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## Chapter II

### ORPHIC AND PYTHAGOREAN MYSTICISM

We have observed how, during the seventh and early sixth century before Christ, the Near East was passing through one of the darkest periods of its very checkered history: the kind of tribulation that seems periodically to overcome and harass humanity, and bring in its wake, the disruption of vast empires, depreciate its basic cultural values, destroy its long established social institutions, and create spiritual unrest as well as deep longing for deliverance. While the capitals of the existing empires still held to the remains of their past power and glory, and displayed them most lavishly; beneath that veneer lay deep grievances, and moral and spiritual unrest. Zoroaster was fully conscious of that condition, and refers to it in his Hymns, but in poetic figure of speech. Jesus compared his followers to sheep and himself to the good shepherd. Zoroaster uses a similar analogy. He compares the human soul to the Ox soul, and himself to its master when he says:

To you did the soul of the ox complain:  
"For whom did you create me? Who made me?  
Fury and violence oppress me, and cruelty and tyranny.  
I have no shepherd other than you: then obtain good  
pastures for me."

Then the creator of the ox asked the Right: "Hast thou  
a judge for the ox,  
That you may give him, with the pasture, the care for the  
raising of the cattle?  
Whom did you appoint his master who shall put to flight  
Fury together with the wicked?"

"I know but this one: Zarathustra Spitama, the only one  
who has heard our teaching:  
He will make known our purpose, O Wise One, and that of  
Righteousness.  
Sweetness of speech shall be given to him."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Footnotes on page 54.

Thus, these tribulations were mere birth-pangs of the new Zoroastrian dispensation, the new outpouring of divine grace. But military reverses, suffered by the Persians, prevented the Greeks from coming under the spiritual "Dominion" of Zoroaster, and the cultural purpose and values he proffered. The sphere of activity of the prophet himself was in the distant land of Iran, which, to the Hellenic people, was foreign and barbaric. Racial and national alienage and prejudices, together with lack of understanding and appreciation of this new channel of divine revelation, led the Greek thinkers to fall back on their own intellectual resources, to discover a means of deliverance. One form of reaction was the naturalistic and materialistic approach to reality, we have already considered. Another was the mystic. The one was purely rational, the other spiritual and emotional. For when spiritual redemption is sought, otherwise than through the intermediary of the prophets of revealed religion, it is apt to become mystic. It is sought through direct substantial unity with God, believed to be realized in inner experience, at rare moments of ecstasy. The distinguishing feature of revealed religion, as we have observed, is its trinitarianism; for it interposes between God and man, the divine nature of the prophets. When these are disregarded, and their station and function overlooked, then two possible courses are open to man: either to follow the course of pure rationalism, of Idealism and Empiricism; or the mystic path of direct union with God, believed to be experienced in moments of ecstasy.

This longing for redemption, accentuated by harassing world events, on the one hand; and complete ignorance of Zoroaster as a prophet of God, sent to that specific age, to effect a cultural rebirth, on the other; led in Greece to the spread of mystic movements. The Dionysiac communities became strong; Orphism, that originally was revelational in type, began to assume mystic traits; and Pythagoreanism, that was mainly rationalistic, adopted the emotional and mystic tendencies as well. These mystic movements were the spiritualistic reactions of Greece, to the tribulations of those days. They were different expressions of their longing for some form of redemption, other than Zoroastrianism, to which they felt a sense of political estrangement.

#### The Basic Difference Between the Revelational and the Mystic Conceptions of the Reality and Destiny of Man:

Revealed religion distinguishes between emanation and creation proper. It considers emanation as an outflow of the divine substance; and creation in the nature of "making," of an artifact: the moulding of an individual object, or reality, to assume a higher

form. In the Gatha, we have the example of the first type of proceeding, in the outpouring of Good Mind, Righteousness, Dominion and the other attributes of God or Ahura Mazda; the second in the manner the human soul is made to attain perfection, and acquire attributes that are immortal. The one is an emanation of Ahura Mazda; the other is His work as an architect or artisan. The first is a type of devolution; the second of evolution and improvement. The first can be symbolized by the outpouring and radiation of the rays of the sun; the second by the manner a piece of clay is made to assume the form of a statue, or an individual man who, born as an animal in the lap of nature, is trained to acquire characteristics that are divine. Emanation presumes perfection in the reality emanated; creation necessitates acquiring that perfection.

Now, because the divine nature revealed in Zoroaster, or the other prophets of God, reflects Good Mind, Righteousness and other attributes of perfection in their fullest form; they act as intermediaries through whom man can approach God, understand the nature of His attributes, and gradually endeavour to acquire them. They are intermediaries indispensable for the needs of the spiritual and cultural life of man; the goal of which is to attain that perfection, and acquire those immortal attributes.

In contrast to such a revelational conception, mysticism disregards such distinction between emanation and creation proper. It does not confine the principle of emanation to the divine nature revealed in the prophets; but applies it as well to the human soul, and considers it as a further outpouring of the divine essence. Being an emanation of God, this human soul is assumed perfect, but unconscious of it. The task is merely to make it conscious of that perfection, of being an element of the divine being possessing all its attributes of perfection. And that consciousness is deemed to be attained at the rare moments of ecstasy. Considering the reality of man as such, mysticism attributes to it the ability of obtaining a direct apprehension of the nature of God, and of His attributes of perfection; and thus of dispensing with the need for an intermediary, except as a guide to trace for us the road of attaining that ecstatic vision, to tell us the way we can develop that experience, or consciousness, of being one with the divine essence. According to mysticism, human apprehension of God, is in the nature of a like beholding its like, of becoming conscious of that substantial unity, and thereby intuitively grasping and apprehending its essence and nature. According to Zoroaster, the supreme goal of human endeavour is to acquire the divine characteristics, manifested by the prophets, and thus, become a faithful image of God, or Ahura Mazda.

Where shall Righteousness be attained?  
Where is Holy Devotion? Where the Best Mind?  
Where are thy Dominions, O Wise One?

All this I ask: shall he receive from Righteousness the ox,  
The herdsman of good will and upright deeds,  
Obedient to the lord of the two rewards,  
Who promised to the pure a just protector.<sup>8</sup>

It is from the "herdsman," the "just protector," that is, Zoroaster, that the "ox," or the human spirit, must learn "Righteousness," "Devotion," "Best Mind," "Dominion" and other divine characteristics. Zoroaster possesses these attributes in their perfect form, because his divine nature is an emanation of Ahura Mazda. Man is to be made to acquire them.

With this presentation of the reality and destiny of man, mysticism becomes a definite system of thought, with a prescribed philosophy of life, held in opposition to that of revealed religion. As such, it acts as a parasitic plant, sending its tendrils into the very tissues of the latter, whenever this loses its pristine vigour and vitality, tends to become syncretic to vindicate its truths, and discards its specific goal of ultimate human attainment. In other words, whenever revealed religion declines, mysticism flourishes. Essenes sprung into eminence, when the spiritual vitality of Judaism was at a very low ebb. Manichaeism appeared when Zoroastrianism was far in its process of decline. Christianity tended towards mysticism when it was too weak to withstand any further the onslaught of Neoplatonism, and began to compromise with it, Islam gave way to Sufi tendencies four centuries after its birth, when it began to be culturally on the decline. All these mystic movements appeared, when revealed religion was in the process of losing its cultural and spiritual values, and failing to justify its claim to act as source of illumination; when formalism and legalism were weighing down upon its spirit and its animating cultural purpose and pursuit.

#### Orphism As A Mystic Movement:

We have observed that the origin of Orphism is enveloped in obscurity, though at its earliest stages it shows signs of being revelational in nature. And the ground for it, is that it possessed a sacred scripture, attributed to a specific person, reputed to have been highly virtuous and inspired, who exhorted his followers to lead a pure life as the only means in preparation for a spiritual one; where their individuality, together with the virtues they have acquired will be retained and preserved eternally. And this would

corroborate "a fragment of Artapanus from the first century B.C. (which) relates that Musaeus (mentioned by Plato in his dialogues) was the Greek name for Moses who was a teacher of Orpheus."<sup>9</sup> But whatever the validity of this statement, and the nature of the origin of Orphism, during the sixth century, it was considered a mystic movement alongside the Dionysian, and closely affiliated with it.

