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DUALISM

DUALISM, feature peculiar to Iranian religion in ancient and medieval times. There is general agreement on this point, though some scholars have minimized the importance of dualistic elements in Zoroastrian doctrine and even denied their existence, in order to emphasize monotheistic or crypto-monotheistic aspects (e.g., Shroff; Moulton, pp. 125-26; Gray, 1929, p. 3), perceived as incompatible with any form of dualism (cf. Duchesne-Guillemin, 1958, pp. 1 ff.; idem, 1962, pp. 385 ff.; Herrenschmidt, pp. 217 ff.). From a strictly religious-historical perspective, however, dualism should not be conceived as opposed to monotheism (as polytheism must be); on the contrary, it can be viewed as "monotheism itself in two opposite and contrary aspects" (Pettazzoni, pp. 96, 112 n. 109). Although this definition cannot be applied to every dualistic religious conception (cf. Bianchi, 1986, p. 109), it fits Zoroastrianism, in which a monotheistic tendency and a strong dualism coexisted. The problem is complicated by the fact that Iranian dualism was not unitary and static but a developing concept (Gnoli, 1984). Heterogeneity within the Iranian religious world must also be taken into account; in fact, the fundamentally ethical and philosophical dualism of Zoroaster (as found in the Gathas and in part of Zoroastrian tradition) must be distinguished from a metaphysical and ontological dualism in which two coexisting entities are opposed by their intrinsic natures, rather than by choice (see below). This distinction is rejected by those who maintain the ontological nature of dualism in the Gathas and argue that reference to the two *mainiius* "spirits" (*Y.* 30.5) is at most a "statement regarding their essence" (Bianchi, 1978, p. 376). Nevertheless, the pivotal role of choice in Zoroastrianism has been established

by Herman Lommel (pp. 156-65) and others, and Ilya Gershevitch has argued effectively for the ethical character of the gathic opposition between the two spirits (1964, pp. 12-14; cf. Gnoli, 1984, p. 118).

The most lucid evaluation of dualism as a fundamental element of the Gathas is that of W. B. Henning: “Any claim that the world was created by a good and benevolent god must provoke the question why the world, in the outcome, is so very far from good. Zoroaster’s answer, that the world had been created by a good *and* an evil spirit of equal power, who set up to spoil the good work, is a complete answer: it is a logical answer, more satisfying to the thinking mind than the one given by the author of the Book of Job, who withdrew to the claim that it did not behove man to inquire into the ways of Omnipotence” (1951, p. 46). According to Henning, Zoroaster came to formulate his dualistic conception “only by thinking” and “by very clear thinking.” Whether he was correct that it was a protest against monotheism or whether it was an integral part of gathic monotheism is unclear. It can reasonably be concluded, however, that dualism lay at the heart of Zoroaster’s message and that gathic dualism cannot be dismissed on grounds that Ahura Mazdā stood above the two opposed spirits or that an eschatological expectation of the triumph of good pervades the Gathas. These elements are, in fact, common to other dualistic conceptions in which the final triumph of good is implicit.

The following passage from the Gathas (*Y.* 30.3-4) is fundamental to understanding Iranian dualism: “The two primeval Spirits (*mainiiū pauruiiē*) who are twins (*yəm̄ā*) were revealed [to me] in sleep. Their (*hī*) ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving are two: the good and the evil (*vahiiō akəmčā*). And between these two [ways] the wise men (*hudåŋhō*) have rightly chosen, and not the foolish ones (*duždåŋhō*). And when these two Spirits met, they established at the origin (*paouirīm*) life and non-life (*gaēmcā ajiiāitīmcā*) and that at the end (*apəmən*) the worst existence (*aŋhuš acištō*) will be for the followers of Falsehood (*drəguuatąm*) and for the follower of Truth (*ašāunē*) the Best Thinking (*vahištəm manō*).” Although the interpretation of this passage is uncertain (for a different translation, see Kellens and Pirart, p. 111), its dualistic content is beyond doubt. Equally clear is the paradigmatic character of the choice between two spirits, the prototype of the choice that man must make between the paths of truth and falsehood (Gershevitch, 1964, pp. 13, 32). Among the many other gathic texts in which dualism is emphasized are *Yasna* 45.2, in which the two spirits are juxtaposed in several modes of expression, and *Yasna* 47.3, in which the twinship of the two spirits is implicitly clarified

