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LINDSAY JONES  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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Lindsay Jones, Editor in Chief

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tice and thought. He detects there rational elements and mystical components important enough to merit serious attention in any critical assessment of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's later contributions.

CHRISTIAN W. TROLL (1987)

**AHRIMAN** SEE AHURA MAZDĀ AND ANGRA MAINYU

**AHURA MAZDĀ AND ANGRA MAINYU.**

Ahura Mazda (called Lord Wisdom in the Avestan [Av.] and Ōrmazd in the Pahlavi [Pahl.] texts) and Angra Mainyu (Av. Evil Spirit, Pahl. Ahreman) are the names of the two opposed primordial powers that represent good and evil in the dualism of Iran's pre-Islamic religion, Zoroastrianism. In the structural system of the oldest literature, the *Gāthās*, Angra Mainyu is the destructive force opposed not to Ahura Mazda directly but to Spenta Mainyu, the "beneficent spirit" representing Ahura Mazda's creative force. These creative and destructive powers form a primordial pair of mutually exclusive opposites like light and darkness. The creative force (Spenta Mainyu) is negated by the destructive one (Angra Mainyu) in the same way that Ahura Mazda's other spiritual creations, or Bounteous Immortals (*amesha spentas*) are negated by an evil opposite: truth (*asha*) by deceit (*druj*), good mind (*vohu manah*) by evil mind (*aka manah*), and right-mindedness (*ārmaiti*) by arrogance (*tarāmaiti*). This dichotomy is also reflected in the Avestan language insofar as there are special vocabularies for the good, ahuric beings on the one hand, and for the evil, daevic ones, on the other.

Through his creative force, Spenta Mainyu, Ahura Mazda brought forth life, while the destructive force produced non-life (Y 30.4; Y 44.7). In the Old Avestan "Worship in Seven Chapters" (*Yasna Haptanghaiti*), Ahura Mazda is praised for creating "all that is good" (Y 37.1), and in the Gathic hymn *Yasna* 44 he is presented as the author of two manifestations of perfect life. One is spiritual and includes truth and good mind, while the other is physical, entailing such phenomena as the sun, stars, moon, earth, water, wind, clouds, plants, and the daily rhythm of light and darkness, sleep and activity, dawn, midday and night. Both spiritual and physical creations were originally made perfect, without any fault or defect, and especially free from decay and death. This positive view of a good and perfect material world is unique and of fundamental importance for Zoroastrian eschatology, for at the end of time, the physical creation will be reinstated in perfection. Both spiritual and physical life were created by Ahura Mazda for the purpose of overcoming evil, Angra Mainyu. Apart from the distinction between spiritual and physical creation, the most salient feature of Zoroastrian doctrine is its dualistic solution to the problem of evil: the latter does not come from God but has a separate origin and is antagonistic to him and his work. All evil in the world, including deceit and death, comes from that external source.

Angra Mainyu is also opposed to Spenta Mainyu in the Younger Avesta. As observed by Herman Lommel (1930, p. 29), the two mutually antagonistic forces are presented as the originators of two opposed creations, one truthful and good, the other deceitful and evil. The two powers and their respective creations are in a constant struggle with one another. But at the end of time Spenta Mainyu will emerge victorious (Yt 13.13; Y 10.16) and Angra Mainyu will retreat "powerless" (Yt 19.96). In addition, when Zarathushtra repeats the formula "O Ahura Mazda, most bounteous spirit, creator of the physical world, truthful one" (e.g., Yt 10.73; Yt 14.1, 14.34, 14.42; Vd 2.1 and *passim*), Spenta Mainyu functions as an epithet of Ahura Mazda. Such a usage indicates a merger between Ahura Mazda and his creative force.

In the cosmological myth of the Pahlavi texts, Ahreman (the Middle Persian form of Angra Mainyu) is directly opposed to Ōhrmazd (the Middle Persian form of Ahura Mazda). The most coherent accounts of this are found in the *Bundahishn* and *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram* and have been conveniently, though not entirely reliably, transcribed and translated by R. C. Zaehner (1955, pp. 276–321 and 339–343). According to these accounts, in the beginning Ōhrmazd existed on high in endless light, while Ahreman was abased in endless darkness, the two being separated from one another by the Void. They were thus both limitless within themselves and limited at their boundaries. Ōhrmazd, being omniscient, was aware of the existence of Ahreman, while the latter, characterized by ignorance and hindsight, did not know of his opponent.

