

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Consubstantial dualism: a Zoroastrian perspective on the soul

Ted Good 

Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada  
Email: [ted.good@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:ted.good@mail.utoronto.ca)

(Received 29 September 2022; revised 13 June 2023; accepted 14 June 2023; first published online 2 August 2023)

### Abstract

This article describes the group of ninth-century Zoroastrian philosophers I call the ‘Dēnkard School’ and sketches the way they do philosophy. It presents their argument against substance dualism, which the Zoroastrians argue is in tension with the belief in repentance. From an analysis of this polemic, there follows a reconstruction of the Dēnkard School’s own doctrine of the consubstantiality of body and soul. To understand these arguments, I describe some background eschatological and ontological beliefs upheld by the Dēnkard School and their specific conception of substance, which includes the notions of ownership and responsibility. Overall, the argument can be seen as a new position on a traditional problem, and so increasing the scope of philosophy in a more global perspective.

**Keywords:** Zoroastrianism; Dualism; Soul; Death; Dēnkard

This article presents a Zoroastrian argument against substance dualism and its difficulty with repentance, and from that polemical articulation it attempts a reconstruction of their doctrine of the consubstantiality of body and soul. Both claims appear in discussions of death and the afterlife, and Zoroastrians have a long history of theorizing about these topics (Shaked (1998)). It begins in the ancient past and continues until today, but the earliest extant systematizing Zoroastrian theology appears in the seventh to the tenth centuries of the Common Era and is written down in the Middle Persian language. The most important product of this period for us is the book called the *Dēnkard*.

The *Dēnkard* resulted from a small group of philosophical contributors, and for this reason I call this group the ‘Dēnkard School’. The Dēnkard School is composed of several named and unnamed thinkers, and the most important are Ādurfarrōbay ī Farroxzādān (d. early ninth century CE), Mardānfarrox ī Ohrmazddādān (fl. mid-ninth century CE), and Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān (d. early tenth century CE). They were dualists who claimed that there are two ultimate sources of reality, and they labelled this form of dualism bifoundationalism (*dō-buništaqīh*). The first source is light, and it accounts for life and other good things; the second source is dark, and it accounts for death and other bad things. Arising out of these two sources are two separate streams of productions in both the material and spiritual states. Our world is the mixture of the two. Using bifoundationalism, the Dēnkard School argue that the body and the soul are so intimately connected that they have the

same substance. This claim follows from the fact that both body and soul are productions of light. Moreover, the precise way they conceptualize substance allows for cooperation and the transfer of responsibility from one to another.

Death, on the bifoundationalist account, is a separation splitting the body from the soul, which thereby stops the activity of the whole. The soul is judged for the actions it cooperated in while active in the world, and the body's material constituents dissolve back into the world. This account frames their polemic against a 'dissenter' (*zandīg*) who advances a form of substance dualism, or the belief that the body and the soul are distinct substances. The dissenter's account is criticized for splitting the body and the soul from the start, and thereby disabling the cooperative activity from which the soul takes responsibility into the afterlife. More precisely, the polemic points to a tension between the separation of substances and the necessity of repentance, saying that repentance requires that the responsibility for the acts done by the body transfer to the soul, but such a transfer is prevented if the substances were always separate.

The polemic against the dissenter is the most explicit source for the Dēnkard School's view on this issue, and from it their own position can be reconstructed. However, there are problems and caveats with formulating such a decontextualized argument since it is embedded in prior beliefs and historical contingencies that affect its philosophical meaning and scope. So, to remedy this, I will first briefly sketch the writings of the Dēnkard School since their style of exposition makes our reconstructions tentative. Second, I will canvas some background beliefs on eschatology and general ontology by translating a few select passages.<sup>1</sup> Finally, this background will enable us to understand the Dēnkard School's polemic against substance dualism and its own doctrine of consubstantiality.

While addressing the philosophical content, however, we should also remember the historical contingencies. The most important is that this is a single argument formulated by a small group of intellectual elites, and for this reason, its conclusions may not apply to every variety of Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, due to space limitations, I must also set aside the historical development of these ideas, the Dēnkard School's arguments against monotheism, and their debates with other groups, such as the Manichaeans.

### The Dēnkard and the Dēnkard School

The Dēnkard School produced two types of texts: the authoritative but obscure technical ones, and the accessible but limited public ones. Both have examples in the *Dēnkard* itself, which is the most philosophically sophisticated product of the theological systematization mentioned earlier. The *Dēnkard* was composed by multiple authors over hundreds of years (König (2018)), and it contains a variety of genres, such as philosophy, exegesis, and ethical aphorisms. The philosophical portion comprises books 3, 4, and 5; books 3 and 4 are technical, while book 5 is public. The entire philosophical portion is especially associated with Ādurfarrōbay and Ādurbād (Rezania (2017), 343–349). Ādurfarrōbay is considered the first editor of book 3, he is attributed the whole of books 4 and 5, and he is considered so important to the school that König ((2020a), 66–67) speaks of the 'School of Ādurfarrōbay' when referring to them. As for Ādurbād, he is the last editor of book 3, and little else is known about him.

