

THE MASTERS OF BEING

ZOROASTER

THE WORLD WE CHOOSE TO MAKE

PROLOGUE



AARON GARRITY

Interpretive portrait, not a historical likeness.

ZOROASTER

THE WORLD WE CHOOSE TO MAKE

PROLOGUE

We are shaping a world long before we see what it will become.

There are moments when the distance between truth and falsehood seems impossibly large. We imagine the great moral choices as belonging to prophets, rulers, and the turning points of history. Then an ordinary day asks something of us. We know what happened, but we can tell the story another way. We know what is fair, but fairness may cost us. We can speak, remain silent, or allow someone else to carry the consequence of our silence.

Most of us will never know whether such a moment changed anything beyond our own lives. We may never meet the person helped by our honesty, or see the harm set in motion by a lie we considered too small to matter. Yet a choice has been made. Something has entered the world through us.

Across a distance of centuries we cannot measure with certainty, the hymns associated with Zarathustra bring us to that threshold. We know far less about the man than later stories might lead us to believe. His dates are disputed, and the contours of his life cannot be arranged into a confident modern biography. The Gathas remain: searching, difficult songs addressed to Ahura Mazda, alive with questions about truth, discernment, and the possibility of a changed world.

In one of those hymns, Yasna 30, the hearers are called to listen and consider with a clear mind before each makes a choice. I keep returning to that order. First, hear. Then examine. Then choose. It is possible to be so eager to do what is right that we skip the examination and mistake our first certainty for wisdom. It is also possible to examine forever because a decision will cost us something. The hymn leaves us responsible for both the care of our judgment and the direction of our lives.

I am drawn to the seriousness with which these hymns regard a human choice. Truth is more than a fact we possess or an argument we win. The word *asha* carries meanings that include truth and right order. It points toward a life aligned with something greater than preference or convenience. Against it stands falsehood. This opposition belongs to Zarathustra's religious vision, and I want to meet it there before asking what it might say to my own life.

We would prefer to locate falsehood somewhere else: in an opponent, a corrupt institution, a person whose motives we distrust. Sometimes it is there, and we must be willing to name it. But if our examination ends with identifying the guilty, we may escape its most difficult demand. We avoid asking what happens when fear persuades us to conceal something, when loyalty asks us to defend what we know is wrong, or when ambition teaches us to call a convenient half-truth wisdom.

I have sat in boardrooms where silence was part of the responsibility. Information could not be released before its time. People's livelihoods, trust, and the future of an organization could be affected by a careless word. I understand why those boundaries exist. I have lived within them.

But I have also seen how easily we build a second kind of boundary inside ourselves. We begin with a sound reason for withholding something, then grow accustomed to the comfort of withholding. We explain a decision in the terms that make it easiest to defend. The account is repeated until even those of us who were present can lose touch with what gave us pause. The explanation feels so familiar that we stop examining it.

Confidentiality may be a duty. It does not release us from the duty to be honest with ourselves.

I do not say that as someone who has always passed the test. There have been times when I have wanted the cleaner version of a story, one that preserved my confidence in a decision or spared me the discomfort of looking again. It takes humility to notice that desire before it becomes a conviction. It takes more to admit that other people may have been living with the consequences while we were still polishing the explanation.

Perhaps this is one way a world is made. Before anything takes visible form, we imagine what we want or what we fear. We give it language. We choose in its direction. Others make choices in response to ours. Eventually, we are living inside something that once existed only in a thought, a private justification, or a conversation behind a closed door.

I am not suggesting that people create every circumstance they suffer. Much is inherited. Much is imposed. The choices of the powerful can reach people who had no part in making them. That, too, is why the inner life of a leader matters. What begins as an unexamined thought in one person can become the working reality of many.

The way back can seem almost too simple to trust: begin by telling the truth to yourself.

Not every truth can be spoken to everyone at once. But if I cannot acknowledge what I know within my own conscience, I will soon find reasons to call my silence wisdom, my fear loyalty, or my ambition service.

Yasna 30 returns to thought, speech, and action as the opposed ways are set before its hearers. The Gathas do not yield every meaning easily to an English reader, and I will not reduce an ancient religious vision to a formula for self-improvement. But the connection unsettles me. A thought can become a word; a word can give others permission; an action can outlive the person who performed it. We are neither spectators waiting for the world to be repaired nor sovereign creators who can command it into goodness. We are participants, responsible for the direction of what we bring into it.

I come to those hymns with a hope of my own. I believe humanity can grow toward a higher consciousness, one in which conflict no longer governs our relationships, our institutions, or our imagination. I cannot claim that Zarathustra taught that belief as I understand it. What I can say is that his vision presses on mine. It asks whether I am willing to take responsibility for my choices while the better world I hope for has yet to arrive.

There is a danger in speaking of a future peace if it allows us to overlook the present. We can imagine a healed humanity while remaining unkind to the person across the table. We can praise truth in public and make private accommodations with what we know is false. We can wait for consciousness to rise as though we have no part in the rising.

If the future matters, the present must matter too.

I do not know how the whole world is changed. Institutions carry histories. Injustice outlives the individuals who began it. Good intentions can fail, and brave actions do not always receive a visible reward. There are days when choosing honestly seems to make life more difficult rather than less. I need a hope large enough to face those days without pretending they are easy.

So the question returns to the ordinary day. What do I know? What am I afraid to say? Whom might my silence protect, and whom might it leave alone? If I have been wrong, can I see it clearly enough to change?

No one answers these questions once. A life answers them over and over. Perhaps that is why Zarathustra's hymns still have the power to unsettle us. They speak of a struggle larger than one person, then return responsibility to the person who must choose.

I still believe humanity can grow beyond conflict. I do not know when that day will come, and I cannot claim that Zarathustra saw it as I do. But his ancient invitation prevents me from making peace only a dream about the future. Before the world becomes something different, I must decide what I am willing to place within it today.

THE WORLD WE CHOOSE TO MAKE.

Continue into The Masters of Being

AARONGARRITY.COM



SOURCE NOTE

The Gathas are the oldest hymns of the Avesta, preserved within the Yasna. The discussion of listening, choosing, and thought, speech, and action draws on Yasna 30.2-3; asha and falsehood are central Gathic themes. Their translation and interpretation are debated. The dates and biography of Zarathustra remain uncertain; later Zoroastrian tradition develops renewal more fully. The author's vision of higher consciousness is his own. Artwork is interpretive, not historical reconstruction.

