

The “Salvation” in the Truth in Giovanni Gentile and Emanuele Severino

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The theme that connects Giovanni Gentile and Emanuele Severino is the knowledge/participation in the Truth, which, in its characterization as absolute, can be the only way to salvation as a true liberation. Thus at the beginning of the twentieth century, Gentile presents the eternity of the transcendental ego in the dialectic of becoming, which is a constant evolution. In this way he assures in ethics always constituting the non-ephemeral meaning of life and salvation in history. In the second half of the twentieth century Severino, after having identified in the actualism the definitive outcome of the philosophy of becoming, reaffirms the eternity of what is, not being existing but an appearance of an eternal. And yet – and it is the hypothesis of the contribution – the two "messages" of salvation, even in their distance, speak a language that is complemented each other. And they speak it for their being a "recovery" of the eternal or rather the "revelation" of the same.

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1. Introduction

If one were to focus on some of the characteristics of our age, the first thing to come to their mind would probably be the extraordinary speed of communication, be it voice or image through. The impression might be that of an age in which people live *sub specie instantis* and therefore believe the ephemeral to be the actual truth. These things go indeed mostly this way. Our reality is attached to the contingent and to the fluidity of social media, completely devoted to the lure of technology and to the charm of appearance, whereas public institutions crumble like never before (from family to state) and domestic violence is on the rise. A society with no values nor order, where the line between freedom and libertinism blurs and responsibility is disregarded. Thus are hedonism and relativism outstandingly prosperous. At the same time theoretical and historical disciplines lose their ability to provide a thorough perspective on life and end up being a sterile philological investigation.

From many points of view, Severino's philosophy, ever since the publication of *The original structure* (1958), has been trying to show the untruth of all deciduous things. It has also established itself as a criticism of every philosophical theory of becoming, for the becoming, as it constantly changing and therefore denies itself, is nothing.

As Severino (1981) explains in the Introduction to the new edition,

this structure envelops every specific and particular element of our history, thus being always present; nevertheless, its actual meaning must be understood at a deeper level [...] This level can be reached only by avoiding a journey in the company of the various historical reconstructions proposed by our culture; better yet, by completely avoiding the 'journey' (p. 14).

Again, Severino (1999), states that becoming is

the unity of many determinations [...]. This unity appears to be contradictory when it is isolated from the contradictions existing between some of those determinations and happens to be the unity of the determinations which are not plainly to be seen as contradictory (p. 423).

The idea of becoming is therefore, according to Severino, self-contradictory. In this respect, Severino's thoughts constitute a significant response to the restless flows of our era.

Now, in order to clarify the meaning of Severino's criticism of becoming, it must be kept in mind that philosophy was born great, since it is born, with the Greeks, as an inquiry concerning foundation, which is to say truth. There is no philosophy without the pursuit of truth, of truth as the Absolute. The fact is that Severino – suffice to think about his “contentious” *Returning to Parmenides* (1964, that is now in *The Essence of Nihilism*, 2016, pp. 35-83) – asserts that truth is what already is, thus setting out to radically criticize every philosophy which conceives the be coming as true. “Being neither leaves nor returns to nothingness, is neither born nor dies; there is no time, no situation in which Being is-not. If it should return to nothingness, it would not be” (p. 45). And then,

That which is in time is not something that is possessed by the eternal (precisely because it must be said of everything – and so also of Being that appears in time – that it is eternally); so that the not being of Being that is in time does not disprove that which, moreover, cannot be in any way disproved: that Being in and cannot not be (p. 83).

This is why he was regarded as a nihilist, the opposite being true, because the nihilist is, according to Severino, the one who considers *this* world, with its beginning and its end, a true reality which is bound to cease to be.

There is however one more aspect that deserves attention. Severino was a student of Gustavo Bontadini, the catholic philosopher (an interesting debate between Bontadini and Severino, which, among other things, shows the respect and affection they had for each other, is in Bontadini and Severino (2017) who explained to him the speculative aspects of the most observant Christian tradition, from which Severino was eventually excommunicated (Cf. Severino, 2001a). It “contains the

letters from the years 1961-1970 which tell how the Catholic Church was led to officially declare the opposition between my thought and Christianity” (p. 5).

The influence of a thinker in many respects connected to Gentile is evident: with him, the philosophy of becoming reached its peak, and it was Gentile to whom Severino returned many times in his works.

