us, to make it, must both give and receive help with a generosity that does not look for an exact or even exchange. Beneficence too is part of the true order of things (asha).

Often in the Gathas, the Wise Lord is described as a friend (or beloved),<sup>41</sup> as a source of solicitude and help.<sup>42</sup> And we are told that He is the first to be there, to help and protect us, when we experience the difficult results of the law of consequences (Y30.7). But we also are told that He helps us, he protects us, with asha (truth) and vohu mano (its comprehension).<sup>43</sup> The angels that come to help us are His thoughts, His understanding. Other angels come to help as well. They are those angels (some full time, some part-time) who express these qualities of asha and its comprehension (vohu mano) in whatever degree, with their thoughts, words and actions.<sup>44</sup>

So through the law of consequences, and with the help of these assorted angels – the Wise Lord, His divine forces, and each other – we make it through the refiner's fire, we effectuate the transformation that results in the defeat of evil. It is an interesting paradox that the defeat of evil requires both the exacting workings of the law of consequences, and the generosity that gives without looking for an exact (or any) exchange.

In short: the concept of asha (the truth which underlies the way existence is ordered) includes within it that perfect justice which generates the law of consequences (that we reap what we sow), and also the beneficence of mutual loving help (which helps to break the cycle of revenge and abuse), thereby effectuating the change in understanding which results in our choosing what is good and right, for its own sake, because that is the way we want things to be.<sup>45</sup>

This brings us to the seeming inconsistency between the freedom to choose and the assured defeat of evil.

In Yasna 49.3, Zarathushtra says:

"However, it has been fated for this world, Wise One, that the truth is to be saved for its (good) preference, that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession....." Y49.3.

On the other hand, the freedom to choose is a fundament of Zarathushtra's thought. If we have the freedom to choose, that would have to include, of necessity, the freedom to choose evil. How then can the defeat of evil be assured, or "fated" if we are free to keep choosing it?

This seeming inconsistency is resolved when we consider that the more wrongfully we choose, the more we experience the consequences of such wrongful choices. Therefore, because of the law of consequences (and mutual, loving help) the more free we are to choose, the more inevitable it is that everyone will eventually understand and choose what's right (another Gathic paradox). Under this order of things (asha) there is no way in which a life force can keep choosing evil. With asha (the law of consequences and mutual, loving help), and its comprehension (vohu mano) evil is checkmated.

It is interesting that this insight of Zarathushtra demonstrates the fallacy of the old argument that either God's power is limited, or God is not all good. According to this argument, if He permits evil to exist and is unable to stop it, He cannot be all-powerful. Whereas if He is able to stop it, and doesn't, He cannot be all good. This argument is based on the faulty premise that evil can be defeated by Divine Decree. It could be sure – but only in a world of robots, not in a reality that is populated by thinking beings who make choices.

Zarathushtra's insight reveals a dimension of thought that renders the above dilemma superfluous.

His insight demonstrates the Wise Lord's power (because He can defeat evil), His goodness (because He does in fact do so with the way in which he has ordered things – asha), and His wisdom (because with His system, we come to the understanding, and the preferences, that defeat evil, for ourselves).

Evil is defeated through understanding (vohu mano), which is also the message of Y29.

Fire in some later texts: Although this is a discussion of metaphor in the Gathas, I think it would be worthwhile to touch upon certain aspects of the treatment of fire in the later texts.

Those Yasnas that are not a part of the Gathas, comprise long and repetitive litanies of things that were worshipped or praised.<sup>46</sup> They were probably composed as chants of worship, over a very long period of time. Some parts of them (and some parts of the Visparad as well) show that their authors understood well certain Gathic ideas. Others are very far removed from the thought of the Gathas and include praise and worship of some of the old Indo-Iranian deities along with Ahura Mazda and the amesha spenta. Although it is not accurate to lump all these later Yasnas together under one classification, I will, for convenience, call the Yasnas that are not a part of the Gathas, the "Later Yasnas".<sup>47</sup> As litanies of worship, they do not have the interest of a story, nor do they challenge and delight our minds, as do the enigmatical puzzles of the Gathas. They nevertheless have value. They sometimes contain golden strands of Gathic thought. They sometimes have value as corroborative evidence. And they also provide insights into the minds, beliefs, and some interesting practices, of their times.

On the subject of fire, the Later Yasnas routinely and repeatedly called fire the son of Ahura Mazda. This is not difficult to understand. In the Gathas, the Wise Lord is called the Father of truth.

"..... the Wise One is the Father of truth." Y47.2.

We have already seen that in the Gathas (and in the later literature), fire is the material counterpart, or metaphor, for truth (asha). So it is not surprising that fire became the central feature of the ritual, and was called in the Later Yasnas, Ahura Mazda's son, just as truth (asha) is a central feature of Zarathushtra's teaching in the Gathas, and the Wise Lord there is called the Father of truth. Did the creators of any of the Later Yasnas remember that Zarathushtra

used fire as a metaphor? I think some of them undoubtedly did, although the Later Yasnas differ markedly from the Gathas, in that fire (and other material elements) are worshipped in the Later Yasnas, whereas fire and other material elements are never described or referred to as objects of worship in the Gathas. Nevertheless, the authors of some of the Later Yasnas, expressed their understanding of the metaphoric nature of fire in interesting ways.

**Fire in all things:** The unknown author of Yasna 17.11<sup>48</sup>, reflected the belief of his time, that everything has a metaphoric fire in it – men, animals, trees, plants, the clouds and the world itself.<sup>49</sup> For convenience, I will segment verse 11, with Mills’ explanatory footnotes in square brackets.

