
The Standard Doctrine of Creation in Zoroastrian

Pahlavi Texts



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Abstract

The main scheme of creation in Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature is adopted from the Young Avesta. In this scheme Ohrmazd creates the world in the manner of a skillful craftsman who conceives of the form of his product and then fashions it in matter. The number of the constituents of the world and the sequence in which they are created are already fixed in the Avesta. Pahlavi authors draw on Greek philosophical tradition to rationalise their account of the creation of the world. The article also explores some of the complications that their philosophical elaboration of the Avestan scheme occasions.

Keywords: Zoroastrian Pahlavi Literature; Avesta; Creation Myth; Presocratic Philosophy; Plato

I have suggested to reserve the designation creation myth or creation doctrine for a specific type of account of the cosmic beginning, namely the type in which an intelligent craftsman conceives the world in its form and then transposes this model into matter.¹ In particular, creation myth may be conceptually distinguished from cosmogony, which describes the emergence of the world in stages (or generations of gods). Cosmogony is the normal type of account of the formation of the world in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean cultures. It is likely that the eighth century BCE Greek storytellers (e.g., Hesiod) took their pattern of cosmogony from their eastern neighbours.² In accordance with the suggested categorial distinction, the number of original creation doctrines can be reduced to three, possibly four (if we include Genesis 1):³ the Zoroastrian creation myth, perhaps the

¹See A. Ahmadi, 'Divine Procreation of the World in Zoroastrian Pahlavi Texts', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (forthcoming).

²See W. Burkert, 'The Logic of Cosmogony', in *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, (ed.) R. G. A. Buxton (Oxford, 1999), pp. 87–106; W. Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge Ma., 2004).

³Cf. J. Bremmer, 'Genesis 1.1: A Jewish Response to a Persian Challenge?' in *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 339–345, especially pp. 344–345, who suggests an Achaemenid background for Genesis 1.1.

Memphite theology of Ptah, and Plato's account of creation in the *Timaeus*.⁴ The main scheme of creation in Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts such as the *Bundahišn* is adopted from the (Young) Avesta, as we will see, not only in its conception but in its actual structure, which is why we can call it the standard doctrine of creation. Nonetheless, the Pahlavi doctrine of creation is significantly influenced by Greek natural philosophy, most noticeably in the importance given by Pahlavi authors to *wād*, which in the context of cosmological speculations should be understood as "air". In a more fundamental (if less conspicuous) way this influence can be seen in the rationalization of the doctrine.

This article consists of three main themes. First, I try to explain how Pahlavi authors and in particular the author(s) of the *Bundahišn* envisage the process of creation. What concepts do they use for this purpose, and how are these actually deployed? In their account the process of creation comprises categories of different beings, from the uncreated *mēnōg* beings to the created *gētīg* beings. This discussion should be considered an essay of historical understanding that involves conceptual explication and translation, generally following the approach of de Menasce, and (partly) Bailey and Shaked.⁵ Second, I show that the Pahlavi schedule of creation is adopted from the (Young) Avesta. Although there are some variations in the Avestan account, the standard scheme we find in Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts appears to be already fixed in the Avesta (e.g., Y 19). Third, I argue that Greek philosophy significantly stamped the conceptualization and the organization of the Pahlavi accounts of creation. Terms such as *tōhm* or *mēnōg* acquire important semantic aspects and valences in the context of cosmological speculations under the influence of Greek philosophy.

The Pahlavi doctrine of creation

The most precise synopsis of the standard doctrine of creation is given by the author of *Bundahišn* in Bd 1.52: *u-š dām ī mēnōg mēnōgihā dārēd u-š dām ī gētīg mēnōgihā dād u-š did be o gētīgihā dād* "[Ohrmazd] holds the *mēnōg* creations in the *mēnōg* state; he created the *gētīg* world in the *mēnōg* state, and then he transposed it into the *gētīg* state".⁶ There are two stages

⁴Cf. P. Hadot, 'Physique et poésie dans le Timée de Platon', *Revue de théologie et philosophie* 115 2 (1983), pp. 113–133, who describes Timaeus's account of creation as "récit cosmogonique" (*ibid.*, p. 119); D. Sedley, 'Hesiod's Theogony and Plato's Timaeus', in *Plato and Hesiod*, (eds.) G. R. Boys-Stones and J. H. Haubold (Oxford, 2009), pp. 246–258. For the theology of Ptah, see S. Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (New York, 2004), pp. 92–95, 172–177, 180–182; J. Assmann, 'Mono-, Pan-, and Cosmotheism: Thinking the "One" in Egyptian Theology', *Orient* 33 (1998), pp. 143–146; S. Blicker, *La cosmogonie égyptienne* (Fribourg, 1994), pp. 53, 113–114, 126, 137–145. The case of Ptah is too complex for an absolute statement. See my remarks in Ahmadi, 'Divine Procreation of the World in Zoroastrian Pahlavi Texts', note 1.

⁵See J. de Menasce, *Škand-gumānīk Vīcār. La solution décisive des doutes: une apologétique mazdéenne du XIe siècle* (Fribourg, 1945); J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard* (Paris, 1973); H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford, 1971); S. Shaked, 'The Notions "mēnōg" and "gētīg" in the Pahlavi Texts and their relation to Eschatology', *Acta Orientalia* 33 (1971), pp. 59–107.

⁶The references to the *Bundahišn* are throughout to F. Pakzad (ed.), *Bundahišn: Zoroastriische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie* (Tehran, 2005). The cited passage is specified by the abbreviation "Bd" followed by the chapter and paragraph numbers. I will not translate the Middle Persian terms *gētīg* and *mēnōg* in this article, because there are no adequate English equivalents for them. These two MP terms are not opposite simply in the way material and spiritual, or terrestrial and celestial, or mortal and divine are, although these oppositions are relevant to various degrees depending on the context. Generally, *gētīg* means visible and tangible, and *mēnōg* invisible and intangible. See D 3.123. (The *Dēnkard* 3 passages are cited from F. Fazilat (ed.), *Dinkard. Book III 113–194* (Tehran, 2004), unless otherwise stated. The cited passage is specified by the abbreviation "D" followed by the book and chapter numbers). But these determinations do not always hold. The Zoroastrian conception of light in particular resists classification in

of creation: 1) conceiving the world, and 2) making the world. Creation of the world, however, requires concepts other than the *mēnōg* archetypes of *gētīg* phenomena. The author collectively calls these concepts *dām ī mēnōg*. Ohrmazd's "*mēnōg* creations" comprise qualities (such as "constancy": Bd 1.38), deities (such as the Amahraspandān: Bd 1.52) and the two formal dimensions of time (Bd 1.41) and space (Bd 1.44). These are necessary for the conception and the subsequent creation of the world but do not have a corresponding *gētīg* counterpart (e.g., Bd 1.53 concerning space). The being of these entities is *mēnōg*, that is to say, it consists of (celestial) light. The relation between Ohrmazd's mind and the *mēnōg* (understood as celestial) sphere is not clear in Pahlavi texts. Ohrmazd's conceptions are *eo ipso* so many *mēnōg* entities and must have a certain manner of existence. For instance, *nēk-ravišnīh* which is the "*ipseity* of creation" (*dahišn xwadīh*) is described as a *mēnōg* (Bd 1.34).⁷ Hypostatization of abstract notions was a normal practice of the ancient thought. The gods of the Zoroastrian pantheon for the most part are hypostatized notions.⁸ Plato, for instance, refines and systematizes the practice in his doctrine of ideal forms.

The author of the *Bundahišn* is aware that if Ohrmazd is a creator, he is *ipso facto* an existent in the normal sense and must be conceivable as such. In other words, the conditions of the existence of Ohrmazd as a distinct being must be coeval with Ohrmazd. According to the Pahlavi author (Bd 1.2) these are Ohrmazd's time (*zamān ī akanārag*) and place (*asar-rōšnīh*) and the qualities of omniscience (*harvisp-āgāhīh*) and goodness (*wehīh*). The two qualities define the *ipseity* of Ohrmazd⁹, his *differentia* vis-à-vis Ahriman. Finally, the *xwadīh* of Ohrmazd is *rōšnīh* "light", in opposition to the *xwadīh* of Ahriman, which is *tārīgīh* "darkness". The usual translation of *xwadīh* as "essence" is somewhat misleading, since it evokes immateriality (in opposition to existence) because of its Christian theological heritage. Clearly, if the *xwadīh* of the god is light, understood as a visible element susceptible to receiving form (e.g., *kirb ī dāmān*), it cannot utterly lack substantiality (see below). This is why it is better in my view to leave the term untranslated or translate it with *ipseity*. To these defining distinctions is added the spatial separateness of the god from his adversary. There is an empty space between the two (Bd 1.5 *u-šān mayān tuhīgīh*). On the other hand, qualities such as *xwadāyīh*

terms of these opposites. All things exist first in the *mēnōg* state and what would become the world is subsequently created in stages into the *gētīg* state. There are contexts in which *mēnōg* refers to a model *conceived* by Ohrmazd (something like a mental image) and *existing* (in the celestial sphere) as a form or body whose substantiality consists in light. Cf. Sh. Shaked, "The Notions "mēnōg" and "gētīg" in the Pahlavi Texts and their relation to Eschatology". In other contexts, *mēnōg* means "principle" or even "quality".

⁷The literal meaning of *nēk-ravišnīh* is "proceeding finely". It must be understood *in situ* to bear on the entire creation and not simply human conduct, hence something like "flourishing". Bd 1.34 *u-š nazdist dahišn xwadīh dād nēk-ravišnīh ān mēnōg i-š tan ī xuwēš padīš weh be kard ka-š dām-dahišnīh menūd čē-š az dām-dahišnīh xwadāyīh būd* [Ohrmazd] first created *nēk-ravišnīh* as the *ipseity* of his creation—that *mēnōg* by which he benefited himself when he conceived of creation, for his sovereignty came to exist as the result of his creation of the world'. The creation of a flourishing world is a credit to its maker who thereby becomes a ruler, too. The flourishing world of course adheres to Ohrmazd's plan and thus may be described as virtuous. The translation of this text in D. Agostini and S. Thrope (eds.), *The Bundahišn: The Zoroastrian Book of Creation* (Oxford, 2020), p. 8, is virtually incomprehensible: "At first, he created the essence of creation, goodness, that spirit through which his own body was made good when he thought of creation. For he became Lord through creation".

⁸See J. Kellens, *Cinq cours sur les Yašt de l'Avesta* (Paris, 2016), pp. 169–188.

⁹Cf. Sedley, "Hesiod's Theogony and Plato's Timaeus", p. 248: "The world [in Timaeus's account] was created by an intelligent god, whose superiority as a creative artist guarantees that none but he would even be capable of destroying it, while his goodness guarantees that he will never in fact choose to do so. Ergo his creation will last forever".

