

PROSODY AND APEIRON

There was neither being (sát) nor nonbeing (ásat) ... what happened? ... who knows? ... Creation may have formed itself ... or the One who made it might not even know. — Rigveda 10. 129

If there is no real thing that is perceived of which you say it does not exist, then the nonexistent, being baseless, how will it present itself to the mind. — Shantideva

"... then even nothing was not, nor existence... The poets who've illumined their hearts see that which is, is kin to that which is not." Nasadiya Sukta

It is by listening carefully to beginnings that we avoid imbalances and set clear courses for necessary change. That's the traditional wisdom ... but it comes too late, and fails to recognize that every moment is the originary beginning. And the only way to get to this point is by being in the beginningless, safeguarding all arisings.

Where does a book about prosody begin? Where does prosody begin? This question is particularly problematic for me. I've already taught and written extensively on prosody as a whole. I thought I had already started at the beginning. And I thought I would, here, start again by presenting prosody as our evolutionary protolanguage, only to find that ground also falling away as a matter of beginning. Complicating a possible starting point even more, I also consider the *segmentals* (phonemes, fillers, syllables) as fully meaningful in themselves and as proper parts of prosody; for many years I've directed an experimental, investigative song and dance cast that has performed a variety of traditional and original phoneme-cosmogonies premised on origination of the universe through sound, specifically the particles of sound known as "phonemes." Initially, this choir was in fact called the "Phoneme Choir" until it gathered up its findings, expanded its mission and morphed into "The Commons Choir". As a responsible prosodist how much more initial than *materialization* could I possibly be? To begin again to write of prosody, I have to ask why a sound practice commensurate with cosmogony is no longer "initial" and why an elucidation of prosody as the "missing" protolanguage would be insufficient (although eventually this case must be made.)

Not even cosmogony starts at the beginning? How could it? Creation would have been brought about. Conventional cosmogony starts once there is an observable beginning. What happened prior to that, before there was something that could be known? The initial conditions that bring about a beginning are necessarily integral to what begins. And prosody is characterizable as that which is constitutive of its initial condition (much more on this below). And my need to start before the beginning must play out in a way that pertains entirely to prosody *practice*. Why? The simple answer would be *to be at home*. Thus the opening question splits in two. How to start before the beginning? And how might prosody and beginninglessness be interrelated? — an impossible posing of the question of that which is not preceded by non-existence before the question of the conditions prior to the coming about of that which does exist.

The matter of "home" is crucial for me. On a practical level, I'm not quite *homeless*. I rent. I'm insecure, paying roughly 2/3 of my income to a Behavioral Change Manager landlord who works for the multinational firm KPMG. I live here, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, but this is not my home. I did recently return to the town where I was born to care for my father for the last 10 years of his life. It was an honor to be with him and keep him in his home as he wished. Nonetheless, as our story together was closing, in the last days leading up to his death at age 100, in the very house he had built and lived in for 65 years, he kept looking to me and imploring, at times insisting "I want to go home" "take me home" "I know you know how to take me home, I want to go home now." We're made just as much of all that exists as all that doesn't. All that doesn't exist ... could it be listed? Parmenides believed that if "it" could be listed, it then *is*; and what really doesn't exist, *is not*. But, if we accept the premise of non-existence, is it but one non-existence that exists? Does it issue forth numerous existences —say "cosmoi" — other than our own, and is its nonexistence uniquely unspecifiable in relation to unique sets of terms in each existence ... in effect creating as many non-existences? Perhaps we should simply let the matter alone as the unknown? Would this be tantamount to admitting that the unknown is our home? To find a way home, to belatedly meet my belated father's urgency to be brought home, I can work through these questions as an offering to others, to others working along parallel and intersecting lines who might find these terms to be of benefit.

The act of speech has always struck me as exceeding my ability to comprehend how it is that I'm able to speak. It's been a matter of letting it happen while allowing the wonder of it to take part in particularized meaning-making. Whatever the mix of inherent or acquired fluency, a word arising in mind, written, or reverberating in air and processed by another's population of neurons, as the most radically intimate, significant, bewildering psychochemical event, has always exceeded my self-understanding. And the effect has been rather proportionate: the more I've studied evolutionary linguistics, speech evolution, cognitive science, psycholinguistics, semiotics, neurolinguistics, primate vocalization research, bioacoustics, computation and so on, the more I'm gratefully wonderstruck all over again. Nothing explains language, particularly not its own power of explanation — which is not to say that it can't be self-recursive. Words must, in fact, say more than words can say, particularly when they're addressing their own nature. In brief, inquiring into *how* a word happens has been a process of fully beholding *that* it happens, just like "existence" — indeed, with existence and language as co-constitutive. The ungraspable nature of words leaves a vast vacuity that language disciplines are scarcely able to address. It literally soothes and balances me to hold language and cosmogony in the same breath. To posit prosody before —and constitutive of — the beginning *and* in relation to that which has no beginning, is the most that I can set out to do; to entrain with the terror of initial knowing. Origin models and myths of both language and cosmos abound; they become coeval and fuse with the arising of each everyday word, as direct evidence and experiential data ... as attuned as Vedic *rsis* who saw their verses form us at the originary sacrifice of nonbeing for being, in order that total interconnectivity *happen*.

NOT EVEN NOTHING

The only observable beginning — our beginning — would itself have had a prior, causal condition, even if that necessary condition would have been “nothing.” Can it be shown that prosody had a constitutive role in that condition? Are poets particularly implicated in or responsible for the ways in which phenomena, at this scale, has played itself out? Particularly in the *Brahmanas*, differentiated materiality is constituted of meters and mantras — the Vedic verses, sacrificial formulae, chants, incantations and imprecations — emanating from the unlimited word, in turn recited by the poets (*rṣis*) as unauthored (*apauruṣeya*) verse. Is there a sacrifice poets are no longer performing that is crucial for maintaining the intricate web of wellbeing? It’s not about social exceptionalism or extraordinary powers, but clarity of role and full participation. Can it be said that our prior condition was the word yet unspoken? Is not an unmanifest word yet a word, the original *unstruck* (*anāhata*) thought through which all phenomena is made manifest through vocalized speech? Is not everything that exists a discrete relationship to its nonexistence? What’s so special about language?

At what point did prosody begin to embody us? Was there a point? Let’s say that prosody, as the patterned vibration of all forms, began to embody us at the emission-point of the first sound wave (and according to its specific oscillations.) Is there a practice through which this point is yet *audible*, just as the cosmic background radiation (CBR, the oldest light in the universe) is still *visible*? It is a fact that the CBR and the primordial acoustic event that drove the expansion of the earliest universe are inseparable. Indeed, aided by extremely sensitive spectra instruments and mathematical constructs, acoustic cosmologists like John Cramer and Gavin Starks have “played” the sounds of the CMB, galaxy arms, gravitational waves, pulsar spins, black hole collisions and other astrological phenomena; while in the sonic universe of the *Upaniśads* an infinitely sensitive instrument — the *self*, or, bare consciousness (as consciousness is itself a modification of waveform) — can directly hear the cosmogenic sound, the *anāhata nāda*, the unstruck sound. (This sound which can be tuned to but not produced, audible as the cynosure syllable *AUM*, runs through Upaniśadic, Epic, Puranic, Yogic and Tantric scriptures, and pre-dates, pervades and sustains the current cosmos while reverberating within the body. The relevant literature is vast. The *Mandukya* and *Nada Bindu Upaniśads* are potent starting points for practice — with Vedic *Vāc* as the feminine principle or presence of speech as precursor, and the Hatha Yoga *Praitprika* perhaps standing as the most recent detailing of a *Pranava* practice.)

All along I’ll be interrelating two primary *proofs* (*pramanas*): *evidenced-based science* and *śabda* (the “word” of sacred teachings transmitted through time and received as truths), as I find both modes of knowing to be rigorously experiential with a shared dedication to the “real” and to objective, positive outcomes. Both modes also share a similar limitation. Science could be described as that system of knowledge that continually obsolesces itself by upholding any topical view as *truth*. And the constant reinterpretation of traditional knowledge always leaves room for further interpretations, partial understandings, biases and confusions. My purpose in all this is simply to provide whatever means I can for a practice of prosody as liberating and life-fulfilling. In this, I’m open to establishing correlations between the scientific and the sagacious, but only if such connections are cross-causational or serve as practical insights in themselves.

SAY

yə·hî "let there be"

Poets draw on prosody in order to write poems ... and orators, in order to speak persuasively. Meditative recitation of primordial sounds and syllables merges a practitioner with all points of the inceptive and sustaining energy of existence. According meditative recitation with the purported, standard Big Bang model of the universe that began from an infinitely dense singularity event around 13.8 billion years ago (depending on the reigning Hubble Constant) is simple enough. Hindu *Pranava*, *Nāda Yoga*, Attentional *Anāhata* and the Phonemic Emanations found in Tantra are all profound cosmogenic approaches that directly correlate with our scientific understanding of the observable universe. Speech cosmogonies have been practiced the world over. In the first chapter of *Sefer Bereshit*, the phrase “And God said” (*Wayyōmer Ēlōhīm*) occurs ten times while “and it came to be” (*wayəhî*) occurs fifteen times. Creation comes about through different permutations of the twenty-two letters housed in the Torah. “Twenty-two letters: God drew them, hewed them, combined them, weighed them, interchanged them, and through them produced the whole creation and everything that is destined to come into being.” (So says the *Sefer Yetzirah*.) But what distinguishes prosody (and its expression as poetry) from forthright physical science is a fused factual and figurative faculty of perception (the *definite* and *indefinite*, if you like, or the *finite* and the *infinite*.) *Sirach* 1:4 states that “Wisdom has been created before all things.” And this wisdom *can* be heard. The phenomenal world is the manifestation of wisdom, constituted by and of *wisdom*. What we’re witnessing, whether by means of an optical telescope, electron microscope or a sunrise seen with our own eyes, is wisdom itself — and as such, as that which came before creation, we are also directly perceiving nonexistence’s existence. “And there is no beginning but wisdom...” (Bahir: 97.) Empirically, in this view, all things are seen as *teachings*, even *speech*; felt as breath and blessings.