By the sixth century B.C., like the Dionysian order, Orphism had come to believe in the course of the divine life process, which was typically mystic and emanational in nature, stressing the substantial unity of the human soul with God. It had come to adopt the myth of Dionysus which says, that after many adventures, this god was slain by the Titans and devoured. Man was considered to be their offshoot, and therefore, as partaking of the nature of both. The divine or Dionysiac element was located in the human soul; and the Titan in the physical body. The first essentially good and perfect; the second essentially evil. The Orphics, therefore, believed that human redemption could be achieved only by freeing the former from the firm clutches of the other.<sup>10</sup> Thus, man is "a compound of divine and earthly nature, and it is our duty to cultivate the Dionysiac and suppress the Titanic element in our nature."<sup>11</sup>

This process of spiritual redemption could be achieved either in this life, or in the next. In this life, the Dionysiac nature is freed through ascetic and orgiastic practices and prescribed rituals, that deaden the physical senses, and impart an inner feeling of reunion with the divine—a feeling that is considered to be the result of consciousness that the soul is a drop of the sea of God's being, that substantially they are, and have ever been, one and the same. And in the life to come, redemption will be achieved, either through further suffering, undergone in Hades, or gradually, through the process of repeated return, and rebirth, in this earthly life,<sup>12</sup> until the Titanic element is completely annihilated, and the Dionysiac freed.

"These then were the two things that the Orphic wished to preach: (a) a belief in the essential immortality and divinity of the human soul, (b) the necessity for constant ritual purity if that immortality were not to be forfeited."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the spiritual life was served, not as conceived by Zoroaster, not by practicing Good Mind, Righteousness, and Devotion, which the prophet exemplified through his thought, words and deeds, as divine characteristics to be acquired by man; but by undergoing certain practices, that imparted the feeling of being already divine, and released from the Titanic element. Liberation was deemed to be

effected through "katharsis," through "an elaborate system of rules which had to be observed continually,"<sup>14</sup> to impart that beatific consciousness. This katharsis was formalistic and ritualistic, based upon the mystic premise that the human soul is an emanation of God, and in substance and essence divine, and hence, already perfect. That it merely needs to be liberated from the clutches of the Titan element in him.

### The Mystic Tendencies of Pythagoreanism:

Pythagoras was born on the island of Salamis (c. 570 B.C.) in the sixth century, which we have seen, also witnessed the birth of Zoroastrianism. He travelled extensively until he finally settled in Korton, in southern Italy, where he founded his school and closed community. Though Pythagoreanism had a totally different origin from Orphism, yet their mystic tendencies tend to group them together; for it had an ascetic and religious character very akin to that of Orphism. During that century there was a general religious revival among the Greeks, either stimulated by the appearance of Zoroastrianism, and the example of the spiritual culture it had inaugurated; or simply as an independent reaction to prevailing conditions, and the unrest and dissatisfaction, that they had created. "The Pythagorean society represents the spirit of this religious revival, which it combined with a strong marked scientific spirit."<sup>15</sup>

To say that Pythagoreanism was a religious revival and awakening stimulated either directly or indirectly by the Zoroastrian revelation, is not as presumptive as it may at first seem. For we have a similar awakening, in that same age, among the Jews. And that also due to a direct contact with Zoroastrianism in this very early stage of its appearance, when its spirit was dominant, its teachings pure, and its values highly spiritual and cultural. As reported and judged by their own prophets, the Jews were defeated, and taken into bondage, by the Babylonians because they had been compromising with heathen practices and beliefs, and, as a result, completely lost their ancient spiritual and cultural priority over other nations. Their close contact with Zoroastrianism while in exile, seems to have made them conscious of their own spiritual heritage. As a result, a vast majority of them embraced the new Faith. But a considerable section clung fast to their old loyalties, and under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, tried to reform themselves, and revert to their ancient beliefs. Direct contact with Zoroastrianism, and its spiritual teachings acted as a reminder of what they once possessed, and the spiritual paramouncy they once enjoyed. In other words, the spiritual light shed by Zoroastrianism,

spread throughout the whole of the Near East, thoroughly illumined some, and merely stirred others into consciousness and self-criticism. The first embraced Zoroastrianism, and became assimilated into its fast spreading community, such as the Babylonians and Assyrians; others remained on the fringe, but nevertheless tried to reinterpret their own thought in its light. The reform of the Jews under Ezra was one such reaction; Greek religious revival in that age was another. And Pythagoreanism was one such movement.

Though the Pythagoreans were mystic in tendency, they were not considered, like the Orpheans, influenced by its extreme forms, such as the Dionysian. There was a scientific and rational element in their teachings that restrained them. "The practice of silence, the influence of music and the study of mathematics were all looked on as valuable aids in tending the soul."<sup>16</sup> They considered the human soul as "the real man," and not as a "mere shadow-image of the body, as it appears in Homer."<sup>17</sup> Being the seat of reality in man, they said, the human soul should be tended, freed from fetters that retard its progress, and made to attain its destiny. The means of such liberation, however, are not confined to the observance of strictly mystic practices, leading an ascetic life, or abstinence from meats that are considered defiling by nature. The soul can be liberated by hearing music, and pursuing the study of abstract and rational subjects such as mathematics. Pythagoras also maintained that after death the human soul assumes some other form of life, either plant or animal, the nature of which depends upon the quality of the life it has led.

#### Orphic and Pythagorean Mystic Teachings in the Light of Zoroastrianism:

As we have already observed, the fundamental principle of revealed religion, is the existence of an intermediate reality between God and man—for a personality that stands to humanity "instead of God."<sup>18</sup> In other words, it maintains the existence of three worlds: (a) the world of Ahura Mazda, or an absolutely transcendent God; (b) the world of creation which includes both physical nature and the soul, or spirit of man; (c) the world of the "Word" which emanates from God as the divine nature revealed in the prophets, in Zoroaster. On the other hand, mysticism, and theistic philosophies, in general, believe either in the existence of two worlds, namely, the world of the creator and the world of the created—without distinguishing between emanation and creation proper—or in one basic universal substance, of which God and physical being are different aspects or attributes. And this monism is the logical

extreme to which dualistic philosophies ultimately tend, and that because they fail to realize the basic distinction between emanation and creation proper. Because they failed in that respect they could say "Nothing is more divine or more human than anything else, but all things are alike and all divine. That is the true note of 'Enlightenment,' and it was the note of all the Ionian schools."<sup>19</sup>

Now, do we find in the Gatha Hymns, attributed to Zoroaster, distinction between these three worlds? Is the conception of God presented there absolutely transcendent? Does it convey the principle of creation, as of an artisan imparting a new form to a reality, and thus producing a new individual being? Is there a principle of emanation, held to be revealed in the divine nature attributed to Zoroaster as prophet of God?

The terms "Ahura," or "Lord of Life," and "Ahura Mazda," or "Lord of Life and Wisdom," both imply transcendence; for no reality can be "Lord" and possess and wield "Dominion" over another, unless it transcends it. The "Dominion" a "Lord" enjoys, is of the nature an artisan possesses; for it imparts Law and Order, which is a new form, upon the object at his disposal. He generates a cosmos out of a void. There is transcendence implied in the words of Zoroaster when he says: "Who appointed their path to sun and stars? Who but thou is it through whom the moon waxes and wanes?"<sup>20</sup> Similarly, there is admittance of transcendence in the exclamation of the Ox-soul, or the human spirit, when it is made to say: "Who made me?"<sup>21</sup> Zoroaster asserts the transcendence of the divine element revealed in himself when he refers to it as "master";<sup>22</sup> or when he asks "What artificer made light and darkness? What artificer sleep and waking? Who made morning, noon and night, to remind the wise man of his task?"<sup>23</sup> "Light" in this context is divine illumination, "darkness" its lack; "waking," in this spiritual and cultural system of thought presented by Zoroaster himself, refers to consciousness of that illumination, and "sleep" its disregard. "Morning, noon and night" are poetic and graphic expressions for the beginning of a new age, its nadir and then its close. All these phases of the spiritual and cultural process of human growth, imply a reality which transcends it, a reality that exerts "dominion" over its evolution and unfoldment, and brings about law and order out of chaos. In all these cases transcendence implies, not only the dominion of Ahura Mazda, but also that He is substantially and essentially different from the object he creates. He is substantially different from the Ox-soul, the human soul, and the spiritual and cultural life He generates. He transcends it as an artisan does his handiwork.

But besides the principle that Ahura Mazda transcends the

world of creation, which is His handiwork; we find in the *Catha Hymns*, the doctrine of emanation to complement it. We have the different aspects of His being, namely, the Holy Spirit, Good Mind, Righteousness and Dominion, revealing themselves through the instrumentality of the divine nature of Zoroaster himself.