by affirmation that Ahura Mazdā is the "father" of the beneficent spirit: Both are, in a certain sense, sons of the same father (Gershevitch, 1964, pp. 13, 33). Interpretation of "twins" as a metaphor for "the equality in state of the two unrelated beings, and their coevity" (Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, p. 194) is unconvincing. Instead, the fundamental role of choice in Zoroastrian dualism should be kept in mind; the relationship between God and the devil did not involve direct dependence, because the notion of "childbirth" implicit in the concept of twin spirits refers to derivation from God of an undifferentiated spirit, which splits into twin spirits of opposite allegiance once human free will has emerged (Gershevitch, 1964, p. 13).

Zoroaster's dualism was therefore a wholly transcendent or "spiritual" dualism, not based on the opposition *mēnōg* versus *gētīg*, which can be very approximately translated as "spiritual" and "material" respectively. The latter duality recurs particularly in 9th-century Pahlavi texts, reflecting a complex theoretical systematization (Shaked, 1971). It has clear Avestan antecedents in the Gathas, in the idea of two states of being (*uba-ahu-*), *ahu- manaŋhō* (or *manahiia-*) and *ahu- astuuaṇt* (lit., "bony," i.e., "corporeal"; cf. Pahl. *axw ī astōmand*) or *sti-* "existence," *mainiiauua-* and *gaēiθiia-*. In this context *gētīg* is negative not by nature but because it is the place where the two spirits intermingle, in which God's creation is contaminated by the assault (Pahl. *ēbgat*) by Ahriman. In 9th-century Zoroastrian theology Ahriman was not considered the author of a *gētīg* creation, as Ohrmazd was (*Bundahišn*, chap. 1; tr. Anklesaria, pp. 17-21): "Of Ahriman it is said that he has no *gētīg*"; "The creation of Ohrmazd is both *mēnōg* and *gētīg*, while that of the demon has no *gētīg*" (*Dādistān ī dēnīg*, pt. 1, 18.2, 36.51). In the *Dēnkard* it is said that "Ahriman never existed and does not exist" and that "the gods exist while the demons do not" (*Dēnkard* 6.278, 6.98; tr. Shaked, 1979, pp. 39, 109). It may therefore be concluded that "Ahriman's presence in the world is not an ontological fact, but merely an anthropological and psychological phenomenon. This does not deny the reality of Ahriman as such: it merely marks his totally negative, hence also non-material, character" (Shaked, 1967, p. 232). This doctrine, too, has Avestan antecedents: Avestan *gaēiθiia-* (> Pahl. *gētīg*) may refer to the *yazata*s but not to the *daēuua*s (Gnoli, 1963, pp. 182-83 n. 61; see *DAIVA; DĒW). The existence of evil forces is only "spiritual" or "mental"; Iranian dualism is a dualism not between spirit and matter but between two spirits, who choose between truth (*aša*; gathic *ašåuuan-*) and falsehood (*drug*; gathic *drəguuaṇt-* or Younger Av. *druuaṇt-*; see DRUJ-) in the same way that men do (Gnoli, 1963, pp. 180-90; idem, 1971, pp. 77-78, 97-98).