SA’AH NAAGHÁI BIK’EH HÓZHÓÓN

In Diné ceremony as well, the world is thought and spoken into existence from within the sweat-house of the primordial *Diyin Dine’é*, the inviolable Holy People or In-lying Ones. “The earth will be, from the very beginning I have thought it ... The earth will be, from ancient times I speak it ... and so it will be.” (Beginning of the World Song, translated by Gary Witherspoon, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe*, pg. 16.) The animating powers of thought (*Sa’áh naaghái*) and speech (*Bik’eh hózhó’*) are drawn out of the ordinary medicine bundle. But reducing the meanings of *Sa’áh naaghái* and *Bik’eh hózhó’* to “thought” and “speech” would be more than misleading. As an invocatory term *Sa’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón* is omnipresent in Diné prayers, rites and storytelling. Diné Education Consultant Vangee Nez has written that “*Sa’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón* is Diné epistemology, a complex system of knowledge encompassing two paradigms: Beauty Way (*Hózhóójii*-female) and Protection Way (*Naayée’ k’egho*-male), with *hózhó* at its core. (*Diné Epistemology: Sa’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón Teachings*, by Vangee Nez.) The word “*hózhó*” is resonant beyond any conceivable interpretation. Perhaps “harmony” or “balance” or “happiness” can begin to give an impression. But what’s involved is a lifelong, ardent, ethical, ecological, participatory practice regarding one’s actions in relation to others, community, environment and cosmos, as full awareness of the cosmogenic, current nature of words. This interrelational nature in which language is

performative and proscriptive — not descriptive — is directly practiced as prosodic transformation of space in the neurosocio-commons. In this sense, translation and indigenization of conscience serve as antidotal medicine of reverse acculturation. From the book *Saad Lá Tah Hózhóón* by Diné poet Rex Lee Jim (translated by the author): “*I come in many forms. Because of me people think differently. Because of me people pray differently. Because of me people sing differently. Because of me people speak differently. Because of me people plan differently. Because of me people live differently. Voice I am... I value different ways of living ... These are reasons why I gave myself over to the earth-surface people ... When I sound within them without falling apart life ceaselessly expands. In the beginning I am.*” Diné poet Sherwin Bitsui (from a reading at the University of Arizona 2/12/2015): “*Unfurling a blank heaven over mapped earth, here again*”. When the Diyin Dine’é were originally asked what they were planning they answered: “*We are planning to extend knowledge endlessly.*” (from Witherspoon.) “Prosody” is to directly perceive this plan as vibratory phenomena; to receive the prayers we pray. *Hózhó* is the patterning of who we are by harmony-generating awareness. In my own teaching I call this *Implicate Prosody* — prosody as the embodied, enacted, rhythmic integration of wisdom, world and interaction.

Diversity of speech and behavior is evidence of thought’s boundlessness. “*In the Navaho view of the world, language is not a mirror of reality; reality is a mirror of language.*” (*Language and Art in the Navaho Universe*, Gary Witherspoon. pg.34.) Through language we participate in continually re-intuited, re-researched creation. And given that cosmology is always local (an epiphenomenon of a people in their bioregion and background) it’s through language that we participate in creation of place. In this way, all things are revelatory, word is entheogenic and breathing is itself the creational, carrier wind. Cosmogony is our nature.

WORD OF THE FOX (PROSODY AS AN ETHIC OF NATURE)

In West African Dogon cosmogony, the original stirring of elements and impulses are the words of the creator Amma. Amma conceives of the world and then materializes it through the spoken word. One of the first beings to be engendered is a key figure in Dogon divination named Ogo. Ogo breaks out of the primordial egg prematurely, anxious to complete a rival world of his own. Clearly, Ogo is a disordering, self-invested agent. For Ogo’s repeated transgressive behaviors, Amma metes out a series of punishments designed to deprive him of the creative power of speech: his tongue is torn out, his teeth are broken, his throat is damaged and he is ultimately changed into a fox, forced to live as an outlier and a thief. But Ogo’s agitations are at once understood as integral to the formation of the universe, and he is given a mediatory role between human activity and Amma’s intentions. Ogo begs to speak to people and people carefully read the signs and symbols of events as the divinatory speech of Ogo, the “Word of the Fox.” In Dogon divination, speech is the matrix of the cosmos. The original word and human language are one oscillation in an uncertain and constantly recreated and reinterpretable reality. Action is a form of speaking, and every work is the word of its maker. Ogo’s speech-deprivation nevertheless continues to shape and redress the world as the “word of the fox” sought in divinatory rites by people in need of guidance.

Ogo's struggles at the beginning of time created the dynamic irregularities necessary for the evolution of life. In divination, the freedom of making personal decisions in a contingent, contradictory and conflictual world is a matter of carefully consulting phenomena while accepting responsibility for the communal harmony upon which the fluent workings of Creation depend. In her book *Dogon Divination As An Ethic of Nature*, Laura Kétékou Grillo states that Dogon divination is "an ethical duty arising from the responsibility human beings bear for the proper functioning and flourishing of the cosmos, giving primacy therefore to 'the good.'" Prosody (to reiterate) is the expressive, rhythmic, tonal, intonational, intentional, temporal, performative and repercussive aspects of language — the entire gesture of realized interrelationship. These prosodic facets are themselves a rapport with cosmogonic forces also distinguishable as "language" and further distinguishable as *prosodic* forces, as portrayed in the patterned, cymatic emanation of the observable universe. This rapport between vocal and cosmogonic prosodies is embodied and activated in the courses of action we divine each day in light of this rapport and (as mentioned in Dogon practice above) for the wellbeing of community and all that exists. Prosody as an "ethic of nature" is simply a practice committed to becoming aware of the full meaningfulness of phenomena. Prosody, by definition — beyond the lexical, discursive, material levels of language — opens into the immeasurable potencies of sound, symbol, suggestion, invocation, incantation, silence and the implicit. Its divinatory potential (to propose and put into place by way of the about-to-spoken) calls upon these potencies entangled in events to bring about harmonious, equitable outcomes in the molten creativity of the momentary. It's not "supernatural ability" but unobstructed insight into the nature of existence; not paranormal or "out-of-body" but an emptiness of self and out-of-bias; a step outside the dictates of cause and effect where consequences can be weighed and played out by the prescient and impulsive array of prosody's tools. Prosody connects act to ethic — there are critical differences between coercing and compelling and occasioning. Superstition is a matter of acting out of the fear of nature's presumed inhospitality. Reality is otherworldly enough. Immeasurably so.

COSMOI

But what are the implications for prosodic practice once we take into consideration the multiverse and unobservable-universe models, including cyclic models in which prior versions of our own universe may have collapsed and bounced back? Does this blow human being to smithereens or put things in perspective? In Post-Vedic Hindu cosmology, a beginninglessness in which universes sequentially oscillate in and out of existence *is* the standard model, in which the imperishable *Vedas*, as both the undifferentiated and differentiated totality of knowledge, formulate cosmos after cosmos. And in the west, no later than the time of the first theoretical physicist Anaximander, teetering between Hesiod's theogonic table of elements and natural science, would the word "cosmos" have appeared in the plural *cosmoi*. How would a person, co-emergently, tune to the bubbling up of potentially infinite *cosmoi*, each with its own physical nature? And although there is of course an outside chance that our known cosmos is absolutely unique and non-successive, the question of a lone, specific prior condition or a possibly-characterizable conditionlessness would still remain unresolved — not to mention prosody's unprobed relationship with the unobservable 95% of our current universe which is purportedly dark energy and matter invisible to us by any means.

NO LOCATION, PLACELESS PLACE, NOWHERE'S WHEREABOUTS ANALAGOUS TO THE UNSTRUCK SOUND

What is it to *disappear* ... like one thought after another? The reversibility of remembering. It must have once existed, even if nowhere. Information that exists, as it never existed. Boundless love in each cell of my body. I'm horizon without even a line. The vast complexity of nothing, abounding; *nihilscopic*. Just as an H₂O molecule is not a piece of water, a person dying, aging, suffering and being born, is not a part of everything. Space is not made of space. In the perturbative tonotopy of our exchanges. The only word that could ever curl up every point in space until they vanish is "word." The tip of tongue. Cavernous suspense. Entirely probable with no real world application implied. I could do this all day. The unobservable outcomes are calling the shots. There are no building blocks. No rug to pull "under" out from under. We were led to believe that space is a byproduct of arrangements within it. It will appear in a phase completely unfamiliar to us, but when? Scrap it and reassemble it before it's too late to ever figure out. Physics will outlive the law. I can't be uncoordinated. We jiggle. Stiffen up in a crowd. If you've ever spent an hour disentangling your daughter's hair, you'll never romanticize entanglement again — or at least until she grows up and takes charge of her own haircare. (The word for smoothly flowing inner energy in Tantra is "untangled.") The boundary is nothing and it is everywhere, emitting solids like us. An unassembled bracelet can't contour a wrist, not until we hear humming. I'm no relation to you ... just the same stuff. The more incontiguous the more we say many and seem one. If we're all immune to the ubiquitous how will we get along? Bring me to your back-door, I'm completely oblivious to your aura. I want to be born again though backwards. You've created so much distance between us I can't move on. Inconsistency is as short as flat. The brain is not built to accept its own shortsightedness. What's left is the grain of salt without the salt. Being weighed down is a crutch, just as instantaneity is personal. Primitive prosody is the cause and its effect, the throwing that is the rock that throws itself into the pond, the wave, the floating threads, clumping stars, and the interspersing tonal and intentional landscapes conveyed and interpreted as actually happening. I experience what is not known first. There's not enough distance between us to exist. The intense eros of being each other's mechanics and information loss, an embrace made of every being that ever exists, without analogue. I can't come until I'm approximate again. Though the buildup must first be built exactly. We are what is real about each other: the appearance of solidity's appearance. The cosmos calls me home. Another universe barging in, how else explain effects without cause? Any hypothesis will fit in my hat.

WHAT'S MORE PRIMITIVE THAN SPACE?

"What is the divine? That which has no origin and no end." — Thales, (DK 11A1 (36)).

Let's travel back to the portal of creation, step by step, palpation by palpation, where what we've always thought of as 'time' shatters into droplets that have no meaning.

If there can be sound without a source ('unstruck' as implied above) how could there not be space without events as well? If there is a cosmogenic predecessor-space, would it have inherent properties so different from existence as-we-know-it (or void of existence) as to be absolutely unrecognizable?

In a successive-universe scenario, is there a trajectory? Does the oscillatory nature of the observable collapse limitlessly back into itself or exhaust itself forward (or perhaps both at once?) Does not-even-space exist, and if so, how can we even say "exist"? What would whatever we're able to point to as "nonexistent" be made of? What is anything ultimately made from? In his final essay titled "Eureka" Edgar Allan Poe wrote: "*Because nothing was, all things are.*" Would non-spatiality be tantamount to nothing? (I pose these questions only in relation to prosody; problems without the provision of prosodic implications I couldn't even pretend to meaningful tend.) Is it proper to speak of prosody inanimately, as applied to matter? (Would it not then be the elusive *vital force*?) Could prosody per se have played a part in the fraction (and fractioning) of the world that is visible to us? Where does it start? What is its rock bottom — especially in that prosody is always integral to its own emergent conditions? Could vibration itself, indivisible from prosody, act utterly differently in other cosmoi? Are there totally inconceivable prosodies? Or could vibration not exist and existence yet exist? What is prosody's role in the pre-palpable (if not the substantiation of the nature that it would tune?) Especially now that space is theorized as having properties of its own, with or without matter in it: flexibility, fluidity, springiness, outward push, and so on. It may even have *weight*, or at least mass-producing effects by means of particle-interaction with bosons in the putative Higgs field — like passing a potential mass through thick molasses that saturates and coats that mass. In terms of current testable cosmological questions, one underlying premise is that emptiness has energy, so-called counter-gravitational *dark energy*. The impulse to speak. That which we have no idea will ever be spoken or could be spoken: dark energy of the all-generative and unmanifest tacit, staring us in the face by means of what we call "outer space." It lays on the cosmetics, onto all the surfaces it has created.