Hear, O Lord, him who watches over Righteousness,  
An initiate, a healer of existence,  
Who rules his tongue at will to speak true words.

Out of the fulness of his own union with Integrity and  
Immortality,  
With Righteousness and Dominion,  
Shall the Wise Lord make him master of Good Mind  
Who is his sworn friend in spirit and in deeds.<sup>24</sup>

It is through that divine nature, revealed in the prophet, that emanation of Ahura Mazda, that His attributes of perfection come within reach of human understanding, and become the source of its guidance and deliverance. The chasm that the principle of creation creates between Ahura Mazda, as an absolutely transcendent God, and the human soul, is bridged over by this projection, this emanation of the divine being through the personality: the thought, words and deeds of Zoroaster. And because that emanation is in substance and essence divine can Zoroaster achieve "the entire remaking of this existence,"<sup>25</sup> the regeneration of mankind. In short, in the light of the teachings of Zoroaster, dualism fails because it restricts procedure from God to creation, and disregards emanation as a complement, to span the chasm generated between the transcendent God and man. And monism is untrue because it confines that proceeding to emanation, and hence, leaves no distinction between Ahura Mazda, and the human soul, which is merely His handiwork.

Hence, absolute divine transcendence, which Zoroaster taught, though rationally sound, when joined with the dualistic conception of being, opens up a yawning chasm between the Creator and the created. For, in that case, no element of the Creator can be logically regarded as residing in the created; and no element of the created to be in substance and nature one with the Creator. The two realities, or worlds, would thus be thrown completely apart, and the logic of the spiritual and cultural life, which necessitates a link between God and man, would be totally impaired. To avoid such complete segregation of the two worlds, mysticism maintains a measure of divine immanence in man. It upholds that the human soul is an emanation of God, and therefore, in substance divine. The Orphics, for example, held that the human soul was

Dionysiac and therefore, in substance divine. But mysticism is not consistently dualistic. As we have said, at times, when it reaches out to the full implications of its premises, and becomes extreme in its claims, it merges into pantheism, and considers all things, even physical objects, in substance divine, as the doctrine of emanation, to which it subscribes as sole form of procedure from God, logically implies. And in Orphism that tendency was not wanting. For the Titans, it was reasoned, though opposed to Dionysus, were also children of gods, and therefore, divine in substance.<sup>26</sup> Pythagoras also shared that monistic tendency, though he did not consider the soul absolutely immaterial and pure spirit. To him the difference between matter and soul was a question of degree and refinement.<sup>27</sup>

But if the soul is in substance divine, and therefore, completely actual in its attributes, as extreme mysticism maintains, then progress in acquiring perfection, becomes meaningless and superfluous. For if the human soul is substantially one with God, and therefore, necessarily and fully actual and perfect, there is no room left for further perfection. In that case Good Mind, Righteousness, Dominion, Devotion and other divine attributes that render man perfect, are already and fully ingrained in the human soul; and there is no field left for spiritual and cultural development in acquiring them. This is the ground of the claim, such extreme mystics make, when they say they transcend moral, social and intellectual values. The principle, that their soul is an emanation of the substance of God, logically and fully justifies them to make it.

In contrast, Zoroaster maintained that the human soul is a created reality, seeking perfection and immortality. "O Mazda Ahura, bring Thou their desire to fruition of attainment,"<sup>28</sup> he says. Only gradually, and after following the footsteps of the prophet, learning them from him, arduous endeavour in acquiring them through repeated practice in thought, words and deeds, can the human soul become in the image of Ahura Mazda and reflect His attributes of perfection. For, "by acquiring the wisdom of the Good Mind one becomes like Thee O Mazda,"<sup>29</sup> in wisdom. And the same may be repeated for Righteousness, Devotion and Dominion. It is by practicing a virtue incessantly that man becomes virtuous in that respect. Hence, if we maintain that the human soul is a mere creation of Ahura Mazda, then there lies before it an infinite road for progress. And this can be successfully traversed, only if man comes in contact with the channel of divine revelation, and beholds clearly and distinctly exemplified, the actual perfections he must acquire. Thus, according to Zoroaster, the cultural life and its

values cannot be transcended. For they constitute the very characteristics he has to acquire. Not orgies, and practices that benumb the mind, not music that gives a sense of detachment and ecstasy, not the study of abstract subjects such as mathematics; but a concrete vision of the attributes of God, revealed by His prophet; the constant practice of goodness; true knowledge regarding the nature and destiny of man, and the environment in which that can be attained; a law and order that would render society a healthy environment within which that purpose can be pursued, an adequate appreciation of what constitutes beauty, all these are essential for the development of the soul.

Furthermore, as we have observed, man is, according to Orphism, composed of two elements: the one emanating from Dionysus, and the other from the Titans. This is a case of emanation, because unity of substance is maintained, between the god and its offspring. Such a conception logically leads to a dualistic notion of the reality of man: the one essentially and substantially good, and the other essentially and substantially evil. These two natures are inborn in man. They are not creations of these gods; but children of their seeds. In other words, this mystic doctrine tries to establish two basic principles: first, that the existence of these two natures—the good and the evil—are inborn in man; secondly, that they are not acquired through a gradual process of development and training, but as a result of an emanation of the divine being, of Dionysus and of the Titans, respectively. But if we admit that good and evil are inborn in man, and that they are emanations of the nature of these rival gods, combined in the human soul; then there is no ground left for the principle of creation, of acquiring an ever higher form. The process would resolve itself, to merely overcoming one element of our nature, and stimulating the self-expression of the other.

To Zoroaster, as to all other prophets, the ultimate reality in man is his soul or spirit. Being a creation and not an emanation of God, divine characteristics are not inborn in it. Man is not born possessing Holy Spirit, Good Mind, Righteousness, Dominion, Devotion, Law and Order as inherent in his nature. He merely possesses the power and capacity, the aptitude and possibility of acquiring them. And that capacity is the ground of his duty and spiritual obligation. These characteristics are the type of which Jesus said, neither moth can eat, nor rust destroy. They are eternal acquisitions.

Because the better way to choose of the two is not  
therefore in sight,

To you all I come as the judge of the two sides,

— such as the Wise Lord knoweth me —  
That we may live according to Righteousness.

Make known to me what you have, as Righteousness,  
appointed to me as the best,  
That I may join myself unto it: from whence comes  
my inspiration  
Which makes me learn from the Good Mind, for my  
remembering,  
What shall not be, O Wise Lord, or what shall be.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, at birth, this human soul possesses the innocence of a child. It has the capacity, and freedom, to choose the way of goodness, or to follow that of evil. He has the ability, and liberty, of developing into an image of God, becoming in His likeness, and reflecting His attributes of perfection; or of acting otherwise.

Thine was Devotion, thine the creator of the ox,  
Thine the force of the spirit, O Wise Lord,  
When thou didst give a free path to the ox  
Towards the herdsman or one who is not a herdsman;  
Then of the two did it choose for itself the cattle-tending  
herdsman,  
As a just master, as an advancer of the Good Mind.  
He who is no herdsman, despite his striving,  
O Wise One, he shall have no share in the Good Message.<sup>81</sup>

Should the ox, that is, the spirit of man, contact the "cattle-tending herdsman," the source of revelation of the Holy Spirit, Good Mind, Righteousness, Dominion, Devotion, Law and Order, as well as other divine characteristics, practice these qualities in his thought, words and deeds, then it will acquire perfection. If man should follow wittingly, he "who is not a herdsman," and hence, fail to acquire divine characteristics, the evil he commits is merely an accessory of his freedom of choice, rather than an expression of a positive principle of evil inherent in his nature. Thus, redemption is achieved, not by overcoming a sinful nature and disposition inborn in man; but by a positive acquisition of divine attributes of perfection. Furthermore, by being redeemed we do not become God, and be merged into the sea of His being, and substance, as Orphics, and mystics generally maintained; but remain mere creations of His will and purpose, relying on the guidance of the prophets for our spiritual and cultural growth.

