
Being total: considering the end of the human person in Zoroastrian perception

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Abstract

The human being is dual, consisting of body and soul, and therefore the end includes it as *psycho-somatic* being, as *total being*. The final goal of religious life in Zoroastrianism, like, for example, in all philosophical systems from ancient Greece to major world religions, is *salvation* both for the soul and the body. The cosmic act of ethics based on the messages given by the revealed Zoroastrian texts, is centred on the human being and its relationship with the divinity. We find in its unity, as encountered and understood in the world religions, the basis of an *anthropological* foundation, which is of special importance in the dialectics of interreligious dialogue. In this article, this feature is shown within the context of the personal *Endzeit*, a context basically founded on the idea of *immortality* and *ascension*. Another objective of the present material was to point out the very aspect of *ascension* as an onto-gnoseological fact, insisting on the synchronic and phenomenological similarities between the transformative spiritual experiences in Zoroastrianism and Shamanism. After all, every religio-philosophical experience/system has an *ascensional motivation*.

Introductory remarks

“(...) man is aware of himself as (...) particular knowing existence; he can know his knowing. There is something in him that can take him beyond existence”¹. This is how Karl Jaspers used to express one of his personal views on life as a continuous process of self-discovering and

¹ *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed., tr. and intro. by E. Ehrlich, L. H. Ehrlich & G. Pepper, Ohio University Press, Ohio, 1986, p.144.

cognition. And the substance of this statement wanders - actually all philosophies - from Socrates to the dawning problems of existentialism and postmodernist philosophies. But this statement fully applies in the very field of religious experience, and we see this experience as a cardinal point in making human life total, as will be shown below in the provocative Zoroastrian vision. *Self-transcendence*, as transformative feature of the person, can be seen in the spiritual battle with evil forces which permanently attempt the conquest of our worldly or, so to speak, personal paradise. And *self-transcendence* links with the very concept of end as the different religio-philosophical trends used to conceive it, in their own manner.

Soul, souls, travelling soul and body: the constitution of man

When we try to consider the idea of individual or personal end in Zoroastrianism, it is necessary that we make some specifications concerning the notion of *soul*. What we understand by soul appears subdivided into more specific, different elements. It is generally recognised that, in Iran, the body disappears after death, being exposed on either a dry peak or ground and, later, in the Towers of Silence, but the soul remains alive. Its spirit, *ahū*, its thinking conscience, *dāenā*², its intelligence, *baodah*³, its soul, *urvan* (Reichelt 1967: 495), and its genius, *fravaši* (Narten 1985: 35-48; Lütge 2008: 101; Reichelt 1967: 466), and power, *taviši* (Reichelt 1967: 447) continue to last (Brandon 1973: 97-98; Shaked 1994: 141-145). The point of special importance is that all these component elements of the soul in its totality are personal, individual, separated from one another. They are, briefly speaking, personified faculties of the same human being. Still *fravaši* appears to be the most common element without which Zoroastrianism cannot be conceived. It is the genius or *idea*-soul which existed in God's mind *ab origine* and corresponds to the Egyptian *ka*, except that it is immaterial, but on the other hand it appears similar to the ancestral winged entity *ba*. According to the research results, we cannot speak of borrowings from Egyptian thought, where soul possesses

² A term-concept signifying the *inner being* of man and the *faith*; cf. Manfred Mayrhofer, *Vorgeschichte der iranischen Sprachen; Uriranisch*, in *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum*, herausgegeben von Rüdiger Schmitt, Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1989, pp.16-18. Professor Jean Kellens translates it as '*conscience religieuse*', cf. his study *Avestique in Compendium...*, cited edition, pp.38-40. More meanings of this word are given *infra*, footnote 14. Here we would like to thank Professor Emeritus Mac Linscott Ricketts, former Professor of History of Religions at Duke University and Louisburg College, for having revised our text.