There is no doubt that Aŋra Mainiiu, like Ahura Mazdā, was a "creating divinity," an idea that occurs in the Avesta (e.g., *Yt*. 13.76 = *Y*. 57.17, with an explicit reference to creation by the two spirits; cf. Kreyenbroek, pp. 44, 45, 85-86; *Vd*. 1, with a list of "countries" created by Ahura Mazdā and the countercreations of Aŋra Mainiiu; cf. Christensen, 1943, pp. 50 ff.). The crucial element is the fundamental difference between the two kinds of creation (*Y*. 44.7; for references, see Gray, 1929, p. 176). Aŋra Mainiiu's creation has a negative character because it begins in opposition to that of Ahura Mazdā (or, in the gathic formulation, of Spəṇta Mainiiu). The *gētīg* state is the creation of Ohrmazd; Ahriman can only attack, contaminate, and corrupt it. The *mēnōg* nature of Ahriman's creation is amply documented in Pahlavi literature (*Dēnkard* III, sec, 10; *Dādistān ī dēnīg*, pt. 1, 18, 30; cf. de Menasce, 1968; idem, 1973, pp. 107, 393). From this perspective the preeminently "mental" or "spiritual" character of the demons can be explained: The *daēuua*s are false gods or chimeras without real existence (Gershevitch, 1975, pp. 79-80; Zaehner, 1961, p. 216), an idea traceable to the gathic notion (*Y*. 30.4) that Spəṇta Mainiiu and Aŋra Mainiiu are related to life and to nonlife (*gaēmčā ajiiāitīmcā*) respectively. Pahlavi *gētīg* "worldly" corresponds to Avestan *gaēiθiia-* "having corporeal life, material" (*AirWb*., col. 479) and is therefore connected to *jī-* (*juua-*) "to live," *gaiia-* "life." Zoroastrian "pandemonium" (Gray, 1929, pp. 175 ff.; cf. Christensen, 1941), with its classes of demonic beings symmetrically opposed to the angelic ones, results from an elaborate analysis of the superhuman world divided between good and evil, virtues and vices, opposed forces that, like man, may belong to the world of truth or of falsehood. All things are divided into two categories, even language itself, in order to distinguish between activities proper to beings that conform to truth and those who choose falsehood (Frachtenberg; Güntert; Gray, 1927; Burrow, pp. 128-33; Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, p. 298).

Zoroastrian dualism was based on the idea of choice, and the argument that one who chooses evil follows his own nature (Bianchi, 1978, pp. 361-62) does not affect that principle. In the *Bundahišn* (1.20-22; tr. Anklesaria, pp. 6-9) Ohrmazd offers peace to the evil spirit (*ganāg mēnōg*), who may thus become "deathless and unaging, unfeeling, incorruptible," but the evil spirit rejects the offer and threatens to take over the entire universe. From this passage it appears that Ahriman freely chooses his own destiny: Dualism is thus characterized by "choice," not by the essence or nature of the protagonists. Further confirmation comes from the Armenian Christian writer Eznik Kołbacʿi, in whose work Ahriman says: "'It is not that I cannot create anything

good, but that I will not.' . . . Do you see? He is evil through his own wish, not from the fact of his birth" (Zaehner, 1955, p. 438). Abnormal aspects suggesting that Ahriman is capable of creativity comparable to that of Ohrmazd are debatable or absolutely secondary in Zoroastrian dualism, the ethical nature of which is a constant element from the Gathas to Pahlavi literature. Yet Zoroastrian and Iranian dualism generally did undergo historical transformations, impelled by inner tendencies and contacts with other religions (Shaked, 1994).

