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PARADOX, POETRY, AND ETERNITY:
SOCRATES, PARMENIDES, AND NIETZSCHE[1]

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Abstractly, some metalanguages and their allied languages are such that the metalinguistic truths cannot be put into the language itself without a (fruitful or devastating) paradox which breaks the very rules which the metalanguage itself enunciates for the language. Others are such that the transposition of metalanguage into language occurs without difficulty. The status of philosophy as a purported "science of all sciences" from classical times to the present hangs on this difference; for, unless there can be speech about speech in one's own (however elaborated) natural language, the metaphysical enterprise sooner or later topples, to be replaced by faith, poetry, or sociology, to name only a few (not inferior, but non-ontological) examples.

But this is too abstract, and moreover represents a conclusion, not an introduction. I shall here be concerned with one example of each type of metalanguage-language relationship, with examples taken from the ancient world: Parmenides and Socrates, as I think each can be read, and as I have attempted to read them before.[2] I shall then add detail and documentation in the case of Socrates, and attempt to reflect in a new way on what emerges from the juxtaposition of these two figures for philosophy of first principles, for the concerns I have raised in the first paragraph above.

The dominant contemporary view on Parmenides' discovery of reason really dates from Plato's *Sophist*. It is best found now in the writings of Owen, Furth, Nussbaum, and MacKenzie.[3] The idea is that Parmenides was an absolute monist who argued for his view by shunning what is not (whatever that is) and who therefore embroiled himself in all sorts of necessary paradoxes of self-referential inconsistency, knowing full well that this was what he was doing and intending the resulting paradoxes as pedagogical tools. They make one understand the doctrine and thus why they are unnecessary. To put the account of the view crudely: if a thing comes to be or perishes or changes, then it is not what it was or will be (the dreaded "is not"); if it has gaps or inhomogeneities, it is not in one place as it is in another; finally, if there are two things, each is not the other. Thus Parmenidean being must be, as his goddess says in Fragment 8 of the poem, "ungenerable . . . unperishing . . . a whole of a single kind, unmoving and perfect." It has to be conceded to this view that it has explanatory adequacy, as it does account for the transcendental predicates that are claimed and proven of being.

The trouble is, it explains too much. Parmenides is not just an absolute monist, on my view as on theirs; he is one with a particular twist. It's not just that (again, in spite of Plato's *Sophist*) Parmenideans have trouble explaining how appearance can be different from reality if all is one, nor just that numerically different words supposedly expressive of truths about being cannot exist if all is one, nor even how the single word "being" could denote the thing being if there is no difference; in these senses, absolute monism could perhaps best be communicated as in Zen monasteries with a shrug of the shoulders,[4] and pedagogically undertaken self-referential inconsistency is unavoidable. I do not see how to clear Parmenides of these charges--if they are charges--indeed, students like to point out to me that he winds up in the same boat as Cratylus the Heraclitean, who, convinced that the world was so changeable that language could not fix it, settled for raising a single finger in silence as his ultimate expressive device.

It is instead with other accusations of self-referential inconsistency that I am preoccupied. I hoped to clear Parmenides of these and in so doing to establish the difference from Socrates that I mentioned earlier. The fact is that if you read Parmenides' poem you will find the goddess many times using the very "it is not" that she herself had apparently prohibited, in vocabulary ("ungenerable"), in syntax ("nor is it divisible"), and in proof, by denying the opposite of what she

wants to prove. Indeed, she negates more often than she asserts. And this apparent inconsistency seems peculiar to Parmenides, not just one allied to absolute monism in general. For the view I am criticizing, it is just one more inconsistency, a way for her to get us to see her views by getting us to see that she cannot speak without flouting them.

But without rerehearsing too much a case I have made elsewhere, let me please just say that I found this interpretation not simple-minded enough. The goddess surrounds her speech with metaphors of persuasion, trust, necessity, and unshakability, and even signals to us explicitly, when she later begins to treat human views instead of true views, that her words are then to be taken as deceptive; but there is no such signal in her account of being, which reads simply like literal transcendental argument. I have suggested a hypothesis which would, I believe, allow us to take her at face value without dispensing with the unavoidable monistic paradoxes, one which would have her show us what to do and how to think by not having her break her own negation-rules before we are all mystically united with being. Indeed, I think, the latter is not possible without the former; for a speech all of whose words undercut themselves in a patternless way is indistinguishable from silence. The idea is that if it is not *necessary* to take the self-referential inconsistencies as owing to negation, then the hypothesis that the negative words are literally meant is at least possible.