³ Corresponding to *perception, sensitivity*; see, e.g., the Avestan *Glossar* given by Hans Reichelt in his *Awestisches Elementarbuch*, p.461.

wings, whereas in Persia the *ba* idea is rather represented as a soul or faculty of the soul which desires (Hesko 2005: 2710-11). In ancient Egypt, *ab* or the heart is the one that the human being meets after death and accuses it for its evil deeds; on the other hand, in Zoroastrian tradition a parallel concept is *daēnā*. Humans die, but their volition, conscience and protective genius carry on their existence.

A division of the sacred book entitled *Bundahišn* (34, 4-13) states that the human being is constituted by five elements: *tan* - the body (MacKenzie 1986: 81), *jan* (life or vitality, “breath-soul”(cf. Zaehner 1955: 86), *ruvān/urvan* (soul), *evinak* (the form) and *frohar/fravaši* (Moulton 1972: 256; Zaehner 1975: 269)⁴, which separate once a person dies: the body goes back to the earth, life in the wind, form in the sun, and the soul unites itself with *fravaši*, thus being indestructible:

(...) man was fashioned in five parts – body, vital spirit, soul, image, and external soul. The body is the material [part]; the vital spirit that which is connected with the wind – the inhaling and exhaling of breath; soul is that which, together with consciousness, hears, sees, speaks, and knows in the body; the “image” is that which is situated in the station of the sun; the external soul is that which is in the presence of Ohrmazd the Lord (...) (Zaehner 1975: 269; Colpe 2003: 488) [own insert].

We find in the *Avesta* some data about more souls and faculties of human beings as well. Thus we have in principle three immortal souls, each playing its definite role in a person’s destiny: the pre-existing soul (*fravaši*), which, *post mortem*, joins the soul destined to immortality (*ruwān*) and the travelling soul (*daēnā*) (Zaehner 1975: 163; Pavri 1926: 9)⁵, which is the mirror of one’s good and evil deeds from its earthly life and accompanies the *ruwān* on its way to the other world. The multiplicity of souls in Iranian anthropology was attested not

⁴ A possible etymology could be provided by the Av. root-verb *frāuu-* ‘to fly off’, ‘to ascend’, ‘to fly up’, suggesting the spiritual, nonmaterial dimension of these beings; cf. Cheung 2007:90.

⁵ We must remark here that the idea of a third, external, *travelling soul* is to be found within the framework of Shamanic ideologies, for example, in the Tungus anthropology; see SM Shirokogorov’s monumental work *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (electronic manuscript), p.278. We express our deep gratitude to Mr Vladimir Shirokogorov, member of Prof. Shirokogorov’s family, from Moscow, who has been so kind to send us the electronic manuscript.

only by modern scholars (as we've noticed in Zaehner, see *supra*, p.55), but also by a text dating from the 9th century CE, *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* (see Boyce 1968: 41-42)⁶.

Chapter 29:

Verses 2-3:

*L'agent de croissance est la **frawashi** qui fait croître les bras et les jambes, fait apparaître la masculinité ou la féminité, compose les veines et les nerfs assemble les os, fait apparaître les voies et les passages, et ouvre les portes et fenêtres comme l'architecte qui donne forme à la maison. (3) Et l'âme vitale qui maintient le **corps** vivant est semblable au feu que l'on fonde sur (son) trône sous la coupole;*

Verse 9:

*(...)l'âme vitale est mēnōg de par la création du Créateur, et l'organisateur du corps est l'âme qui est mēnōg(...); [Pehlevi transcription] : (2) frāz-waxšēnīdār {īh} **frawahr** kē dast <ud> pāy waxšēnēd ud narīh ud mādagīh paydāgēnēd ud rāg ud pay passāzēd ud astān ō ham barēd ud rāh <ud> widarg paydāgēnēd ud dar <ud> rōzen wišāyēd be ō rāz{ī}-kīrrog kē kadag dēsēd. (3) [105] ud **gyān** kē **tan** zīndag dārēd be ō atāxš ī andar gumbod abar gāh nišānēnd.*

Verse 9:

*(...) **gyān** mēnōg pad āfurišn ī az dādār <ud> rāyēnīdār ī **tan ruwān** ī mēnōgig (...)* (Gignoux & Tafazzoli 1993:95-97)⁷.

