

# The Phenomenological Immediacy and its Structure

**MASSIMO MARASSI**

Full Professor, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart • e-mail [massimo.marassi@unicatt.it](mailto:massimo.marassi@unicatt.it)

**Translated by Giulia De Florio**

The present contribution moves from one of the main issues of Severino's *The Original structure*, namely, the relation of co-implication between phenomenological and logical immediacy. In their structural relationship, these two meanings of immediacy constitute the original structure of the appearance of being (*ens*). This structure is characterized by a complex unity, which is articulated into three moments, indicating that something only appears if its appearance appears. The proposal of the present work consists in a comparison of Severino's position with a classical structure of evidence and implication such as that of the transcendental, which is here conceived in a Kantian sense, namely, as the place of the *a priori* conditions according to which the data enter the subject's horizon.

**Keywords:**

**phenomenological immediacy, logical immediacy,  
being, structure, appearing, transcendental**

## 1. Introduction

The presentation of the original structure is equal to the individuation of the essence of ground, that is, the anapodictic structure of knowledge or, alternatively, the dynamic by means of which the multiplicity structurally becomes principality or immediacy (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 107).

*The original structure (La struttura originaria)* begins with a formal definition which represents, however, the aim of determining what characterises the immediacy and, then, the experience as such.

The notion of immediacy explicitly refers to the empirical given. Nevertheless, this notion has to be distinguished from the empirical given; on the one hand, it certainly refers to the appearance of the given, on the other, it states that the appearance of the given cannot be denied. And, of course, the latter feature is not included at all into the empirical given.

Now, these two moments – the phenomenological and logical immediacy – are concretely unified thus constituting the experience of being. From this point of view, both the empirical data and their twofold evidence are secured. Since this original structure names the ground, the ground is already efficacious in the dynamics in which the phenomenological and logical immediacy are intertwined. This originary-ness has, as a *content*, the totality of the experience and it is identical to the unity of the experience; however, from a *formal* point of view, it is identical to the whole being. This is, in a nutshell, the theoretical path we would like to follow.

A first consideration concerns the role of philosophy that, as a manifestation of being as such, is phenomenology, not only as the appearance of something to the subject but also as a manifestation of being in its necessity. Here, we deal with the first stage of the structure of the philosophical understanding given as the synthesis of phenomenology and logic: two distinct constituents that are, however, concretely unified.

It means that a phenomenological given is not what simply shows itself within the horizon of the appearance, but it is what is never separated from the *logos*: “The immediacy of the *nexus* between the meanings (= meaningful

things = the fact that things mean = beings) is put as ‘logical’ immediacy (since the logicity, the *logos*, is the relationship between meanings) and the immediacy of the logicity is called ‘law of noncontradiction’. The immediacy of the *evidence*, that is, the appearance of the various forms of nexuses which hold together the meanings, is called ‘phenomenological’ immediacy” (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 17).

In the definition of the content of knowledge, intended as synthesis of the phenomenological and logical appearing, we face a specific notion of truth: truth is construed as the immediate and, from a structural point of view, the anapodictical structure of knowledge leads to the immediate without any mediation.

For such reason, the problem of non-truth arises: non-truth is precisely the separation of these two indivisible dimensions.

Given that, the original structure is not something which in turn needs to be grounded by something else; on the contrary, it is itself the essence of ground and, therefore, it belongs to the anapodictic understanding, which does not require any demonstration. The structure, in other terms, appears to be an incontrovertible self-manifestation. Along with the first – immediate, original and phenomenological – manifestation, it appears the *logos* too, that is, the principle of the incontrovertibility. The original structure exhibits both the poles of its own immediacy. But what does it mean to maintain that the immediacy is twofold (phenomenological and logical)? What does it mean that in the self-revealing of the being the dimension of the incontrovertibility also comes up and that these two moments together constitute the original structure?

Here, we state that the appearance of everything that immediately appears, entails the presence of the *logos* too. Therefore, we have the following consequences: first, the original judgement is not only the expression of a methodology but it expresses at the same time also a content, that is, a being with all its determinations. Second, the truth of the original structure does not deny the plurality of the determinations but it shows the identity, within the original judgement, of subject and predicate. It does not take for granted something of immediately known which, without the phenomenological-logical interweaving, would be only seemingly known.

That said, we can reach a conclusion already implicit in the occurring terms. The immediacy is a structure which includes phenomenological and logical immediacy. These cannot be intended as successive and distinct moments but as items originally in relation. For this reason, the original structure is the necessity between the semantic fields, both as immediacy of

the evidence of the appearance and as logical relationship between the meanings.

