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# The Impurity of the Corpse (*nasā*) and the Future Body (*tan ī pasēn*): Death and Afterlife in Zoroastrianism

MANFRED HUTTER

## 1. Introductory remarks

The funeral, in its broadest sense can be defined as the combination of those procedures, having as purpose the disposal of the corpse and the handling with the separation of the dead person and the bereaved. Among the most common funerary forms in the history of religions burial in the ground and cremation are mentioned, while less frequently, the exposure of the corpse in order to decay or be consumed by animals is encountered.<sup>1</sup> That specific funerary forms can change within a religious community due to historical developments of social conditions is a known fact in the study of religions. Nevertheless, in most cases, a clear preference for a certain funerary form can be observed, whereas the exclusive use of one single type of funeral is practically unaccounted for in history.

The practices of Zoroastrianism with its 3000 year-old history also fit in this general framework of the study of religions, insofar as, the human body may be handled in very different ways after death.<sup>2</sup> There is, for example, evidence of funerals of the whole body in rock caves and rock tombs, as well as secondary funerals of the bones in ossuaries, or the exposure of the corpse in remote places or, – starting with the early Islamic period in Iran – in architectural structures wrongly called “towers of silence”. This last form prevailed as norm for about 1000 years, but is currently performed only in India and not in Iran; even in India, the ongoing debate on whether this funerary form should be retained is intense – even leading to legal dispute.<sup>3</sup> Special cases are mass burials in quickly dug graves in the soil, after disasters or wars. Zoroastrians, who live as minorities or individuals outside of the religious

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1 HUTTER, *Funeral/Burial*, 771-774.

2 For an overview of archaeological evidence of different funerary practices cf. HUFF, *Evidence* and TRÜMPPELMANN, *Persepolis*.

3 Cf. STAUSBERG, *Religion*. vol. 3, 237-241.

core countries Iran and India since the 19th century, also bury their dead according to the respective traditions of their host country.

Thus we can state from the start that our question basically refers to three levels – symbolical, ritualistic and normative; the latter can be left unconsidered in most cases, because a normative ruling of Zoroastrian funeral prescriptions only started to prevail in the early Islamic period. Then, in the 8th and 9th centuries CE, the Middle Persian Pahlavi texts were edited to create a unified and normative theology – for the sake of strengthening Zoroastrianism faced with the expansion of Islam in Iran. The internal Zoroastrian pluralism, which is well documented by written and archaeological sources dating from the Achaemenid to the Sasanian times is largely eliminated in favour of a uniform doctrine and a uniformity of rituals. However, as these occur after the period mainly discussed here, the normative level is less important than the symbolical and ritualistic ones. The symbolical level applies to the dogmatic concept that impurity emanates from a corpse, which may compromise the good creation of Ahura Mazda. Thus, the purpose of the funerary forms is to prevent any damage to the believers as well as any pollution of the elements created by Ahura Mazda. This results in the theological concept that neither earth, nor fire may come into contact with the corpse during the funeral, so that burial in the ground and cremation of the corpse are theologically excluded. Also pertaining to the symbolical level is the concept that the (right) treatment of the deceased supports the journey of their soul to paradise. This leads to the ritualistic level, which has two aspects:<sup>4</sup> on the one hand, the funerary ritual must be considered as physical “disposal” of the corpse, and should be completed within one day. The other aspect of the ritualistic level is represented by the “soul ceremonies”: these are performed by priests and span a period of three or four days. The aim of such rituals is to enable the separation of the soul from this world and to guarantee its successful journey to the afterlife, during which Sraoša guides the dead person’s soul.

