

What is *aša-*?

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Abstract

The term *aša-* stands in the centre of ancient Iranian thought. It is a pivotal concept in Zoroastrian religious lore, but is not, in its significance, coeval with Zoroastrianism. As an object of eschatological longing, *aša-* has Indo-Iranian roots. It is, in Old and Middle Persian texts, primarily understood as a synecdoche for the divine sphere where the religiously dutiful expect to lead a blessed mental existence after death. *Aša-* is also a deity of the Old Avestan pantheon, thus a deified concept. Finally, the term is regularly used in the Gāthās as both the authoritative instance of measuring human (religious) conduct, and the normative goal of therapeutic (eschatological) activity. In this latter usage, too, and in agreement with its form and etymology, *aša-* signifies a concrete phenomenon. There are good reasons to think that this phenomenon is the world as it was “put together” by Ahura Mazda, and only subsequently sickened by the forces of deception. Translations to date, such as “truth” and “order”, are examined, all of which are shown to have serious problems. In conclusion I propose to translate *aša-* as “cosmos”.

Keywords: Zoroastrianism, Eschatology, *Aša-*, *Druj-*, Dualism, Truth

No other Avestan term is as enigmatic and as important to our understanding of the religious view of the Avesta as the notion of *aša-*. The etymology and the form of the term enjoy scholarly consensus.¹ If the concept defies definition, it is because, in Nietzsche’s words, “an entire process is semiotically concentrated” (1994: 53) in it, a process which is quite obscure. Basing themselves on the opposition of *aša-* to *druj-* “lie”, and seemingly on its etymology, scholars have generally translated the term as “truth” or “order”: one or the other? – this has been the main focus of the debate on the matter.² More recently, a number of scholars have remarked that *aša-* contains both of these meanings. After a brief review of earlier contributions to the topic, Hintze (2007: 58) states: “the term denotes much more than the common contemporary understanding of ‘truth’ in the sense of conformity with fact. *Aša-* applies on both the spiritual and material levels. On the latter, it denotes the laws of nature or ‘order’ by which

- 1 See Hoffmann 1986: 173–80; Tichy 1986; Cantera 2003; Hintze 2007a: 53–8. This article has greatly benefitted from the critical remarks of an anonymous reader. I wish to thank her/him.
- 2 “It is generally accepted that the original meaning of **ṛtā-* (Vedic *ṛtā-*, Av. *aša-*) is ‘truth’. That is confirmed by the fact that *aša-* is opposed [to] Av. *druj-* ‘lie’” (Schlerath and Skjærvø 1987: 694). Compare Gonda 1963: 197 and Kuiper 1964.

the physical world functions well on the cosmic, ritual and social planes. With regard to the former, it refers to that way of thinking which is in conformity with the perfect spiritual and material worlds". Kellens' preferred term "l'Agencement" (e.g. Kellens 2008) implies both of these ideas and points to the etymology of the Avestan term.

It is fair to assert, however, that the sense of the term *in situ* remains elusive. One may justifiably wonder, for instance, what is meant in Kellens and Pirart's translation of Y 34.12cc' *sīšā nā aša paθō, vanhāuš x'v aētāng manahō*: "Enseigne-nous grâce à l'Harmonie les chemins aisés de la divine Pensée" (1988: 128). Is the reference to *aša-* meant to remind the god of an obligation? Is it meant to signal one's qualification for the god's instructions? In his lecture at the Collège de France (January 20, 2012), Kellens interprets the instrumental differently: "Enseigne-nous par l'Agencement les chemins faciles de la bonne Pensée". It is hard to determine what "par l'Agencement" could mean in the phrase, since he seems to understand "l'Agencement" as the "principe régulateur de tout (Aša)" (2008: 509). Does "l'Agencement" here mean "ritual" perhaps (see below)? Lommel (1971: 89) translates *aša* as "durch Wahrsein", presumably as the instrumental of means or medium. Insler (1975: 57) chooses "in alliance with truth", maintaining that it modifies the "paths" (1975: 226). The "paths" that are "in alliance with truth": what could the phrase mean? Humbach (1991: I, 142) seems to interpret *aša* as an adverbial: "Show us with truth the paths of good thought, easy to travel". Does Mazda ever resort to deception or present things deceitfully? Or perhaps the instrumental is comitative, in which case "truth" would be one of the two topics for which revelation is sought. Humbach's translation of the imperative verb, however, is tendentiously vague. Elsewhere, the "paths" are the object of $\sqrt{sāh}$ "instruct" (Y 43.3), whereas *aša-* is the object of \sqrt{dis} "display" in Y 43.10 *at tū mōi dāiš ašam*, that is to say the object of a visual showing (cf. Mayrhofer 1992–2001: 744–6). What, then, might *aša-* be, in this phrase? In Y 34.12cc' we have the full range of the senses that scholars have given *aša-*, but none really works.

In addition to the semantic there is the question of the religious meaning or, more broadly, ideational content of the term. According to Kellens (2000: 101–2), in the Avestan worldview sacrifice helps maintain the cosmic order: "The men reproduce symbolically the cosmogonic act of Ahura Mazda by submitting the sacrifice to a perfect order. Aša, like OInd. *ṛtá-*, is also a ritual allegory and even one of the possible names for the ritual, for the ritual is the foremost ordered human activity". It is not clear what is meant by "ritual allegory"; the possibility that the term *aša-* may denote ritual must be determined by investigating its discursive usage. It seems that "order" is understood here in an abstract sense. In any case, it makes a difference whether the ground for using the same term to refer to the cosmic order as well as ritual is their "perfect order", or whether it is because the latter "imitates" the former. Thus, different meanings can be attributed to Kellens' assertion that performing the ritual is "to do what Ahura Mazda did at the dawn of time: produce order" (2000: 101). In a similar vein, Skjærvø (2003: 407 ff.) holds the view that in the Old Avestan context ritual seeks to "reproduce" the cosmic order, and functions as the "means of making Order and the sun reappear" (2003: 411); "the ritual Order matches the divine Order" (Skjærvø 2002: 406). It is unclear whether the model of the ritual is

the creative act or the cosmic order, and how one or the other is “emulated” in the ritual, if in fact “order” refers to a specific order and does not merely have an abstract sense. The alleged connection with the daily rise of the sun is yet to be substantiated.³ According to Hintze (2007: 57), the adjective *aṣa.nāsa-*, used of *nāmah-* in the context of the *hamaspaθmaēdaiia-* festival, “suggests that *aṣa-* is strengthened by means of the ritual”. She translates the compound as “order-obtaining”. The *nāmah-* strengthens the cosmic order and contributes to its maintenance. But \sqrt{nas} means attaining or reaching, e.g. a goal or destination (Mayrhofer 1992–2001: II, 27–8). Thus the phrase *aṣa.nāsa- nāmah-* means: the (ritual) homage that reaches *aṣa-*, which would not make much sense should one insist on translating the term as “truth” or “order”.

The idea that the term *aṣa-* has an abstract sense is a widespread assumption in the scholarship.⁴ I cited Kellens above as suggesting that it is a “ritual

- 3 Bodewitz (1976) argues that the Vedic daily offerings into the domestic fire, *agnihotra*, originally had the role of ensuring the regular movement of the sun in its daily course. In particular its purpose was the nocturnal safekeeping of the sun (in the hearth fire). Whether this interpretation of the *agnihotra* is acceptable does not concern me here. This scheme cannot simply be transposed to Avestan material, where the *yasna* rite is strictly a morning event, as opposed to the *agnihotra*: “the evening *agnihotra* is primary. It is the real offering into Agni. It has the formula ‘Agni is the light, the light is Agni’. The morning performance ... seems to be a duplication (with some necessary adaptations). The mystery of the sun’s disappearance has been brought under control ... The misleading emphasis on the morning performance in the secondary literature may be due to the fact that this performance takes in [sic.] a central position in the discussion on the right time for the offering” (Bodewitz 1976: 3). Bodewitz also points to the eschatological dimension of the rite, an “important secondary function” (1976: 4). It seems to me that the theme of overcoming death is present in all the various myths related to the rite (see Bodewitz 1976: 14–29). Compare *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2, 1, 6, 4–5: “When Prajāpati created (emitted) the gods, he created Agni as the first of them. Failing to find something else to seize he returned to Parjāpati. He (P.) became afraid of death. He shaped yonder sun out of himself. Having offered this he fled. Then he overcame death. He who knows this overcomes death” (in Bodewitz 1976: 17–8).
- 4 See, for instance, Thieme 1970 and Boyce 1975: 20–41. Michiel de Vaan (2003: 593) translates *aṣa-* as “truth, righteousness” and *aṣauuan-* as “truthful, righteous”. Hintze’s view is ambiguous in this regard. As the text I cited above shows, she maintains that the term “applies on both the spiritual and material levels”. On the “material level” it refers to “the laws of nature”; on “the spiritual level” it refers to “a way of thinking” which is in “conformity with the perfect spiritual and material worlds”. It is not clear where the “spiritual world” fits in the scheme. But let us assume that “order” refers to the laws of both spiritual and material worlds. Does this mean, then, that “truth” refers to a “way of thinking” which is in conformity with the “perfect order”? Is this “perfect order” the same as the “laws of nature”? (Let us note in passing that “truth”, unlike German “Wahrsein”, does not really lend itself to the characterization Hintze gives it, i.e. “a way of thinking”.) Is it as a “way of thinking” that “truth” is opposed by *druj-* “lie”? Is the latter, then, not an alternative “order” but only an alternative “way of thinking”? In my mind, the notion of “order” as Hintze understands it, i.e. the set of laws governing the world, may in principle be a plausible interpretation of *aṣa-*, but is ultimately unacceptable because it cannot account for the eschatological dimension of the concept. On the other hand, the idea that *aṣa-* (also) designates a “way of thinking” (in conformity with the “perfect order”) is less defensible in view of the usage of the term, as we will see. Incidentally, *āramiti-* is the “way of thinking” that strengthens the *aṣa-*: Y 44.6cc *aṣəm śīiaoθanāiš, dəbqzaiī ārmaitiš* “the proper way of thinking strengthens *aṣa-* by way of (true) actions”.