*Dēnkard* III is the most authoritative technical text. It contains 420 anonymous chapters that Ādurfarrōbay and Ādurbād either added or reorganized. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the text, we can assign neither a specific author nor a specific date to any chapter (de Menasce (1973), 8; Josephson (2012), 545–546, 548–550). Nevertheless, across the 420 chapters, key definitions, distinctions, and argument patterns reappear within many individual chapters. Each individual chapter begins with a title, which announces the topic(s) and their order of presentation, and it thereby acts as a table of contents.

The body of the chapter subsequently proceeds by first recalling a topic from the title, developing it with definitions, evidence, or arguments, and then advancing to the next topic. This orderly progression conceals a convoluted style, in which abstruse neologisms are defined with puzzling phrases, all of which recur elsewhere in book 3 without cross-referencing. This technical style results in terms that are difficult to define and arguments that are difficult to reconstruct.

After the chapter's title and body, book 3 sometimes adds a polemical appendix. The polemical appendices target either the 'sectarians' (*kēšdārān*) or a 'dissenter' (*zandīg*). The sectarians are anonymous but can be reasonably identified as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, or others (König (2020b), 66–68). The dissenter is the target of the polemic we will discuss below, but his precise identity will be bracketed in favour of a philosophical focus. In general, the polemical appendices are useful because they clarify the chapter's technical contents with referents to some better-known interlocutors. In addition to book 3, book 4 of the *Dēnkard* is also a technical text, but it is even more technical, and it also lacks the helpful polemics.

A good example of a public text is *Dēnkard* V (Amouzgar and Tafazzoli (2000)). Instead of convoluted and technical discussions, book 5 contains two epistles that Ādurfarrōbay wrote in response to questions posed by non-Zoroastrians. Given the nature of his interlocutors, he could not presume fluency in *Dēnkard* III or in Zoroastrian doctrine, so he had to distil that information into his concise answers. For this reason, book 5 can clarify book 3's technical arguments. In addition to these epistles, there is a more detailed public text called the *Škand-Gumānīg Wizār*, the 'Doubt-Shattering Analysis' (de Menasce (1945), Taillieu (2004), Thrope (2012), Sahner (2023)). Its author is Mardānfarrox, who is important for many reasons, one of which is that he identifies his polemical targets by citing recognizable parts of the Islamic, Jewish, Christian, and Manichaean traditions. Even more importantly, his thorough ratiocinative progression through arguments shows how the *Dēnkard* was understood and used in interreligious debate.

As I mentioned earlier, the most important source for the *Dēnkard* School's doctrine of the consubstantiality of body and soul is a polemical appendix against a dissenter. That appendix attaches to the body of a chapter that does not explicitly formulate the school's own position, but it can be formulated using other texts. Given the obscurity of the technical texts, however, reconstructing their argument should ideally begin with the public texts and confirm with the technical ones. In this article, I attempt to reconstruct their position using public texts, polemical appendices, and other chapters from book 3.

## Background Beliefs

To understand the polemic against the dissenter and the *Dēnkard* School's own position, I want to sketch some background beliefs that are presumed by both arguments.

The most general set of beliefs is the cosmic context (Kreyenbroek (1993)), in which the good god, who is variously called Ohrmazd, Creator, or simply 'god', is currently fighting against an invading contrary being, who is variously called Ahreman, the Befouling Spirit, the Rival, the Opponent, the Devil, or simply 'contrary'. The expressions 'god' and 'contrary' are generally preferred by the public texts, so I will follow this usage. God defeats the contrary by creating the material world, and the process of creation is analogized to a lengthy war between god's army and the army of the contrary. The material world is the frontline of this battle where the two forces meet, and so our world is a mixture of both good and evil. Given this context, the present mixed world is contrasted with the future pure one after the contrary has been defeated. In the present world, there exists heaven, hell, and the intermediate plane, but in the future, the Resurrection (*rist-āxēz*) of humanity and Renovation (*frašgird*) of the world will restore everything to its original purity.

Now, death only applies to the present mixed state of the world. Its relation to the afterlife of the individual is discussed in a public text by Ādurfarrōbay, who concisely articulates some beliefs related to heaven, hell, and the Resurrection. As I mentioned above, his answers are distillations that report only the essential information. His response is as follows:

*Dēnkard* V 8

- (1) On Heaven, Hell, and the Resurrection.
- (2) Heaven and hell exist right now: heaven is the star-station<sup>2</sup> and beyond it, and hell is below the surface of the earth. (3) Heaven is light, fragrant, spacious, totally restful, and totally good; (4) hell is dark, tight, foul, restless, and totally evil. The enumeration of each detail for goodness and [each] for evil is long. (5) In the middle between the earth and the star-station, there is the intermediate plane, and it has parts mixed from both. (6) Of those dead and passed, those whose merit is more, [they take] the path to heaven; those whose demerit is more, [they take] the path to hell; and those whose merit and demerit are equal, [they] have a place in the intermediate plane. (7) There are levels within all three places, like places have [either] rest and goodness [or] restlessness and evil in a pure way or in a mixed way, like the wind.
- (8) The Resurrection will happen with the final annihilation of the Rival, and the beneficent Creator will make all people alive again. (9) The wicked will be beset by unavoidable punishment from the purifiers through the purification of the sins and the corruptions each did and [of] the mixture appropriate to them. (10) The righteous will receive, by their own activity, eternal, persistent recompense, atonement for all actions and abstentions, and reward. (11) No creation will remain in the rivalrous state. Ahreman and the other demons and devils will be conquered, smote, and killed. All rivals and corruptions will be removed from the good creation, and all creatures – like us – whose root substance (*bun gōhr*) is light, will be fixed in purity, cleanness, in a state without corruption and without need, with fulfilled desires, without rival, and [in] total bliss.