As Bontadini (1954) wrote (that is now in *Notes of philosophy*, 1996), “Gentile is the philosopher who brought modern era to an end and gave birth to the contemporary age, and this shows the relevance of his work. ‘Gnoseologism’, i.e. the problem of knowledge as the problem of prejudice, was the pivotal point of modern philosophy” (p. 23). And later “what must be pointed out here is the relationship between classical and Christian philosophy and his thought. This reveals, contrary to what is often believed, a positive relationship of theoretical reconciliation rather than irreconcilable opposition” (p. 25).

For this reason, our purpose is to identify the deeper meaning of an intellectual debate which has been going on for decades.

2. The issue

Giovanni Gentile and Emanuele Severino face the problem of knowledge—connection to the Absolute in two different times in the history of philosophical tradition. The connecting thread between them is, therefore, participation in the Truth, which, being absolute, is indeed the only way for salvation – inasmuch absolute liberation – for the thinking self acknowledging its transience. Deliverance from both the wandering in the world and the fear of what will be *afterwards*.

Accordingly, at the beginning of the twentieth century Gentile undermines the hegemony of the positivistic idea of truth as a mere biologically determined fact which takes place in mere events. This is achieved by the dialectic of becoming, which is the persistent realization of the eternity of the transcendental Self. Yet ethical life can provide an enduring meaning of life and salvation in history.

In the second half of the twentieth century Severino, also in the light of the reflection on the actualism of some thinkers such as Gustavo Bontadini and Ugo Spirito, after identifying in the actualism itself the definitive outcome of the philosophy of becoming, or rather the dissolution of the existing beings and of the existing things in the becoming, reaffirmed, recovering ancient speculative echoes, the eternity

of what is, being the existence just only the appearing of an eternal, of what already is and can only be.

In fact, over the years the author of this paper has read the philosophy of Gentile and Severino, but also those of Spinoza and Ugo Spirito, as well as answers to a text by Seneca (*Troades*, 397-402 and 407- 408) that has struck him since the early years of high school (a problem that has caught him even earlier in his pre-adolescent disquietude).

Post mortem nihil est ipsaque mors nihil, / velocis spatii meta
novissima; / spem ponant avidi, solliciti metum: / tempus nos
avidum devorat et chaos. / Mors individua est, noxia corpori / nec
parcens animae [...] Quaeris quo iaces post obitum loco? / Quo
non nata iacent.

In truth, at least for the writer, to do philosophy is to answer this statement. After, really nothing? Can we save ourselves, or will there be another life instead?

In *The world beyond*, Ugo Spirito, in the view of Gentile's reflection on death, pointed out the inadequacy of phenomenal experience. Hence he concluded:

Afterlife remains indeed transcendent due to an unsurpassed dualism of heaven and earth, and we must resist the urge to try to understand it by phenomenologizing the absolute in any way. Nevertheless, despite its still radical alterity, afterlife is at the heart of our lives, for it is the basic problem enclosing it all. And, although the problem is not yet its solution, analysing its main aspects is sufficient to raise hope in pursuit and to save us from that spiritual idleness which leads to indulge facile dogmatisms of faith or scepticism (Spirito, 1948, p. 189. Severino took into account Spirito's investigation, cf. Severino, 1950, pp. 51-54).

Later on, Spirito (1955) stated that the concept of "person" is often associated with the human body, but this has revealed its ephemeral nature bound to vanish with death. Thus, to surrender to death is to surrender to "being nothing" (p. 109). This is the origin of the crisis of the modern man.

The crisis is thus caused by the inability of looking outside ourselves. We are incapable of believing in an *other* as absolute, of having faith in the *idea*. The crisis lies in the hypostasis of the person, in egocentrism and egoism: becoming inward-looking, loving only ourselves directly and being miserable due to the awareness of our limitedness (pp. 129-130).

The result is a metaphysical opening without any individualistic closure.

I am constantly *given* to myself in a stream of ideas which *come to my mind* more or less unexpectedly, bringing me a light whose nature I cannot forebode and of which I become aware at a later stage. The origin of this *stream of ideas* transcends my person and resolves itself in the reality of the whole. My thought is the thought of reality inside me. The reality and I coincide in a single centrality (Spirito, 1971, p. 190. For these aspects of Spirito's philosophy cf. Cavallera, 1988; 2000; 2010a; 2010b).

Thus, Gentile's most brilliant pupil has overcome in his own way every individual finiteness, which is part of a whole where self alone can find a meaning.

