

Iranian Zurvanism, Origin of Worshipping Evil

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Abstract: In this article it is attempted to study the philosophy of the emergence of evil forces in the history of human life from the perspective of the East ancient texts, particularly those of ancient Iran and middle Persian language and then Zurvan, its emergence and status beyond a creator and as a neutral element and an evil force, and its logical concept is studied. “Above is not bright. Below is not dark. It’s invisible, and it can’t be called by any name.

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1. Introduction

In a narration by Plutarch it is stated that Theopompus has remarked in the first half of 4th century B.C. that “A group of people believe in two gods who are like to masons, one of them is creator of good and the other one is creator of evil and useless things. And a group of people call the good force as God and the other one as the Evil. And the Magus Zoroaster, who had lived 5000 years before Trojan War, called one of these gods Horomazes and the other one Areimanios and showed that Horomazes is similar to light more than anything else which is comprehended by the senses and while Areimanios is like darkness and ignorance and Mithres is the mediator between them. They also retell many myths about the gods such as this: “Horomazes that is born by the clearest lights and Areimanios that is born by darkness and ignorance are fighting each other.” (3). what has actually made Aryans and even other people of ancient history to recognize evil gods and bring them in their own minds? Worshipping totems like many others prays has possibly been established based on fear. Man worshiped animals because they were very strong and he thought he would make them happy this way. However, many humane gods were the dead who had become heroes due to the imagination of living people. Appearance of the dead in their sleep was sufficient for them to be sanctified and worshiped by people because although praise is not born by fear, it is at least its twin brother. People who were very strong in their lifetime and people were afraid of them, were worshipped after their deaths. In many languages the words which mean god, actually mean “die” and “dead” (12). Therefore people began to believe in forces that they worshiped due to their panic, and in other words people’s belief in them and satisfying them generated religious beliefs in evil forces of the world among them.

1.1. Zurvan and its etymology

Etymology of Zruuan, which is generally defined as “time” in Avestan language is indefinite in available documents and references. On the other hand, it could be said that this term is linked to Avestan zauruuan- which means “ancient time, old age”, and zaurura- which means “ancient and worn-out” which are derived from primitive Indo-European stem **ǵerh₂*, which means “to age”. Of course this link has many phonetic problems. According to accepted rules of phonetics and phonology, **ǵr̥h₂-* *uēn*-PIE must have led to production of Avestan zauruuan-but there is no justification for zruu- in the beginning of the word “zruuan-”. In his dictionary, Bartolome doesn’t make any comment on etymology of this word. (6). Pokorny refers to adding the term “vielleicht”¹ to zruuan – among the derivations of PIE **ǵerh₂-* (11). To explain the irregular initial part of this avestan term, Nussbaum has discussed letter movement in **ǵruh₂*² which is based on some pre-assumptions on development of similar terms (9). Hoffmann has explained that singular dependence form of zruū is derived from **zruu̯ā*<**zruu̯ā*<**zruu̯əh* (<**zruu̯an*) like *hū* in new Avestan (singular dependence form of *huuərə* “sun”) is derived from **huu̯ā*<**huu̯ā*<**huu̯əh* as well as *x^vəng* in Gathic Avestan language. (7). In definition of zruuan (zrvan- in his script) he begins with the concept of “time” and expresses the following meanings:

Time: 1. “certain time, definite time” a. In trial (court) language: “time of consultation, appointment, date”

2. “Period, duration, distance”

3. “Time span” A. “as divinity, lordship”² (Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques (1956), but the concept of “time” for this term can not be an original and primitive meaning. Of course it is right that we should accept such a meaning that is the defied concept of time³ for zruuan-, a meaning which later forms one of the key concepts of Zoroastrianism that

is Zurvanism. However, this god appears only in ending Chapters of Avesta and in other cases zruuan-seems to mean “distant (time), limited (time), lifetime” (9).