Augustine of Hippo's statement about time could only, at once, apply to his sense of space: "...then assuredly the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time... 'In the beginning' can't be said if something had come before." (*City of God* XI, 6). In our helplessness, why wouldn't we cling to scripture? Homer qualified the gods as everlasting and ageless (*aidion kai agaro.*) Doesn't cosmology today confirm the archaic rumor: that the eternal, infinite, inexhaustible and inconceivable define the divine? Perhaps Aristotle best expressed the archaic moment of the melding of theoretical physics and theology. In the latter half of Book 3 of his *Physics* he finds it necessary to exhaustively inquire into *infinity*. "There is no beginning of the infinite (*apeiron,*) for in that case it would have an end. But it is without beginning and indestructible, as being a sort of first principle; for it is necessary that whatever comes into existence should have an end. Wherefore as we say, there is no first principle of this (i.e. the infinite) but it itself seems to be the first principle of all other things and to surround all and to direct all, as they say who think that there are no other causes besides the infinite (such as mind, or friendship), but that it itself is divine; for it is immortal and indestructible, as Anaximander and most of the physicists say." (*Physics* iii. 4; 203 b 7.) This year's (2019) Nobel prize-winner in physics, James Peebles, concurs: "It's very unfortunate that one thinks of the beginning whereas in fact, we have no good

theory of such a thing as the beginning." (AFP interview, November, 2019.) Peeples said of the Big Bang: "It connotes the notion of an event and a position, both of which are quite wrong."

Peeling away the doxographic layers — back to the key terms and concerns of the Presocratics — provides us with western instruments for sensing prosody's primordial stirrings. This etymological odyssey at once opens various concomitant cultural questions. Can early cosmology support contemporary astrophysics? Can a peer-reviewed proof spark a meditative practice? Can mantra coincide with baryon acoustic oscillations? Are geometries of the formative gas flows around galaxies harmonic? Can a capacious understanding of prosody apprise the sciences? The cross-empirical approach of the research field known as the *Prosodic Body* posits that such correlative questioning weaves together who we are and allows us to feel at home in the scarcely knowable.

EVERYTHINGS

What is that which is entirely or at least somewhat different from that which it creates?

The universe is a product of the illimitable exacting a limiting action on itself. What can be known about this action? How did I arrive at this question? From how many angles? The question whether space has any inherent properties (*not* co-dependent on anything *in* space) is inseparable from the attempt to locate the basic elements or particles, beyond which only pure space would exist. Can the building blocks indeed be removed without obliterating their volume? What underlies even the infinitesimal? "Underlie" is itself a precarious, perhaps misleading, word. The origin from which all things come might not exist in any spatial relation to its productions. Spatiality itself is suspect as mere metaphor. Expressions like *God within, heaven above* and *underlying reality* might be misdirecting us, not cluing us "in." Ultimately (is it delusional to conjecture in terms of the *ultimate*?) there would seem to be a point at which something could have only come from nothing, or from something so different from known matter that it utterly escapes us. But why assume "everything" would have only happened once as *our* everything? What about *their* everythings, *alien* everything, *otherworldly* everything, *separable* everythings? Perhaps phenomena forever springs from phenomena, with no infinities (as Aristotle suggests) separable from the sensible. Assume an infinite number of everythings (cosmoi, in this case) forever generating from something else. Is immateriality merely matter we can't identify. Is materiality more or less or also completely immaterial, perhaps but a holograph projected from the 2D edge of the overall shape of the universe. To be "in over our heads" would be the point of existence, were existence to have a point — to hold up under the awe that blows our separable selves away. Holding up under the awe that blows our separable selves away leaves what? What is it to "hold up?" To stick to the delusion of density? To what end? To be somebody? To not miss a moment of the preciousness of existence (which is obscured by holding up)?

Leave behind even holding up. Hear what you say. Prosody is a leaving off from prosody, quite specifically. Worrying is extremely localized. One is worried. Worrying is extremely localized because we claim it. It can't exist without us. What else would want it (other than oneself)? Prosody is being in the position of not being bound to the reinforcement of position. Tonal

freedom in all directions; in being inhabital. (Creative interrelationship not bound to chronic, causal outcomes.) Does the nature of space hold a key for prosody as an ethic of nature? Is there a behavioral tendency in the practice of tonal freedom? In the Dzogchen, the most ancient teaching in Tibetan Buddhism, emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and compassion are coeval (and, moreover, *blissful*.) How different is meditative *śūnyatā* from cosmogonic speculation? Is it the nature of space that is empty, or the nature of mind aware of its own emptiness? It could be said that *śūnyatā* is reflexive: meditation on space leads to *śūnyatā* and *śūnyatā* empties space. But with regard to the Presocratic project, how “participatory” was the process of thinking? Was there a pronounced tendency among these first philosophers to reflect back on that which theorizes as a constitutive part of the cosmos they were attempting to comprehend? “To think is the same as the thought: it is.” (*Ταῦτόν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα*. From Parmenides' untitled poem: 8.34.) I.e., both thinking and the thought *are*; that is, they *is*; this is the bottomline ontic enlightenment, prerequisite for Presocratic processing of phenomena. They *theorized* for the sake of the kosmos.

PHYSIKOI

How did the Presocratics self-identify. (They certainly could not have called themselves “Presocratics.”) Adding to the difficulty of identification is the fact that they were very variegated, often writing to contradict each other. Aristotle called them *physikoi*, to differentiate them from the earlier *theologoi* and *mythologoi*. They were a fringe movement (quite literally: their Milesian “school” was in present-day Turkey, while the other, established Eleatic school was in southern Italy) that began a new way of inquiring into the phenomenal world. Their natural philosophy was an uprising and an uprooting. *Concept* struck people to the ground. (Anaxagoras was prosecuted for *impiety* for asserting that stars were fiery stones.) They were proto-scientific etiologists. Heraclitus said “lovers of wisdom must be inquirers into many things,” and the *physikoi* were indeed pan-disciplinary. Their knowledge of nature was intended to bear on all things, namely, the kosmos — a bearing that nonetheless involved the rejection of considerable prior knowledge. They’re known for their revolutionary rationality. Logic *this* pure must have been totally revelatory in its day. Pristine ontology would have indeed burned as bright as the “truth.” But the keenness of their epistemological method can’t be explained without recognizing that they were at once awash with the extramundane. Thales was a hylozoist who held that God is mind. Xenophanes didn’t rebuke Hesiod for being theological, rather he ridiculed him for degrading deity with the attribution of human characteristics. For Anaxagoras, *nous* initiated the motion of the universe and had power over all things without partaking of them. For Heraclitus, knowledge of the structure of the kosmos accorded with knowledge of the soul. The closed communities of the Pythagorean *akousmatikoi* worshiped Pythian Apollo. The Orphic formulae that found their way into Plato’s dialogues would have first journeyed straight through the Presocratic schools. Empedocles was an ethicist. Parmenides’ poem is a hexametered katabasis that takes him to a goddess who lays down the plain ontological truth: what is *is* and what is not *is* not (*ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν* 6.2-3) and there’s nothing to learn from the latter “for you cannot know what is not” (*γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἔδν*. 2.5) — just get over it, give it up, in order to know what is necessarily real and to hear the everyday speech of mortals for what it is, i.e., that which *deadens*. Parmenides doesn’t refer to the *apeiron*. He simply unifies Being by abolishing nonbeing. In his poem, all differentiation is part and parcel of the specious world of “*doxa*” (opinion) while *beings* like ourselves only have veritable existence as *Being*.

Parmenides was also a *Oulades Physikos*, a physician or *iatromantis*. As such, he would have had an array of revelatory-healing practices at his disposal: dark retreat, diet, dream *incubatio* and interpretation, *enkoimesis*, word cure, baths, herbs, gymnastics and other Asklepiian therapies. Parmenides would have also understood that his poem — in which he was shown what only God knows — would need to be a total therapy in itself, the ultimate medicine of *truth* told: a sacrifice (of his mere mortality, his being, of untrue poetry); a centerpiece of his healing ceremony; deepest theurgic doctoring; the poem's words as Word — being-merged-into-Being as the basis of the poem. One could read his fragments as a mere didactic poem or empirical paradox, but only at the expense of untold benefits and heightened wellbeing; his poem has more in common with the mystery religions of his time than philosophy as we know it today — a turning or converting back to the divine; what Jung called *Urerfahrung*. First philosophy was an initiatory purification; an immortalization of soul, not its explication as was the case with "next" philosophies.

Prosody implies that how we say what we say *is* what we say. The mind making itself up is prosody saying what we say in a way that says what it says. Prosody is the mind making itself up in a way that says what we say. Among the *physikoi*, mind and logos became indistinguishable. Their natural speculations were a clearing of the mind, a returning to mind as primordial; speculations that patterned the mind anew — according to the language of their inquiries — into Nature inclusive of kosmos. If an original writing on cosmogony is not itself cosmogenic it has failed. The *physikoi* were contrarian. They opposed popular culture, they reconciled a universe that was generated and energized by contraries, and they argued with each other. They stood acutely and contentiously between the infinite and the finite, the undifferentiated and the different, chaos and order, the uncreated and the contingent, being and nonbeing, Being and beings, oneself and others, mind and knowledge, as well as elemental contraries like water and fire, air and earth, in order to speak the language of reality for the first time. Their prosodies were the correspondences between that which reveals and their realized revelations. Their mode can rightly be called *henosis*, a fusion with the fundamental, a coming home to logos. Heraclitus wrote indignant aphoristic fragments with the precision of a jeweler, and as though the kosmos were a digestive tract eliminating his speech. Parmenides knowingly wrote a metered, counter-counterfeit-Odyssey to take himself home and tell the story that Being, not *beings*, live on. In effect, the *physikoi* established an intense elenctic collective according their language with the periodicities of cosmogenic logos; with prosody as the necessary particularization of the primordial; a *prosodonoēsis*; an interactive tonotopic organization of what is.