Chapter 30

Verse 1:

*(...) globalement l'homme est composé de quatre (choses) qui sont: le corporel, le **vital**, <le **connaissant**> et l'**animé**.); [Pehlevi transcription] : (...) mardōmān mādagwarīhā pad +čahār ī ast **tanig** ud **gyānīg** <ud **dānišnīg**> ud **ruwānīg** (Gignoux & Tafazzoli 1993:97).*

⁶ WZ. *Inter alia*, this work deals with creation, the story of Zarathushtra and the *frašokereti*.

⁷ We are deeply indebted to Professor Dr Touraj Daryaei, *Howard C. Baskerville* Professor in the History of Iran and the Persianate World, from the University of California, Irvine, for having so kindly sent us a copy of this precious text.

In the above chapters of his work, analysing the way the human being is composed, the author twice states the existence of *three souls*: the embodied soul, the external one (which explains the dreams during sleep) and the one from the world of spiritual beings (*mēnōg*). This tripartite subdivision is connected, actually, with the other already mentioned above: the soul which carries life in the body is *ruwān*, the journeying one is *daēnā* and the other world soul is *fravaši*. Such a trichotomism is likely to be met as an influence of the ancient Greek thought, where one speaks about the division of human being into intellect (*noūs*), soul (*psyché*) and body (*sōma*)⁸ (Cumont 1949: 349). We know that in Greek thought and even in the writings of the Church Fathers, *noūs* appeared as the highest level or capacity of the human soul, a dimension by which a person could perceive the ideal world or, in the Christian view, the divine world, in contemplation of the Triune.

The Zoroastrian journey of the soul and Shamanism

Professor Philippe Gignoux considers that, if this theory is useful, especially in accounting on the *post mortem* destiny of soul and its journey to the other world, we can think that it represents a possibility of explaining the mechanism of the other-worldly Shamanic voyages (Gignoux 2004: 529-532; Gignoux & Tafazzoli 1993: 24). In order to sustain further this interpretation of the literary data, we have to add that a human being consists of a body (*tan*) and a vital soul (*gyān*), which leads to the conclusion that soul or the breath of life remains in the body and keeps it alive. It is well known that *bones* hold a special importance within the framework of Shamanic ideologies. The same thing happens in Iran, being considered the place of life, rather than blood, which carries this significance in the Semitic area. In addition, we may consider that the *fravaši* could be associated with a tutelary spirit, a kind of *Hauptgeist*, which, in a state of ecstatic vision, helps the soul in its journey to the beyond together with *daēnā*, resembling, for example, Central Asian and Siberian Shamanic celestial journey patterns (cf., e.g. Waida 1983: 226).

Within the context of an *ecstatic* vision about the other world and afterlife, the visionary priest Kerdīr speaks about an *osseous soul*:

⁸ For example, see the meaning of the term *nous* in Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle.

(...)et celui qui fait le bien, ira au paradis, et celui qui commet le péché, sera jeté en enfer; et celui qui fait le bien et marche bien vers les bonnes actions, à son corps osseux⁹ échoiera la bonne renommée, et la prospérité, et à cette âme osseuse¹⁰, la sienne, échoiera la condition d'ardāy (sauvé), comme c'est arrivé à moi, Kirdīr (Gignoux 1979: 43; Frye 1965: 217)¹¹.

In Central Asia, the connection between bones and soul is explicitly marked by ossuaries. In addition, bones must be kept, so that, at the moment of resurrection, the god Ahura Mazda can re-constitute every person's body, a process which represents, in the clearest meaning of the word, a veritable "re-ossification" (Gignoux 1979: 69). Simultaneously, this fact reminds us of the *initiation rites* of Shamans, whose bones had to be kept with extreme care, as they were symbolically mangled and then reconstituted, a fact which signified a *death-rebirth*, projected on a transformative structure (Eliade 1985: 13-14; Eliade 1989: 62-63; Weckman 1970: 69).