“We worship thee, the Fire, O Ahura Mazda’s son! We worship

∅ the fire Berezi-savangha (of the lofty use) [Mills footnote 2: “This fire is that before Ahura Mazda and the kings.” The Bundahish adds that this fire is in “the earth and mountains and other things which Auharmazd created in the original creation...<sup>50</sup>],

∅ and the fire Vohu-fryana (the good and friendly) [Mills footnote 3: “This fire dwells in the bodies of men and beasts...”],

∅ and the fire Urvazista (the most beneficial and most helpful) [Mills footnote 4: This is in trees and plants.”],

∅ and the fire Vazishta (the most supporting) [Mills footnote 5: “This is in the clouds (lightning).”],

∅ and the fire Spenishta (the most bountiful) [Mills footnote 6: “This is the fire which is applied in the world (Bundahis, West, page 61).”],

∅ and Nairyasa-sangha the Yazad of the royal lineage [Mills seems unsure of this reference. He says in footnote 7: “That N. is here referred to as connected with the fire, seems certain; this fire corresponds with that of Vahram in places of worship.” However, in Sirozah 1.9, as translated by Darmesteter, this Nairyasa-sangha is identified as the fire that “dwells in the navel of kings” SBE Vol. 23, page 8, and Darmesteter explains it in a footnote as follows: “The fire Nairyasa-sangha, as the messenger of Ahura, burns hereditarily in the bosom of his earthly representative, the king.” SBE Vol. 23, page 8, footnote 5.],

∅ and that fire which is the house-lord of all houses and Mazda-made,

∅ even the son of Ahura Mazda, the holy lord of the ritual order, with all the fires.”

I find very appealing, the fact that there was no divide or segregation between the ritual fire and the fire that dwells (metaphorically) in all things. I like the idea that religion and life were considered part of the same experience as reflected in this Later Yasna – a very Gathic perspective.

The idea that divine fire pervades all things, is a beautiful metaphor. But what was the author of this ancient Yasna (17.11) using fire as a metaphor for? Was he using fire as a metaphor for the energy or life force of Ahura Mazda – expressing the concept of the immanence of the Wise Lord in all things? Was he using fire as a metaphor for *asha* – as the underlying truth pervading the worlds of both mind and matter? It is interesting that although each fire relates to a different part of the material existence, these fires are called by spiritual concepts implicit in the notion of *asha* – good and friendly, most beneficial, most helpful, and *spenishta* (i.e. most benevolent, or most advancing the forward progress of creation<sup>51</sup>). In other words, was he using fire as a metaphor to illustrate that *asha* pervades all things? It is difficult to say for sure. But each possibility is beautiful, in its own way, and perhaps capable of being reconciled, when you consider that the Wise Lord is *asha* personified, and that *asha* is the core of each of His divine characteristics – the *amesha spenta*, and that light or glory are used as metaphors to describe both the Wise Lord and *asha*.

**The Fire Mountains.** A number of the Later Yasnas, including this same Yasna 17 at verse 14 says:

“And we worship Mount Ushi-darena which is Mazda-made and shining with its holiness, and all the mountains shining with holiness, and of abundant glory, and which Mazda made – .” Mills translation. **SBE** Vol. 31, page 259.

This reference to shining mountains of abundant glory was a puzzle to me. It must have been important to the unknown authors of the Later Yasnas, because it was repeated in more than one Later Yasna (e.g. Y6.13, 17.14 and others). What did these authors mean by “mountains shining with holiness, and of abundant glory”? Volcanos? A metaphoric usage? The answer once again appears in Darmesteter’s interesting footnotes to the Sirozah and the Ormazd Yasht. It seems that the ancient kings of Iran, going all the way back to the legendary Kavi Husravah (Kai-Khosrav), came upon a wonderful way of translating a core theological concept into something tangible, that people in general could feel good about, and relate to.

“Ushi-darena” means “keeper of understanding” (**SBE** Vol. 23, page 33, footnote1). The “shining” of this mountain was a fire that burned on the top of Mount Ushi-darena, symbolizing the enlightenment that truth (asha) and its comprehension (vohu mano) bring.<sup>52</sup> So by “shining with holiness” we see that once again, fire was being used as a metaphor for truth and its comprehension (vohu mano).

This explains Mt. Ushi-darena, but what of the other mountains shining with holiness, mentioned in Y17.14 (and other Later Yasnas)? Again, we find answers in Darmesteter’s interesting footnotes to later Avestan texts. The Glory (xvarena) was seen as illuminating each segment of society – the priest, the warrior and the agriculturalist (in a delightful equality) (**SBE** Vol. 23, footnote 1, page 7).

The glory (xvarena) of the warriors was represented by the fire known as Adar Gushasp or Gushnasp, which King Husravah settled on a mountain in Azerbaijan known as Mount Asnavant. (**SBE** Vol. 23, footnote 7, page 7; and Bundahish 17.7, **SBE** Vol. 5, page 63).

The glory (xvarena) of the agriculturalist was represented by the fire known as the Burzin fire. It was established by King Gushtasp on Mount Raevant in Khorasan. (**SBE** Vol. 23, footnote 1, page 8, and Bundahishn 17.8, **SBE** Vol. 5, page 64).

The glory (xvarena) of the priests was represented by the fire known as Adarapra, or Adar Farnbag. It was the illumination of science and learning (**SBE** Vol. 23, footnote 2, page 7), which at that time was the province of the priests and may have reflected Zarathushtra's thought that religion is a quest for the truth (asha) – in the worlds of both mind and matter (Y28.4 and 28.2). In the Bundahishn it is written that this fire was originally established by Yim on a mountain in Khvarizem and then was established by Kavi Vishtasp, “out of Khvarizem, at the Roshan (‘shining’) mountain in Kavulistan, the country of Kavul, just as it remains there even now.” (West translation, **SBE** Vol. 5, page 63) – indicating that the author of the Bundahishn believed that the fire on these mountains had burned for many centuries.

So the “mountains shining with holiness” mentioned in Yasna 17.14 (quoted above) were mountains on which enormous fires burned continuously, representing the presence of the divine glory in each part of the community – a unifying symbolism, beautiful and empowering. The fires must have been huge to make the mountains “shining and of abundant glory”, indicating that these fires were visible from the valleys below the mountains. It must have been an awesome sight, and oddly comforting, for the people who lived there, to see those great fires burning on those mountain tops, day and night – almost like an “all’s well” beacon, down through the centuries. Considering the size of the fires, and the fact that they burned continuously for centuries, it is doubtful that there would have been sufficient resources of wood to feed them. It is more likely that they were fed by natural gas. As Y17.14 says: “of abundant glory, and ... Mazda made – .” This might also explain the necessity of moving the Adar Farnbag Fire (first established by Yim in Khvarizem) to a new location in Kavulistan. Perhaps the gas supply in the original mountain had become diminished or exhausted, necessitating the move.