allegory”, i.e. the cosmic transposition of the orderliness of ritual, “the foremost ordered human activity”. It is true that almost all the OAv gods seem to be allegorized ritual capacities or activities. Setting aside *aša-*, the YAv *amāša- spənta-* deities are personified abstract nouns, with the probable exception of Mazda.⁵ Perhaps this is why it is assumed that *aša-* must belong with this list of abstract terms. Along with *āramiti-* (cf. Mayrhofer 1992–2001: 110), unlike the other deified terms, *aša-* has an Indo-Iranian lineage. The view that it is the generic name for ritual thus remains an assumption. More importantly, as I will argue, *aša-* is not in its fundamental meaning a Zoroastrian conception but is inherited from pre-Gāthic tradition.

Avestan *aša-* is a nominalized past participle (**Hṛtá-* → **árta-*) derived from IE $\sqrt{*h_2er}$ “to fit, join” and designates the result of the action denoted by the verb.⁶ Whether the full grade Avestan noun dates back to the IE times, “ein morphologisches Relikt” (Tichy 1986: 95–6), or is a nominalization of the verbal adjective **ṛtá-*, an Avestan innovation, “when vowel gradation caused by accent shift was still in operation” (Hintze 2007a: 56), there cannot be any question that *aša-* is a substantive.⁷ One may query the isolation of the Avestan noun in Iranian languages if Herrenschildt’s argument (1993) for reading **artā hacā* for OP *artācā* in XPh 41 (also in XPh 50–1, 53–4) is accepted.⁸ The etymology and form of Avestan *aša-* point to a concrete notion. This is an important consideration. Substantivized verbal adjectives in *-ta* generally have a concrete sense.⁹ The conceptual domain of *aša-* does not necessarily coincide with its Vedic cognate (*contra*, e.g., Kellens 2000: 101–2). The Vedic adjective *ṛtá-* seems to be a qualification of speech where it particularly means “true”, in the sense of conformity with fact. This is perhaps why it is easily replaced in the later texts by *satyá-*, an adjective that alleges the “reality” of what it qualifies (Thompson 1998). In a significant context, the substantive *ṛtá-* shares with the Avestan term a set of features that points to a common conception (see Kuiper 1964). Despite his translation of the term as “order” (seemingly) in an abstract sense, the specific usage of *ṛtá-* set out by Kuiper (1964) avers otherwise (see sections 2 and 3).¹⁰ The case for the translation of *aša-* as an abstract notion (such as “truth” or “agencement”) is yet to be made. It has to be demonstrated that it can have such a sense in usage.

5 On Mazda, compare Kuiper 1957; Hintze 2007a: 284–5; 2012, 67–9: “der sein Denken setzt” (p. 68); Hintze 2012 is now published in English translation (Hintze 2014).

6 See Mayrhofer 1992–2001: I, 254–5; Hoffmann 1986. “Following Hoffmann 1986: 166, we can interpret **árta-* as the substantivized form of the verbal adjective **ṛtá-* ‘joined’, which is attested in Skt. *ṛtá-* ‘right, just’” (de Vaan 2003: 593).

7 Cantera (2003) argues that the substantive noun has a zero grade vowel in its initial syllable in Old Avestan, i.e. **árta-*.

8 The reading was first proposed by Henning (1940), who translates **artā hacā* as “according to the Holy Law” and suggests the comparison with Gāthic *ašāt hacā* (1940: 506). I am grateful to the anonymous reader for drawing my attention to this text. According to Tichy (1986: 91–2), Vedic *ṛtāvan-* and OP *artāvan-* are derived from the collective noun Ilr. **ṛtā* < IE *h₂ṛtáh₂*, which means “‘das Geordnete (Richtige) in seiner Gesamtheit’ → ‘rechte Ordnung, Wahrheit’”, whereas the Avestan *aša-* < **árta-* < **h₂érto-* is a singular abstract noun (Tichy 1986: 95–6).

9 See Wackernagel and Debrunner 1954: 584–8.

10 Compare Gonda 1963: 197.

1. Case usages of *aša-* in Old Avestan

As we can see the usage of the noun, no less than its etymology, rules out the abstract sense. There are many occurrences where *aša-* must be understood as a personified concept, i.e. a deity. Most if not all of its occurrences in the nominative, in the vocative, and many in the accusative, fall into this category. One may wonder what justification the translation of *aša-* as “truth” can have in Y 51.10cc’ *maibiiō zbaiiā ašəm, vañhiiiā ašī gaṭ.tē*.¹¹ In Y 29.2 *aša-* is the interlocutor of *gəuš tašan-*, the “fashioner of the cow”: *tašā gəuš pərəsaṭ ašəm*. One might reply that in these instances “truth” is allegorized into a deity, as seems to be the procedure with the other *aməša- spənta-* entities, which are “abstract notions” apparently designating ritual dispositions or capacities (cf. Thieme 1970). If so, the actual usage must indicate that the term can indeed have an abstract sense like “truth” or “agencement”. Where does “truth” simply mean truth? My point, in what follows, is that nowhere can it have that meaning.¹²

The only grammatical case in which there may be grounds to believe that *aša-* can have an abstract sense like truth or orderliness is the instrumental. This case alone counts for almost half of all the occurrences of *aša-* (excluding the idiomatic *ašāt hacā*) in the Gāthās and the Yasna Haptaṅhāiti – 76 out of 155.¹³ The senses of (the noun in) the instrumental may be divided into three categories, leaving aside the obscure passages.¹⁴ The first category is the comitative instances, where *aša-* clearly has the sense of a divine person, such as in the following passages.

Y 28.8a–b *vahištəm ..., yəm ašā vahištā hazaošəm / ahurəm ...* “the very good Ahura who is in accord with *aša-*”. The instrumental is the complement of the adjective *hazaoša-* meaning like-minded (similarly in Y 29.7).

Y 34.2b’ *yehiiā uruuā ašā hacaitē* “whose soul is associated with *aša-*”. The instrumental is governed by the verb.

Y 44.8d (*uxdā frašī*) *yācā ašā* “and the words that I exchange with *aša-*”. The instrumental is governed by the verb (similarly in, e.g., 51.11).¹⁵

11 Insler (1975: 105): “I (therefore) summon truth to me, to come with my good reward”. Lommel (1971:174): “Für mich rufe ich das Wahrsein an, mit der guten Vergeltung zu kommen”. Humbach (1991: I, 188): “(But) I call (for) truth to come to me with a good reward”.

12 The “truth” of a proposition implies, one way or another, a relation to something else, whether the reference is to “what the case is” (correspondence theory) or to the other propositions in the system (coherence theory). In other words, the claim of “truth” bears on a relation. When one casually talks about the “truth” of a situation or a matter, one is implicitly making a contrast with how it “appears” to be: it *is such and such* as opposed to how it appears. This contrast has been fundamental to a certain usage of “truth” ever since Parmenides and Heraclitus. Behind or beyond the appearances stands the real (e.g. ever the same) world. In Plato’s doctrine of “ideal forms” (in the *Republic*) perceptible phenomena (i.e. the objects of the senses) are copies of the “real” things (i.e. the objects of the mental intuition). These are not the truth; the truth is that these really are, and not the former.

13 The count is based on the lexicon in Kellens and Pirat 1990: 209–10.

14 These are Y 30.9, 31.3, 34.6, 34.11 and 46.9.

15 The whole context is Y 44.8 *taṭ θβā pərəsā, əraš mōi vaocā ahurā / məndaidiūi, yā tōi mazdā ādištiš / yācā vohū, uxdā frašī manəṅhā / yācā ašā, aṅhəuš arəm.vəēidiūi / kā mē uruuā, vohū uruuāxšaṭ āgəmaṭtā* “this I ask you, O Ahura, tell me straight, so that I

Y 49.5 *yā daēnqm ... sārəštā ... ašā* “who unites [his] vision-soul with *aša-*”. The instrumental is governed by the verb.

Y 50.4a–c *aṭ vā yazāi, stauuas mazdā ahurā / hadā ašā, vahištācā manahhā / xšaθrācā...* “I worship you while praising you, Mazdā Ahura, along with *aša-*, very Good Thinking, and Power”. The instrumentals are governed by the preposition.

The second category is the instrumental that expresses the idea of conformity or adherence. It comprises the majority of the occurrences of *aša-* in the instrumental.