The symbolical conceptions concerning the human body, prevailing in Zoroastrianism, its material and spiritual components and their further existence after death can be deduced from early Zoroastrianism on the one hand, from the Avestan texts.<sup>5</sup> This corpus of the so-called “holy scriptures” of Zoroastrianism developed over a longer period, with the oldest parts going back to the end of the 2nd millennium BCE and the most recent parts being composed even in the late Achaemenid

4 STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 3, 447-483.

5 For short remarks on the Avesta cf. HUTTER, Schriften and the research review in STAUSBERG, State, 570-574; also KELLENS, Philology.

era. However, the textualization of the Avesta in the present-day form occurred only in the 4th century CE, maybe influenced by the “scholarliness” – inspired by the Bible – of Mani and the Manichaeans in Iran.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the Avestan sources, further genuine Zoroastrian source texts are available – the so-called Pahlavi scriptures<sup>7</sup> whose final literary form dates as late as the 8th and 9th centuries CE. A part of this theological literature was not written until this time, although the larger part of it dates from the late Parthian and early Sasanian time. Therefore, the significance of the individual Pahlavi texts has to be assessed differently, according to their origin, so as to avoid – in some cases – incorrectly dating back to earlier epochs the normative view of Zoroastrian theologians of the Islamic time. Nevertheless, both text corpuses – Avesta and Pahlavi scriptures – can be considered for our discussion.

## 2. Symbolic approach: Body – Soul – Death

We can start with the creation of man: first, the *primeval man* Gayo.marətan is created by Ahura Mazda; he is the one who “has mortal life in him”. The primeval man, however, falls victim to the attack of Angra Mainyu, the dualistic counterpart of Ahura Mazda and is killed;<sup>8</sup> the Pahlavi tradition expands this concept by correlating the first humans with other creations of Ahura Mazda, e.g. metals (cf. also Bdh 14:1-5; Zdspr. 3:69), while the Avesta merely emphasizes the connection with humankind (Yt 13:87):<sup>9</sup>

We worship the Frawashi of righteous Gaya Marətan, who first listened to the thoughts and teachings of Ahura Mazda, from whom (Mazda) fashioned forth the families of the Aryan peoples, the seed of the Aryan peoples.

Besides this primeval man, there is the first human couple, whose meaningful names, in their Middle Persian form, are Mašyā and Mašyānag (variant: Mašē and Mašānē); these name elements also point to the semantic field of “mortality” so that the naming already signifies a determination of character. The creation of Mašyā and Mašyānag is not recorded anymore in the present-day Avestan text corpus, but the idea of man can be derived from the Avesta: man is basically fashioned

6 Cf. HUTTER, Manichaeism, 313-314.

7 For the Pahlavi texts cf. the history of literature by CERETI, Letteratura as well as STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 1, 291-297.

8 WILLIAMS, Zoroastrism, 156-157.

9 MALANDRA, Introduction, 114.

of material and spiritual components, without there being a complete systematization of them. What can be perceived as essential aspects of “body and soul”, which must form a harmonious unity is shown in chronologically different texts: in Hāδōxt Nask 2:15-17, the difference between “body and soul”, the separation of which signifies death, is defined in an almost “classical” way:<sup>10</sup>

The first step that the soul of the faithful man made placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise. ... Then one of the faithful, who had departed before him, asked him saying: ‘How did you depart this life, you holy man? How did you come, you holy man, from the abodes, ...? From the material world into the world of spirit? From the decaying world into the undecaying one?’ ... And Ahura Mazda answered: ‘Ask him not what you asked him, who has just gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress, where the body and the soul part from one another’.

We find here a definition of death that consists of the separation of the body or the existence (*ast*) from the consciousness or perceptiveness (*baodah*). Perceptiveness (*baodah*) is one of the spiritual components which are essential to humanity. On several occasions, we can find in the Avesta a row of five, which circumscribes these spiritual sides of human beings (Yt 13:149; cf. e.g. Y 26:4.6; 55,1; Yt 13:155):<sup>11</sup>

We worship now the *ahū* and the *daēnā* and the *baodah* and the *uruuan* and the *frauuāšī* of the first teachers (and) of the first to have listened to the teachings, of the righteous men and women who have won a victory for Truth.

Other “life components” which define a human being can also be cited: these include Avestan terms such as *kəhrp-* “body, figure”, *uštāna* “vital force, vitality”, *manah* “mind”, *xratu* “reason, wisdom”, or even *xvarənah* “charism, glory”. Zādspram, a theologian of the 9th century, systemizes the idea of “man” in a treatise in four fundamental parts:<sup>12</sup> man is *tanīg*, *gyānīg*, *dānišnīg*, *ruwānīg* – i.e. a corporeal, vital, intellectual and spiritual being.

