Heidegger Interpreting Severino

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This essay tries to overturn the usual order of addenda: it is Heidegger, here, who interprets Severino. The confrontation between the two thinkers is as necessary an event, just as the emergence of the unbridgeable conflict that divides them. The interpreter Heidegger would insist on at least three aspects: the disavowal on Severino's part of the priority of worldliness over philosophizing; the residual separation, in Severino's thought, between the logical pole and the phenomenological pole; Severinian myopia with respect to the binding strength of practical-existential relationships. The basic thesis of this essay is that Heidegger would argue that Severinian thought is much more homogeneous with the Western metaphysical tradition than it can ever assume. Heidegger is beyond.

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1. A necessarily possible interpretation

In the following considerations I will try to answer the question: should Heidegger have read Emanuele Severino's pages, what would he have thought of them? There are at least two reasons that can justify the 'weird' move of proposing Heidegger as a possible interpreter of Severino. The first is the realization that attempts to compare these two thinkers mostly remain conditioned by an asymmetry that 'favours' the Italian philosopher, in that it is the latter who places on the shoulders of the interpreters (often coinciding with his followers) so onerous presuppositions as to become rigid prejudices. The second is the main thesis of these pages of mine, which is that *Heidegger is beyond Severino*[*].

Of course, it is the truth force of the meditations of the philosopher of *Being and Time* and of *Contributions to Philosophy* (*Beiträge*), so deeply untimely, that turn out to be more exposed to forgetfulness. The philosopher, instead, who thinks that all things are eternal (Severino 2016, p. 170; Severino, 1980, p. 170; Severino, 2019, p. 19), which is as far as possible from the experience shared by human beings, is perfectly in keeping with the logical-ontological grammar prevailing today, also in the scientific field. With the latter Severino shares: the obviousness of the equation *ens = res*; determinateness as a synonym of «noncontradictoriness» (Severino, 2016, p. 65) and of clarity (both semantic and *in rebus*); the analytic nature of argumentation; the necessary coinciding of «law of Being» and logical order of the discourse; the digital logic of either 0 or 1, which excludes both degrees and *nuances* of being – to Severino either there is the being that is, or nothing (see Severino, 1979, pp. 31, 47). In short, at first glance, to appear overcome is a philophizing like Heidegger's, one that moves from the hu-

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[*] I will employ 'Being' with capital b as an equivalent for the Italian 'essere', the German 'Sein', the Latin 'esse', and 'being' to mean the Italian 'ente/essente', the German 'Seiend', the Latin 'ens'.

man existential situatedness and, so, from the pathic (not pathetic) experience of truth, in which passions are a unity of passivity and activity, that orientates (Caputo, 2000, p. 74; Caputo 2020, p. 37) and reveals (Pasqualin, 2015, pp. 16, 18) Being as Being-in-the-world, passions that are one with logos and knowledge. That of the German thinker is a philosophizing in which Being and Nothing (as non-being) turn out to be one, a philosophizing that questions the modern equation falsity = mistake (Heidegger, 1982b, p. 76); a philosophizing that lets emerge the constitutive indeterminateness of what appears ontologically; a philosophizing, so, that may seem non-philosophy or a mystical suggestion lacking stringency.

However – and here is the question put as an easy prophecy –, how it is that an analytical Severinism could very well be, today, already, or in the next future, while an analytical Heideggerism could never be? The answer sounds like this: because it is Heidegger who constitutes an authentically radical questioning of the traditional philosophical grammar. It is Heidegger who overcomes, also, Severino. Let me insist: as it is superficial to deem that the classic metaphysical tradition and analytic philosophy are incompatible (Ventimiglia, 2012, pp. 14-5, 19, 23, 53, 57-8), in the same way this should apply to the speculation of the Italian thinker. Future philosophy might be an analytical Severinism, in which the noncontradictoriness of the determined might find its most complete philosophical display and false sentences might correspond to «pure nothing», to the pure opposite (*enantíon*) of Being (Severino, 1980, pp. 148-9). The Heideggerian thought, on the contrary, though confined to an angle of rarity, concretely does thinking experience of the truth of Being – a tragic, poetic and sacred, experience we are destined to in inhabiting this earth as world. Heidegger is beyond Severino's metaphysics in that the latter still remains in the track of Cartesian reism and of modern objectivism, whose bases are to be found in the Thomistic Scholastics as mediated by Suarez, while the speleologist of *Being and Time* and of *Contributions to Philosophy* goes deeper, exposing himself to experiencing the limits of logical and semantic determinateness, Being, existence and history (*Geschichte*) manifesting their own autotelic movedness as a flowering lacking nothing. The character of possibility and finitude of being does not make it less of a being or needing something, but, on the contrary, makes of it a manifestation of energy, an action/*praxis* which does not chase either usefulness or completion.