(sovereignty) or *frazānaqīh* (wisdom) require an object over which they are exercised, and thus only accrue to Ohrmazd after the creation of the world (Bd 1.33).¹⁰ The author methodically proceeds through the premises of creation—at least, this seems to be his intention. First are those qualities that pertain to time. From his own “limitless time” (*zamān ī akanārag*) Ohrmazd fashions the *zamān ī kanāraqōmand* “limited time”, which is more meaningfully designated as *zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy* (Bd 1.38). This term is generally translated as the “time of long dominion”. While this translation is not wrong, it obscures what the Pahlavi phrase means to convey, namely that the limited time has its own laws. Time sets in motion Ohrmazd’s creation and thus causes its propagation (*dām ōd pad zamān rawāgīh nē bauwēd*), and ineluctably occasions the spread of Ahriman’s creatures, too (*ka zamān brēhēnīd dām-iz ī ahreman rawāg be bauwēd*) (Bd 1.35; cf. WZ 1.28¹¹). From the “limited time” Ohrmazd “creates” the time-relations or temporal determinations of the (future) world. The passage of time implies the transience of whatever is subject to it. Against this logical implication, the *Bundahišn* author maintains that subjection to time as it concerns Ohrmazd’s creation does not imply transience, inconstancy, and ephemerality (Bd 1.38). On the other hand, time will prove fatal for Ahriman’s creation: Bd 1.36 *u-š ācāraqīhā petyārag aqār kardan rāy zamān frāz brēhēnīd* “having no other option, [Ohrmazd] created time in order to incapacitate the Adversary”. The antecedence of time with respect to the temporal determinations of the world is expressed by the phrase *az zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy asazišnīh frāz dād* “from the long autonomous time [Ohrmazd] created [the principle of] intransience [i.e., of his creation]”. How does one explain the paradox of deriving (or generating) permanence from temporal flux? Ohrmazd “fashions” the measurable time out of necessity (*ācāraqīhā*). Does this mean that its value is limited to its function in suppressing Ahriman? Had time not been necessary for this task, Ohrmazd would not have created it? At the same time, the author is aware that without time, there would be no motion, and without motion, there would be no propagation of Ohrmazd’s creation, whose very *xwadīh* is to flourish. In other words, without time the world would remain sterile. Zādspram explicitly articulates this point (WZ 1.27). In effect, time is supposed to reserve its positive aspects for Ohrmazd’s creation, and its destructive aspects for Ahriman’s (see below).

The process of creation in general is presented as a series of (hypostatized) concepts or elements each of which is derived from the preceding one. This rational narrative order, as we may call it, is taken from Greek philosophy. I come back to this point below. After measurable time Ohrmazd fashions the world in “(visible) form” (*kirb ī dāmān ī xuwēš*) from his own *ipseity* (*ān ī xuwēš xwadīh*), which is described as the “being of light” (*stī ī rōšnīh*), along with the “form of good space” (*kirb ī way ī weh*) presumably as the requisite container (Bd 1.53). The creation of the Amahraspandān and other deities (Bd 1.52) follows the creation of space (*way ī dagrand-xwadāy* “the long autonomous space”).¹² The *mēnōg* stage of

¹⁰It is only after the creation (*dām-dahišnīh*) that Ohrmazd becomes *xwadāy* “sovereign”, *sūd-xuwestār* “beneficent”, *frazānaq* “sagacious”, *jud-bēš* “benign”, *āškārag* “manifest”, *hamāg-rāyēnīdār* “all-governing”, *abzōnīg* “promoting” and *harwišp-nigerīdār* “all-observing” (Bd 1.33).

¹¹The passages from the *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* are cited from P. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli (eds.), *Anthologie de Zādspram* (Leuven–Paris, 1993); the cited text is specified by the abbreviation “WZ” followed by chapter and paragraph numbers.

¹²Bd 1.52 *az amahraspandān pas az way ī dagrand-xwadāy nazdīst Wahman frāz brēhēnīd* ‘from among the Amahraspandān—after [creating] the lasting autonomous space—[Ohrmazd] first fashioned Wahman’. Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, p. 10, translate this text: “Afterward, from the Way of Long Dominion he first fashioned

creation of the *Bundahišn* account does not have a comparable counterpart in the extant Avesta.¹³ It was probably elaborated by the philosophically minded Pahlavi theologian. The construction indicates the author's appreciation of the requirements of a philosophical account, while it obviously tries to accommodate Zoroastrian dogmas.¹⁴ Just as he is mindful to specify that the limited time is "fashioned from" the limitless time, so he is careful to state that after twelve thousand years the limited time "merges and turns into" (*gumēzēd ud wardēd*) eternity, which means that Ohrmazd's creatures, too, become eternal (*kū dām-iz ī ohrmazd abēzagihā abāg ohrmazd hamēg bawēnd*) (Bd 1.41).¹⁵ The eschatological dogma is presented in terms of the relation between eternity and time flux. Note that eternity in this perspective does not mean the absence of motion and change but the elimination of decay and death. Another example is the treatment of the *dēn*, which according to Zoroastrian dogma derives from Ohrmazd's nature. This is reflected in Bd 1.2 where the *dēn* is duly equated with Ohrmazd's omniscience and goodness.¹⁶ Sometimes, however, dogma gets the better of the author's judgment. The list given in Bd 1.52 of twenty gods and *mēnōg* beings created by Ohrmazd includes the name of Ohrmazd in the seventh place in accordance with his role

Wahman". They incorporate *az amahrspandān* into the previous sentence: "for Ohrmazd is both: first spiritual, and then material by means of the Amahrspands" (Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, p. 10). This analysis is incorrect, and the semantic implications of their translation are problematic. First, the Amahrspandān are not *gētīg*, how can Ohrmazd be *gētīg* "by means of" them? See Bd 3.14–22. Second, if the Pahlavi author intended such a meaning, he would have used *pad* and not *az*. Third, the idea that Ohrmazd fashions Wahman "from the Way of Long Dominion" contradicts what the Pahlavi text goes on to say, namely that Ohrmazd fashions Wahman from *nēk-ravišnih* and *sī ī rōšnīh*. Incidentally, Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, p.199, assert that *pas* should be "emended" to *ī* in Pakzad's critical edition of the text. There are two occurrences of *pas* on the indicated page (22) of the Pakzad edition. Both are straightforward readings, which, moreover, appear to be translated by Agostini and Thrope themselves as "then" and "afterward", respectively.

¹³This of course does not mean that in the Avesta Mazda's creation of the world is not preceded and guided by the (mental) representation of its form. The notion of "creation" as it is understood in this article (in contradistinction to cosmogony) implies such an antecedent conception of the worldly constituents, and there are numerous indications to this effect in the Avesta. But we do not have an Avestan account of a distinct "mental" stage of the creation of the world. Incidentally, the opposition of *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in Pahlavi literature semantically amalgamates two Avestan oppositional pairs: the OAv. *ahu- manačiia-* (or *manaphō*) versus *ahu- astuuant-* (the mental existence versus the existence possessed of bone), and the YAv. *mainiiaua-* versus *gāēθiia-* (celestial versus terrestrial). On the latter, cf. J. Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes vol. 1. Le Ratauuō vīspe mazišta* (Paris, 2006), p. 42 (translation of Vr 2.4); J. Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes vol 3. Le long préambule du sacrifice* (Paris, 2010), p. 14 (translation of Y 16.1–2). In the Gāθās and probably the YH, the "mental existence" seems to precede the "existence possessed of bone" and resumes after the dissolution of the latter, but (as far as I can tell) only for humans and possibly beneficent animals. Cf. J. Kellens, 'ahu, mainiū, ratu', in *Aux sources des liturgies indo-iraniennes*, (eds.) C. Redard, J. Ferrer-Losilla, H. Moen, and Ph. Swennen (Liège, 2020), pp. 165–166. For a different view of the OAv. oppositional pair, see J. Narten, *Der Yasna Haptahāiti* (Wiesbaden, 1986), pp. 290–295; A. Hintze, *A Zoroastrian Liturgy. The Worship in Seven Chapters (Yasna 35–41)* (Wiesbaden, 2007), p. 73.

¹⁴By "philosophical account" I mean in the manner of Greek natural philosophers.

¹⁵Plato's demiurge creates time after the world soul. Cf. *Timaeus* 37d–38c. "[T]ime was created along with the universe, and since they were created together, they will also perish together, if they do ever perish. And the creation of the universe conformed to the model of eternity, so as to be as similar as possible. For the model exists for all eternity, while the universe was and is and always will be for all time" (*Timaeus* 38c). For Plato, the cosmos although created is endless. Time is the "image of eternity" (*Timaeus* 37e). The following edition of the *Timaeus* is used in this article: Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, translated by R. Waterfield (Oxford, 2008).

¹⁶D 7.1.4 *weh dēn čhr ohrmazd xēm u-š dahišn pad ham-niyābīh ī fradom dām wahman amahrspand* (transcription modified) "the nature of the good religion is Ohrmazd's own character (i.e., nature), and its creation (took place) in collaboration with the first created being, Wahman the Amahrspand". (The passage from the *Dēnkard* 7 is cited from H. Molé, *La légende de Zoroastre selon les textes pehlevi* (Paris, 1967); the abbreviation "D" is followed by book, chapter, and chapter numbers.) Cf. Bd. 1.52 *u-š wahman az nēk-ravišnih ud sī ī rōšnīh frāz brēhēnd kē-š dēn ī weh ī māzdešnān abāg būd* "he created Wahman from *nēk-ravišnih* and luminous substance, [Wahman] who was accompanied by the good religion of Mazda worshippers".

as the *rad* of human beings. Another apparent absurdity is the measurement of time (at Bd 1.13) before the creation of (measurable) time—unless one assumes that this creation takes place (three thousand years) before the first confrontation with Ahriman. The narrative, however, places Ohrmazd’s institution of time (Bd 1.36) after that confrontation and the subsequent agreement between the two antagonists to limit their struggle to nine thousand years (Bd 1.25; cf. Bd 5b.14). This is also the narrative order in WZ 1.2–12. Zādspram, too, applies time measurement retrospectively. Particularly troublesome is the dogma of the static world prior to Ahriman’s assault (Bd 4.23), which is upheld in the face of the recognition that time inherently implies motion and change.

WZ 1.26 *sē hazār sāl dām tanōmand ud afīrazraftār būd xwaršēd māh <ud> starān ēstēd hēnd andar ō bālist awazišnīg*

For three thousand years the creation was corporeal and static. The sun, the moon, and the stars stood motionless at the zenith.

The author of the *Bundahišn* appreciates and spells out the connection between time and *rawāgīh* “propagation” (Bd 1.35–36); and, if we translate *nēk-rawišnīh* as I have suggested, namely something like flourishing¹⁷, the author makes Ohrmazd’s *xwadīh* the ground of the flourishing and propagation of his creatures (Bd 1.34). Not only change (e.g., growth) seems to be positively evaluated but also its connection with the institution of time is recognized. Zādspram projects this recognition onto Ohrmazd who (belatedly!) realizes the sterility of a motionless world.

WZ 1.27 *pad zamānaq sar ohrmazd nigerīd kū čē sūd ast {ī} az dādan ī dām ka apōišnīg arawišnīg awazišnīg u-š pad ayārīh ī spilr ud zurwān dām frāz brēhēnīd*

Once the period [of three thousand years] ended, Ohrmazd reflected: “what benefit is there in creating a world that is static, motionless, and stationary?” And he fashioned the world [in motion] with the assistance of space and time.