2.1. Divine philosophy of Zurvan

Now that you know about the etymology and meaning of Zurvan, the philosophy of generating this meaning and also this god will be discussed as much as possible. According to Eudemus and as quoted by Damascius, among the Magi and other Iranians, some call whatsoever comprehensible and endless as “place”, and others call it “time”, and this way these two creatures have separated each other, good God, and evil Satan, and as people say, they have created light and darkness. They add variety to the nature which had been monotonous earlier and create two series of superior creatures which are headed by Ormuzd and Ahriman respectively.” If it is concluded from this article that there had been a cult of time, it should logically be concluded that there had also been a cult of place⁴. God and Satan “would divide time between themselves” because as Theopompus declared in 4th century, they are ruling “time” respectively and it could be said that they would divide “place” between themselves as well because one of them was created as infinite above and the other one as infinite below (4). It should be accepted that as written by Greek Eudemus, “place” without being superior to Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, is placed under their flag in the battle between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. Considering time, in cult of Mazdisna it is explained that growing in predetermined time makes Ahura Mazda happy as mentioned in 13 stanzas of chapter 56, therefore time is supporting Ahura Mazda and then we are dealing with a myth⁵ in which there is no Zurvan and achieving to predetermined time by two Minoos defeats Ahriman and if we compare it particularly with Fargerd and Navidad. we notice that this concept is more probably the lifetime which was mentioned in earlier lines because the ghosts of the dead (whether good or evil) must cross created Zurvan (created time) and in this way they actually do their own movement (battle) in their lifetime which was predetermined or they face it again after death and they reach to Chinvat bridge which is built by Ahura Mazda and seek for their rewards for the good deeds they have already done for their souls and minds. All these issues indicate that they have done all these affairs in the way of created Zurvan. It is quite obvious that this movement.

5. According to Zoroastrianism which is accepted by all, the world history is 12000 years old. The first 3000 is the period of main creation; the second 3000 is passed based on Ormu’ willing; the third 3000 is the period of integration, and the desire

of good and evil, and in 4th period Ahriman is defeated. In Zurvanism this 12000-year-old period is divided differently. The first 9000 years is the time of evil’s ruling and the last 3000 is the time of its defeat. Maybe this current statement is a more ancient tradition. Towards purity and cleanness which has been directed by Faravahars and the evils’ attack to prevent it in other words the beginning of the battle that creators do with material body in this world but predetermined lifetime or moving in the path of life would be a better interpretation for it. In this case in line 54 “water will flow” and in line 56 “plants will grow” and in line 58 “stars, moon and the sun will move ahead” would be a more appropriate translation [because it shows them in the path of their lifetime who are fighting Ahriman (Evil) and pleasing Ahura Mazda] and therefore next studies improved the text of line 56 and its translation in two aspects. First, Goldner replaced the term fraoxšiiieinti with the term frauaxšaiieinti⁶ in line 56 which has a better meaning (to grow instead of to move from a place to another place). Moreover, Avestan yaona- mainly means path and route rather than place or space or a holly place⁷ (9). However this concept must not keep us away from the definition of Zurvan as a single God even in recent movement of Zoroastrianism.

3.1. the origin of Evil

If it is accepted that time or Zurvan had a cult around itself therefore it has been placed under the flag of Domino in Avesta and has done just some parts of its activities under the shadow of two Minoos Such as the role of launching. Duchesne Guillemin has translated line 13 of Fargerd and line 19 of Navidad which is known as the temptation of Zoroaster as follows which indicates the launching role of Zurvan in spite of accepting Ahura Mazda as the greatest God: “Then Ahura 6. Vaxš with prefix frā- means “to grow” and “to boast” and both are derived from the same root but the first one mainly means to move from one place and the second one means to grow (1).

7. Stätte Mazda told Zoroaster (who asked him to help him against Minoo) : Oh Zoroaster! Resort to Mazda’s good religion, resort to Amesha Spenta, to immortal place, to endless time, resort to superior wind⁸, Oh Zoroaster, resort to valuable wind which is created by Mazda.” He believes that this text implies the existence of polytheism in Mazda’s monotheism: a memorial of the time when Ahura Mazda, has not got all the roles of god yet such as launching role, even though he was then the greatest god and maybe this inference is resulted from that part of the line which names the wind together with time and place, so that it wants to bring together all the divines related to the beginning (source). (4) Therefore it should be said that J.

