

What is Angra Mainyu (Ahriman)?

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Angra Mainyu, also known by the name of Ahriman in Persian, is the primal force in reality that causes harm and destruction, spreading wrongful and regressive ways of being. Fundamentally, it can be understood as a 'destructive way of being' existing fully in the realm of mind, which manifests in individuals as mentalities and systems of thought, and physical existence in general as the countless potentials for destruction and regression. In this latter understanding, it may be understood as a fundamental force embedded in reality as the potential for evil and wrong to occur. Alongside Druj 'the deception', it is the ultimate source of evil that has brought about the destructive, wrongful aspects of existence in large part through its regression of the natural instinct for life to grow and flourish, Spenta Mainyu.

While it can be viewed as a cosmic force of regression, Anghra Mainyu is foremost an aspect of the mind, one that exists outside the individual as potential ways of thinking and feeling that are subconsciously adopted by the individual throughout life. It is conclusively the whole of the malignant impulses and potentials that drive one toward the destructive thoughts, words, and deeds which make up the whole of their wrongful mentality. These potentialities can arise from painful experiences or dysfunctional ways of being that are inherited during childhood, or they can arise from societal, familial, and cultural systems of thought that directly or inadvertently cause one to act and think in wrongful, dehumanizing, and (self-)destructive ways.

All of these different causes, collated together, form webs of wrongness and deceit which branch across reality, stretching back to the dawn of time, ever ensnaring and trapping thinking beings and ultimately deceiving them into justifying the very wrongness they have been forced to adopt. In this way, Angra Mainyu can be seen as a force of mind made up of a countless amount of destructive impulses spread throughout existence, embedded in the mind of humans and all those aspects of reality which harm or mislead individuals.

Cosmologically, Angra Mainyu stands in opposition to its direct opponent, Spenta Mainyu, the 'progressive, growthful impulse' that is the true creative force in reality. One constantly nurtures life, encouraging growth and progression and actualizing the good; the other regresses the potential for life to grow, consistently providing opportunities for twisted, manipulated regression, and ultimately, death and destruction. Together, they are seen as twin forces which literally fashioned the world by providing opposing pathways for the development of the material world. In another way of understanding, Spenta Mainyu enacts Ahura Mazda's vision for a perfect, ideal reality (Asha) while Angra Mainyu works against this vision, destroying, harming, and corrupting the creations of Spenta Mainyu.

It should be noted that Angra Mainyu is neither a malignant creator of evil creatures nor the scheming, devil-esque adversary of Ahura Mazda, the latter of which is a common point of misunderstanding. It is instead directly opposed to Spenta Mainyu, as stated before. Moreover, it can be understood as a sort of nothingness or nonexistence, because it, and all the wrongful,

disordered things which have arisen from it, only have existence as the regression and corruption of the good, real material things that do exist.

Ultimately, when Spenta Mainyu has fully actualized Asha, those perfect laws of existence, all potential for wrong and harm will cease to appear. Existence, then, will be made new, fresh, or ideal. At this point, during a process called Frasho-kereti, Angra Mainyu will cease to exist, no longer having any 'fuel' to continue its malignancy. Reality will then be without harm, destruction, or regression, and, therefore, life will finally be ideal, fresh, and full of life.