If you will take my word for it, sentences of the following types do or could occur in the poem's proof

S is P
S is not-P
not-S is P
(not-S is not-P)

together with some negations of sentences as a whole. But sentences of the following type do not:

S is-not P (S isn't P)
S is-not not P (S isn't not-P)
not-S is-not P (not-S isn't P)
not-S is-not not-P (not-S isn't not-P)

The only Greek expression which is unambiguously reducible to the "isn't" in the sentences which do not occur is *ouk esti,* "is-not"--and yet this is the very expression which is prohibited by the goddess when she makes the prohibitions which base the subsequent proofs. Thus what is prohibited--i.e. a negated copula--never occurs except modally or *as* prohibited, etc., *as* a sequence of words, *though* most every other conceivable kind of subject--or predicate--negation *does* occur. To me the message seems to be that the language was intended to be positive, that other kinds of negation besides that of the copula can and do occur, and that copula-negation was prohibited because it was thought to rob the sentence of meaning, i.e. possible function as a judgement connecting subject and predicate. Thus the proofs themselves, I think, need not be self-referentially inconsistent at least because of their negations, and the language can be literal transcendental argument which does not need to undercut itself in order to make its point. This is the hypothesis.

I am, then, claiming that Parmenides on one level is a master of bold-faced speech, not of paradoxes. I shall say precisely the opposite of Socrates, and here it is surprising that major views try to give a literal, non-paradoxical reading of a major issue in Socrates' life: how does he whose wisdom consists in ignorance, know that he does not know? Thus the views of Socrates taken by others and by myself will be opposites, though in opposite ways.

Socrates' friend Chaerephon consulted the oracle and found out that no one was wiser than Socrates. The statement is interestingly ambiguous; either Socrates is on a pinnacle above the rest of us, or we are all on the same level. I shall suggest that both are true. The story is from the *Apology.* Socrates, sure of his own lack of wisdom yet unwilling to believe Apollo capable of a lie, conducts a series of interviews with politicians, poets, and craftspeople. Either he will find out that they really

are as wise as they are supposed to be (and thus *a fortiori* wiser than he), or he will trip them up. (The word "wise" here could initially cover success in any of these human domains.) What he finds is that, though undeniably successful, the politicians and poets cannot give an account of themselves, and the craftspeople, though wise in the technical sense, are lost on the level of theory. It is not so much what any of these people are doing that is objectionable to Socrates; it is that they will accept the title of "wise" without what he regards as its precondition--some sort of rational justification. Of course, he does not have one either, and thus is strictly on their level--the first half of the oracle's ambiguity. Yet he has discernment somehow about this fact about himself and about others; knowing that he lacks a justification, he knows that he does not know, and thus is better off than all his interlocutors, who all think they know even though they really don't. And this is the second possible reading of the ambiguous oracle. I would suggest, though Apollo did not say so, (Apollo rarely says what he means), that Socrates' ignorance makes him no less ignorant than the rest of us, but that his knowledge of that ignorance is meant to make him wiser, thus both sides of the ambiguity come to the same thing. Note how limited the scope of the wisdom is; it consists only in a reflection performed on a lower-order lack of wisdom, and results only in a hypothetical conclusion: if I am wise, it can only be because I know that I am not. The god's wisdom, speaking of course from a higher plane, knows that only those humans who know that they are only human are worthy to perform the civic role of questioners, gadflies, and eventual victims of judicial murder.

I have said that Socrates somehow has "discernment" or "knowledge" of his own ignorance, and that this enables him to agree with the God's ambiguous assessment of him as a mortal who transcends his own mortality through the very act of knowing it. Since I also earlier claimed that other interpreters try to remove the sting of the paradox while I would like to intensify it, let me go on in an attempt to argue.