ARCHÊ = APEIRON

There is doxographical agreement that Anaximander was the first theoretical physicist — specifically for having thoroughly thought-through origin. He is credited with the first technical use of the term *archê* (beginning, first cause) and the equating of *archê* with *apeiron* (the indefinite, infinite, that which cannot be limited, or that which comes before all differentiation) (see Simplicius *Physics*. 32 r; 150,20 — *Physics* 24, 13.) And even if Anaximander *didn't* ultimately confirm infinite coexistent and successive cosmoi, his disclaimer would have required the conceptualization of their possibility and served as de facto *introduction* of the idea. Once

arriving at the indefinite as *archê*, all contradictions and all possibilities beyond the evident are necessarily in play, even as parallel or simultaneous possibilities. In a very real sense, Anaximander's views bear on the quantum dicta of the indivisibility of observer and observed — that one's observation of a state of matter alters that state, and that the energy transferred to a system in order to observe it is at least partially constitutive of that system. In his search for the primal prose of natural philosophy, Anaximander's introduction of a conceptual abstraction — a neuter, non-representational, metaphysical term such as *apeiron* — would have been in itself earthshattering in 6th century BCE Miletus. And having modelled the beginning of philosophy by directly thinking the beginning — void of theogony or metaphoric, heroic and mythological supports — it's no wonder that physics, as well as metaphysics, keep referring back, foundationally, to the few archaic accounts of his writing and the lone extant fragment, appearing in a roundabout attestation by Simplicius (DK 12B1) commenting on Aristotle's *Physics* one millennium after Anaximander, and believed to be a quotation from Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus. The fragment itself: "The Non-Limited is the original material of existing things; further, the source from which existing things derive their existence is also that to which they return at their destruction, according to necessity; for they give justice and make reparation to one another for their injustice, according to the arrangement of Time." (translated by Kathleen Freeman in *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p. 19.)

Nietzsche redeployed Anaximander's *apeiron* as detonation device for collapsing both the Classical Apollonian Greek ideal and the axiological foundations of Christian civilization. "That which truly is, concludes Anaximander, cannot possess definite characteristics, or it would come-to-be and pass away like all the other things. In order that coming-to-be shall not cease, primal being must be indefinite. The immortality and everlastingness of primal being does not lie in its infinitude or its inexhaustibility, but in the fact that it is devoid of definite qualities which would lead to its passing away. Hence its name, 'the indefinite'." (Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. p. 47.) On the basis of the Anaximander Fragment, Heidegger first distinguished the differences between beings (*ta onta*), to be (*einai*), is (*estin*) and Being (*on*), and our profound obliviousness to Being (see his essay on the Anaximander Fragment.) He further defines *apeiron* as the "empowering power of appearance" and the effective difference between Being and beings, while highlighting Anaximander's correlation of *apeiron*, *archê* and being: *archê ton onton to apeiron*. (*The Beginning of Western Philosophy*. pp. 22-26.) With *apeiron* as presence, a being is that which presences in *unconcealment*. Emanuel Levinas also calls "*apeiron*" by name. In *Totality and Infinity* he elaborates the dependent interrelationship between autonomous beings and infinity; *apeiron* is the primal giver, as well as 'nothingness.' In more recent physics, Heisenberg developed a theory in which elementary particles were stationary states in a unified field of matter which he likened to Anaximander's *apeiron*. Max Born proposed to name the primordial quantum substance in which the same particle could manifest in different states "*apeiron*." One explanation for dark energy is that it's a property of space. Empty space may be thought of as an *apeiron* in which virtual particles continually appear and disappear.

UNBORN AGAIN

"There is nothing in possibility more wonderful than what is." (*laysa fi 'l-imkan abda ' mimma kan*). — Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī

“The Lord of all things is the word “be”...

“Every shift (in the energy balance accomplished at earth’s crust) affects all the universe. Though fantastic, this is scientific fact.” — Buckminster Fuller

It would be a fascinating study, to trace the development of *apeiron* from Anaximander through the Hellenistic age, as it met and meshed with the major monotheisms (i.e., *arché* is God.) But tracing this theological crossover would be a major undertaking in itself and, for the most part, a sidetracking of the prosodic research at hand. I will, on the other hand, be following forward the Heraclitan lineage of the correlation of *archê* and Word (logos) as it is basic to prosody. The harmonic *arché* of Pythagoras and Philolaus is also a path that may wend its way through this writing in one form or another. And I think it’s essential, before moving on, to at least touch upon a few corroborative Arabic terms and Islamic sources that speak to the medium of prosody as I have been presenting it.

The lived experience of the eternal, evidenced through its ever-present contrast with the contingent (with everything else, with *everything*) is fundamental to Islamic thought. The 'contingent' is that which could either be or not be. *Hadith* derives from the Arabic root *h-d-th*, “to happen.” *Hadith* in Islamic literature of course refers to the collection of sayings, practices and sanctions that trace back to the Prophet. But the underlying meaning of *hadith* is “created-in-time” — that which begins after it was not; an existence preceded by non-existence; being-that-has-become. *Hadith* contrasts with *qadim*, “eternal.” The Quran, as verbatim revelations from Allah are *qadim* (or “uncreated,” “uncomposed,” if you like) while the *Hadith*, compiled generations after the time of Muhammad by his followers and subject to doubt, dispute and the burden of authentication, are *contingent*, created in time in relation to the verity and eternity of the Quran. It’s an open question (at least for non-Sunnis) whether the Quran was created (by God) or uncreated with no prior existence, not even as God's message to humankind at certain point in time. There's even a Quranic reference to the Quran as a *written* text (*archetext*) existing before creation, then transmitted orally to Muhammad. The Prophet’s literal illiteracy along with his lack of prior familiarity with the historical scriptures that undergird the Quran, would support the book’s status as revelation from self-existent *qadim* (not unlike the beginningless, imperishable *Vedas*.) To summarize, from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi’s text *Tajrid al-I’tiqad*: “What is not preceded by anything else, nor by non-existence, is eternal; otherwise, it is contingent (*hadith*).” (From *Creation in Time in Islamic Thought with Special Reference to Al-Ghazali*, by Eric L. Ormsby.) Ismaili and Sufi interpretations allow Quranic verses to be read on both levels, as created in time and uncreated — as exoterically, externally literal (*zahir*), and as hidden (*batin*.) (I’d argue that language itself — and certainly language as cosmogenic Logos — can be understood in this confluence.) *Zahir* is the “letter” of language, language as acquired habit, the arbitrariness of sound and meaning; artifice; the mechanistic; rote; face value; a superficial understanding of religion and the real, accessible to everybody; evident, apparent, knowing only the name of God and not God, knowing only God and not that the Name is God; deactivating words; deadness of the word; fundamentally non-resonant. *Batin* is inner, unseen, esoteric. From the Ismaili text *Kalami Pir* (pg 85): “If you look at the reality itself from the point of view of relativity, it will be relative, and if the relativity is seen from the point of view of reality, it will be reality.”

If the art of prosody, through its array of transformative tropes and grasps of symbolic meaning, is *not* that which senses and expresses the subtle shifts, streams, offshoots and impulses within the contingent/uncreated confluence, it is *nothing*. One writes within this confluence in order to reveal the confluence. One writes within this confluence to lift people out of the literal *and* the allegorical (*majāz*: the figurative, metaphorical, sign, caricature; inclusive of the “letters” which stand for things — the appearance we pass through because there is somewhere further to go which is marked by the meta-phor.) The timeless tropes of prosody mediate *zâhir* and the real (the real as that which requires statement and allegorization to be revealed) as an essential aspect of words saying more than words can say, in the illumination where words are illimitable, inimitable, real (*haqîqat*), where benevolence is beheld in every atom, in the origin of the gift of language, as our wondering where words come from begins to reciprocate.

AN AMERICAN APEIRON

In Ismaili theosophical practice, interpretation of literal and implied levels of meaning is named *ta'wil*. The *Kalami Pir* defines *ta'wil* as “derived from *awwal*, and means ‘to trace something to its origin.’” This is the same source Henri Corbin drew from in his book *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*. Corbin’s *ta'wil* was in turn tapped by several later-modernist American poets, including Diane di Prima, Robin Blaser, Robert Creeley, Robert Kelly and, in particular, Robert Duncan and Charles Olson. While it’s warranted to question the appropriateness of expropriating a Medieval theophanic Shi’ite text for the purposes of American poetics, in effect Corbin’s experiential, exegetical translations came across as immediately meaningful — even providential and, moreover, concisely mind-blowing — for the syncretic, anagogical, experimental spirit of the 1960s. (After all, even at this point, one half-century after the fact that this Ismaili Shiite offshoot took root in American poetics, a sedulous examination of motive can only help safeguard and update such an act of translation — even with regard to a poetics as assiduous as Olson’s that claimed to be “secularization that loses nothing of the divine” — a claim in this case up against the statement in the *Kalami Pir* that “*ta'wil* is the state of God” only realizable under the guidance of the Imam who possess all the evident and hidden properties of God and who keeps not only this world but 18,000 other worlds from collapsing.)

Everything Robert Duncan did was an “omen of the real.” He received, as he wrote, his heretical “grand collage.” In *Fictive Certainties*, relative to his experience of reading Pindar’s first Pythian Ode, he wrote: “My mind lost the hold of Pindar’s sense and was faced with certain puns, so the words *light, foot, hears, you, brightness, begins* moved in a world beyond my reading, these were no longer words alone but also powers in a Theogony, having resonances in Hesiodic and Orphic cosmogonies where the foot that moves in the dance of the poem appears as the pulse of measures of first things [archēs].” When Duncan introduced Charles Olson at the 1965 Berkeley Conference he said of Olson: “His knowledge of language is such that its usability seems everywhere. He has had to occupy an area in history big enough for a spirit which can roam all over anything it can imagine and then imagine one that is still restless because it can’t find a space big enough for it to exist in.” In Olson’s essay ‘The Animate versus the Mechanical, and Thought’ he added this note: “I am here seeking to speak within, or across the ‘range’ of a principle of likeness which includes, and seeks to ‘cover’ what Henry Corbin reminds me is a constantly affirmed homology among the initiatic cosmos, the world of nature,

and the celestial world.” He mapped a cosmography — the Animate — in which the events of his life would allow him to pass through a counterpart self who would be his archetype, or an angel thinking his thoughts, if you like, or all of his angels as a hierarchy of active intelligences. Olson referred to these intelligences as “given things or voices which come to you from cause.” Although the archetype he moved toward was necessarily individuated, it was at once cosmic (in terms of the Anthropos or “homo Maximus” whom Jung spoke of, via Ezekiel) and *extra-cosmic*. Olson was writing an *apeiron* event inclusive of the uncreated, of those events happening prior to creation which are conditions for creation: “But behind it all, backwards (Ocean forwards ta’wil the Angel of Cinvat / Bridge you will pass through it you / propose it / the 1st Angel (of the Pleroma - / the 1st samsarar / the 2nd Angel farushta / the 3rd angel your own / outside Creation outside God himself.” This concatenation of Ismaili terms appears in the fifth section of Olson's *The Secret of the Black Chrysanthemum*, displaying a poetics impossible to project without the Illuminationist writing of Suhrawardi and the epiphanic theosophy of Ibn Sīnā, as made available in Corbin’s texts.