Pythagoras was justified in observing that human redemption cannot be achieved in the few score years, man labours upon this earth; but the kind of existence beyond the grave, in which that

task is to be pursued, is differently conceived by revealed religion, and among them Zoroastrianism. Pythagoras thought that complete effacement of the scars of sin, left in the soul, the Titanic element, as the Orphics termed it, can be achieved through metempsychosis. But can the human spirit become perfect through repeated resumption of earthly life? Furthermore, why should we limit being to the physical realm? If God is infinite, and His creative power is inexhaustible, why should not His worlds also be unnumbered? Does not the conception conveyed by Jesus in the words: "In my Father's house are many mansions,"<sup>32</sup> and repeated by Mohammed in the verse: "But for these who fear their Lord are pavilion built upon pavilion,"<sup>33</sup> present a more adequate and noble picture of the realm beyond the grave, where the perfection and eternity visualized by Zoroaster could be achieved? Spiritual evolution, with its gradual and slow process of acquiring the infinite attributes of God, would be much less certain, if man were to fall back to plant and animal level of being, than if he were to proceed to higher spheres of existence, where divine perfections are more fully and abundantly revealed, and physical handicaps do not operate. Furthermore, these higher stages of being, have their own higher forms of perfection, and can be acquired only there. Spiritual, intellectual, moral, social and aesthetic perfections can be achieved only on the human level, only in this stage of our existence; not by falling back to the plant and animal life. Similarly, on higher stages of existence, the human soul will have perfections to acquire, far beyond what he can even conceive or appreciate at present. The task set by Zoroaster, and by Jesus when he says: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"<sup>34</sup> needs an infinite process, pursued by the human soul, in infinite stages of being, and infinite time. It is on such a ground that Mohammed says: "It needs not therefore that I swear by the sunset redness, and by the night and its gatherings, and by the moon when at her full that from state to state shall ye be surely carried onward."<sup>35</sup> Baha'ullah adds, that in all these higher stages of being, there shall be prophets to lead the human soul, and reveal to it the higher perfections it has to acquire.

Pythagoras maintained, that the punishment suffered in Hades, situated in some lower regions of the earth, is indispensable for the purification of the sins of the soul. It is true that revealed religion depicts a fearsome picture of hell, but that is only to draw a physical sketch and semblance of the sorrow, remorse, and inner torture that awaits a sinful soul in the life to come. For not physical suffering and burning, but spiritual sorrow and remorse, for past evil deeds, clean the soul and heal its scars. When redemp-

tion is spiritual, as in the case of the human soul it is, the forces operating upon it, and the goal these seek to attain, should also be interpreted spiritually. And if they are mentioned in physical terms, we should attribute to them spiritual significance, to appreciate their meaning. Zoroaster says:

And all those whom I shall induce to worship such as you,  
With all those will I cross the Bridge of the Separator!<sup>36</sup>

Here the term "Bridge" should be taken spiritually. In that case it would designate the religion of God, which Zoroaster was calling humanity to embrace. It was the bridge that led from the purely earthly animal existence, to the spiritual and cultural life. But redemption, though spiritual, can have both individual application, and also a social and universal one. Just as Kingdom of God can refer both, to a state of being beyond the grave, and also to a social condition to be realized on earth. Religion serves, not only the spiritual evolution of the individual, but also the society in which he is to achieve it. We are now considering redemption in the case of the individual soul. We shall in the sequel deal with the social and universal one, on which Zoroaster is more emphatic.

A distinguishing feature of all mystic movements, which we also find in Orphism, is the significance attached to the emotional life, as opposed to the rational. The road of rationalism, they contend, is full of pit-falls and leads ultimately to doubt; but the apprehension, which accompanies feeling and emotion, is direct and certain. For it is in the nature of "like" beholding its "like", and feeling one with it. Therefore, when stimulated by orgies, and other practices, man's emotions are aroused, and made keen and ready to reach out and grasp that ineffable reality that transcends understanding. This tendency of suppressing the mind, to give vent to human emotions, has often led mystics to employ physical means: such as incantations, dances, drugs and intoxicating beverages.

In contrast to such purely emotional attitude, we see Zoroaster stress Good Mind, as the outstanding emanation of Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, reflected in the thought, words and deeds of the prophet himself. This Good Mind is always mentioned as accompanying Righteousness, Law and Order, Dominion, Devotion and other divine perfections. Man cannot transcend it and act virtuously. At the same time, he denounces most vehemently the use of Homa, which was an intoxicating drink used by the Persians as part of their religious rituals. Referring to its use he says:

When, O Wise One, will the warriors understand the  
message?  
When wilt thou smite this filth of drink?

Through which the sacrificers wickedly  
And the evil masters of the countries of their own will  
Commit their deeds of malice<sup>287</sup>

Furthermore, can man's nature be cleft in twain, and feeling severed from understanding? Are these not organically united one with the other? Can man feel satisfied emotionally, when in doubt about the truth of its supreme object, or uncertain regarding its validity? The object of love and desire has, in the long run, to coincide with the object of understanding, if the one is not to undermine the other, and leave the individual with inner conflict and uncertainty. Furthermore, how can we know that this emotional urge to be united with the divine substance, is not motivated by wishful thinking, and wrong premises as to the reality and destiny of man? When the individual seeks some psychological experience intensely and long enough, stimulates his emotion and suppresses his understanding, he might succeed in obtaining a vivid experience of what he desires. But are intensity of emotion, and vividness of a psychological experience, sufficient criteria for objective validity? The experience may be vivid but illusory.

According to our definition, a psychological experience never constitutes the hall-mark of spirituality. Spirituality is cultural maturity, and implies, according to Zoroaster, adequate possession of the Holy Spirit, Good Mind, Righteousness, Law and Order, Devotion, Dominion and the other attributes of God. These are characteristics prophets reveal in their life and teachings, and we have to mirror forth to be spiritual. Moreover, the faculty of reason is indispensable in man's search and appreciation of the prophets when they appear on earth. Emotion, in the form of love we bear towards their person and their teachings, is to create in us the urge, and steel our determination, to follow their way. Devotion is emotional, but in Zoroaster's system of thought, it is inseparable from Good Mind. Good Mind leads, Devotion follows.

#### Belief of Zoroaster in a Cultural Purpose Pervading History:

A materialistic empirical philosophy, such as the Milesian which reduces all things into physical elements, leaves no place for the existence of a transcendent purpose, dominating human history, and determining man's cultural development. Its empiricism would deny the existence of purpose, because it denies the reality of anything senses do not, and cannot, detect, its existence. And denying the existence of such purpose, it cannot possess a sound philosophy of history, which sees a unity in the trend of the seemingly conflicting events that transpire. It is apt to consider these, either as

connected by mere chance, which in a cosmos cannot be logically presumed, or interlocked by a blind "fate" or "Destiny", "against which even gods cannot stand."<sup>288</sup>

Roman historians tried to follow the idealistic system of thought when they maintained, that the problem of "the one and the many", in the realm of history, can be explained by the eternity and unchangingness of the State as an "Idea", throughout its many changes and vicissitudes. Rome, for example, started as a village, acting as the homestead of a tribe. It then became a flourishing republic, and turned into the seat of a mighty Empire. But Rome as a State, and an "Idea", was eternal and unchanging. If the supreme reality is the eternal Rome, and the vicissitudes, passing phases and unreal, then what is the significance of history, where resides its reality, what constitutes its import, what is the purpose of recounting its events, and recording its facts? Is it just the tale of a senseless dream, wars won and lost, peoples merging into world powers, and then submerged into oblivion? To be significant, the events of history should be stages in a creative process, seemingly conflicting forces interacting for a purpose, ups and downs in a planned journey reaching out to a set destiny. They should be successive stages, or failures, of a humanity that is given the guidance to realize an ideal, with full freedom to discard it, and bear its evil consequences. It should be the interplay of divine destiny and human freedom.

Nor can a mystic trend of thought, which calls on man to renounce earthly interests, and considers physical being as Titanic, and hence essentially evil, be adequate foundation for a philosophy of history. Its ascetic tendency would bar it from attributing any significance to facts of history, or seeking spiritual value in its development.

