

The Web of Immanence.

By Dina G. McIntyre.

Fans of the original Star Trek series may remember Ensign Chekov. When the series first started, for every technological marvel that came up in the course of any discussion, Chekov claimed a Russian inventor. It became a standing joke. I am beginning to feel that I have a Chekov-complex, because for just about every ill that plagues our world, I (an unabashed Gatholicist) find real time answers in Zarathushtra's thought. Allow me to give you a bird's eye view, with a few examples.

Consider the great divide that currently exists between religion and science. In Zarathushtra's thought, the two are seamless, because to him, truth – asha – finds expression in the worlds of both mind and matter. And religion is an on-going quest for truth.

For those who are concerned about a society in which blaming everyone and everything else for their own actions, has become endemic, Zarathushtra offers an effective antidote – individual responsibility. We can have the best form of government in the world, we can enact the best laws, we can have the best organization or corporate charters, but they don't mean a thing unless they are implemented from day to day, by individuals making the right choices. We can confer. We can advise. But when all is said and done, it is individual responsibility that saves us from the collective cop-out.

For those who worry about the ego-centric rat-race we sometimes get caught up in, Zarathushtra implies that "completeness" (haurvatat) is achieved at both an individual and a collective level. Perfecting ourselves is a necessary first step, but completeness is ultimately attained when everyone makes it. So at each step along the way, in order to make it, we must both give and receive help. It is the paradox of the individual and the community – individual responsibility, and mutual loving help; each concept flowing seamlessly into and out of the other; both essential to realizing the desired end.

It is sobering to think how many people in the world live under dictatorships, deprived of basic human rights. According to Zarathushtra, even the object of our worship is to be chosen in accord with the true order of things, asha ([yatha ahu vairyo...](#)). Logically then, people should also have the right to choose their temporal rulers in the same way. If this idea of Zarathushtra were to be believed and held, worldwide, it would solve not only the problems of dictatorship, but also those of democracy.

In matters of governance, whether of nations, or corporations, or even community boards, we often are beset by abuses of power. The wealth of some nations gets siphoned off into the pockets of corrupt politicians, leaving little or nothing to spend on needed infra-structure, such as roads, water and sewage systems, electricity, telecommunications, schools, urban planning – the infrastructure needed to form the foundation of a thriving economy. Corporate management sometimes uses its power to manipulate markets, and engage in deceptive practices, resulting in near financial collapse, not only for such corporations, but for the economy itself. Zarathushtra's solution is vohu xshathra – the rule of truth (asha), its comprehension (vohu manah), and its embodiment in thought, word and action (aramaiti); the idea that power and authority are a trust to be exercised in a way that promotes the true

order of things (asha); the profound realization that, to be effective, an essential ingredient of power is service (another interesting paradox);

"...fame is to serve Thee and the truth, Wise One, under Thy rule." Y32.6.¹

"Glorious Jamaspa Haugva (has displayed) this understanding of His power: 'One chooses that rule of good thinking allied with truth in order to serve...' Y51.18.

In a world where so many live below the poverty level, where the children of Bangladesh and Africa haunt our TV screens, where women are victimized, where on a lesser scale, poverty, adult illiteracy, drugs, crime, prejudice and environmental pollution afflict our various communities, Zarathushtra's "can-do", action oriented teaching provides a powerful remedy. He teaches that it is not enough to think good thoughts, and speak good words. We have to use our minds and hearts to search for solutions, and take action, so that each of us becomes a co-worker with Ahura Mazda, a benefiter, a savour ("saoshyant") of our world, solving one small problem at a time. He says:

"Yes, those men shall be the saviors [*saoshyanto*] of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and with truth, Wise One. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury ..." Y48.12. Notice, the 'enemy' to be expelled here is fury, violence.

I love the teaching of a prophet who tells us that on the path of spiritual evolution, a good first step is justice, being fair, but an even higher step is generosity ("...the beneficent have correctly chosen ... Y30.3). If we could commit to generosity in our dealings with each other, what a happy difference it would make, as generosity often (though not always) begets a corresponding generosity from the recipient.

On the other hand, Zarathushtra does not teach us to be willing victims. He encourages us to fight wrongful actions, but with truth and good thinking, not with anger or hatred or prejudice, or violence. If we fight hatred with hatred, or anger with anger, prejudice with prejudice, or violence with violence, we simply create more hatred, anger, prejudice and violence. Zarathushtra helps us to realize that a good end can never be accomplished through wrongful means by showing us the path of the amesha spenta, -- the path of the true order of things (asha), its comprehension (vohu manah), its embodiment in thought, word and action (aramaiti), its good rule (vohu xshathra), its complete and undying attainment (haurvatat/ameretat) -- the benevolent way of being (spenta mainyu), which indeed is wisdom personified (mazda).

In the final analysis, there is one teaching of Zarathushtra that links into all the others, and provides a solution for so many of the ills that plague us. It is the idea that the Divine is immanent (present) in all things, and that therefore, we all are part of one whole. If, when making our choices, we could remember that teaching, just imagine what the consequences would be. How would we speak or act in a given situation, if we remembered that 'God' is present in the object to which our words or actions are directed -- whether it is a human being, or another life form, or our environment?

Can this teaching be carried to its logical conclusion? Probably not. Do I swat mosquitoes? Sure I do (with a mental apology). Would I eliminate a colony of ants that were lurching on my house? As humanely as possible (and to the extent necessary), yes I would. Should we kill to eat? We have to, if we want to survive. Even vegetarians kill (all or parts of) plants. I do not know why our world is ordered in such a way that we have to kill to survive (although I have some ideas). However, we can use our minds/hearts to ensure that we don't victimize. If we believe this teaching of Zarathushtra – that the Divine is present in all things – we would understand that we all are inextricably linked in a web of existence – an interdependent ecosystem. We would understand that whether it is another human being, or another life form, or our environment, we cannot victimize it, we cannot trash it, without harming ourselves and the Divine. If we could turn this thought into actions, its Light would flood our lives and make our world a brighter, happier place. "...Therefore may we be those who shall heal this world..." Y30.9.

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¹ All quotations from the Gathas in this piece are from the translation of Professor Insler of Yale University as it appears in *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (E. J. Brill, 1975).

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