Proposing, here, a Heideggerian interpretation of Severinian philosophy is not a mental experiment or a fanciful performance. In the first

place, both philosophers share in a constitutive allergy towards mental experiments; as a matter of fact, both theoretically sound out what is, what is given as real, being, leaving out of the philosophical discourse any hypothesis of unreal and purely 'mental' possibilities. Secondly, the comparison Heidegger-Severino has the leisure of sharing various questions, as witnessed by the presence, in both, of some keywords: "Aristotle", "Being", "nothing", "time", "becoming", "necessity", "possibility", "logos", "language", "technique" work as pivots in the thought of both. A few of them will be employed as guides also in the philosophical observations put forth in the present essay. On the other hand, very significant is also the absence of those very keywords that while being crucial for one – for instance Being-in-the-world to Heidegger and noncontradictoriness to Severino –, are not so for the other, and viceversa. Furthermore, a thrust to propose Heidegger as interpreting Severino comes from the fact that at first the latter devotes an extraordinarily careful attention to the German philosopher in *Heidegger and Metaphysics* (1950), to the point that he speaks of him as his privileged interlocutor: «metaphysics finds in Heidegger an ally, not an enemy», a thinker whose ontological research waits for the «essential return of man into the homeland of the truth of Being» (Severino, 1994, pp. 342, 345). But then, the same Severino ends up with engulfing the moves of the German thinker within his own moves, thus favouring a heavy theoretical impoverishment of the author of *Being and Time*, of *Contribution to Philosophy* or of *On the Way to Language.*

At this preliminary stage, one may add that the interlocution between Heidegger and Severino (sic) is due to necessity, but no less necessary is the unbridgeable gap dividing them. As a matter of fact, a Severinian thinker cannot but find the phenomenological-hermeneutical considerations of Heideggerian kind weak, he/she cannot but receive them as too far from the epistemic-philosophical stringency and, at the same time, as too close to what is deemed obvious in the anthropologic realm of life. In the same way, those who are in the Heideggerian track cannot but be disappointed by the excessively simplified, coercive, and fleshed-out character of the Severinian logical-rational argumentation: one single semanteme – to be is not not to be – that returns eternally the same, in the vain theoreticist (logistic) attempt to impose its priority to the disclosing of the world and of the historicity of Being, including linguisticity. Here is the first keyword: priority.

2. Priority

The disagreement, a conflict as a *differend*, between Heidegger and Severino can be read as a question of order of priorities. They give different answers to the quintessential philosophical question: what comes first? Here what is first, prior, the foundation, the beginning, constitute a non-chronological *arché*. In point of fact, in a philosophical sense, priority is a question of decisiveness (of what is grounding and dominant).

What comes first, nothingness or Being? Being or being? The Being discussed by philosophers or the lifeworld? Philosophy comes after; but, after performing an epoché of the naturalist prejudice, in which it is the *Lebenswelt* that persuades us, is philosophy able, theoretically, to circumvent the world? Does the surrounding world (*Umwelt*), the context in which we live our «everyday life», come first? Or the world (*Welt*), the disclosure of the possible as worldliness? It is around questions like these that the *querelle*, and the gap between Heidegger and Severino, take form. What comes first: the originary structure that opposes everything that is to (the) not-Being or our Being situated-open in the world?

In *Categories* 14a-b Aristotle throws light on the different meanings of 'prior (proteron)'. After showing the most obvious ones, most patently that of coming first in a chronological sense (for example, the older) or that of coming first characterizing the basic elements to form what comes after (one comes before two, because two cannot do without one that joins with another one), Aristotle calls into play a last meaning of priority, the most important one, philosophically speaking. And his argumentation is as follows: between the real fact that the human being is (subsists) and the sentence affirming that the human being is (subsists) there is a reciprocal, not an extrinsic, relationship. But what comes first? That is to say, what is more decisive? Aristotle has no hesitations: the truth according to which the human being is (subsists) is the cause, the foundation, the basis of the truth of the statement affirming that, not viceversa (Aristotle, 1991, pp. 32-3) – Greek Aristotle, in fact, is extremely far from thinking that the human being is (subsists) because the statement saying that is true. It is worthwhile observing that both Severino and Heidegger, on this point, agree with Aristotle, whom they read in opposition to modern epistemological metaphysics (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 55, 207-8; Severino, 1981, p. 108). However, let me repeat, the crucial point is: Aristotle calls into play an inflection of priority-anteriority meant as the coming first of what is

more decisive and grounding – and in that case the very example "chosen by him" comes before any other thing: the truth of Being.