The negative aspect of the passage of time, decay and annihilation, is neutralized eschatologically with the help of the Platonizing (*mēnōg*) forms. The *mēnōg ī abē-wardīšnīh* ensures that Ohrmazd’s creation *qua* archetype does not change (Bd 1.38 *nē wardēd*), that it is preserved in its original perfection. Conceptual strategies such as this indicate the ambivalence of the Pahlavi authors concerning time and the difficulties that the issue posed for them. Nothing displays the quandary and the concomitant anxiety better than the *Bundahišn* author’s derivation of *asazišnīh* as a time-relation the creation of Ohrmazd from *zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy*, that is to say, the derivation of “intransience” from temporal flux itself. The world is simultaneously subject and not subject to time. One can see that some kind of Platonizing accommodation becomes unavoidable. The dogma of the static nature of the original creation is reflected in the Avesta (Yt 13.53–58), even if the setting in motion

¹⁷Cf. Bd 1.52 *kē-š rawāgīh ī dām ī Ohrmazd aziš būd... u-š Wahman az nēk-rawišnīh ud sī ī rōšnīh frāz brēhēnīd* “[Wahman] from whom was the propagation of Ohrmazd’s creation [Ohrmazd] fashioned Wahman from flourishing and the being of light”. By way of Wahman, *rawāgīh* is grounded in *nēk-rawišnīh*. The way of proceeding in general that accords with Ohrmazd’s will (*nēk-rawišnīh*) is the source of the propagation (*rawāgīh*) of his creation, activated by time (**pad ayārīh ī zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy*). Cf. WZ 1.27.

of the world is credited to the *frauuāšis* as a countermeasure to the assault by *anra mainiiu*. It is understandable that a perfect god cannot but create a perfect world and, therefore, any change in it can only be adventitious and detrimental. Within such a frame, time is bound to pose a formidable axiological problem.

The schedule of the creation of the six *gētīg* phenomena follows the schema we find in the Avesta.

Bd 1a.4 *u-š nazdist asmān dād pad abāz-dārišnīh ast kē fradom gōwēd dudīgar āb dād pad zadan ī tišn druz sidīgar zāmīg dād harwisp astōmandīh čahārom urwar dād ō ayārīh ī gōspand ī hudāg panjom [ō] gōspand <ō> ayārīh ī mard ī ahlāw šašom mard ī ahlaw dād ō zadārīh ud agārīh ī gannāg-mēnōg ud hāmīst dēwān*

In the first place [Ohrmazd] created the sky for the purpose of holding off [Ahriman] – some say (it was) first¹⁸; second, he created the water for the purpose of smiting the demon of thirst; third, he created the earth (for supporting) the whole corporeal world; fourth, he created the plant for assisting the generous beneficent animal; fifth, [he created] the beneficent animal for assisting the righteous man; sixth, he created the righteous man for the purpose of smiting and incapacitating Ahriman and all the demons.

Bd 1a.5 *u-š pas ātaxš dād xwarg u-š brāh az asar-rōšnīh awiš paywast ēdōn kirb ī weh čiyōn ātaxš kāmag ud aziš pas wād brēhēnūd pad mard kirb ī gušn ī pānzdah sālag kē ēn ā bud urwar ud gōspand ud mard ī ahlaw ud harw tis-ēw bared ud dāwēd*

Then, [Ohrmazd] created the fire ember and joined to it the radiance of the endless light. For this reason the desire of good creatures is like the desire of fire. And from fire he created the air in the form of a fifteen-year old man that he may support and carry the water, the beneficent animal, the righteous man and all things.

Fire has a special status in the (*gētīg*) world. It is strictly speaking not a *gētīg* creation but is derived *qua* light directly from the divine *asar-rōšnīh*; it pervades the world and vivifies the entire good creation: Bd 3.10 *u-š ātaxš andar harwisp dahišn... be pargand* “[Ohrmazd] spread fire throughout the entire creation”.¹⁹ This is the reason why every “good creature” like fire desires to join the celestial *asar-rōšnīh*. The standard account of creation counts six *gētīg* creations, not seven, and hence six stages (and correspondingly six celestial levels).²⁰ In the brief presentation of the doctrine at B 1a.4–5 fire is set apart from the six “creations” *stricto sensu*: whereas these are enumerated (B 1a.4 *nazdist, dudīgar*, etc.), the place of fire in the process of creation is marked by the adverb *pas* “then”. What is decisive is the nature of fire, whose *brāh* “radiance” is “joined to it from the endless light, the place of Ohrmazd” (BD 3.9 *az asar-rōšn gāh ī ohrmazd awiš paywast*). The *purr-rawišnīh* “proliferation” of the good creation depends on

¹⁸Note that the author distances himself from the assertion that the sky is the first creation. See my discussion of Bd 1a.2 below.

¹⁹Cf. WZ 3.77–82.

²⁰Cf. D 3.123 *ud gētīg dahišnān hangardīg hēnd šaš asmān <ud> āb ud zāmīg ud urwar ud gōspand ud mardōm* “the *gētīg* creations are six altogether: sky and water and earth and plant and beneficent animal and human”. For the six celestial levels see Bd 2.10–15: 1) *axtarān āxrag-ēwēnag*; 2) *starān a-gumēzišnīg*; 3) *māh ī gōspand-tōhmag*; 4) *xwaršēd ī arwand-asp*; 5) *gāh ī anahraspandān*; 6) *asar-rōšnīh gāh ī ohrmazd*. In Bd 2.16 the author explicitly gives the number of the levels and relates it to that of the *gētīg* creations: *ēn-iz ast šaš pāy ī šaš dahišn čiyōn šaš dahišn ī gētīg* “thus there are six levels of the six (celestial) creations as there are six *gētīg* creations”. Here *dahišn* must be understood to designate the object as well as the act of creation.

fire.²¹ This special status is, of course, already present in the Avesta (see below). The process that culminates in the creation of the human archetype is underwritten by the teleological perspective of the doctrine of creation. The *gēnīg* world becomes capable of fulfilling its function of defeating Ahriman with the creation of the (righteous) human being.²² In the *Bundahišn* the sequence of creations is mapped onto the annual *gāhānbār* schedule, counting six festivals: Bd 1a.18 *u-š ʔn šaš dahišn pad šaš gāh ī gāhānbār be dād* “[Ohrmazd] created these six creations in the time–frames marked out by the six *gāhānbār*”. This correspondence is in all likelihood a happy coincidence, since the six annual festivals are related to seasonal pastoral or agricultural activities. The list of the original creations must ultimately be based on pragmatic observation and generalization in categories. What are important or imposing in the daily life of a pastoralist become the products of Ahura Mazda’s creative activity.²³

Zādspram’s account of creation in the *mēnōg* state is straightforward. Once Ahriman becomes aware of Ohrmazd and the realm of light, he attempts to reach it and to have power over it in the same way he rules the realm of darkness.

WZ 1.4 *ka frāz ʔ wimand mad ohrmazd abāz dāstan ī ahreman az xwēš šahr rāy frāz ʔ ham-rānīh mad u-š pad abēzag gōwišn <T> yazdīg stardag kard u-š abāz ʔ tam abgand pāsbānīh az druz rāy mēnōgīhā andar ʔ bālist mēnōg <T> asnān āb zamīg urwar gōspand mardōm ud ātaxš brēhēnūd u-š sē hazār sāl dāšt*

²¹WZ 1.25 *ohrmazd dām tanōmandīhā be ʔ gēnīg dād fradom asmān dudīgar āb sidīgar zamīg ʔ ahārōm urwar ud panjōm gōspand šašōm mardōm ud ātaxš andar wisp būd paḡandag hāmīst pad šaš gōhnag ī har gōhrag-ʔ drang ī pad abar dādan and būd gofi ʔstēd ʔand mij-ʔ ī ka ʔk pad did frōd nihēnd* “Ohrmazd created the creation in bodily form in the *gēnīg* state: first the sky, second the water, third the earth, fourth the plants, fifth the beneficent animal, sixth the human being, and fire was spread in everything; all (the creation) in six substances, each of which substance, it has been said, taking as much time for being created as the blink of an eye takes”. Cf. Bd 1.52 *ohrmazd pad amahraspandān brīnōmand mad ka-š dād būd hēnd šaš rad ʔ ʔ-š abāz ʔ gēnīg abāyīst dād* “with the Amahraspandān, Ohrmazd came to a stop when he had created the six *rads*, for he had to transpose [the world] to the *gēnīg* state”. The subordinated clause *ʔ-š abāz ʔ gēnīg abāyīst dād* is defective. I have provided the missing object in the square brackets on the basis of the phrase that follows it: *u-š nōgtar pad tan ī pasēn anāgīh aziš be abāyēd burdan* “in the eschaton [Ohrmazd] must once again remove evil [or corruption] from it”, where *aziš* unquestionably refers to the world and *nōgtar* evokes the original purity (*abēzagīh*) of the world. The main clause appears to refer to the process of creation: the Amahraspandān potentially could have been more, but once Ohrmazd had created six of them, he stopped. Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, p. 10, translate the first passage: “When Ohrmazd created the Amahraspands, he became limited. He needed to create these six spiritual masters for the material world”. The notion that Ohrmazd “becomes limited” once he has created the Amahraspandān is obscure and, as far as I know, otherwise unattested in Zoroastrian literature. Appeal to the arrangement of the names of the days of the month (e.g., Bd 3.8) in order to make sense of the notion is not warranted. The second sentence in their translation is problematic, both in syntax and in meaning. As to the latter, cf. Bd 3.8–9. What becomes of the subordinating conjunction *ʔ*? If in effect one reads *ʔ* as the relative pronoun *kē*, the Pahlavi sentence would mean: “in creating the Amahraspandān, Ohrmazd stopped once he had created the six *rads* whom he had to re-appoint to the *gēnīg* world”. There are two problems with this treatment of *ʔ*. One is that it fudges over *abāz* (ʔ... dādan). More seriously, it cannot be harmonized with the phrase that follows it. There is no question that in *anāgīh aziš be abāyēd burdan* the object of the verb *abāyēd* is the infinitival phrase *anāgīh aziš be... burdan* “to remove evil from it [i.e., the world]”. Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, p. 10 make the Amahraspandān the object of *abāyēd*: “and, later, at the time of the Final Body, he will need them once more to remove evil from it”.

²²Cf. D 3.123 *u-š dahišn ʔ kušīšnūg awīštāb ud awīštābāg ī xwad ast dahišn hamēstār spōzīh ud ham paywand ān ī ʔawēdānīg nēk-rauīšnīh* “the reason for his creation is to fight against oppression and oppressors that are indeed the creation of the adversary, and to join the eternal well-being, too”. See also Bd 1.12.

²³Cf. Y 1.16: “I announce and perform (the consecration) of these (inhabited) spaces, the settlements, the pastures, the habitations, the water points; the waters, the earth, the plants; the earth here, the sky there, the wind (in between) that supports Aša; the stars, the moon, the sun, the self-established endless lights; and all the male and female creations of the Life-giving Spirit that support Aša and the arrangements of Aša”. (The translation is based on J. Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéenes vol. 1. Le Ratauuō vīspe mazišta*, pp. 20–21.) There is only a rudimentary categorization of the phenomena in this list. As far as I can see there are at least four or five such categories marked out by semicolons in my translation. I am not sure whether the final group refers to human beings or is meant as a totalizing formula to cover what is not explicitly named. The list of course is not a creation list. Nonetheless it reveals what seem to be taken as vital phenomena.