Three of these components of man – *uruuan*, *daēnā* and *frauuāšī* – refer not only to life, but remain relevant after death. *Frauuāšī* pertains to the vitality of man, representing at the same time also a “spiritual” side of man, where the believer may find assistance and support in the fight against the power of Angra Mainyu and the demons (Yt 13:26f.30.47.49). Therefore *frauuāšī* can be characterized as the guardian

10 Cf. PIRAS, Nask, 54-55.

11 MALANDRA, Introduction, 115-116.

12 GIGNOUX/TAFAZZOLI, Anthologie, 96-105, chapter 30,3.22.36.37; on the components of a human being cf. also SHAKED, Dualism 135-145.

spirit of the individual.<sup>13</sup> *Frauuāši* can be translated literally as “choice decisions”<sup>14</sup>, i.e. this component of man belongs to the spiritual part, but at the same time has to be distinguished from the terms *uruuan* and *daēnā*. Translating *uruuan* by “soul” is the most justifiable and it is therefore used in what follows. This soul can temporarily leave the person (still alive); at the same time, it is the component of humanity, which endures after death, when spirit, mental power or vitality have ceased to exist. After death, this soul is the bearer of human thinking and feeling and must take responsibility before the otherworldly judgment seat. Its counterpart is the *daēnā*, which can be translated as “(religious) view”.<sup>15</sup> This shows the individuality of the *daēnā*, which also outlives a person’s death. It is consistent with the Zoroastrian world order that both the soul (*uruuan*) and the religious view (*daēnā*) exist in the Ahuric and in the Daēvic cosmos. In an opposing characterization of the “good spirit” and the “evil spirit” it is emphasized (Y 19:15; Y 45:2) that their souls and religious views differ from each other. That *uruuan* and *daēnā* are two components of man, which have to be distinguished and that exist separately even after death, is shown by Hādōxt Nask 2: here the two spiritual components of the individual meet one another.

The different spiritual components which constitute the idea of ‘man’ show therefore the complex anthropology of Zoroastrianism. Its basic statement, that human beings can choose the Ahurian world with “body and soul”, goes back as far as Zarathustra. The aim of material life and religion as a whole is to act during one’s life in a way, so as to receive a body in future, in resurrection, which is free of the flaws caused by the bad principle and which exists in harmony with the good principle. This “future body” (*tan ī pasēn*) then is a “pure” body, free from evil and the power of Angra Mainyu.<sup>16</sup> In the Zoroastrian world view, the pure body, which is reflected in the health and vitality of man, is opposed to the “impure” bodies of witches and murderers that provide a space for demonic powers.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of death, the body (*kāhrp*) equally belongs to the area of impurity and the preservation of purity and the elimination of impurity must be understood as the individual’s participation in the cosmological fight against Angra Mainyu. Impurity as the immediate expression of the world of Angra Mainyu can be subdivided into three large

13 Cf. e.g. BOYCE, *Zoroastrianism*, 106.

14 NARTEN, *Yasna*, 180-181.

15 LANKARANY, *Daēnā*, 167.

16 Cf. WILLIAMS, *Zoroastrism*, 156.

17 WILLIAMS, *Zoroastrism*, 159; HUTTER, *Demons*, 26-28.

areas:<sup>18</sup> *xrafstra*, *hixra*, *nasu*. *Xrafstra* are demonic beings including both anti-gods and harmful animals, *hixra* encompasses all sorts of human discharge, and *nasu* includes everything in the context of death and the corpse. It is necessary to take maximum sanctuary from this area of death which is the immediate expression of impurity. It is said in Vd. 7:2.9f.:<sup>19</sup>

Right after the death, O Spitamid Zarathustra, (when) Consciousness (*baodah*) has departed, the Nasu Druj flies up from the north in the form of a ... (?) -fly, crouching (on its front legs), its anus in the air, (covered) with unlimited filth like the most ghastly *xrafstras*. ... O righteous Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Creator of the material world. To what extent does the Nasu Druj infect these two, the bedding and the pillow, innermost, the shroud (?) with (its) pestilence and putrefaction and pollution? – Then Ahura Mazda said: ‘The Nasu Druj infects, outermost, the bedding and pillow, innermost, the shroud (?), with (its) pestilence and putrefaction and pollution’.

