

“Golden Implication”

The Primary Foundations of the Eternity of Being

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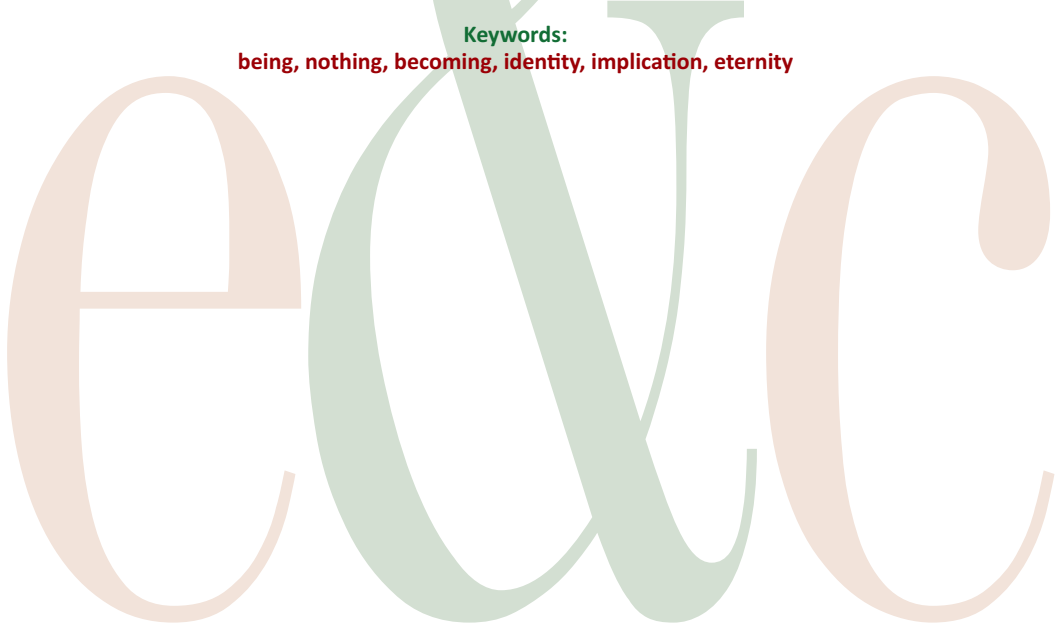
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This essay aims at briefly presenting the numerous ways of indicating the eternity of being, insofar as it is being, in line with what Emanuele Severino has shown in his works. In one of his most recent works, Severino himself has named “golden” the implication of the eternity of being on the part of the being itself of being. Such implication is at the core of his discourse and multiple are the ways of its foundations. If we call “original tautology” the appearing of the being itself of being, we can show that the ways of the golden implication depend on the principle of universal opposition of the positive and the negative – the destiny of thought – which is the law according to which Being shows itself in all of its forms.

Keywords:

being, nothing, becoming, identity, implication, eternity



1. Introduction

The *original structure* is the structure that is not founded on anything else, that is, of what is known through itself. What is not founded in anything else is the appearing of being in the form of identity/non-contradiction, so that we say that each being is identical to itself and it is not other than itself.

In the following I will call “original tautology” the appearing of the being itself of being, its not being other than itself, with explicit reference to Emanuele Severino’s works and the unprecedented sense of identity that they suggest, a sense that is radically different from the way Western thought has conceived of identity.

Plato, Aristotle, Hegel state the necessity of identity. Plato said that not even in a dream we can be convinced that “one thing is other than itself” (*Theaet.*, 190 b-c) and Aristotle shows that it is impossible “to suppose that the same thing is and is not” (*Metaph.*, 1005 b 11-34). Hegel calls “Tautologie” the essence of the dialectical method (cf. *Science of Logic, Introduction*), that is therefore the affirmation of identity.

However, according to the Western tradition, things are engaged in the process of becoming – they are generated and they perish – and this entails the persuasion that the things are essentially “nothing”. In fact, the Western tradition is the failed attempt to think identity: it wants to affirm the identity of beings, but, *precisely because it thinks the becoming of beings*, in its subconscious the Western thought thinks the identity of what is not identical (Being and Nothing), that is, the negation of identity.

Instead, the “original tautology” is the appearing of the identity of each and every being as it implicates in various ways (as we will see) the eternity of all beings. The “golden implication” – concept which is at the core of Emanuele Severino’s writings – is precisely the implication of the eternity of being (of each and every being, of any determination-that-is) on the part of the being itself of being.

