

AV. MAINIU.TĀŠTA- AND OTHER MAINIU-COMPOUNDS

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The Avestan compound *mainiu.tāšta-* is attested,¹ always together with *stāhrpaēsah-* ‘adorned / decked with stars’:²

a) with reference to the ‘garment’ (*vaṅhana-*) of Ahura Mazdā (*Yt.* 13, 3,³ which, in its turn, lies in apposition with *asman-* ‘heaven’, mentioned in *Yt.* 13, 2);⁴

b) to Miθra’s ‘chariot’ (*vāša-*: *Yt.* 10, 143);⁵

c) to Haoma’s ‘girdle’ (*aiβiiāṅhana-*; *Y.* 9, 26);⁶

d) to Haoma’s ‘stalks’ (*Yt.* 10, 90).⁷

The chariot of Miθra is also called *mainiu.hqm.tāšta-* (hapax) in *Yt.* 10, 67.⁸

We may just mention the occurrence attested in the *Wizīrgard ī Dēnīg*, 29 (*srīrəm vastrəm stāhrpaēsahəm [...] srīrəm vastrəm mainiū tāštəm [...]*),⁹ although this text is nothing but a late composition, probably (at least in part) based on earlier scattered material.¹⁰

SCHLERATH¹¹ has rightly noted that the sequence *vaste vaṅhanəm stāhrpaēsahəm* of *Yt.* 13, 3, finds a direct parallel in the Vedic figure *vāstrāṅi [...] péśanāni vāsāno*, attested in *ṚV.* 10, 1, 6ab, which shows the existence of a common Indo-Iranian poetic pattern (**vas-* **vastra-* **paic-*).

¹ BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1140; 1904: 1385.

² Cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1606.

³ Cf. MALANDRA 1971: 67, 111.

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ GERSHEVITCH 1967: 144–145.

⁶ KELLENS 2007: 65–66.

⁷ GERSHEVITCH 1967: 116–117.

⁸ BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1141. GERSHEVITCH 1967: 104–105.

⁹ BARTHOLOMAE 1901: 101.

¹⁰ See CERETI 2001: 11.

¹¹ SCHLERATH 1990. Cf. also MAYRHOFER 1996: 169–170.

Very interestingly, JACKSON¹² has recently underlined the evidence that also the sequence (*stəhr-*)*paēsaṅhəm mainiiu.tāštəm* could follow an Indo-Iranian model (**paić-* [...] *man-(as)- tacś-*) thanks to the comparison with *ṚV. 3, 60*,¹³ 2: *āpimśata* [...] *mānasā nirātakṣata*:

yābhiḥ śacībhiś camasām āpimśata
yāyā dhiyā gām āriṅīta cārmaṇaḥ /
yéna hārī mānasā nirātakṣata téna
devatvām ṛbhavaḥ sām ānaśa //.

“By means of the ability, with which you carved the (wooden) cup, by means of the vision, with which you drove forth the cow from the hide, by means of the thought, with which you fashioned the two yellowish horses, by means of this, o Ṛbhas, you have attained divineness”.

Then, JACKSON concludes that we have to do with the common notion of a deity dwelling in the sky, “who puts on (**vas-*) the star-adorned (**star- *paić[a]-*) vault of heaven as a garment (**vastra-*), and that this garment is thought-fashioned or created by the spirit (**man-(as)- *tacś-*)”. I think that this new comparison can be taken as significant with regard to the semantic material which was assembled in the same verse, although the Vedic passage does not properly refer to an astral context, and the use of *āpimśata* concerns the carving of the cup, and not the same action expressed by *takṣ-*.¹⁴ But there is another point on which I would like to concentrate our investigation, stimulated by JACKSON’s investigation, because the interpretation of this formula seems to be still unsatisfactory, at least in one of its aspects.

¹² 2002: 51–52.

¹³ See GELDNER 1951: I: 408: “Durch die Künste, mit denen ihr die Becher formtet, durch den Erfindungsgeist, mit dem ihr aus dem Felle die Kuh heraustriebet, durch das Nachdenken, mit dem ihr die beiden Falben gebildet habt, durch (all) dies habt ihr Ṛbhu’s göttlichen Rang erlangt”; RENO 1966: 85–86: “Le pouvoir grâce auquel vous avez façonné-artistement les coupes, l’intuition-poétique grâce à laquelle vous avez (ex)trait la vache (hors) d’une peau, / la pensée grâce à laquelle vous avez façonné les deux alezans, grâce à (tout) cela, ô Ṛbhu’s, vous avez obtenu-pleinement la qualité-de-dieu”.