I have relied so far on the *Apology* in making the claim that Socrates' ignorance is not a mere toying with metalanguages but is crucial to how he thinks about how he is supposed to behave. Indeed, in the *Lysis*, *Laches*, and *Charmides*--traditionally early dialogues in part because they end also in confessions of ignorance--it is clear what the results are in terms of pedagogical strategy, and it is thus unnecessary to try to document further the centrality of these statements for him. The question is: is the paradox a paradox at all? is it defusible?

In an effort to shrink the wide spectrum of opinions on the subject I would like to deal simply with the more literalistic views of Gregory Vlastos and a conventionalism I find an interesting challenge. Once again, my goal is to attribute to Socrates just the opposite of what I attributed to Parmenides, and I hope that the significance of this will appear fully later.[5]

Thrasymachus says in *Republic*, Book I, that Socrates is lying and feigning ignorance in order to trap people. While, in my opinion, there is certainly an element of strategy in the claim not to know (what better way to expose tenderest beliefs for manipulation) it must be at least ironically sincere (in the modern sense, in which even irony can tell the truth) if reflection on it is to have started Socrates on a career ending in the failure of personal relationships and execution after a show trial. Quite apart from what he says in the *Apology*, a cocktail-party parasite would have begged off as soon as his or her own gratification or welfare were in question. Nor, I think, could it have been a matter of simple belief or right opinion, this stance towards his own ignorance, and that for the same reason; not only are we told that he concluded what he did because of an imperative emanating from the oracle, but the entire Socratic elenchus is directed toward the examination of opinions; an opinion about his own ignorance and concomitant course of life would never have been allowed to stand unprobed. It could be that he is making a mistake, but he will always give you his reasons.

If we dismiss lies and true or false opinions, one path will suggest conventions and Vlastos will suggest knowledge--but a nonparadoxical kind of knowledge.

Could it be that Socrates is a cultured citizen of Athens who takes beliefs common to all cultured and no-so-cultured interlocutors and simply follows their lead, inevitably winding up in contradiction, in the conviction of ignorance both for himself and his hearers? Here we would not

have just belief, of course, but reason operating on belief; but all of us have been in the sad condition of realizing that our hopefully crystalline theoretical formulations were not matched in cogency by our practical maxims or by each other. This is a conventionalist view as I understand it.

The difficulty is: how does one *know* that the beliefs are in conflict? One cannot just believe it, for the reasons I have explained. One cannot know it without having some grounding for the rules of reason on the basis of which one conducts one's arguments. How does one know that a belief needs a justification? That an elicited contradiction dooms an assertion? That a definition is not a set of examples? That *reductio ad absurdum* argument works? That rational agreement through dialectic is a good social goal? How does one know the truth of the arts of negation, subordination, and syllogism? Only, I think, the avoidance of contradiction could be said to be a culturally cultivated practice; the other things I have mentioned are things that Socrates repeatedly has to drum into his interlocutors as if they had never encountered them before. Surely Socrates practiced a new kind of reason, not hitherto encountered, at the expense of all, including himself, not reducible to the norms and customs of cultivated conversation. if his criticism was that people did not *know* what they *believed*, then he must have known at least those argumentative techniques and presuppositions that he himself used.