Duchesne Guillemin's remarks about time and place in Avesta should be considered so that "even though time and place have come together with real divine, they have remained with their immortal and endless descriptions more as abstract rather than alive gods (4), then even though god of Zurvan as the father of Domino is not seen in Avesta or Zoroastrianism, the existence of a god with this name in later Avesta and the importance of time in the battle of Domino, makes this imagination possible that Zurvan was a time-determining god who had been worshiped more than Domino in a period of Ancient Iran. An imagination which is then seen in texts and even in foreign texts there are some findings in this regard. In line 8 it is written about time that: "It is said in religion that time is stonger than both creations: creation of Ormuzd and Ahriman." Reports related to Zurvan then increased in writings of Christian historians such as Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. Hippolytus, Eusebius and St. Basil. These historians' writings in some cases are the only historical documents related to Zurvanism which are available and accessible. This matter is so remarkable that Anquetil-Duperron, according to the Christians' remarks, doesn't call the real cult of Iranians during Sasanian era as Mazdaean 8. Wind Dithemism but he believes in monotheism in Zurvan as the father of twins Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. (4). Some groups of faithful and loyal followers of Zurvanism, that were sometimes called Majusi, moved to Asia Minor and lived there. They narrated the myth of Ormuzd's and Ahriman's birth in that land and Theodore of Mopsuestia has quoted it very briefly and has attributed it to Zoroaster. According to his narration "as Zurvan, the origin of everything, decided to have Ormuzd, both Ormuzd and ahriman (evil) were born." Fortunately, there is a more detailed explanation of this report in Armenian language in writings of Eznik De Kolb and Eliseus and in Serianean language in works of Theodore Barknai. On the other hand, a short description of Zurvan in a brief essay called "scholars of Islam"⁹ is reported: "Time is the creator and has no boundary; it has no beginning or ending... Ormuzd was light and pure and fragrant and helpful and master of all good things. So when he looked down, he saw Ahriman (Evil) 9000 leagues away, black, vicious, foul-smelling, and evil..." Benevise, 2004 :52-53). In referring to this matter that Zurvan, with his doubt, was the origin of evil more than Ahriam, Eznik writes: "So it is clear that Zurvan was weak and imperfect, and unaware, and he himself was the origin of Evil (bad) and not the cause of Ahriman, because if hadn't been doubtful, as they say, Ahriman had not been created, one that they say is the creator of Evil (bad); but he was uncertain and 9.

"Awkward name" is a brief essay about zurvanism which was written in 13th century.

Doubtful himself, and he had no faith or power." (12). Now we return to Iranian texts to find the footprint of Eznik's inference in these texts. As mentioned before, Zurvan determines the lifetime of the creatures who are conflicting their material life and as it is a bilateral conflict in which both creatures are present, then Zurvan (even though unconsciously or fairly) helps two Mino equally and grants them time to live. If the equal lifetime and creation of both Mino is in the hands of another one, It can now be said that this power is just Zurvan then shouldn't it be said that he helps two creations equally in this battle? During the battle, immortality is impossible because granting immortality is possible only when the devils are destroyed and there wouldn't be any evil creature to be everlasting like the creatures of Ormuzd and this means that as long as this conflict continues, Zurvan equally helps these two Mino and their creation. To confirm this matter, a line of the text can be referred to: "Ormuzd clearly saw that Ahriman never stops evil deeds, and it would never stop except by the creation, creatures never develop except by time, but if he creates time, Ahriman's creatures will develop as well." In Zadspram in which Zurvan is described a little more negative, it is stated that: "Ormuzd saw an intelligent Mino that if the time of battle is not determined, Ahriman threatened that he is able to determine it. Therefore he asked time to help him, because wouldn't be stooped by mediation of any lights, Time is for both of them and it is needed for help and guidance."