Iranian metaphysics animates Western poetics on a number of levels. *Ta’wil* is a template for cutting through far-from-home occidental materialism and situating organism in cosmic communion, as new world pioneers become medieval Persian pilgrims. Also, the imagination is primary for both poetry and the Avicennan recital in which the *ta’wil* procedure takes place in and by means of the “organ of metamorphoses,” namely, the *imagination*. This is why I position prosody — the performance of the organ of poetic imagination — as mediatory between the senses and *apeiron*, between the contingent and that which exists without having come into existence. Through prosodic imagination the literal, sensible and exoteric are transmuted into *symbol* and *exaltation* which are identifiable as the spiritual reality they imply, and which could never be revealed otherwise or as anything else. This spiritualized imagination operates autonomously within the dictates of cause and effect; in fact it creatively composes with causal details, transferring words and actions — by means of themselves — beyond themselves into boundless being. Finally, it must be mentioned that the *ta’wil* return-to-origin necessitates originality, a perilous “finding out for oneself.” Innovative American poetics could *mainline* Ismaili mysticism in that our current age of maximal egoism is consonant with the ta’wil procedure which, to be genuine, requires intensely personalized experience and a privatized, performative reading of the phenomenal world; opportune for putting together a paginated path in the name of *poetics*. The cosmos can only be local! “Paradise is a person. Come into this world. The soul is a magnificent angel. And the thought of its thought is the rage of Ocean.” At times Olson conflated soul and angel, which is not exactly accurate relative to the Avicennan angelology he drew from. “In every case this figure [the angel/guide] represents the heavenly counterpart of the soul; it manifests itself to the soul only at the dawn (note also that Olson self-identified as “archeologist of morning,”) the “sunrise,” of the soul’s perfect individuation, its integration, because only then is its relation to the divine individualized.” (From *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 21.) (Interestingly, Corbin also mentions “*fravarti*.” Fravaši is the Avestan word for a person’s archetype which sends the soul out into existence to fight for the preponderance of benevolent over baleful actions.) Thus the Ismaili recital — as a dramatic situating of oneself in the cosmos, as “spiritual autobiography” — and field-composition overlap. The poet can’t bring the poem to reality without the soul (troublesome to define; try “animated self” or “terrestrial angel”) undergoing the return, and a return can’t be undergone without the writing of the poem creating the conditions for returning. This reciprocity is the hermeneutic circle, the cosmic self/text cross-exegesis. “my memory is ... the history of time ... I am making a mappemunde, it is to include my being...” (*The Maximus Poems*, p. 256.)

HOME

Dying is to move from the figurative to the real and even further from the limitations of the literal — from mere metaphor to before-that-which-begins, to that which one's life has all along implied. Once this implication — if ever — becomes an image or understanding, from that understanding one looks back upon one's life as that which has all along implied such understanding. The image is theophanic, the understanding is ordinary word.

In his home of 65 years, my father, of perfectly sound mind, asked to be taken home, repeatedly, over the last few days of his life. What's that all about? Was the nostalgia oriented forward or backward in time — or perhaps a perfect mix of both, indivisible, accomplishing each other? Terrestrial-celestial pleromatic dissolution? About to be no longer a part of a species. Species of one — no one — always particularized by having been. No more wondering, just wonder. Agnostic nostalgia? No need to either believe or not believe when finally faced with *fact* — glaring fact that at once can't be known. Perhaps the facts are always beyond themselves, depending, until the contingent crystalizes for real. One's end anticipated by exultation and anguish. To have now been in exile then. I continue to live through my father's experience of the formerly familiar. In his defamiliarizing of phenomena he must have included me as well (how new or otherly was I in that changeover from father to final farewell?) as he gathered up his family and friends in mind as requisite fissile matter (one can only de-familiarize by sacrificing the familiar.) The unfamiliar can never be unfamiliar ... it's simply "unfamiliar." He was preparing, packing up, coordinating a meeting with boyhood companions on the Avestan bridge, while wide awake; needing to drive to Los Angeles from his easy chair in Southern Minnesota. The brutish *apeiron* pressing in. An acme of individuation about to have all suffering die away. His recital. Mysticism when it's happening is simply the immediate. It can only be first-hand. A spiritual romance indeed, with its sweetness nowhere to be found. Unable to even spit up. Who wouldn't be ready to leave 7,423 bombs dropped in Afghanistan last year alone. (During the Great War, he repaired bombers returning to Tunisia after their missions flown over fascist Italy.) Everything is instantly long ago with nothing between now and then. Quarantined on a cruise ship. To want to go home makes one a stranger where one is, or at best a guest (gnosticism is *harsh*.) To return to that which one never wondered whether one left. It wasn't there until before — which is to say, there is a counterpart to the home that no longer feels like home because there always was if it is. To return to conditions prior to one's creation and be before creation itself with those pre-primordial events as one's real family. It is a sound that can't be heard, yet it is. Its rungs have rung. All ten timbres of the unstrung. The Almighty's tinnitus is us. Belonging to the uncreated by means of all that the Goddess had made by being uncreated. A *machinist* of morning. Solid man among men. Would follow me to the ends of the snowstorms to glow with the glory of his boy athlete. Lifetimes of my efforts which would honor him can't compare to even one step he took in order to survive by means of his natural effortless. To jump just in time. From freight car to fright car. Adventure to let passing away take its course. Changing over to the tacit, the non-adventure, as he starts to see for himself, looks like gone, is shown. "Got to go." Though it's still the early universe for another millionth of a second. Wrestle with outworn senses. Can't lift an eyelid in all of nonexistence in the bed he conceived me and won't breathe again. Why look again? It only detracts from inconceivable coherence. We can't

know as little as each other. I'm intruding again. I want, and I must not. Only "I'm sorry" is more vast than a cosmos. To bear the original grace to leave the crypt without the bitter a priori retrospect of being cast into exile or hurtling ahead into oblivion. Our hands are not in our hands. All my strength makes it so. I am literally like what I can't see, a faith stronger than fate. All there is, made mostly of address, crying out. Listening to listening. The winter branches, the internet, no nuclei yet. We do know the origin of language. Evolution is but a diacritic, as in "let me go home." We do know the origin of language: existence that would exist and existence without having been brought into existence distilling the first dot. Matter far more impressionable than any readymade anatomy. The operation has had to be physical, that is, unendurable. Exactly what is happening can't be happening. Watch me go. Do as you're told when you don't listen. Command lament. Material returns to create energy. We each independently do the same though at the critical instant we cry that "each" not be. The same is the symbol. Savior of separation. The syzygy of home and home. Ingenuous gnosis. Partially is only whole. How am I understanding this, following the scents, hanging on my own words? My father has just died. Forever.

ACCORDIANIST

Not seeking revelation, one's life is revelation, God's knowledge; tempered, kept in tension, knowing God is not knowledge. What is the effect, as the uncreated plays out in the contingent? Indiscriminately revealing? For Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī to write: "There is nothing in possibility more wonderful than what is" (*laysa fi'l-imkan abda' mimma kan*) he had to open the last door. *Experiential Apeiron* fully shown, seated under the bodhi tree, or between two unruly shrubs on the pre-cast concrete steps of the house where I was born. Enwombed without an outside. Entombed without a tomb.

Thought responsible for maintaining integrity of the cosmos, tunes to self-occurring sound. Emptiness is constitutive of the specific. This is the way in which any object that exists, in that it exists, is beyond me. Better to say *boundless*, not *otherworldly*. There's nothing unnatural, only things handled with less reverence. We're caught in the inability to create creation, though it's ours to smash to bits to see how it ticks, proving how easily we might have never been, or ever be, in a rock bottom that never began. Prosody cuts conduct and ethics into gnosis. The meaning of compassion is the manifest.

Words knew they'd need us, their substance, to refer to the unspeakable bliss that can only be expressed through them, as our viscosity. The literal level exists as ambiguity that serves the concrete's need for change, and as unprecedented existence's need for original evidence.

Prosody is the metabolism of visible, invisible bodying. This is what I have meant all along by *vibe*. Our correlational organ. The recital (without which there is no context) of finding a way home by spatializing (spiritualizing) space.

The suprasensory buckling columns and pancaking floors slapping progressively downward in the collapsing of a skyscraper, collapsing the spine stacked up like gold coins, still spreading panic.

Uncreated words cutting off circulation.

Emptiness, returned to, as no more exoteric than esoteric, rescues human being. Compassion can have no reference, no object, or it will be quashed by contingencies. Our meditations fail as premeditation. Impulse is compassion. Without emptiness there's no instant, no sudden tears as the astonishing accordionist in the subway station sends forth her dulcet sound, salvaging the lot of us. I did die for her, who sustained me for that moment. While on another front, monster autocrats make the decent people fight to not fall to their level, where all will be devoured.

A word can differentiate, divide, democratize or dissolve even the identical. Speaking the unexpressed is creation. How much more simple can it get? Phonemes are *archē*. Once Creator thought the words, already there, for their corresponding objects, they would have to be vocalized. This is the same as saying that mind and speech entered into union, each before the other. What then does that make Creator? Who, distilled to AUM, to Am and to irreducible A, in whom no one can believe.

Doesn't have parts, it's everywhere. I mean, any one of the charms I bought and brought home for my daughter to make her tiaras. Exaltation is always turned on, though only through its details which at some point, after all the delusions and desperations play themselves out, *suffice*. The ethers, oceans and suns are in the ear. Eternal though not imperturbably so.

There's little occasion for having these discussions about the nature of everyday speech: whether we "think it ourselves" or thoughts as thought by thought. Of course there is trance, the autonomic, channeling, universal grammar, musing, mediumship, prophecy, revelation, psychoactive ingestion and other conditions of extraordinary speech. But what I mean is the taking for granted of the basic paranormality of the norm. Prosody is active gratitude for the immensity of interchange, realized in real time in ways that dumbfound by unfettering.

Say this too many ways, but only once, at once.

Differentiation is a symbol of unity.

Only the unknown is home. Composition of the contingent conducting us to the uncreated — creativity Creation, mother Mother, father Father, Who whole. The cheap tricks of capitalization capitulation save us from damnation.