Ādurfarrōbay uses clear and direct language and avoids minutiae (for example 8.4) for clarity. These features make it a good example of a public text. Now, to explain the Zoroastrian understanding of these concepts, Ādurfarrōbay first sketches the current spatial organization of the afterlife, and then he advances to the future state after the defeat of evil (Panaino (2015)). In the mixed state, he writes, humanity is sent either to the good heaven above, the bad hell below, or the intermediate place in between based on the balance of that person's good and bad deeds. With the coming of the Resurrection, however, that stratigraphy will be flattened when god defeats the contrary and all of humanity will be recalled and resurrected into a world purified of the invading evil.

I would like to focus especially on Ādurfarrōbay's statement that our 'root substance' (*bun gōhr*) is light. The term 'substance' (*gōhr*) is polysemic in Middle Persian. It was imported into Arabic philosophical literature (Dhanani (1994), 55–60) to translate Aristotle's 'substance' (Greek *ousia*) and to denote the Islamic theologians' 'atom' (Arabic *jawhar*). In contrast to these meanings, Ādurfarrōbay uses it to mean a 'root' (*bun*) or a source for both actions and accidents. From this usage, it follows that since the root substance of humanity is light, humanity's actions and accidents are derived from that foundation.

In the cosmic context, the defeat of the contrary results in the complete separation of light from dark. While elaborating on this conflict, Mardānfarrox connects it specifically to the death of the individual. He writes that:

*Škand-Gumānīg Wizār* 12.71–81

- (71) You should also consider this: [first] what the opponent devil seeks, and [second] what god's army fights for. (72) The opponent seeks this: 'I will obliterate this earth, sky, and the creations of light, (73) or I will appropriate them and convert them away from their substance, (74) so that god may not be able to perform the Resurrection and Renovation and [not be able to] restore his creatures.' (75) The army of god fights for this: 'May that opponent not chance upon what is necessary for his desires,' (76) and for this: 'From the original creation onward, Ohrmazd's army is triumphant in fighting and victorious according to his will.'
- (77) It is evident from this [that] if it is he that fashioned this earth and sky, (78) then he is able to obliterate all creatures and creations, but no one [else] is able to obliterate even the most minute of god's creatures. (79) For if the body (*tan*) is separated from the breath (*gyān*) on condition of death, it is neither obliteration nor a change of substance from its identity, but rather a transition of accidents and a procession from place to place and act to act. (80) Otherwise, how is it evident that the substance of body and breath each settles back into another act specific to its own substance, (81) and [how] is it evident that these creatures and creations are fully in motion and continuously active, so long as their existence is necessary and beneficial?

Mardānfarrox's orderly analysis, though still a public text, is more detailed than the epistle by Ādurfarrōbay. He points out that the contrary sought something in attacking, but what he is seeking is impossible. The contrary seeks either to obliterate god's creation or to convert them to his side, but both are impossible according to bifoundationism. The underlying metaphysical assumption is that, on the bifoundationist view (*Dēnkard* III §142, §250, §330, §400), positively existing dark things are generally mistaken for negative things (like negative states, negative properties, etc.). Accordingly, the analysis that obliteration is destruction into nothing (a negative state) must be reanalysed as a dark thing pushing out a light thing from a particular locus. One pushes out the other because light and dark cannot collocate but can only mutually exclude one another. Mutual exclusion also means that the contrary cannot convert god's creations to his side either, since his dark substance pushes away god's creations, which are rooted in the light substance.

Mardānfarrox deploys this account to argue that individual death is neither transferring between sides, since converting god's products into products of the contrary is impossible, nor is it obliterating the individual into nothing, since destruction into nothing is also impossible. Instead, he says that death is simply the separation of the material body (*tan*) from the subtle breath (*gyān*) as well as the subsequent rearrangement of accidents, acts, and locations. To substantiate this, he notes that the constituents of the body and the breath persist in the world, since we see them continue to behave according to their respective substances. He also reminds us that god is still actively engaged in defeating the contrary, so the force motivating the created world is still sustaining the body and the breath.

Both passages from the public texts rely on certain metaphysical assumptions, which are the subject of a short chapter of *Dēnkard* III. This chapter presents the basic ontological views that are part of the polemic against substance dualism.

*Dēnkard* III 416 (B 310.17–311.5)

On creatures' spiritual issuance, their coming to materiality from spirituality, and the evidence [for it].