Such transformative experiences could have had also the Greek *iatromantes*, the ancient Getes and Scythians (Petre 2004: 122), for example, although the mangling motive is not to be met (Pythagoras, Apollonios of Tyana, Orpheus, Arystheas of Proconessus). The *ecstatic vision* can be framed as part of a practice of immortality (those who used to practise special techniques were known as *athanatizontes*), because, since divinity is the very fountain of this special attribute, also human beings - by their souls, as spiritual entities - already possess immortality. The idea of a soul capable of travelling out of the body and that, during its journey-ascension (*psychanodia*), it can meet some helper superhuman beings, dates from the very Palaeolithic era.

According to the Zoroastrian conception, after death the human body (being considered the most dangerous source of impurity) is brought in front of a dog or bird of prey, to watch it – beings about which it is believed that they possess an *apotropaic* power - that is to cast away

⁹ Pahl. *astvand tan*; cf. Gignoux 1979: 43. Here we would like to express our deep gratitude to Mrs Monique Oger from the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, Université Nice Sophia Antipolis, for sending us this article.

¹⁰ Pahl. *astvand ruvān*; see Gignoux 1979: 43.

¹¹ We gave the exact French translation made by Professor Gignoux, for its accuracy. In his translation of Kerdīr's inscription, Professor Richard N. Frye renders the expressions *astvand tan* as *corporeal body* and *astvand rubān* as *corporeal soul*.

the demons¹². Thus, the *dog* plays an important role, being a *psychopomp* animal, because every person “wishes them [the dogs] to come to the assistance of its soul at the Chinvat bridge”¹³. It is a guardian of the way that the human soul will take towards the world beyond. Together with cattle, dogs belong to the category of good animals, being part of Ahura Mazda’s good creation. The Zoroastrian tradition holds that these animals even possess souls and moral responsibility, their injury having the power to deeply affect a human’s destiny (Shaked 2001: 579-581).

Destiny of the soul and the way to the divine

Regarding the soul’s post-mortem destiny, the *Gāthās* don’t offer a clear view, but the later Avesta¹⁴ and the Pehlevi texts offer new perspectives, in addition to paraphrasing the Avestan material. To a Zoroastrian, death is not a destruction, but only a final *transformation*, not just the ceasing of physical life, caused by the separation of soul from body: “(...) when his soul has parted with his body” (V.8,IX,81)¹⁵. The human body contains in itself a divine spiritual power, which leaves it at the moment of death. A righteous person’s soul stays, during the first three nights after death, by its head (Lommel 1930: 185), reciting texts from the *Gāthās*, and the demon Wizareša is there, accompanied by two companions.

In late sources, it is said Ahriman tries, in this state, to pull the soul into hell, while the angel Sroš protects it. A weak person’s soul cries and recites Y. 46¹⁶, suffering, according to some Pehlevi sources, remorse and fear for what awaits it. After three nights, the good one’s soul feels surrounded by pleasant fragrances, with a perfumed wind which comes towards it from the south. The figure of a beautiful and shining 15 year-old maiden, accompanied by two

¹² A similar idea can be found in Islamic thought or in the popular Romanian tradition, where dogs (especially the black ones) are said to be able of seeing the demons (*shaitāns*), which makes us question about a possible Zoroastrian influence; cf. Boyce 1977: 145.

¹³ *Sad Dar, or The Hundred Subjects XXXI,4*, in *SBE*, vol. 24, *Pahlavi Texts, Part III*, tr. by E. W. West, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970, p.293.

¹⁴ Dating from aprox. the 4th century C.E.

¹⁵ Vendidad 8, IX, 81, in *The Zend Avesta, Part 1*, (SBE 4), tr. by James Darmesteter, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1969, p.113.