This statement is clear. With death begins – in various degrees – a contagion with pollution against which protection must be sought.<sup>20</sup> What is interesting is the extent of this peril, which is the bigger, the more pious the deceased person was (cf. Vd. 5:28.35-38). The idea behind this concept is that death is understood as the fight of the demons against the good creation. A pious person, who represents the good creation in a considerably more intense form than a sinner, accordingly, can only be overpowered by a larger quantity of anti-godly powers. The fighting effort to defeat the pious person is therefore bigger and more creatures of impurity are present at the “battlefield” of death when a Behdīn, a pious believer dies. Nasu, the “lie (*druj*) and death demoness” per se, spreads this impurity, when the corpse is disputed over by the demons for three days.<sup>21</sup> The pivotal challenge which death implicates for the bereaved is the necessity to minimize the pollution emanating from the dead body as much as possible, so that it cannot spread (like a contagious epidemic). This status of the “impure” corpse is not only the starting point of the funerary rites, but also of those rituals which assist the soul to depart on its journey to the afterlife, so that it can regain the pure future body (*tan ī pasēn*) at the end of the world.

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18 Cf. CHOKSY, Purity, 14-19; HUTTER, Religionen, 234-235.

19 MALANDRA, Introduction, 168.

20 Cf. also STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 1, 136-137.

21 HN 2,1-6 (PIRAS, Nask, 51-52.); cf. MX 1,73; see also CHOKSY, Evil, 59-60.

### 3. Ritualistic Approach: Avoiding of Pollution

To prevent impurity and the death demoness from spreading all over the whole good creation, both ritual specialists and ritual locations have a high significance in Zoroastrianism in the context of death. It is the task of the specialists as specific professional group to ensure the disposal of the corpse (av. *nasu.kaša*, *irištō.kaša*; pahl. *nasā-sālār*), to treat the dead properly, so that the impure corpse does not infiltrate the creation.<sup>22</sup> Their social status was very low because they constantly dealt with death and, subsequently, with the impurity of the corpse. At least two pallbearers (or multiple) must act together because according to Vd. 3:14 one person alone is not allowed to carry a dead person for their own protection against the Nasu. Originally, the pallbearers worked naked (Vd. 8:10) in order to prevent pollution by their clothing and probably only in Islamic time, (cf. Pers.Riv. 109: ll. 11-17) a special attire for these pallbearers was introduced.

Before the pallbearers bring the dead person to the funerary site, the so-called *Sagdīd* ritual takes place where the gaze of a dog is supposed to banish the Nasu from the dead person. "Four-eyed" dogs are preferred, i.e. dogs with two white spots above the eyes. After the recitation of various prayers the pallbearers carry the dead person to the funerary site on a metal stretcher; metal is regarded as the material to which impurity sticks the least. Outside of the funerary site the pallbearers unclthe the dead person. The participants in the funeral keep their due distance. Following a second *sagdīd* and prayers, the dead person is buried. At the same time, the participants say a prayer after this they clean their uncovered body parts with cattle urine (*gōmēz*) and go home. After depositing the corpse at the funerary site, the pallbearers undress, wash themselves three times with *gōmēz* and water and put on pure clothes; then they can go back home. Originally, the clothing even had to be washed six times with *gōmēz* and water and be exposed to the sun for six months (Vd. 7:15ff.).

In addition to the ritual specialists and ritual acts, the funerary forms also serve to avoid pollution. In the Avesta, we find different possibilities of funeral, and the term *daxma* could originally be used for different funerary sites and types. The word *daxma-* can be derived from the Indoeuropean verbal root *\*dhmbh-* „bury, inter“, so that *daxma* probably only indicates the funerary site, and not a particular funerary form. In the Avesta, the term *daxma* sometimes has a positive, but, more

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22 CHOKSY, Purity, 107-110; MODI, Ceremonies, 53-55; STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 3, 228-229.