In searching for a material metaphor for truth (asha), Zarathushtra could not have picked a more meaningful one than sun / light / fire. In his time, the sun and fire, were the only sources of warmth and illumination. They had no electricity (no light pollution at night either – the stars must have been a wonderful sight!).<sup>53</sup> The sun was necessary to sustain life and grow food. The hearth fire was the centre of the home, giving warmth and light, and cooking what nourished his people. As such, light / sun / fire reflect well the central role that asha plays in Zarathushtra's thought – making things clear, enlightening and nourishing mind and soul, warming lives, gladdening hearts and promoting well-being – an ever-present reminder of the divine in all things.

### 1.3 Some Thoughts on Zarathushtra's Purpose in Using Metaphors.

Why did Zarathushtra feel it necessary to express his ideas, sometimes explicitly, and sometimes in masked form through this system of metaphors in which the Wise Lord's divine forces of truth, good thinking, completeness and immortality are linked to such material objects as fire, sun, cow (and what it produces – milk and butter), water and plants (including bread which is made of water and plants).

Insler demonstrates<sup>54</sup> that butter (azuiti), milk (iza), and the sacrificial cake or bread (draonah) which are ritual components intended (symbolically) as refreshment for the Wise Lord, appear in the Gathas as the masked forms of good thinking and truth (butter and milk – which come from the cow) and immortality and completeness (the sacred bread – made from grain [plants] and water, the material metaphors for completeness and immortality). He suggests that by overlaying such material (ritual) items with abstract meanings, Zarathushtra expresses the idea that the aramaiti of the man who follows the precepts of truth and good thinking is a parallel way of worshiping and refreshing Ahura Mazda as are the symbolic material refreshments of the ritual.

And he concludes that Zarathushtra's technique of continually shifting references from the material to the abstract – of using these material symbols (cow, milk, butter, bread) interchangeably with their abstract counterparts – was Zarathushtra's way of demonstrating that the worlds of mind and matter -- the spiritual and the material -- feed and bleed into each other, that they both form homologous systems which belong to a single design of nature, and that the Wise Lord is best served, not only by means of ritual offerings, but by worshipping Him with His own divine values, by means of which we reach immortality and completeness – that our immortality and completeness are the best offerings we can give Him.

"..... Your enduring worshipful offering has been established to be immortality and completeness." (Y33.8).

I agree with Insler's insightful conclusion regarding this equation between the components of the ritual and Ahura Mazda's divine forces, illustrating Zarathushtra's unique way of worshiping the Wise Lord – not only with ritual items, but also with His own divine values in our thoughts, words and actions. I would like to suggest a few additional reasons (there well may be many more).

First reason: Perhaps Zarathushtra employs a system of material metaphors (not limited to ritual items) such as cow, cattle, draft-oxen, pastures, plants, pastor, fire, water, et cetera, as masked forms of abstract ideas, to demonstrate that, at least in our reality, the worlds of mind and matter -- the spiritual and the material -- each have a part to play in fulfilling the purpose of existence; that the divine needs to be experienced in the material. And conversely, material words and actions bring divine concepts to life in our world and in our beings.

By giving each divine value a material counterpart, in a system of metaphors, perhaps Zarathushtra wishes to demonstrate his understanding that it is through the medium of the material world that spiritual perfection is obtained, which in turn results in perfecting the material world – an interesting paradox.

The material and the spiritual, (flowing seamlessly into and out of each other), enable us to achieve the twofold purpose of existence -- to perfect ourselves and, in the process, to perfect our world (by personifying these divine values with our thoughts, words and actions).

Second reason: I think this concept of personification is one of the core concepts of Zarathushtra's thought. We see it without metaphor in Zarathushtra's name for the divine – Mazda, or Ahura Mazda, or Mazda Ahuro. With inspired insight, Professor Paul Thieme, after a careful linguistic analysis concludes that "Mazda" is not an adjective but a noun, and means, in fact, Wisdom personified:

"Mazda Ahuro would then be not 'the wise lord' but Lord Wisdom, or 'Wisdom, the Lord', that is personified Wisdom..... 'wise lord' is what anybody in power may be called, who uses this power in a fair, just and circumspect way. Personified 'Wisdom' is something quite different: ..... Not a god qualified as 'wise', but only Personified 'Wisdom' can be characterized as 'father of the truth (...Y47.2)".<sup>55</sup>

This concept of personification is also apparent in Zarathushtra's treatment of spenta mainyu, which, as a concept is simply an alternative – the benevolent way of being – but which also is personified in the Wise Lord's way of being, as is apparent in the many references in the Gathas to His spenta mainyu.

"...Thou, the Wise One, hast come into the world with Thy virtuous spirit [spenta...mainyu] (and) with the rule of good thinking....." Y43.6

"...Him who is beneficent through His virtuous spirit [spenta mainyu] to those who exist..." Y45.6.

A moment's reflection makes it clear that divine values in the abstract have no existence, other than as an alternative, a possibility, a potential. It is only when they become a part of us (through our choices and experiences in thought, word and action), that they are brought to life, given substance, given reality – in short, personified. This personification is suggested with subtle skill by Zarathushtra in sets of related metaphors. Here are a few examples:

The good vision – the vision of truth and good thinking – has as its material metaphor, the cow. And Zarathushtra uses the metaphor, cattle, or draft-oxen of truth, for those who personify the good vision in their thoughts, words and actions.

In the same way, milk and butter, which come from the cow [vision of truth and good thinking] are used as metaphors for truth and good thinking as well. Yet Zarathushtra also uses milk and butter as metaphors for a person who personifies these values. ("But that man, Wise One, is both milk and butter (for Thee), namely the one who has allied his conception with good thinking....." Y49.5).