¹⁶ E.g., verse 1, which perfectly depicts the sorrow: “To what land to turn; aye, whither turning shall I go? On the part of a kinsman (prince), or allied peer, none, to conciliate, give (offerings) to me (to help my cause), nor yet the throngs of labour, (not) even such as these, nor yet (still less) the evil tyrants of the province. How then shall I (establish well the Faith, and thus) conciliate Thy (grace), O Lord?”; *The Zend Avesta, Part 3*, (SBE 31), tr. by L. H. Mills, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1969, p.134-135.

dogs, shows up in front of it. The soul asks her who she is, and she answers, identifying herself with *dāenā*¹⁷, i.e., its own religious soul or celestial double, a concept already known from the *Gāthās*, quite similar with the *daimon* (protector *genius* of a person's life) that Plato mentions in his last book of the *Republic* (620D-621D)¹⁸. The good thoughts and deeds of a person during life make its *dāenā* become more and more beautiful. The description of the weak soul reverses the above-mentioned details, with its *daēnā* who appears as a naked ugly woman. The scene of the meeting with this feminine figure which symbolises a human being's religious achievements takes place at the crossing of Činvat bridge:

Then comes the well-shapen, strong and tall-formed maid, with the dogs at her sides, one who can distinguish, who is graceful, who does what she wants, and is of high understanding. She makes the soul of the righteous one go up above the Hara-berezaiti; above the Kinvad bridge she places it in the presence of the heavenly gods themselves" (V.19,II,30; cf. WZ 31,3: "(3) Le quatrième jour, la forme de femme accueille l'âme et lui fait passer le pont Činvat, le 'passage des lamentations', terrifiant, comme la mère à la naissance des enfants)¹⁹,

revealing itself as a matrimonial meeting, that is the union, *marriage* of the soul with its intimate double (Kellens 2002).

After three nights, the weak one's soul is left by the demon Vizareša ("the one who leaves") on the Činvat bridge (Zaehner 1964: 214), falling down into darkness. The crossing of the bridge is done with shouts and laments and physical pain (V. 13)²⁰. The young maiden,

¹⁷ *Daena* is called, in old Avestan tradition, the spiritual (*mental*) *being* of man, the self, a kind of *anima coelestis*. Due to various reasons, it is difficult to exactly determine or grasp the conceptual content of this term thoroughly. Indeed, it appears frequently in the *Gāthās*, in later writings, though its almost exclusive meaning connects with the moment when a faithful departed person's soul is about to enter heaven, where the person's *daena* welcomes it, playing a *psychopomp* role. Both meanings, *spiritual being* and *religion* (faith), are intimately interconnected, possibly denoting human's ability of spiritual insight as well. On a terrestrial, empirical, level, it might symbolise the community of Zoroastrian adherents (Rus 1985: 692). Herman Lommel seems to propose also the meaning of "*teaching*" or "*conviction*", alongside that of "*religion*" (probably inherited from the later Islamic tradition); cf. Reichelt 1967: 448; Lommel 1930: 150; for J. D. C. Pavri, this is man's *conscience*; Pavri 1926: 29; Reitzenstein 1921: 31; Vahman 1985: 665; Corbin 1989: 41; Lütge 2008: 115-117; *Wesenheit, Individualität, Ich*, cf. Hinz 1961: 95; Boyce 1975:239; Shaked 1994: 139; Colpe 2003: 383-402; Van der Leeuw 1970: 684: "*geistige Urwesen*".

¹⁸ See the translation of B. Jowett and Lewis Campbell, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1894.

¹⁹ *Vendidad* 19,II, 30, in *The Zend Avesta*, Part 1, (SBE 4), p.213.