Therefore, if the logical immediacy consists in the non-contradiction of being as such (taken in its totality), the phenomenological immediacy is defined by Severino as “immediacy of the appearing of being that appears, inasmuch being which appears, that is, the appearing of any being that appears, that is the appearing of the totality of being which appears” (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 34).

It means that every being is always within the concrete original structure and, therefore, the two regions of the immediacy are characterised by an effective and specific self-exhibition. In any case, everything originally appearing, appears both as a being and as the necessary relation among beings. It is straightforward to identify the relationship between the two levels with the logical dimension of the original; however, since this relationship exists, it must be said that it belongs to the phenomenological level too.

## **2. Phenomenological immediacy and the structure of the appearing**

On the basis of such premises, the phenomenological immediacy cannot be understood simply as the immediate appearing of beings. It is, more radically, an appearing of nexuses where the form of appearing includes not only the beings but also the beings which constitute the various relations. At the same time, the immediacy includes, then, the co-originary-ness of the two regions of the immediacy.

In order for a being to appear, there must be, at the same time, the whole class of the nexuses by means of which any being is necessarily and formally included into a relation. The empirical appearing of any given, of any being, of any state of affairs, is within a horizon which is original and it always remains as such: if something is, it is undeniable that it appears within this structural entanglement of relationships. This class of nexuses is the original grounding, without which any being cannot access into the horizon of the appearing.

This clarification allows us to say that the subject-object dualism, which characterised modern philosophy, is solved and, at the same time, overcome. It is solved because this class of nexuses immediately appears in its own undeniability, in its necessity; therefore, it is not the effect of the relation between subject and object, but it is the undeniable remaining of the identity among being-knowing-meaning. It is overcome as a veritable

horizon, since the original truth of being does not depend on the intentional act but it shows itself as original opposition to its own negation. How is the phenomenological immediacy, that is, the appearing being exhibited? In order for something to be able to self-manifest, no operating presupposition is supposed to be. So, what reveals itself, by excluding a presupposition, is undeniable. The immediacy is, then, another way to characterise the manifestation; the structure of the immediate refers to the totality which belongs to such level of manifestation. This is an undeniable nexus and, therefore, the structure of the genuine appearing coincides with the structure of the immediacy.

The presence of being does not presuppose anything but itself: “The being which is immediately present – the ‘immediate’ as what it occurs into the constitution of the subject of the original judgement or, better, as element of that structure of the senses of the immediacy which constitute the subject of the original subject – is what, in order to be affirmed, does not require (or not presuppose) anything but itself: τὸ δι’ αὐτὸ γινώριμον: *per se notum*” (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 143).

It is worth to note that this passage clearly distinguishes the presence of being and the presence of what is present. However, here it is simply stated that being as *per se notum* means that one knows that the being is; in other terms, being states the phenomenological immediacy of a nexus. A further step is required; and it is specified in the following: “When we claim: the being is, *since* the fact that the being is, is *per se notum*, this ‘since’ (the grounding) is not in this case the reason of being of the being (it is not the *since* of the connection between the subject and predicate of the proposition: ‘The being is’), but it is the ‘since’ of the that-being (*dass*): phenomenological immediacy” (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 145).

The appearing has therefore a content (hyposyntax) and it is at the same time the horizon in which the being appears (hypersyntax). As background, the structure is original and as unity of a multiplicity, it is a phenomenological and logical complex constituted by determinations related to each other. The determinations are just within the complex and the complex is a unity of a plurality of determinations. The grounding is the impossibility of not-being, immediately appearing without the mediation of anything else: the ground, in order to be ground, must be original and it is original only because it is a structure.

Now, thought is the manifestation of being; this presence of being – which is known in itself – is understood in an immediate way and cannot be subjected to negation. Otherwise, the presence of being would keep close the

not-being intended as not-removed; in other terms, the affirmation of being would not entail its negation to be removed. The negation is actually removed by considering that the affirmation of being does not require any proof or demonstration. The deep meaning of immediacy actually excludes the possibility of a non-being together with being. Namely, it means that the statement “being is” does not need any demonstration: “Greek philosophy has the priceless merit to *reveal* the sense of immediacy. This revealing is not something secondary with respect to the immediacy, but is precisely what makes immediacy valuable as grounding. The immediacy is either grounding inasmuch it is revealed or it is *posed* as immediacy” (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 147).

(In this way the difference from Gustavo Bontadini becomes clear: only by eliminating the great contradiction and maintaining the work of the principle of creation’s immobility, philosophy develops and cancels the ongoing contingent determinations. The paths of knowing diverge. And yet, Severino grasps the original structure within the same framework, singling out from contemporary philosophy the conditions to overcome the typical of modern philosophy’s oblivion of the classic, metaphysical thinking.)

