

Foreword

by Giulio Goggi

1. Italian philosophy is gaining more and more attention all over the world. In the context of philosophers who have had and continue to have a significant impact on the Italian philosophical landscape, there is no doubt that the contribution of Emanuele Severino – with regard to issues such as Ontology, Nihilism, Praxis, Language, Science, Technics, Economics... – stands out for the absolute theoretical rigour.

«Eternity and Contradiction. Journal of Fundamental Ontology» is the official publication of the ASES (Associazione di Studi Emanuele Severino – Society for Emanuele Severino Studies). It is characterized by an international research profile and is addressed to anyone who, despite coming from different disciplines and school of thought, wants to open a debate on issues indicated, bearing in mind the “lesson” of the great Italian thinker.

The dialogue with philosophers, theologians, literati, psychologists, scientists, jurists..., already started, continues to animate high-level congresses and seminars, like the one held last year (“At dawn of the eternity. The first 60 years of *“The original structure”*”) with the participation of Graham Priest in dialogue with Severino and the one that was held last June: “Heidegger in the thought of Severino. Metaphysics, Religion, Politics, Economics, Art, Technics”, with the participation of Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.

In this number, the first part refers to the topic that is at the core of Severino’s thought: it is *the eternity of being implied in the original structure of destiny*, in its structural relationship between phenomenological and logical immediacy. In the second part we have theoretical reflections and studies starting from the theme of the eternity of being *insofar as it is being*.

As the eternity of being is a fundamental issue, it can be useful to consider some aspects of it, although very briefly.

2. The *original structure of destiny* is the appearing of the being itself of being – of its being other than what is other than itself – as that which cannot be denied: “In manifesting itself [...] Being submits itself to the law opposing it to not-Being [...]”. The opposition is the ground in the sense that it is *that without which no* thought and *no* discourse could constitute itself or exist. It grounds its own negation as well:

not [...] in the sense of making it be valid or grounding its value, but rather in the sense that if the negation did not base itself upon the opposition [...] it would not even exist” (Severino, 2016a, p. 62).

In fact, the negation of the opposition is *a determinate being* which opposes itself to its negative: “This determinateness is proper *both* to the negation, considered as a semantic unity with respect to everything that is other than the negation, *and* to the single terms that make up the negation. If the negation does not remain distinct from its other, there is no longer negation; if each term of the negation is not distinct from every other term [...] again there is no negation [...]. In order for to be negation, the negation must be determinate, both with respect to its other, and in the term that constitute it; and therefore it presupposes and is grounded upon that which it denies” (Severino, 2016a, pp. 67-68). Denying its own ground, the negation of the identity/opposition “is a quitting the scene of the word and of thought, a declaring its own nonexistence and its own meaninglessness” (Severino, 2016a, pp. 69-70).

Then, this being itself of being – this undeniable opposition between every being and its other – implies the eternity of being *insofar as such*: in fact, to think that there is a time in which being is nothing means to think of a time in which being is the absolute other from itself, the impossible negation of destiny.

The necessary affirmation of the eternity of being *insofar as it is being* does not exclude the “becoming” of beings, provided that it is correctly understood. In this respect, Severino himself uses a very powerful metaphor: “Think of a simulacrum that spins on itself in front of a light. Every side of the simulacrum has always been, but they all little by little show themselves. Everything that stands before it is and it is impossible that it is not. In this sense it is eternal. What is the variation of the world, then? It is the coming forth of the eternal. Then, only the eternal can become: becoming is the showing and hiding, and whatever can show itself and hide itself is only what *is*” (Severino, 2000, p. 225).

What undeniably appears is not that beings begin to exist and cease to exist, but rather their come forth: their appearing and disappearing in the eternal gaze of destiny.

3. Because every being is eternal, every being is necessarily in relation to every other being and it is significant only in its relation to the totality of other beings. However, the actual appearing is the dimension where beings begin and cease to appear, so that what we originally have is not the concrete meaning of beings and the totality of Being, but it is their abstract formal meaning. Insofar as it is a finite dimension of the appearing of Being, the original structure of the truth is also the original structure of the contradiction: “Because the original meaning is, and means what it is and means, only in its connection with the Everything [...], in the isolation of the original meaning from the Everything (i.e., in the non-manifestation of the concrete Whole in the original meaning), the original meaning is not the original meaning” (Severino, 1981, p. 73)..