*Haurvatat* and *ameresat*, completeness and immortality, have as their material counterparts, waters and plants. Plants (which contain water) nourish the cow (good vision), as in the "pasture of truth and good thinking" Y33.3. And plants are also used metaphorically for those who personify ameresat and therefore nourish the good vision [cow] ("...And the Wise One shall increase the plants for her [metaphoric cow – good vision] through truth...." Y48.6).

Conclusion: In the Gathas, each characteristic of the Wise Lord is either associated with, or has a metaphoric counterpart in, some aspect of the natural world -- animal, vegetable, mineral, fire and the celestial, as the following tabulation shows.

The Wise Lord (Ahura Mazda), His benevolent way of being (spenta mainyu) and all his divine forces (the amesha spenta)	with	Man (and perhaps all the living
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The Wise Lord, Truth (asha) and good thinking (vothu mano)	with	sun, light
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Truth, right (asha)	with	fire
Good thinking (vohu mano)	with	cow
The good vision (the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking)	with	cow
Those who personify truth and good thinking (the good vision)	with	draft-oxen, cattle
Truth (asha) and good thinking (vohu mano)	with	milk and butter
Those who personify truth and good thinking	with	milk and butter
Completeness, perfection (haurvatat)	with	water
Non-deathness, immortality (ameretat)	with	plants
Truth and good thinking which nourish the good vision (the metaphoric cow)	with	pastures (i.e. plants – which include water)
Those who have attained haurvatat and ameretat (i.e. who personify truth, good thinking and all the amesha spenta) and thereby nourish the good vision (the metaphoric cow)	with	Plants (which include water).

In using this system of metaphors, is it Zarathushtra's purpose, to suggest that in our reality, there is no divide between the divine and the natural world, each being a part of the other? to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all things? to suggest, in complementary fashion, the immanence of the divine in all things, and, at the same time, the path to completeness? to suggest that the evolution to completeness and non-deathness is not restricted to humans, but includes all the living? One can but wonder.

1. All references to, and quotations from, the Gathas in this paper are from the translation of Professor Insler, as it appears in The Gathas of Zarathustra, (Brill, 1975) ("Insler" hereinafter), unless otherwise specified, although Professor Insler may or may not agree with the inferences that I draw from his translation. In quotations from the Gathas, round parentheses appear in the original translation and indicate interpretative aides inserted by Professor Insler. Square brackets in a quotation indicate explanations inserted by me. For example, after the word karpan, I might insert [a type of priest]. And I leave "aramaiti" untranslated, inserting the word "aramaiti" in square brackets in place of the translated word. A string of dots in a quotation indicates that I have deleted parts of the verse which are not relevant to the particular point under discussion. These deletions are for the purpose of providing focus. Often a verse will contain many different thoughts and ideas. If I am quoting a verse as evidence of one particular thought or usage, it helps to focus on that part of the verse only, so that the mind is not distracted by all of the other thoughts in the verse.

2. Zarathushtra's use of metaphor was first brought to my attention by Professor Insler, and I gratefully acknowledge my debt to his scholarship and insight. See Insler, pp 134-147; and Insler, Abstract Levels of Ritual in the Gathas of Zarathushtra, a Lecture given to the American Academy of Religions, Nov. 20, 1988.
3. First proposed by Professor Insler in the foregoing works.
4. This is especially true when we consider that the Wise Lord's response of a "promise of butter and milk" is made in response to the cow's lament in verse 1, that she is held captive by "the cruelty of fury and violence, of bondage and might", and her request for "good pasturage". A literal "promise of butter and milk" from the Wise Lord would hardly solve her problems. In addition, in the first sentence of verse 7, the Wise Lord's promise of "butter and milk" refers to the last sentence of verse 6, where the Wise Lord assures the metaphoric cow (good vision) that there will be those who will care for her. Butter and milk in this verse, are metaphors for those who think, speak and act with truth, and therefore nurture the good vision.
5. This is particularly significant when you consider that Zarathushtra's formula for worship, is that we worship the Wise Lord with his own divine values – we worship truth with truth, good thinking with good thinking, et cetera (Y28.2, Y50.4, Y51.22, and footnote 27). Similarly, Zarathushtra teaches that we obtain salvation by following the path of truth and good thinking. Yet he likewise defines salvation as truth and good thinking (Y51.20). The means and the end are the same.
6. Insler, Abstract Levels of Ritual in the Gathas of Zarathushtra, a Lecture given to the American Academy of Religions, Nov. 20, 1988.
7. In the Gathas, it is not clear which of the two – water or plants – Zarathushtra pairs with haurvatat. In Y51.7 he speaks of "the waters and the plants" and a few words later, of "immortality and completeness", without saying which is paired with which. In other parts of the Later Yasnas, (Y3.1, Y4.1, 3, Y7.1, 20, Y8.1), and in a Pahlavi fragment, (see Sacred Books of the East (Motilal Benarsidas reprint), "SBE" hereinafter, Vol. 5, page 377-378), haurvatat is paired with water and ameretat with plants.
8. Such as Stephen Vincent Benet's remarkable poem, John Brown's Body, where the term refers to apples.
9. For example: "Lord, grant ye to these (mortals) strength and the rule of truth and good thinking, by means of which one shall create peace and tranquility....." Y29.10.
10. See for example Y28.11, where Zarathushtra says:
 

"Thou who dost guard truth and good thinking for eternity....do Thou, Wise Lord instruct me (in these very things)....by means of which the foremost existence shall come about here [i.e. on earth]." (Y 28.11).
11. There are a number of verses which refer to pastures, pasturage, or nourishment. In some, good thinking or truth or aramaiti nourishes man (Y34.3, Y48.11), in others it is the cow [good vision] which is so nourished (44.20, 48.6), and in others, it is the cow [good vision] which nourishes man (Y50.3, Y48.6), reflecting again Zarathushtra's subtle thought that the good vision nourishes man, and man's good thinking and truth nourish the good vision.
12. See also Y33.6 in which man is the pastor, although no mention is made of the cow [good vision].
13. Truth, good thinking and His benevolent spirit – the fashioner of the "cow" (good vision).
14. SBE Vol. 5, page 372 et seq.
15. For the evidence on which this conclusion is based, see Of Means and Ends, in the *First Gatha Colloquium* (WZO, 1998), pages 85 to 107. *Of Means and Ends* also may be read on the following websites: www.vohuman.org (Site Map), and www.zarathushtra.com.