2. “Identity of the identity with itself” and “élenchos”

1. In order to fine-tune our subject, it can be useful to clarify certain aspects of this discourse that are already present in Severino’s fundamental work *The Original Structure*.

We define “being” as every “that which is”, where “that which” indicates the essence, whereas “is” indicates being a not-nothing on the part of the essence. In *The Essence of Nihilism*, Severino himself explains that the term “essence” is to be considered in its transcendental sense: in fact, “essence” refers to every semantic dimension, to everything that is not nothing. The same applies to “Being” that means being a not-nothing on the part of the totality of whatever is not nothing – and therefore on the part of each determination and of the totality of determinations.

In *The Original Structure*, it is claimed that being is *immediately* a *syntactical constant* of every meaning, and that means that “it is immediately self-contradictory that any determination – that any positivity – is not” (Severino, 1981, p. 499). Of each semantic content (x), and therefore also of the Semantic whole, being (ϵ) is immediately predicated, with this important clarification: essence and existence cannot be presupposed by their synthesis. In fact, being cannot be predicated of an essence that is separated from being; by contrast, it is of the essence that is already originally in synthesis with being ($x=\epsilon$), that being (ϵ) is predicated, and the being that is predicated is precisely the being of the essence ($\epsilon=x$).

I am referring to that concrete formulation of identity that is investigated in chapter III of *The Original Structure*, where it is shown that identity is to be understood as “identity of the identity with itself”. In the case of the existential assessment that we are considering, we will thus obtain the formula:

$$(x=\epsilon)=(\epsilon=x).$$

The subject to which the predicate refers is not the *pure* subject isolated from the predicate, and the predicate is not the *pure* predicate isolated from the subject. Therefore, the “identity” is not the outcome of the thought’s unifying act, which identifies contradictorily the non-identical (the subject and the predicate that are originally separate), rather it is the appearing of the identity of identical, that is, the identity between the synthesis of the subject and the predicate and the synthesis of the predicate and the subject.

2. Also by way of introduction – in order to clarify further parts of the analysis –, it must be pointed out that the original structure is not an arbitrary presupposition.

In other words, it is a matter of understanding *why* the Being's identity with itself must be affirmed and the identity of Being and not-Being cannot be affirmed:

Replying to this question means effecting the *authentic* unconcealment of the truth of Being, which is not a simple saying, but is a saying that has *value*; a saying, that is, capable of superseding [negating] its own negation (and so of superseding any particular form that negation may assume). The affirmation that Being is not not-Being must, unquestionably, be denied as long as its value is not seen. In the meantime, this affirmation is like an invincible sword in the hand of someone who does not know he has an invincible sword: such a swordsman will be struck down at the first encounter. And rightly so: a “truth” that cannot hold its ground is not a truth (Severino, 2016a, p. 59).

The original structure is not simply the appearing of the being itself of being, but to it also essentially belongs the appearing of being itself as that whose negation is self-negation.

This is the topic of the “*élenchos*”, which is the core of the entire discourse. Briefly, it can be formulated as follows: the negation of being itself of being – and therefore the negation of the opposition between any being and what is other than such being – is itself a determinate being which opposes itself to everything that is other than itself. This means that the negation of the being itself of being is founded on what it negates, that is, it negates that without which the negation could not be as such, so that it is a way of saying that includes the declaration of its own non-existence:

The *élenchos* is precisely this ascertainment of this self-supersession of the negation; i.e. the ascertainment that the negation does not exist as *pure* negation – as negation that, in order to constitute itself, has no need to affirm that which it denies. Saying that opposition “cannot” be denied thus means ascertaining that, precisely because the ground of the negation is that which it denies, the negation consists in the negation of itself, in its superseding itself as discourse (Severino, 2016a, pp. 62-63).

And the “original tautology” is not something controvertible, deniable, precisely because it is not separated from the appearing of the “élenchos”: the opposition between every being and its other, and thus also the opposition of every being to nothing, shows itself as the same “breath of thought” (Severino, 2016a, p. 79).