frequently, it has a negative semantic meaning. As everything which comes into contact with the area of death is exposed to the influence of Nasu, everyone intends to avoid this area. Therefore, it is self-evident that a *daxma* is considered to represent whereabouts of the demons, diseases and worst human beings<sup>23</sup> and its destruction must be regarded as a commendable act (cf. Vd. 7:49-58). Likewise, earth is polluted when the corpse of a person or of a dog is buried in the ground or a *daxma* is built to inter humans in it (Vd. 3:8f); on the other hand, the earth is pleased when a *daxma* is destroyed (Vd. 3:12f), so that the dead get exposed to the sun and the air. These statements which cannot be completely harmonized with each other lead to the first meaning of the Avestan word *daxma* – a solid funerary construction, and even if the funeral in such “funerary constructions” was not favoured, it was still clearly practised. This practice is documented not only by textual evidence, but also by archaeological findings of funerary sites dating from the early Achaemenid times, among which the most famous examples are the tomb of Cyrus in Pasargadae and the funerary monument known as Gūr-i Dukhtar. As massive funerary constructions, they are perfectly appropriate to keep the impurity which emanates from the corpse inside of the tomb; therefore such funerary constructions seem to have been rightly considered for some time – as expression of Zoroastrian funerary architecture.<sup>24</sup> Equally, the rock cut tombs of the Achaemenids (especially in Naqš-i Rostam) have the function of preventing the impurity of death from spreading. As stone constructions of rock cut tombs, they are adequate for funerary sites because natural stone, as a creation of Ahura Mazda, cannot be permeated by impurity.<sup>25</sup>

The term *daxma* is however used with a second meaning in the Avesta already, namely in the sense of “site of corpse exposure”: the corpse must be taken to a suitable *daxma* (Vd. 8:2), where it lies in the sun and rain for at least one year (Vd. 7:45f; 5:14); the omission of this corpse exposure is a sin, which is tantamount to the killing of a righteous believer. Vd. 5:14 orders that the exposed corpses may be eaten by birds, and in Vd. 6:49-51, we find the prescription that the bones must be collected and laid down out of the reach of dogs, wolves and foxes. A clarification – and development – of the latter statement is provided by the structures called *astōdān* (av. *uzdana*, cf. Vd. 6:50) in Middle Persian – rock niches or rock troughs that served to accommodate the

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23 STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 1, 137.

24 Cf. DE JONG, Traditions, 435; STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 3, 205-206; HUFF, Evidence, 614-617.

25 CHOKSY, Evil, 60.

bones.<sup>26</sup> At first, the corpses are exposed and eventually, the remaining excarnated bones are collected and entombed for a second time in the *astōdān*. Archaeological findings also prove the existence of such rock niches or rock troughs, pertaining to this practice starting in Achaemenid times, but being documented more frequently in Sasanian times.<sup>27</sup> The location of these (artificial) rock niches, mostly in an elevated spot would prevent them from being reached by animals, although sometimes stairs lead to the niches. Some of the niches were closed with stones – for protection against desecration. Among the rock troughs and sarcophagus-like tombs, consistent with their size, some were used for whole-body funerals, whereas smaller varieties could only accommodate the bones remaining after corpse exposure and excarnation. However, these findings show at the same time, that some of them dating to the (late) Sasanian times were big enough for whole-body funerals: inscriptions on the tombs refer to them as *daxma*, and these inscriptions also mention that the construction of such a tomb is a commendable act that will be rewarded with paradise.<sup>28</sup>

In the Avesta, we have thus a coexistence of statements concerning the funerary forms and the differing semantics linked to the term *daxma* can be explained as follows: the commonly used term *daxma* “grave” (or in general “funeral [site]”) was used secondarily as term for sites of corpse exposure. This transfer of meaning is connected with the change of the interpretation of the afterlife, where corpse exposure correlates with a heavenly beyond. This idea was propagated by Zarathustra, so that the exposure of the dead was considered as commendable and burial as condemnable. However, the textual and archaeological findings show that in spite of the recommendation of corpse exposure, this practice was not completely accepted area-wide, because, among other things, primarily the problem of impurity was considered – and only secondarily the theological question of the correlation between “funeral” and “beyond”. And a massive construction built from stones that are created by Ahura Mazda and cannot be permeated by impurity also inhibited the spreading of Nasu. Thus both the archaeological and the textual observations reveal that until the early Islamic period in Iran there was a “pluralistic” Zoroastrianism, which was not completely uniform with regard to the ritual treatment of death and the ritual ban-

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26 TRÜMPPELMANN, Persepolis, 17-18; STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 1, 232; STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 3, 207. – It is difficult to get archaeological evidence of sites of corpse exposure which have no constructional specifics, however, they existed without doubt (cf. also HUFF, Evidence, 595-596).