Y 28.1 *ahiiā yāsā ... / mainiiəuš mazdā paouruuīm, spəntahiiā ašā vīspəṅg šīiaoθanā / vaṅhəuš xratūm manahhō, yā xšnəuuīšā gəušcā uruuānəm* “I ask all (of you) for the primordial (vision?) of the beneficent intuition with an action (that is) in accordance with *aša-*, so that you may receive, O Mazdā, the efficacy of (my) good thinking and the soul of the cow”.¹⁶ The optative *xšnəuuīšā* from $\sqrt{xšnu}$ “receive, satisfy” must mean here “let it please you and thus achieve its purpose”. The poet acquires the vision of primordial creation from the beneficent intuition. The conformity of the action with *aša-* secures the supreme god’s favourable disposition. Insler’s “the spirit virtuous through truth” (1975: 25) and Humbach’s “the spirit, prosperous through truth” (1991: I, 117) introduce an obscure idea (“the spirit being virtuous or prosperous through truth”). What is “truth”, by means of which the “spirit” may be prosperous?

Y 31.16a–b’ ... *huuō, yā hudānuš dəmanahiiā xšaθrəm / šōiθrahiiā vā daxiiəuš vā, ašā fradaθāi aspərazatā* “the generous one who aspires to power over the house or the settlement or the country in order to make it prosper through adherence to *aša-*”. The free instrumental cannot be that of the means, that of the reference, or that of the reason of the action. The translations given by scholars of this passage are vague or even *unsinnig*: “pour (les) prospérer par l’Harmonie” (Kellens and Pirart 1988: 116); “to prosper the rule of the house or of the district or the land with truth” (Insler 1975: 41); “welcher als Wohlverständiger die Herrschaft des Hauses, Gaus, Landes mit Wahrheit zu fördern strebt” (Lommel 1971: 52); “a generous person ... who strives to promote, with truth, one’s power over house, district and country” (Humbach 1991: I, 130). Does “truth” bind or otherwise condition the exercise of power, as Insler’s and Lommel’s translations might suggest? Or does it serve the promotion of (one’s) power, as Humbach’s seems to aver? In either case, what is “truth” that is capable of achieving the supposed goal?

Y 33.10cc’ *vohū uxšiiā manahhā, xšaθrā ašācā uštā tanūm* “I thrive in body (or in person) by means of power (available) through good thinking, and in accordance with *aša-*”. The sacrificer thrives by means of the “power” that is acquired through the “good thinking” of the sacrificer (see Ahmadi 2012b). This thriving takes place in accordance with *aša-*. The sequence does not require

know, what your advice (is), O Mazdā, and (what) the words (are) that I exchange with Good Thinking, and (what those) that (I exchange with) *aša-* in order to have the right knowledge of the (primordial) existence. By what (path of) the good (thinking) my soul arrives at (its) destination?”

16 See Ahmadi 2014a.

or justify attributing the same sense to the instrumentals. One cannot dispense with the conceptual background of the terms. The instrumental of reference indicates compliance with an authoritative instance that must have more or less articulate features. That the instance has describable characteristics is implied in the idea of compliance. The usage, then, precludes attributing an abstract sense to *aša-*. Again, the translations we have of the role of *aša-* are vague, sometimes arbitrary and, in any case, meaningless. “(And) grow Thyself, in breath and body, through the rule of good thinking and of truth” (Insler 1975: 53). What does the “rule of truth” mean? “Grow through good thought, power and truth as (Thou) desirest, in (Thy) body” (Humbach 1991: I, 138). What could “growing through truth” mean? In what sense is the instrumental understood? “Mon corps croît heureusement grâce à la divine Pensée, à l’emprise (rituelle) et à l’Harmonie” (Kellens and Pirart 1988: 124).

Y 34.4a–b’ *aṭ tōi ātrēm ahurā, aojōḡhūuaṇtəm ašā usēmahī / asīštīm m̄mauuaṇtəm, stōi rapantē ciθrā. auuaṇḡhəm* “And, Ahura, we wish your powerful (sacrificial) fire, mighty and supremely capable (or commanding)¹⁷ in accordance with *aša-*, to be a brilliant help for the supporters”. The functions and capacities of the sacrificial fire are determined in the primordial creation. “Thy fire, Lord, which possesses strength through truth, etc.” (Insler 1975: 55); “ton feu puissant, instructeur et fort par l’Harmonie” (Kellens and Pirart 1988: 126); “dein Feuer, o Herr, durch Wahrsein kraftvoll” (Lommel 1971: 87); “Thy fire, O Ahura, [which is] strong through truth” (Humbach 1991: I, 140). The idea of “strength through truth” is quite obscure.

Y 44.2 *hūō zī ašā spəntō* “because that one is a vitalizer through adherence to *aša-*” (cf. Y 34.2). The instrumental is an attributive complement of the adjective *spənta-*. Adherence to *aša-* empowers; in particular, it gives the capacity to vitalize existence (cf. Y 43.2–3). Insler (1975: 67) translates the phrase: “virtuous through truth”, Humbach (1991: I, 157): “prosperous through truth”. Truthfulness is normally considered a virtue; in being truthful, a person is virtuous. Let us grant that this conditional relation may be expressed in the instrumental: virtuous through truthfulness. But truthfulness is not the same thing as “truth”, e.g. the truth of a proposition.

Y 44.20ee’ *nōit hīm ⁺mizēn, ašā vāstrəm frādaḡhē* “they do not foster her (so that she would be able) to make the pasture thrive in accordance with *aša-*” (cf. Y 43.6). The instrumental could also be comitative (cf. Y 44.10). Lommel (1971: 114) renders the infinitive phrase: “durch Wahrsein die Weidewirtschaft zu fördern”, Insler (1975: 72): “to prosper her [i.e. the cow] and her pasturage with truth”, where the “cow” is a metaphor for the “good vision” (Insler 1975: 73, n. 16), the *daēnā*. Truth is the means of making the “good vision” thrive. In what sense must “truth” be understood for such a proposition to have any meaning?

Y 45.6bb’ *stauuas ašā, yā hudā yōi həntī* “praising the (most) benevolent of the gods in accordance with *aša-*”. The instrumental is the complement of the present participle *stauuat-* describing the poet, and probably has a bearing on the fact that the poet is praising Mazdā. Compliance with *aša-* requires that

17 See de Vaan 2003: 237–8 for *asīšti-*.

he praise Mazdā in particular as the most benevolent god. In view of the context, the instrumental could also be sociative: “praising, along with *aša-*, the most benevolent of the gods”, thus Kellens and Pirart (1988: 156) and Insler (1975: 264). Lommel (1971: 125) translates the instrumental as “durch Wahrsein”, Humbach (1991: I, 165) “with truth”. If the qualification “with truth” bears on the praise, it can only mean “truthfully”. If the sense of “truthfully” is not admitted for “with truth”, one wonders what other meaning the phrase can have.

Y 46.2ee’ *āxsō vaḥhāuš, ašā īštīm mananḥō* “Behold the control of good thinking thanks to (my) adherence to *aša-*”. It means: behold the control I have over the power (*xšaθra-*) that you make available through good thinking, (the control) which I possess because of my adherence to *aša-*.¹⁸ The instrumental is an attributive complement of the action noun *īšti-* derived from *√is* “be capable”. Kellens and Pirart (1988: 158) make the instrumental into a gerundive: “Scrute le rite de la divine Pensée en le mesurant à l’Harmonie”. Is the poet boasting to the god about his ritual or recalling the criterion to be used assessing it? What, in either case, could “Harmony” possibly mean other than the model, e.g., of the rite? Humbach (1991: I, 168) makes the instrumental the complement of good thinking: “Look upon the vigour of good thought, (inspired) by truth”. In Humbach’s text, again, the only sense “truth” can have is “truthfulness”, i.e. good thought inspired, motivated, by wanting to be truthful. The meaning of Lommel’s translation is completely obscure: “Lehre durch Wahrsein die Macht des Guten Denkens” (1971: 132).

Y 46.12a–b’ *hiiat us ašā, naptiiaēšū naḥsucā / tūrahiiā uzjān, friiānahiiā aojiiaēšū* “when he became ascendant among the praiseworthy descendants of the Tūranian Fryāna and their relatives because of (their adherence to) *aša-*”. The instrumental explains the circumstance of the god’s ascendancy, namely the clan’s adherence to *aša-*.

Y 46.17d–e’ *yā vīcinaoṭ, dāθamcā adāθamcā / dangrā maṇtū, ašā mazdā ahurō* “who discerns the righteous and the unrighteous with extraordinary insight in accordance with *aša-* (is) Ahura Mazdā”. The instrumental expresses the criterion of the discernment (cf. Kellens and Pirart 1988: 163); or, less likely, it is a comitative, so Insler (1975: 85) and seemingly Humbach (1991: I, 173).

Y 48.6cc’ *aṭ aḥiiāi ašā, mazdā uruuarā vaxšat* “may Mazdā make plants grow for her [i.e. the cow] in accordance with *aša-*!” The primordial arrangement requires the existence of plants for the cow. Kellens and Pirart translate the instrumental as “en raison de l’Harmonie” (1988: 48). Insler (1975: 91) “through truth”, and Humbach (1991: I, 177) “with truth”, seem to give the value of the means to the instrumental. The idea of “making plants grow by means of truth” is quite incomprehensible. Again, one is left wondering what “truth” may be that it can serve such a purpose.¹⁹

18 Compare Y 34.5a–b’ *kaṭ yā xšaθram kā īštiš, šiiāoθanāi mazdā yaθā vā hahmī / ašā vohū mananḥā, θrāiīōidiīāi drigūm yūšmākam* “Which power do you bring to bear, O Mazdā, what control (do I exercise) thanks to good thinking and through adherence to *aša-*, for (the time of) action or as I sleep, for safeguarding (me), your needy one?”

