

Dualism

By BBC Team

Dualism in Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrian dualism is probably one of the most debated aspects of Zoroastrianism in the West. So what does it mean?

Dualism in Zoroastrianism is the existence of, yet complete separation of, good and evil. This is recognised in two interconnecting ways:

- Cosmically (opposing forces within the universe)
- Morally (opposing forces within the mind)

Cosmic dualism

Cosmic dualism refers to the ongoing battle between Good (Ahura Mazda) and Evil (Angra Mainyu) within the universe.

It is important to understand that Angra Mainyu is not God's equal opposite, rather that Angra Mainyu is the destructive energy that opposes God's creative energy. This creative energy is called Spenta Mainyu. God created a pure world through his creative energy, which Angra Mainyu continues to attack, making it impure. Aging, sickness, famine, natural disasters, death and so on are attributed to this.

With cosmic dualism we have life and death, day and night, good and evil. One cannot be understood without the other. Life is a mixture of these two opposing forces.

Moral dualism

Moral dualism refers to the opposition of good and evil in the mind of mankind. God's gift to man was free will; therefore man has the choice to follow the path of Evil (druj - deceit) or the path of Righteousness (asha - truth). The path of Evil leads to misery and ultimately Hell. The path of Righteousness leads to peace and everlasting happiness in Heaven.

As with cosmic dualism, we have the polarity of happiness and sadness, truth and deception and so on but with an emphasis on choice. This choice is crucial as it determines whether we are the helper of Ahura Mazda or the helper of Angra Mainyu. When all of mankind chooses the former over the latter, evil will finally be defeated and Paradise on earth will be realized.

In practice, modern Zoroastrianism has a positive outlook. It teaches that Mankind is ultimately good and that this goodness will finally triumph over evil. This could be seen as a retrenchment from the faith's original purity of dualism.

Related Links

BBC Links

- [bbc.co.uk/radio4 - In Our Time -
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20041111.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20041111.shtml)

Published on BBC Religion & Ethics: 2006-08-02

This article can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/beliefs/dualism.shtml>

© British Broadcasting Corporation

For more information on copyright please refer to:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/copyright.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/terms/>

BBC Religion & Ethics

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/>