4.1. Zurvan in other texts

After Pahlavi texts, Manichaean texts are studied which are very helpful in knowing Zurvan and then the role of Zurvan and creation in this religion is briefly explained. As Ferdinand Christian Boor emphasized, Mani selected dualism of ancient Iran to start his work. Dualism of ancient Iran is based on the constant conflict between two main elements, Ormuzd (hormuzd, Ahura Mazda) who is good and Ahriman that is evil. But it could be said that Mani improved and developed religious desire and tendency which had existed from earlier in Iran because Manichaean generally hated the claim that good and evil are brothers. One he stated that: "if we had said that Ormuzd and Ahriman were younger and older brothers Then I repent of my sin and ask for forgiveness."¹⁰ Due to his Iranian and Gnostic background, Mani had a precise dual attitude towards the world. Although this dualism seems to be fundamental, accurate study shows that this attitude has some signs of monism. One of the two fundamental Manichaean religious dogmas is the idea of "two principles" (in middle Persian "two roots").

That is God and matter (named which is a Greek term in Serianian language). They are ancient and are permanent and are classified as “natures”, “essences” or “roots”. Although both principles are ancient, they are entirely in conflict with and in opposition to each other like good and evil, truth and lie, light and darkness, and they are not at the same level, because only good principle is called “God” and bad principle is called “Evil”. In Middle Persian, this term reflects the conflict between Bagh¹¹ (party), Yazd and Dēw (Evil). This distinction means that Good is superior to Bad as believed in Zurvanism because it was willing to modify dualism to become monism specially by resorting to Zurvan as the origin who created two sons who were each other’s enemies and then made Ormuzd superior to his twin brother Ahriam (Evil) who is finally defeated by Ormuzd.

The Manichaeans matched their system with religious culture of Iran, and not with Ormazd and they selected Zurvan as the dominant and superior god of their religion and it is amazing that Zurvan is basically god of light. 11. Bay Brightness, and like Zurvanism myths, is not god of Ahriman (Evil), but he has the same relationship with Ahriaman that Ormuzd does in Messina’s religion. They are eternal and everlasting enemies, from a separate essence, [that is] good and evil, light and darkness, and are incompatibly against each other. However, the Manichean didn’t consider Ormuzd as an appropriate grandfather for themselves and thus selected Zurvan. According to Reizen Stein, Ormuzd is someone who with all his grandeur and divinity, is inferior to his father and his glory, and fights darkness and evil forces and is embarrassingly and shamefully defeated. So Zener Concludes that during Mani’s ruling which started in 442 A.D. that is in era of The Sasanid King Shapur I, Ormuzd was not inevitably considered as the dominant superior god and there was a greater and more powerful god than him who was Zurvan. Therefore, was considered as a common form of Zoroastrianism in that time. (12). Here again we deal with a feature of pantheism, just like Zurvanism where Zurvan creates the world from his own body and is both father and mother simultaneously. In Alfehrest it is said that god has three features: his light, his strength, and his wisdom; these three attributes and god himself make four grandeurs. God has four dimensions¹² that is a totality of three aspects of light, strength, and wisdom, and his ego. About the relationship between the god of the Manichean and Zurvan the last point is that he is a principle not a person and this concept is matched with Zurvanism opinion about majestic god that is more abstract. On the other hand, as mentioned before, great god, that is, Zurvan is not the enemy of Evil, but his son Ormuzd is. [But] this derivation

from Zurvanism is more superficial rather than real. A grandfather did some tasks to stand against Ahriman and as his five creatures were not efficient to fight he decided to command the battle himself. (2). Both Manichean and Zurvanism are connected to the universe. This is an original and fundamental idea for both Manichean and Zurvanism. In both religions, the force of body attacks primitive man and defeats him. The difference is that in Manichean religion, the primitive man suffers from pain and illness but in Zurvanism he passes away. It is difficult to find an accurate equivalence for Manichean primitive man but there are many descriptions such as failure and offences of primitive man; therefore, it must be said that in Middle Persian texts it is emphasized that the primitive man is Ormuzd. This fact draws attention to Vendidad Fargerd 22 which is said that Evil Mino charmed Ahura Mazda by sending thousands of thousands diseases to surround him and Ahura Mazda is rescued by Prophet Neryosang who sends him to Airyaman. On the whole, it could be concluded that all prominent and pervasive ideas and most mythical features of the Manichean are extracted from Zurvanism, but some terms and details in this religion are the Manichean heritage. According to the Manichean religion, Human’s thought, the feature which existed in primitive man or Adam and his descendants, is a part of the whole light which almost existed in primitive man. Then the rescuer in fact rescues him, that is, rescues his lighting chips by rescuing the man. This is the idea of “rescued rescuer”¹³. Manichean eschatology tells the story of redemption. This world is ruled by Ahriman (Evil) and human being must try to rescue himself. It should be hoped that although both Zurvanism and Manichean have pessimistic attitude towards this world, there is strong faith in these religions that ultimately man or great world and universe or small world would be rescued and all light would become as pure and enjoyable as it was in the past. The constant war between good and evil, light and darkness, exactly like what is found in Iranian religion, reaches its peak in a final terrifying war which is called “Great war” in The Manichean religion. Scattered group will reunite and religious system and justice will get powerful again, that is all good-doers will prevail, because the “great king” will be found on the Earth and will rule the kingdom. The last judgment will happen, but Mani’s description of it is related to current era¹⁴ (but the current era it is ultimately influenced by the imaginations that Iranians had in this regard). However, the main part of this revelatory play is modeled on Iranian revelatory attitude, so that the terms “Great War”¹⁵ which is found in Zurvanism revelation and “Great King” which is found in Ahasuerus’s predictions