3. The identity of essence with existence and the Law of Being

1. We have said that being is predicated of every semantic content and therefore also of the Semantic whole.

Now we add that the logically immediate propositions are such insofar as they relate to the universal formulation of the principle of identity (non-contradiction): we say “A is A” (thus predicating “A” ’s being), not because being identical to itself is “A” ’s prerogative, so that considering “B” we cannot say that “B is B”, but because both “A” and “B” are individualizations of the universal – that is, of Being – to which essentially belongs the being identical to itself. And conversely, Being is identical to itself “not because identity is a property of Being, understood as an abstract or formal universal [...], regardless of the concrete content of this formality, but because Being is the concrete universal [...], namely because the formal element is put in its relation to the specific content” (Severino, 1981, pp. 321-322).

It follows that “A” is not “for itself” identical to itself but “for other”, where this other is the concrete universal that includes “A”. The same applies to “B”:

The L-immediate [logically immediate] identity is thus only the identity of the concrete, and this identity is expressed by the proposition “the whole is the whole”, the whole being precisely Being as concrete universal [...]. On this side, this is the only analytical proposition, or there is no other analytical proposition but this one: in fact, to pose *A* as the individuation of the concrete universal, and pose *B* as the individuation of the concrete universal, means posing the same content, i.e., the concrete universal. This does not mean that *A*’s identity with itself does not differ in any way from *B*’s identity with itself: the two identities are clearly different, but both, as L-immediate identities, essentially imply a term – the universal, the whole – that comprises both identities, so that their concrete meaning is the same (Severino, 1981, pp. 323-324).

Therefore, the proposition “the whole is the whole” (where “whole” is to be understood as the totality of the positive) conveys the same logical immediacy, and it is tantamount to the proposition “Being is”, where “Being” is to be understood as the same semantic whole that in itself includes the totality of the logically immediate connections. The proposition “Being is” – which predicates the being of the concrete universal that is identical to itself – is thus the same principle of identity and non-contradiction. Indeed, such principle has a value that is essentially ontological: it is not only a norm for thought, but it is the law for Being itself.

The meaning of the “original tautology” (the being itself of being) that I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, saying that it implies the eternity of being, is now clearer. *The Original Structure’s* main point emphasizes:

That Being has to be resides in the very meaning of Being; wherefore the principle of non-contradiction expresses not simply the identity of essence with itself (or its difference from other essences), but rather the identity of essence with existence (or the otherness of essence with respect to non-existence). (Severino, 1981, p. 517).

This means that *the identity of the essence with itself* must not be isolated from the *identity of essence and existence*. The identity of essence and existence is to be understood in the sense that “in the meaning of the determination (essence), of which the being (existence) is predicated, the being (the positivity, the existence) of the determination is originally included” (Severino, 1981, p. 517). Essence is in fact different from existence but, as we already know, being different does not mean being separated.

Hence Being’s immutability: to say that Being becomes (that is, that goes from not-Being to Being and vice versa) “means to say that Being is not: it is not, either at the beginning or at the end of becoming. These both in the case that becoming of the whole is becoming [...] of the whole as such, and in the case that becoming of the whole is becoming of one moment or one aspect of the whole [...]. All this can be expressed by saying that Being is eternal” (Severino, 1981, p. 520).

We can sum it up as follows: of the whole of Being, and of one moment of the whole (for instance, this pen, this supervening noise...)

we cannot think that *before they were and after they will not be*. Thinking that Being is generated is the same as thinking that Being is nothing, and the same is to be said if the Being is corrupted: it is nothing at the beginning of becoming and it is nothing at the end of becoming.

To think of Being's birth and death means to think of the time in which being is absolutely other than itself, that is, the negation of that being itself of the being, the negation of which is self-negation.

Everything is eternal. And yet becoming appears. So how are we to understand becoming? Severino writes: "If the impossibility of Being's not-being is not recognized, one will be left without the slightest suspicion that the authentic content of Appearing is radically altered by defining the Becoming that appears as an annulment of Being, or as Being's emerging from nothingness".

In truth, "what appears is not Being's issuing from and returning to nothingness, but rather its appearing and disappearing," therefore, "if Becoming is defined as the process of the revelation of Being [...] then Being's immutability and its Becoming non longer rank as mutually contradictory terms" (Severino, 2016a, pp. 107-112).

2. The Western tradition has not been able to think identity because it has always understood Being as something that is in time:

Aristotle's argument (later to be repeated by Aristotelians and Scholastics past and present) that when Being is, it is, and when Being is-not, it is-not, therefore states that when Being is Nothing, then it is nothing. But in this discourse, then, one fails to see that the real danger that must be avoided lies not in affirming that when Being is nothing, it is Being (and, when Being is Being, it is nothing), but rather in admitting *that Being is nothing*. The real danger lies in assenting to a time *when* Being is not Nothing (i.e., when it is), and a time *when* Being is nothing (i.e. when it is-not), in admitting, that is, that Being *is in time*. In this way, the "principle of non-contradiction" itself becomes the worst form of contradiction: precisely because contradiction is concealed in the very formula that was designed to avoid it and to banish it from Being (Severino, 2016a, pp. 38-39).