When Ahriman approached the borders, Ohrmazd came forth for battle in order to prevent Ahriman from [entering into] his realm, and by a pure, divine speech stupefied him and threw him back into the dark [realm]. For the purpose of safeguarding [his realm] from Druz [= Ahriman], Ohrmazd formed on high in the *mēnōg* state the *mēnōg* [archetype] of the sky, of the water, of the earth, of the plant, of the beneficent animal, of the human being, and of the fire, and kept [them in that state] for three thousand years.

Each of the constituents of the world has a *mēnōg* model. Zādspram does not mention any *mēnōg* being other than those that will subsequently be transposed into the *gētīg* state.²⁴ Zādspram's list of twelve creations given at ZW 34.20 is probably due to the astrological significance of the number and is otherwise *ad hoc*: 1) *asmān*; 2) *zamiḡ*; 3) *xwaršēd*; 4) *māh*; 5) *star*; 6) *urwarān*; 7) *ātaxš* (*andar urwar*); 8) *hōšag*; 9) *zahag* (*andar mādaqān*); 10) *murwān*; 11) *āb*; 12) *abr*. Perhaps it intends to include *andarwāyīg* “atmospheric” phenomena such as clouds and birds. Why has livestock given its place to agricultural produce? The chaotic nature of the list is curious. Why not supplement the seven *daxšagān* (e.g., WZ 1.4) with *wād* (e.g., WZ 3.10–11) and the four Avestan celestial spheres (*star*, *māh*, *xwaršēd*, *asar-rōšn*)?

The Young Avestan scheme of creation

Let us briefly look at the Avestan background of the doctrine. In Yt 13.2–11 Ahura Mazda lists the phenomena that he maintains with the help of the *frauuāšis*.²⁵

Yt 13.2 *vīdāraēm zaraθuštra aom asmanəm yō usca raoxšnō frādərəsrō... aiiajḥō kəhrpa x' aēnahe*; 13.4 *vīdāraēm zaraθuštra arəduuīm sūraṃ anāhūtām*; 13.9 *vīdāraēm zaraθuštra zṃṃ pərəθβīm ahurađātām... yā vīspəm ahūm astuuantəm baraiti*; 13.10 *yējhā paiti θraotō.stācō āpō tacaiṃti nāuuaiiā yējhā paiti pounu. saradā zəmāda uzuxšīciṃti uruuaiā θrāθrāi pasuuā vīraiīā... θrāθrāi gəuš paṃcō. hiiaiiā auuašhe narəṃ ašao-nam*; 13.11 *vīdāraēm zaraθuštra azəm barəθrišuuu puθrē paiti.vərətē* (The paragraphs are not cited in full.)

I maintain, Zarathuštra, that sky above, luminous and resplendent... with the body of scintillating metal; 13.4 I maintain, Zarathuštra, the [celestial water] Arduuī Surā Anāhūtā²⁶; 13.9 I maintain, Zarathuštra, the wide, Ahura-created earth... that bears all the corporeal existence; 13.10 where waters run in navigable rivers, where all species of plants grow from the soil for supporting domestic animals and men... for supporting the five kinds of animals, for aiding righteous men; 13.11 I maintain, Zarathuštra, sons enveloped in wombs.

If we use *vīdāraiiā* – “maintain” as marker for distinguishing the categories of phenomena in the passage Yt 13.2–11, we get sky, [celestial] water, earth, and human beings, in that order; with the earth carrying the entire corporeal existence: terrestrial waters, plants, animals and (righteous) men, in that order (cf. Bd 1a.2 *az āb zamiḡ ud harvišp astōmandīh gētīg frāz*

²⁴Cf. PRDd 46.3–36. (The passages from the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* are cited from A. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 2 volumes (Copenhagen, 1990); the numbers following the abbreviation “PRDd” refer to chapter and paragraph.) Fire is a “creation” only in a loose sense, as I explained above. Although the main ground for its inclusion in the lists of *gētīg* creations is the indigenous *daxšagān* doctrine, one cannot rule out the encouragement of the astrological significance of the number seven.

²⁵The passages from Yašt 13 are cited from W. W. Malandra (ed.), *Frauarđin Yašt. Introduction, Text, Commentary, Glossary* (Irvine, 2018).

²⁶Cf. Y 65.1 *yazāi āpəm arəduuīm sūraṃ anāhūtām*; see J. Kellens, ‘Le problème avec Anāhūtā’, *Orientalia Suecana* LI–LII (2002–2003), pp. 317–326.

brehēnīd). In Y 13.22 the list comprises *asman*- “sky”, *āp*- “water”, *zam*- “earth”, *gao*- “cow”, *puθra*- “son” – while the plant is missing. Yt 13.28 has the canonical six *gēfiḡ* creations (in the same order as e.g., Bd 1a.4 or WZ 1.25, except for the order of plant and cow): *yaṭ spəḡitō mainiiuš vīdāraiaṭ asmanəm yaṭ āpəm yaṭ zəm yaṭ gəm yaṭ uruuarəm yaṭ barəθrišuuva puθrā vīdāraiaṭ paiti.vəṭāṭ*. The hexad are also listed in the same sequence as in the (Pahlavi) standard doctrine in Yt 13.86 where their *frauuāšis* receive sacrifice.²⁷ The list must be more or less canonical at the composition of Yašt 13. Interestingly, the order of Yt 13.28 is followed in Y 19.2 (repeated in Y 19.4), while Y 19.8 presents the items in the order of Yt 13.86 (sky, water, earth, plant, cow, *gāiia- marətan*-).²⁸ In all three Y 19 lists the theme is Mazda’s recitation of the *ahuna- vairiia*- prayer before creating the world. Although there are variations in the extra items included in these lists, their comparison shows that in view of the composer creation comprises six basic phenomena.²⁹

Y 19.2 *para asməm para āpəm para zəm para gəm para uruuarəm para ātrəm ahurahe mazdā puθrəm para narəm ašuuuanəm para daēuuāišca xrafstrāiš mašūāišca*.

Before the sky, before the water, before the earth, before the cow, before the plant, before the fire, son of Ahura Mazda, before the righteous man, before the vicious *daēuuas* and men.

The last item does not belong here (after all, the *daēuuas* are not created by Mazda). I do not speculate about the circumstances of its ending up in the list of creations. Kellens interprets it as a quotation of Y 34.5c’ in order to remove the grammatical discrepancy.³⁰ But this does not resolve the problem of its inclusion in the list. Ritual fire is not of the same order as the other items but is Mazda’s son (cf. PRDd 18.d1). Just as Mazda becomes assimilated to (celestial) light, so ritual fire which is “from” the luminous heavens becomes his progeny.³¹ Otherwise the items and their order are identical with the Yt 13.28 list. Y 19.4 adds to the 19.2 list two more items: *para vīspəm ahūm astuuantəm para vīspa vohu mazdadāta ašaciθra* “before (creating) all the corporeal existence, before (creating) all the good things created by Mazda that have the brilliant form of Aša”. They are obviously comprehensive designations, but it is hard to know to what sets of phenomena they refer—perhaps, respectively,

²⁷Cf. D 3.123 *ud gēfiḡ dahišnān hangardīḡ hēnd šaš asmān <ud> āb ud zanīḡ ud urwar ud gōspand ud marđōm* “the *gēfiḡ* creations are six altogether: sky and water and earth and plant and beneficent animal and human”.

²⁸The passages from Yasna 19 are cited from J. Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéenes vol 3. Le long préambule du sacrifice* (Paris, 2010).

²⁹The six items also occur — sometimes along with other items (notably fire) — in purification or consecration contexts, such as Visperad 7.4 or Vīdēvdād 11.1 (and 10). See Ch. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, (Berlin, 1961), col. 402–403, 507. The list in Vīdēvdād 11.1 (repeated in 10) is interesting. It starts with fire rather than the sky, and gives terrestrial creations followed by celestial ones, and ends with a comprehensive formula: fire, water, earth, cow, plant, male and female righteous humans; stars, the moon, the sun, and the endless lights; and all good things created by Mazda that have the brilliant form of Aša. Note the order of cow and plant. The Vīdēvdād passages refer to F. Geldner (ed.), *Avesta: the Sacred Books of the Parsis*, 3 (Stuttgart, 1896). Cf. A. Ahmadi, ‘Zoroastrian Doctrine of Formation of Heavenly Bodies in Pahlavi Texts’, *Iranian Studies* (2020).

³⁰See Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéenes vol 3. Le long préambule du sacrifice*, p. 29: “(ceux que Y 34.5c’ appelle « les démons infects et leurs hommes-liges »”.

³¹For Eudemus, Aristotle’s pupil, Ahura Mazda was apparently consubstantial with light (Eudemus fr. 150 Wehrli). On the reliability of Damascius who reports the text, see G. Betegh, ‘On Eudemus Fr. 150 (Wehrli)’, in *Eudemus of Rhodes*, (eds.) I. Bodnár and W. Fortenbaugh (New Brunswick, 2002), pp. 337–357. A. Hintze, ‘Monotheism the Zoroastrian Way’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24 (2014), pp. 229–232, argues that Mazda “generates [“all good spiritual beings”] out of himself”, and that the terminology of procreation expresses this consubstantiality.

terrestrial and celestial phenomena. The list of creations in Yt 13.86 and Y 19.8 matches the standard schedule of creation in Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts.³²

Y 19.8 *fracā aētāt vacō vaoce yaṭ ahumat yaṭ ratumat*
para auuaŋhe ašnō dāŋhōiṭ para āpō para zəmtō para uruuaraiiā
para gēuš caθβarə.paitištānaiiā dāŋhōiṭ
para narš ašaonō bipaitištānahe zəθāt
para auuaŋhe hū θβarštō kəhrpiia
ape aməžanəm spəntanəm dāhīm

Thus the text that contains *ahu* and *ratu* was recited before the creation of the sky there, before [the creation] of the water, before [the creation] of the earth, before [the creation] of the plant, before the creation of the quadruped cow, before the engenderment of the biped righteous man, before the fashioning of the sun in corporeal form, [but] after the creation of the Life-giving Immortals.

This text was probably one of the exegetical references of the standard doctrine of creation. As opposed to Yt 13.4, the water seems to be terrestrial here.³³ The mention of the Life-giving Immortals in the context is significant in the perspective of the later doctrine of creation (cf. Bd 1.52). The generation of the gods and the creation of the world take place, respectively, before and after the recitation of the *ahuna-vairiia*-. Could this constellation have been interpreted as the assignment of each of the latter group to one of the former in the doctrine of *daxšaγān*? What to make of the “fashioning” of the sun “in visible form” after the standard hexad (cf. Vd 11.1)? Is its place in the list significant? In the *Bundahišn*, the formation of the celestial luminaries (*rōšnān*) follows the creation of the hexad.³⁴

The impact of Greek natural philosophy on the Pahlavi doctrine of creation

A detailed account of creation is given in the *Bundahišn* chapter called *abar dām-dahišnīh ī gētiṅhā* (“on the creation of the world in the *gētiṅ* state”), paragraphs 1a.6 to 1a.17. I only cite the relevant texts.

³²Yt 13.86: sky, water, earth, plant, cow, Gaiia-marətan.

³³See Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes vol 3. Le long préambule du sacrifice*, p. 32 : “la répétition de *dāŋhōiṭ* se justifie par la séparation des créations célestes et des créations terrestres”.