16. Which raises an interesting question: If *asha* is an attribute of the divine, and is also a part of the natural order of the material world (among other things), (a) was Zarathushtra expressing the idea of the immanence of the divine in the material world, or (b) was he simply expressing the idea that the Wise Lord's truth underlies or orders, the material world (among other things)? A reasonable argument could be made for both points of view.

17. The word "Righteousness" which many translators have used for *asha*, is not, in my view, satisfactory, in that it does not include the application of *asha* to the world of matter. In addition, it comes with the wrong kind of baggage in our culture – that of the puritan, the hypocrite, the sanctimonious who use it to control people through fear. Such baggage is no part of Zarathushtra's notion of *asha*, or his thought that religion is an on-going quest for truth and what is right, with an inquiring mind/heart that is free to choose, make mistakes, learn from its mistakes, and so grow in its understanding of the truth, (which is also an understanding of the divine).

18. It is interesting that course of the sun and stars, and the waxing and waning of the moon, are all asked about in the verse which speaks of the father of truth (*asha*) – "what fits", the natural order of things.

19. The difference between a metaphor and a simile is as follows: A metaphor is when the form of one thing is used to describe another, e.g. "Her eyes are stars." A simile is when the form of one thing is **likened** to another, e.g. "Her eyes are **like** stars."

20. In the later texts, *aramaiti* is translated as "*rightmindedness*". That to Zarathushtra, the concept of *aramaiti* means the realization of truth and good thinking (i.e. giving these divine values substance, making them real, with thoughts, words and actions) may be seen from the following verses.

"But to this world He came with the rule of good thinking and of truth, and (our) enduring [*aramaiti*] **gave body and breath (to it)...**" Y30.7.

"...Through its actions, [*aramaiti*] **gives substance to the truth...**" Y44.6.

[Referring to the Wise Lord] "...And His daughter is [*aramaiti*] of **good actions...**" Y45.4.

"Virtuous [*spento*] is the man of [*aramaiti*]. He is so by reason of his **understanding, his words, his action, his conception...**" Y51.21.

One cannot give "body and breath" (30.7 above) or "substance" (44.6 above) to truth or to the rule of truth and good thinking, by rightmindedness alone. Nor are "actions" included within the meaning of rightmindedness (45.4 above). Indeed, Y51.21 demonstrates clearly that "understanding", "actions", "words", and "vision" are all included within the meaning of *aramaiti*. In addition, "rightmindedness" is no different from "good thinking" (*vohu mano*). Zarathushtra would not have had two redundant *amesha spenta*.

21 Perhaps worth mentioning is the enigmatical Y50.10, where, in my opinion, Zarathushtra indulges in a triple metaphor.

"Yes, those things which Thou hast brought to realization,  
as well as those things which Thou hast reached by Thy action,  
and those things which one shall esteem, through good thinking, in his vision –  
**the lights of the sun, the bright bull of the heavens –**  
these are for your glory, Wise Lord allied with truth." Y50.10

In this verse, the "lights of the sun" appear to refer to the three things that precede that term, specifically:

1. Those things which Ahura Mazda has brought to realization
2. Those things which He has reached by His action, and
3. Those things which one shall esteem, through good thinking.

What does Zarathushtra mean by #1 “Those things which Thou [Ahura Mazda] hast brought to realization...”? In light of the fact that Mazda is called the Father of truth (Y47.2), good thinking and aramaiti (45.4), the creator of truth (Y34.10) and good thinking (Y44.4, 7), and the fashioner of aramaiti and xshathra, (rule) (Y44.7) it would be reasonable to conclude that #1 above refers to the amesha spenta, the divine values which the Wise Lord has brought to realization.

What does Zarathushtra mean by #3 “...Those things which one shall esteem, through good thinking...”? In the Gathas, the amesha spenta are objects of reverence, praise or esteem – sometimes together with Ahura Mazda, and sometimes by themselves. This is done with good thinking in Y28.2, and Y51.7.

#2 is more difficult to puzzle out – “those things which Thou hast reached by Thy action...”. We know that the concept of completeness (haurvatat) includes the attainment of all of the amesha spenta. And haurvatat is one of the Wise Lord's characteristics. Therefore those things which He has reached by His actions (#2 above) could also refer to the amesha spenta.

In my view, the “lights of the sun” in Y50.10 quoted above, is a metaphor for the attributes which Ahura Mazda personifies – “lights” referring to the amesha spenta, and the “sun” referring to the possessor of these attributes – the Wise Lord (who “has the appearance of the sun....” Y43.16). The “bright bull of the heavens” in my view, refers to the previously mentioned sun. All of these references are metaphors.

22. Translations of the Gathas vary widely in translating certain words as glory or light. For example:

The word vahme in Y34.2 and 45.6, and its variants in Y45.8, 46.10, 46.17, 48.1, 50.7, 50.10, 51.2, and 53.2 are translated as “glory” by Insler, and “glorification” by Jafarey (except in 53.2, where Jafarey translates as “veneration”). Humbach translates these words as “laudation”. Taraporewala (citing Bartholomae) translates as “devotion” “worship” or “adoration”, while noting that it derives from the Skt. root “vah-” which has three possible meanings, one of which is “to shine” (See IJS Taraporewala, The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra (Hukhta Foundation reprint, 1993) (“Taraporewala” hereinafter), page 553. In Y50.10, without explanation, Taraporewala translates as “glory”.