¹⁴ We should note, however, the parallel use of *takṣ-* with reference to a horse in *ṚV. 1, 161, 7c* (*āsvād āsvam atakṣata*). See GELDNER 1951, I: 220; RENO 1966: 83–84, in the framework of another hymn to the Ṛbhu.

The problem, in fact, concerns the explanation of the first element of the compound *mainiiu.tāšta-*, translated by BARTHOLOMAE as “von Geistern gefertigt” or, for instance, by JACKSON as “created by the spirit”. Also other translations like “spiritually fashioned” do not clarify the actual meaning, and open the way to speculations about such a theoretically and philosophically charged intellectual category as that of ‘spirit’ (*Geist*) and ‘spiritual’ (*geistig*), whose proper sense remains at least ambiguous with respect to an Indo-Iranian framework. In addition, the direct comparison between *mánas-/manah-*, on the one hand, and *manyú-/mainiiu-(mañiiu-)*,¹⁵ on the second hand, should be much more carefully evaluated.

Although KELLENS¹⁶ has tried to suggest a basic translation of every Old Avestan occurrence of *mainiiu-* as “avis” [‘opinion’], I seriously doubt that this proposal can be considered as conclusive, and I am not convinced that it could be the most fitting adaptation of the “sens étymologique indo-iranien de «réaction mentale»”¹⁷ into the Avestan textual context. In any case, a translation of *mainiiu.(hqm.)tāšta-* as “fashioned through/by means of an opinion” would be, *à mon avis*, meaningless. Furthermore, KELLENS and PIRART, for instance, have not take into consideration the pertinent remarks made by MALAMOUD about Ved. *manyú-*.¹⁸ The French scholar, in fact, rightly noted that all the (numerous) interpretations attributed to this stem can be restricted to two pivotal semantic fields, the first accepted univocally (but, as we will see, a priori): “colère” [‘anger’], the second oscillating between two zones:

- 1) “désir” [‘desire’],
- 2) “esprit” [‘spirit’], which, in the Italian version of MALAMOUD’s book, has been translated¹⁹ as “mente” [‘mind’].

MALAMOUD, however, has shown not only that the alleged meaning ‘anger’ remains unjustified in the *Ṛgvedasamhitā*, but also that the basic

¹⁵ Cf. FORSSMAN 1995:24–26.

¹⁶ 1990: 102–106, *passim*. See KELLENS – PIRART 1997; cf. also KELLENS – PIRART 1990, II: 281 “état d’esprit”.

¹⁷ KELLENS 1990: 102.

¹⁸ 1989: 179–194 (= 1994: 185–201). We must recall that the Italian translation of this work is a revised and corrected edition. This chapter of MALAMOUD’s book is, in its turn, a revised version of an earlier article (1968) published in the Festschrift RENOUE.

¹⁹ With the authorization of the author.

value of the stem *manyú-* can be considered to be unitary, notwithstanding the real difficulties in finding a fitting word for every particular attestation. In any case, Ved. *manyú-* is “une faculté permanente, mieux, une faculté essentielle”²⁰ which has nothing to do with “une passion ou une humeur passagère, ni même un trait de tempérament comme l’ «aggressivité» ou l’ «irritabilité»”.²¹

This faculty can be both human and divine,²² and, in some cases, it is personified – not only as in the two Vedic hymns (10, 83; 10, 84) dedicated to Manu,²³ but also as in *AV.* 9, 2, 23,²⁴ where we find the *manyú-* (in the vocative) representing the “courage personified”, as already BLOOMFIELD²⁵ suggested. Although MALAMOUD did not offer a definitive and unique translation for *manyú-*, it can oscillate between that of ‘mental force, will, desire’ and that of ‘active thought’, ‘intense thought’;²⁶ in any case, we must consider the subtle difference between *manyú-/mainiiu-* and *mánas-/manah-*, the first one meaning ‘content of thought’, the second one ‘active thought’ or ‘thinking [i.e. willing] thought’, as explained by KELLENS – PIRART,²⁷ who distinguished between “contenu de la pensée” and “pensée pensante”.²⁸

Of course, this aspect of ‘active – thinking – thought’ can be good or bad, positive and negative, both in Vedic and in Avestan. Anyway, although I used in translations the word ‘spirit’ (*Geist*),²⁹ I would like to avoid it, at least without a necessary clarifications, because it is too strictly connected – as I underlined before – with theological and philosophical implications of Western derivations, and which risks to introduce only an

²⁰ 1989: 182 = 1994: 188–189.