³⁴See Ahmadi, ‘Zoroastrian Doctrine of Formation of Heavenly Bodies’. The Gāthic account of creation (Y 44.3-7) is quite different, although obviously the six constituents of the YAv. doctrine are present there, too. See J. Kellens, ‘Les cosmogonies iraniennes : entre héritage et innovation’, in *Chomolangma, Demawend und Kasbek* (eds.) B. Huber, M. Volkart, and P. Widmer (Halle, 2008), pp. 508–509; J. Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes vol 6. Lecture sceptique et aventureuse de la Gāthā uštaiuiāi* (Paris, 2020), pp. 47–59. Kellens, ‘Les cosmogonies iraniennes’, p. 509, describes the Gāthic account as “une théorie de la chronologie cosmogonique conçue comme un processus qui va de l’engendrement du principe régulateur de tout (Aša) à l’apparition des générations humaines”. The Yasna Haptaŋhāiti list of creations in Y 37.1 is curious. See A. Hintze, *A Zoroastrian Liturgy*, pp. 162–167. It mentions the creations in the following order: the cow, Aša, the waters, good plants, the sky (literally “lights”), the earth (*būmi*-), and all that is good. It is not clear whether “all that is good” is meant to cover what is not mentioned by name or the intermediary space between sky and earth, as Kellens ‘Les cosmogonies iraniennes’, p. 508, maintains, which would presumably include the heavenly bodies. Cf. Bd 2.1 *ohrmazd andarag ī asmān ud zaniṅ rōšnān frāz brēhēnīd* “Ohrmazd fashioned the heavenly bodies between the sky and the earth” The absence of human beings in the YH list is hard to explain, so is the order of the items—pairing them as the syntax suggests does not help that much in this respect. See Kellens, ‘Les cosmogonies iraniennes’, p. 509.

Bd 1a.7 *nazdist asmān dād rōšn ud paydāg ud abēr-dūr xāyag-dēs xuēn-āhan ī ast gōhr ī almāst ī nar u-š sar pad ō asar-rōšn paywast u-š dām hamāg andarōn ī asmān be dād...* 1a.8 *dudīgar az gōhr ī asmān āb brēhēnūd...* 1a.9 *sidīgar az āb zamīg dād gird ud dūr-widarag ud abē-nišēb...* *ud rāst mayān ī ēn asmān be winnārd...* 1a.12 *azēr ī ēn zamīg hamāg gyāg āb be ēstēd* 1a.13 *čahārom urwar dād...* 1a.14 *panjom gāw ī ēk-dād brēhēnūd andar Ērān-wēz pad mayānag ī gēhān...* 1a.15 *šašom gayōmart brēhēnūd...* 1a.17 *u-š gayōmart abāg gāw az zamīg brēhēnūd*

First [Ohrmazd] created the sky, bright, manifest, and very far in the shape of an egg [made] of shining metal which is the substance of steel [or diamond], and he joined its borders to the [sphere of] endless light, and placed all the creatures inside the sky... Second he fashioned the waters from the substance of the sky... Third, he created the earth, circular, far-reaching, and flat, from the water... and placed it exactly in the middle of this sky... Under this earth in all places stands water. Fourth, he created the plant... Fifth, he fashioned the uniquely created cow in Ērānwēz, (which is) in the middle of the world, on the shore of Weh Dāitū river, that is, in the middle of the world³⁵... Sixth, he fashioned Gayōmart... He fashioned Gayōmart and the cow from the earth.³⁶

Each phenomenon is created from (the substance of) the previous phenomenon. This is the general pattern of creation in the author's mind. It is also evident in Bd 1a.3: *čē-š <az> asar-rōšnūh ātaxš az ātaxš wād az wād āb az āb zamīg ud harwisp astōmandīh gētīg frāz brēhēnūd* “for [Ohrmazd] created the fire from the endless light, from the fire the air, from the air the water, from the water the earth and the entire corporeality”. In Bd 1a.7 the process starts with *asmān* “sky” (literally “stone”), which is the first creation in the standard doctrine. The author connects it topographically (and through its description as “shining”) with the “endless light”. The notice of topographic contiguity may be meant to point to the original substance of the creation process. In PRDd 46.3 Ohrmazd makes the whole world from *asar-rōšnūh*. In Bd 1a.3 the series of demiurgic acts starts with creating fire from *asar-rōšnūh* which apparently exists already (see below). The whole world is created in stages from one uncreated substance. In these texts the process of creation is foregrounded—as opposed to its *raison d'être*. In the case of Bd 1a.3, not only its scheme but also its elements are adopted from the Greek natural philosophy, which typically develops the cosmos from a principle (*archē*).³⁷ The abbreviation in Bd 1a.3 of the plants, animals, and humans to “entire

³⁵WZ 2.9 adds *mādag* “female” to the description of the *gāw*.

³⁶In Bd 1a.18–1a.25 the author adapts the schedule of creation to the *gāhānbār* festivals: Bd 1a.18 *u-š ēn šaš dahišn pad šaš gāh ī gāhānbār be dād*. The process of creation takes a whole year, in which the festivals punctuate the six periods of creation with six periods of presumably rest and celebration. For instance, Ohrmazd creates the sky in forty days (*pad čehel rōz*) after which the god rests for five days during the *mēdyōzarm* festival (Bd 1a.20). Incidentally, this adaptation shows the problematic nature of reading a “cosmogonic sacrifice” into Bd 3.26. Would the author of Bd 1A have adopted the *gāhānbār* frame for the creation scheme if there was a conception according to which creation of the world is accomplished during a sacrifice? Conversely, would the author of the Iranian manuscripts version of Bd 3.26 (whether or not the same as that of chapter 1A) ignored the *gāhānbār* scheme of the chapter which is specifically about creation of the *gētīg* world, and made a noon sacrifice the time frame of creation? See the appendix.

³⁷In the *Timaeus* (32b–c), the demiurge arranges the four Empedoclean elements “so that as fire is to air, so air is to water, and as air is to water, so water is to earth; and so he bound together and structured the visible and tangible universe”. Cf. Simplicius, in *Phys.* 24.13: “[Anaximander] said that the principle and the element of existing things was the *apeiron* [indefinite, or infinite], being the first to introduce this name of the material principle. He says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some other *apeiron* nature, from which come into being all the heavens and the worlds in them” (in G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 2007, p. 107). “Principle” translates *archē* and “element” *stoicheion*. Aristotle used *stoicheion*, which designated letters of the alphabet, for the “elements”. On the notion of *archē* “principle” cf. *Timaeus* 29b; *On the Soul* 402a in J. Barnes, (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton, 1984), 1, 641.

corporeality” may be motivated by the desire to stay close to the Greek model, although the expression has an Avestan background (e.g., Yt 13.9).³⁸ Bd 1a.17 *u-š gayōmard abāg gāw az zamīg brēhēnīd* must be understood along the same lines, and not as a Biblical reflection, which may be the case in PRDd 46.36. That within the Zoroastrian frame the process of creation had to start with *asar-rōšnīh* was evident to the Pahlavi author, since it is not only uncreated but also the highest substance.³⁹ In the latter respect it matches the status of *aithēr* in a number of Greek cosmologies, a luminous substance which is least corporeal and which constitutes the outermost layer of the heavens. In Anaxagoras *aithēr* and *aēr* (air) appear to be the first elements “separating” from the mixture of *spērmata* “seeds” and forming the outermost spheres. For Heraclitus *aithēr* was consubstantial with fire, and fire was the primary substance of the cosmos.⁴⁰ It is not necessary to show in detail that one particular philosophical conception is the model for the author of Bd 1a.3, which would be a hopeless task anyway in view of what may be reasonably assumed about our author’s knowledge of specific physical theories. It is rather a matter of the author’s view of what an explanation of the formation of the world must include. The *peri phuseōs* frame, i.e., derivation of the cosmos from a primary substance⁴¹, and the replacement of *asmān* in Bd 1a.3 with *asar-rōšnīh* and (thence) *ātaxš* “fire” and *wād* “air” clearly show the impact of the Greek

³⁸Cf WZ 34.50 *ohrmazd pad āb be dād... čē āb čīhr dāwēd ī rōšnāg ud waxšāg... čīyōn ka tōm ī unwarān be ō āb rasēd ā-š zōr ī waxšāgīh az-iš <ud> xuwēd bauwēd* “Ohrmazd created through water... for water has a nature that illuminate and makes grow... as when plant seeds are watered, they receive the power to grow and become succulent”. Aristotle wonders whether Thales’s “supposition” that water is the *archē* of cosmos is not rooted in the observation that “seeds” have a moist nature and grow in moist conditions.

³⁹Cf. D 3.123 *bun sī ī gēhān baxtag ī anayr-rōšn dādār nazdtōm* “the original being of the *gēnīg* world is a part of the endless lights, which is the closest to the creator”. Bd 1.1 *ohrmazd bālisfīg pad hanwisp-āgāhīh ud welīh zamān ī akanārāg andar rōšnīh hamē būd* “Ohrmazd was forever on high in light with omniscience and goodness [and] the unlimited time”. As Bd 1.2 indicates, the unlimited time, omniscience and goodness are hypostatized, although they also remain Ohrmazd’s defining qualities and temporal mode of existence.

⁴⁰For Anaxagoras see Kirk et al. (eds.), *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 372: “For air and aither are being separated off from the surrounding mass, which is infinite in number” (Fr. 2 Simplicius in *Phys.* 155, 31) ... ‘From these things, as they are separated off, the earth is solidified; for water is separated off from the cloud, earth from water, and from earth stones are solidified by the cold; and stones tend to move outwards more than water’ (Fr. 16 Simplicius in *Phys.* 179, 8 and 155, 21)”. The order “air and aither” reflects the perspective of the “mixture in the middle” from which they are “separated off”. In *Phaedo* 96a–100a, Socrates describes to his friends his disappointment when he discovered that Anaxagoras’s cosmogony was no different from other physical theories and that despite his notion of the cosmic *nous* he in fact had no place for an intelligent cause in its account of the formation of the world. See Plato, *Meno and Phaedo*, (eds.) D. Sedley and A. Long (Cambridge, 2016). For Heraclitus see Kirk et al. (eds.), *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 198: “All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods” (Fr. 90, Plutarch *de E.* 8, 388D) ... The pure cosmic fire was probably identified by Heraclitus with *αἰθήρ* (aither), the brilliant fiery stuff which fills the shining sky and surrounds the world; this aither was widely regarded both as divine and as a place of souls. The idea that the soul may be fire or aither, not breath as Anaximenes had thought, must have helped to determine the choice of fire as the controlling form of matter”. See G. E. R. Lloyd, ‘Greek Cosmologies’, in *Methods and Problems in Greek Science* (Cambridge, 1991a), pp. 141–163.