PROSODY AS ARCHĒ

This writing on the origin of prosody actually had a false start. I initially set out to make the case for prosody as the *evolutionary protolanguage* — starting relatively recently, long after the beginning, much less *before* the beginning. Starting with the earliest signs of hominin speech-making and positioning prosody as compulsion to speak (and I am wending my way back to prosody's proto-linguistic role as directly as possible.) One step later I was in freefall down the proverbial rabbit hole ... at the bottom of which would rest the bottomless *apeiron*, initiating the pursuit not of the *archē* of prosody (which would have been far simpler to chart, with its course

clearly denoted from the trillion-Kelvin dot nuclei and post-plasmic background radiation forward) but *prosody* as *archē*.

By way of vibration and formation, periodicity, patterning, embodying and cohering (or “poetics” if you prefer) the natural correlation between prosody and cosmogony can be proffered. Knowledge of prosody’s connection to the conditions that brought the cosmos about would require knowledge of the existence of those conditions, with prosody itself playing an integral part in the pursuit of such knowledge. The radical, root, premise is that prosody would naturally be constitutive of the conditions that brought it about — as *archē* and as current speech as well.

Typically we think of prosody as a temporal phenomenon ... or at least as inseparable from time-sensitive formation. Prosody’s spatiality, particularly in terms of the a pure, inceptive space from which the universe possibly formed, is entirely unexplored. On what grounds to proceed? Is prosody necessarily *experiential*, as distinct from *conjectural*? If cosmos is an epiphenomenon of consciousness (to take this leap,) consciousness would then be vibrational.

COMING APART AT THE SEEMS AS THESE SENTENCES

Edgar Alan Poe’s statement (in his last essay *Eureka*) “because nothing was, all things are” brings us to a further formulation: *nothing having been, by way of what has never not been, is the way in which all things are*. We are so much the *impression* of consciousness as to be made of it. Can it be said that consciousness has ever not been? What’s your understanding, and where is it coming from (if not itself)? On what is it predicated? Is it a process of palpating the imperceptible to produce a pulsation readout? Aren’t comprehension and creation fully correlated? Is making-things-up convulsively cosmogenic or a mere matter of more messy manifestation? Is imagination a blueprint? To hear we reverse-engineer. Remember, orality was preceded not only by *revelation* but *reception* of a text written in — and indistinguishable from — so-called eternity. The first poets *untranscribed*. Listening was *that* pristine. Listening was itself inceptive. It still is. Let’s call it “hearing.” Hard to describe what happens: existence without prior existence is transliterated in that its text is carried over, exactly, though orally, without a sound, without actually having been spoken or read aloud — perhaps as an impulse or jolt without spacetime (and certainly not *syntax*) to be unfolded by an organism which the a-primordial text specifically brought about in order that it be spoken. Now we write, as well, and have a new evolutionary relationship to the all-containing, undifferentiated dot of dots that begot the beginning. Writing carves out. Writing carves out what wasn’t. Piece-of-paper infinitely-dense-and-hot sub-infinitesimal dot-breakout. Speaking out at once extrapolates observed conditions all the way back in time. Prosody is the autonomic system coordinating all these loose ends, a mixing console beyond our machinations and imaginations. Poets, as adepts at pitch, pattern and stress, gesture and suggestiveness are those who pick up on and mess with all *this*. *Apeiron* is the organ of language, prosody its impulse ... always initial. I can’t work out all the incongruities. Again, only partial can be whole (or there life could never be.)

COMING HOME TO APEIRON

“The Inexpressible is the Great Note that harmonizes all the notes that make up the expression of nondifferentiation into discrete beings.” — Wang Bi

Doxographers right up to today vent their frustration, indignation and even surprise over Anaximander’s failure to define *apeiron* beyond its definitive identification with *archê*. Countless books and essays are now being written to fill in the blanks, bring the seed to fruit or plot courses through the conundrum; to comb through, iron out or further frazzle. Anaximander may have felt it would be contradictory to definitively define the indefinite, or that he had indeed been perfectly, necessarily concise ... or that the act of non-definition completely conveyed his meaning. Perhaps he in fact had raised *apeiron* to the heights of the ineffably self-defining and self-subsisting. Perhaps he had extensively propounded *apeiron* ad infinitum in his lost writings and his early commentators, faced with Anaximander's prolificacy, determined that extreme aphoristic abridgement was in order.

Can *apeiron* be written? If I bring you there, to the “nonwhere” by means of this perilously practiced *ta’wil*, would that be evidence of direct experience, as distinct from Presocratic or third party hearsay or overheard heresy? Can *apeiron*, as Undifferentiated Name, be contained by its name? Could countless definitions add up and overtake the extent of its indefiniteness — an all-accommodating account of non-existence following every overtone, modulation, undertone, connotation, implication, contradiction and concealment as nuanced frequencies in its illimitable illegibility, altogether sensed as an harmonics we entirely tune to and address simply by being — an enumeration more exhaustive than counting every number? A practice too infinite to continue, tips over. Correlation’s non-illusory lustration, to wash and wash and wash to blot. To exceed the indefinite, like exceeding the infinite by adding more rooms, as infinite must lose track. Let live. While eternity turned its attention away, we crept out.

INDEFINITE HARMONICS (LEAPFROGGING INFINITIES)

Repeat plain truth until it loses its meaning and is only loss. Repeat the unreadable toward its opposite end.

I hear looking. I’ll be right back. Reread the unreadable, contrarily. These are the slight fluctuations that led to form.

Every *each*, specifically not *any* or *outside of*. Plus and minus an all-inclusivity of what is not. And un-specifically not even remotely part of or made of. The infinitely definable. Leave it at that. The impossibility to arrive at is within and without. The impossibility inverted is *substance*. A word for "entirely distinct from," without being. An intense intimacy with what even infinity over-defines. The use of “is” is demiurgic, perhaps imperialist. The leaves that are left on the trees in winter, dark against sunlit bluest sky behind them. I can only imagine the grandeur of the

initial abstraction of the world believed to be directly perceived by the senses alone. The books I take with me to the grave will be left on the street.

This morning, over a celery root, shitake mushroom, spinach, garlic, jalapeño omelette billowing between two slices of pan-toasted buckwheat bread, I'm even more tired of facing potential infinities than growing old. That in which there can be no doubt that there're no dots to connect. Our nature is to be in union with what is not. An oscillation generative of solids, rapid beyond any conceivable sensor. There is an impasse behind impassivity to be desired. A continual counting that never started is like a song playing in my head. Each number a starting-line gun, a defibrillation for a new dysrhythmia. Too unique. Jerked around just like you, I'll make it to the end. More or less one perfection after another.

If it is, it's infinitely divisible. If it's indivisible, nothing has been left out. There's nothing I can't make inchoate that already is. Know not that which doesn't make sense to you (nor the way in which it does not) but that which tells you so. Subtract energy, then subtract *subtract*. If you're on top of your game, offer your gratification to another. You'd think two cosmoi couldn't be both simultaneous and timeless. Let me rephrase the existent. God is perfect provided we have no idea what we mean by "provided." "It all depends on how I look at it" bores me to death. Ecology in a world revealed as fully as possible by the existence of as many beings as possible. This degree of sadness is a condition in which we're less revealed with each new day. Who die out. Who doubt. God is unattached. How can I hear the imperturbable? It's so deafening. How owe who? Ow oh who. Nothing itself can step forward and snap us out of negative fascination.

Just a moment. When obvious, add "unless." Fill in the blank or leave as is (if it can't be measured it can't be) ... (then list exceptions). If it can't be erased it can't be. Delineate a constituent with spatial extent without content. A large parched vertebrae from the high Chihuahuan Desert set next to a blue sphygmomanometer. Tongue twister over rough terrain. Peyote locates us, after a detailed public recitation of my sexual history, only where it hurts. Saving all kinds of boxes for who knows what.

There are things the omnipotent just won't do. It won't include the oblivion of whatever it would refuse. My thirteen-year old sister had her right arm amputated to no end. Today she'd be saved. This is which atrocity's yesterday? Questioning is incapable. We keep trying to overturn the facts. The indefinite will make you whole and place you in a frame. In order to not deserve a gift received, in order to emphasize its good.

True, metaphorically speaking, or not. It's the principle of disharmony that disproves, ironically, the autonomy of individuals. We need a local name for the cosmos in which this condition is apparently the case. A good greater than maximal happiness for all. Evident because unprovable, the way the word for its sounds is what it means purely because agreed upon. Another one of those. All the ones of those. All those. All.

I've had to look up its definition every time I've used the word "space." Choose among: *unfoibleable*, *unfoibleness*, *foibleless*, gracious regardless, gratuitously good. Always do all the good you can in order to not deserve the gift finally given. It only seems contradictory. The evidence for which is so hard to come by that it's necessary to crisscross — not merely cross — the untraversable.

I know what I would do, not whatever happens. I take that back. Paint each stair tread a new fluorescent color. To be more perfect, decide to not know. I made mistakes only when the fullness of my life was at stake, when I was full and more apt to be mistaken. I still don't accept help, while awaiting any windfall to come and squeeze my clown nose — an indivisible circus component that is infinitely divisible into the various days of countless cosmos pulsing in and out of existence in an inflatable pool.

It's not necessarily redundant to say "infinitely indefinite." The difference to mark between finitely and infinitely indefinite is not only the mark, but the in between as well. The series of numbers, for example, is actually infinite, while each number in the series is ordinal. This totally tranquilized Avicenna.

Avoid every preconception, before during and after, to never arrive at definitive definition of the awkwardly worded originative content. It would take a billion rocket scientists countless *kalpas* to see that just *anyone* would know that an element can't rise of itself or create its contrary *and* remain simple. No preference formed. No preference formed the phenomenal. One day, a pot to piss in.

In my hand is something other than what I took from the bag, while leaving only more and more of it behind in the bag. Realism is in the particulars, without a boundless stockpile elsewhere. Our creativity can't be a mere instance. How many actual infinities are there that fail to meet the criteria for their disproof? How many will come to exist simply because they are not demonstrably impossible? Demonstrate that you can't imagine this or that — determined by the ability or inability of the estimative organ that can't even picture itself. If it reaches the limit beyond which there is no limit, sit back, enjoy the ride. I have a set of construction plans for "qualitatively infinite." Fits on a napkin, a matchbook. A mastodon.

The step after which it takes a finite amount of time to cross what can't be more or less. Is it beyond comprehension or simply of no concern?

Nevertheless. An all-inclusiveness in which deities comfortably subsist. How can it be even more infinite, ever the less. Paint this on the ceiling of an atom ... well, on any ordinary surface at this point, now that there are no observable obstacles. Meaning waits for me to add to it meaning. Come to life my life. Turn Tartarus back to mystery school. The genie was never in a lamp until there was a lamp. Apodictic presupposition, meaning I don't know what I mean either. This is my experience. *Noneless.* Countless 'concoctures.' Without *the*. More than all is made of. Otherwise eventuality the wholeworks would grind to a halt. Everywhere in no way bounds but here, or I could just as well read to you from any newspaper. Maybe the word '*apeiron*' wasn't even in use in Miletus.