19 Humbach’s and Insler’s translations of Y 49.1bb’ *yā dušarəθrīš, ciḥšnušā ašā mazdā* are similarly incomprehensible: “O Wise One, (to me) who try to satisfy the ill-herded

Y 50.6a–b’ *yā maθrā, vācəm mazdā baraitī / uruuathō ašā, nəmaḡhā zaraθuštrō* “the bearer of divine visions who raises his voice in reverence, (he is) Zarathuštra (your) loyal ally because of (his adherence to) *ašā*”. Kellens and Pirart (1988: 176) seem to interpret the instrumental as an adverbial: “qui parle avec Harmonie et hommage”. If so, it is difficult to comprehend its meaning. Lommel’s “Freund durch Wahrsein” (1971: 169) and Humbach’s “ally through truth” merely go through the motion of saying something meaningful.

Y 50.8cc’ *aṭ vā ašā, arədraxiīcā nəmaḡhā* “(serve) you with the reverence of an *ardəra*- and in accordance with *ašā*”. Kellens and Pirart’s “par l’Harmonie” (1988: 176), Insler’s “with truth” (1975: 101) and Lommel’s “mit Wahrsein” (1971: 169) are obscure.

Y 51.18a–b *təm cistīm dājāmāspō, huuō.guuō ištōiš x^varəna / ašā vərəntē...* “that idea of control over the riches(?) Djāmāspa Huuoguuā chooses in conformity with *ašā*”. The instrumental may also be sociative (cf. Y 30.5) or indicate the reason for the action. The action noun *išti-* “control” can govern *x^varənah-*, but this latter could also be the direct object of the verb. Lubotsky (2002: 191–5) argues that *x^varənah-* is the Avestan form of a postulated Scythian **farnah-*, meaning something like “dominion”, the cognate of Vedic *pārīnas-*, from the Ir. \sqrt{par} “fill”. The initial fricative would mean that the term spread from Scythian to other Iranian languages. Did it not already exist in these languages? Despite historico-linguistic difficulties (see Hintze 2007b: 179–80), the phraseological similarities in the Vedic and Avestan passages where the word occurs are striking. “The formula *rāyā parīnasā* is no doubt identical with the Avestan formula (*ahe/mana/āḡhəm*) *raiiā x^varənaḡhaca* and goes back to Indo-Iranian times” (Lubotsky 2002: 193). Kellens (2012: 480–1) suggests that the word may represent “la transfiguration divine de l’aliment sacrificiel”.

The third category is the instrumental that expresses the reason for an action.

Y 28.6 *vohū gaidī manaḡhā, dāidī ašā dā darəḡāiīū / ... mazdā, zaraθuštrāi aojōḡhuuat rafəno / ahmaibiiīcā ahurā, yā daibišuuatō duuaēšā tauruuaiīāmā* “Come thanks to (our) good thinking! Give by reason of *ašā*- O Mazdā! Grant (your) long-lasting powerful support, to Zarathuštra and to us, with which we may overcome the hostilities of the hostile one!” Insler associates *ašā*- with “support” as objects of “granting”: “Along with truth, grant ... the long-lived gift of strong support” (1975: 25); similarly Humbach (1991: I, 118). But what does “granting truth” mean? Reading *ašā* as an adverbial modulating the imperative verb (i.e. give in compliance with *ašā*-!) makes for a rather tactless reminder of obligation (cf. Kellens and Pirart 1988: 106, “en raison de l’Harmonie”). Kellens and Pirart read (against others²⁰) *dāh* as a second person sing. inj. aorist of $\sqrt{dā}$ “give” instead of an accusative neuter of the noun *dāh-* (*dā’ah-*) “boon”, which would make the hemistich excessive by one syllable. The metric argument *per se* is not cogent, since the meter is not stable in 28.5–7 (see Kellens and Pirart 1988: 106). The formally identical series of the

(cows) with truth” (Humbach 1991: I, 179); “I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, Wise One”.

20 Insler 1975: 25; Lommel 1971: 20; Humbach 1991: I, 118.

finite verbs in 28.6 and 7, however, make their reading convincing: 28.6 *gaidī ... dāidī ... dā*; 28.7 *dāidī ... dāidī ... dās*^o. Lommel seems to make *aša-* the means by which Mazdā gives his gift: “gib durch Wahrsein die langwährende Gabe” (1971: 20). What could such a qualification mean? *What is “truth” that may be something given by the god to his worshippers or that may be the means by which the god gives something else?* The request for long-lasting support, by the means of which one may overcome the hostilities of the hostile one, “by reason of *aša-*” has an eschatological dimension. Here *aša-* must refer to an object of longing.²¹

Y 29.10a–b’ *yūžəm aēibiō ahurā, aogō dātā ašā xšaθrəmcā / auuat vohū manəhā, yā hušəitīš rāmqmcā dāt* “Give, you (gods), to these (supporters) strength and power, O Ahura, by reason of *aša-*, that (power which one can have) through good thinking, by which Ārmaiti may establish good dwellings and peace”. Humbach (1991: I, 122) has: “Grant You, O Ahura, strength through truth to those (present)”. Insler (1975: 31) has: “Lord, grant ye to these (mortals) strength and the rule of truth and of good thinking”. The “rule of truth and of good thinking”, however, is Insler’s contribution to the religious thought of the Gāthās: he explains that the instrumentals “modify” *xšaθra-*, but this would only give “the rule characterized by truth and good thinking” (Insler 1975: 156)²² (whatever this would mean), and not “the rule of truth and of good thinking”. He believes that the dubious conception finds support in Y 30.7aa’ *ahmāicā xšaθrā jasat manəhā vohū ašācā*, which he translates: “But to this world He came with the rule of good thinking and of truth” (1975: 35). His analysis of the syntax, however, is mistaken.²³

Y 31.5a–b’ *taṭ mōi vīcidiūi vaocā, hūiat mōi ašā dātā vahiiō / vīduiē vohū manəhā, mənācā daidiiā yehiiā mā ərəšiš* “Tell me so I may discern the better

21 See Ahmadi 2014c.

22 Insler calls it “a stylistic usage characteristic of the Gāthās” (1975: 168–9) and refers to his discussion of Y 32.2 (1975: 196–7), which is not really relevant.

23 The term *ahu-* consistently has an abstract sense (“existence”) in the Old Avestan texts, and never the sense of an entity, e.g. the “world”. The direct object of \sqrt{gam} “come” is either in the accusative or locative, not in the dative. When the verb has no complement, it has the sense of “arise” or “arrive” (e.g. Y 30.8, 31.14, 48.11), and its possible dative complement expresses the reason for “arising”. The sense of accusative and dative complements of \sqrt{gam} is clear in Y 36.2 *uruūzištō huō nā yātāiiā patī.jamiiā ātarə mazdā ahurahiiā* “You there, the most joyful one, may you come close to us for the sake of the request, O fire of the Wise Lord” (Hintze 2007a: 119). See Hintze’s analysis of the dative *yātāiiā* (2007a: 124–7). Y 28.3c’ *ā mōi rafədrāi zauuəng jasatā* means “come to my appeals for help” where the direct object (“my appeals”) is in the accusative and the reason for coming (“helping”) is in the dative. In Y 29.3c’ *yahmāi zauuəng jimā kərədušā* the dative relative pronoun does not refer to 29.3c *hātəm huō aojištō* but to 29.3a *ahmāi* (“Soul of the Cow”): for the sake of the Soul of the Cow I come to (his) appeals, humble (that I am). The expression *zauuəng ā* \sqrt{gam} may be idiomatic. Y 51.10cc’ *maibiō zbāiiā ašəm vanhūiiā ašt gaṭ.tē* means “I invoke *aša-* with good *aši-* to come for me”, i.e. for my benefit, and not “de venir à moi” (Kellens and Pirart 1988: 183), “to come to me” (Humbach 1991: I, 188), etc. Thus 30.7aa’ must be translated “and for the benefit of it (existence) comes (Mazdā) by means of the power (acquired) through good thought, along with *aša-*” in view of 30.8bb’ *aṭ mazdā taibiō xšaθrəm vohū manəhā vōiuūidāiē* “then, O Mazdā, power will be presented to you through good thinking”. Compare Kellens and Pirart 1988: 111; Humbach 1991: I, 125; Lommel 1971: 42; Insler 1975: 35.

(stipulation) which you give me by reason of *aša-*, so that I may know it through good thinking and be inspired by it (and become) its *ərəši-*". If, as Kellens and Pirart (1991: 63) maintain, the elliptical object is *uruuata-* one may compare it with Y 30.11 "When, O mortals, you learn the stipulations in reference to which Mazda establishes both easy access and ban on access (to the divine sphere), and that there will be a long withering for the followers of *druj* and vital energies for the *ašauuans*, then (by abiding) with these (rules), things will be according to (your) wish". If *aša-* is the reason for Mazda's action, namely giving his law to the mortal,²⁴ it must be something that the mortal desires. Humbach's mechanical rendition of the instrumental, again, makes no sense: "that better (part), which You have assigned to me through truth" (1991: I, 127). What could "assigning something through truth" mean? Insler's creator (god) "truth" is *ad hoc*: "the very good thing which has been created for me by truth" (1975: 37).