⁴¹Almost all our knowledge of the *phusikoi* “physicists” comes from Aristotle and his pupils Theophrastus and Eudemos. In the first book of *Metaphysics* (1.3–10) Aristotle gives an account of the ‘philosophers’ beginning with Thales, after defining what philosophy is (1.1–2). According to this definition, philosophy is explaining things through their principles, which belong to one of four categories: material, moving, formal and final causes. The first philosophers (i.e., Thales and Anaximenes) explained the cosmos through material principles; but, says Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1.3, 984a16ff), later philosophers realized that matter being passive does not give rise to anything on its own and requires a moving cause if it is to become something; still later philosophers brought to bear in their explanations of the world the final and formal causes. See J. Barnes, (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 volumes (Princeton, 1984), pp. 1552–1569. Aristotle distinguishes the *phusikoi* and other philosophers from the “theologians”, i.e., composers of theogonies. For him, first substances are gods, i.e., heavenly bodies; it is in this perspective that he is prepared to admit anything philosophically salvageable in theogonies. See *Metaphysics* 12.8 1074a37ff.

philosophical tradition. Depending on the context and the author, the Zoroastrian reception of Greek natural philosophy was more or less thorough. In some chapters of the third book of the *Dēnkard*, one would be hard pressed to find any meaningful trace of the Zoroastrian doctrine of creation.

The typical Presocratic picture of the cosmos places the light and hot fire or ether in the outermost spheres, layers of air and mist (from hotter and dryer to colder and moister) in the middle, and the dense and cold earth in the center. The philosophically minded Pahlavi authors appear to have adopted this hierarchy and organized the standard schedule of creation in accordance with it. The author of the *Dēnkard* 3, perhaps Āzar-Farnbay Farroxxzādān, tries to stay within the standard Zoroastrian doctrine.

D 3.123 *ud asmān pēs dād paydāg did āb pad-sazāg ham-dārišnīh ī wād-nērōgīh abar [×]cē way mēnōg asmān gōhr did zamīg ud did urwar ud did gōspand ud abdom mardōm u-šān panj andarōn asmān <ud asmān> bēdom ī-šān wisp o hamāg abar <ud> ham-bunīhistan, paydāg āb t <az>išn⁴² wistarišn andar hamāg way ī azēr ī star pāyag ud ēr ud abar <ud> ham pērāmōn zamīg, abar-iz āb-nērōg kardagīh winnardaḡīh*

[Ohrmazd] created the sky before all; this is revealed [in religion]; then [created] the water appropriate for holding the wind power, for the *mēnōg* of the atmosphere is the substance of the sky; then [created] the earth, then the plant, then the beneficent animal, and finally the human being. These five are inside the sky, and the sky is outermost with respect to them all, and is over all of them, and [these] are all from the same principle; this is revealed [in religion]. The flow of water courses throughout the atmosphere, which is under the star level. And [thus] under and over and also around the earth is arranged thanks to the effective power of water.

This last sentence probably refers, at least in part, to the doctrine that water holds the earth afloat and in the centre (cf. Bd 1a.12; WZ 2.3). The atmosphere enters the schedule of creations from whose *mēnōg* (light?) the sky is made. It is almost certain that in the passage *wād* and *way* are understood to be identical. Between sky and earth are air (*wād*) and water, or rather mist. The term “principle” in the cryptic phrase *ham-bunīhistan* “being of the same principle” said of the five creations inside the sky must refer to an original substance, which can only be light. Note the concern with causes, in the event, the material cause, and explaining the cosmological order through material causes, which is the hallmark of Presocratic cosmology. There is no need to labour the point. I mentioned above that the original substance in the process of creation in the Zoroastrian doctrine is light. Light is in an important sense both *mēnōg* and *gētīg*.⁴³ The world in its *mēnōg* state is made of the “being of light”, which is itself Ohrmazd’s *ipseity* (Bd 1.43). But *rōšnīh* in the form of fire is also a part of the *gētīg* world; it pervades the whole *gētīg* creation (cf. PRDd 18.d2). In view of the materiality (or substantiality) of light, the curious assertion that Ohrmazd is both *mēnōg* and *gētīg* (e.g., Bd 1.52 *ohrmazd har(w) dō ast mēnōg nazdist ud gētīg [pas]*) becomes

⁴²Fazilat, *Dinkard*, p. 80, rightly edits *tšn* to *tcšn* on the basis of MD 126.14 and 207.6.

⁴³Cf. A. Hintze, ‘Monotheism the Zoroastrian Way’, p. 231. The *Bundahišn* manuscript TD2 version of Bd 1.43 has *Ohrmazd az ān ī xuwēš xuwadīh [†]kē gētīg rōšnīh kirb ī dāmān ī xuwēš frāz brēhēmīd* “Ohrmazd created the form of his creation from his own essence which is *gētīg* light”. TD1 and DH have *sī ī* instead of *gētīg* (see Pakzad, *Bundahišn*, p. 19). Based on the place of the text in the account, I think that the correct reading is *ohrmazd az ān ī xuwēš xuwadīh az sī ī rōšnīh*, etc. Nonetheless, qualifying *rōšnīh* with *gētīg* is not at all absurd and in itself quite comprehensible within the Zoroastrian conception of the ontological status of light.

understandable. I recall Eudemus's description of the magi's cosmology (reported by Damascius) which assimilates Ohrmazd to light.⁴⁴ In the *Gāthās* (Y 30.5) the luminous sky is the garment of Ahura Mazda, and in the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* (Y 36.6), light (celestial light present in ritual fire) is the body of the god. Ahura Mazda is manifest *qua* light. The homogeneity of Ahura Mazda with light is thus an ancient Zoroastrian doctrine.⁴⁵ The dual nature of light—both *mēnōg* and *gēfiŋg*—made it possible for the Pahlavi authors, on the one hand, to render intelligible the notion of transposition of the world from *mēnōg* to *gēfiŋg* state, and on the other, to apply the basic explanatory model of the Greek natural philosophy to the process of creation.

The parallel with Plato's account of creation in the *Timaeus*

Ohrmazd conceives the “form” of the world and then implements that form in *gēfiŋg* (tangible and/or visible) bodies. The *mēnōg* world, too, has a “body”, consisting in divine (or celestial) light. The conception of the world prior to its coming to be distinguishes creation myth from cosmogony. This categorial distinction is valid even if the doctrine of creation has a cosmogonic background.⁴⁶ It does not matter if the creator god of the *Gāthās* has come about through the suppression of the (heroic) achievements of the gods of pantheon, save the single achievement of ordering the cosmos by a single god.⁴⁷ Ahura Mazda could have gained his identity through such a process. Plato accommodates Hesiod's gods in the *Timaeus*, perhaps along with other features of the traditional Greek theogony.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the *Timaeus* recounts a creation myth and not a cosmogony. The demiurge creates the cosmos according to a mental representation (i.e., its form), and tries his best to stay as close to this form as possible, that is to say, creates “all that is perfect and best in this world of becoming” (*Timaeus* 68e). Moreover, the demiurgic action seems to have a purpose—however difficult it may be to articulate this purpose. In earlier works such as the *Phaedo* (96a–100a, esp. 98c–99d) Plato criticizes his predecessors (the *phusikoi*) for trying to account for (the emergence of) the cosmos by mechanical processes. Cosmic order is not reducible to such processes; rather, one must postulate an intelligent maker. In the *Timaeus*, Plato calls on his theory of ideal forms to explain the creation of the cosmos. The divine craftsman selects the best formal *paradeigma*, namely that of a living intelligent being, and

⁴⁴“But of the Magoi and all the Aereion race, according to the relation of Eudemus, some denominate the Intelligible Universe and the United, Place, while others call it Time (Chronos): from whom separately proceed a Good Divinity and an Evil Demon; or, as some assert, prior to these, Light and Darkness. Both the one, therefore, and the other, after an undivided nature, hold the twofold co-ordination of the superior natures as separated and distinct, over one of which they place Oromasdes as the ruler, and over the other Arimanius” (Fragment 150 Wehrli cited from R. G. Edmonds, ‘Misleading and Unclear to the Many: Allegory in the Derveni Papyrus and the Orphic Theogony of Hieronymus’, in *The Derveni Papyrus: Unearthing Ancient Mysteries*, (ed.) M. A. Santamaría (Leiden, 2019), p. 93 note 95).

⁴⁵Cf. J. Kellens, ‘La Gāthā *ahunauuaitī* dans l’attente de l’aube’, *Journal Asiatique* 302 2 (2014), pp. 279–282. YH 36.6: “We now declare, O Wise Lord, that this light here has been the most beautiful form of your forms, ever since yonder highest of heights was called the sun” (Hintze, ‘Monotheism the Zoroastrian Way’, p. 231); “Nous te reconnaissons, ô Ahura Mazda, le corps le plus beau des corps: ces lumières-célestes, la plus haute des hauteurs depuis que le soleil a reçu son nom” (Kellens ‘La Gāthā *ahunauuaitī*’, p. 280). The phrase “since the sun was named” means “since the sun has been in existence”.

⁴⁶This is why Genesis 1 may be described as a creation myth.

⁴⁷Cf. S. Jamison, *The Rig Veda Between Two Worlds* (Paris, 2007), pp. 35–38.

⁴⁸See Sedley, ‘Hesiod's Theogony and Plato's *Timaeus*'.

creates the best possible product, because he himself is absolutely good (*Timaeus* 29d-e, 30c-31b; cf. *Republic* 379bc). The demiurge is the fundamental cause (*aition*) of the cosmos. But this still does not quite explain why the demiurge creates the cosmos *at all*. Now, the *Timaeus* has an answer to the question: why create at all? The demiurge creates because he wants to give form to an otherwise disorderly elemental substrate.

Not only were they [i.e., the four elements] disproportionate and erratic, however, before that event, but even when the organization of the universe was first taken in hand, fire, water, earth, and air, despite displaying certain hints [or traces: *ichmē*] of their true natures, were still wholly in the kind of state you'd expect anything to be with no god present. Finding them in that condition, then, the first thing the god did, when he came to organize the universe, was use shapes and numbers to assign them definite forms; and we can take for granted, as the principal axiom affirmed by us, that the god did not leave them in the condition he found them, but made them as beautiful and as perfect as they could possibly be.⁴⁹

The god creates according to his nature; in other words, he creates only good things.⁵⁰ But if there was no chaotic elemental state to begin with, would have there been a “demiurge” and a cosmos “as beautiful and as perfect as they could possibly be”? The answer has to be in the negative, since the absolutely beautiful and perfect intelligible world is more in accord with the god's nature than what is (only) “as beautiful and as perfect as [it] could possibly be”. In the latter case, the “wandering [i.e., non-purposive] cause” (48a), which is not determined by the considerations of what is good, has to be accommodated.⁵¹ Why does the would-be demiurge create? Because there is disorder⁵² to be eliminated and divine order to be established. The demiurge “wanted everything to be as similar to himself as possible... there is no more important precondition for the created world than this... He found everything visible in a state of turmoil, moving in a discordant and chaotic manner, so he led it from chaos to order, which he regarded as in all ways better” (29e-30a). This circumstance explains in *Timaeus*'s account why there is creation at all.⁵³

In Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts Ohrmazd creates the world as his *abzār* “instrument” for his struggle against Ahriman (e.g., Bd 1.12). In the suppression of the latter Ohrmazd's creation has its purpose. Zoroastrianism thus answers the most fundamental question of theology (why create at all?). Monotheistic theologies are unable to answer this question. No mundane thing is insignificant in the perspective of the purpose of creation in Zoroastrianism. The thorough-going ritualization of existence is understandable in this worldview. Note the parallel between the Platonic and Zoroastrian answers in one important respect. Both start from two contrary principles. The Platonic “wandering cause” is essentially characterized by its inertia, however, whereas the Zoroastrian hostile principle is an agent and maker in his own right. The Zoroastrian doctrine of purposive creation thus dichotomizes the

⁴⁹*Timaeus* 53bc (see note 15 above for the edition used).