The transformation of Zoroaster's original dualism was determined by the progressive assimilation of Ahura Mazdā and Spəṇta Mainiiu, a process favored by the idea that God created everything through the beneficent spirit (*Y*. 44.7), defined in the Younger Avesta (*Yt*. 10.143) as a "creator" (*daδuuå spəṇtō mainiiuš*) not unlike Ahura Mazdā himself (Gershevitch, 1964, p. 14); there is no real evidence in the Avesta that the opposition between Spəṇta Mainiiu and Aŋra Mainiiu was transferred to Ahura Mazdā and Aŋra Mainiiu, however. As Gershevitch (1964, p. 15) has noted, such a transformation was documented in the Greek sources as early as the 4th century B.C.E. and in Zoroastrian texts of the 9th century C.E.: "In the place of Falsehood now stands the Fiendish Spirit, in the place of Truth, God himself. Zoroaster's religion has become an uncompromising dualism, in which two aboriginal deities, Ohrmazd and Ahriman, God and the Devil, face each other and contend for ultimate victory." Aristotle, in a fragment of the *Perì philosophías* (apud Diogenes Laertius, 1.8), explained the teaching of the Magi as presupposing the existence of two principles, Zeus or Oromasdes and Hades or Areimanios. In the *Metaphysics*, too, he cited the Magi in Asia, because of their dualism, as forerunners of Plato immediately after Pherecydes in Greece (cf. Benveniste, p. 17; Bidez and Cumont, I, p. 102). A similar notion was expressed by his disciple Eudemus of Rhodes (apud Damascius, p. 322; cf. Gnoli, 1988). In *De Iside et Osiride* Plutarch attributed such a dualistic formula to Zoroastres the Magus (Bidez and Cumont, II, p. 71).

In the 9th-century Pahlavi literature the dualism between Ohrmazd and Ahriman is omnipresent. In the first chapter of the *Bundahišn* there is a powerful representation of Ohrmazd as omniscient and good, residing on high in the infinite light (*asar rōšnīh*), which is also its own space (*gāh*) and place (*gyāg*). Ahriman, endowed with "knowledge after the fact" (*pas-dānišnīh*, knowledge of effects, rather than causes, as only Ohrmazd is able to foresee) and a desire for destruction (*zadār-kāmīh*), resides in the abyss (*zofr-pāyag*) in

infinite darkness (*asar tārīgīh*), which is its own place. Between them is the void (*tuhīgīh*), or atmosphere (*way*), where the mingling (*gumēzišn*) of the two spirits (*mēnōg*) takes place (*Bundahišn* 1.1-5; tr. Anklesaria, pp. 4-5).

It should be noted, however, that this new formulation of Zoroastrian dualism, in which God is degraded to the level of devil's antagonist, was part of a unitary body of doctrine that remained essentially unchanged for centuries. Within certain limits a historical development can be partially reconstructed from the heterogeneous sources. It can be assumed that the gathic formulation (of Ahura Mazdā and opposed twin spirits) was succeeded by a formulation in which Ahura Mazdā was directly opposed to the evil spirit, with the addition in some instances of another entity, time (Zurwān), conceived as the father of the twins Ohrmazd and Ahriman. The supremacy of time in some sources, both Iranian and non-Iranian, related to the religion of the Magi or even in the 9th-century Zoroastrian religious literature, has been interpreted as attesting to Zurvanism, defined either as the continuation of an Iranian religion parallel to Mazdaism, a Mazdean heresy, or simply a theological trend peripheral to orthodoxy (Nyberg, 1929; idem, 1931; Zaehner, 1955; for further references, cf. Gnoli, 1980, pp. 211-12; Boyce, 1990; idem, *Zoroastrianism* III, pp. 412, 423-24, 463-64). It seems that Zurvanism, "with its speculation on Time, its apparatus of numbers, and the idea of the world-year, is the outcome of contact between Zoroastrianism and the Babylonian civilization" in the 5th-4th centuries B.C. (Henning, 1951, p. 49; see BABYLONIA ii). The various references to the opposition between Oromasdes and Areimanios in Greek and Latin sources, particularly the passage from Eudemus, can be interpreted as evidence that Zurvanism already existed in the latter half of the Achaemenid period. The historical development of Iranian dualism can therefore be viewed as having taken place in three principal stages: gathic dualism (Ahura Mazdā + Spəṇta Mainiiu and Aŋra Mainiiu), Zurvanite dualism (Zruuan + Ahura Mazdā and Aŋra Mainiiu), and the simplified dualism of the Pahlavi texts (Ohrmazd and Ahriman), in which the two principles are represented in almost symmetrical opposition (pace Bianchi, 1958; Molé).