Severino names “contradiction C” this constitutive contradicting of the original

structure whose solution is not a future to come, but has always been: the true Being of the finite appearing, and of every determination that appears in it, is the infinite appearing of the determined totality of beings, which is the overcoming of the totality of the contradictions of the finite. The original structure of destiny, whose contradicting is removed not by the negation of its content, but rather by its concrete position, necessarily implies the being of the infinite appearing of destiny, which in the finite circle of appearing manifests itself only abstractly.

The “contradiction C”, determined by the “non appearing” of the concrete totality of being, is the condition of establishing the “normal” form of contradiction, the contradiction whose content is nothing. It is its condition not in the sense that the “non-appearing” of the concreteness of Everything as such implies the error (the original structure of destiny is a finite dimension, but it is not an erring, as it is the original negation of the error), but in the sense that it is only in the finite appearing of Everything that the erring is possible and can “contrast” the truth.

The other condition of establishing the “normal” form of contradiction is the happening of what Severino calls the “isolating persuasion”, i.e., the conviction that the “earth” – that is everything that enters the circle of appearing – is what we certainly have to deal with. Isolated from the truth of Being, the earth is understood as the environment of “becoming other” (the impossible negation of the being itself of being) that the ontological thought interprets as becoming *absolutely other*, that is to say, as becoming nothing and from nothing.

4. In the process that leads from philosophy to the domain of techno-science, nihilism (the persuasion that being is nothing) becomes increasingly fitting to its essence. The earth, conceived as a reality that oscillates between Being and Nothing, is the object of all those forms of the will to power that are under the illusion that they can steer its development, by coordinating means to ends that each time they try to achieve.

“If we want to put it in terms of a stone metaphor”, Severino writes, “I will say that all the things are unscratchable diamonds. However, one of these diamonds is the belief that anything can be scratched. This belief is itself a diamond, because error itself is eternal. Therefore it is not that in reality the ability of transforming Being exists: acting does not exist, what exists is the persuasion that acting exists. The content of error does not exist, erring exists” (Severino, 2000, p. 232).

If acting as such is an erring, if every decision (both the individual’s and the institutions’) is a way of erring, then all the specific forms of acting and deciding – political, economical, religious, ethical, technical-scientific, artistic... – are forms of erring. The language that testifies the destiny of the truth also belongs to the isolating will, but it belongs to it insofar as it is will to tell destiny, not insofar as it concerns the content that is told, which is the appearing of the folly of the “becoming other” of beings.

The present situation is marked by contrast between the truth of Being and the isolating persuasion, contrast that can only appear as denied in the gaze of destiny. If this negation is not yet accompanied by the appearing of the isolated earth as

that which has reached its completion (i.e. as a complete totality), nevertheless the appearing of the isolation of the earth as a “past” is destined to appear. The writings of our philosopher show it clearly: they show that the language that testifies destiny is the beginning of the path that leads to the decline of the isolation of the earth, proceeding beyond it *in indefinitum*.

But before the descending of the will to power, it is also necessary that the language that testifies destiny is spoken, not only by this or that individual, but by all people. After the ages of myth, of philosophical reason, and technological-scientific reason, the coming of an age in which the language that testifies destiny will prevail: “When the time comes [...] when all the people are destined to speak the language that testifies destiny, they cannot free themselves from action, and the action to which they are connected is the action that can only adapt to the ethics of technics [...]. However their testimony of destiny makes their action *different* from their action when such testimony is absent in them [...]. And the action seen as error is different from the action that does not know to be error” (Severino, 2016b, p. 82).

In this context it will be inevitable that the action (and therefore the non-truth) takes on a new face, because acting and knowing of the error of the action is different from acting without knowing of such error.

5. From the above, it emerges that Severino’s discourse is a point of no return for all the forms of thought and action facing the unheard-of meaning that the testimony of the truth of Being has brought into the language. By hosting all the voices that intend to discuss these issues, the journal “Eternity and Contradiction. Journal of Fundamental Ontology” belongs to the dawn of that path that is destined to lead outside the darkness of nihilism.

References

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