²⁰ The myth of this *transition* seems to have been borrowed by Islam – where we find the bridge *sirat* – from Zoroastrianism. See Leszynsky 1909: 42.

which is *dāenā*, guides the souls of the righteous on the bridge, towards the spiritual *yazatas*²¹. At the entrance on the bridge, we find two dogs which act as guardians, the bridge being associated sometimes with *Hara-berezati* (*Harburz*) or Mount Alborz, where the judgment will take place. Mithra, Sroš, Rašnu, Ahura Mazda and Vohuman will exercise this act (*Dd.XXXI,11*²²). When the souls cross the bridge, it becomes large and comfortable for the righteous, who enter the dimension of eternal light, through their universe of good thought, words and deeds (symbolised by stars, moon and sun), there where Ahura Mazda dwells. For the weak and sinful, the bridge is narrow and dangerous, and they travel to a frightful place. There, gathered together, every soul realises the terrible feeling of loneliness. Dark, cold and foul odours characterise this *house of lie*.

The Činvat *bridge* acts as the medium for an automatic judgement, being in the same time the symbol of an *initiatory challenge*. Consequently, its crossing, even without a favourable verdict, facilitates the soul with a deeper knowing of its true *self*, an awareness of eternity. Beyond it, we can find good and evil spirits who protect or harm, according to the nature of their functions. The first category includes Sroš, Rašnu and Vohuman, the other includes, for example, Wizareša. The progressing of the righteous on the bridge is described as having four stages, the first of which is in consonance with the three ways of good thought, word and deed. Then, the soul will be welcomed by the formerly dead souls and Wohuman, being offered food and drink. The bridge can thus be found on a supernatural level, beyond which the righteous reach to the entrance of paradise, where they will wait until the day of resurrection. On the fourth day, a demon brings the sinful to the bridge, where Rašnu displays all his evil nature. There, he arrives at the infinite darkness, where the unrighteous dead people surround him; until the resurrection, he will stay in hell, enduring misery and various torments.

At the proper time, all the dead will be resurrected and gathered in one place. Resurrection and *frašokereti* imply rehabilitation; the new creation "will (thenceforth) never grow old and never die, never decaying and never rotting, ever living and ever increasing, and

²¹ *Daena* herself seems to be also part of this class of *yazatas*, i.e. Beings Worthy of Worship. Cf. Stausberg 2008: 32.

²² "And that account is at the time the account occurs; those taking the account are Auharmazd, Vohuman, Mitro, Srosh, and Rashnu, and they shall make up the account of all with justice, each one at his own time, as the reply is written in its own chapter"; *Pahlavi Texts*, Part 2 (*SBE* 18), tr. by E.W. West, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970, p.66.

master of its wish", that is independent (Yt. 19, IV, 23)²³. After the general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, the former will be guided into the *good existence*. In late Persian, this good existence came to be known as *paradise*,²⁴ *the house of praising, the treasure house, the house of reward, the house of song*. All these expressions characterise the final condition of the faithful ones, full of happiness and contentment, receiving rewards and abundant blessings from Ahura Mazda. On the other hand, the wicked shall be thrown in the eternal hell, the endless dark. With this, the world should complete its final stage, all the eschatological events taking place on a superior, celestial level (Hong 1981: 77).

The righteous is the one who surpasses the evil in the world. We learn from the Zoroastrian texts that the moral character resides not only in sincere deeds but mostly in an *inner impulse* towards a behaviour in accordance with the Zoroastrian principles of life. Thus, good thoughts, good words and good deeds form a moral triad. According to the Zoroastrian cosmogonical narrative, when Mazda created humankind, he gave it physical, mental and spiritual powers. Therefore, a person's duty is to cultivate these powers and use them for the service of Ahura Mazda and humanity. A primary teaching is that about physical, mental and spiritual purity, which enables people to lead a virtuous, honest, simple, devotional life. The complicated body-purifying rituals suggest that a *mens sana* could reside only in a healthy body. We find a similarity with Islam, Judaism and Christianity in this regard, in that without physical and spiritual health, human beings wouldn't be able to fulfil their three capital duties in life: towards God, themselves and the others.