But this makes the problem deeper. How could he have known these things when he said he did not know, in fact used them to expose ignorance? Here Vlastos, by distinguishing between two kinds of knowledge, attempts to cut through the paradox. The knowledge that Socrates is allowed to have is called "elenctic knowledge"; the other, which Socrates denies to himself, is called "certain knowledge." Elenctic knowledge emerges only from one-on-one conversations with interlocutors, and has to do with the mutual consistency of the beliefs that they specifically hold as expressions of life-style. Thus Vlastos' model, if I understand it properly and may extend it, is that if you can show someone that three of their beliefs are incompatible with a fourth, which they also believe, then either the fourth is doomed or further investigation into the ranking and logical interrelationships of the three needs to be performed. Then, if many conversations with many interlocutors lead Socrates for example to the conclusion that everybody's real beliefs are surprisingly incompatible with the idea that it is better to do wrong with impunity than to suffer it, Socrates will claim that he "knows" that an innocent victim of tyranny is better off than a tyrant. And yet this "knowledge," based as it is only on repetition and on the consistency of beliefs furnished by others, is not *a priori* or certain like Plato's claimed knowledge of the good; it is, says Vlastos, just "elenctic." And this is supposed to dissolve the paradox of Socratic ignorance that I am considering now, since no amount of elenctic expertise could grant me *certain* knowledge of my own ignorance. The best I could have would be a series of tape-recordings of conversations in which I and my friends were unable to define anything. Thus there is no paradox, since the *elenctic* knowledge I have of my own ignorance is not the *certain* knowledge I lack when I have that ignorance. If all I have to go on are beliefs and their incompatibilities, it might be claimed, then even the belief that I do not know is potentially subject to conversational revision, as long as the Athenian officers of justice permit. And I am sure Vlastos would argue that this is just what Socrates does when he queries politicians, poets, and craftspeople, and finds out that they do not know; the lack of certain knowledge is partly a function of the belief-oriented situation, but also a generalization from the actual conversations that Socrates did have with all and sundry.

Against this I bring up two points. First, nowhere is it shown how Socrates elenctically knows the principles of logic, deduction, incompatibility, argument, and dialectic, if these are supposedly basic to any elenctic conclusion. Indeed, these cannot be elenctically known, but must be known with certainty, if the elenchus is to proceed. This is the point I made against the conventionalist view. Thus Socrates must have certain knowledge if he is to know his own ignorance. Otherwise the elenchus is a mere fugue of ideas with no criteria for argumentative adequacy--which it clearly was not.

Second, if Vlastos' view is to work Socrates must know the difference between the knowledge he has and the knowledge he lacks. Isn't this philosophical knowledge of the most refined sort? Can one sustain a distinction between the probable and the certain without having criteria for what is

certain? From whence were these criteria derived if not from a theoretical epistemology? Even a lifetime of experience with elenctic argument would not entitle me to say that my elenctic knowledge fell short of something unless I had a pretty clear idea of what that something was. Indeed, even within the elenchus, how do I distinguish between a certain definition and an uncertain one--the former *known to be* never achieved--without known metaelenctic criteria for definition and unshakable truth? Once again, Socrates could not have known his own ignorance without having certain knowledge of a fairly high theoretical sort.

Thus I take it that Socrates' attitude towards his own ignorance was not that of a lie, nor a false or true belief only, nor a conclusion from conventional presuppositions, nor the outcome of elenchus only. Instead, we must suppose that he knew, for good reason and with full theoretical certainty, that he did not know even what he knew.

But this, of course, might seem to make the paradox intolerable. For now the principles of logic and epistemology governing his arguments and guiding his searches are such that, once known, they show why it is impossible to know even themselves. And this is just the interpretation of Parmenides I have argued against. Does it make sense to attribute such a situation to Socrates, the inventor of the ideal of rational clarity in definition with the good life as the end in view?

I think it does. I shall use religious terminology in what follows, but I do not intend an irrationalist interpretation. Indeed, I hope to show in my conclusion how Socrates and Parmenides represent two solutions to a fundamental problem within reason.

What makes Socrates human, just like the rest of us, is that he does not know. What makes him wiser than we, he concludes, is that he knows better than we do that he does not know. That is his interpretation of the oracle. His divine commission is that, knowing that he does not know, he can go about infecting the rest of us with his own ignorance. It is thus his uniqueness and his divine commission which are closely allied to his knowing that he does not know, and thus to the self-refuting principles on which that knowledge is based.