Similarly, roacha and its variants are universally translated as having to do with light, e.g. “luminous” or pl. “lights” (Insler); “light(s)” by Humbach, Irani, Jafarey, Mills, Moulton and Sethna; and “Realms of Light” by Taraporewala. However the word raochebish is very differently translated: e.g. as “throughout your days” by Insler without explanation in his commentary; “lights” by Humbach, Mills, and Sethna; “Heavenly lights” by Irani; and in Y31.7 Mills translates the word as “illuminating objects, lights, or shining stars” (SBE Vol. 31, footnote 2 page 44).

In spite of this diversity in the translations of specific words, there seems to be a consensus that light is used (as a metaphor) to describe Ahura Mazda and His divine attributes, the amesha spenta – perhaps because Zarathushtra sometimes expresses the same idea in different ways, so even though there may be differences in translating individual verses, his meaning often comes through, regardless.

23. This is based on the Insler translation, and would not be an accurate statement of all other translations.

24. Eight times in all. Here are the remaining instances of its use to describe Ahura Mazda:

“...for the glory of Him, the Wise One, ...” Y53.2.

“...for the glory of the Mighty One.” Y51.2.

“...these are for your glory, Wise Lord allied with truth.” Y50.10.

“...the victories of your glory...” Y50.7.

“...If, ... one shall defeat deceit by truth, .....then one shall increase Thy glory, Lord...” Y48.1.

25. For example:

“Ahura Mazda...the radiant and glorious...” Y1.1, SBE Vol. 31, page 195, Mills translation (frequently repeated throughout the Yasnas).

“To Ahura Mazda, bright and glorious.....” Sirozah I verse 1 SBE Volume 23, page 3, Darmesteter translation (repeated several times throughout the Sirozah).

“Unto Ahura Mazda, bright and glorious.....” Ormazd Yasht Intro. SBE Vol. 23, page 23 Darmesteter translation;

“...My name is Glorious.....” Ormazd Yasht, verse 12; *ibid.* page 27.

26. The Gathic *yaso.hyen* is translated as “attains glory” by Insler (without explanation). Humbach in Vol. 1 of his work translates it as “they honor” (page 187), but in his commentary in Volume 2, he explains that the Vedic *yasa* means honor, glory, and he translates *yaso.xiien* as “they honor, glorify.” (page 224). I am not clear on how Jafarey translates it. Taraporewala translates *yaso* as attainment, and *xyen* as “there shall be the attainment” (page 773).

27. Yasna (*Haptanghaiti*) 37.4, as translated by Humbach, in The Gathas of Zarathushtra, Vol. 1, page 146. Professor Humbach translates *spentem ameshem* as “prosperous (and) immortal”. In this verse, the term is a reference to *asha* as an *amesha spenta*.

28. It is interesting that the Gathic word used to describe Jamaspa as “glorious” is *xvarena*.

29. There is one other instance in the Insler translation of the use of “glorify”. It appears in the context of what man can do for Ahura Mazda. In Y45.10, Zarathushtra says:

“I shall try to glorify Him for us with prayers of [aramaiti], Him, the Lord who is famed to be Wise in His soul.....” Y45.10.

The Gathic word which Insler translates as “glorify” is *mimayzo* (the “y” being pronounced “gh” according to Taraporewala). It is explained by Insler in his commentary as belonging to the Vedic “*mahayati*”, meaning extols, glorifies (page 260). Jafarey and Taraporewala translate the word as “exalt” (Jafarey), and “seek to exalt” (Taraporewala). It well may be, therefore, that this word has nothing to do with the literal meaning of “glorify” as in “to make bright, or radiant”. I mention its use in Y45.10 only for the sake of completeness.

30. In Y31.3 Zarathushtra uses the parallel technique in a slightly different way.

“.....That satisfaction which Thou hast created for both factions together with Thy spirit and hast promised (to them) through fire and truth .....” Y31.3.

I think he mentions “fire” here in parallel with truth (*asha*) in order to emphasize the aspect of *asha* which is the law of consequences, with respect to the ideas expressed in this verse.

31. The full verse, Y46.7 reads as follows:

“Whom hast Thou appointed as guardian for me, Wise One, if the deceitful one shall dare to harm me? Whom other than Thy fire and Thy (good) thinking, through whose actions one has nourished the truth, Lord? Proclaim that wondrous state to me for the sake of the (good) conception.” Y46.7.

Is it reasonable to infer that “fire” is used in this verse as a metaphor for truth, when truth itself is mentioned (without metaphor) a few words later? I think it is. I think that Zarathushtra was trying to express the idea that it is

through the operation of asha (including the law of consequences) in the material world (fire) and its comprehension, good thinking, that asha is nourished and the “wondrous state” realized.

That “fire” in this verse (Y46.7) is indeed the masked (or metaphoric) form of truth [asha] is also suggested by an earlier verse in this same Yasna 46, where Zarathushtra expresses the concept of the Wise Lord supporting or protecting, through truth and good thinking, without metaphor.

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

32. In a Pahlavi fragment (which E.W.West estimates was written in the 7th century, and which he has appended as an Appendix to his translation of *Shayast la Shayast*, but which he states is not a part of it, footnote 1, page 372), it is written that the fire of Ahura Mazda is a “counterpart” of Ardavahisht (*asha vahishta* – the best truth). SBE Vol. 5, page 375. Both Mills and Darmesteter make the comment that in the later texts fire and truth are frequently associated. Unfortunately, they do not cite the textual sources on which they base this conclusion. Mills, in footnote 1 to Yasna 1.4 states that asha vahishta and Ahura Mazda’s Fire are “Constantly associated together in the later Avesta.” SBE Vol. 31, page 197. Darmesteter in his introduction to the Ardibehesht Yasht states that Asha Vahishta has an abstract character, as an amesha spenta, as well as a concrete character, “and in his concrete character, the genius who presides over the ...Fire.” SBE Vol. 23, page 41.

33. The string of dots indicates that I have omitted the word “(final)” which Insler places in parentheses to indicate an interpretive insertion by him. This is one of the rare instances in which I do not agree with Professor Insler. Based on what I see in the Gathas, I think that the “judgement” is an on-going thing in our lives, as part of the law of consequences, and not a one-shot, final future event.