are Persian terms. A very special detail was the role that 'lust' ('greed' in Middle Persian) played in Zurvanism revelation, greed the commander of the evil and Ahriman are the only survivors of evil forces in the last days and in Manichean religion Ahriman and greed are mentioned a lot as well, for instance in texts M 470 and M 472 it is stated that greed and the evils will be killed in final battle. An important point in the story of creation in Mani's tradition is that it hasn't referred to the origin of evil or Ahriman. In fact while Zurvan is not named as his father, Zurvan does not directly quarrel with Ahriman and actually he is living in a light world and wants to defeat Ahriman but he gets Ormuzd to defeat him and then he defeats Ormuzd so that light and matter (darkness) integrate consciously and then human and world are created with the help of the emissions which are called on by Great God or Zurvan in such a way that the light inside them should escape out and return to its own origin and this process finally destroys the world. In fact this is like the process that Zurvanian myth follows and although Zurvan is not remembered as the father of Ahriman, he is not quarreling with him either, and sends Ormazd to fight him and conscious defeat of Ormuzd is done by Zurvan like transferring kingdom to Ahriman so that at that time a conscious battle would happen between light and matter due to such integration and finally light would be victorious as it is mentioned in Zurvanism tradition.

After Pahlavi and Manichean texts Shahnameh is studied which is a big book in which Zurvanism features are seen more than the other things. In Shahnameh, Ferdowsi refers to single God who is the creator of Saturn and moon, and beyond name and fame. In most verses of Shahnameh double verbs are used for God, as an absolutely good God, and also as an unknown God to whom both god and evil belong (Ahura Mazda – Zurvan) and he tries to keep himself as the only god. But the perennial question of the poet at the end of each story which never gives him up is that "How such a creator who has been introduced from the beginning as the creator of the skies can also be the creator of injustice and evil?"

Happiness and sorrow belong to him both increase and decrease belong to him

This kind of behavior is known to us in a Zurvanian text about Minoo of wisdom:

"Do not commit sin for <name and shame>. Because goodness and adornment (order of affairs) and wealth (richness) and kingdom and art and merit are not based on the men's desires and actions, but depend on destiny (fate) and world and desire (wish) of gods."¹⁶ Sometimes it is severely against generous youth like Siavash and sometimes it is in favor of

kings such as Keikhosrow and Jamshid and Fereidoon. Can such a god be anyone except Zurvan, the god of time?

The World didn't delay any chance that sorrow of Hooshang disappeared with intelligence and rock

The universe will not join you, Sun and it will neither show you itself clearly

If we compare these verses with a Zurvanian text in Minoo of wisdom, our response will be definitely "No". "Be alert and know that the affairs of the world are running by fate and time and determined fortune which is the ruler Zurvan himself and god" (12). Therefore it is better to introduce him as a creator who determines fortune and fate, whether good or bad, for or against our desire without anybody's role in his Decision-making and therefore he becomes the creator of comfort and discomfort, life and death. In Shahnameh. So that when Zal sends Rustam to fight Evil, he tells him:

*If your day becomes dark by Evil
With the command of the creator of the world
Can anybody keep you away from it?
What is to be done is done*

Also in Yasnaha, 72, line 10, it was observed that there could be a relationship between Savash which means atmosphere or the heaven god who has set his law himself and Zurvan and it's seen in Shahnameh that the creator is one whose existence has integrated again and again with universe, sky and fast moving dome and dark wheel which are all reminiscent of sky (heaven) and time. He knows all secrets of humans' lives, good or bad, and he never stops moving. Worthy description of god of Zurvan.¹⁷

*Look at this fast moving dome
That treatment and pain belong to him.*

Neither the passing of time destroys him nor does the pain or treatment irritate him.