²¹ *Ibidem.*

²² 1989: 186 = 1994: 192–193.

²³ 1989: 179–180 = 1994: 185–186. Cf. DUMÉZIL 1948: 110–111.

²⁴ MALAMOUD 1989: 188 = 1994: 195.

²⁵ 1897: 594.

²⁶ See, in particular, some of RENOÛ’s alternative translations, as collected by MALAMOUD (1989: 182 = 1994: 188).

²⁷ 1997: 65, n. 63.

²⁸ Notwithstanding this point of agreement, I do not share the idea that the concept of personalization of *mainiiu-* would always be far-fetched. See, in particular, PANAINO 2001: 51–53.

²⁹ See also KELLENS – PIRART 1997: 53 about this problem.

additional element of confusion, visible, for instance, in the earlier translation of the sequence *spənta-mainiiu-* as “Holy Spirit”.³⁰

But, although these distinctions are fundamental, we must note that, together with the expression *mainiiu-taš-*, we can find also *manah-taš-: hiiat nā mazdā paouruuīm, gaēθāscā tašō daēnāscā θβā manahā xratūšcā, [...]* (*Y.* 31, 11): “After you, ō Mazdā, originally fashioned our living-beings (i.e. our animals), (our) consciences-visions and, by means of your thought (= content of thought), (our) intelligences [...]”. If the above suggested distinction between *manyú-/mainiiu-* and *mānas-/manah-* is sound, the use of *manah-* in this case can be explained with the fact that Ahura Mazdā’s action is presented as fashioned by means of a particular intellective modality: a kind of resultative way of thinking (*manahā*), as the fruit of a mental vision/representation, without any involvement of an active thought and will. Thus, *mainiiū taš-*, would mean, in its turn, ‘to fashion by means of a willing (or deliberate) thought’.

Coming back to the compounds we are discussing, I seriously doubt that we can explain *mainiiu-* as first element as referred to one or many personified ‘Spirits’. From the mythological point of view it is difficult to admit that Ahura Mazdā’s garment, Miθra’s chariot, etc., have been fashioned by another divine spirit/Spirit (such as, in particular, Spənta Mainiiu). For its part, the Vedic parallel, referred to the Ṛbhvas, states that “by means of thought (*mānasā*) [...] you fashioned (*nirātakṣata*) the two yellowish horses (*hārī*) [...]”. The direct comparison between *mānasā takṣ-* and *mainiiū taš-* suggests that we should prudently imagine that a divine garment, chariot, girdle, etc., could be made/cut (i.e. ‘inlaid’ with regard to the chariot, ‘embroidered’ in the case of the heavenly garment, or ‘shaped’ concerning the belt) through a volitive mental act (which possibly underline the creative, in an artistic sense, faculty of mind), without any need of postulating the active role of another god or divine being (= Spirit), whose presence results to be unknown and unnecessary.

But before we accept such an explanation we must consider the fact that one verse-line of *Yt.* 10, 43 could apparently contradict the present

³⁰ ZAEHNER 1961: 42–43, *et passim*. Here, I will avoid a translation, but, if necessary, now I prefer that of ‘Incremental Thought’, ‘Active Thought’. The generally admitted translation as “Spirit” should be considered as a simplification due to convenience.

solution. In fact, GERSHEVITCH³¹ suggested that the formula *stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm* was “a stereotyped combination”, which, together with the epithet *mainiiu.həm.tāšta-* of *Yt.* 10, 67, “summarizes the words *həm.taštəm yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš* ‘fashioned by the creator Spənta Mainyu’”, attested in *Yt.* 10, 143.³² Although I agree with GERSHEVITCH³³ on the point that the Avestan poet(s) imagined the chariot of Miθra as “studded with «stars»”, I cannot uncritically share his idea that the compound *mainiiu.tāštəm* should be considered as an elliptic formation referring to *yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš*. Actually GERSHEVITCH postulated that *vāšəm [...] yazāi həm.tāštəm yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm* should be translated as “the star-decked chariot built (by him) who is the creative Incremental Spirit”, as if we had *həm.taštəm * <ahmāi> yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš [...]*. GERSHEVITCH,³⁴ as he himself explains, was ready to follow WINDISCHMANN³⁵ and GELDNER³⁶ in emending *yazāi* to **yazatāi*,³⁷ but other fitting considerations prevented him.