27 TRÜMPPELMANN, Persepolis, 19-20; HUFF, Evidence, 597-598.

28 Cf. de BLOIS, Inscriptions, 30-31; also HUFF, Evidence, 605-606.

ishing of impurity. Only in post-Sasanian times, this ritual diversity was reorganized in a normative way, imposing corpse exposure as the only theologically correct norm in order to accomplish a strengthening of identity for the decreasing number of believers by means of a “standardization” of theology. At the same time, an architectural innovation was initiated, in that a *daxma* – from now on only in the narrowed sense of “site of corpse exposure” – became a roofless structure where corpses were disposed – possibly also to protect the (peace of the) dead in an Islamic environment – and left them to be consumed by vultures and to decay.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Afterlife and the Future Body (tan ī pasēn)

In the explanation of *daēnā* and *uruuan*, the relation between the individual and the beyond has already been brought up. Like the connection between cosmology and the eschatology of *Frašo.kərətī*, the individual idea of the afterlife (both material and spiritual) belongs fundamentally to the idea of ‘man’; the individual renewal in the afterlife is part of the universal perfection of the world. It can be noticed even for Zarathustra’s own annunciation that for him the deeds of man essentially contribute to how the destiny in the afterlife will turn out to be. Y 31:20 (cf. also Y 30:11) reads concerning the sinners:<sup>30</sup>

A long life in darkness, foul food (and) the word ,woe’: to that existence (your) religious view (*daēnā*) will lead you, O you deceitful, on account of your own actions.

Other passages such as Y 46:11; 48:4; 49:11 or 51:13 also show clearly that bad deeds determine the condition of the *daēnā* after death, when it comes to a judgement and a decision about the destiny in the afterlife at the Činvat bridge.<sup>31</sup> With the concept of a tribunal, which separates good from evil, Zarathustra obviously introduced an innovation. For the pre-Zoroastrian religion, it has to be assumed that the dead indiscriminately went to a (underworldly or heavenly) afterlife and that although the passage from one world to the other was a critical situation, the place in the afterlife was not influenced by the worldly life. The “transitional situation” in death, concretized at the Činvat bridge, was modified by Zarathustra insofar as he based a successful passage across the bridge on the prior (ethical) life. The *ašavan*, i.e. the “truthful” or “pious” reaches heaven, the *drugvant*, the “liar”, inevitably falls from

29 HUTTER, Leichenaussetzung, 75-77; STAUSBERG, Religion. vol. 3, 206-214.

30 HUMBACH, Gāthās, 131.

31 Cf. LANKARANY, Daēnā, 75-77.

the bridge, that gets narrower and narrower, into hell. The Old Avestan texts do not contain much about the form of the tribunal, the tradition knows three judges:<sup>32</sup> Mithra, who pronounces the judgement (cf. Yt 10:94), Rašnu, who holds the scales, and Sraoša. It is possible that two passages of the Gāthās already hint at this: Y 43:12 alludes to a tribunal, in which Sraoša participates, and Y 48:8 could be about the weighing of deeds.

Another aspect where Zarathustra also modifies the hopes for the afterlife essentially is the concept that everyone can get over the bridge, which previously, before Zarathustra, only men were able to undergo as it shown in Y 46,10:<sup>33</sup>

(That) man or woman, O Wise Ahura, who will grant me (those things) which Thou knowest (to be) the best of existence, reward for truth (and) power through good thought, (...) with all those, I shall cross over the account-keeper's bridge.