34. “...Him who offers solicitude (to us), the Wise Lord who, together with His clever advisor, truth [asha] has **judged the just and the unjust.**” Y46.17. Notice that judgment is associated here not only with asha but also with the Wise Lord's solicitude for us. So we have the idea of solicitude (love, care concern) being associated with the justice that is inherent in asha.

35. Indeed, the core characteristic of asha – what fits – in the world of mind and spirit, is beneficence. In Y30.3 the person who makes the correct choices is called “beneficent”.

“...And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen...” Y30.3.

And the Wise Lord himself is described as being beneficent through asha, thus establishing that beneficence is a characteristic of asha.

“...the Lord, beneficent through truth [asha], virtuous [spento] and knowing...” Y48.3.

36. In the Later Yasna 62, fire is described as the agent for the growth of the soul (verse 6), and as bringing about the renovation (verse 3) Mills translation, SBE Vol. 31, page 314, 315, all of which corroborate the conclusion that fire is a metaphor for that part of asha that is the law of consequences, an instrument, not of punishment, but of enlightenment.

37. “Give, o truth, this reward, namely, the attainments of good thinking....” Y28.7.

38. If life is an evolution to perfection and completeness, as Zarathushtra taught, then in order to attain perfection, it stands to reason that we would have to experience everything there is to experience. The difficulties we experience – whether earned or unearned – are nothing more than teaching devices, the kinds of things that sculpt our souls. As such they may be “heavy blessings” but they still are blessings.

39. Thus we see again, that the means (asha as the law of consequences) and the end (what we become – asha personified) are the same.

40. Later Yasna, Y17.11, SBE Vol. 31, page 258.

41. "...Someone like Thee, Wise One, should declare to me, his friend, ..." Y44.1.

"...Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend..." Y46.2.

See also Y43.14. In 43.14 Insler, Bode & Nanavutty, and T.R. Sethna translate the word fryai as "friend", Taraporewala as "beloved." In Y44.1, Insler and Bode & Nanavutty translate fryai as "friend", Taraporewala as "lover" and Sethna as "who is fond of you". In Y46.2, Taraporewala and Bode & Nanavutty translate the words fryai as a lover to his beloved. Insler and Sethna as a friend to a friend.

42. "...Him, the one who offers solicitude..." Y45.7.

"...the glories of Him who offers solicitude (to us) the Wise Lord..." Y46.17.

43. "What help by truth hast Thou for Zarathushtra who calls? 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 with good thinking?..." Y34.5

"...Who has been found to be the protector of my cattle? [metaphor for followers of the good vision] Who of me? Who other than truth and Thee, Wise Lord, and best thinking...?" Y50.1.

44. A conclusion that is echoed in "... (But) in due course [aramaiti] shall come to terms with one's spirit where there has been opposition." Y31.12.

45. There are a number of verses in the Gathas which might be (and which by some have been) interpreted to say that we should return evil for evil, or bad for bad. Integrity requires that we examine these verses objectively to ensure that we understand Zarathushtra's thought as accurately as possible, for there are too many of these verses for us to dismiss them as isolated, inconsistent aberrations.

Some of these verses are simply an expression of the law of consequences – that we reap what we sow, described without the metaphor of fire. For example: "...Thou didst determine actions as well as words to have their prizes, namely, bad for the bad, a good reward for the good..." Y43.5. (Other examples of this sort appear in: Y30.8, 32.12, 46.8, 46.18).

But other verses present more of a puzzle. Here they are:

"...who shall bring about what is bad for the deceitful one either by word or by thought, or with his hands, ..." Y33.2.

"...I would do evil to the deceitful one (as) in accordance with the wish of Him who has upheld the truth..." Y51.8.

"Wise One, the deceitful are not able to deflect those who are properly truthful from this virtuous spirit....a man...shall be loving to the truthful person and bad to the deceitful one." Y47.4.

What is Zarathushtra saying here? Is he saying that the end (getting rid of evil) justifies the means (do anything you want to them, however "bad" it may be)? I don't think that is an accurate interpretation because it is illogical, and Zarathushtra was eminently logical. We cannot eliminate evil by acting wrongfully towards wrongdoers. If we act wrongfully towards wrongdoers, we simply are creating more wrong, not eliminating it. But quite apart from the

illogic of such an interpretation, I think it is inaccurate because it does not square with the textual evidence, for at least three reasons (there doubtless are more).

First such a conclusion would be inconsistent with the overwhelming evidence of the Gathas that a fundamental teaching of Zarathushtra is that the amesha spenta are both the objective and the path to the objective. The means and the end are the same. (See Part 3.1 of this piece, Metaphor in the Gathas. See also Of Means and Ends, in the First Gatha Colloquium (WZO, 1998), pages 85 to 107; also at: [www.vohuman.org](http://www.vohuman.org) and [www.zarathushtra.com](http://www.zarathushtra.com).) A necessary conclusion from this premise is that a good end can be achieved only through good means. A good end cannot be achieved through wrongful means.

Second, such a conclusion (that we should do bad (as in "wrong") to those who are bad) is inconsistent with the rest of the language in two of the three verses quoted above. For example, in both Y51.8 and Y47.4, the act of being "bad" or "evil" to the deceitful one is linked with truth (asha). In Y51.8, doing "[evil to the deceitful one](#)" is linked to acting "[... in accordance with the wish of Him who has upheld the truth..](#)" so the quality of the act to the deceitful one would have to be something that is in accordance with asha. Similarly, in Y47.4, Zarathushtra speaks of being "[...bad to the deceitful one](#)" right after he states that the deceitful are not able to deflect those who are truthful through spenta mainyu (a benevolent way of being). So it stands to reason that the quality of the act to the deceitful could not be inconsistent with being truthful through a benevolent way of being.