In this way, drawing on one of the main themes of actual idealism and its school, between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, Severino gives an extremely new and crucial meaning to the image of salvation, which is enclosed in the eternal manifestation of all being. From this perspective he stands apart from the traditional speculative views, which are typically about what is not preserved (contingency). Yet – and this is the argument of this article – the two salvation “messages” (Gentile's and Severino's ones), although apparently different, complete each other (on the connection between Gentile and Severino cf. De Giovanni, 2013). The similarity lies in the fact that the both attempt to “rescue”, or, rather, to “reveal” the eternal: it might seem paradoxical, but the connection is closer than it may appear to be; better yet, Severino's philosophy cannot be understood without considering his remarks on Gentile's philosophy.

It should be remembered that Severino states that according to Gentile the true reality is not the one which is made, but the one which is still to be done. His thought is therefore a radical support to the truth of technology. “The inevitability of Gentile's thought alone suffices to establish the dominion of technology, i.e. to show that no limits nor

obstacles stand in its way. Contrary to what is usually believed, there is a deep connection between Gentile's thought and technological civilization. This is the reason why Gentile is not bygone time yet. He, along with a few others – who need, by the way, to be *understood* – leads to the twilight of western philosophy, which is the basis for every thought and work of western tradition” (Severino, 2010, pp. 60-61). On the celebration of the centenary of Gentile's birth, Severino wrote that “every ‘ultimate’ truth which differs from the faith in the patency of becoming and therefore from the faith in the identity between the whole and the becoming, is an immutable which anticipates, thus making it impossible, the becoming. [...] To admit a solution for the problematic reality – such are Spirito and Bontadini's views – is to admit the possibility of an ultimate truth (understood as a solution to the problem), namely of the immutable that prevents the becoming and the problem whose obviousness is believed. The belief in this faith requires recognizing in Spirito's “problematic dialecticism” (“situational problematicism” a step backwards from Gentile's “metaphysical dialecticism” (“transcendental problematicism”), where the problem is the content of the solution itself (the becoming, the content of the immutable). Any chance to solve the problem is thus discarded: the chance to reintroduce one of the immutables excluded by the one immutable that is bound to reign in western history: the obviousness of becoming and its consequent awareness, the awareness of the whole as a problem” (Severino, 1977, p. 793).

3. The theme of holy in Giovanni Gentile

In addition to being the philosopher of actual idealism, Gentile's works were put in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (cf. Verucci, 2006. On religion in Gentile's thought, cf. Spirito, 1969, pp. 95-123; Cavallera, 1994, pp. 41-166), because he and his students were the fiercest opponents of neo-scholasticism. During the 1920s and 1930s, it aimed to become, under the guidance of the Rev. Agostino Gemelli and his school, not only the philosophy of Catholicism, but also, after the Lateran Treaty (1929), of the whole Italian State. A wide collection of writings concerning the debate between Gentile and neo-scholastic philosophers was edited by H. A. Cavallera in Gentile (1994). During a speech held in 1922 (*My atheism and the history of Christianity*), Gentile said that “contemporary idealism yields neither to catholic barriers nor

to abstract rationalism. Also, it is the first Italian philosophy to highly praise religion in general, and especially Christianity and Catholicism as a spiritual view of life: that same view which idealism aims to enliven” (p. 183). However, Gentile maintained he was catholic until his death, albeit in his own way (cf. his lecture *My religion*, 1943). Also his family’s life complied following catholic traditions (religious marriage and baptism).

Accordingly, actual idealism can be considered a realization of Catholicism in philosophy, as can be seen from the lecture *Il carattere religioso dell’idealismo italiano* [*The religious character of Italian idealism*] (April 25, 1935) and from the definition of *Religion* (reprinted with the title *Che cos’è la religione* [*What is religion*]) written in 1936 for the *Enciclopedia italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*]. The two abovementioned texts and the lecture *My religion* (which is Gentile’s only work unrevised before its publication) can be read in Gentile, *My religion and other writings* (1992). In *My religion* Gentile writes:

Man and God are undoubtedly distinct, yet not separate other than as abstract terms of the living reality, which is the synthesis between God made man and man raised to God by the Grace, when God’s will is made their own (*fiat voluntas tua!*). Without the unity behind this synthesis, there is no Christianity, no absolute religion, which, in one word, is duality, but notwithstanding a unity. The separation or rivalry which some purport to preserve is worse than paganism. In fact, a heathen would believe and have trust in a reconciliation between the natural and the supernatural, between man and God. The man discovering in himself God, and in this way somehow creates God, is not the natural man but the spiritual man; he has entered the realm of the spirit, where he is man and God at once. God is therefore created by itself, not by man. And God became man in Christ (p. 65).