On the other hand, we may simply take *yazāi* as the verb governed by *yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš* and translate the passage as follows: “I, who am the Beneficial Spirit, shall worship the fashioned together, star-decked, fashioned by thought (chariot of Miθra), I who have ten thousand spies, the strong, all-knowing, undeceivable (*yō baēuuarə.spasānō sūrō vīspō.vīduuā*

³¹ 1967: 294.

³² *Yt.* 10, 143: **yejhā ainikō brāzaiti yaθa tištriiō.stārahe yejhe vāšəm hangrəβnāiti adauuiš paoiriš spitama yaθa dāmqn sraēštāiš hū bāmīia xšaētāi yazāi həm.tāštəm yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm yō baēuuarə.spasānō sūrō vīspō.vīduuā adaoiiamnō [...]*.

³³ 1967: 294, n. 9.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 10.

³⁵ 1857: 52: “Das folgende (i.e stanza 143) ist offenbar verdorben. Ich vermuthe, dass statt *yazāi yazatāi* zu lesen und *hāmstastem* und die folgenden Accusative auf *vāšəm* zurückzubeziehen sind; *yō dadhvaō cpeñtō mainyus* scheint mir zu *adhavis* zu gehören und hierher verschoben zu sein; vielleicht ist es auch nur eine Glosse”.

³⁶ 1881: 532, n. 232. GELDNER proposes the following reconstruction of the text: *yejhe vāšəm hangrəβnāiti* (cf. *Yt.* 10, 68) | *adauuiš paoiriš spitama* | *dāmqn sraēšta* (instead of *sraēštāiš*) | *hūbāmīia* | *xšaētāi yazatāi həm.tāštəm*; *yaθa* (before *adauuiš*) has been deleted. Then, he noted: “*çtehrpaēçanhem* schliesst sich nach deren ausscheidung ungewungen an *vāshem an*”.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

aḍaoiiamnō)". But also this desperate solution would be peculiar, because it is Miθra who is given with spies (etc.; cf. *Yt.* 10, 14, 60), not Spənta Mainiiu. Another possibility, advanced by LOMMEL,³⁸ is that of considering *hqm.tāštəm* and *stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm* as referring to Miθra himself and not to his chariot, but the idea that this god was presented as being 'full of stars' seems to me far-fetched. The presence in *Yt.* 10, 68 of a parallel verse-line like *yejhe vāšəm haṅgrəβnāiti* excludes this guess, and compels us to emend *yejhā* of *Yt.* 10, 141 (*yejhā vāšəm haṅgrəβnāiti*) in **yejhe*. Furthermore, *Yt.* 10, 67 (*vāša mainiiu.hqm.tāšta*), as we have already seen, confirms that these epithets should be compellingly connected with the chariot. Moreover, we must consider that the presence of *yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš* between *hqm.taštəm* and *stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm* results problematic in itself. I suspect that this relative sentence was a later insertion, as the last one. In fact, the sequence *yō baēuuarə.spasānō sūrō vīspō.vīδuuā aḍaoiiamnō* is attested also before the refrain concluding the 34th *kardag*,³⁹ in *Yt.* 10, 141, which occurs just before the one we are dealing with. Thus, a repetition of these verse-lines due to a scribe's mistake is, in that very framework, absolutely understandable.