⁵⁰Cf. *Timaeus* 29a: “It is perhaps clear, then, that he [i.e., the demiurge] used an eternal one model, because nothing in creation is more beautiful than the world and no cause is better than its maker”.

⁵¹At any rate, such is how things appear within the type of account (*eikōs muthos* “likely fable”) that is suitable for what “has come into being” or “generated”, i.e., the cosmos, as opposed to the type of account (*logos*) which is expected of “being”. Cf. *Timaeus* 48b-c, 53d.

⁵²Or, at any rate, merely a blind sorting of the “traces” of the four elements by the attraction of like to like (cf. *Timaeus* 52e-53a).

⁵³We can see here a pale reflection of the beginning of Hesiod's theogony.

world into antagonistic sides (cf. WZ 2.17). History of the world from the beginning to the end is a theater of war. The theme of purpose of creation is not found in the (extant) Avesta. The ideological ground of cosmic dualism in the Gāthās is strictly eschatological. I interpret Y 30.4–5 in particular in this perspective. The question whether it was this eschatological orientation that intensified the inherited (i.e., Indo-Iranian) ritual system in the direction of ritualization of existence may have an arguable answer, but it is not my concern here. In any case, Zoroastrian ritualism is utterly permeated by cosmic antagonism. The idea of articulating explicitly the purpose of creation could well have been occasioned by the Young Avestan accounts of creation in Yt 13.53–58 and Y 19.⁵⁴ The Gāthic background of the latter is evident. Every positively evaluated act contributes to the defeat of the evil adversary. Moreover, the real significance of every action is determined by how it relates to the cosmic adversary: opponent or proponent. In principle, the semantic binary code covers all possible occasions of human life. In my view, the idea of a purpose of creation is implicit in the Zoroastrian subjection of existence to a comprehensive binary code, and may be understood as a projection of the resultant semantics into the doctrine of creation. In this way, the Zoroastrian doctrine of purposive creation places the ultimate imprimatur on the regimentation and indeed instrumentalization of life. Does not the doctrine, strictly understood, contradict Zoroastrian eschatology, since in the perspective of the doctrine humans along with other creatures owe their existence to their function in the struggle against their creator's cosmic adversary? Whence the pretention to immortality? Once the purpose is served the instrument may be discarded. Nonetheless, the achievement of the goal turns out to be the liberation of the entire creation from its subjection to time (cf. Bd 1.41). The quandary may be resolvable. On the one hand, already in the Gāthās eternal bliss is strictly the reward of taking sides against the *druj* in all its manifestations, however one may care to interpret the arena of this partisanship. Eschatology subtends cosmic antagonism. The expectation of eschatological reward based on lifelong performance explicitly refers to the creator god's will (cf. Y 51.6). This constellation can accommodate the possibly contradictory consequence of purposive creation as this concerns the mortal's aspiration for eternal life. On the other hand, there is in the doctrine of creation the notion of the divine substance of the world as the countervailing force against its instrumentalization. The world is created in the final instance of the being of light (*stī tī rōšnīti*).⁵⁵ It is likely that the reception of Greek philosophy created the context and motivation for the specification of the original element (i.e., *archē*) of the world. In any event, it is an arguable point that the world owing to its original divine substance, namely light, must be eternal. In the same vein, the post-*ēbgat* "final bodies" (*tan tī pasēn*) are luminous (Bd 34.8; WZ 35.50–51, 59–60) and hence incorruptible (Bd 1.41 *abēzagīthā* "in pure state").⁵⁶ It may be suggested that the divine substance

⁵⁴Y 19.15 "The divine Ahura Mazda pronounced the *ahuna vairiia* (the divine one organized all; the evil one became bound) and banished the partisan of *druj* with this interdiction: 'neither our minds, nor our announcements, nor our wills, nor our choice, nor our words, nor our actions, nor our visions, nor our souls associate [with one another]'. The two phrases that I have put in round brackets are in my view a subsequent expansion. The two original statements are straightforward reports on what Mazda utters (from \sqrt{mnu}), and the coordination by means of *-ca* duly expresses the persistence of the logical subject.

⁵⁵Cf. Bd 1.52; WZ 21.9.

⁵⁶Cf. M. Timuš, 'Le "corps eschatologique" (*tan tī pasēn*) d'après la théologie zoroastrienne', *Studia Asiatica* 4 and 5 (2003–2004), pp 795–800, 803.

of the world overrides its status as simply an instrument of the suppression of the hostile principle. The characteristic connection of the eschaton with luminosity can be understood in this perspective: the restoration of the world to its divine substance.⁵⁷ The *hamēth* “eternity” of the *tan ī pasēn* means the release of humans from decay and death; and this condition in turn is nothing other than regaining the (original) luminous bodies.

Conclusion

The basic meaning of the term *mēnōg* in Pahlavi accounts of creation is “mental” (state). Ohrmazd first conceives the form or model of the world—hence the priority of the *mēnōg* state of the world. The Avestan lineage of *mēnōg* (*mainiiauuu-* “celestial”) allows Pahlavi authors to envisage this world-*qua*-idea as having a celestial existence, whose substance or matter consists of light. The notion of the “mental” origin of the world, perhaps even in its celestial valence, goes back to the Gāθās (e.g., Y 31.7). The Pahlavi expression *pad mēnōgīh dāštan* “holding in the *mēnōg* state” describes both aspects of the creator’s relation to the world as representation. I argued that the standard schedule of creation in Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts is adopted from the (Young) Avesta and conceptually elaborated and rationalized in accordance with Greek natural philosophy. In a number of passages this debt is abundantly clear. In particular, the presentation of the process of creation as a sequence whereby each (Empedoclean) element is created from the antecedent one (e.g., Bd 1a2) and the specification of the original substance of creation (whether “endless light” or “a drop of water”) are typically Greek.

The comparison of the Zoroastrian doctrine with Plato’s myth of creation in the *Timaeus* allowed us to bring out two important issues. First, no creation doctrine is complete without answering the question: “why create at all?” Among the doctrines of creation I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Zoroastrian and *Timaeus*’s accounts articulate the final cause of creation. They explain the existence of the world through causality, then, in the most comprehensive sense of this phrase, namely through the causality of an intelligent agent. I argued that such a systematic doctrine of creation is necessarily framed by a cosmic dualism, whether that of two antagonistic agents or that of two thoroughly different categories of being. Second, I pointed out the discrepancy in the Zoroastrian doctrine between the apparently instrumental origin of the world—created for the specific purpose of defeating the Adversary—and its eschatological apotheosis. I suggested that it may be possible to resolve this contradiction by appealing to the original substance of creation, namely the divine substance of light.

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⁵⁷Cf. A. de Jong, ‘Shadow and Resurrection’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 9 (1995), pp. 215–224.

Appendix

Bundahišn 3.26 has been used by some scholars as evidence for the existence in Zoroastrianism of a cosmogonic sacrifice. According to the proponents of the thesis, this Zoroastrian doctrine has an Indo-European lineage. As for the postulated Indo-European ancestor, it must make do with forcible assimilation of disparate myths. In a few publications I have given my reasons for this judgment in reference to the specific myths (Vedic Puruṣa, Norse Ymir, etc.) that have been invoked in the literature.

I have argued that what has been made of *Bundahišn* 3.26 by students of Zoroastrianism, namely that Ohrmazd creates the world in the course of a sacrifice, is problematic because it *contradicts* the account of creation given in Chapter 1A (*abar dām-dahišnīh ī gētiḡhā*).⁵⁸ The proponents of the thesis must deny that it creates discrepancies in the *Bundahišn* account of creation.⁵⁹ They might argue that the (supposed) second account of creation (at Bd 3.26) does not undermine the narrative order but only describes the process of creation *under a different aspect*, that is to say, describes it in the perspective of the anticipated assault of Ahriman (*ēbga*). Hence, according to this interpretation, Chapter 3 can and must be placed in the same chronological slot as Chapter 1 (before Chapter 1A). In my view, this attempt to reconcile the thesis with the narrative order does not really work. First, the supposed creation of the *gētiḡ* world in the course of a “noon sacrifice” (Bd 3.26) flatly contradicts the *gāhānbār* schedule of creation (Bd 1a.18–25). There is no way around this. Second, what to make of the fact that in Chapter 1A where the apparently doctrinal account of creation is given we do not find the slightest allusion to the putative context (i.e., sacrifice) of creation? This is a formidable problem both for the narrative coherence and for the thesis that there is a myth of cosmogonic sacrifice in Zoroastrianism. Third, while in Chapter 1A (Bd 1a.7–25) the account of creation is about *gētiḡ* archetypes, i.e., *asmān*, *gayōmard*, *gāw ī ēk-dād*, in Chapter 3 the creations apparently belong to the post-*ēbga* world, i.e., *ayōx-šust* (cf. Bd 14.2), *mardōmān* (cf. Bd 1a.15–16, Bd 14.5), *gōspand sardaḡān*. The question put to the *frāvahr ī mardōmān* at Bd 3.26, namely whether they are willing to fight in incarnate form with Druz, makes sense only for the post-*ēbga* world, i.e., after Ahriman has attacked and destroyed the *gētiḡ* archetypes, and not three thousand year earlier when Gayōmard alone was created. I do not think appealing to different aspects resolves this inconsistency. If creation of the world with many plants, many animals, and many humans is what Ohrmazd contemplates *ab initio* as the “needful instrument” of defeating Ahriman, why does he create a single plant, a single cow, and a single man in the first instance? If the dynamic, thriving world is the “needful instrument” for defeating Ahriman, why does Ohrmazd create the static world in the first instance? This shows, again, that Chapters 1A and 3 must be placed in different stages of narrative development, and that the argument based on different aspects cannot on its own preserve the narrative coherence. There are good grounds, then, to be

⁵⁸A. Ahmadi, ‘Cosmogonic Sacrifice: A Ghost Zoroastrian Doctrine’, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 60 (2017), pp. 1–16.

⁵⁹I assume that preserving the narrative order is a desideratum of our reading of the text. One could, of course, deny that narrative coherence should be a criterion in judging the issue. One could, for example, maintain that Chapter 3 is composed by a different author who, *moreover*, did not feel himself bound by the account of creation in Chapter 1A since he held a different doctrine of creation, or he might have been simply unaware of the content of the earlier chapter, or that, if the chapters were compiled by a third person, the narrative order (and with it the chronology of events) was unimportant to this compiler.

wary of interpreting Bd 3.26 in the light the thesis of cosmogonic sacrifice. One could hardly affirm the narrative order of the *Bundahišn* account of creation in the face of the problematic consequences of that interpretation. Such an affirmation would be an empty gesture which in effect leaves the notion of narrative coherence without actual content and applicability. A famous philosopher mentions the story of a man who goes to a store to buy fruit. He is offered apples and pears, oranges and bananas, but he rejects what is offered to him. He only wants fruit.