It follows, I think that the principles themselves are divine, and that Socrates has access to the divine as he reasons according to them. But he is not allowed to gain anything from them except negative conclusions, just as his *Daimonion* or divine sign always signals to him "no" and never "yes." Thus he is not a god, and cannot define beauty or virtue in the early dialogues. More than that, in convicting him of ignorance, the divine again and again convicts him of ignorance even of itself, and bumps his sloping satyr-like forehead against the dust of our common humanity as it wipes out knowledge of the very principles on which the conviction of ignorance was based. The result in the early dialogues is thus not only that the hoped-for definition is stymied, but that doubt is cast on the very rationality which overthrew each definition in turn:

> If neither those who love nor are loved, neither the like nor the unlike, nor the good, nor those who belong to us, nor any other of all of the suppositions which we passed in review . . . If, I say, not one of them is the object of friendship, I no longer know what I am to say."[6]

Yet for all that Socrates picks himself up off the ground again, convinced of his humanity yet always striving to transcend it, knowing yet not-knowing, supplied with divine criteria yet without the means to attain them, avoiding relativism and scepticism by his refusal to give up, avoiding platonism by his refusal to claim even one shred of a paradoxical certain knowledge that is not properly his own. Such, at any rate, would be a reading which refused to weaken the paradox of Socratic ignorance and which then went on to see a connection between the divine mission and the part of Socrates which knows that he does not know. And this is not an unrecognizable Socrates: the Charmides who acquires more temperance by acknowledging that he does not know what temperance is, the trio--Socrates, Lysis, and Menexenus--who, in spite of differences in age, become friends in part by acknowledging their ignorance of friendship--all are examples of the creative moral use of ignorance, the use of principles of reason whose human significance lies in part in their biting their

own tails. The divine significance of self-referential inconsistency is an old story in negative and redemptive theology. What I have tried to do is to see the same phenomenon at work here, to see underneath Socrates' silenus mask to the golden statues of wisdom within, as poor Alcibiades puts it in the *Symposium*.

Some examples may be useful here. The *Lysis'* ultimate ignorance of friendship is, of course, based on poetic and other maxims, scientific theories, teleology, psychology, not to mention various ordinary principles of reasoning or--in general--acts of reasoning assented to by an interlocutor in order to reach conclusions which destroy themselves, are mutually contradictory, are replaced by fresh hypotheses and terminate in a final *aporia*. This *aporia* thus comes about not just because of the hypotheses which ruled each other out but because all appeared supported by one or another knowledge--claim.

To be more specific: the following are major principles and specimens of inference which leap out even from casual perusal of the *Lysis* in English. I shall show below how they function in the argument. The criterion for the selection, which is not intended to be exhaustive, is that what is selected be used or deferred to as a basis for subsequent arguments, yet itself not be argued for antecedently.[7]

(1)	207C	friends share and share alike
(2)	207D	to love is to want to make someone as happy as possible
(3)	208A-210D	empirical examples of how one has liberty and is useful
(4)		in matters about which one is knowledgeable
(5)	210C-D	the useless can have no friends and are unlovable
(6)	212E	animals cannot love in return
(7)	213	you can be a friend to your children when punishing them even if they hate you at the time
(8)	214D	the bad are too variable to be friends
(9)	215A	the good *qua* good are self-sufficient
(10)	216B	friendship is not a friend to enmity or *vice versa*
(11)	216A	the beautiful is friendly
(12)	221D	desire is for that of which one is in want
(13)	221E	that of which one is in want is that which has been taken from one

I call these "examples": (3)-(4), (6), (7); and these "rules and generalizations": (1), (2), (5), (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13).

(2)-(5) are the core of Socrates' protreptic with Lysis; (6) and (7) are involved in major alternatives in Socrates' consideration with Menexenus of loving and being loved; (8) and (9) by themselves defeat the entire consideration of friendship among the bad and among the good, respectively; (10) defeats the claim that friendship is between opposites; (12) and (13), by leading to the absurd claim that all desire is reciprocated, defeat the possibility that love might be desire.

Thus we have statements with no preceding argument, agreed upon by Socrates and his interlocutor, most crucial to the refutations and thus to the *aporia*. Please note that I am not levying the charge that Socratic dialectic rests on unfounded premises. I am instead attempting to make the point that refutations in the dialogue's complex *aporia* often depend on treating something as known --i.e. that this ignorance depends on knowledge as manifested by joint assent to a rule or to the interpretation and significance of a counterexample. That is, the final *aporia* depends on each preceding refutations' having been successful, and thus on the principles I have just listed. Thus ignorance here rests on knowledge, so far as I can see.