From a disclosure of the Good Religion.

Indeed.

Spiritual (*mēnōy*) issuance is uncombined generation, it has the invisible and intangible specialty, and it is the root of the material.

Material (*gētīy*) creation is the generation combinable from the spiritual and an outline, it is the evidence for the spiritual, and it has the visible and tangible specialty. This is evident: the spiritual is the root (*bun*) of the material. There is also evidence for this: when something material is released from materiality, it returns to the spiritual generation that is its root.

Spiritual generation is a unit without parts. So, the spiritual is the creator's first derivative issuance called 'generation'; material combination is the creation the creator combined from the first derivative issuance and generation. He created [it] first as spiritual and [then] brought [it] from spirituality to materiality. This, too, has evidence in a disclosure of the Good Religion.

This is a good example of a technical text. It is a full chapter from *Dēnkard* III with title, body, but no polemical appendix. It exhibits the orderly obscurity of the book, since the sentences are short and straightforward, but the content is obscure. Before elaborating the content, however, I would like to point out the expression 'Good Religion', which is one name Zoroastrians give to their faith as well as the scriptures attesting to it.

The content of this chapter is part of a larger discussion of physical theory (*Dēnkard* III §73, §105, §123, §191, §194, §362). The two most important concepts in this discussion are *mēnōy* and *gētīy* (Shaked (1971), (2001)). '*Mēnōy*' comes from the verb 'to think' and denotes the mental or spiritual aspect of what exists, while '*gētīy*' comes from the verb 'to live' and, in the *Dēnkard* School, specifically denotes the empirical aspect of what exists (Shaked (1971), 63–71). The spiritual is what is psychologically perceptible by the breath (*gyān*), and the material is what is sensible by the body (*tan*). The chapter also links these together with a metaphor common in their physical theory. The spiritual is like the roots of a plant that are below ground, while the material is like the fruits of the same plant that are both visible above ground and also evidence for the invisible roots below ground. The metaphor gives an intuitive way to see both as part of the same plant and so ontologically continuous or consubstantial.

Another noteworthy feature of this chapter is its summary of the generation and degeneration of material objects. It begins with spiritual issuance, which is a single non-composite effluxion derived directly from god. It then introduces material creation, which is the production of a composite from that effluxion and an 'outline'. Outlines stack and form concentric circles of increasing size. The process begins with simple qualities, such as hotness and wetness; then it forms the elements, such as fire and water; and finally it produces ordinary material objects. Material objects are generated by this process, and they degenerate by the same process in reverse, when the outlines open up and release their constituents. Degeneration terminates at the non-composite spiritual issuance. The upshot of this physical theory is that the outlines create a distinction between the inside and the outside and thereby show something by hiding something else. For example, according to this theory, when we see a hot stone, we directly sense neither the fire contained within it nor the hotness contained within that fire; the visible stone is the evidence for the invisible fire and hotness within it, whose existence is determined by intellectual analysis.

In addition to the material body and the subtle breath, the *Dēnkard* School importantly relies on the concept of the soul (*ruwān*) in their argument against the dissenter. The soul is spiritual (*mēnōy*), and it is the locus of volition (*Dēnkard* III §123) and thereby responsibility. At death, only the soul is judged, and this is because the distinction between spiritual and material is further coupled with a distinction between voluntary and involuntary acts, respectively. More precisely, in the context of god creating the world,

material objects are the instruments that god creates in order to defeat the contrary, and so they execute only the specialized act for which they were created. In contrast to instruments, volitional beings are partners that are delegated tasks (*Dēnkard* III §174), for which they are free to pursue various means, and against which they are judged. In order to fulfil its goals, the spiritual soul acts in the world using the material body as its own instrument (Shaki (1999)). Such a scheme allows the *Dēnkard* School to locate responsibility on the soul and not on the instrument. So, while the material world was created as god's instrument, humanity was created as his partners.

To sum up, the *Dēnkard* School analyses the person into three basic parts: the material body (*tan*), which is empirical; the spiritual soul (*ruwān*), which is volitional; and the subtle breath (*gyān*), which is the subtle material intermediate between the two. Of course, the *Dēnkard* School analyses other spiritual and psychological components, such as the natural soul (*frawahr*) responsible for the autonomic functions of growth and digestion, but those are not part of the polemic against substance dualism (but see Bailey (1943), 78–119; Shaked (1994), 52–72, 142–160; Gignoux (1996), (2001), 20–30).

### Consubstantiality of body and soul

Now that we have seen the cosmic context, the distinction between material and spiritual, and the psychophysical composition of the person, we can focus on the polemic against the dissenter. It appears in the third book of the *Dēnkard* as a polemical appendix and is occasioned by the content of the chapter. As I mentioned above, the dissenter's claim is that the body and the soul are separate from the start since they are distinct substances. Against this, the *Dēnkard* argues that such a split prevents the activity in one substance from generating responsibility in the other one. In place of the refused thesis, the *Dēnkard* argues that the body and soul are consubstantial, so that the soul uses the body as an instrument and has responsibility for its acts. The chapter is as follows:

*Dēnkard* III 272 (B 217.21–219.3)

On the light-entity soul, the dark root, and why sinning thereby makes one wicked.  
From a disclosure of the Good Religion.  
Indeed.