In the Zurvanite myth as transmitted by hostile and foreign sources, chiefly Syrian and Armenian Christian writers (cf. Schaeder, 1941), Zurwān, or time, fathered the twins Ohrmazd and Ahriman; having promised the scepter to the firstborn, he made Ahriman, who came to light first, king for 9,000 years, a "limited time," after which kingship was to be bestowed on Ohrmazd for "endless time." This myth attests a religious and philosophical mentality quite

different from that of original Zoroastrianism. The historical development of Iranian dualism under the influence of Babylonian astronomy and astrology and the astral religion of Mesopotamia, far from preserving Zoroastrian moral values and belief in the dignity and freedom of man, caused a radical subversion of those values. In gathic dualism Ahura Mazdā and man, his earthly and corporeal symbol, stood above and in the center of everything, with the two opposing spirits offering free choice. Syncretistic Iranian-Mesopotamian dualism reduced Ahura Mazdā to the level of Aŋra Mainiiu and raised time above everything. Whereas in the Gathas the role and value of God and man's moral freedom were exalted above all, in the syncretistic version the role and value of the creator God were debased and man subjugated to the omnipotence of time (*zamān*), from which the soul cannot release itself: "Time is more powerful than the two creations, the creation of Ohrmazd and the creation of the Evil Spirit" (*Bundahišn* 1.43; tr. Anklesaria, pp. 12-15; cf. Nyberg, 1929, pp. 214-15; Henning, 1935, p. 11; Zaehner, 1955, pp. 281, 297 ff., 315-16). In these conceptions lie the foundations of a religious fatalism that deeply influenced medieval Persia (cf. Ringgren, 1952, pp. 72 ff.).

The transformation of gathic dualism into Zurvanite dualism was not simply a theological development without consequences for the Zoroastrian religious life and world view, as has been suggested (Boyce, 1990, p. 25). In fact, the Zurvanite conception of the world-year and exaltation of time above the protagonists in the cosmic drama represented adaptation of the Zoroastrian tradition to the religious, philosophical, and scientific tendencies prevailing in the Near East during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods, when the notions of a universal law regulating the eternal movement of the orbs and of the celestial vault were widely accepted (on these aspects of Babylonian religion, see, e.g., Meissner, chap. xviii; Bottéro, pp. 142-43). It is certainly paradoxical to consider dualism as a monistic attempt to subjugate dualism to Zurwān (Pétrement, 1947, pp. 323 ff.).

It was during this period, too, that Iranian dualism influenced Judaism (Bousset, 1926; Colpe; Duchesne-Guillemin, 1958, pp. 86 ff.; Hultgård; Shaked, 1984), as is especially clear from the Qumran texts (Wilderberger; Michaud; Duchesne-Guillemin, 1957; Winston; Widengren, 1966; Ringgren, 1967; see DEAD SEA SCROLLS); early Christianity (Clemen; Duchesne-Guillemin, 1962, pp. 264 ff.; Widengren, 1975); and Gnosticism (Bousset, 1907; Widengren, 1952; idem, 1967). Research in these different fields is particularly rich and complex, and opinions often differ widely. It is nevertheless difficult to deny an

influence of Iranian dualism on the religions of the Near East from the Achaemenid period to the early centuries of the present era (for a recent discussion see Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* III, pp. 361-490; cf. Gnoli, 1984; see also BIBLE ii).