Y 34.12cc' *sīšā nā ašā paθō, vañhēuš x^vaētēng manañhō* "teach us the easy paths of good thinking by reason of *aša-*". The genitive is subjective: the "paths" are made available by (way of) good thinking. The "paths" lead to *aša-*, which is the reason for which the instruction is sought (see further under Y 34.13). Kellens' and Pirart's "grâce à l'Harmonie" (1988: 128) is vague. One wonders what exactly is the role of "Harmony" in the request. Insler's translation is rather strange: "Instruct to us those paths of good thinking, easy to travel in alliance with truth". What does Insler think the poet had in mind with "truth", whose alliance makes the paths easy to travel? Humbach seems to make the instrumental into an adverbial, basically meaning truthfully: "Show us with truth the paths of good thought, easy to travel". Is Mazda prompted to speak truthfully?

Y 34.13a-b' *tēm aduuānəm ahurā, yēm mōi mraoš vañhēuš manañhō / daēnā sošiiantqm, yā hū.kərətā ašācīṭ uruuāxšat* "(show us) that road, O Ahura, which you tell me (is that) of good thinking, the well-made (road) along which the vision-souls of the *sošiiants* proceed by reason of *aša-*". The image of the road travelled by the psychopompic *daēnā-* must belong to the funerary or ecstatic context.²⁵ Compare Y 51.13 *tā drəguuatō marədaiṭi, daēnā ərəzaoš haiθīm / yehiiā uruuā xraodaiṭi, cinuuatō x^vpərətāu ākā / x^vāiš šiiāoθanāiš hizuuascā, ašahiiā nqsuuā paθō* "Thus the vision-soul of the partisan of *druj* – (who) has disappeared from the path of *aša-* because of his actions and (the actions) of his tongue and whose soul facing the Collector's Bridge is enraged – neglects the true (action) of the straight (path)". Kellens and Pirart (1988: 128), Insler (1975: 57), and Humbach (1991: I, 142) read Y 34.13 *ašācīṭ* as a sociative. Is the god "l'Harmonie" or "truth" a psychopomp? In Y 34.12cc' instruction is sought about the paths that lead to *aša-* and in Y 34.13 it is stated that it is precisely for this purpose (*ašācīṭ*) that the psychopompic *daēnā-* proceeds along those paths.

Y 43.2c-d' *θβā ciciθβā, spēništā mainiiū mazdā / yā dā ašā, vañhēuš māiiā manañhō* "(who) perceives through your most vitalizing intuition, O Mazda, the supernatural powers of good thinking by reason of *aša-*".²⁶ Insler (1975: 61)

24 Compare Kellens and Pirart 1988: 114: "La meilleure (règle) que vous me conférez en raison de l'Harmonie".

25 See Kellens 1990; 1995.

26 See Ahmadi, forthcoming. Compare Kellens and Pirart 1990: 14.

has: “Thou didst create the wondrous powers of good thinking allied with truth”. Are “good thinking” and “truth” deified entities here? Lommel (1971: 97) makes “Wahrsein” a direct object of the verb, whose sense remains obscure: “du mit dem Wahrsein geben mögest die Wunderkräfte des Guten Denkens”. Humbach (1991: I, 151) makes “truth” the means by which the “blessings of good thought” are granted by the god – whatever this may mean.

Y 44.18b–e’ *kaθā ašā, taṭ mīzdəm hanānī / ... / hīiaṭ mōi mazdā, apiuuaitī hauruuātā / amərətātā, yaθā hī taibīiō dāṅhā* “how will I gain that reward, by reason of *aša-*, which secures (?) for me integrity and immortality as you partake of these for yourself?” The form of *apiuuaitī* is unclear. Kellens and Pirart (1990: 296) analyse it as a third sing. inj. aorist of *api* + $\sqrt{\text{vat}}$ “inspire”, but the ending and the lack of epenthesis in the verbal prefix rule it out (cf. Beekes 1988: 200, who maintains it is a first person middle inj. aorist of $\sqrt{\text{vat}}$). Humbach (1991: II, 160) suggests the sense of “secures” for the verb based on the comparison with Yt 10.27 *auuarəθā hīš apiuuaiti baēuuarə ḡnḡnā nisir-inaoiti* “he seizes them, defenceless, he deals out ten thousand blows”. Insler (1975: 73) has: “How shall I win through truth this prize...”. Is the import of the question Zarathuštra asks of Mazdā: how do I win the prize truthfully as opposed to deceitfully? Humbach (1991: I, 162) has: “Shall I deserve that prize through truth...”. Is Zarathuštra asking whether “truth” (“truthfulness”?)²⁷ entitles him to the prize?

Y 49.12 *kaṭ tōi ašā, zbaiieṅtē auuaṅhō / zaraθuštrāi, kaṭ tōi vohū manaṅhā / yā vā staotāiš, mazdā frīnāi ahurā / auuaṭ yāsqs, hīiaṭ īštā vahištəm* “What help do you offer to Zarathuštra who invokes you by reason of *aša-*? What (help) do you make available through good thinking to (me) who cherishes you with praises, asking for that (help), which is (your) best, (to be) in (my) control?” The instrumental may be related either to the help sought or to the invocation. In the latter case, it must express the reason for the invocation: it is the object of Zarathuštra’s concern, what motivates his request for help. It is not clear in what sense Lommel understands the instrumental: “Was hast du durch Wahrsein an Hilfe für Zarathuštra” (1971: 162); similarly Humbach: “What (kind) of help dost Thou have through truth” (1991: I, 182). Insler (1975: 97) has: “What help by truth hast Thou for Zarathuštra who calls?”

Y 50.5 *ārōi zī xšmā, mazdā ašā ahurā / hīiaṭ yūšmākāi, maθrānē vaorāzaθā / aibī.dərəštā, āuuīšiiā auuaṅhā / zastāištā, yā nā x’y āθrē dāiīāt* “For (vitalization) is deployed by you (gods), O Mazdā Ahura, by reason of *aša-*, when you (gods) will have regaled (me) the bearer of your conceptions with a spectacular, manifest help, set in motion by your hands, the kind which places us in well-being”.²⁸ Compare Y 34.3cc’ *ārōi zī hudāṅhō, vīspāiš mazdā xšmāuuasū sauuō* “vitalization of the beneficent one is effected by all (of you), O Mazdā, in (the rite: *vahma-*) dedicated to you (gods)”. The genitive is objective, which means that *sauuah-* must have verbal force. The concept of “vitalization” in the Gāthās

27 Compare Lommel 1971: 114: “ob ich mit Wahrsein (= wahrhaftig) diesen Lohn verdienen werde”.

28 The relative clause literally says: “by which one may place us in well-being”. On the use of the relative clause in the optative for characterizing the antecedent, see Ahmadi 2012a: 21.

has an eschatological dimension (cf. Y 43.2–3). Humbach’s reading *mazdā* against Geldner’s *mazdā*, on the grounds that the latter is a *lectio facilior* (1991: II, 216), is not cogent in the face of the syntactic problem it creates: “For (recompenses) have been allotted by You, O Ahura, wise through truth” (Humbach 1991: I, 184). The would-be relative clause is a stump that has nothing to do with the discursive context where the gods (not just *Mazdā*) are active; moreover, the supposed meaning of the phrase is specious.

Y 53.5c–d” *vaēdō.dūm daēnābīs, +aibiiascā ahūm yā, vaḥhōuš manaḥhō / ašā vā aniiō ainīm, +vīuuḥhatū taṭ zī hōi, hušōnem aḥhat* “find by (your) vision-souls ... the existence of good thinking. Let each of you try to win out over the other by reason of *aša-*, for that will be a choice gain for him!” Attaining *aša-* must be at stake here, represented as the choice prize of a race; *ašā* means “in quest for *aša-*”. Kellens and Pirart extend the marriage motif of the beginning of the strophe to the last verse line: “Charmez-vous l’un l’autre par l’Harmonie” (Kellens and Pirart 1988: 190). The extension is questionable, however. Aside from the fact that the statement does not make much sense, the context strongly suggests another interpretation. The preceding sentence neutralizes the interlocutors with respect to gender. The vision-soul (*daēnā-*) is a psychopomp. Although the form of *+aibiiascā* is a problem, making it difficult to know what to make of it,²⁹ and hence of the accusative phrase, we can at least be certain that the subject urged to “find by (way of your) *daēnā-*” is gender-neutral. The point is reinforced by the opening verse line of the following stanza, Y 53.6aa’ *iθā ī haiθiiā narō aθā jēnaiiō* “thus are true men, thus (true) women”.³⁰ The subject of Y 53.5 *ašā vā aniiō ainīm +vīuuḥhatū* may well be the *uruuan-* of each man and woman. Kellens and Pirart (1988: 190) suppress the causal conjunctive *zī* in their translation of the last clause: “Que cela vous soit à chacun une (récompense) facile à gagner”. The adjective *hušōna-* cannot mean “facile à gagner” but “choice gain”. It is not clear what “cela” refers to in their text. If it refers to “Harmony”, what is the import of the wish that “Harmony” be “for each” a “reward easy to win”? According to Kellens and Pirart’s scheme the meaning of the last two clauses is: “I wish that *aša-* will be an easily attainable thing (or state?) for the men and women about to marry, so that each can charm his or her sexual partner by its means”. Further, since they maintain that at issue is a hierogamy, the divine male partner and the human female partner are invited to charm each other by means of *aša-*. One must admit that this is a strange conception. At any rate, what is *aša-* that may be an instrument of sexual charm between gods and women? Humbach (1991: I, 193) translates the last two clauses of the strophe: “Let each of you try to surpass the other in truth, for this will be fruitful for him”. Is this an assertion about the pragmatic advantages of being truthful?