In the case of *yō daduuā spəntō mainiiuš*,⁴⁰ we must additionally consider that *daduuah-* is never used with regard to Spənta Mainiiu. Another remark concerns the fact that the isolated *hqm.taštəm*, placed after *yazāi*, is, so as it occurs, meaningless, because it anticipates the standard formula *stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm*. Probably the scribe (we may doubt that this fault could be attributed to earlier composers) recalled the existence also of the *hapax mainiiu.hqm.tāšta-* occurring in *Yt.* 10, 67 with reference to the chariot, and by a *lapsus* inserted it twice, the first as *hqm.taštəm* (sic!, with a short *-a-*), the second, correctly, as *mainiiu.tāštəm*. My suggestion, which I advance with the due prudence, is that the last part of the stanza 141 should be considered as very corrupted, as already WINDISCHMANN assumed. Probably, the sequence *stəhrpaēsahəm mainiiu.tāštəm* should have originally been in a position following *yejhe vāšəm haṅgrəβnāiti*, where we would expect it, and not so far from *vāšəm*

³⁸ 1927: 85.

³⁹ GERSHEVITCH 1967: 144.

⁴⁰ See again WINDISCHMANN 1857: 52, quoted here, in note 35.

in the whole verse. For the rest, I do not dare to propose other hypotheses, given the poor condition of this *kardag*.

Coming back to the comparative Indo-Iranian framework, the Avestan difference probably underlines the ‘intentional will’ lying behind this act of thought, through the use of *mainiiu-* instead of *manah-*, as already remarked by MALAMOUD⁴¹ with reference to the semantic field covered by Vedic *manyú-*. Although we must maintain a certain semantic difference among Ved. *dhā-/Av. dā-* (< **dheh₁-*), Ved. *takṣ-/Av. taš-*, and Ved. *kṛt-/Av. karət-*⁴² – the first root being more frequently used for the earliest cosmic creations (though we are not compelled to imagine a sort of *creatio ex nihilo*, an idea probably never shared by the Indo-Iranian tradition)⁴³ – the presence of *mainiiu-* clarifies that this action was not properly physical or mechanic, but mental, in the sense of a voluntary decision, and not necessarily performed by another (unknown?) divine actor.

For these reasons, I suggest that the compound *mainiiu.tāšta-* (like *mainiiu.həm.tāšta-*) should be more prudently translated as ‘made/carved (etc.) [together (*həm*)] by means of a mental act (or will)’, and not ‘by a spirit/Spirit’. Thus, JACKSON’s “thought-fashioned” seems to be, only after these clarifications, acceptable, as it formally appears GERSHEVITCH’s interpretation: “supernaturally fashioned” (what in itself was based on other premises which I cannot share). We must also remark that the use of a verb such as *taš-* basically implied a technical operation (in particular, although not always, by means of a knife). Probably its use means that the objects possessed by or attributed to divine beings are comparable to those of the humans, but that they are not really *manufactured*. Their origin lies in the power of mental will, the active thought. The direct connection between *mainiiu.tāšta-* and *stəhrpaēsah-* insists on the idea that anything adorned with stars has been realized by means of the power of the willing thought, and not by hands. A possible reference to the force of ‘invention’,⁴⁴ *māyā-/māiiā-* is, thus, quite reasonable.

⁴¹ 1989: 182–183, *et passim* (= 1994: 187–189).

⁴² Cf. LINCOLN 1997.

⁴³ See PANAINO 2007: 273 with additional bibliography. Cf. KELLENS 1989; SHAKED 1971: 67–68, n. 30 (= 1995).

⁴⁴ With regard to Old Avestan cf. KELLENS – PIRART 1990: 286.

Now we can focus upon the compound *mainiiu.stāta-*, attested in *Yt.* 13, 2, and occurring in another relevant framework. Here, the yonder heaven, which covers the earth, is compared to a ‘bird’,⁴⁵ *vīš*,⁴⁶ as HENNING⁴⁷ demonstrated, placed around an ‘egg’ (*aēm*),⁴⁸ and it stands as *mainiiu.stāta-*. Such a compound cannot actually mean “von den Geistern hingestellt”,⁴⁹ or “raised by the spirit”, but “mentally established” or “established by (means of) active thought”. Also the compound *mainiuuasah-* or *mainiauuasah-*, said of horses (*Y.* 57, 27)⁵⁰ and of various kinds of weapons/missiles (*Yt.* 10, 129 [arrows], 130 [spears and hatchets], 131 [knives and clubs])⁵¹ or of the arrow properly shot by *Ἐραξσα* (*Yt.* 8, 6),⁵² seems to mean ‘whose space is in the mental power’, i.e. ‘having a space (like that of) the mental will’, if *-asah-* here means ‘space’ (as generally admitted), with reference to a kind of swiftness which is as fast as the mental activity, and not simply “whose place is of/belongs to the Spirit (i.e. the air)”, as, for instance, BARTHOLOMAE supposed,⁵³ implicitly suggesting an equation spirit = air (*Geist = Luft*). On the other hand, we must consider the possibility, advanced by FORSSMAN,⁵⁴ that this *-asah-* should be more fittingly connected with the family of Av. *āsu-* ‘swift’, *āsiah-* ‘swifter’, *āsišta-* ‘swiftest’ (Ved. *āsú-*, *ásīyas-*, *ásīṣṭha-*), thus meaning ‘swiftness’. Various supportive arguments can be given in order to explain the presence of a short *-a-* instead of the expected **-āsah-* ‘swiftness’ (cf. in any case O.Av.