And in the same volume Cavallera states:

We are therefore witnessing, on the one hand, the realization of religion in actual idealism (1935 speech), and, on the other, the recognition, in the historical forms of religion, of the primacy of Catholicism, because (see *Religion*) God is person and the soul is immortal, even though true immortality is the one of spiritual life, not that of the unrelated man, of the individual enclosed in his limitedness. The reaffirmation of actual idealism does not

exclude the connection to Catholicism in its institutional properties. However, the turning point – the conflict between institutional Catholicism and that one realized by actual idealism – is always seen in the light of idealistic supremacy (p. 28).

Now, apart from the competition for the cultural leadership of Italy, for our purposes, the theological debates concern the same root of those endured by Spinoza: the question of the survival of the empirical self (And still, Spinoza's thought can be regarded as one of salvation by the means of *acquiescentia*. Cf. Cavallera, 2014). Gentile, on the one hand, states that the act in act is eternal, and on the other hand, he states the ontic non-existence of the empirical self. This aspect, as for Severino's thought, is the focus of this article.

As Gentile (1916) wrote in the first edition of the *General theory of the spirit as a pure act*, multiplicity as such, abstracted from the activity by which it is established and valued, is not immortal; the One is immortal, for it is the origin of multiplicity which itself cannot be multiplied.

Is the individual mortal or immortal? The Aristotelian individual, as it is conceived by the public imagination, is indeed mortal: that is to say, its immortality is its mortality, since its actuality is in the immortal spirit. But it is mortal as a spiritual act, namely as the individual individuating itself. Immortality's domain is thus in the act inasmuch pure act of the spirit outside which there is nothing but abstraction. If man were not this act and did not feel himself, albeit obscurely, in his immortal essence, he could not live, because he would fall into an absolute practical scepticism [...] The energy which sustains life is the awareness of the divine and of the eternal whereby death and the vanishing of all deciduous things is seen from high up the immortal life (Gentile, 1987, pp. 147-148).

Hence the denial of every mere naturalistic position (p. 226).

This viewpoint recurs in many of his works. In the second book of *System of logic* (1th ed. 1922), Gentile focuses on the fear of death and the unknown.

This same feeling of dread chills the heart of man, whether his thought surpasses life so that he gazes astounded at his dull life and hears the infinite silence which the universe will be for him

once he has no ears to hear its sound, or he moves anxiously backwards towards the infinite silence of nature not yet in motion to create the life enjoyed by man. The same horror and loathing caused by a corpse, which is the most evident annihilation of his being alive (Gentile, 1987, Vols. 2, pp. 197-198).

Confronted with this horror, Gentile reaffirms the immortality of autosynthesis, for it is irreducible to mere individual life.

In conclusion, death is frightening because it does not exist, nor do nature, the past, and dreams. There is the dreaming man, but the dreamed things do not exist. In the same way, death is the denial of thought, but it cannot be actual what is realized through the self-denial of thought. In fact, as we just saw, thought, being infinite, can but be immortal (p. 200).

Gentile (1926) wrote about the eternity of the thinking thought also in *Warnings*

The actual idealist reduces everything to the thought, though such a thought is not the one of man, born of woman, doomed to die, a mere individual member of society, to which he is more or less *quantité négligeable*. [...] This thought is then Thought itself, the universal thought, unique and infinite: a divine thought giving us strength to open our mouths [...]. It must be noted that this Thought, be it called spirit, subject, Self, or whatever it may be called, is not something in itself and for itself, regardless of the multiplicity of the world of the objects, where the thinking activity manifests its creative strength” (Gentile, 1958, pp. 236-237).

It would be worth reading Gentile’s meditations on death, where he goes beyond the finiteness of the subject and gazes at the reality revealed by the *intelligere*, by ascending to a higher plane (on the theme of death cf. Cavallera, 2007, in which many unpublished works on the argument (included) are analyzed).