Here, one can appreciate the unique function of the phenomenological immediacy since it amounts to the very manifestation of being. However, saying that being is – that is, stating its being given with any chance to negate it – depends on the phenomenology and it is certified by the logos. At this point, the statement “being is” amounts to “it is true that being is, it appears.” Given this distinction, one can maintain that the phenomenological and logical immediacy constitute a structure, the original structure of the appearing: the appearing of these entities can be affirmed only if its appearing has been affirmed. Again: the appearing of the appearing can be affirmed only if its appearing is affirmed. As the structure is a compound of immediacies, so the appearing is a complex unity, a being which is and which denies to not be. The phenomenological moment is already present in the logical moment.

For that, the structure of the appearing is articulated into three levels which constitute the complex unity of the appearing: the appearing of the appearing of the appearing. The three levels mean that something appears only if its appearing appears. The *aporia* stems from that: on one hand the appearing of being belongs to the necessity, on the other it is ungrounded since it chases the necessity without reaching it.

How to avoid the *aporia*? The proposed solution is the following: “The totality of the appearing being originally includes its own appearing (i.e. originally includes that being that is its own appearing), so that the position

of the appearing of the being that appears is *originally* a position of the appearing of such appearing (position of auto-appearing); in other words, the affirmation of the existence of the appearing does not have to look for its grounding in the affirmation of the existence of an appearing (*a*) of the appearing (*a*), where the *a'* appearing is different from *a* appearing of the being. The appearing (*a*) of the being is, originally, at the same time appearing *of itself*, and consequently it does not have to endlessly chase its own Necessity” (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 65).

That requires an explanation of the notions of reflexivity and completeness. The three levels do not mean that the reflection adds to the appearing another appearing; neither it holds the objection that the appearing of the appearing would trigger an infinite regress.

In the first place, if an empirical given is evident, then being appears inasmuch its own appearing appears; in other words, the immediacy of the given is not simple but it belongs to a structured appearing: it always shows a reflexivity. The appearing of being entails the appearing of its appearing.

Secondly, the threefold appearing does not go on endlessly since the three levels constitute an identity. We face a complete evidence of immediacy: the immediacy of a given entails the being self of the given. This immediacy excludes the non correspondence between being and being immediate; therefore, a given is immediate in every time and with reference to itself.

The phenomenological immediacy concretely discloses the structure of the immediate presence of being: it is the already cited threefold appearing structure. This allows to state that the appearing does not concern only the things (the appearing of things) but, more significantly, it is the appearing of the appearing of the things: it is the self-appearing. Therefore, the thought not only is directed towards the manifested things, but it is itself a content which appears. Every content of the appearing of the phenomenological immediacy is, therefore, incontrovertible.

### **3. A possible analogy: the notion of *transcendental***

The analysis of the structure allows for a great quantity of references to the history of philosophy; Severino exploits those works in order to clarify his view and to distinguish it from the others available, for instance, the explicit references to Hegel.

Let us take the following juxtaposition: the appearing is already appearing of the appearing of the appearing as well as the consciousness is already consciousness of the self-consciousness (Severino, 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 92). As a matter

of fact, the latter formula allows a better understanding of the former.

I would like to provide another analogy, concerning the classical structure of evidence and entailment: the notion of transcendental. It is worth noticing that, even in this case, there is no equivalence of arguments (Severino would not accept that) but a sort of affinity between discourses. The term “transcendental” is not intended by Severino as a transgeneric notion, that is, the universal which is in any particular. Transcendental is the horizon within which the appearing of all beings appears and the transcendental Ego is the appearing which is conscious that the beings are.

In a first sense, this transcendental appearing is obviously distinct from the empirical appearing of the individual determinations. But there is a second way in which the appearing is transcendental: a given is included in knowledge only if one can exhibit at the same time its condition of possibility; analogously, a given is immediate only if it is included in an immediacy which is necessary. The appearing of beings is within a transcendental and total appearing where beings are forever, they do not begin or stop appearing. Here *transcendental* coincides with the original and necessary horizon in which any being is. Without this relationship, no entity could appear.

One could propose a different, alternative, argument. The transcendental structure indicates everything that is condition of the possibility of the knowledge and together the knowledge of this condition. What is considered as condition is, doubtlessly, identifiable (at least for Kant) as an *a priori* form. Nevertheless, it could be construed in more general terms: in every act of knowledge the totality of experience and its undeniability about the individual state of affairs which appears within the totality is entailed (as its condition). It is a sort of ontological amplification of the transcendental structure which extends and modifies the point of view. Here, the suggestion has a pure heuristic character, but it is useful to take into account two exemplifications, one historical and the other theoretical.