The attention devoted to the question of beginning specifically orients Heidegger's meditations coming after the turn/*Kehre*. He explicitly distinguishes between *Beginn* and *Anfang,* beginning and origin (Heidegger, 1999, pp. 38-9; Heidegger, 1982b, p. 9; Heidegger, 1968, p. 152), between the temporal beginning that is computable in years and days, and the historical (*geschichtlich*) opening meant as decisive erupting of Being. Those who think devote themselves to beginning as *Anfang*, rather than determining genetic moments in history (*Historie*). So, in a similar way, Severino thinks the originary in contrast with that beginning to be «free from any tie» in which all things come from nothingness (Severino, 1979, pp. 31-32) – furthermore, by force of the originary structure the beginning to appear is nothing but an entering in appearing, rather than a passage from nothingness to Being (Severino, 1980, pp. 138-144).

As any philosophical confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) worth of this name, the one between Heidegger and Severino, too, *seems* to take the form of a dispute won by the one who succeeds in taking the 'prior', 'higher', or, better, 'deeper' position with respect to his adversary's. Now, from the Severinian perspective philosophy is but an explicitation, the analytic presentation of the originary truth (Severino, 1981, pp. 111n. 115-6, 211). Strictly speaking, therefore, every philosophical move, including Severino's, as an individual thinker, presupposes the truth he is witnessing, and, so, every argumentation of his shows, de-monstrates, what is already, ever true. However, this approach presupposes the authorization to a boundless assumption: there are no other possible philosophies but the one voiced by Severino; it is, in fact, the very originary that rules out «other philosophies» (Severino, 1981, pp. 126-7). In a Heideggerian approach, this means to untie the thinking experience of philosophy from the bonds of finitude and historicity. The Severinian imaginary and language are warlike, «the authentic philosophizing», «'thought' in a strong sense» (Severino, 2016, p. 60), are posed as invincible:

> As an impregnable fortress is not, simply, a defensive work, but it extends its rule everywhere, since also those who live in the most distant quarters are aware that they will never be able to conquer it and on this knowledge regulate their existence, in exactly the same way the immutable does not limit itself to rally around existence, but it demands that all events conform themselves to its nature (Severino, 1979, p. 25).

Severino charges the traditional episteme with being weak, incapable of keeping its own statements on the immutable truths firm, as they are contaminated by the nihilistic faith according to which everything oscillates and is, therefore, replaceable. «The history of nihilism» expresses «a will to rule, incapable of ruling» (Severino, 1980, p. 118). Nihilistic is not possessing the logical force to win, relying only on faiths and wills. The Severinian warship, on the contrary, presents itself as necessarily domineering. The latter does not limit itself to win elenchtically those who attempt at conquering it, but it assumes any other possible battleship as a-prioristically won. Going back to Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 9: «necessarily tomorrow there will be, or there will not be, a sea battle». To Severino, both are necessarily won, also the one fought with enemy ships that have never been met. In point of fact, every possible enemy ship is in an originary way hooked by the 'corvus' (as the ancient Romans called the hook bridge) by the noncontradictory self-meaning structure.

Though risking to attribute to Heidegger what is, instead, proper of the Plato paving the way to Platonism, that is, the fight to rule out the veils that hide truth, Roberto Esposito finds «military harshness» and something «warlike» in the discourse of the German thinker, too (Esposito, 2018, p. 34). In my view, however, Heidegger would agree with Severino at least on one aspect: the authentic philosophical thinking does not participate in a mere game of parts, neither does it compete for gaining a privileged place in the field. It is a war, not a dispute. The thinking experience comes first, prior to any conflict of opinions or *Weltanschauung*. In other words, to Heidegger, too, what is at stake is not that of performing a movement (*kinesis*) more rapidly than one's adversary's, in order to place higher one's flag (categorial banner) through a move of circumvention or deception of the enemy (Heidegger, 1982b, p. 60).