*Neither has he stopped moving at all
Nor he is mortal at all like us.*

Know that abundance and sustenance belong to him Good and bad are revealed to him. In other words, Zurvan's God as described by Neibarg can be observed in Shahnameh: "Not only is he inaccessible God in the sky who has the certain fate of human in his hand, but also he is God of the Earth, life and death, birth and decay of both animals' and plants' kingdom" (12). Oh world! How terrible and ignoble essence are you! That you yourself bring up and then destroy

*Look! How the creator of Gord
Seized kingdom from Zahhak family
He was king of the world 500 years
Finally he went and his throne was left
He left the world to another one
He didn't take anything but pain and sorrow*

*I am so always superior or inferior
You can be a shepherd if you like or flock*

Also a piece of Shahnameh which had an important role in expressing Zurvanian instructions, and is about the priest's questions and Zal's answers has not talked about Ormuzd and Ahriamn, therefore it is not ornamented with Zoroastrianism thoughts, and as explained by Zener is considered as Zurvanian.

All the necessary elements of Zurvanian plan from the last moments exist in this piece of epic: eternal life and mortal life which is definitely boundless and bounded Zurvan; day and night which are the same light and darkness. (12). both times which bring two Minoos to the mind, (that is) good and evil, or mainly light and darkness which is on the whole reflects a combination of time-space. Therefore Ferdowsi provides a concise report of Time Religion (Time Tradition) for us; A religion which was once very significant in Iran and it seems that Ormuzd and Ahriamn had no place in it. (5) Whatsoever was told might be summarized in one sentence: Zurvanian ceremony has been marked by pessimistic fatalism. Ahriamn [based on Zurvan's desire] is the ruler of current era therefore one can only entrust themselves to the fate.

4. Discussions

It was found that ancient people including the Aryans observed some events in their lifetimes especially those events which were out of their control and their fear of such events led to believing in evil forces which gradually became gods who were sometimes in the form of polytheism and sometimes were popular in society as dualism and Zurvanism. Therefore, by creating evil force and helping him, Zurvan is considered as the creator and origin of evil force and although sometimes in some periods of time he apparently has an unbiased and neutralized role, his evil footprints can still be followed and he can be considered as the great god and the sole initiator of good and evil simultaneously.

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Words:

1. The word means "maybe" and has been written to show doubt about it.
2. "Zeit: 1) 'Zeitpunkt, bestimmteZeit', a) in der Gerichtssprache 'Zeit der Verhandlung, Termin' 2) 'Zeitabschnitt', 3) 'Zeitdauer'; A) als Gottheit."
3. Refers to Zurvanism

4. Schaefer refers to the introductory part of this text as an evidence to show the importance of this Manichean feature, and has tried to prove the existence of four gods: god, light, all-knowing, superiority and considers them as the symmetry of four Manichean aspects including time, light, space – religion, all-knowing – Ormazd – creator but Zaehner disagrees with it and doesn't consider it as an accurate symmetry
5. As mentioned before this can be an appropriate definition for a man who has come to this world in order to defeat Ahriamn with his thought.
6. Angel Lughā 21, Mattā 24, and Marghos 13
7. This is exactly the term used in Zadspram chapter 34 line 52
8. Minoos of Wisdom, chapter one
9. In Zadspram it has also been stated that: "Ormuzd thought about the secret of time that what is the benefit of creating creatures if they are without movement (still, immovable), without behavior [and] immobile; and thus he created the world with the help of Sky and Zurvan [over behavior (=moving)]." (Rashid Mohasel, 2006 :36 b)

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