Third. There are other verses in which Zarathushtra specifically states that we will defeat deceit with asha, with the amesha spenta and with goodness. For example:

["If, during the times after this \(present\) one which is under the workings of evil, one shall defeat deceit by truth \[asha\], ...then one shall increase Thy glory, Lord..."Y48.1.](#)

["...How might I deliver deceit into the hands of truth in order to destroy it in accord with the precepts of Thy teaching..." Y44.14](#) [the precepts of the Wise Lord's teaching is the path of the amesha spenta (see Part 3.1.2 of this piece Metaphor in the Gathas).

["Those who, with ill will, have increased fury and cruelty...whose evil effects one has not yet defeated with good effects..." Y49.4.](#)

These verses give the key, in my view, to a correct interpretation of being bad to the deceitful, as expressed in Y33.2, 51.8, and 47.4, quoted above. At one level, I think Zarathushtra means "bad" in the sense that we should not do anything that will prosper the deceitful or make them successful. We should oppose and retard those who are being deceitful, bring their deceitful activities to a bad (unsuccessful) end.

But at another level, I think Zarathushtra was playing with words as another way of expressing a basic thought – that you destroy "bad" with what is "good" i.e. "good" being "bad" for (or destructive of) the "bad". To illustrate: Imagine, if you would, a person engaged in perpetrating a swindle, a fraud. What would be "bad" for such a person? Revealing the truth of the matter, which would defeat the swindle and expose the fraud. So the truth would be "bad" for the person engaged in perpetrating the fraud (bad). "Bad for the bad" in that sense.

46. In the Gathas, fire, the cow (or earth for those who so translate that word), the plants and waters, are used as material metaphors for divine qualities – qualities which Zarathushtra also sees in man. However in the Gathas, such material objects (whether as metaphors or not) and good men and women, are never mentioned as objects of worship. By contrast, in the later Yasnas, such material objects and good men and women are repeatedly offered worship, along with the Wise Lord and the amesha spenta. I am inclined to think this practice may have started as the worship of the divine in the material. Later, perhaps, with the devastations of war, conquest, persecution and time, the idea behind the practice became lost.

47. We know that the language of the later Avestan texts is somewhat different from Gathic, indicating that a long enough period of time – several centuries at least – would have had to elapse from Zarathushtra's day, for such

linguistic changes to have occurred in a society where change did not occur at as fast a pace as it occurs today. In addition, there is the evidence of the Later Yasnas themselves. One of them speaks of “..... the Zarathushtrian law, and its long descent;” (Y25.6 SBE Vol. 31, page 277, Mills transl.) indicating that by the time this particular Later Yasna was composed, the Gathas already were ancient. Some of the Later Yasnas that are far from the thought of the Gathas well may have been pre-Zarathushtrian in origin in that they offer praise and worship to a number of ancient Indo-Iranian deities. That parts of the Later Yasna were of pre-Zarathushtrian origin is suggested by some of the later Yasnas themselves. The A Airyema Isho prayer (which is Yasna 54) first praises the Gathas and then says: “...And we sacrifice to the Praises of the Yasna which were the productions of the world of old.” (Y54.2 SBE Vol. 31, page 293), indicating that they pre-dated the Gathas. Similarly, in Yasna 55 (not a part of the Gathas) verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are devoted to praising and venerating the Gathas, whereas verse 6 is devoted to venerating the:

“...Praises of the Yasna **which were the production of the ancient world**, those which are (now) recollected and put in use, ...” Y55.6, SBE Vol. 31, page 295.

See also Y71.18 (not a part of the Gathas) “And we sacrifice to the (Yasna’s) ending words, to those which end the Gathas. And we sacrifice to the bounteous Hymns themselves.... And we sacrifice to the Praise-songs of the Yasna which were the products of the world of yore.....” SBE Vol. 31, page 331.

48. SBE Vol. 31, page 258, Mills translation.

49. This same thought is discussed in the Bundahisn, Chapter XVII, SBE Volume 5, pages 61 to 64, as translated by West.

50. SBE Vol. 5, page 62.

51. According to Taraporewala, the Pahlavi translation or understanding of the meaning of “spenta” or its variants, includes the idea of advancing the forward progress of creation. Taraporewala, page 356.

52. In Yasna 62.4 (not a part of the Gathas), fire (as a metaphor for truth) is described as increasing understanding. “Give me, O Fire, Ahura Mazda’s son! ... an expanded mind, and nimbleness of tongue for soul and understanding, even an understanding continually growing in its largeness, and that never wanders...” Y62.4, Mills translation, SBE Volume 31, page 314.

53. It is interesting that Mills translates a reference to the Wise Lord’s truths in the Gathas Y31.7, as “...(His) glorious (conceptions first) clothed themselves in the stars” [Mills footnote: “Raocebis certainly means, with illuminating objects, stars or shining lights”] SBE Volume 31 page 44. In the Later Yasnas, the stars too, are used as metaphors for Ahura Mazda and His divine attributes, the amesha spenta (and perhaps those who have attained them in a double entendre). In Yasna 12.1, it states “...to Ahura Mazda...the holy One, the resplendent ... the glorious...whose are the stars, in whose lights the glorious beings and objects are clothed.” SBE Vol. 31, page 248. Mills sees in that verse (12.1) a reflection of the Gathas Y31.7. In Yasna 36.6 (of the Haptanghaiti) the sun and stars are used as metaphors for the Wise Lord’s “body”. Mills translation, SBE Vol. 31, page 285. In Yasna 58.6, the Fshusho-Manthra, referring to the amesha spenta this Later Yasna says: “...and may the creative stars of Ahura Mazda, the Creator, shine down on us, and round about us...” [Mills footnote 3: “Lit. ‘may we be closely beheld by the creative lights,’ &c.”] Mills translation SBE Vol. 31 page 308.

54. Inslar, Abstract Levels of Ritual in the Gathas of Zarathushtra, a Lecture given to the American Academy of Religions, Nov. 20, 1988.

55. Thieme, Reflections on the Vocabulary of Zarathushtra's Gathas, in Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium, held in 1993, published by the World Zoroastrian Organization in 1998, page 202.