

Emanuele Severino

Eternity and Contradiction.

Journal of Fundamental Ontology

The journal *Eternity and Contradiction* is a platform for discussing the central themes of the philosophical thought, especially the one concerning the “truth” about what is known and what is wanted by humans. This theme remains the fundamental one despite those perspectives that intend to obscure it or to prove its irrelevance; and, paradoxically, the fundamental nature of the theme is largely due to the presence of these perspectives.

Presentation

With different degrees of intensity and rigor the philosophy of the last two centuries refuses the possibility of any absolute and ultimate “truth” that aims to affirm the existence of an Eternal Being beyond history and Time beyond the becoming of the World. Such a refusal means something completely different from considering the theme of “truth” superfluous. Indeed, when it is aimed at solving its own task and when it does not present itself as naive skepticism, this refusal is actually *inevitable*, and it presents itself as the incontrovertible truth.

The two terms that constitute the title of this periodical indicate: in the framework of the philosophical tradition, if the dimension of “Eternity” did not exist, the assertion of the existence of the becoming would be a “contradiction”, that is, a denial of the truth; contemporary philosophy shows instead that, if that dimension *existed*, the world of the becoming would be impossible, that is, the assertion of its existence would be a contradiction. The contrast between supporters and critics of the ultimate truth may become more evident encompassing the opposition between “continental philosophy” and “analytic philosophy”.

Since humans inhabit the Earth, they interpret the world as a becoming. The things of the world are a “becoming something else” (since something becomes only if it becomes other from what it is). Since philosophy inhabits the Earth, it conceives the “thing” as “what is” (“being”) and it defines its becoming something else as a “transition from its not-being to its being” and vice versa. A thing that starts to be was once a not-being, a nothing. It has been a nothing *in so far as* it was not before and it starts to be now; and a thing that ceases to be, returns in its not-being, in its nothingness: *in so far as* it ends and is no more. This is about recognizing that, *proceeding from this meaning* of being a thing, it is inevitable for philosophy to reach the refusal of every absolute and ultimate truth and of every immutable and “divine” Being that presume to constitute the ultimate foundation of things. Such a refusal is inevitable only if it proceeds from that meaning – which progressively dominates not only thoughts but also the deeds of the Western society and, by now, of the entire Planet. (This doesn’t mean that this dominant inevitability is before the eyes of all the protagonists of contemporary philosophy: on the contrary, it must in fact be tracked down in the underground of our times).

The Greek meaning of being a thing dominates the earth; and it is believed to be unquestionable. But why can’t it be discussed?

In this question a dimension unknown to the knowledges appeared throughout the history of human shines through. All the more unknown as this dimension does not present itself as a simple question, but as the *denial* of the dominant meaning of being a thing – and therefore as a denial of that on the basis of which it is inevitable to reach the denial of every incontrovertible truth.

From the point of view of the kinds of knowledge appeared throughout the history of humans, such a dimension is a totally unacceptable paradox, precisely because it questions and denies the meaning of being a thing that dominates the history of the World; that is, it denies what, more or less explicitly, every form of knowledge considers to be the absolutely evident and undeniable truth: the becoming, historical, and temporal nature of the things that manifest themselves: the nature that is asserted from both those who affirm that the eternal exists beyond the becoming, and those who deny such an existence.

Such a dimension might be called “destiny”. Concerning “destiny”, in this introduction, we can only speak in the most indefinite way. (My

essays – and not only them – address it.) However, this word possesses none of the meanings that have been given to it. Destiny is the dimension in which the meaning of the incontrovertible and the incontrovertibility of such a dimension incontrovertibly appear: it is not the faith in its own incontrovertibility. This means that destiny – the denial of faith, that is, of making mistakes – is the manifestation of the *diverging*, by which every single being is not the others and is not its own not-being. The meaning of the incontrovertibility and of the necessity of destiny can be outlined by saying that the diverging of beings is the dimension whose denial denies itself; and this is about recognizing, moving beyond the Western *ethos*, *that precisely because of the diverging of beings from their not-being* it is impossible for any being, any “that which is”, not to be: it is impossible not within the limit of the time in which the being is (as Aristotle thinks instead), but it is impossible *simpliciter*. The being, inasmuch as it is a being, is not in the dimension of time. It can also be said: destiny is the emerging of the necessity for *the being, inasmuch as a being*, to be “eternal”. The implications of such a statement lead very far (far even from any kind of “eternalism” proposed by contemporary philosophy). The “man” we talk about in the earth isolated from destiny is himself the content of a faith. By that, it is meant something essentially more radical than the assertion that human makes mistakes: it is meant that the faith in the existence of the humans of the isolated earth is a mistake, a dream. The whole earth, since it appears isolated from destiny, is the content of the big dream that is “life”, and it is the womb of every faith. (However, since it is a being, the dream itself is an eternal.) The true essence of the human is destiny. It does not belong to any of the inhabitants, human or divine, of the isolated earth. It is, on the contrary, the isolated earth that belongs to the content that appears in destiny; for only in destiny the existence of mistaking, of faith, of dream – i.e. the denial of the destiny of the truth – can incontrovertibly appear.

It has been said that this periodical intends to be a platform to discuss the central themes in the philosophical thought. Also, it is open to the discussion of what we called “destiny” (and to the clarification of what in this introduction can only said in a summary and allusive way).