The volitional knowledge-potency is the soul (*ruwān*) itself, and by the union with its consubstantial (*hamgōhr*) instrument, [i.e.] the body-cloth, people are sinless like the rest of the gods while in the pure state, and while in the mixed Assaultive<sup>3</sup> state, the mix of the dark force, which is a substance distinct (*judgōhr*) from [both] body and breath, is the condition for [the soul's] knowledge being rivalled by the perception of outlines, and [its] volition [being rivalled] by lust. The one intending merit by the perception of outlines, on the one hand, becomes a sinner, and the lazy one aspiring for rest, on the other hand, becomes merit-averse. One's light-entity soul is pained and ruined by acts (*kār*) of sin, alienated and separated from uplifting merit, and will plunge down towards hell, to the nest of devils, away from the body by the gravity [of sin].

There is evidence in the Good Religion that by the final victory of the gods smashing the devil's power, the creator will bring up the volitional [beings] from hell, and by the spiritual purifiers' cleansing, he will cleanse them of their sin and harm, newly reclothe them in a consubstantial body-cloth that is cleansed of having been defiled by the Assault, and will fix them as eternal, immortal, and blissful.

The dissenter's (*zandīg*) falsity in saying [that] the body is a substance distinct (*judgōhr*) from the breath is evident from the breath being a consubstantial (*hamgōhr*) healer of and a life-preserver for the body; and in saying [that] the breath's first sin was done by the devil, they contradict the wickedness and need for repentance they predicate on the breath.

So, it is difficult for the breath to become wicked by a sin the devil did, and to repent from a sin it did not itself do. The mark of false repentance is as if the breath would say, 'The sun is dark' by its bodily instrument, [then] it would not be the breath but the devil that spoke it. Further, were one [of them] to say, 'I am ashamed and repentant of my saying 'the sun is dark', [then] if the breath says, 'I said it' for the saying it did not say, then it would be lying and sinful; and if the devil says it – according to the dissenter's argument – [then] the devil should be praised for telling the truth and repenting of sin. A substantial change away from badness [follows] from the dissenter's theory. They absurdly predicate of the breath that if it were to sin, then it would change its substance.

The body of the chapter introduces the volitional soul (*ruwān*) and the material body (*tan*) as its consubstantial (*hamgōhr*) instrument, while the polemical appendix cites two claims by a dissenter (*zandīg*), which are then refuted one at a time. The dissenter's first claim is that the body (*tan*) and the breath (*gyān*) are distinct-substantials (*judgōhr*), and his second claim is that even though they are separate substances, the acts performed by the body, which is the evil substance, demand repentance from the breath, which is the good substance. Both claims are related since the content of the first is presumed in the second. So, the dissenter's first claim involves substance dualism, and his second claim involves responsibility for a sinful act (*kār*) transferring across separate substances. From the content of the polemic, we can also note that the chapter's discussion of the effects of sin on one's soul is the occasion for introducing the dissenter.

Now, the refutation for the dissenter's first claim, that the body and the breath are distinct-substantials, relies on the conceptual distinction between two types of substance. Unfortunately, English does not have a fluent way to translate 'distinct-substantial' (*judgōhr*) like it does for 'consubstantial' (*hamgōhr*), but the meanings are clear from the separating (*jud-*) and joining (*ham-*) prefixes, respectively. They are adjectives that literally mean, '[something having] a distinct/the same substance'. Consubstantials are substances that join up into composites, and distinct-substantials are ones that separate composites. The concept of 'distinct' used here should not be confused with 'opposition' or 'rivalry', and Mardānfarrox can help clarify the concepts intended by these terms. He describes them as follows:

*Škand-Gumānīg Wizār* 8.81–86

(81) From the observation of objects, the distinction (*judāgīh*) in things is evident, (82) and distinction is twofold – as I wrote above. (83) One is divergence (*judkārih*) and the second is distinct-substantiality (*judgōhrīh*). (84) Divergence is [evident] from cooperation and synergy, (85) and distinct-substantiality is [evident] from incompatibility and oppositionality, (86) as well as [from] things not situated in one place.

Just as there are two types of substance (*gōhr*), there are also two types of act (*kār*). For his definition of distinct-substantials, Mardānfarrox includes the notions of mutual exclusion and opposition. Distinct-substantials cannot collocate, instead they push each other out of a particular locus, and they compete against each other for that disputed locus. The intended sense of distinction may be clearer in the term 'divergent' (*judkā*) and its



unexpressed foil ‘consonant’ (*hamkār*). Here, the same prefixes modify the noun ‘[discrete] act’ (*kār*), and so these adjectives mean ‘[something performing] a distinct/the same act’. In his definition, Mardānfarrox states that divergence exists within cooperation and synergy, so divergent acts are separate ways of acting that synergize into a greater whole. For this reason, the conception of ‘distinct’ intended in divergence cannot be conceived as rivalrous or as oppositional action. More generally, we can note that the related term ‘distinction’ (*judāgīh*), with which Mardānfarrox introduces this passage, separates the types of substance and the types of act into different categories and not into competing rivals.