What is at issue are two models of Greek reason: a direct, descriptive, canonically methodological one based on transcendental argument, versus a kind of reasons which works pedagogically or morally through a kind of language which violates its own principles and thus undercuts itself. What is even more at issue is a problem in the foundations of reason. If as a lover

of philosophy one is interested in the question of how to justify first principles, then these are two among many other models for making or for abandoning the attempt. The question is: given some principles and what one might call a sphere of discourse governed by those principles--a metalanguage and a language--can the principles be expressed *literally* in the sphere of discourse which they govern or does the mere attempt to do so generate paradoxes because speech within the sphere can be only presuppose the principles, not express them? Under many circumstances I suppose the answer could fall either way, but--if there are any such universal principles without infinite regress--it is at least harder to give an answer in the case of first principles, since, if there is no discourse for them which is in either way accessible, then both Greek models will fall.

Let me consider some modern models. One claim in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* seems to be that the Christian theologically- and morally-based conscience eventually turns against itself in that its criteria for truth, when made stricter and stricter, eventually make one deny that very belief in god as truth on which such a conscience was originally based. I am not concerned now with the truth or falsity of Nietzsche's claim, but only on its structure and paradox. God inspires criteria which turn against god--but that is only the first paradox, and it by no means leads to atheism by itself alone. The second paradox is that, without god in the first place, there would have been no criteria to use against god. Well then? Nietzsche leaves the solution of this paradox to readers. But if one understands that all non-relativistic notions of truth are bound up for him with the notion of god, the results will not be an absolutistic atheism so much as the demonstration that absolutism is self-undercutting in a way that leads inevitably to relativism. Not relativism as a separate, opposed position, but relativism as emerging paradox within absolutism. And here the historical irony is evident to readers of the *Theaetetus*, where relativism and its paradoxes (e.g. is relativism relative only to relativists?) are argued against from an absolutistic standpoint in the quest for knowledge. All these, I would think, are attempts to demonstrate that canons for truth cannot be formulated in the sphere of the language they govern without inevitably undercutting themselves. The only statements possible are "this is *my* norm," or "there are *our* norms," without any attempt to give Parmenidean reasons, or even Socratic ones. And Nietzsche then goes on to see such norms as canons of the creative will, rejoicing in the absence of reasons.

For the latter Wittgenstein, too, certain conventional philosophical problems are expressions of failures to understand the difference between statements made within languages and statements made about the social behavior underlying languages. This is the same problem, only with an attempt to keep paradoxes away, to preserve the distinction between language and metalanguage. (Unfortunately the question of the status of statements made about social behavior itself is not sufficiently addressed. "This is the way we do it" does not solve a *metaphysical* problem, and one senses unexamined Nietzschian paradoxes in the background.) Moreover, in the face of the sustained Nietzschian critique of Parmenidean truth, it is not enough to say that we need it in order to solve ethical problems or problems of social justice (for there is no reason why such problems should be soluble); nor is it enough to give a reductionistic explanation of any sort, since the bottom level of the pyramid of reduction must be describable as if true *à la* Parmenides even if the top level is Parmenides himself disguised as some ideology or other. Nor--certainly--will it do to resurrect the past.

Plato in the *Timaeus* posed his challenge to all subsequent philosophy thus: *if* there is a distinction between true opinion and knowledge, *then* there must be a distinction between platonic forms and particulars, each mode of cognition corresponding to an appropriate object. Aristotle disagreed, thinking that one could have the one without the other. My version is not too far off: either stable Parmenidean reason or the self-undercutting, relative modes found in different ways in Socrates or (at the end of our tradition) Nietzsche. Of course there are many compromises. But it could be maintained that our historical position is indeed a fortunate one; for the corrosive of Nietzsche, it could be maintained, eats through much of our current thought, while the whole dichotomy is now historically accessible to us at both its extremes.

Yet one cannot help but be uncomfortable, and to wonder what lies ahead. The imperturbable silence of absolute monism versus the din of relativism, which speaks in many

tongues? Plato's compromise was programmatically designed to fit in between just these alternatives. And yet, as I have perhaps indicated, I am somewhat suspicious of bold Platonic definitions undertaken where even Socrates withheld his hand out of sheer humility.