It should also be noted that “discussing” means affirming a *difference*: between what is discussed and what is opposed to it in several ways. And destiny, as already mentioned, is primarily the emerging of the meaning

that appertains to the *difference* (that is, the difference of those which differ). To discuss destiny and oppose to it is therefore *to differ from it*. And precisely because of this it also means *sharing*, more or less unknowingly, its original trait: the affirmation of difference. In this differing-sharing-what-we-differ-about, and to which we oppose by discussing it, the claim, earlier recalled, of the meaning of the incontrovertible, recurs, that is, the incontrovertible is the dimension whose denial denies itself.

It is necessary to affirm the existence of differences; though not, however, because they appear inside those faith and dream that constitute the earth isolated from destiny – and therefore, lastly, not because *we want* them to be. It is in destiny that the necessity of the difference of those which differ and the necessity of their eternity and of everything it implies, appear: these necessities reveal themselves in destiny, that since forever, beyond the path the inhabitants of the earth inevitably reach, opens out onto the foundation of faith concerning the becoming something else, enveloping it, and onto the denial of every truth and of every immutable Being.

To discuss destiny and oppose to it, and therefore sharing it, is thus only the unconscious *attempt* to share it. For the denial of destiny is one thing, which essentially belongs to itself, as it is the denial of its own denial (and this denial of the destiny is not a simple attempt to deny it); the denial that appears in the earth isolated from destiny is another thing, and if it (contrary to the other denial) makes itself visible to the inhabitants of this earth, nonetheless, as it is a faith, it is just an attempt to be the denial of destiny. An attempt that, however, makes the historical configuration of the denial of destiny more and more concrete.

To live is already to find ourselves among differences – it is, indeed, to believe, have faith, to find ourselves there. Perhaps the oldest difference is the one that our will believes to experience between its desiring and the resistance met by it. Today, technology led by modern science is the strongest way through which our will dominates the differences. However, not even science and technology, despite their conceptual rigor, can pose themselves beyond faith and therefore beyond faith in the existence of differences.

Philosophy, from the beginning, is the will to set us free from faith and hence from myth, which is one of the oldest contents of faith and which for a long time has included in itself and dominated every other kind of faith (and still lingers in many parts of the World). And yet

philosophy maintains the core trait of the pre-philosophical faith in differences: it maintains, indeed, the faith in their becoming something else, in their differentiating from one another, and in the most radical way. Myths narrate cosmogonies, theogonies, metamorphoses: the great manners of becoming something else. Philosophy, however, intends to be the “true” tale. Its greatness resides in having evoked, once and for all, the radical meaning of “truth”. “Truth” is the absolutely incontrovertible that reveals itself. Throughout the history of philosophical thought, it has then been about establishing the meaning of the “absolutely incontrovertible”, the content of which is necessary to affirm that incontrovertibility. And throughout the history of Western society, faith has prevailed over philosophy itself, and inside philosophy itself: besides developing as faith in the *act of differentiating* (becoming something else) of the differences, philosophy has increasingly reinforced itself as *faith* in the incontrovertibility of the manifestation (“testability”, “observability”) of this differentiating.

“Truth” is something that is said with a lot of meanings also because many areas of life present themselves as “truth.” That is why we talk about religious and moral “truth”, about the “truth” of the instincts, of our emotions, of art, about the “truth” of philosophy and science; and, overall, about the truth of the existence of life and earth (as it appears in its being isolated from destiny). However, since these “truths” are not the destiny of truth, they are all controvertible “truths” – as different as their “plausibility” (“probability”, “reasonableness”, conceptual “strength” and “coherence”) and their strength can be; and affirming them is always a faith, even when they have faith in their incontrovertibility. The “more plausible” one is as far from destiny as the “less plausible” one is: infinitely. (This, even though it is indeed inside this infinite distance that nonetheless the destruction of every absolute “truth” and of every immutable Being presents itself as “inevitable” for the contemporary thought).

The language that testifies the destiny of truth is future philosophy; for if in the present its voice is overpowered by those of the earth isolated from destiny, it is nonetheless destined to reveal itself as the language of people. On the other hand, by testifying destiny, the language of the future philosophy addresses the eternal dimension that is not included but – being older than the furthest past – includes the totality of time that is affirmed in the isolated earth.

However, the voices that rise from the isolated earth – the voices that are therefore denials of destiny – make “more and more concrete” the content of destiny *too*. They make more and more concrete, indeed, that denial of destiny that is essentially linked to it, and in this respect, it belongs to it, and thus without which destiny could not be. This means that the discussion concerning destiny is not only the opposition to it; for such a discussion intends to differ from it, shares (that is, is the unconscious attempt to share) the affirmation of the difference that appears in it: such a discussion is at once the enriching of the denial of destiny, thus it is at once the enriching, the realization of it. In this respect, *all* the infinite content of the earth isolated from destiny – the content that is wholly the denial of destiny – makes more and more concrete the denial of destiny and therefore destiny itself, since it is the denial of that denial.

On the other hand, the isolated earth, since it is the original faith, is an interpretation, that is, it is the act of giving meaning to something. However, precisely because it is a “giving”, the incontrovertible necessity of destiny cannot appertain to it, and is therefore *will* to give meaning. It is because of this giving of meaning that, in the isolated earth that appears in destiny, certain events appear as languages and as languages that deny destiny. All the denials of destiny that appear in the isolated earth are therefore contents of the act of interpreting (that is, of the dream) that appears inside destiny (and whose existence is therefore a trait of destiny itself). The events of the isolated earth are interpreted as languages that are its denial precisely because they testify something different from destiny. therefore, the existence of the discussion concerning destiny offered by the isolated earth is something wanted by the act of interpreting (that appears in destiny).

The relationship between destiny and its discussion-denial is extremely more complex (as indeed every trait we referred to so far); however, I hope that now, presenting this periodical created for discussions, the given hints might be enough to introduce to the discussion.