Utterly unentertained. Mule. *Mutile. Cosmoitic. Cosmitotic. Cosmeiosis.* Excessive *cosmauxesis.* Parallel and materially unrelated though born of one what. What would without limit with and without? One place and time in the place and time of another place and time. Now that I think of it. It can't come from what it is. What else could limitless mean? We even feel that love and mind are anthropic, who gave birth to the inanimate (as only we could) that it might be. Everything is speaking, with the exception of *everything*.

Nothing words come from. Unshelled peanuts from Chinatown left on the window ledge for brownstone blue jays. Changeless constitutes everything that does. The interdependence of the literal and the metaphoric points out an ordinary ornament, one with our origin dependent upon progression. At some point there must be basic reconfigurable parts that can't break down any further. A cycle can't start from scratch each instant and still be a duration in which the blue jays return to the window to pick up the peanuts, shells and all. Why this happens instead of nothing is due to the irrepressibility of beauty.

That thought is my irreducible part. The fat melting away from flesh. Greased crematoriums. Mud mother. Must not-evident always be more real? I keep coming back. Because it's unclear doesn't mean it's boundless. Keep conferring attributes upon it. Filling the time of which there's none. Frills the kill, without which we couldn't suffer our losses. The point from which a thing is first observable and not a moment sooner exists.

I, for one, can't be predicated on things that would then not be. Not even an existence that didn't come to exist. Though I can wrap my head around that, and I am at home in as much as we'll ever know as a symbol of nonexistence, I can simply incinerate at any synapse. I'll be fine.

What can be pinned down is fictitious. I don't reread I re-corpse until I breathe again for the first time. Dollhouse elevator, cookie cutter decor, Easter basket hung from the ceiling, sequin curtain, beaded jaguar head, mortar mix of only lime and sand, pear and millet porridge, framed Antonie van Leeuwenhoek engravings, woodworking clamps, rolling pin, thinly-sliced birch branch bulbed ornament from Finland, empty plastic Radio City Rockettes popcorn souvenir, what seeps through tissue in the one room in which this is being written. Indefinite will be my last lover as it has been all my loves all along flaring up, filling the cut-out reality claiming my pressure is the imperishable breaking the spell of specifics, bursting the final colossal superposition.

How many worlds would it take for each one of them to be comprised of all the others? How far could "far" ever be, knowing it is me? I did the time, only to be freed to knock my crown foramina against an underside. Because we can pose trick questions only, our sense of hearing must be breathtaking. Infinity is no more than that which is enough. Conceptually, in relation to what's at stake, it's a mercy; something to sleep on. As a backup, I've built a universe outside itself for polymathic invisibility-skeptics; replete with septic systems plugged with godawful *apeirons* causing supposition sepsis ... "turning tissue to shit" (as my mother's doctor said so delicately of her undiagnosable and ultimately iatrogenically fatal disease.) Rot is alive. Anything that begins but love that overcomes us. Invert abiogenesis in one breath.

Once the *apeiron* is identified as the organ of language (masked as the inferior frontal gyrus) it speaks for itself, noting only language itself is vast enough to be idiomatic. Not only Mitochondrial Eve or Mater Matter, and not even a shared subjective identification with the whole cosmos as ancestral ecology ... rather, the *apeiron*, our one womb that we never leave, is earthling indivisibility; felt as something rather than nothing, in the sense that "things" could have — and do — go either way, in the boundless power of suggestion.

What's left to forget? Don't even want how greatly you'll benefit, in order to benefit even ever more. Words don't survive their meanings. That we even have thoughts! God is what we don't

know. This total intimacy is not a name that can be named, but a name that names — inconceivably subtle enough to cause at first.

The word exists before it's spoken. Do we then say that it doesn't exist? The word exists without being spoken. Afterwards as well. After having not existed at all.

Attesting little to speech, too intent on what we're trying to say, as if speaking for ourselves — while the words we use to describe the world actually constitute it! And when words that actually constitute language are used to describe language, we must be mindful of the colossal energy losses.

NEITHER CORRELATED OR CO-EXISTENT NOR EQUIVALENT BUT *SELFSAME*

“Concerning the unseen, the gods have clarity, but it is for men to conjecture from signs.” — Alcmaeon (DK24B1; tpc)

Anaximander's astrophysics boils down to *apeiron is archê*. But can the formula reduce any further? How could anything other than origin itself be the origin? For that matter, following this abductive heuristic to its finish, I would ask: how could origin even be original?

First, there is the antonymic tension, with the primary divide *existence/nonexistence*. Really, what's the difference? — certainly not the death of any one of us who will have existed, as though the two contraries could ever be un-intertwined. And, moving ahead a millionth of a fraction of a second in newly created time, according to most cosmogenic accounts, it was *opposed elements* that seeded creation — whether the good and evil of dualist cosmologies, water and fire of elemental creation myths, hypostasized rival gods such as Set and Osiris, or the more amoral, nature-based, complementary contrariety of *yin* and *yang* adjoined as sunny and shady sides of a mountain.

Granted, the greater part of this writing has developed by means of *correspondences*, though only in order to exhaust the correlative process and pattern the potentially infinite prompts of the syncretic mind. There's a missing word for this approach, a missing efficacy. The reason it's critical to discern the name for not only the *complimentarity* but the *identity* of antitheticals like nothing/something and many/unity is that it would name my approach and identify my practice with my prayer and my person; my part in maintaining the integrity of the cosmos, working back through the all the contingencies to our inherent uneventuality.

Even within the word “undifferentiated” the contradiction abounds between the interdependent needs of affix and stem — the situation could even conceivably be reversed as in the differentiating of “un” as types of non-existence. It's not a word game. For me it's soteriological. I've tried to show that sorting this out in words “alone” is not poetic fantasy or fiction but the connecting of everything, as real and unreal, struck and unstruck, as other apparent incongruities reify as having always been one.

Are *apeiron* and *archê* identically differentiated or perhaps differently indistinguishable? Is there a nondual word not bound by spacetime? If I say *apeiron* and *archê* are equivalent (as they certainly cannot be poised as contraries) I still uphold the pair as *binary*. Equivalent what? What's between them, binding them, blowing "apart" apart? To say "homologous" suggests developmental separation. "Interchangeable" still plays on the weight of phenomenal distinction: one in place of another. "Synonymous" is seductive but still sorts into separate words and respective sounds. And "coequality" is of course a duet. Maybe something more like quantum's particle/wave same-phenomenon ... yet that construct dichotomizes the viewing and deals with effect, not cause. Even in multi-phonic "*AUM*" one's mind diffuses into the pre-eminence of Atman, while the Vedantic term *advaita* (nondual) requires a positive to negate along with an illusory world to deal with as it falls in line with other nondualist traditions that pose the battle not between poles but against polarity per se, in contradiction with the fullness of differentiation, unable to be anything other than all its contrary is not.

The only word that prevails in my spacetime freefall is, rather surprisingly "selfsame." At least for now, "selfsame" clears my mind — *apeiron* and *archê* as *selfsame*. Does it work? What would be the criteria with which to tell? Does this word liberate the mind or end suffering once it touches *archê* to *apeiron*?

Call in another correlate? Put it to the test. To give one example: in Mahayana Buddhism, emptiness (*sunyata*) and compassion are selfsame — the experience of absolute boundlessness breaks down the boundaries between us. Or perhaps, inversely, the experience of relative compassion opens the mind's innate spaciousness. If not the selfsame experience of origin, what would be bliss? (Aristotle did speak practically of happiness as a lifelong practice with conduct and quality of mind as selfsame: "For as it is not one swallow or one fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes a person blessed and happy." (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a18.) Are *Apeiron* and *sunyata* selfsame (just because I say so?) and inseparable from experiential states of highest attainment? Does what-is-not consist of — or is it — bliss? Mind is an altered state of mind, most of all in its pure absence of contingency. The original arising of the world, to create conflicts through which those in conflict decondition themselves and become a selfsame *selfsame* as bliss? But is selfsame itself the selfsame as anything else? Does "as" apply? Nothing can come between. Nothing is between. Between is nothing. Between nothing.

If there is no elephant in the room can it be said that the room contains *elephantlessness*, even though no one is wondering whether there is or is not an elephant in the room? Although the substance of heaven and hell can't be found (other than the earth itself) their allure nonetheless steers people around. Both heaven and the absence of elephant are *ascribed* ... just like the room. Agreed upon terms are the most egregious of human hungers, guaranteeing we get what we want once we cannot.

Name something you're not thinking of.

When the room is empty and we're emptied of the room, why would there be light, and how would pure light not be loss of life? Who'd want light alone? Who'd ever want light alone cannot be other than light. Who wanted light alone can no longer want. What we'd call, from our

embodied beings as heavenly bodies *nectar*. Nectar streaming from a heart whose body is now everything.

Experience without an experience.

I write to be converted. No, *saved*. What, exactly, would be saved, if not *when*?

THE SCALE OF THE ECOLOGY OF THE NONSTOP LITURGY KNOWN AS SPEECH

I either and neither nor either nor neither am and am not that I am.

Sounds wonderful. But in a world rife with violence, poverty, bigotry, greed and warring sides both divinely justified, how can we keep our clarities from causing further confusion? Perhaps contraries are a contrivance, a superimposition, and not an objective observation of nature. (The Paleo-Siberian Lygoravetlat people see their cosmogenic spirits as cooperative.) Perhaps al-Ghazālī's threshold from which *nothing-could-possibly-be-more-wonderful-than-what-is* is too resigned. Perhaps the scientific method and the unknowable are already and always blissfully *selfsame* and there's nothing to critique. For mortals, perhaps immemorial dread of death and dread of nothingness are selfsame and we'll always be half-homeless. Perhaps God both is and is not creation alone. In a world always in need of being made real, how might the potentials of prosody serve as guide?

I'd like to close this section on *apeiron* by performing a final, prosodic *ta'wil* on word-use itself — an experiential etymology, if you will — tracing moral dualist cosmogony to its source in ancient Persian Zoroastrianism and ultimately to the nuanced multidimensionality of the key Avestan word *aša* — “truth.” My intention, here, is to get at the root of word use and show our rootedness in speech.