Ōhrmazd started the course of events by bringing forth out of himself the creation in the spirit (*mēnōg*) state. When Ahreman rushed to the boundary of his darkness, he became aware of Ōhrmazd and his spiritual creation. He then crawled back into the darkness and, in order to destroy Ōhrmazd's creatures, fashioned the evil spiritual counter-creation. In a preemptive move, Ōhrmazd invited Ahreman to enter an agreement according to which battle would be limited to a period of nine thousand years. Ahreman, confident that he could defeat Ōhrmazd, accepted, and from then on was bound by that contract, which he was incapable of breaking. However, as was pointed out by Shaul Shaked (1994, p. 24), the neat distinction between good and evil is blurred here, because this myth is based on the assumption that Ahreman is true to his word, an idea incompatible with the deceitful nature of evil. Thereupon, the story continues, Ōhrmazd recited the Ahunavar prayer, thus revealing to Ahreman his final defeat. Ahreman fell in stupefaction, and while he lay unconscious, Ōhrmazd created the physical (*gētīg*) world. After three thousand years, Ahreman awoke from his stupor, beheld Ōhrmazd's beautiful and perfect physical creation, and attacked it, bringing pollution, pain, illness and death into the world. Since that attack, the world has been afflicted by evil. However, this time of "mixture" (*gumezišn*) was limited to three thousand years. The birth of Zarathushtra marked the beginning of the fourth trimillen-

nium, in the course of which three saviors are expected to arrive at intervals of one thousand years. Zarathushtra brought the Mazdā-worshiping religion to humankind, thus equipping them with the means of fighting evil successfully. This struggle is expected to be won by the third and victorious savior (*Sōšyans*), who will drive evil out of the material world. At that point, Ahreman will withdraw powerless and the world will be reinstated in perfection (*frašegird*).

While in the Avesta there is a triangular structure of Ahura Mazdā and Spenta Mainyu, on the one hand, and Angra Mainyu, on the other, in the Pahlavi texts there is a balance of two forces on each side. From a structural point of view, Öhrmazd is opposed by Ahreman, and *spenāg mēnōg* (the Middle Persian form of Av. *spenta mainyu*) by *gannāg mēnōg*, the foul spirit, newly formed to match *spenāg mēnōg* as a negative opposite, presumably after the upgrading of Ahreman to be directly opposed to Öhrmazd. They are contrasted with one another, for instance in *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 1.9, "the goodness of the Holy Spirit (*spenāg mēnōg*) and the non-goodness of the Foul Spirit (*gannāg mēnōg*)." In addition, *gannāg mēnōg* is like Ahreman in denoting the opponent of Öhrmazd, for example, "I, who am Öhrmazd, will be the supreme ruler and the Foul Spirit (*gannāg mēnōg*) will be the ruler of nothing" (*Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 6.3). As in the Avesta, the beneficent spirit is identified with Öhrmazd, for instance in the formula *spenāg mēnōg dādār öhrmazd*, "the beneficent spirit, the Creator Öhrmazd" (e.g., *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 35.7).

While there is direct opposition between good and evil on the spiritual level, there is no such dichotomy in the material world, which was wholly good before the assault of evil. In the structural conception of Zoroastrianism, the physical creation does not have a symmetrical negative counterpart in the way that Ahura Mazdā's perfect spiritual creation does. Angra Mainyu produced a negative countercreation only on the spiritual level, not on the physical one. The reason evil is incapable of producing a material creation is given in a *Dēnkard* passage discussed by Shaul Shaked (1967, pp. 229ff.): the good, luminous *mēnōg* carries "the hot and moist power of living nature" in itself and is therefore able to become manifest in physical, *gētīg* form. In contrast, the evil, dark *mēnōg*, being the negation of life, has a "cold and dry" nature, and is therefore incapable of "reaching compounded materiality." Evil creatures such as wolves, reptiles, and "demons who rush about" are explained as "embodied creatures of luminous seed" that have been hijacked by evil *mēnōg* forms. Thus, the presence of evil in the material world is secondary and derivative, as it presupposes the ontological reality of Ahura Mazdā's material creation. The latter was devised by its creator as a battleground that evil was bound to enter as a result of its destructive nature. Evil clings to God's good physical creation in a parasitic manner and, in the words of Mary Boyce (1975, p. 201) "preys, vampire-like" on it and tries to corrupt and eventually destroy it. However, it is able to adhere only to the physical creations, not to the

spiritual ones. As shown by Shaul Shaked (1971, pp. 71ff.), evil requires the physical creations to cling to in order to be present in the material world. It is for that reason that, in the Pahlavi texts, Öhrmazd is said to exist while Ahreman does not. The connection that underlies this statement is that Ahreman exists only on the spiritual level because the physical one does not have its own evil material creation.

SEE ALSO Zurvanism.

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ALMUT HINTZE (2005)

**AHURAS.** The Iranian term *ahura* ("lord") corresponds to the Vedic *asura*. Whereas in the Vedas *asura* is usually applied to Dyaus-Pitṛ ("father sky"), the Indian equivalent of the Roman Jupiter, in Iran and in the Zoroastrian tradition