The thirteenth chapter of *Genesis and Structure of Society* is of unrivalled depth, especially considering it was written during critical moments of Gentile’s life – his son Giovannino, a quite renowned physician, had died on March 30, 1942, and death threats had become

more frequent. Nevertheless, Gentile writes about transcendental society and the immortality of the transcendental self: Gentile's becoming preserves everything, and through preservation it maintains everything. Should this be the case, the empirical self which is dissolved is the deciduous part of the self, not its real substance. The poem outlives the poet, or maybe it does not outlive at all: it remains as potency of being recovered in its founding elements.

What man actually wants, Gentile states, from an eudaimonistic point of view, is not eternity, which has no connection with time, but perpetuity, which is commensurate with time: a desire to live on unlimitedly.

The individual will be there tomorrow as well. The day after too. Always, since this reduced eternity, namely *sempiternity*, is to be truly hoped. If life can continue after the dissolution of the body, there is no reason not to think it cannot carry on unlimitedly. Days, though, hours, every moment passes here, and it will pass there too. Thus, time is not vanquished. And that *other* life, meant as the continuation to this one, and not much different from it (Gentile, 1946, p. 150).

In eternity, time flees, or rather, it is eternalized by the enfolding thought.

A time no more enclosing the thought, nor the thinker nor its whole historically determined being, before and after. It is rather enclosed in a thought whose unfolding amazes the beholder, even though the marvellous eternity of this world has arisen from him and discloses the real world (p. 153).

On the distinction between eternity and perpetuity, Gentile identifies three illusions to which most men succumb: first, believing that the soul, intended as its substance, is immortal; but "separated from its activities, it retreats to an abstract universality and loses every sign of its individuality, therefore losing itself" Ibid., p. 156.; second, believing that the *individual* soul is immortal, "and we forget that the person is self-consciousness and unification; it is no substance, as it is a process, an act in which the synthesis of multiplicity occurs" (p. 156), resulting in an antireligious, immoral and illogic illusion; lastly, believing in another

world conceived as the one we experience, as if it were “a corner of this one” (p. 159). Hence the conclusion which explains the true meaning of immortality.

It is the immortality of the eternal process of the Self existing in its actuation as universality, infinity and therefore immortality. This recurrently causes the abnegation and sacrifice of the *little self* to the *big self*, of the existing reality to the ideal which animates reality and remarks that this immediate existence is not yet being. [...] The immortality of the living man is such as the one of the man living because he continuously dies to himself. By living this way, he moves towards eternity, is rendered immortal (p. 170).

In this way, Gentile reaffirms the end of the empirical self and that the idea of eternity is completely distinct from that of particularity. Actually, this uninterrupted process is strictly speaking a preservation and a *trasumanar* altogether. Multiplicity commits immortal life to eternity. Immortal life does not belong completely to multiplicity, but rather to eternity, to which it grants life inasmuch as eternal. It is the immortality of the *egregie cose*, which are not only heroic enterprises or intellectual works, but also that same love we feel for our beloved, for our children, that love which makes us act selflessly and constructively; that which grants the individual as such the possibility to escape from particularity and to universalize itself in this life, a man among men. It is a very subtle paragraph which can be easily misunderstood from a strictly religious point of view. *Resurrexit, non est hic*. Gentile, despite his being officially excluded by the Catholic Church due to his works, reaffirming its act in act does not cancel the manifestation of the self, because eternity lies in this manifestation of the world. In this universalization (on this aspect, cf. Cavallera, 1991) process particularity proves universal maintaining the point of view of multiplicity.

4. Earth and Joy in Emanuele Severino

Severino explores the fundamental thought developed in his *La struttura originaria* in other crucial works, analysing deeply the meaning of existence as *being*.

An essential work to understand the meaning of his speculation is *Destiny of necessity* (1980). If we cannot escape destiny, truth is the necessary saying. “Truth is the destiny of the Whole” (p. 124), and will

is *appearing*: “it is the appearing of something which belongs to the world dreamt by the alienation of truth. This world is the isolated earth, the result visible inside the *isolation of the earth*” (p. 573). The existence of the deciduous is therefore established in the context of the isolation of the earth, but what is considered deciduous is nothing but the appearing itself. Appearing is necessary, because it is the manifestation of destiny. At the same time though it is contingent, for it is conceived in the context of the isolation of the earth.

Finite appearing is the infinite appearing of the Whole (the appearing of destiny is the appearing of destiny in its entirety), and still the Whole *does not appear* in the circle of destiny’s appearing. Its infinite appearing is enlightened in the unconscious of this circle, which is surrounded by the shadows of the non-appearing of the infinite enlightenment of the Whole. It is therefore the circle (or the entwined circles) of the Whole’s finite appearing. The Whole, overcoming all the contradictions of reality, is Joy (p. 594).