The instrumental use of *aša-* in the Old Avestan texts suggests, then, the following meanings for the term. First, like the majority of the direct cases, *aša-* is

29 See Hintze 2007a: 59–60; Kellens and Pirart 1991: 270. Compare Y 51.19 “O Madyōmāha Spitāma, the man, who pronounces the laws of *Mazdā*, asking for existence and finding (it) by his *daēnā-* (*daēnaiiā vaēdāmnō yā ahūm išasqs aibi mazdā dātā mraot*), acquires for himself that (power which is) better through actions of life”.

30 I take *ī* as a particle. On the eschatological valence of *haiθiia-* see Ahmadi, forthcoming.

the name of a deity. One may plausibly think that the god emerged from the allegorical apotheosis of the eponymous concept. Second, the term designates in a large number of passages an authoritative instance, the compliance with which empowers one for a task, entitles one to a privileged position, qualifies one for making a request, or in reference to which a condition or a situation is justified. This usage rules out an abstract sense for the term. One cannot measure a specific state against “truth” or “order”. The authoritative instance must be the primordial cosmos created by the supreme god, whose norms have somehow been violated on earth.³¹ Third, in the eschatological passages *aša-* is used as a synecdoche for the celestial sphere, where the primordial conditions of existence are (still) in place. The domain of *aša-* is in the supreme god’s “house”, the object of eschatological longing. Hence, the term appears in the instrumental of cause, i.e. as the reason for an action. This constellation is reflected, for example, in Y 48.7b–d’ *yōi ā vaṇhēuš, manaṇhō dīdrayžō.duiiē / ašā viiṇm, yehiiā hiθāuš nā spəntō / at hōi dāmṇm, θbahmī ā dām ahurā* “(you) who want to secure the envelope of good thinking by reason of *aša-* whose companion is the vitalizing man; now, its nets are in your house, O Ahura”.³²

2. Two idiomatic usages of *aša-* in Old Avestan

The two idiomatic usages of *aša-* in Old Avestan point to a single idea. In an earlier article I have argued that the expression *ašāt hacā* indicates the eschatological dimension of what it qualifies (Ahmadi 2012b). The postposition *hacā* is formed from \sqrt{hac} “follow, associate (with)”; it is the cognate of Vedic *sacā* “zusammen, mit, zugleich, dabei, bei” (Mayrhofer 1992–2001: II, 688). The supreme god is described as the companion of *aša-* in Y 41.3 *humāim θβā ižīm yazatəm ašāṇhācim dadəmaidē* “we regard you as the good-powered, invigorating venerable one, the companion of *aša-*” (Hintze 2007a: 312, translation slightly altered). OP *artācā* from XPh (see above) must have been a technical term embedded in Iranian religious lore, since it is not translated either in Elamite (*ir-ta-ha-ci*) or in the Akkadian (*arta-šá*) version of Xerxes’ text (see Schlerath and Skjærvø 1987). One may plausibly maintain that the conception behind it was untranslatable. OAv *ašāt hacā* is generally understood to indicate an orientation to *aša-* translated as “truth” (“according to truth”, “gemäß dem Wahrsein”), “Agencement” (“selon l’Agencement”), or “Order” (“in accordance

31 Compare Y 44.3bb’ *kasnā zaθā, ptā ašahiiā pouruiiō* “who is the primordial father of *aša-* by engenderment?” Mazda is the “founder” (*dāmi-*) and “companion” (*hiθao-*) of *aša-* in Y 31.8 and 34.10.

32 On nom. n. pl. *dāmṇm* compare Insler 1975: 267 and Kellens 1989. The neuter noun *dāman-* (Vedic *dāman-*) is from $\sqrt{dā}$ “tie”. Insler (1975: 267) translates it as “bonds”, and Kellens (1989: 65–9) as “le piquet”. It is perhaps best to translate it as “net” implying a range or domain. Kellens (1989: 66) translates *haēθa-* (from \sqrt{hi} “bind”) as “le cordage”, another architectural term. Mazda is not a creator god but the architect of the “cosmic hut”: *dāmi-* is “celui qui plante les piquets” and *hiθao-* is “celui qui fixe le cordage” (1989: 67). There is not space here to discuss in detail the reasons he gives for his view; suffice it to say that they are not convincing. Y 46.6bb’ *drūjō huuō dāmṇm haēθahiiā gāt* means “he will go to the nets of the bond of *druj*”, hardly “ira aux poteaux du lien de la Tromperie” (Kellens and Pirart 1989: 160).

with Order”). But, since all these are understood as abstract terms, the expression is devoid of sense (*unsinnig*). One can compare a phenomenon (a thing, a state, a constellation or an action) with another phenomenon, measure a phenomenon against a specific rule, but it is not possible to measure a phenomenon against orderliness or arrangement or truth. The noun in the other instances of the abl. + *hacā* points to a locale.³³ Y 37.2 *yōi gāuš hacā šīieñtī* “who are on the side of the cow” (Hintze 2007a: 168) literally means “who reside at the cow’s”. It is not hard to see how the “metaphorical” sense of standing by the cow could have developed for the spatial locution the abl. + *hacā* + $\sqrt{\text{ši}}$ “reside”. Y 32.2 *mazdā ahurō ... xšaθrāt hacā paiī.mraoṭ* can only mean “Mazdā Ahura responds at his kingdom or from out of his kingdom”. OAv *xšaθra-* is an abstract noun meaning “power”, secondarily developing the concrete sense of (divine) “kingdom” (e.g. Y 32.6). A translation like “the Wise Ahura ... answers in accordance with (His) power” (Humbach 1991: I, 132) is devoid of sense. Y 44.17 *hacā xšmat* is an adnominal and means “auprès de vous”, not “in accordance with you”.³⁴ Y 53.6 *drūjō hacā* means “at or bound for (the house of) *druj*”, and not the senseless “in accordance with *druj*”. Y 31.14 *išudō ... dāθranqm hacā ašāunō yāscā ... drəguuō.dəbiiō* means “the refreshments that (mortals’) gifts provide at the *ašāuuan*’s (rite) and those at the (rite of) *drəguuants*”. The phrase *hacā ašāunō* (or its opposite) clearly describes *dāθra-*, the ritual gift to the gods. Kellens and Pirart’s “à la manière du partisan de l’Harmonie” (1988: 116) certainly conveys the meaning; but, if in fact this was how it was understood by its users, this meaning must have developed from the primary sense of the abl. + *hacā* implying a locale. The meaning “in the manner of *ašāuuan*” describing a type of ritual gift cannot be derived from something like “according to *ašāuuan*”. Humbach’s “from the truthful one” (1991: I, 129), Insler’s “from the truthful” (1975: 41), and Lommel’s “von den Wahrhaftigen” (1971: 52), are ad hoc and probably based in the

33 Y 28.11 *θbahmāt ... mainiūuš hacā* is difficult to determine in this respect. The existing translations of the phrase in which the expression occurs do not make much sense: “enseigne-moi par ta bouche à prononcer, d’après ton état d’esprit, (ces hymnes)” (Kellens and Pirart 1988: 107); “belehre du mich gemäß deinem Geist aus deinem Mund” (Lommel 1971: 20); “instruct me (in these very things) through the eloquence befitting Thy spirit and with Thine own mouth” (Insler 1975: 27); “teach me with Thy mouth, in accordance with Thy spirit, (how) to pronounce (these eulogies)” (Humbach 1991: I, 119). Is not the qualification “in accordance with your state of mind” completely redundant? Insler’s “befitting” instead of, e.g., “in accordance with” is ad hoc, that is to say, these two do not mean the same thing, despite Insler, who translates the phrase (even in the same text) sometimes in the former sense, sometimes in the latter, e.g. Y 28.2 *ašāt hacā* “befitting truth” (1975: 25), “in accord with truth” (1975: 120).

34 Y 44.17 means something like: “I ask you this, speak to me straight Ahura! O Mazdā, how could I make my aspiration to be close to you into (being in) your company, and (how could I make it so) that my voice be vigorous (enough) for effecting (my) union with integrity and immortality by means of that formula that is an *ašāt hacā* attainment?” See Ahmadi 2012b: 529–30. Compare Insler 1975: 71: “This I ask Thee. Tell me truly Lord. Wise One, how shall I, with your accord, impassion your following, so that my voice might be powerful (enough) to strive for alliance with completeness and immortality (for Thee) in accordance with that precept which adheres to the truth?” What does “to strive for alliance with completeness and immortality for Thee” mean? Is “with your accord” supposed to be a cautionary qualification? Is it not an illocutionary misfit here?

later (e.g. YAv or OP) sense of the preposition *hacā* “(issue) from (place or person)” (see Bartholomae 1961, col. 1746–52).