With this novelty, the “genderlessness” of heaven is ended, as women also are granted the possibility of salvation. This is essentially what afterlife expectations for the individual were for Zarathustra: heaven or hell according to the deeds judged by a tribunal ruling over all human beings. An important post-Zarathustrian novelty in the context of the *daēnā* should be mentioned here, because from the Young Avestan tradition onwards, it had an increasing influence on the conception of afterlife – the myth of the “Virgin of the Good Deeds”.<sup>34</sup> Several components probably contributed to the development of the myth: firstly, the opening of the possibilities of afterlife to women, furthermore, the fact that the word *daēnā* grammatically is of feminine gender, and possibly, also the Indian goddess of dawn, Uṣas. In the Young Avestan corpus the legend is briefly mentioned in Vd 19:30:<sup>35</sup>

There comes that beautiful one, strong, fair of form, accompanied by the two dogs. ... She comes over high Hara, she takes the soul of the just over the Činvat Bridge, to the rampart of the invisible Yazatas.

Although the name of the girl is not mentioned, a comparison with the Hāḍōxt Nask makes it certain that the passage is about no other than the personified *Daēnā*, who is brought to perfection by the deeds of the humans. The *Daēnā*, as soul guide to the afterlife is the concretization of Y 31:20. With the Avestan tradition only knowing the conception that the *Daēnā* appears in the guise of a beautiful girl, a description was

32 BOYCE, *Zoroastrianism*, 75-76.

33 HUMBACH, *Gāthās*, 170.

34 Cf. SUNDERMANN, *Jungfrau*, 159-165; also CHOKSY, *Evil*, 68-72.

35 BOYCE, *Sources*, 80.

probably influenced by the goddesses Anahita (Yt 5) and Aši, the sister of the *Daēnā* (cf. Yt 17:16). Not until the Pahlavi text *Mēnōg ī xrad*, dating to the 6th or 7th century CE is it declared that the *Daēnā* confronts the unrighteous person (Middle Persian: *druwand*) in the guise of an ugly witch, an image, which is retained afterwards and is finally expanded and written out in full, in the *Bundahišn* (chap. 30).

Then they carry all the souls, of him who is righteous, as also of him who is wicked. If it is the soul of the righteous, a fat cow full-of-milk approaches it in the road, owing to which fullness and fatness come to the soul. And next, a virgin approaches it, of good shape, clad in white garments, of fifteen years, who is fair on all the sides, by whom the soul is gladdened. And next, approaches a garden, full of crop, full of water, full of fruit, and full of plenty, which is the heavenly land, wherefrom delight and a feeling of plenty come to the soul. If it is the soul of the wicked, a dry, feeble and frightful cow affronts it, owing to which dryness and leanness come to the soul. And next, a terrific maiden of vile shape affronts it, who has covered herself with scornfulness, terrific on all the sides, owing to which fear and dread come to the soul. And next, approaches a garden, without water, without trees, and without comfort, owing to which evil thoughts come to the soul, which is the land of the wicked existence.

It is perfectly consistent with dualism that heaven and hell are pictured here in completely antithetic images; the images themselves, however, are familiar: the cow and the garden full of flowers and fruit, earthly ideals which experience their perfection here (*frašo.karati*), just as hell<sup>36</sup> reflects the barren earthly dwellings of the *Daēvas*. Therefore, we can rightly state that Zarathustra's closeness to nature, which has always been tangible in the texts since the *Gāthās* became defining for the whole Iranian history of religion. The soul (*uruuan*), on the way to the afterlife is indirectly depicted as image of the human body, which makes its steps to the heavenly kingdom of light. On this way over the *Činvat* bridge the *Nasu* is no longer mentioned, but the soul becomes the *tan ī pasēn*, the pure future body.

## 5. Conclusion

For Zarathustra, body, death and individual concepts of afterlife are connected with the ethical deeds and the (religious) view (*daēnā*) as spiritual component of human beings. The basis of Zarathustra's overall view of the world, salvation and man is that man takes part in the Ahurian sphere; however, he always is engaged in battle against the

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<sup>36</sup> On Zoroastrian conceptions of hell – their origin, theological setting, topography – see most recently STAUSBERG, Hell.

world of Angra Mainyu, the *Daēvas* and impurity. At the moment of death, impurity emanates from the body itself – representing the battlefield of the *Daēvas* – so that purification and funerary rituals are on the one hand necessary to banish this impurity that infiltrates the good creation of Ahura Mazda, and on the other hand the funerary and purification rituals for the corpse serve to allow the departed and his soul, the access after death to the realm of Ahura Mazda, where he lives on in his “future body”.

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