In contrast to these systems of thought, we find revealed religion, as expressed by the prophets of Israel, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed, produce a philosophy of history that not only sets a goal for the social evolution of man, imparts hope and meaning to his earthly life, attributes spiritual significance to events of history, but also shows their objective validity in facts. The first chapter of Genesis stresses, that the purpose of physical being, is the creation of an adequate environment wherein man can dwell and have his being. Addressing man, God says: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."<sup>289</sup> In other words, the purpose of physical being is the satisfaction of the needs of man, and the creation of an environment, wherein he can participate in develop-

ing the cultural life destined for him. Furthermore, the main theme running through the tales told in the Old Testament, is that the spiritual and cultural life of the Israelites; was the direct result of God's creative purpose. In fact, He chose them to fulfil a spiritual and cultural purpose when He told them: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."<sup>40</sup> In fulfilment of His promise, and to help them further that cultural purpose in the world, God delivered them whenever they strayed far from goodness and justice and got entangled, as a result of their own iniquity, in insurmountable difficulties. At times He would counsel them through His prophets, at others he would rebuke them, discard them to their fate, and then pity them, and deliver them again from bondage. In other words, the history of the ancient Hebrews, is that of a transcendent purpose, dominating the political, social and cultural growth of a nation, chosen to fulfill a mission—the mission of imparting blessing to "all the families of the earth." Besides this, the Old Testament records the vision of the fulfilment of that purpose, the dawn of the day when wars will end, justice between all nations of the earth will prevail, and peace and security will spread its blessings to all mankind. In short, the Old Testament is the tale of the successes and failures of a wilful nation, called by God to serve the realization of a spiritual and cultural purpose in the world; and the evil consequences that wilfulness repeatedly brought upon it.

Later Jesus and Mohammed appeared, and as they themselves asserted, bore the same mission to mankind. For the spiritual and cultural empire they established, to be appreciated, must be considered as extension, and renewal, of the same one the Israelites had served. It served the same divine purpose, and tried to hasten the advent of the same social ideal, namely, the reign of universal peace and brotherhood throughout the world. Israel etymologically means, to follow the Lord. It was applied to Abraham, because he hearkened to the call of the Lord, and consecrated his life to His bidding, because he submerged his will in God's purpose. Similarly, "Muslim" is defined in the Koran, as the one who resigns his will to God's, who furthers His purpose. On that ground, Mohammed says, all the prophets that have appeared since Abraham were "Muslims." Jesus and his disciples, he considers to have been "Muslims"; because they all submerged their will in God's, and pursued his spiritual and cultural purpose on earth. Thus, both terms "Israel" and "Muslim" literally imply a paramount spiritual and cultural purpose that dominates history. Furthermore, on what ground can we attribute the term "prophet" to a person, except that

he was sent by God to "prophecy" on the advent of a great historical event, and to hasten its realization?

Now, does Zoroaster's teachings follow in line, with this basic principle of the other revealed religions? Does he maintain, that outstanding events of history, are guided by a transcendent divine purpose, aiming at the realization of this supreme event, the social maturity of man; the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth? This theme features more in the words of Jesus, for all his parables are centered around it, and much of his other sayings are animated with that hope, and among them the sole prayer of his, that has been recorded. The Koran is even more graphic, and emphatic, in that respect. But compared to the prophets of Israel that preceded him, Zoroaster is more definite. Jesus referred to his advent, and the regenerating influence of his teachings as "rebirth," or "rising from the dead" and acquiring a new spiritual life. Zoroaster terms that phenomenon "renew this existence," or "the entire remaking of this existence"; and calls the historical period in which that is effected "the turning-point of existence." And this "remaking," he considers to be the result of the advent of "Saoshyants," or "saviours" sent by Ahura Mazda to further his purpose.

Those are the future saviours of the peoples  
Who through Good Mind strive in their deeds  
To carry out the judgment which thou has decreed, O  
Wise One, as Righteousness.  
For they were created the foes of Fury.<sup>41</sup>

In some passages Zoroaster speaks of "remaking" such as to apply to his own mission.

Because you are truly thus, O Wise One with Right and  
Good Mind,  
Give me this sign: the entire remaking of this existence,  
That a great joy may be mine in your worship and praise.<sup>42</sup>

In other occasions he speaks of a number of saviours, to be sent by Ahura Mazda to later generations.

When, O Wise One, shall the wills of the future saviours  
come forth,  
The dawns of the days when, through powerful judgment,  
The world shall uphold Righteousness?<sup>43</sup>

And there is also reference to that culminating event which is referred to as "the last turning-point of existence."<sup>44</sup>

Now, if we throw a rapid glance at the spiritual and cultural history of mankind, during the last three or four thousand years, we will find no events so momentous as to deserve to be desig-

nated, as, "the entire remaking of this existence," or "the last turning-point of existence," as the advents of Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed, who founded the Hebrew, Zoroastrian, Christian and Mohammedan cultural Empires of the past; or the appearance of Baha'u'llah, who about the middle of the last century, claimed to be, what in effect is the "saviour" of "the last turning-point of existence," visualized by Zoroaster. The first are historical facts; the latter is yet to be verified. And these expressions, can be rightly attributed to these prophets, because they all "through Good Mind strive in their deeds to carry out the judgment which thou has decreed"; the purpose Ahura Mazda envisaged for mankind.

#### Unfoldment of that Purpose is Subject to Time:

Mysticism, we have observed, considers the human soul as an emanation of God. As a result, the salvation it proffers is an inner experience, a consciousness, attained at moments of ecstasy, that our soul constitutes, in substance and essence, part and particle of the divine being. And such a sudden consciousness cannot be considered a process that entails time. It transcends time, which is a characteristic of physical phenomena. The case is different when the soul is considered a creation of God: when it is regarded as mere "clay," that has to assume an ever higher form to attain its destiny. Especially if acquiring those forms, is through gradual practice and habituation; then the element of time is indispensable. Acquiring habits of thinking, speech and behaviour is a process that needs time; especially if the individual is endowed with freedom of choice, which he has at times to curb and guide through proper understanding and right emotions. This is true not only in the life of the individual, in his task of achieving perfection, and acquiring immortal attributes; but also of society as a whole, in its process of development.

If we take this point of view, the principle of social justice, is not merely to give every one his due; but also to establish "Asha," or a divine Law and Order, that is dynamic with an ever widening scope, until it embraces all mankind. None of the revealed religions, while cherishing the ideal of a reign of universal peace and brotherhood, would consider social justice attained, if the Law and Order it seeks, is still confined within a closed community; a limited static state or nation, or restricted to a particular race or people. It should be ever expanding, until it comprises all mankind. And that final, and world-wide dominion of Law and Order, was the outstanding feature of the ultimate "Farashkart," the "last turning-point of existence," that Zoroaster envisaged for the distant future. In other words, the process of

developing, and widening the sphere of social justice, until it is fully realized, and embraces all the peoples, races, and classes in the world, is not a matter achieved by transcending time; but by acquiring an ever higher form, an ever wider sphere of operation, which can be realized only in time and in history. And this is the conception Zoroaster presents, in what he says regarding repeated "renewals of existence," effected at the hands of himself, and of "future saviours".

This conception, that individual and social perfection can be achieved only in time, was adumbrated in Zoroastrian literature, dated later than the Gatha hymns. Thus, the Avesta presents the picture of a "boundless and infinite" stretch of time, which culminates in a "bounded or finite" one, extending twelve thousand years. At the beginning of this period, a fierce struggle is said to have started between the creative power of Ahura Mazda—here called Ohrmazd—and the destructive forces of Ahriman. The first wielded the positive power of Good Mind, Righteousness and Dominion, the second of negation, evil and falsehood. The first was creative, the second destructive and obstructive.<sup>45</sup> The struggle thus started, was considered to continue until it would finally culminate in the "Farashkart," or "the Making Excellent," which we might term social maturity, or the reign of universal peace and brotherhood associated with the Messianic Age. Then the forces of Ahriman will finally give way and be utterly destroyed, and "then shall Evil cease to flourish."<sup>46</sup>

This idea, that the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, is not as mystics visualized it, a sudden and timeless consciousness of being one with God in reality and substance; but rather entails the element of time in its process of creation, together with repeated dispensation of prophets who would guide man to it, and liberate forces that would achieve it, is also found in other revealed religions. If we revert to Genesis we see it state that God created heaven and earth in six days. Similarly the Koran says: "It is He who created the heavens and earth in six days, and then ascended His throne."<sup>47</sup> Peter in his epistle says: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."<sup>48</sup> The Koran corroborates this, and regards a scriptural day as equal to one thousand years.<sup>49</sup> As Baha'u'llah says, an infinite creator implies an infinite creation: infinite both in time and in space. For any limitation attributed to the object of creation, entails limitation to God's creative power, and hence to Himself. This is true of physical being; it is also true of the spiritual and cultural life of man. Both are eternal and everlasting; they neither had a beginning,

nor will they have an end. Therefore, this six thousand years, mentioned in the Scriptures of the different revealed religions, should be taken to mean the duration of recurring prophetic cycles, such as we have observed Zoroaster taught. Only in that light can they have meaning.