The other idiomatic figure is the combination of *aša-* and $\sqrt{\text{sar}}$ “join (with)” (and the feminine *sar-* “company”):

Y 51.3 *yōi ... sārəntē ... ašā* “those who join with *aša-*”.

Y 32.2 *mazdā ahurō sārəmnō vohū manəḥhā ... ašā ... x^vənuuātā* “Mazdā Ahura, joined with good thinking and the sun-drenched *aša-*”.

Y 49.5 *huuō ... yā daēnəm vohū sārəštā manəḥhā ... ašā* “he who has joined his vision-soul with *aša-* through good thinking”.

Y 49.8 *uruuāzištəm ašahiiā ... sarəṃ* “the most joyful company of *aša-*”.³⁵

Y 53.3 *ašahiiā mazdāscā ... sarəṃ* “the company of *aša-* and Mazdā”.

Y 35.8 *ašahiiā ... sairī* “in the company of *aša-*”.

The collocation is certainly elective. There are only three other occurrences of *sar-* in the Gāthās: with *vohu-* *manah-* (Y 49.3), with *hauruuatāt-* and *amərətātāt-* (Y 44.17), and with the *drəguuant-* (Y 49.9). The expression “joining with *aša-*” describes the situation (or occasion) of being in the company of *aša-*, i.e. being in the divine sphere where Mazdā is. Or, if it is the description of a mental state, it can be so only as a metaphorical expression. In other words, *aša-* must be understood as a concrete entity (and not an abstract qualification such as “truth”). Further, the expression (and idea) “joining with *aša-*” must be idiomatic, that is to say, drawn from the traditional religious discourse; it is not an invention of the poet. The adherents of the *daēva* cult, too, want to “see *aša-*”.³⁶

3. *Ašauuan-*

The denominative adjective *ašauuan-* has been translated as “truthful” or “righteous” (Hintze 2007a: 332);³⁷ “qui met son activité rituelle en accord avec l’Harmonie, partisan de l’Harmonie” (Kellens and Pirart 1990: 211); “der Ašaanhänger” (Tichy 1986: 103); “der zum Aša hält und gehört” (Bartholomae 1961: col. 246); “possessing truth (*aša*)” (Gnoli 1987: 705); “who sustains Order” (Skjærvø 2002: 401); “qui soutient l’Agencement” (Kellens).³⁸ The Indo-Iranian suffix *-van* regularly forms adjectives (and *nomen agentis*) from either verbal roots or nouns (Wackernagel and

35 Insler (1975: 97) has “the most happy alliance of truth”; Kellens and Pirart (1988: 173) “la plus agréable union avec l’Harmonie”; Humbach (1991: I, 181) “the most delightful shelter of truth”; Lommel (1971: 161) “die beglückendste Gemeinschaft mit dem Wahrsein”; Hintze (2007: 138) “the most joyful communion with truth”. Except for Insler’s, these translations are meaningful if “truth” (or “Harmony”) is understood as a divine person, or has, in any case, a concrete sense. One cannot join with an abstract quality or a qualification (of a relation). Insler’s translation is simply meaningless.

36 See Ahmadi 2014c.

37 Insler (1975: 40) and Humbach (1991: I, 128): “truthful”; Lommel (1971: 52): “der Wahrhaftige”.

38 The citation from Kellens is from his lecture at the Collège de France on 11 January 2013: http://www.college-de-france.fr/media/jean-kellens/UPL899002172279704075_13011_SupportJK_Y31_1_.pdf

Debrunner 1954: 894–902). In the latter case, “von Personen ausgesagt”, they have the sense of “mit dem Begriff des Grundworts versehen” or “etwas bringend, ausübend” (Wackernagel and Debrunner 1954: 900). If one were to give a general translation of the denominative adjective in *-van*, it would have to be: “possessed of the noun” whether the noun is concrete or abstract, such as *magauuan-* “Gaben besitzend” from *maga-* “Gabe”, or *hazahuu-* “predator, bandit” from *hazah-* “(superior) power” (see Wackernagel and Debrunner 1954: 900–03). Much less frequently, the adjective in *-van* can have, like those in *-vant* and *-mant*, the sense of “being an exponent of” (see Wackernagel and Debrunner 1954: 871–94). Wackernagel and de Debrunner (1954: 900) translate both *ṛtāvan-* and *satyāvan-* (“altes Ersatzwort für *ṛtāvan-*”) as “wahrhaft”. Tichy, as I pointed out, derives Vedic *ṛtāvan-* from a postulated collective noun **ṛtā* “das Geordnete (Richtige) in seiner Gesamtheit” and translates it as “der zur rechten Ordnung hält o. gehört” (1986: 92).

Therefore, if we allow ourselves to be guided by these observations, translations like Skjærvø’s “who sustains Order” or Kellens’ “qui soutient l’Agencement” immediately become suspect. This meaning quietly appeals to the dualist ideology of the Gāthās, which is clear in Kellens and Pirart’s “partisan de l’Harmonie”. But the adjective clearly dates from before the Gāthās, and even if Gāthic *aṣauuan-* has acquired the (dualist) agonistic sense, this sense cannot be probative for the original meaning of the adjective, nor for that of its noun component. Kellens and Pirart’s alternative “qui met son activité rituelle en accord avec l’Harmonie” is based on their view that the presumed Gāthic ritual had a cosmological function. Note, in any case, that in this definition the term “l’Harmonie” must be understood to be describable in its features. One cannot put one’s ritual activity in accord with “orderliness” or “arrangement” but with a specific order, a specific arrangement.³⁹ No more acceptable are the traditional translations of “truthful” and “righteous”. The English adjective “truthful” is used of speech, which implies some version of the correspondence theory of truth, or of a person, in which case truthfulness is more or less synonymous with sincere frankness. Now, neither of these would fit the catalogue of the senses of the adjectives in *-van*. As for the more literal “possessing truth”, it faces the formidable task of specifying what “truth” is that may be possessed. The statement “Zarathuštra possesses truth” is as nonsensical as (Wittgenstein’s) “Socrates is identical”, since “truth” can only be ascribed or denied to an assertion, its conformity with “what the case is”, i.e. the world, or its consistency with the other constituents of a system. Broadly speaking, the claim that an assertion “possesses truth” means that it corresponds to a fact, or that it is verifiable under defined epistemic conditions, or that it is provisionally accepted as valid, or that it is consistent with other intra-systemic assertions. Obviously, a person cannot possess “truth” in any of these senses: only an assertion may be a possible truth-bearer. Hence, again, in what sense may Zarathuštra “possess truth”?

Perhaps it makes a difference whether Vedic *ṛtāvan-* was directly formed from the collective noun **ṛtā* “das Geordnete (Richtige) in seiner Gesamtheit” or from the already substantivized “rechte Ordnung”.⁴⁰ In the former case, it

39 The idea of the ritual activity “being in accord with” the cosmic order is rather obscure, in my mind.

40 See Tichy (1986: 92), who also has “Wahrheit”.

is hard to imagine any other meaning for the adjective than being an exponent of the collective comprising the “adjusted” ones. If the adjective was formed from a substantive noun, it can, in principle, have either of the senses that we noted above for adjectives in *-van*. It may mean either belonging to *ṛtā-* “rechte Ordnung” or possessed of *ṛtā-*. But, in the latter case, what could the substantive refer to? The use of OP *artāvan-* in XPh 54–6 seems peculiar: *utā jīva šiyāta bavatiy utā marta artāvā bavatiy* “(while) alive becomes happy and (once) dead becomes *artāvan-*”.⁴¹ Gnoli maintains that “there is no real divergence in meaning between Old Pers. *artāvan* and Av. *ašavan*; recent studies have shown that being *šiyāta* ‘happy’ in life and *artāvan* after death are both the results of one and the same mode of conduct during one’s earthly existence” (1987: 705). Each of the two adjectives may equally describe in Zoroastrian lore the condition aspired to by the human being in both worlds.⁴² Nonetheless, *artāvan-* is in fact used in Xerxes’ inscription of the dead as a desirable postmortem status. This usage may reflect a traditional conception, especially when one considers that the formula occurs earlier in the inscription (XPh 47–8) in the first person: *šiyāta ahaniy jīva utā marta artāvā ahaniy* “may I be happy (while) alive and (once) dead may I be *artāvan-*”. The connection with the world of the dead seems to have been significant and even elective.⁴³ How else would one account for the formulaic distribution, other than explaining it away? Herrenschildt’s translation of OP *artāvan-* “participe du bon agencement” (1993: 48) is in principle justified insofar as “pertaining to” is one of the two senses that is generally attested for adjectives in *-van*. But perhaps a better translation would be “partaking of”. This rendition captures both of the general senses of the suffix and does justice to the fact that *artāvan-* describes a blessed postmortem condition. “On ne peut nier que l’appartenance au parti d’Aša représente, dans bon nombre de textes mazdéens, qu’ils soient vieux-perses, moyen-perses, voire avestiques, l’expression même du salut eschatologique” (Kellens 1995: 32). This is the most crucial point. What is it about *aša-* that “partaking of” it can (come to) mean “eschatological salvation”? What would *aša-* have to denote if it is to have such a semantic potential?