⁴⁵ And not to a celestial ‘abode’; cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1456 ([†]*mainyu.stātō*), 1456, n. 6.

⁴⁶ Nom. sg. m. of the stem *vi-* (cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1356–1357, s.v. *vay-*, m.: “«Vogel», in Allgemeinen”). See HENNING 1954: 290–291 = 1977, 2: 438–439, and in particular SCHINDLER 1969: 146–160.

⁴⁷ 1954: 289–292.

⁴⁸ Nom.-acc. of the stem *aiia-* (n.) < **āiia-* “egg”; HENNING 1954: 291 (= 1977, II: 439). See also SCHINDLER 1969: 160–167.

⁴⁹ BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1140.

⁵⁰ KREYENBROEK 1985: 52: “belonging to the spiritual realm”.

⁵¹ GERSHEVITCH 1967: 136–139: “hailing from supernature they fly, hailing from supernature they fall” (*mainiauuasā vazənti mainiauuasā patənti*).

⁵² PANAINO 1990: 32. My former translation simply as “celestial” was over-simplistic.

⁵³ 1904: 1134: “im, durch den Raum der Geister (d. h. die Luft) sich bewegend, schweben, fliegend”.

⁵⁴ FORSSMAN 1995: 28–29.

asišta-, in *Y.* 30, 10).⁵⁵ Thus, such a compound would mean ‘swift like the (willing) thought’, or, more simply, as FORSSMAN suggested, “gedanken-schnell”. In its turn, also KELLENS’ translation of *mainiiu.tāšta-* in *Y.* 9, 26 as “taillé dans la matière aérienne”,⁵⁶ does not escape from the limits of a modern intellectual association between a (divine?) Spirit, which, according to our traditional perception, is given with an incorporeal “existence” (thus, apparently like the air), instead of focusing on a much more literal and primitive sense like that of ‘mind, thought’. Although compounds with *mainiiu-* as first member are frequently attested in astral contexts, especially with reference to *asman-*, it is not necessary to presume that already in Avestan *mainiiu-* had assumed a definitive connotation, starting from the idea of ‘mental force’, like that of ‘spirit’ > ‘air’ > ‘heavenly’ or ‘immaterial dimension’ (as in Pahlavi sources).⁵⁷

In fact, we must recall that in Pahlavi *mēnōg* two different Avestan stems coexist,⁵⁸ *mainiiuuua-*, adj., and *mainiiu-*,⁵⁹ subst.; but also in this case, the force of the original etymological meaning has not been lost⁶⁰ (and the same word can still be referred to negative concepts and beings as well). This way, we risk to abandon the basic pertinence of the earlier distinction between *mainiiuuua-* ‘mental’ and *gaēiθiia-* ‘living’ as it were a

⁵⁵ *Ibidem.* FORSSMAN (1995: 29) has also suggested a semantic comparison with Ved. *mano-jū-*, *māno-java-*, *māno-javas-*, a solution that has been rejected by KELLENS – PIRART (1997: 65–66, n. 63), on the assumption that *manah-* and *mainiiu-* respectively correspond to “contenu de la pensée” (“content of thought”) and “pensée pensante” (“thinking thought”), but this objection seems to me a priori.

⁵⁶ 2007: 66.

⁵⁷ KELLENS – PIRART (1997: 53) mention the Skt. translation of *mēnōg*, in its later meaning of “immaterial thing” as *adṛśyamūrṭi-* “visible form”.