What I think is common to both extremes is a certain insistence on eternity, allied with a kind of poetry. Here I do not mean poetry in the fashionable twentieth-century sense, in which one laments the past in language nobody can understand, makes a fetish of one's own act of creation, bewails one's inability to write, calls literary criticism poetry, or comments in verse on a tradition which is rendered dead as if it had ever been only a text in the first place. I mean poetry in the visionary sense, as proclaiming the sight of the eternal in the temporal. Homer and Parmenides wrote songs; Plato wrote plays.

But why should eternity be a workable notion after Nietzsche? Parmenides' goddess registers being in the "now" of eternity; Platonic time is a moving image of eternity; but all Nietzsche offers us--and that in a prophetic mode--is the eternal recurrence, a temporalized eternity. And yet, paradoxically, the result could be viewed as even stronger than the classical version. It is numerically the same event which recurs endlessly in Nietzsche, since all principles of individuation between events (including clocks) also recur and are thus indistinguishable from their recurrences. Thus the cosmos as a whole displays itself across time--or rather, defines a delimited chunk of time--and yet is at the same time a frozen moment which does not itself traverse time, there being in reality only one recurrence with no time outside it. And this frozen moment--whatever its inside structure may be--is eternal in the same way as Parmenides' eternal sphere. Thus eternity as an expression of hermeneutical cycles at the end of the tradition parallels eternity as an expression of literal transcendental argument at the beginning. The notion itself survives and is the common denominator between Nietzsche and his antithesis. Nor is this residual traditionalism in Nietzsche, or a Nietzsche who temporarily burst free in *Zarathustra* from his aphoristic, nihilistic side; it is rather that linear temporality without a recurrence would be for him an expression of *classical* truth, something that would make it impossible for me to sanctify my own relativistic deeds and values by willing them *myself* in perpetuity rather than submitting them to someone else's demarcated scheme. Thus, he would say, a mere twentieth-century temporalization or reduction of values would repress the instinct of creation that sets values free. Both the Eleatic tradition and its opposite, then, are committed to a perpetual sabbath of the "now." And this is where we have to start.

Now, I am not going to pretend that Parmenidean eternity incorporates the temporal in the same way that Nietzsche's does. For Parmenides the temporal is a strict bastardization, yet even he is constrained by hermeneutics, if by nothing else, to pose his vision as a young man's chariot-ride to the edge of the earth, his penetration through the grinding axioms of justice and warm reception by a goddess, his steerage, like Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, along the proper route to the homeland of truth, and truth's own bondage to the fixity in chains of justice, necessity, and doom--all poetry whose literary antecedents have been speculated about since antiquity, and just as wild in its occupation of literary mountain-tops as parts of *Zarathustra*. In the end for Parmenides this is to dissolve into the mystical vision of a "ring of endless light"; but the poetry contains that eternal goal of the fantastic voyage from the beginning. And it is not necessary to speak of Nietzsche's poetry, or of Blake, Milton, or Dante, as finding in things and human feelings not only images of things above but also the clear presence of their archetypes in things below, a compresence of eternity in time which is seen and then recorded or prophetically spoken.

This is not to say that visionary poetry is the ultimate fulfillment of the philosophical quest. But it is an appropriate accompaniment of our tradition both at its beginning and at its end, in the light of the notion of eternity, however conceived.

I am well aware that a call for a philosophical future in which eternity couples with poetry may seem insufficiently clear. But I would hope at least to have reflected on certain metaphilosophical considerations, to have shown that these generate at least two types of philosophical speech, to have situated these within the tradition, especially at the beginning and at the end, to have provided historical and documentary reasons for situating them so, particularly

arguments about Socrates. I will suggest in a moment that both types of speech can converge, but I will have for the moment to leave solution, elaboration and criticism to better heads than mine.