4. Conclusion

The conception of “sun-drenched or bathed-in-light *aša-*” is pan-Iranian and probably Indo-Iranian.⁴⁴ It is attested in the Yasna Haptaṅhāiti (Y 37.4 *aša-*

41 Compare Herrenschildt (1993: 48): “vivant, devient heureux et, mort, participe du bon agencement”.

42 See Kellens 1995: 29–36. Both have an eschatological dimension. “Le quiétude et l’artavanité, loin de s’opposer symétriquement, apparaissent, dans leur rapport à l’eschatologie, comme deux notions strictement parallèles dont le champ d’application s’étend de la vie à la mort” (Kellens 1995: 36).

43 See Kuiper 1964: 108–10.

44 See Kuiper 1964: 106–18. The general connection that Kuiper observes between *aša-*, or more generally the abode of the gods (e.g. of Varuṇa), and the sun in the Indo-Iranian understanding of the heavenly sphere can hardly be disputed. Varuṇa “resides in and watches over the Cosmic Order (*Rtā*), which is said to be ‘fixed and hidden where they unharness the horses of the sun’” (Kuiper 1964: 107; compare Witzel 1984). It is, however, another matter to want to reduce the bliss promised to the *ašauuan-* to a

vahišta- raocōḡhuuat-), in the Gāthas (Y 32.2 *aša- x^vēnuuat-*) and in the YAv corpus (Y 16.7 *x^vanuuat- aša-*). In the last mentioned the phrase occurs in a very revealing context: *x^vanuuaītiš ašahe vərəzō yazamaide yāhu iristanqm uruuqno šāiienti yā ašaonqm frauuašaiiō vahištəm ahūm ašaonqm yazamaide raocāḡhəm vīspō.x^vāθrəm* “we make offerings to the sun-drenched domains of *aša-* where the souls of the dead, which are the *frauuašis* of the *ašauuans*, exist in blissful tranquillity (lit. rejoice); we make offerings to the best existence of the *ašauuans*, bathed in light (and providing) all manners of well-being”. The locative relative pronoun *yāhu* shows that at issue is a concrete place, if a linguistic proof were indeed needed. The “domains of *aša-*” must be located in the heaven according to this image; the phrase *vahišta- ahū-* is the regular YAv designation of paradise.⁴⁵ I pointed out above the regular use of *aša-* as a synecdoche for the divine sphere, permanently bathed in heavenly lights, in the OAv texts.⁴⁶

We must ask how the two senses of *aša-*, namely the primal cosmos and the divine sphere, may be related. Another way of posing this question is: does *aša-* exist in Mazdā’s abode as a god or (also) as something else? Perhaps we can find in Y 28.11 a clue in this respect: *yē āiš ašəm nipāḡhē, manascā vohū yauuaētāitē / ... / ..., yāiš ā aḡhuš pouruiiō ^xbuuat* “(Mazdā, you) who protect (in your abode⁴⁷) *aša-* and good thinking thanks to these (hymns) ... by which the primordial existence will take place”. The hymns that the poet learns from Mazdā and by the means of which or with the help of which the god protects *aša-* are the same hymns that will effect or, better, restore the original (conditions of) existence, presumably on earth. The dual potency of the hymns (preservation in the celestial sphere and restoration on earth) inclines one to think that *aša-* and the “primordial existence” are intimately related. It is not likely that *aša-* is understood as a deity in this passage. In Y 43.10 *aṭ tū mōi dāiš ašəm* the poet asks Mazdā to be shown *aša-*.⁴⁸ It thus seems that *aša-* is

mystical vision of the “sun in the rock”. “Just as Mitra and Varuṇa, as lords of the cosmic mystery, knew the secret of ‘the sun in the rock’ and were, therefore, ‘sun-seers’, so, with the transfer of the epithet from the lord to his domain, Ahura Mazdā’s *xSaQra-* is called ‘sun-seeing’ in the Gathas” (Kuiper 1964: 120). But this supposed transfer is hardly meaningful: a “domain” cannot have a mystical vision of “the sun in the rock”. The Middle Persian *ardāyih* designates the post mortem state of “being saved” (see Gignoux 1979).

45 See Ahmadi 2013.

46 The Gāthic expression “path of *aša-*” must be considered in the light of, e.g., the (YAv) “domains of *aša-*”. Gonda (following Benveniste) maintains that the “path” is to be imagined as beset with dangers and obstacles (see Gonda 1963: 197–8).

47 Compare Y 49.10.

48 Referring to Y 37.1 *yē gqmā ašəmcā dāt*, Kellens (2008: 511) remarks that “la position initiale de celle-ci [i.e. la vache] est l’énigme fondamentale du catalogue haptahâtique”. In the Gāthas we come across the same motif in Y 44.6 *azīm rāniīō.skərētīm gqm* and Y 51.5 *ašāt hacā gqm*. All three refer to the soul’s journey to the divine sphere. The precedence of the “cow” in Y 37.1 must signal the trajectory. In the YAv fragment Pūrsišnīhā 33 the soul and perception of the sacrificial victim are emissary substitutes for the sacrificer: *gaospənta gaohudā baodasca uruuānəmca fraēšiiāmahi nazdišta upa θβaršta raocā narš cašmanā sūkəm* “vitalizing cow, benevolent cow, we dispatch your perception and soul to the nearest fashioned lights, the light of vision of the

the original cosmos that continues as such in the celestial sphere under the protection of the gods, but which has been damaged by the forces of *druj-* on the earth, whose defeat and expulsion is the task of human beings, especially in their religious observances: Y 31.4 *yadā aṣəm zəuuīm, aṅhən mazdāscā ahurāṅhō / ..., vahištā išasā mananḥā / maibiō xšaθrəm aojōṅhuuat, yehiā vərədā vanaēmā drujəm* “when the gods are present, *aṣa-* that one must invoke and Mazdā ... I would request, through good thinking, that I may possess the mighty power whose growth would allow us to defeat *druj-*” (cf. Y 44.13). If the proposed connection is right, it probably represents the Gāthic appropriation and inflection of an already existing conception of *aṣa-* as a place of blissful existence after death.

In their understanding of *aṣa-* as “truth” or “order”, scholars have generally taken their bearings from the notion of *druj-* “lie” or “deception”.⁴⁹ But the opposition to *druj-* is not important for the basic meaning of *aṣa-* in the Gāthās. “Deception” (*druj-*) is ever an eristic imputation to one’s opponent. The charge originates in ideological battle. Its dualistic (metaphysical) elevation must be placed in the context of the uncompromising denunciation of the *daēva* cult in Gāthic ideology. The concrete reality behind *druj-* is the cult of the *daēvas*, the source of whose perceived mischief is sought in the realm of the invisible.⁵⁰

According to the Gāthic ideology, human beings take part, by way of their religious observances, in the cosmic struggle against the destructive forces that have sickened the earthly existence. The two senses of *aṣa-* that are evident in the OAv texts, i.e. the primal cosmos and (synecdoche for) the divine sphere, do not quite coincide with the basic cosmological division of corporeal and mental existences. The material world as it is now, is not as it ought to be; the “laws” operating in the “existence possessed of bone” (*ahu- astuuant-*) do not embody the “existence of *aṣa-*” (Y 46.3 *ahu- aṣahiā*). The perceived “order” of the current world is deceptive; or more precisely, the forces of deception have sickened the world. Our earthly existence is in need of (eschatological) therapy.⁵¹ Whether *aṣa-* designates the primal world to be restored on the earth or signifies the divine sphere and a blissful mental state therein after death, it is clearly an object of longing for the mortal. The usage of the term shows that it denotes a concrete phenomenon, in agreement with its form and etymology: what is “put together” (by the creator god), the (properly) “arranged”. Concept defies

man’s eyes”. Compare Kellens and Pirart 1988: 34: “L’*uruuan* de la vache est, lors de chaque cérémonie, l’ambassadeur de l’*uruuan* humain et fait le chemin que ce dernier fera un jour vers l’au-delà, accédant au but que l’homme a choisi par ses pratiques rituelles: les lumières du jour, la maison d’Ahura Mazdā ou le ciel nocturne, la maison de la Druj. Le sacrifice gāthique a donc acquis une portée eschatologique”.

49 See, for example, Kellens 2000: 101; Skjærvø 2003.

50 Compare Y 32.3 *aṭ yūš daēuuā vīspāṅhō, akāt mananḥō stā ciθrəm / yascā vā maš yazaitē, drūjascā pairimatōišcā / š’iaomaṃ aipī daibitānā, yāiš asrūdūm būmiiā haptaiθē* “But you all, the *daēvas* and the great one who offers you sacrifice, are clearly from bad thought (and are involved) together in actions inspired by *druj* and negligence, for which you are notorious (even) in the seventh clime”. For an analysis of this stanza, see Ahmadi 2014b.

51 See Ahmadi 2014a.

definition, as Nietzsche tells us; and all the more it defies translation. If, nonetheless, one insisted on a translation, the best single term would probably be “cosmos” (*kosmein* means “arrange”), being understood that the primordial cosmos has in the meantime been compromised on the earth and is therefore operative (only) as a normative measure and an object of eschatological longing.

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