The types of substance and the types of act intersect, and parsing out the different composite concepts can clarify the dissenter’s first claim, that body and breath are distinct-substantials, and the *Dēnkard*’s claim, that they are consubstantial. Using Mardānfarrox’s definitions, we can generate the following grid:

Consonant Consubstantial	Consonant Distinct-substantial
Divergent Consubstantial	Divergent Distinct-substantial

Consonant distinct-substantials, or different things performing the same act, are impossible since the mutual exclusion and oppositionality characteristic of distinct-substantials circumvents their harmonizing into the same act. Next, divergent distinct-substantials, or different things performing different acts, do not provide the connection between different substances, which the dissenter needs for his second claim. The important node for understanding the *Dēnkard*’s refutation of the dissenter is that of divergent consubstantials, or things that have the same substance but perform different acts. The consubstantiality joins them together, and the divergence distributes their acts into different cooperative aspects.

So, using Mardānfarrox’s analysis, the refutation of the dissenter’s first claim, that the body and the breath are distinct-substantials, can be summarized as follows:

(1)	The breath heals and preserves the body.
(2)	Healing and preservation are cooperative acts.
(3)	Cooperation entails consubstantiality.
∴	So, body and breath are consubstantial.

The refutation is brief and performs an interesting shift of perspectives away from the dissenter’s separation of the body from the breath and towards their consubstantiality. It does so by first noting that the breath heals and maintains the body, and this shows they can affect one another, which the dissenter accepts in his second claim. The breath’s acting upon the body is cooperative, since the breath’s action contributes to the life of the body, and its separation from it deactivates the body. Next, if we look at the individual premises, we can see the shift in perspective. The central premise (3) depends upon conceiving the body and the breath as divergent consubstantials. This conception differs from the view of the dissenter, who seems to consider them as consonant distinct-substantials.

The reason for this is that he identifies them as distinct-substantials and believes they can affect one another. However, consonant distinct-substantials are impossible, and the only other node in the earlier grid that can explain the cooperation of the body and the breath is that of divergent consubstantials. So, for the *Dēnkard's* refutation, then, the observation of cooperation is evidence for divergent consubstantials.

On the *Dēnkard's* own account, however, neither body nor breath has responsibility since neither has volition. Rather, they are both material instruments for another's volition. We must keep this in mind when we turn from the refutation of the first claim to the refutation of the second. The second claim was that the sinful act performed by the body demands repentance from the breath. Instead of the breath affecting the body by healing it, here the body affects the breath by transferring responsibility to it. So, the dissenter's second claim is a transfer of responsibility from one to the other. In its refutation of this second claim, the *Dēnkard* relies on an agent's ownership of their acts, saying that it is difficult for the breath to repent of a sin it did not do; that is, the breath does not recognize the lie uttered by the body as its own act, and so does not feel responsibility for it. This notion of ownership is a consequence of the *Dēnkard's* theory of substance.

This aspect of their theory of substance is the subject of another chapter from *Dēnkard* III, which discusses the way one recognizes an act as one's own. So, it discusses substance and this precise sense of ownership. The chapter is as follows:

*Dēnkard* III 246 (B 202.10–203.11)

On the condition for human sin and destruction not fit [to arise] from Creator Ohrmazd.

From a disclosure of the Good Religion.

Indeed.

When Creator Ohrmazd created creatures from one substance, he enlivened people from one common root. This was so that, due to creation's consubstantiality (*hamgōhrīh*), on the one hand, they nurture, fix, and help one another; [and so that] due to the same activity enlivening people, on the other, each regards the other as their own (*pad xwēš*), and they do good for one another, and remove evil from one another, like loving brothers. He made in people thinking, deliberation, wisdom, and many [other] virtues, and sent to people Good Thought, Deliberation, Attentiveness, and many [other] gods, and installed them in them. This was precisely so that people want, think, speak, and cultivate merit, and thereby become righteous. It is fitting that he did not throw into people lust, greed, wrath, envy, shame, vengeance, and the other sins of wickedness, or other spoiling qualities, nor [any] agents faulting or pressuring human love into attacking and harming one another, nor did he defile people there.

So, when [it says] in the Religion, 'We attack and harm [them] again, they attack and harm us legitimately, and our attacking and harming activity is returning to us', [then] they regard as their own (*pad xwad*) the attacking, harming, and other [such] activities of someone else, and due to the fear of the legitimate attacking and harming activities that come back to them, non-attacking and non-harming activity is fixed [for them]. It is a mark of attacking and harming activity's not being necessary in people that god made the condition for non-attacking activity a virtue in people and also advised against [harming activities] religiously.

This conviction is also [common] among the sectarians (*kēšdārān*): the condition for illegitimate harming activity is sins like lust, greed, shame, vengeance, and envy.

God making them in people – according to the sectarians’ account – is clearly contradictory verbiage and false.