Another problem with the thesis of “cosmogonic sacrifice” is that its proponents do not explain what exactly they actually mean by sacrifice. Do they mean a version of Lincoln’s myth of the sacrifice of Gayōmard? Or do they have in mind one of the known Zoroastrian services? In the former case, they have to explain why absolutely no indication to that effect is found in Bd 3.26 or indeed in any other Pahlavi text. In the latter case, they need to show in reference to the *content* of whatever service they have in mind how it can accommodate the standard schedule of creation of Chapter 1A. This, in my view, is not feasible.

Let us now examine the actual text (from Bd 3.26). There are in fact two different versions of the passage in question. In the Iranian manuscripts we read: *ohrmazd abāg amahraspandān pad rapihwin mēnōg ī yazišn frāz sāxt andar yazišn kunišn dām hamāg be dād*. In the Indian manuscripts, however, we have a totally different phrase: *ohrmazd abāg amahraspandān pad rapihwin mēnōg ī yazišn frāz sāxt u-š andar yazišn harw abzār pad ōzadan ī petyārag abāyist be dād*.⁶⁰ The boldface indicates the competing phrases. What may be the criteria for choosing between the two (e.g., as the original)? Is it possible to explain the existence of two rival versions? In an article I tried to show that the Indian version fits the narrative order, whereas the Iranian version (in the meaning ascribed to it in the literature) does not. Now I would like to argue that the reading that is generally offered of the phrase *andar yazišn kunišn dām hamāg be dād* is questionable. In my view, this phrase does not mean (in Agostini’s and Thrope’s translation) “during the celebration of the worship, [Ohrmazd] created all creation”.⁶¹ The verb *kardan*; *kun-* meaning “do” or “make” or “perform” is frequently used with *yazišn* in Pahlavi texts. The phrase *yazišn kun-* generally means to perform a worship service or sacrifice. If one interprets Bd 3.26 *yazišn kunišn* in this way, thus giving *kunišn* verbal force governing *yazišn* as its direct object, then it must be admitted that the preposition *andar* is out of place. One rather expects *pad* which is regularly used in Middle Persian with abstract nouns that have a verbal force in the meaning “by means of” or “through”, which at a pinch can mean “during”. MP *andar* (from Old Persian *antar*)⁶² in the meaning “inside” or “between” is used with nouns that designate circumstances (e.g., *tan* or *dēn*) or states (e.g., *paymān* or *abēzagīh* or *bīm* or *rōšnīh*), and in the meaning “among” it is used with sets of concrete or concretized items. The term governed by *andar* is always (envisaged as) a circumscribed space, a container. Both etymology and usage militate against its use with abstract nouns with verbal force. It is senseless to say inside or between or among celebrating a sacrifice. In Middle Persian one would say *pad* “through” celebrating a sacrifice (**pad yazišn kunišn*), if this meaning was intended. I very much doubt that *andar yazišn kunišn* means

⁶⁰See Pakzad, *Bundahišn*, p. 52.

⁶¹Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, p. 25.

⁶²See C. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin, 1961), col. 131.

“during the celebration of the worship”, *contra* Agostini and Thrope. Translating *andar* as “during” in the phrase is to fudge it in order to make the passage express what is expected of it.

Let me first give my understanding of the phrase and then try to justify it with examples. The phrase *andar yazišn kunišn dām hamāg be dād* means: “in the service, [Ohrmazd] set [for] the creation in its entirety its task”, where *yazišn* designates a concrete circumstance and *kunišn* is understood as what must done or task. In other words, *andar yazišn* is an adverbial clause, and *kunišn* is the object of *be dād*. For the usage of *andar* I only give examples that seem to invalidate my position.

D 5.11.3 *ōzadan ī mardōm bē ān ī andar kōšišn* “killing people other than the killing that happens in battle”. Here the abstract noun *kōšišn* is concretized and denotes battle.⁶³

D 5.4.9 *u-šan tuwān kunišn ud pahrēzišn andar kunišnān ud pahrēzišnān* “among the things that must be done and the things that must be avoided they must [respectively] do and avoid [as many] as it is in their power”. The term *kunišnān* circumscribes a set of obligations. Incidentally, note that the necessitative participle *kunišn* is substantivized here to designate a task.

D 5.7.2 *be šnāxtan ī frēfiārīh ud wiγābāngārīh ī ahreman ud dēwān čiyōn gumēxtaγīh ī-šan bārīkīhā andar weh dahišnān niहुfiārīh ī-šan rāh ud ristag ī rāst zūr nimūdārīh ī-šan ast pad nēst rāh-dārīh ī-šan andar acw ud menišn ud gōwišn ud kunišn ī astōmandān ud āsūdagīh ī-šan pad wināhišngārīh* “to recognize the deceitful and misleading character of Ahriman and the Dēws: how they cleverly mix [themselves] in the good creations, [how] they conceal the right way and manner, [how] by deception they make what is appear as what is not, [how] they rob humans [lit. incarnate beings] in life [or intention] and thought and speech and action, and [how] they feel content by committing crime”. The terms *menišn* and *gōwišn* and *kunišn* are not gerunds (thinking, speaking, and performing) but are envisaged as fields whose constituents may be taken.

D 5.24.4 *ud kō(x)šišn ī pad andar gumēxtan wihān an-ēwēn kēnwarīh ud āzwarīh*, etc. “the motivation [of Ahriman] in struggling to mix in [i.e., good creations] is aberrant vengefulness and enviousness”, etc. The implicit object of *gumēxtan* is *weh dahišnān*. *andar* is used as a verbal prefix with verbs that can take complements of place, such as *būdan*, *abgandan*, *ōfiādan*, *ōbastan*, *nišastan*, *māndan*, *hištan*, *gumēxtan*, *ēstādan*, *šudan*. *andar abāyistan* means “require” or the like. *mard-ē kē duxt ī xwēš ayāb xwah ī xwēš pad zanīh andar abāyēd*, etc. “the man who requires his daughter or his sister to be his wife”, etc.⁶⁴ Bd 1.53 *ka-š way ī dagrand-xwadāy firāz bēhēnīd ōy-iz abzār-ē(w) būd ī-š pad dām-dahišnīh andar abāyist* “when [Ohrmazd] fashioned the lasting autonomous space – this, too, was an instrument that he required for creation of the world”. Perhaps *andar abāyistan* literally means: something is required among (e.g., one’s tools).

D 5.24.7 *ud pēš az ān zamān bēron nē kardan čim ēk a-wišōbišnīh ī ham hu-frazām-gārīh kē rāy andar hištan-iz čim* “and the reason why [Ohrmazd] does not expel [Ahriman] from [the world] prior to the [appointed] time is, for one, that the accomplishment [of the expulsion

⁶³The *Dēnkard* 5 texts from cited from J. Amouzgar and A. Tafazzoli, *Le cinquième livre du Dēnkard* (Paris, 2000).

⁶⁴H. Rezaei Baghbidi, *The Rivāyat of Ādur-Farōbay ī Farrōxzādān* (Tehran, 2005), p. 16.

of Ahriman] is not disturbed, which is also the reason why [Ohrmazd] allowed [Ahriman] inside [the world in the first place]”.

D 5.24.17 *ud barsom ud drōn ud abārīg ī andar paristišn ī yazdān frāz dārīhēd nihang-ē pad nām-barišnīh hangirdīg hēnd ī hamāg gēfīg dahišnān ī pad sālārīh ō mardōmān abespārd ēstēnd* “Barsom and Drōn and other [ritual implements] which in the worship of the gods are deployed are a limited number of things that represent in a summary form all *gēfīg* creations which have been entrusted to humans as their guardian”. The phrase *paristišn ī yazdān* denotes a (concrete) rite in (the course of) which one deploys ritual implements.

PRDd 58.19 *kayādurbōzīd guft kū xwad āb andar kunišn čē ān-iz sāzišn-ē* “Kayādurbōzīd said that of course water should be put in [the bowl] for that too is a [legitimate] preparation”.⁶⁵

PRDd 58.43 *u-šān abestāg pēš andar nē kunišn* “they should not recite the Avesta further in [the text]”.

WZ 9.5 *tā pad ān ī būd pad čē-ēwēnaḡ be ō pēšēnīgān hammōzād ud abar ān ī bauwēd čē-ēwēnaḡ kunišn-iz be ō dāmān framāyēd* “so that [Zarduxšt] may teach about how things were like for the ancients, and also instruct the creatures in what manner one must act in the future”.

WZ 27.2 *dudīgar wizīn-kardārīh ī andarag menišnān gōwišnān kunišnān* “the second [characteristic of Āsrōn] is judiciousness concerning thoughts, words, and actions”. The participles are concretized: *menišn* means “what is thought”, etc.

In view of the usage of *andar*, one can maintain the meaning “during sacrifice [Ohrmazd] created the world in its entirety” for *andar yazīšn kunišn dām hamāg be dād* only on the condition that *yazīšn kunišn* mean sacrifice or service. In other words, it would convey precisely what *yazīšn* on its own regularly means, i.e., either sacrifice in general or *yašt* (e.g., Yasna ceremony) in particular. But, then, why the pleonasm? Admittedly, for the reading I suggest one ideally expects *andar yazīšn kunišn <ō> dām hamāg be dād*.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, on balance, I still prefer the latter reading to the former one, even strictly within the bounds of the syntax of the phrase. If one closely examines a good number of passages with *andar*, one realizes how odd *andar yazīšn kunišn* is; and if the phrase appears trivial, it is because the verb *kardan* is frequently used with *yazīšn* as its direct object.⁶⁷

The presence of the *frawahr* in Bd 3.26–27 reminds the reader of Yt 13.53–58 where the *frawašīs* are credited with helping Mazda to get the hitherto stagnant waters to flow and the plants to proliferate and thrive, and to delineate the right path for the motion of the heavenly bodies, as countermeasures to Anra Mainiiu’s attack. If the author of the *Bundahišn* passage did indeed have the Avestan passage in mind, as the theme of the chapter inclines one to suspect, this gives us further indication as to the intended chronology of the Bd 3.26 *yazīšn* within the millenarian scheme: the world is on the verge of being attacked by Ahriman. The *mēnōgān* have received their tasks in preparation for the coming struggle (Chapter 4: *abar dwāristan ī ēbḡat ō dām*). In Bd 3.26–27 one final category of the *mēnōgān* accept the task that is given them by Ohrmazd: the *frawahr ī mardōmān*.

⁶⁵The *Pahlavi Rivāyat* texts are cited from A. V. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Copenhagen, 1990).

⁶⁶Or *andar yazīšn kunišn <ṭ> dām hamāg be dād* “in the service, [Ohrmazd] set the task of creation in its entirety”.

⁶⁷But this favours giving *kunišn* (in the supposed *yazīšn kunišn*) verbal force, and makes the phrase vulnerable to the criticism based on the usage of *andar*.

The analysis I have proposed for *andar yazišn kunišn dām hamāg be dād* tallies with the narrative order and fits the context of the chapter and takes into account the possible Avestan background of the presence of the *frauahr* in the paragraph. Further, the Iranian and Indian versions turn out to be semantically convergent, both referring to the measures taken against the impending *ēbgat*, enumerated in the chapter. This makes it likely that one or the other was actually produced on the basis of the understanding of what the chapter is about. Perhaps one of the versions was missing a number of words between *andar yazišn* and *be dād*, and the defective nature of the sentence was perceived, and a contextually appropriate phrase was supplied. It is thus possible to explain the existence two different phrases in the two manuscript traditions by relying on their convergent meanings.