If Being is in time, there is a time in which Being is not, in which the positive is the negative: the time of the absurd. However, the "original tautology" – the appearing of the being itself of being –implies the eternity of everything that is, its not being in time, and thus expresses a

sense of identity and non-contradiction that is essentially different from the temporal understanding of Being.

It must be pointed out that the so-called principle of identity and principle of non-contradiction are moments of the logical immediacy: Being is identical to itself because it is not a not-Being, and Being is not a not-Being because it is identical to itself, therefore “a logical priority of one over the other is to be ruled out: the two sides of the principle are immediately connected and thus none of them is something mediated from the other” (Severino, 1981, p. 175).

Being itself of being that is separated (isolated) from its being negation of its own other, is not a being itself. The real meaning of the original tautology is expressed in the universal opposition of positive and negative. Already in *The Essence of Nihilism* Severino conceived of it as the “law of Being [...], the destiny of thought, and thought is always witness to this law; always affirming it, even when ignorant of it or when denying it” (Severino, 2016a, pp. 64-65).

If Being is the positive, then the negative is the non-positive, i.e., everything that in different ways is other than the positive in question. We understand now that the opposition of Being and Nothing is one of the ways in which the positive is opposed to the negative: “the negative is not simply the pure Nothing (Parmenides), but is also the *other* positive (Plato)” (Severino, 2016a, pp. 46-47). In fact, “the denial of the not-being of Being [...] is an individuation of the universal opposition of the positive and the negative”, because “in the original opposition, every Being (and the totality of Being) turns in a number of directions – it enters into a plurality of relationships” (Severino, 2016a, p. 80), and this plurality of directions or relationships is precisely the plurality of ways according to which every positive is opposed to its negative.

4. The main modes of the golden implication

The identity of being and its necessary implications are constitutive of the semantic-syntactical horizon that Severino calls “persyntactic field”, where the term “persyntax” means the authentic transcendental, the syntax of all the syntaxes, that is, the set of meanings and relationships that has to necessarily appear in order for every being to appear.

The being itself of being insofar as it is being is the fundamental persyntactic determination, in the sense that all the other persyntactic determinations are traits of the concreteness of the being itself of being.

Among the necessary implications, the most remarkable one – already in *The Original Structure*, but even before then (cf. Severino, 1958) – so much that it deserves the name of “golden” (Severino, 2015, p. 95), is the already pointed out implication between the appearing of the being itself of being and the eternity of every being.

We have found that if Being became – if it was born or if it died – Being would not be: *becoming nothing* and *becoming from nothing* imply a time in which Being is not. It is the “primary” foundation of the eternity of beings. It is called “primary” because it is based on nothing but the original structure, i.e., on the appearing of the incontrovertible original tautology.

In what follows I will briefly mention the other ways of indicating the eternity of being, namely the main modes of the golden implication.

a) We have seen that the being itself of being (its being other than what is other than itself, its being other than nothing) is a necessary connection, something that cannot be other than how it is. But a necessary connection is an eternal connection: it is impossible for a time or a situation in which this connection is not to exist because we would have a necessary connection that is not a necessary connection. Therefore “it is *impossible* that any being [that is a being itself, i.e., a necessary connection] begins and ends being itself [...]. This impossibility is the eternity of being insofar as it is being” (Severino, 2015, p. 177).

We have here another formulation of the *golden implication*: another primary path that leads to the same statement (asserting the eternity of being), starting, in this case, by considering the necessity of the original connection.

b) If now we look at the “result” of becoming other, we find that in it (in the result) there is not only the other, but there is also the having become other on the part of the being that becomes. For example: in the result of becoming ash on the part of the wood, there is not only the ash, but also the having become ash on the part of the wood, an impossible identification of non-identical.

We can think of avoiding the contradiction by saying that, in the becoming ash on the part of the wood, the wood becomes nothing. However, by saying that, we are doubling the “folly” of becoming other: we end up thinking not only that in the result of becoming, wood is other than itself because it is identical to the other positive, i.e., the ash, but also that the wood is other than itself because it is identical to its absolute other, which is nothing. And for this becoming to happen it is also

necessary that the ash emerge from nothing: at a certain point, nothing becomes ash, so the result of this becoming from nothing is the being ash on the part of nothing.