The purpose of this chapter, according to its title, is to explain the tension between the existence of a benevolent god and the existence of vices contrary to that benevolence. We set aside the brief polemical appendix against the sectarians.

The *Dēnkard*’s explanation for this tension is that while creating the world against the contrary, god creates people as partners with the goal that they cooperate with him and with each other. For this reason, he would not undermine his own purpose by installing contentious vices in those same people. So, to achieve this end, god creates people from a single substance and with a single act of vivification, such that people help one another due to their consubstantiality, and they see each other as their own (*pad xwēš*) due to the shared act of enlivenment. The result is a family-like sense of mutual aid, in which people spontaneously remove from each other the evil which originated with the contrary. So, in the cosmic context, while god installing virtues in people reinforces his goal, his installing vices does not. To account for the origin of vices, then, the chapter evokes the cosmic attack of the contrary. Analogously, vices are like a violent invasion: an outside group attacks, receives legitimate self-defence from the attacked party, and then recognizes the echo of their original violence as their own (*pad xwad*).

While the *Dēnkard* School’s theory for the origin of evil is beyond the scope of this article, we can note the philosophical content important for the polemic. The harmonious group recognizes each other as their own, while the aggressive group recognizes the rebounded violence as their own. The thought here is that agents intuitively identify acts originating from their substance as their own but do not make such an identification with acts originating from a distinct one. Let us call this the ‘ownership’ of an act. I own my own actions in a way that I do not own your actions. This connection of ownership is between one substance and the act it specifically generated. This clarifies the *Dēnkard*’s claim that it is difficult for the breath to repent of an act it did not do, since it feels no ownership of that act. It also substantiates *Mardānfarrox*’s earlier statement that the contrary cannot convert god’s creation to his side, since this is an impossible transfer of ownership from one substance to another. The transfer is impossible because the ownership of an act does not cross to another substance.

So, in addition to the different types of substance and different types of act, there are also different ways in which substances relate to individual acts. Acts generated from one’s own substance are considered one’s own, and one claims ownership of them; acts generated from a substance distinct from oneself are not considered one’s own, and one does not claim ownership of them. Given this distinction, the refutation for the second claim, that the acts performed by the body demand responsibility from the breath, can be summarized as follows:

(1)	Substance is the source of acts.
(2)	One must only repent of one’s own sins.
(3)	The source-substance has ownership of its generated acts.
(4)	If substance A sins, substance B is not responsible.
(5)	The body and the breath are separate substances.
(6)	The body performs the sin.
∴	So, breath is not responsible for the body’s sins.

This refutation hinges on the notion of ownership. It begins with the school's specific understanding of substance as the 'root' (*bun*) or source for acts and accidents, and couples it with common-sense claim (2) that one must only repent of one's own sins. However, its distinctive move appears in its two central premises (3) and (4), which both rely on the relationship between a substance and the sense of ownership it has of its acts. If the body and the breath are separate substances, like the dissenter claims; if distinct-substantials cannot cooperate, as was argued in the refutation of the dissenter's first claim; and if ownership does not transfer from one substance to another, which follows from premises (1) and (2); then the responsibility for the sinful act does not transfer from the body to the breath.

Now that the refutation of the dissenter's theory has been analysed, we can briefly turn to the *Dēnkard's* own theory implicit in the chapter. Recall that the chapter began with the volitional soul (*ruwān*) and the body as its consubstantial instrument. The soul is needed because the present world is mixed such that the dark distinct-substance limits the body to the sensation of outlines. So, the soul must avoid superficial appearances and steer its instrument rightly, since only it will be held responsible for these acts in the afterlife. It can be reconstructed as follows:

(1)	The body and the soul cooperate.
(2)	Cooperation presumes consubstantiality.
∴	So, the body and the soul are consubstantial.
(3)	The soul chooses the act.
(4)	The body performs the act.
(5)	Consubstantiality permits the transfer of ownership.
(6)	Choice entails responsibility.
∴	So, the soul is responsible for the body's acts.

The argument presupposes that the body and the breath are divergent consubstantials since they are consubstantial, and they cooperate. Their union produces the activity for which the soul is responsible: the soul is the volitional agent of the act, the body is the material instrument for the act, and so the soul is responsible for the acts that it chose to articulate through the body. On this account, then, the body and soul perform the material and spiritual aspects of the act, respectively.

To sum up, the dissenter claimed that the body and the breath were substances distinct from the start, and that the breath is responsible for the sinful acts performed by the body. The *Dēnkard* criticized this account for disabling the connect that would permit responsibility and ownership to move from the one substance to the other. The reconstructed argument for the *Dēnkard's* theory claimed that for responsibility to accompany a sinful act, there must be a divergence between a spiritual act and a material one, according to which the spiritual one chooses and the material one executes; these divergent acts must be performed by consubstantials, so that responsibility can transfer between them. So, on this account, repentance and responsibility require the consubstantiality of body and soul.