Preliminarily, it is useful to investigate whether the notion of transcendental can be read as the necessary reference of a given (i.e.: an empirical intuition, a state of affairs) to an undeniable horizon in which there is the experience of given. This proposal can be expressed also in Kantian terminology. Let us think about, for instance, the notion of “system” which is the connection of known propositions grounded in a unique principle in order to exclude bunches of known propositions simply aggregated. But a system is not only “the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea” (Kant, KrV: B 860, tr. 1998, p. 691). Moreover, a system can guarantee the

existence of the totality. The concept of system is, therefore, structural and it does not concern solely the knowledge, but also reality. Kant's example is illuminating: the system is akin to an "animal body" – "whose growth does not add a limb but rather makes each limb stronger and fitter for its end" (Kant, KrV: B 861, tr. 1998, p. 691).

The analogy with the living world suggests that a system must be alive in order to guarantee its own unity; and, by consequence, "the entire system of metaphysics" (Kant, KrV: B 874, tr. 1998, p. 699) is alive since it wants to achieve the essential aims of the reason. The system of metaphysics is an articulated system, not a heap of unconnected parts. The metaphysics is such not because its proper objects are beyond the experience, but because it represents a system that foreknows both "the interconnection [of cognition] based on one principle" (Kant, KrV: B 673, tr. 1998, p. 591), and all the possible objects of experience. Thus, the system denotes an object and, at the same time, its unconditional possibility, that is, its belonging to a given unity of meaning. Reason is the faculty of the unconditional because by gathering everything in a totality, it does not confine itself to the knowledge of what is given, but it pre-emptly the unity of a fundamental connection, that is, the "systematic completeness of all cognition" (Kant, KrV: B 683, tr. 1998, p. 597) of the objects of the experience.

#### **4. Final remarks: the implications of the transcendental reading**

But the historical link to Kant does not exclude a further theoretical in-depth analysis, instead it requires it. One can ask under what conditions an given appearing is also the content of a transcendental knowledge. It must be that the given is the content of an evidence, that is, a given which appears within the horizon of appearing and, moreover, that evidence is necessary. The transcendental structure is the horizon in which something appears and, at the same time, it entails that what is within the appearing must necessarily appear. The transcendental is the immediate which entails the being present as necessary and at the same time the presentness of what is necessary present.

The given which appears in the transcendental structure is known as immediately necessary and therefore the transcendental is a necessarily immediate condition.

The transcendental is, sure, a condition of possibility of the knowledge but it is also the necessary and incontrovertible knowledge of that very condition. At the end of the day, a structure can be said transcendental in so

far as it allows the appearing of the given and its necessity. In that way, the excess of a content about the structure is excluded since every content of the experience appears only within the horizon of presentness which cannot be overcome, since it is the unity of the experience.

In sum, nothing can be given without and beyond the horizon of the transcendental structure, which unconditionally appears. Every being is not contradictory in its appearing and its appearing too is not contradictory. Nevertheless, the transcendental operates by means of categories and, among them, the modal ones. Here the relation between the given which appears and the subject to which the multiplicity appears is not univocal. “Finally, necessity is nothing other than the existence [*Existenz*] that is given by possibility itself” (Kant, KrV: B 111, tr. 1998, p. 215). The transcendental argument could lead, here, to other solutions. Thus, Severino’s philosophy seems to be already outlined from the very beginning of his reflection: “This complicated historic and theoretic development of the philosophical thinking is far from being summed up in a simple act; instead, it needs a movement of adjustment and clarification throughout the time, where what has to be potentially remembered – the classic metaphysics – could be usefully presented in multiple ways that manage to grasp, from different perspectives, its truth. A sort of surveys and probing investigations then take place, which positively contribute to such adjustment, thus leading to the complete illumination of the truth. The following reflections have to take into account such contribution. The investigation is basically constituted by a deduction of the structure of being, by the determination of the deducted structure and by the shift from deduction to determination” (Severino, 1950, p. 385).

## References

- Kant, I. (1988). *Critique of Pure Reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Original work published 1781/1787).
- Severino, E. (1981<sup>2</sup>). *La struttura originaria* [*The Original Structure*]. Milano: Adelphi.
- Severino, E. (1950). La struttura dell’essere [The Structure of Being]. *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, 42 (5-6), 385-411.