The first way in which we observe that the beginning and the end of becoming as such imply the identification of being and nothing, is combined with this additional primary foundation of the eternity of being (cf. Severino 1992, First Part, chap. I; 1995, chaps. I and II), which establishes the impossible identity in the *result* of becoming nothing or becoming from nothing. “This, even if in the becoming nothing (or from nothing) the identity of being and nothing is more *primary* than the identity that is present in the *result* of becoming nothing (or from nothing), because [...] becoming from nothing implies a time (the beginning of this becoming) in which the being is still nothing (is identical to nothing) and becoming nothing implies a time (the result of this becoming) in which the being is nothing” (Severino, 2015, p. 138).

By further investigating the structure of becoming, Severino has identified other primary ways of meaning of the eternity of being.

c) Let us consider the process of becoming other on the part of being X. Because this process is not a nothing, but it is a being that is other than X, it follows that, from the beginning, such process is already the having become other on the part of X: “this means that, in the process of becoming other, the being becomes other (the other consisting in the process) when it has not become other yet. At the same time it becomes other (the other that is at the beginning of the process of becoming other) without having become other (the other that should be the result of the process of becoming other). The becoming other is the negation of becoming other” (Severino, 2015, pp. 295-296).

Also this shows that becoming other is something contradictory, because it negates the being itself of being, “where the being that is not itself is precisely the becoming other” (Severino, 2015, p. 296). However the impossibility for every being to become other is the same necessity that every being is eternal.

d) Let us consider now that in the becoming Y on the part of X, it is necessary not only that X becomes Y, but also (syn-chronically) that Y becomes X. If Y did not become X, Y would be separated from X, that could not become Y, “so that a being, becoming other, becomes itself, that is, it does not become other” (Severino, 2015, p. 149. The same remark is found also in Severino 2011, chap. X, par. III).

This is another configuration of the contradictory nature of becoming

other: a being that, in becoming other, does not become its other, is a negation of the being itself of being, and this means that this is “an additional foundation of the necessity of the eternity of every being” (Severino, 2016b, p. 239), an additional primary foundation of the eternity of being insofar as it is being.

e) Finally, let us consider becoming as a transition from potential being to actual being, for example, the becoming where a block of marble is transformed into a statue by an artist. In this case we say that the statue is “potentially” in the block of marble. But its being “potentially” means that the actuality of the specific shape of the statue is still nothing: if at least certain aspects of the statue weren’t still nothing, the statue would already be in actuality and there would be no transition from potentiality to actuality.

Therefore, the becoming from potentiality to actuality is a transition in which something that is still nothing (*nihil absolutum*) becomes a being. And this transition is “a ‘third’ with respect to nothing and being [...]. Because it affirms a ‘third’, and thus it negates the being itself of being, the concept of becoming is self-contradictory, that is, also for this reason becoming [...] is impossible (it is the negation of the being itself of being). The impossibility of becoming is the necessity of not becoming of beings, i.e., the necessity of the eternity of each and every being” (Severino, 2016b, pp. 227-228).

And this is another primary way of the eternity of beings implied in the original structure of the identity.

5. An additional foundation of the eternity of being

The golden segment of the persyntax shows in numerous ways its own necessity. The primary path suggested by Severino in his earlier writings – the path that negates the ontological form of becoming other – appears to be “surrounded” by other paths, suggested by our philosopher in his later writings (and summed up for the first time in Severino 2015, Third Part, chap. I). They are primary paths as well because, as we have seen, in them as well the persyntactic determination of the eternity of every being is implied by the appearing of the being itself of being.

There is an additional foundation of the eternity of being that is subordinate to the primary path, a path about which is spoken for the first time in *Dike*. Let us call (e)S the eternity of that certain being which is the original structure, and (e)BB the eternity of being insofar as it is

being. In this additional (but subordinate) path we start with the observation of (e)S – which is asserted on the foundation of (e)BB – and we show that (e)S, insofar as it is distinct from the foundation of (e)BB, implies (e)BB.