Joy is outside the isolated earth, and, at the same time, it is the overcoming of its loneliness, since it does not belong to the shadow of appearing. “In Joy, the deciduous has always been past” (p. 597). It is the awareness that inside the infinite appearing of the Whole, which encloses finite appearing, lies the manifestation of the whole destiny, which can but be Glory.

Destiny can but be the one of the whole, because it is the incontrovertible manifestation of being. Since it is the manifestation of the totality and eternity of being, it can but be the revelation of the necessity of what is determined. Hence, the circle of the appearing of destiny can only manifest its limitedness (Severino, 2001, p. 27).

Later on, Severino explains that

the isolated earth is a segment of the infinite manifestation of the earth. The isolated earths, gathered in every circle, are the manifestation of the essence of totality; that is to say, the disclosure of becoming, the progressive manifestation of that eternal which is the isolation of the earth. [...] Nor does the

infinite appearing occur. Besides being the appearing of the manifestation of the isolated earth, it is the infinite unfolding of Glory of a constellation of circles (p. 551).

In this regard, Severino's philosophy is one of salvation. This theme is crucial in *The Death and the Earth* (2011). According to Severino, the isolated earth is brought to completion by the death of empirical will, because, after it, no more determinations of the isolated earth occur.

The eternal, which is the contrasted background of the isolated earth, wanes and reaches completion; the eternal, now a background without contrast, begins to appear. In this waning and beginning to appear, the permanence of what is identical in both configurations and in every other background configuration appears (p. 413).

Between death and the appearance of Joy, there cannot be any intermediate being, for it would belong to the earth, but, after death, the earth cannot occur anymore. Therefore

death is the extreme imminence of the union in every circle of pure and isolated earths and of earth that saves. In the imminence, that splendor of Joy is still, motionless, time does not flow because nothing arrives (no eternal) (p. 414).

Accordingly, approaching death means approaching Joy (salvation in truth), and the isolated earth wanes. In this way, the destination of being *this* appears.

The destination is the appearing necessity of Glory (that is to say, of the necessity for the saving earth to occur properly in every circle of destiny), and therefore of the Glory of Joy, that is to say, of the infinite ways in which the real Whole of beings endlessly manifests itself (p. 425).

The self is the eternal appearing of destiny, whose splendour, according to Severino, is simultaneously the splendour of its destination, towards the Glory of Joy. It is indeed a great and bright manifestation of immense power of salvific light.

The endless isolated earths of the infinite constellation of the finite circles of destiny are a part of the Whole, and it is necessary that the totality of those earths be overcome through the advent of the saving earth. Then, the infinite traces left by the Whole in this totality need to be deciphered so that the infinite reality of the whole can appear in the infinite constellation of circles (p. 426).

The self, through death, manifests the incontrovertibility of being inasmuch being, namely its eternity, and that Joy “is what every self of the finite circles of destiny actually *is*” (p. 536). (For a punctual analysis of Severino’s thought, see Goggi, 2015. See also Cusano, 2011; Spanio (ed.), 2014. Cf. finally Severino & Scola, 2014).

Existence, as Severino (2016) states in *History, Joy* is a continuous self-deception, because the characteristic of the mortal as such is the will to live “established on the belief that things are becoming *per se*” (p. 47). However, present age – an age of technoscience following the age of reason, preceded itself by the age of myth – is established on the certainty of a future which can but reveal its deep contradictions, while technoscience is curbed by the power of tradition, which intends to evoke the ontological meaning of becoming *something else*. “Being inferior to tradition, the age of technology is self-contradictory, because technology cannot be what it aspires to be, that is, an infinite growth of power” (p. 59). This, within the logic of western thought, is shown by the limitedness of the empirical self (death).

It is inevitable that fear overshadows the paradise of technology turning it into its opposite, whence it is evident that every glimmer of happiness is to be lost. Extreme power knows it is powerlessness. This is the contradiction of the age of technology (p. 63).

The will to power is therefore the characteristic of the isolated earth, as defined by Severino, of man’s life and, accordingly, of ethics, of which it is an aspect “requiring us to overcome ourselves. In fact, once we reach the good, we must continue living in it and thus overcome ourselves” (p. 81). For this reason, technology has proved to be the most rigorous form of mistake. Technology, understood as a faith in a better future, carries *doubt* with it. Faith recognizes it as an indissoluble presence.