In his parable of the fig tree, Jesus does not maintain that the prophetic cycle is exactly one thousand years, that that much will elapse before his return, at the dawn of a new day. He says that when new foliage begins to appear on the tree, then we can know that its season of fruition has come. In other words, the dawn of a new day, or cycle, depends upon circumstances, the signs of the time, upon the spiritual and cultural life of humanity, and its need for divine guidance and grace. But generally speaking, that special grace is imparted to mankind about once every one thousand years. It was on such grounds that the early Christians believed that the Kingdom of Jesus will last a thousand years. Now, if we take all these passages, we shall observe, that social salvation of man is regarded as subject to time; that it is not instantaneous or transcendent to time; but being a creative process is involved in it; that the ever higher forms it has to assume, demand a gradual and constant process that render it essentially temporal.

#### Primordial "Void" is Spiritual and Cultural:

"In the beginning Ohrmazd was on high and dwelt in the Endless Light: he was characterized by omniscience and wisdom which some call Religion. Ahriman was in the depth and dwelt in the Endless Darkness: he was slow in knowledge and his will was to do harm. Between the kingdom of light and darkness was the Void which some call Vay. This briefly, would seem to be the Mazdean view of the universe before Ahriman's attack on the kingdom of light and the creation consequent on it."<sup>50</sup> If "renewing existence" and the "entire remaking of this existence," constitute the specific mission of Zoroaster, and the "future saviours," then this whole passage should be interpreted in the light of the spiritual and cultural life of mankind. "In the beginning," should be taken to refer to the spiritual and cultural condition of the world, before the "renewal of existence," effected at the hands of the "saviours," sent by Ahura Mazda, each to his age. "Endless Light," ought to be taken to mean light of knowledge and understanding; and "Endless Darkness," of ignorance and falsehood, "The Void," or "Vay," would then be the resulting lack of the spiritual and cultural life, which the "saviour" is sent by Ahura Mazda to replenish. It would be the confusion of social ideals, and conflict of institutions and their loyalties, that Law and Order would have to harmonize.

And such conditions do come to prevail in the world when revealed religion ceases to operate as a unifying and inspiring force.

In fact, such a cultural "Void" did prevail in the world in the seventh century B.C. when Zoroaster appeared and inaugurated one such prophetic cycle. Humanity at that time was passing through a period of turmoil, when there is no unifying purpose, no sound values and conceptions, to unify its ranks and guide its thought. Lykurgus had died, but his socialistic institutions dominated the life of a number of Greek city states. Solon was actually living and a contemporary of Zoroaster. Lykurgus had advocated a sort of planned economy with communistic tendencies; and Solon stood for freedom of enterprise. They both, however, considered man essentially a political and economic animal. In contrast to these, Zoroaster deemed man as primarily a spiritual reality, aiming at essentially spiritual attainments. Sparta had adopted one system, Athens another, and Persia the third. Every one of these had its own conception of the reality and destiny of man, and its own type of social institutions. They were constantly at war one with the other; but the dominion they sought was not confined to the political and military spheres of interest. It was basically cultural and comprised all aspects of life. There were also different philosophical schools of thought, every one entertaining its own basic premises. Added to all these were the Orphic and Dionysian orders that had a mystic approach to the spiritual life. Plato, with his dialectical method, discussed the basic conceptions of most of these, and tried to be fair in his exposition; but could not advocate one outlook that would inspire all. The dominating attitude was the pragmatic one of the Sophists. In short, a cultural "Void" prevailed in the world when Zoroaster appeared—a cultural "Void" similar to the one that existed at the advent of Moses; and made its reappearance later, when Jesus and Mohammed appeared; when old established values and premises of thought were discarded, and there was none to replace them, and unite and galvanize the activities of man. In such a "Void" Ohrmazd is said to have brought a new spiritual and cultural life and purpose, and Ahriman risen to oppose it.

#### The Dualism Imputed to Zoroaster:

But does this struggle between Ohrmazd and Ahriman, over human salvation, imply a dualism in Zoroaster's conception of God? The issue is grave; for Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were staunch monotheists. And Zoroaster ought to have been the same, if the Faith he established, is to be considered a separate revelation of the selfsame perennial religion of God.

Freedom of choice is an outstanding principle of Zoroastrian thought. It is an endowment to enable man to participate actively in his own salvation. The role of the prophet is merely to afford him guidance: to show him the way that would lead to perfection, individually and socially. There was no case of compulsion, of absolute determinism.

Hear with your ears that which is the sovereign good;  
With a clear mind look upon the two sides  
Between which each man must choose for himself,  
Watchful beforehand that the great test may be accomplished in our favour.

Now at the beginning the twin spirits have declared  
their nature,  
The better and the evil,  
In thought and word and deed. And between the two  
The wise ones choose well, not so the foolish.

And when these two spirits came together,  
In the beginning they established life and non-life,  
And that at the last the worst existence should be for  
the wicked,  
But for the righteous one the Best Mind.

Of these two spirits, the evil one chose to do the worst  
things;  
But the Most Holy Spirit, clothed in the most steadfast  
heavens,  
Joined himself unto Righteousness;  
And thus did all those who delight to please the Wise  
Lord by honest deeds.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, "at the beginning," that is, at "the entire remaking of this existence," which Zoroaster as prophet was sent by Ahura Mazda to effect, "the twin spirits have declared their nature." At that juncture the differentiation between good and evil was made: the one was creative, righteous and wise, the other destructive, evil and foolish.

I will speak of the two spirits  
Of whom the holier said unto the destroyer at the beginning  
of existence:  
"Neither our thoughts nor our doctrines nor our mind's  
forces,  
Neither our choices nor our words nor our deeds,  
Neither our consciences nor our souls agree."<sup>52</sup>

The one strove to regenerate man spiritually and culturally, and help him attain perfection, both individually and socially; the other

sought to obstruct the realization of that goal. But does such separation between good and evil constitute dualism in the divine nature, and establish two separate entities? To determine whether these constitute separate entities, we should know how they come into being, what their nature is.

Because the better way to choose of the two is not  
therefore in sight,  
To you all I come as the judge of the two sides,  
— Such as the Wise Lord knoweth me —  
That we may live according to Righteousness.<sup>53</sup>

Towards the wicked man and the righteous one  
And him in whom right and wrong meet  
Shall the judge act in upright manner,  
According to the laws of the present existence.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, the prophet, Zoroaster, was missioned by Ahura Mazda to act as judge, and guide man to the choice of what is conducive to his salvation. And what determines his verdict as what leads man to salvation is "the laws of the present existence". That constitutes Good Mind, and leads to Righteousness. What contradicts that "law" is foolish and evil. And the prophet and his laws, are guided by the creative purpose Ahura Mazda pursues.

Thus, ultimately it is the "laws of the present existence", dictated by the creative purpose of Ahura Mazda, that determine the verdict of the prophet as "judge," as to who is righteous and who evil: who furthers the divine purpose and who obstructs it, who helps the individual to attain immortality and perfection, and who leads him to error and destruction, who helps the realization of the "Frashkart," that is, social "excellence" and maturity, and who opposes it and perpetuates rancour, disunity and war.

This I ask thee, O Lord, answer me truly:  
Who among those to whom I speak is righteous and who  
is wicked?  
Which of the two? Am I evil myself,  
Or is he the evil one who would wickedly keep me far  
from thy salvation?  
How should I not think him the wicked one?<sup>55</sup>

But not Zoroaster alone, every prophet, every "saviour", is judge as to what is conducive to the fulfillment of the divine purpose in his specific dispensation, and what is obstructive; who personifies the spirit of goodness, and who the spirit of evil; who like Zoroaster calls man to salvation, individually and socially, and who "the evil one who would wickedly keep man far from it". A certain law and institution might have been beneficial in a previous

dispensation, and actually helped the spiritual and cultural growth of the individual and society in that age; but with the development of man and his social environment to a higher stage of being, those very laws and institutions might become inoperative, or positive handicaps and retarding. Therefore, what was of Ahura Mazda and good in a previous dispensation, becomes evil and satanic in the latter. And the prophet is judge to that effect. It is his judgment and verdict that determines whether that law and institution still furthers the divine purpose, or obstructs it. He defines what is good and what is evil, and what the spirit that animates them. And this is in substance what Jesus maintained. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword."<sup>56</sup> That sword was his judgment, and verdict, as to who furthers God's supreme purpose on earth, and is of the Holy Spirit; and who defies it, and is of the evil one. Baha'u'llah says that this sword is double edged: with one the prophet cleaves humanity into two, and with the other it unites them to pursue God's one purpose for man.