Even clearer is the influence of Iranian dualism on Manicheism, despite the present tendency to consider the origins of Manicheism within the general framework of Judaism and Christianity (see, e.g., Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* III, p. 460-65). In formulating his version of dualism Mani abided by one of the fundamental tenets of Mazdaism, that creation is the work of a good, wise, and omniscient God (Puech, p. 142), but in Manicheism there is particular emphasis on an omnipresent evil, which man must fight with all his force during his earthly life. This dualism is based on the opposition of light and darkness, God and matter, conceived as principles preceding and transcending the drama of human existence in the mediating moment of their "intermingling" (Pahl. *gumēzišn*), as in the 9th-century Zoroastrian texts. In Mani's dualism man was again at the center; Ohrmazd was redeemed from the degradation into which he had fallen in Zurvanite theology and identified as primordial man, who, in Manichean Gnosticism was the true divine savior (Gnoli, 1984, pp. 134-35). Manichean and Turkish documents from Central Asia demonstrate that Manicheans reacted against Zurvanite dualism by attacking those who affirmed that Ohrmazd and Ahriman were brothers or that God had created both good and evil, referred to in the Manichean Middle Persian text M 28 (Henning, 1951, p. 50) and the Uighur confession text *Xwāstwānīft* I.C.3-4 (Asmussen, p. 194; cf. the texts collected in Zaehner 1955, pp. 431 ff.; Puech, pp. 140-41). The occurrence of such a condemnation in a 9th-century Zoroastrian text undoubtedly reflects the influence of polemics between Manicheans and Christians (*Dēnkard* 9.30.4: "Ohrmazd and Ahriman were two brothers in one womb"; Junker, p. 144; Schaeder, 1930, pp. 288-91; Benveniste, 1932-33, pp. 209-11; Zaehner, 1955, pp. 429-31; Molé, pp. 464-65). Any trace of Zurvanite dualism was to be eradicated and replaced by the new Zoroastrian orthodoxy, in which the dualism between Ohrmazd and Ahriman was preeminent.

Islamic hostility to dualism also influenced the Zoroastrian communities in Persia. In fact, condemnation of dualists (*ṯanawīya, ahl al-iṯnayn*) was almost a topos in Muslim refutations of Manichean, Mazdakite, and even Mazdean doctrines; the last was, however, given special attention by such authors as Abū Bakr Moḥammad Bāqellānī (Monnot, 1977), ʿAbd-al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad (Monnot, 1974), and Abu'l-Fatḥ Moḥammad Šahrestānī (Gimaret and Monnot,

pp. 635-54; cf. Monnot, 1986, pp. 119, 38, 41, 86, 124, 141 ff., 157 ff.). After the Muslim conquest of Persia and the exodus of many Zoroastrians to India and after having been exposed to both Muslim and Christian propaganda, the Zoroastrians, especially the Parsis in India, went so far as to deny dualism and to view themselves as outright monotheists (Dhalla, pp. 46-53, 156-73, 247-68, 337 ff.; Duchesne-Guillemin, 1953, pp. 161 ff.; idem, 1962, pp. 373-74; Boyce, 1979, pp. 197, 207, 213, 220). After several transformations and developments one of the defining features of the Zoroastrian religion thus gradually faded and has almost disappeared from modern Zoroastrianism.

Nevertheless, Iranian dualism spread widely east and west of the Iranian world, especially through Manicheism. Traces can still be found in Central Asian and particularly Tibetan cosmogonies (Klimkeit, 1986, pp. 46, 48; Tucci, 1949, pp. 730-31; idem, 1980, pp. 214, 271 n. 5; Gnoli, 1962, pp. 127-28; Hoffmann, pp. 102 ff.; Blondeau, p. 313; cf. Uray; Kværne). In the West, although the connections are uncertain and the historical development difficult to reconstruct, religious dualism can be identified in the beliefs of Priscillianus and his followers in the late Roman empire, the Paulicians in the Byzantine empire, and later the Bogomils (see, e.g., Söderberg; Runciman; Loos; for a sound survey of the history and problems, see Manselli; for further references, see Couliano, pp. 223-81; Rudolph, pp. 402 ff., 423 n. 191).

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