

Opening Note

by Giulio Goggi

On the occasion of a meeting with Heidegger, in Bern, Cornelio Fabro, an important figure of twentieth century Thomism, spoke to him about *Ritornare a Parmenide* [*Returning to Parmenides*], Emanuele Severino's best known essay. And this is what Heidegger said: «This concept of “being”, elaborated by Severino, is the hypostatization of my *Dasein*» (Severino, 2006, p. 157).

And in the last seminars held in Zähringen (Freiburg) in 1973, Heidegger argued that in order to move away from the modern conception of the “subject”, which reduces being to “object” making it a product of the subject, it would be necessary to return to the origins: «But this return», he wrote, «is not a “return to Parmenides”. It is not about *returning to Parmenides*. It is only necessary *to turn towards* Parmenides» (Heidegger, 1992, p. 173). Within these words some have seen an allusion to the essay *Ritornare a Parmenide*, published in 1964 and merged, in 1972, in *Essenza del nichilismo* [*The Essence of Nihilism*].

Hence, the fact that Heidegger was aware of Severino's position has long been known. But the International Congress held in Brescia in 2019 – “Heidegger nel pensiero di Severino. Metafisica, Religione, Politica, Economia, Arte, tecnica”¹ – laid the groundwork for a further examination of Severino and Heideggerian studies. Three “Annotations” by Heidegger on Severino's writings emerged from archive of Marbach: the first two, dating back to 1958, refer to the book entitled *Heidegger e la metafisica* [*Heidegger and Metaphysics*, Severino's graduation thesis published in 1950] and reflect on the theme of «going beyond metaphysics» to be understood as «remaining in it»; the third, dating back to 1967, makes explicit reference to *Returning to Parmenides* and speaks of a «new beginning of foundational thought». Cf. the discourse given by Francesco Alfieri at the aforementioned Congress

1 “Heidegger in Severino's Thought. Metaphysics, Religion, Politics, Economics, Art, Technique” (June 13-15, 2019).

and his report: «The three "Annotations" of Martin Heidegger on the theoretical path followed by the philosopher Emanuele Severino in *Heidegger e la Metafisica* and in *Ritornare a Parmenide*, together with the testimony of Heinrich Heidegger, are a tangible sign of how the works of the Brescian philosopher were fully known by the members of the phenomenological circle of Freiburg: in primis by Heidegger and then by Eugen Fink and Hans-Georg Gadamer» (Alfieri, 2019, p. 9).

Future studies will shed light on these "Annotations". But one point must be held firm: the sense of this reference to Parmenides is something essentially different in the two perspectives. Heidegger alludes to the Greeks' aural thought, which would be characterized by the intuition that "Being" means "appearing" – that is, "Being" would be the very manifestation of entities (beings) –, a dazzling beginning that would soon lose its vigor: in fact, the metaphysical-theological perspective would take over, in which "Being" – the horizon of every appearing – is transformed into an entity, ending up by becoming the Entity that towers over every other entities. Severino, on the other hand, intends to show the need to repeat the patricide carried out by Plato, but in a radical sense: it is in fact necessary to say of each being what Parmenides said of the only indeterminate "being", namely that "it is", and that it is impossible that "it is not".

If for Heidegger "Being" is "time" and no entity is eternal, Severino indicates instead the dimension in which there appears the necessity that the being *insofar as it is being*, and therefore every being, is eternal.

It is Heidegger and Severino that the theoretical contributions of the first part of this issue are addressed to; in the second part, Severino is compared with other giants of thought: Aristotle, Leopardi, Husserl, the Pierangelo Sequeri's theological-theoretical perspective and the relationship with Christianity.

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I reproduce, below, the "Ideas for a Discussion" written by Severino himself on the occasion of the aforementioned Congress "Heidegger in Severino's Thought".

«That there are "eternal truths" could be granted as demonstrated only if the proof were provided that *Being-there* [*Dasein*] was, is and will be for all eternity. Until this proof has been provided, we will continue to operate in the field of reverie» (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 44). And for Heidegger this proof is missing, even for all the entities of the world that are different from *Dasein*.

What in my writings is called “the primal structure of destiny” implies with necessity the eternity of the being *insofar as it is being*, i.e. of every being (where eternity is the impossibility that any being that is has once been nothing and can return to being nothing).

The “Being” of Heidegger is “nothingness of the entity”, that is *not nihil absolutum*. But for him not even the entity, when it is, is *nihil absolutum*. This means that the “Being” and the entity have in common *not being a nihil absolutum* and that therefore the “Being” cannot be the “nothingness of the entity”. This common dimension includes both terms of the “ontological difference” (“Being”, entity) and is not explored by Heidegger. It is the dimension of the being *insofar as it is being* – which is not even the dimension of the Aristotelian being *insofar as it is being*, i.e., the being that is when it is. The primal structure of destiny is the appearing of the being itself of the being, that is, of what the negation of which is autonegation.

Heidegger’s “Being” is both unveiling and veiling, concealment. That unveiling is concealment cannot mean for Heidegger that what remains hidden is nothing, but that, though hidden, it exists. But this existence cannot be a phenomenological content – and in Heidegger’s texts there is no proof that what is hidden exists: they only presuppose the thesis that if something is manifested then everything that does not belong to the manifest content must exist.

Whether it presents itself as the freedom of *Being-there* affirmed in *Being and Time*, or as the freedom of “Being”, affirmed after the “turning point”, not even freedom – it should be noted – can be a phenomenological content. On what basis is it affirmed by Heidegger? In the *Spiegel* interview, speaking of the God who can save us and adding that this may also not happen, he seems to allude to the freedom of “Being”.

That from which only a God can save us is annihilation or technology? It is both. In any case, salvation comes from the ontic dimension, even if it is different from the metaphysically understood one; and in this sense the initial project of *Being and Time* remains confirmed, suspending judgment on the configuration of the ontic dimension (the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, etc.).

For Heidegger, “philosophy” ends up in technology, it is completed therein and *can no longer modify* the world and provide salvation or perdition: it is technology that now is the master of all things. However, technology dominates because the forces that delude themselves to use it renounce their values; and the renunciation is effec-

tive when what in my writings is called “the philosophical underground of our time” shows that those values are not absolute truths, because absolute truth is dead. “Philosophy” (which is the essence of the West) *modifies* the world to such an extent that it *establishes* the domination “de jure” of technology.

Regarding what can be read in the last paragraph of these “Ideas for Reflection”, where it is said that “absolute truth is dead”, Severino alludes to the inevitable consequence that the profound essence of contemporary philosophy draws on the foundation of faith in the Greek sense of becoming. On this basis, no absolute truth is possible because it would nullify that passage from non-being to being (and vice versa) deemed as what is absolutely evident. If absolute truth is dead, then the word “truth” can mean nothing but the ability to dominate, and the supreme form of domination and power is the one exercised by techno-science. But “the primal structure of destiny”, indicated by Severino’s writings, shows that what for Western thought is the supreme evidence (the Greek sense of becoming) is, in reality, the supreme Folly. The “destiny” – which is the look of non-Folly – has always been apart from the manner in which Western thought has understood the sense of “truth”: it sees its erring and therefore it is the incontrovertible manifestation of the eternity of every being.

References

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