Paul was born under the "Law" prevailing in Judaism, which traced itself back to the Old Testament, and the writings of the prophets. It, therefore, sprung from the previous divine revelation. Hence, it was creative and good. Nevertheless, when Jesus appeared, and revealed God's ancient purpose in a new light, and with a new, more spiritual, interpretation to answer the different needs of the day; the same "Law" became a "curse" to Paul. "Christ," he wrote to the Galatians, "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."<sup>57</sup> It was in fulfilment of the "Law" that Jesus appeared, reinterpreted the Scriptures, stressed its spiritual significance, and revived the cultural purpose the prophets cherished. Yet whatever furthered the realization of that purpose in the world, Paul deemed good, whatever retarded its fulfilment, he considered a "curse" and evil, even if that be the laws and institutions of Judaism itself. And in fact that "Law" became a "curse" to the Jews, when we observe the dark cultural period they entered, as a direct result of denying Jesus as a "judge" and holding fast to that "Law," as interpreted by their priests.

This whole theme is best expressed by Baha'u'llah when he says in one of his prayers: "I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, out of His mouth, and the First Call gone forth from His lips, than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depth. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided,

separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation, and revealing, in the unseen realms, the signs and tokens of Thy unity and oneness. Through that call Thou didst announce unto all Thy servants the advent of Thy most great Revelation and the appearance of Thy most perfect Cause.

"No sooner had that Revelation been unveiled to men's eyes than the signs of universal discord appeared among the peoples of the world, and commotion seized the dwellers of earth and heaven, and the foundations of all things were shaken. The forces of dissension were released, the meaning of the Word was unfolded, and every several atom in all created things acquired its own distinct and separate character. Hell was made to blaze, and the delights of Paradise were uncovered to men's eyes. Blessed is the man that turneth towards Thee, and woe betide him who standeth aloof from Thee, who denieth Thee and repudieth Thy signs in this Revelation wherein the faces of the exponents of denial have burned black and the faces of the exponents of truthfulness have turned white, O Thou Who art the Possessor of all names and attributes, Who holdest in Thy grasp the empire of whatever hath been created in the heaven and on earth."<sup>58</sup> It is in the light of such cleaving of "existence," of mankind, into the faithful followers of the prophet, and those who deny him; those who arise to further the divine cultural purpose in the world, and those who seek to obstruct it; that the "twin spirits" mentioned in the Gatha has to be interpreted, to convey a significance that can apply to all revealed religions. And such interpretation can never impair the conception of unity of God that Zoroaster maintained.

#### The Pythagorean Doctrine of Number:

We have attempted to show, that neither the Milesian school of thought, which was empirical and materialistic; nor the Orphean and the Pythagorean, which were mystic in tendency, could produce a system that would fill the cultural gap: that "Void" that prevailed, in the latter part of the seventh century B.C., in the Near East, at the dawn of the Zoroastrian era. The first, because it sought to interpret the unity of the universe, in terms of unity of physical substance, instead of unity of a dominating spiritual and cultural purpose; the second, because it directed the attention of man completely away from earthly physical and social interests, which it considered essentially evil and Titanic; and centered it upon a spiritualistic and other-worldly element that it regarded fully divine; thus leaving no field for gradual improvement and perfection of the soul, to be achieved during this earthly existence.

But the teachings of Pythagoras did not possess only this mystic element. It also contained a mathematical one, which stood in equal contrast to the basic conceptions of Zoroaster, as expressed in the *Gatha Hymns*, at least in its logical implications.

In all these three tendencies: the empirical, the mystic and the mathematical, the standpoint from which man tried to approach nature and reality, was that of the passive observer, rather than of the active creator. They tried to understand or apprehend, rather than to pursue a creative purpose, essentially cultural. And the significance and consequences of this approach and outlook, will gradually dawn upon us, as we proceed in our study of Greek thought, and compare it with that of Zoroastrianism as a revealed religion. The need for such an approach was first voiced, as a general principle of philosophy, by the Pythagoreans when they said: "the best of all (classes of men) are those who simply come to look on";<sup>59</sup> that is, to observe the phenomena of nature, understand them, formulate universal ideas and principles, and establish laws, that would explain them, and govern their operation.

"The Milesians," says John Burnet, "had reached the conception of what we call 'matter'; it was the work of the Pythagoreans to supplement this by the correlative conception of 'form',"<sup>60</sup> which was later fully developed by Plato and Aristotle. The Milesians, we said, considered "matter" to be the basic substance of all things; Pythagoras regarded "form" as such. And the purpose of both schools, was to establish the unity of substance, as basis of unity of the cosmos, as their solution to the problem of the one and the many, that confronted philosophy. But both of these: matter and form, in their pure state, are intellectual abstractions. Factually, neither is found in its pure state. They are always combined one with the other. It is thought that abstracts matter from form, or form from matter, with the object of considering them separately, and building upon them further abstract notions, necessary for the trend of its reasoning. And this process of abstraction, in seeking the form while disregarding its matter, is the direct consequence of the type of approach of the observer, who tries to understand the function and property of things. It is otherwise with the creator, who takes things as they are individually—such matter combined with such form—as objective and real beings, and then tries to improve them by impressing upon them a new and higher form, he conceives and tries to actualize.

Assuming the role of such an observer, Pythagoras went the whole length of his reasoning, and reached number, which is the highest form of abstraction. For in number no vestige of matter is left. It is absolutely universal form. Further, number can be

fully reduced to unity; and as such is the best example and solution for the problem of the one and the many. In short, to Pythagoras, ultimate substance was number: either the arithmetical unit, or the geometrical point. Thus, like Anaximenes, he considered the primary substance and reality to be in the nature of a determinate substance, but not physical as air. Number was fully determinate, and yet, not physical and material, but formal. And being both, determinate and formal, was the supreme object of understanding. For it could be fully defined and comprehended. Solids, for example, of which the universe was composed, and to which it can be reduced, are determined by the planes that define them. And these planes are further defined by their lines, and the lines by the points that limit them. Thus, all physical reality can be reduced into points, and points are numbers<sup>61</sup>. Such a reasoning led Aristotle to maintain that Pythagoras considered number to be both the material and the formal cause of all things.<sup>62</sup> Thus number, to Pythagoras constituted, not only the stuff of which all things were composed, but also the form that gave them shape.

Anaximenes, we said, had conceived the ultimate determinate substance to be in the nature of air. But such a premise led to materialism, for air is one of the physical elements. And the consequences of this materialism went counter to the mystic tendencies that Pythagoras cherished. Furthermore, though air is a determinate substance, it is moving, and a moving reality is not an adequate object of understanding. For thought demands a reality that is unchanging. In the flow of music, Pythagoras could detect persistent numbers, in the form of notes. Therefore, why should there not exist similar persistent numbers in the changing phenomena of nature? He might have observed as well, that, were number considered as the ultimate reality, the stuff of which all things physical and divine were composed, then it would be an essentially knowable and intelligible object. In that case, primary substance would be rational—a fact that would not be theoretically established if air were considered as such. In such a case, no lacuna would be left between the knower and the known, to admit any form of skepticism. The materialism of Anaximenes was open to such skepticism, because air is not an essentially intelligible, knowable and rational reality. But number was, and that would give certainty to knowledge. In other words, Pythagoras attempted to reduce ultimate reality to an intelligible substance, more in the nature of form than matter. And this constitutes the basis of his rationalism. In this way Pythagorean mysticism and rationalism seem to find a common ground. As ultimate reality is number, the study of mathematics, which is a sort of commun-

ion with number, constitutes a purgation, and a means of approach to a consciousness of the primary stuff which constitutes the ground of all things. In this sense, Pythagoras considered "knowledge as a means of release."<sup>63</sup>

A fundamental principle that Pythagoras bequeathed to posterity, was that the best men are those who "simply come to look on": seek understanding as their supreme quest. Ever since then, those seeking abstract thought, have considered themselves superior; even though that knowledge was of no spiritual and cultural significance and value. And the more that knowledge was abstract, the higher was it estimated. That tendency went so far as to raise the value of abstract thought even upon creative-activity; which was considered as the work of an artisan, rather than of a scientist and philosopher, a "making" rather than an "understanding" and knowledge. Similarly, the supreme reality was the object of "contemplation," rather than the ultimate artisan and creator.