Free will and the true religion

In observing its duties, *Avesta* instructs a person to follow the way to the divine. First, it has to lead a life of abnegation, showing altruism and mercy, then cultivate the freedom of conscience, a free will. But the work of Druj (the demon of Lie) within creation is almost overwhelming, because its evil deeds help the power of lie perpetuate in the world (Dhalla 1972: 263-264). When the human leaves the company of Ahura Mazda, it becomes an easy prey to Druj, who makes its life miserable and sorrowful. As long as it stays under Druj's

²³ *The Zend Avesta*, Part II (SBE 23), tr. by J. Darmesteter, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1969, pp.291-292.

²⁴ From the Av. *pairidaēza*, garden; see Anders Hultgård, *Zoroastrian Influences in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Postscript for Prof. Stausberg 2008: 101-112.

devastating influence, it does almost nothing on behalf of its creator. Here angels help the person remove and eliminate the demonic power from creation, by contributing to the continuation of the work of cosmic renewal. Hence, we can decipher, technically speaking, the idea of an instant *frašokereti*, starting from this very dimension, from this very empirical life. There is a *yet*, but the final perfection is to be found beyond this world. Like Angra Mayniu, when humankind shall have reached a state of goodness, that is, a *totalising* goodness, Druj will be entirely powerless and disappear.

The idea of a *store* of good deeds appears explicitly in the Pehlevi writings (e.g., *Mainog-i Khirad* 2, 96). The *den* which comes toward the departed person's soul is called "treasurer of good works" (*Dd.* 24, 5). The wicked one meets an ugly woman who bears the "store of its sin" (evil deeds) (*Dd.* 25,5). The good deeds done by relatives and friends after one person's death relieve her suffering (*Dd.* 8). Endowed with a *free will*, the human person bears here responsibility towards its condition in the hereafter. We found out earlier that *daēnā* was used in the *Gāthās* and *Avesta* both with an *objective* meaning (that is *religio*, faith, community) and with a *subjective* one (conscience, inner being, an *eye of the soul*), but it denotes *free will* (Tavadia 1931: 119-132) as well, manifesting itself as an *eikon* of the deeds, which are an echo of the inner dialectics of the person. Free will and religious attitude stand for the true determination of its future destiny. Sooner or later, the human will make a free choice between truth and lie, between *vera religio* (*mazdayasna*), about which Zarathushtra used to say it had been revealed to him, and *falsa religio* (*daēvayasna*) (Benveniste 1970: 5), that his contemporaries had inherited from their ancestors. The righteous are those who made the correct choice, i.e. the *mazdayasnans*.

The various levels of paradise are mentioned in the *Vendidād* 19, II, 36: the abode of Ahura Mazda, the abode of the Ameša Spentas beings, the place of the other holy beings, the place of eternal happiness and blessing²⁵. A threefold vision of the afterlife worlds is given in *Mainog-i Khirad* 12,13-15 and other places, which includes paradise/heaven; the middle space (*hammistagān* or "ever-stationary") (cf. MacKenzie 1986: 41)²⁶, for those whose evil and good deeds are equal in number (the meaning of this term *hammistagān* is uncertain, probably literally speaking it means "the place of the mixed ones"), where they shall not feel anything

²⁵ *The Vendidad*, 19, II, 36, p.215.

²⁶ MacKenzie renders it as *limbo*, *the neutral station between heaven and hell*.

else but cold and heat (*Mainog-i Khirad*, 7,20); and hell²⁷. They are mentioned in a similar way in *Arda Wirāz-nāmag* 6.9-11. Souls receive these destinations according to their merits or demerits. About *hammistagān*, Zoroastrians used to say it was situated somewhere between earth and stars. Resembling purgatory, this place is divided into two compartments, one for those who are mostly better than wicked, the other for those who are more wicked than good, this idea showing itself more refined as against the original conception, which merely prescribed hell for the wicked and heaven for the good. The Pehlevi writings emphasise *penitence* as preparation for a personal judgment (cf. *Dd.* 41,5²⁸) and expiation. In the Zoroastrian perception, the sins which were eradicated don't count at the final judgment (*Dd.* 12, 2-3). In case they were not expiated, people should be punished. We can mention that they make a difference between sins which imply hurting of other people and sins committed against one's soul.