Severino’s analysis of doubt is indeed incisive.

Since doubt belongs to the isolated earth, it is itself a faith, whose existence is possible just because, like every other faith, is founded on the deepest doubt. Were the *regressus in indefinitum* unavoidable, [...] the fundament of the existence of faith would be postponed indefinitely (p. 112).

The destiny of man is beyond the isolated earth. In fact, “faith, will, pain, the normal contradiction in which we believe when we are in the isolated earth, doubt, death, all wane along with the wane of the isolated earth” (p. 125). Actually

the appearing of destiny is a characteristic of destiny, and, at once, the *essence* of man. It is not what is called “man” within the isolated earth, the mortal. Man is, in his essence, i. e. the circle of destiny, the eternal manifestation of the Whole – of Joy [...]. Every man is this manifestation, one of the true infinite lights [...]. However, in the essence of man, the Whole appears as the infinite which does not reveal itself in all its aspects, it reveals itself *in itself*. The essence of man is the *finite* manifestation of the Whole (p. 140).

Therefore, the finite lies on the infinite road to Joy.

This implies the permanence of the Contradiction as it coexists unfolded in circles. This means that, within the finite circle, pain still exists.

This dark background persists endlessly, as much as Glory and the Joy of Glory, to which the circles of pain are destined too, unfold. It persists endlessly in the *circles of Joy* as well. Yet, it never appears alone, for when it does, it is accompanied by the great wings of salvation (p. 161).

By doing so, Severino confirms the inevitability of pain as intrinsic to finiteness. Outside finiteness lies the sense of plenitude of the Whole.

Mortals want to ‘communicate’ and ‘understand each other’, but they cannot get what they want as long as the *conflict* between destiny and the isolated earth remains. What they think they are obtaining while talking with the intention to communicate and be understood is different from what they are saying and meaning. Every conversation (agreement, disagreement, peace,

war, love, hate) is inevitably ambiguous. As the conflict dissolves, the intention of which language consists dissolves too: along with verticality, 'Good Friday', the saving 'Easter' of the world, Joy, appears, and the circles of destiny, which always overcame our mortal being, have no need to communicate nor to be understood, for they are completely clear to one another (p. 179).

With his very peculiar language, Severino grasps the presence of the Contradiction – which preserves everything, since everything is clear to one another – within the manifestation of the Whole, within the Joy of Glory. The overcoming happens under an absolute light, preserving it all without any will. One could say that, according to Severino, the foundation of the human, and, as such, of pain and joy, of the contingency aspiring to immutability, lies within *will*. Walking away from will means entering the saving earth.

In this case, the finite manifestation of the infinite is, according to Severino, the preservation of multiplicity within eternity: beings are eternal.

5. Salvation in truth

Thus, with an extremely refined dialectic, the saving image of the great philosophical discourse returns.

The speculative discourse is, above all, an answer to the question: what will become of us afterwards? Or, to better say, what will happen afterwards? What is the *afterwards*? Man knows more than any other thing that he must die, as he has seen the others around him die; yet, of course, he does not want to die. Many religions provide a hope of salvation. Christianity in particular assures the resurrection of the body. However, many questions have been raised throughout history: which body will be resurrected? A young body or an old one? Will once living people be able to meet again *somewhere* after their death? Many answers have been given for these questions (on the concept of Heaven, see Bernheim & Stravides, 1994). It appears to be clear that the first idea to come to our mind is that of the *other world* as a continuation to this one, as a way to preserve our affections. This, however, is a *human* simplification which does not consider the process of *indiamento* (Cf. Dante, *Paradiso*, IV, 28) guaranteed by Christian religion. The philosopher cannot accept the idea of a *sui generis* reproduction of this

world, knowing that the empirical self as such cannot understand what is by nature the denial of the empirical.

In this way, within the same Christian tradition, albeit following two different paths, Gentile and Severino return to the theme of *appearing*, which is to say of existence. Both sense the fragility of every immortality appearing in time and space. Nevertheless, both succeed in saving multiplicity through its negation: Gentile does so by the means of the universalization process (Dante's *trasumanar*. "Trasumanar significar per verba / non si porà", *Paradiso*, I, 70-71), Severino through the advent of the "saving earth", which is the denial of will and therefore of mere particularity. Philosophy, when it is not reduced to philosophical philology, can still get to the core of things, and for this we owe it a debt.

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