Nietzsche suggests that a dionysian drunkard, fresh from an orgy of libido and raw animal meat, might pass out under a tree and, in a dream, conceive the golden vision of Apollo. If so, rational clarity is only the inverse image of our animal sap, the jugular instincts we attempt in vain to hold in behind the prison walls of consciousness until we overflow. The traditional version of philosophy, on the other hand, views Socrates as a hero because no amount of wine diminishes his dialectical clarity or resistance to sexual temptation. If these versions are compatible, it can only be because both are necessary. And this would be William Blake's

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower.[8]

Endnotes

1.   I am very grateful to the Society for its invitation to read this paper. I would especially like to thank Paul Woodruff for help and suggestions, including bibliographical. I refer the reader to his "Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge," forthcoming in Stephen Everson, Ed., *Ancient Greek Theories of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press) for a different treatment of these issues. For Woodruff the question is one of expertise, not certainty. Further acknowledgements are contained in the pieces of mine I mention in note 2. The accounts of what I believe to be Parmenidean and Socratic *theory* in this present article are in the main freshly written, truncated versions of what is in these earlier pieces, but I hope to have juxtaposed them while saying something new. The body of this paper was read as a presentation at Texas A&M University, The New School for Social Research, Colgate University, and the University of Texas at Austin; I thank audiences at these schools for stimulating discussion and for making it possible for the readings to occur. No one mentioned here or in earlier acknowledgements is to be presumed to agree with me or to be held responsible for faults in my thoughts and writing.

2.   *Parmenides: Being, Bounds, and Logic* (Yale University Press, 1986) and "The Paradox of Socratic Ignorance (How to Know What You Don't Know)" *Philosophical Topics* 15:2 (pp. 23-34). I have chosen not to argue here for my views on Parmenides as I have for my views on Socrates, but simply to state them without reference to extremely recent treatments.

3.   See G.E.L. Owen, "Eleatic Questions" *Classical Quarterly* 10(1960):84-102, reprinted with revisions in R.G. Allen and D. Furley, Eds., *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), Vol. II, pp. 48-41; Montgomery Furth, "Elements of Eleatic Ontology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7(1968):111-32, also in A.P.d. Mourelatos, Ed., *The Pre-Socratics* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1974), pp. 241-70; Martha Nussbaum, "Eleatic Conventionalism and Philolaus and the Conditions of Thought," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 83(1979):63-108; M.M. Mackenzie, "Parmenides' Dilemma," *Phronesis* 27(1982):1-13.

4.   The idea of comparison with Zen practice is from Furth, who uses a different example (see note 3).

5.   I would like to thank Gregory Vlastos for personal communications and for permission to refer to all or part of what he has said in public or in private. The crucial article by Vlastos is "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge," *Philosophical Quarterly* 35(1985):1-3. I hope that I have reproduced it accurately also the step-by-step progression of the elenchus as he conceives it. I would also like to thank Alexander Nehamas for sharing his views with me as mine developed, and to apologize for a crucial misunderstanding I committed in the article on Socrates.

6.   *Lysis* 222E. Translated by J. Wright.

7.   i.e., My criterion for selecting these premises was quite simply that they leaped off of a somewhat quickly perused English translation as unjustified statements, rules, or examples crucial to refutations (i.e., they are not themselves the hypotheses being examined) and thus necessarily known if the final ignorance-claim is to work. That is, such premises are so common that the *Lysis* is thick with them and depends on them. However, I can also recommend authors whom I have read with profit in the past on early Platonic reasoning, particularly in relation to the eleatic tradition: Svend Ranulf, *Der eleatische Satz vom Widerspruch* (Copenhagen:Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1924), four articles by A. Szabó in the *Acta Antiqua Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae*: "Beiträge zur Geschichte der griechischen Dialektik" (Vol. 1, 1951-52, pp. 377-405); "Zur Geschichte der Dialektik des Denkens" (Vol. 2, 1953-54, pp. 17-57); "Zum Verstandnis der Eleaten" (Vol. 2, 1953-54, pp. 243-86); "Eleatica" (Vol. 3, 1955, pp. 67-102), and Geoffrey E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge, 1966).

8.   "Augeries of Innocence," lines 1-2, in the edition of David V. Erdman, *Poetry and Prose of William Blake (Garden City: Doubleday, Inc., 1970), p. 481.*