The argument can be summed up as follows: the eternal is a rule that anticipates the future and preserves the past. We say that (e)S implies (e)BB because “if beings that become other by coming from nothing and returning to nothing existed, (e)S *would anticipate* their being nothing and it would not let them go through the *nothing* of the past; (e)S would be that Law of the Eternal that presents itself, and necessarily, as the *entification of nothing*” (Severino, 2015, p. 196).

What occurs is a sort of inversion of the underlying trend of contemporary thought, according to which the faith in the existence of becoming implies the affirmation of the non-existence of the immutable: “while in the faith of becoming other the entification of nothing makes impossible the becoming other that in this faith is considered as absolutely undeniable evidence, so that such faith in the becoming arrives at negating each and every Eternal, vice versa (and here is the inversion...) in the implication of (e)BB on the part of (e)S, the negation of becoming other implied by (e)S does not imply the negation of every ‘Eternal’, but it implies, by contrast, the negation of every becoming other, that is, it implies the eternity of every being” (Severino, 2015, p. 198).

6. The fundamental semantic-syntactic structure

If now we go back to analyze the original tautology, to summarize and develop what has been said regarding the authentic structure of the identity of being, we find that it is precisely the concrete formulation of the identity – the concrete sense of being itself of being, understood as *identity of the identity with itself* – that implies the eternity of everything that is.

We have said that in the being, i.e., in “that which is”, being (ϵ) is not separated from the essence (x), neither is the essence separated from being: it is of every “that which is” that being is predicated, in the form that we already know: $(x=\epsilon)=(\epsilon=x)$. And it is precisely of the “being-that-is” that its not being separated from its being identical to itself is affirmed. In formula:

$$[(x=\varepsilon)]=(\varepsilon=x)=[(x=\varepsilon)]=(\varepsilon=x)$$

Severino writes:

But the original and necessary unity of “that which” and its “*is*” is the *eternity* of “that which” – of every “that which”. And the appearing of such unity is a primary foundation of eternity, additional to that which appears almost since the beginning in my writings [...]. Such additional foundation is not based on the exclusion that the “that which” is nothing – as by contrast the primary foundation of eternity that appears in my earlier writings is – but it is based on the exclusion that the Being of “that which” [...] is the Being of nothing, i.e., it is based on the exclusion that the nothing is (Severino, 2016b, p. 223).

Isolated from its own Being, the being is a nothing of which, at a later stage, the being is affirmed: the isolation of the terms implies that their union is the identification of the non-identicals (cf. Severino, 1995, chap. XIV). But it is impossible that the nothing is.

For example, to say that “this pen is” means to say that this pen is eternally, not only because it is impossible that there is a situation in which being is nothing (as it is already said in *The Original Structure*) but also because it is impossible that the Being of being is the Being of nothing, “even if [...] the exclusion that the ‘that which’ (being) is nothing implies the exclusion that the nothing is being” (Severino, 2016b, p. 223).

And because the being itself of being is structured as “universal opposition of the positive and the negative” – and in the plurality of ways in which every positive is opposed to its own negative, and thus also to nothing, – it is precisely under this fundamental semantic-syntactic structure that the paths of the “golden implication” fall.

7. Conclusion

We have seen that the ways of the golden implication are numerous. The language encounters first one way, and then the other: first, in the way suggested by Severino in *The Original Structure*, then in those suggested in later writings.

Because every being is eternal, also the coming forth of being is eternal:

Not even the synthesis between the being that happens and its happening can not-be (that is, be nothing). But in saying that the being that comes into the appearing could have not come into it (or that the being that did not appear could have appeared) – by affirming the “contingency of the appearing” – we say that the being that happens could have not happened, that is, we negate the necessity of the happening. In this way the not-being (that is, the nothingness) of the happening of being is posed as a possibility. The impossibility is regarded as possible (Severino, 1980, p. 98).

Therefore, it is necessary for beings not only to come forth, but also to come forth exactly as they come forth. (The foundation of the necessity of happening consists of numerous paths as well. Cf. Severino, 2015, Third Part, chap. II). And because everything happens by necessity, the succession in the linguistic exposition of the different ways of the foundation of the eternity of being is also necessary. Because there is no chance in the succession of events, it cannot be accidental that the same theory can be demonstrated in different ways.

Moreover, because it is impossible that the different ways of the golden implication are separated one from the other – otherwise they would be separated from the original meaning that implies all the different ways – it can be said that they all belong to the incontrovertible structure of the persyntax, that has always shined before the intellect, and that in the law of the universal opposition of the Positive and the Negative has its radiating core.

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