Faced with a spiritual and cultural "Void," Zoroaster did not consider knowledge, as such, supreme; but rather creative activity, and social and spiritual "artisanship." Knowledge, Wisdom, Good Mind, all were means to realize the regeneration of mankind, instruments for impressing higher spiritual and cultural forms upon a human nature and society that was "formless," perverted, distorted and degenerated. "Prepare the greatest good for man: rebirth,"<sup>64</sup> he said. To Zoroaster, the supreme reality, Ahura Mazda, was not an object of "contemplation" or understanding. As we have already observed, He transcended knowledge. The supreme reality was Ahura Mazda as "artificer," "Who was the father of Righteousness at birth," "Who appointed their path to sun and stars," who was the "creator of Good Mind." He was the "artificer (that) made light and darkness," that "made morning, noon, and night," "Who created Devotion, sacred with the Dominion."<sup>65</sup>

Thus I strive to recognize in thee? O Wise One,  
As Holy Spirit, the creator of all things.<sup>66</sup>

In other words, the supreme reality is the "artificer," or "creator"; and Good Mind is only one of his attributes of perfection, one of His many emanations, revealed to man upon his present stage of existence.

Similarly, on earth, the highest type of man is he who is chosen by Ahura Mazda, not to concentrate his attention and energy on "looking on," even if that be in the nature of a highly abstract mathematical notion or formula; but who as prophet, or "saviour," undertakes to regenerate man, and recast his soul, by impressing upon it an ever higher and more divine form. Knowledge is to act

as a mere means to that end. In fact, spiritual and cultural remaking is the criterion whereby that knowledge is estimated and measured. Knowledge that possesses no spiritual and cultural value, even if it be mathematical and theoretical—such as the schools founded by Plato and Aristotle later pursued—are not the type that Zoroaster would have favoured; for they were not the type that would impart "rebirth," and "remaking of existence."

But if the supreme reality is creative, and the highest activity is regeneration of mankind, then the noblest pursuit is to further that creative purpose in the world. This was the ground on which Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda to bless Vistaspa the king, and "the hero" Frasaotra.<sup>67</sup> It was because these rose to dissipate that spiritual and cultural "darkness" which prevailed in the world, and further the message of Zoroaster that sought to extract it from the "Void." In other words, human salvation, individual and social, could not be achieved by communing with number, or by an inner experience at moments of ecstasy, as Pythagoreans maintained; but by establishing the Dominion of the religion of Ahura Mazda, and serving the goal it had set for man.

To regard ultimate reality in the nature of number, as Pythagoras did, undoubtedly renders the position and operation of mind secure. Because what mind needs is an unchanging reality, an eternal formula, an abiding conception. Furthermore, to premise the ultimate as intelligible and rational, is to eliminate at least one gap that may lead to skepticism. But is not this conceptualist approach, a distortion of one with which we should confront objective reality; a distortion done with the intention of constructing a ground for certainty? Mind should take, and confront, reality as it is, not as it wants it to be; even if that is going to lead to skepticism, as to the nature of ultimate substance and being. It should take that skepticism if it is actually its lot. When Zoroaster maintains, as we have already observed, that all things: stars in heaven, sleep and waking, morning, noon and night, the human soul, Good Mind, Righteousness, Devotion and Dominion, all are created by Ahura Mazda; he presents a universe, both physical and spiritual, that is constantly moving, changing and evolving. In other words, he considers motion a necessary characteristic of all created reality. Mind must accommodate itself to that basic fact, whatever be its consequences. A reality such as number, is not moving and changing; hence, it cannot constitute the primary substance of a constantly recreated, and hence, a dynamic universe. And what is true of number is true of form as well. These are intellectual abstractions, made

by mind, of the creative purpose of God, both in physical nature and in the field of the spiritual and cultural life of man. What is unchanging is the eternal moving purpose of God. If form seems unchanging, it is because mind abstracts that specific phase of it, as an intellectual construction. Only as abstracted it is unchanging. Form is constantly changed, displaced and replaced. The demand of science is not that the substance of things should be knowable; but that their function and properties, which are caused by the moving purpose of God, should be known. In the field of the spiritual and cultural life, man desires to know more than the habitual recurrence of a certain phenomenon, and the constant operation of a formula or law. It desires to go beyond that, and see the unfoldment of that purpose on higher levels of being. These functions and properties are abstractions effected by intellect, from the working of that purpose, and classified under a specific branch of study. In the field of the spiritual and cultural life, the task of the creative mind—in contrast of mere understanding—is to go beyond these unchanging abstractions, and eternal laws and formulae, and employ them to generate ever newer individuals with higher functions and properties. If the understanding mind, finds itself involved in skepticism, as to the nature of the substance and being of an essentially unknowable reality; its knowledge can be replenished by being guided, and complemented, by the revelation of the creative mind itself, which fashioned that substance, and brought that being into existence. To assert that the ultimate substance of things is formal, on the ground that the understanding mind wishes it to be so, is the height of unjustified dogmatism.

- <sup>7</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 29:1, 2, 8.
- <sup>8</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 51:4, 5.
- <sup>9</sup> Religious Platonism by: J. K. Feibleman p. 182.
- <sup>10</sup> The Mystery Religions and Christianity, by: S. Agnus p. 151.
- <sup>11</sup> The Greeks and their Gods by: W. K. C. Guthrie p. 320.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 320.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 317.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 317.
- <sup>15</sup> A History of Philosophy by: Frederick Copleston, Vol. I, p. 29.
- <sup>16</sup> A History of Philosophy by: F. Copleston, Vol. I, p. 29.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. Vol. I, p. 32.
- <sup>18</sup> Exodus 4:16.
- <sup>19</sup> Greek Philosophy, Thales to Plato, by: John Burnet p. 33.

- <sup>20</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 44:3.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid. Y. 29:1.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. Y. 29:2.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. Y. 44:5.
- <sup>24</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 31:19, 21.
- <sup>25</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 34:5.
- <sup>26</sup> The Religious Thought of the Greeks by: C. H. Moore p. 54.
- <sup>27</sup> Greek Thinkers by: T. Gomperz, Vol. I, p. 138.
- <sup>28</sup> Songs of Zarathustra tr. by: Bode and Nanavutty. Y. 28:10.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid. Y. 48:2.
- <sup>30</sup> The Hymns of Zoroaster tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 31:2, 5.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. Y. 31:9, 10.
- <sup>32</sup> John 14:2.
- <sup>33</sup> Koran 31:20.
- <sup>34</sup> Math. 5:48.
- <sup>35</sup> Koran 84:16-19.
- <sup>36</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin y. 46:10.
- <sup>37</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 48:10.
- <sup>38</sup> The Greeks and their Gods by: W. K. C. Guthrie p. 130.
- <sup>39</sup> Genesis 1:28.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. 12:3.
- <sup>41</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 48:12.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid. Y. 34:6.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid. Y. 46:3.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid. Y. 51:6.
- <sup>45</sup> Zurvan by: R. C. Zaehner p. 57.
- <sup>46</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 30:10.
- <sup>47</sup> Koran 57:4.
- <sup>48</sup> 2 Peter 3:8.
- <sup>49</sup> Koran 32:5.
- <sup>50</sup> Zurvan by: R. C. Zaehner p. 57.
- <sup>51</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 30:2-5.
- <sup>52</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 45:2.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid. Y. 31:2.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid. Y. 33:1.
- <sup>55</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin y. 44:12.
- <sup>56</sup> Matthew 10:34.
- <sup>57</sup> 3 Galatians 3:13.
- <sup>58</sup> Prayers and Meditations of Baha'u'llah tr. by: Shoghi Effendi CLXXVIII.
- <sup>59</sup> Greek Philosophy Thales to Plato by: John Burnet, p. 42.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 44.
- <sup>61</sup> Early Greek Philosophy by: John Burnet p. 107.
- <sup>62</sup> Plato and Parmenides by: F. M. Cornford p. 8.
- <sup>63</sup> Early Greek Philosophy by: John Burnet p. 278.
- <sup>64</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 48:5.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid. Y. 44:3, 4, 5, 7.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid. Y. 44:7.
- <sup>67</sup> The Hymns of Zarathustra tr. by: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Y. 28:7, 8.

IN: ZOROASTER'S INFLUENCE  
ON GREEK THOUGHT  
CH. II p. 24-55