## Conclusion

The argument against substance dualism claimed that there is a tension between substance dualism and repentance, since the separation of substances disables the transfer

of ownership for actions, and this ownership is required for responsibility to be rightfully attributed and repentance to be necessary. The argument relied on the overlapping distinctions between consubstantial and distinct-substantial beings, on the one hand, and between divergent and consonant acts, on the other. The conceptual vocabulary allowed us to clarify that the dissenter argued for consonant distinct-substantials, and the *Dēnkard* argued for divergent distinct-substantials.

Moreover, the argument has wider implications for Zoroastrian conceptions of death and eschatology in general. Indeed, when the soul departs from the body, it alone is judged because it alone is responsible for instigating the act. Alongside the soul's judgement, the material body and breath remain in the material world and their constituents continue to behave according to their substance. The material world as a whole, in which many consubstantial things contribute their divergent acts towards defeating the contrary, persists until the contrary is finally defeated. So, the precise conceptual vocabulary articulated here can help describe Zoroastrian eschatology in general. Finally, in the context of global philosophy, we can see that the *Dēnkard* School offers both a new position on a common topic as well as an interesting critique of a traditional position on that topic. Adding new positions to our discourse opens the scope of our philosophical activity and allows for increased divergence and cooperation.

**Acknowledgements.** I would like to thank both Marie-Hélène Gorisse and Jeannie Miller for their many helpful comments across many drafts.

## Notes

1. I translate *Dēnkard* III from the B manuscript (Dresden (1966)), *Dēnkard* V from the edition in Amouzgar and Tafazzoli (2000), and *Škand-Gumāniḡ Wizār* from the edition in Taillieu (2004).
2. The 'star-station' (*star-pāyag*) is the lowest level of the heavens that is closest to the world. In Zoroastrian astrology, the stars are closer to the earth than the sun and moon.
3. The Assault (*ēbgad*) is a technical term that signifies the precise moment when evil first invaded the good creation. After the assault, the world becomes mixed.

## References

- Amouzgar J and Tafazzoli A (2000) *Le cinquième livre du dēnkard* [The Fifth Book of the *Dēnkard*]. Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes.
- Bailey HW (1943) *Zoroastrian Problems in the Nineth-Century Books*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- de Menasce J (1945) *Une apologétique mazdéenne du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Škand-Gumānik Wičār: la solution décisive des doutes* [A Mazdean Apologetic from the 9th century: *Škand-Gumānik Wičār: the Decisive Solution to Doubts*]. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck.
- de Menasce J (1973) *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard* [The Third Book of the *Dēnkard*]. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck.
- Dhanani A (1994) *The Physical Theory of Kalām*. Leiden: Brill.
- Dresden MJ (1966) *Dēnkard: A Pahlavi Text*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Gignoux P (1996) The notion of the soul (*ruwān*) in Sasanian Mazdaeism. In K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, *Second International Congress Proceedings*. Bombay: K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, pp. 23–35.
- Gignoux P (2001) *Man and Cosmos in Ancient Iran*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per L'Africa e L'Oriente.
- Josephson J (2012) The evolution and transmission of the third book of the *Dēnkard*. In Cantera A (ed.), *The Transmission of the Avesta*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, pp. 541–552.
- König G (2018) The Pahlavi literature of the 9th century and Greek philosophy. *Iran and the Caucasus* 22, 8–37.
- König G (2020a) On the question of neo-platonic elements in Zoroastrian literature of the ninth century. In Arsuaga AE and Weltecke D (eds), *Religious Plurality and Interreligious Contacts in the Middle Ages*. Memmingen: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 65–79.
- König G (2020b) Training in thinking. In Ruani F and Timuş M (eds), *Quand les dualistes polémiquaient: zoroastriens et manichéens*. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 65–82.
- Kreyenbroek, PG (1993) Cosmogony and Cosmology, i. In Zoroastrianism/Mazdeanism. In Yarshater E (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, V/3. New York: Iranica Foundation, pp. 303–307.

- Panaino A (2015) Cosmologies and astrology. In Stausberg M and Vevaina YS-D (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 235–257.
- Rezania K (2017) The *Dēnkard* against its Islamic Discourse. *Der Islam* 94, 336–362.
- Sahner C (2023) *The Definitive Zoroastrian Critique of Islam: Chapters 11–12 of the Škand Gumānīg-Wizār of Mardānfarrox son of Ohrmazddād*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Shaked S (1971) The notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in the Pahlavi texts and their relation to eschatology. *Acta Orientalia* 33, 59–107.
- Shaked S (1994) *Dualism in Transformation*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Shaked S (1998) Eschatology in Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian influence. In Yarshater E (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica* VIII/6. New York: Iranica Foundation, pp. 565–569.
- Shaked S (2001) *Gētīg* and *mēnōg*. In Yarshater E (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica* X/6. New York: Iranica Foundation, pp. 574–576.
- Shaki M (1999) Falsafa i. Pre-Islamic philosophy. In Yarshater E (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica* IX/2. New York: Iranica Foundation, pp. 176–182.
- Taillieu D (2004) *The Zoroastrian Polemic against Manichaeism*. PhD dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.
- Thrope S (2012) *Contradictions and Vile Utterances: The Zoroastrian Critique of Judaism in the Škand Gumānīg Wizār*. PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.