Rabindranath Tagore (in a forward to *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* tr. D.J Irani) stated that Zoroaster was the first person to give religion “a definitely moral character and direction.” (The implication is that Zoroaster radically reformed the existing tribalistic, bloodstained culture of worship.) In Tagore's view, Zoroaster defined his faith by contrasting tradition and *truth* “which comes like an inspiration out of context with its surroundings.” But Zoroaster's prophetic innovation, as I see it, exceeded even the ethical dimension. Travel back to prehistory and imagine “truth” itself, as a concept, as *conscience*, not yet existing, ripe for being initially conceived. To meaningfully read the *Gathas* (the oldest and innermost core of the *Avesta*), to read for *theophany*, it would be essential to perform a sort of reverse mantic engineering on the terms of the divergent translations, in order to be reconstituted on the Old Avestan Persian Plateau and at least glimpse the perilous meanings that were originally revealed to Zoroaster. And the message of the *Gathas* alone would not have been enough to ensure their survival. Their intricate, concatenating, agrammatical and incantatory prosody would also have had to engage in battle and enthrall the enemies of the new, truth-based theology. In our current, relativistic world, after bludgeoning each other for millennia over absolutes, it's easily imaginable that truth doesn't

exist (that truth isn't true) or that realization of the absence of truth is itself illumination. But for now, don't the heuristic of spiritual truth having never arisen — no such truth to even negate — considering as well the possibility that we've become so disillusioned and distanced from truth that we've lost track of any possible working, beneficial definition.

The standard, narrow meaning of *aša* is “truth” (Plutarch translated *aša* by *alētheia*.) What is it that makes truth *true*. Where is it made true and for whom? Another meaning of *aša* is “existence.” Yet another meaning is “creation” as primordially ordered, including *moral* order, implying further “right working” and “properly joined together.” But the overarching signification of *aša* is “true-statement.” What is it that makes truth *true*, specifically in the active sense of truth being stated, manifested by speech as existence itself? What makes a true statement true ... a statement so totally attuned as to reciprocally make the cosmos ring true — which is to at once ask: what did Zoroaster *see*?

Both *aša* and its Vedic cognate *ṛtá* derive from Proto-Indo-Iranian *h₂rtás* which stems from *h₂rtós* “to fit.” The Old Avestan language of the *Gathas* and Sanskrit of the *Rigveda* are sister dialects, distinguished more patently by certain phonetic shifts than grammar. *Aša/ṛtá* is the primary ethical concept in the *Gathas* and *Rigveda*. The entire edifice of Western morality is founded on *aša/ṛtá*. It is the name for the observation of — and reverence for — the workings of the natural order, the awe of it all holding together. It's the omnipotent wisdom manifest as the patterning and periodicity of the manifest world. *Aša/ṛtá* is *nature* inclusive of the cosmos; a nature in which any separation of human behavior would be inconceivable. It is that according to which all things happen. God, cosmogony, consciousness, ecology, ethical conduct and the ceremonies for maintaining the intactness of the whole are interactively constitutive of *aša/ṛtá* as true-statement. The *Gathas* often condense this ethical ecology into the concise formula: *humata hūxta huvaršta* “well thought, well said, well done.” It's also possible that Heraclitan *logos* (“that which everything happens according to” and “truth is that which is confirmed by all facts universally”) was influenced by *aša/ṛtá*, as Heraclitus' native city (Ephesus) was, at the time, part of the Persian Achaemenid Empire. (The element of “fire” was *archē* for both Heraclitus and Zoroaster, as well.)

With *aša/ṛtá* as its proper medium, it is prosody that makes true this true statement by composing with every expressive (gestural, vocal, implicative) component that constitutes *aša/ṛtá* according to its nature. Prosody is the embodiment of Logos; the Logos that would otherwise be relegated to the abstract and inertly absolute. In terms of poetry (as an element of the rituals (*haurvatat*) that harmoniously hold everything together, truth is predicated on an effective joining of words within language's own nature, capable of causing such truth. And given that the *Gathas* are metered, liturgical songs revealed in a purely oral tradition, the phonic aspect of the verses would have been as revelatory of meaning as the lexical features. Newly prophetic, newly prosodic. The *Gathas* are anything but “doctrine cast into poetic form.” (See, for example, the essays of Martin Schwartz: Sound, Sense, and Seeing in Zoroaster: The Outer Reaches of Orality" Cama Oriental Institute Congress Volume, 1991; Coded Sound Patterns, Acrostics, and Anagrams in Zoroaster's Oral Poetry" Schmitt and Skjaerve, *Studia Grammatica Iranica*, Festschrift für Helmut Humbach, 1986; Dimensions of the Gāthās as Poetry http://www.hridayamyoga.com/martinschwartz/pdf/SchwartzGathasFINAL_AT_MS.pdf.)

Truth is physics, if only we *knew*.

Truth is its (truth's) origin, without it (truth). Perfectly enough.

The *Gathas* function on what is now a largely lost scale of ecology. Perhaps it's our inability to recognize the ways in which our typically earth-centric and egoist actions might maintain the integrity of the whole (by performing the sacrifices of truth as existence) that enables us to be so destructive locally. (Only two months ago, a few days before Christmas 2019, the president of the U.S. signed into law the creation of a new military branch called *Space Force*, declaring space a "warfighting domain" — a Donald Rumsfeld dream-come-true, and de facto obliteration of the *archê* of space as pristine primordiality, our deepest sense of home.)

THUS FAR THUS

There is a tension between the ideal and the real. Proffering the ideal is ethical only if presented with a realistic (truthful) practice. Otherwise, we're caught in the fantasy of cutting all tension (via *samadhi*, nihilism, private wealth, cynicism, entertainment, violence, wishful thinking, addictions, withdrawal and so on) without necessarily acting on ethical outcomes.

It's the very constitution of the *Gathas* that makes them a particularly lucid ethical practice. The *Gathas* embed the terms of truth in experience. They demystify ponderous terms such as "good" and "evil" and offer a framework for questioning and addressing Creator/Creation. But above all, the *Gathas* are non-prescriptive; they serve to heighten awareness in a field of implications and consequences for committing one's free will to outcomes that bring harmony and happiness ... or, on the other hand, more discord. Again, Tagore: "Zarathushtra was the greatest of all the pioneer prophets who showed the path of freedom to men, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions." Creativity is the act of choosing *creation*. (Is not *creative destruction* oxymoronic?) I could suggest that the behaviors which cause you unhappiness go against the grain of existence, and leave it to you (as did Zoroaster) to decide for yourself what this truth implies in any given context. Doing the right thing is not doctrinal but individually decisive, revealed through attuning to *aša/rtá*. The composition of the cosmos, its course, at this point, is not about to undergo fundamental change. Thus the integrity of the whole can only be maintained by our freedom of discernment. Zoroastrian cosmogony is a ditheism interfacing the moral opposites of benevolence and malevolence. We inherit this adversarial tension by coming into existence. Things could have gone either way; things could have gone *any* way — yet the primordial tension didn't produce disorder or some other order, it "chose" exactly this, the form of creation. Our moral choices and creativities, when aligned, sustain exactly this: creation over nonexistence and confusion. In the *Gathas*, "good" and "bad" bear on human attributes, and are scarcely (if at all) hypostasized as deities, demons, personifications or abstractions. The real drama of existence takes place in the arena of the mind, and the *Gathas* implore *vohu manah* "good purpose, mind or thought" over *aka manah* "bad intent" and *acištəm manah* "the worst thinking."

Again, truth-telling in the *Gathas* is not metaphysical, rather it is embodied and situated in a whole ethical, enactive and deeply harmonizing ecology. To act in ways that are not in keeping with the attuned mind of *aša/rtá ecology* is to deny life at its source. The Gathic list of negative mental and behavioral consequences includes: anger, deception, looting, aggression, insolence,

affliction and duplicitous speech. Rudolph Steiner associated the Gathic *angra mainyu* “maligning mind” with materialism, objectivity and hardheartedness. In defense of life itself, Zoroaster literally, directly identified, addressed — did battle with — phenomena of the mind. Here are a few Gathic excerpts adapted from Yasna 32, 3-11:

But you O products of the Worst Intentions and Self-Interest, and of deceit and of arrogance...

...you defrauded the people of happy lives and the chance for ever-living bliss, as the Worst Thought used negative mind and harmful speech to envenom the spirit and ruin humankind...

...Who dwell in the Worst Mind destroy understanding, destroy the design of life and prevent the realization of Good Conscience from being valued. It is with these words that I cry out to you, Uncreated Wisdom, and to existence as Your Truth expressed...

...Who feed enmity abhor the Ox and shun the Sun, refusing to honor the Living World, turning the pious into impostors, laying waste to the fields and raising weapons against the innocent. It is the Liars, exalted as leaders and elites, who extinguish life, depriving others of their inheritance of amity and benevolence and dissuade them from their Best Intentions, O Lord.

Perhaps reaching back to ancient Iranian religious poetry only serves to rarefy the performance of *aṣ̥a/rtá*. At the same time, it’s crucial to note that true-statements consonant with a boundless ethical ecology are commonplace. And if this commonplace occurrence weren’t the case, I doubt we’d still be “here.” *Aṣ̥a/rtá* can be alive in every breath; it can be seen in the everyday decency of countless people, like my own parents; in the detonative denotation of Will Alexander’s poetry; in the “inter-being” and simplified belly breathing of Thich Nhất Hạnh.

One instance in particular (of the anciently current commonplace occurrence of profound ethical coherence) comes immediately to mind, and I think it will be a fitting way to close this essay. I recently had the good fortune of attending a performance of Indian Kuchipudi dance. In this classical form, the dancer merges her presence with her adornments — makeup, jewelry, costume, sacred Ghungaroor bells — and acknowledges that the movement of her human body represents the movement of the entire universe. She then conducts a *puja*, which is a “sacrifice” or *yajna* akin to Avestan *yasna* (the name given to the Zoroastrian hymns.) The Kuchipudi *puja* is an act of adoration of the particular deity the dancer will dramatize and merge into. This *puja* is also act of worshipping the stage itself as the One Source of Creation. Immediately before the dance begins the dancer performs a *namaskaram* by touching her eyes and then bowing to touch the ground. The entire performance is consecrated by this initial gesture of the dancer touching her eyes as part of the *namaskaram* —the bowing to the supreme within another or within that which one is doing. (I was later told that the dancer can't begin without forming this gesture. Through the *namaskaram* the dancer asks Mother Earth to forgive her for the tapping on the ground she is about to begin, avowing that Mother Earth is as precious to her as her eyes.) As I was transfixed by her gesture, by its degree of graciousness in honoring the Earth and Cosmos through a formal practice, *everything* fell into place for me. I saw that actions congruous with the preciousness of the gift of life we've been given are possible, are actual. I even enjoined the *namaskaram* to somehow “cover” for me, as I make my living as an architect — gouging the Earth, cutting channels into her, tearing out her rooted beings, displacing her insect and microbial communities, converting her body into building materials — bearing responsibility for incalculable and unceremonious destruction.