A very vivid image of the afterlife is offered in *Arda Wirāz-nāmag*, a Middle Persian apocalyptic text that describes the journey of the pious Wirāz into the various places of the other world. The context of his journey is a special one, like in Kerdīr's vision, that is to verify the truth of the Zoroastrian faith about afterlife and the effectiveness of the rituals. This text seems to have been elaborated somewhere after the fall of the Achaemenid empire (330 B.C.E.), being wandered by a kind of religious uncertainty, but the final elaboration²⁹ of the text seems to refer to the early Islamic period. We may wonder whether Plato's famous myth of Er could have had any influence in the creation process of such a visionary account.

Concluding remarks

The end is, conceptually speaking, a *total* and a *totalising* fact, which finds the human being naked, pure body, pure soul, as the religious fact does, playing a *re-ontologising* role,

²⁷ *Dina-i Mainog-i Khirad*, in *Pahlavi Texts, Part 3 (SBE 24)*, tr. by E. W. West, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970, p.38: "And the place of him whose good work is more is in heaven, the place of him whose good work and sin are equal is among the ever-stationary, and when the crime is more, his path is then to hell". The Zoroastrian hell was often compared with the Roman-Catholic purgatory, being only temporary. See Le Goff 1995: 48.

²⁸ *Dadistan-i Dinik, Pahlavi Texts*, Part 2, cited tr., pp.137-138: "When he dies, without renunciation of that sin and impenitently, in that improperly-constituted law, the position of his soul is then in the worst existence".

²⁹ Probably 6th-10th centuries C.E.

understood as a reposing into the natural process of being (Tatu 2011: 98). Salvation is meant both for the body and the soul, a real process that means a *making whole*. That is a moment of fullness and light, when the *eyes of flesh* will become *eyes of fire* – if we are allowed to use one of Professor H. Corbin's favourite expressions - seeing the truth as it really is. We understand from the Zoroastrian texts that the end is included in the anthropology and the anthropology of end is total, because all people have unquestionably the same destination, the *beyond*. The different souls spoken about formerly (WZ 29,2-3; 30,1) are nothing but spiritual-ethical faculties belonging to the same, unique entity on whose basis the human being creates its journey towards the beyond. The hereafter, therefore, occupies a determinant role in Zoroastrianism, based structurally speaking on its *protological dualism* with the final *monotheistic* calling to a certain communion in salvation.

Just like the Shamanic phenomenon or the various dualisms, we think that, in the case of the idea of afterlife, we may speak about a *synchronic* development, on a *phenomenological* level, because, in the same manner as the ideas of good, evil, beauty, life, death, beingness, the notion of afterlife is inherent for any mentality. We avoid, therefore, the hypothesis of different Jewish, Graeco-Roman, Christian or Islamic influences in Zoroastrianism and vice versa. Actually, the idea of afterlife is a natural fact within the Iranian cultural-spiritual space, conferring on the human person a gnoseological perspective as incredible as the one from other cultures, for example the archaic peoples' cultures. If, keeping in our sight the unthorough view of this life, due to the limits of our vision and knowledge, we cannot perceive the *beyond*, then its extension within the post-mortem space opens up an extremely wide horizon. And the Zoroastrian sacred scriptures fully attest this fact. If we take the idea of afterlife as an invariant, from the whole Zoroastrian religion seen as a cultural, psychognoseological system, then we'll discover its real coherence. In general, we meet in all religions or faiths the idea of life as a divine datum, and the same happens with afterlife or post-mortem destiny as elements of a mental process. What is essential is that in the absence of the knowledge of divinity and the divine things, the true destiny and philosophy of living cannot be accomplished. After all, since religion implies also the mental dimension, one of the final answers could reside in the "unity of the human mind" (Couliano 1991: 1), though there are different geographical or ethnic areas and specific manners of expression.

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