⁵⁸ See SHAKED 1971: 61 (reprinted in SHAKED 1995), who, with respect to the two usages of *mēnōg* with respect to the Avestan background writes: “When used as adjectives or abstract nouns, they denote first to modes of being as cosmological ideas, the non-material as opposed to the material. When used as substantives they denote classes of beings”. To this remark I would like to note that in many cases we do not have an opposition, but a distinction concerning two different levels or dimension of the existence, and that the definition of ‘material’ for *gētīg* is fitting only in some cases.

⁵⁹ Actually, it is not necessary to imagine such an evolution in Avestan and Pahlavi; from a basic meaning like that of ‘active thought’, *mainiiu-* was personified as ‘active mental force’ (positive or negative as well).

⁶⁰ About this subject see GNOLI 1963, and SHAKED 1971 (= 1995). SHAKED’s translation of *mēnōg* as “ideal” in some cosmological occurrences is particularly fitting, because it etymologically clarifies the ‘mental’ origin of the creative action.

simple dualism ‘spiritual/celestial’ *versus* ‘physic’⁶¹ – a solution which is not properly correct, and that in a crude way would correspond to a Western pattern. In addition, in Avestan, the couple *mainiiu-* / *mainiiauuu-* does not find a complete parallel, only *gaēiθiia-* (or *astuuant-*) being present; this difference is due to the fact that a *mainiiu-* can be positive or negative, while what is *gaēiθiia-* (or *astuuant-*) is basically positive.

With regard to this remark, I would like to insist on the fact that also the use of an adverb like ‘spiritually’ in order to translate some compositional occurrences of *mainiiu-* is unsatisfactory, because it implicitly evokes a generic connotation regarding the divine framework, but without a clear reference for its mental, volitive aspects, which in my opinion are closer to the proper meaning of this stem. Actually, the ‘mental’ dimension belongs both to positive and negative creatures, and a living being (basically positive according to the Mazdean ontology)⁶² possesses, in his turn, the faculty of ‘thinking’.

Furthermore, the hapax *mainiiu.šūta-*,⁶³ referring to the *frauuašis* in *Yt.* 13, 42,⁶⁴ and generally interpreted as “impelled, pulled by the Spirit” or “spiritually impelled”,⁶⁵ can be simply interpreted as ‘mentally impelled’, or ‘pushed by a mental (willing) impulse’.

Finally, *mainiiuš.x^varəθa-* (said of the *Gāθās* in *Y.* 55, 2,⁶⁶ or of the four Miθra’s horses in *Yt.* 10, 125),⁶⁷ has nothing to do with the food of any Spirit,⁶⁸ but it is ‘food of the [willing] thought’. It is clear that, as GERSHEVITCH translated,⁶⁹ it is a kind of “supernatural food”, but also “supernatural” is not self-evident as an explanation of what *mainiiu-* really meant. In fact, such a food is extraordinary because of its mental force, and not because it is outside of the human (positive) dimension. Such a dualism seems to me, in this form, misleading.

⁶¹ Cf. PANAINO 2004: 109.

⁶² See SHAKED 1971: 72 (= 1995).

⁶³ BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1140: “vom Geist angetrieben”.

⁶⁴ MALANDRA 1971: 76.

⁶⁵ See MALANDRA 1971: 120.

⁶⁶ WOLFF 1910: 73.

⁶⁷ GERSHEVITCH 1967: 134–135.

⁶⁸ See BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 1140: “die Nahrung des Geistes bildend”, “die Nahrung der Geister geniessend”.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

All these remarks invite to consider the semantic implication involved by the use of *mainiiu-*. Although I still maintain that the two antagonist *mainiiu-*, Spṛṇta and Angra were personified concepts already in the *Gāthās* (i.e. that they can be considered as two active Mental Forces, personifications of mental will),⁷⁰ it is unnecessary and sometimes misleading to translate every occurrence of *mainiiu-* as referred to Spṛṇta Mainiiu or to other (good or bad) beings. Also the crude (pseudo-) etymological association spirit = air seems to be a violence against the semantic background, while, contrariwise, we can recover a much more fitting meaning in the already large semantic field of ‘mental power’.

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⁷⁰ See PANAINO 2004: 121–135. For an opposite view cf. KELLENS – PIRART 1997.

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