Heidegger would agree with Severino also on a second, fundamental aspect: priority is not of the philosophers and philosophy, rather, it is of the truth of Being. However, he would reiterate a point that reveals all his distance from Severino: if one makes of this truth an absolute freed from the relationship with the interpreting human being, one falls again into the extra-physical (meta-physical) and extra-wordly isolation of truth itself that, instead, happens (*geschieht*) and manifests itself in the relationship with human interpreters. The decisive aspect is that in a Heideggerian approach, as human beings we are not simply related to the truth of Being, but we *are* this relationship. «*'We' are "in the truth"*» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 209) in that *we are relationship/s* and *in Being*/existing the relationships

that constitute us, we manifest truth. Heidegger retrieves the most origi-nary trait of *alétheia*, in his view the Greekest one, which is the one irre-ducible to an ontic presence equal to itself and to which our stating should correspond («Übereinstimmung») (Heidegger, 1996, p. 29) – truth that, as *alétheia*, is not the thematized true of our representations, nor the truth value of our statements. In other words, there is no need to build some kind of theoretical, epistemological, moral or sentimental bridge to arrive where, instead, we are from the beginning, owing to our ontological-cos-mologic-existential constitution. If Heidegger had read Severino, he would have certainly found the originary tie linking every being, human too, and Being, but he would have said that here all is fixed under a hyper-bole of metaphysics of presence.

The attention of Heidegger, called to interpret Severino's moves, would start with concentrating on two aspects: (3) the assumed self-meaning structure of being as being; (4) the priority of the world with respect to the theoretical moves of philosophical thought.

3. Meaning as immediately known presence

Already in his *The Originary Structure* (1958) Severino, who never lacks clarity, states:

> The originary structure […] is the originary opening of meaning. […] meaning is by itself signifying. Where the 'signified' is Being that is immediately known. […]. Therefore, the meaning is not in-determinately affirmed, but is a structure […]. Insignificant is only the nothingness as absolute negativity (Severino, 1981, pp. 129, 132).

The Severinian saying-thinking puts forth the claim of presenting the originary structure of being as "self-meaning" or «signifying by itself». What is alien to it is on the «same plane of insignificance» (Severino, 1981, p. 134). Now, Heidegger would say that Severino postulates «an originary meaningfulness (autosignificazione)» (Severino, 1981, p. 139) of Being whose priority is totally independent of relationships with the world and with linguistic praxis, and therefore, Heideggerianly, it is as it were unre-lated, worldless, *bodenlos,* uprooted: a well-polished jewel of theoreticist crystal lacking force of truth. In the Severinian setting Heidegger would

soon recognize the legacy of Thomas Aquinas who from Avicenna's *Metafisica* draws the starting indication: «being (*ens*) and essence (*essentia*) are the things first conceived of by the intellect» (Thomas Aquinas, 1968, 1). It is true that Severino, by letting creationism fall (Severino, 2016, p. 48), lets also fall the distinction between Being of being and essence of being – the principle of non-contradiction in fact expresses also «the identity of essence with existence» (Severino, 1982, p. 288) and so everything is divine being, eternal coincidence of *essentia* and *existentia* (Severino, 1980, p. 119). However, one could say that *parva propositio in principio magna est in fine*, a small premise at the beginning is great in the end, if I am allowed to paraphrase the first line of *De ente et essentia*. In short, either the Severinian moves are faced and disarmed at the beginning or *les jeux sont faits*.

Now, Heidegger would first of all contest the «solar obviousness (*sonnenklare Selbstverständlichkeit*) of the meaning of 'Being' (Heidegger, 1986, 2), assumed as «obvious, clear as day» (Heidegger, 1996, 1); he would underline the ancient prejudice according to which «everybody uses it constantly and also already understands what is meant by it» (*ibidem*). Of course, Heidegger would emphasize how this average understandability, given as obvious, doesn't but cover the «enigma (*Rätsel*)» of every relationship to being (Heidegger, 1996, 3), relationship anyway originary from an existential (human) point of view, in that «we live already [and always, «je schon»] in an understanding of Being (*Seinsverständnis*)» (Heidegger, 1996, 3; 1986, p. 4). Yet, not even Heidegger would succeed in circumventing the conflict – nor, furthermore, would he ever fall into the illusion of such a goal –, because those who think always respond to their own ontological-existential destiny.

To Severino «Being is immediately present» and «does not presuppose anything but the presence of itself», that is to say, the «actuality of this Being». «Being that is by itself known» (Severino, 1981, p.115). «Saying that Being is known means that of Being one knows that it is», and that «the news of this connection», *Being is*, is immediate (Severino, 1981, pp. 143-4). I repeat, *les jeux* are – seem – *faits*. One is sure that Being is and by that one knows just enough: one knows that nothingness does not win, that there is something, and, even more, that there is the totality of beings, eternally, since to untie them from their own Being would be contradictory. All the rest does not dent; rather, it explicates this primary truth. Beings' appearing and disappearing, the historical occurences, the world-wide happenings, the human beings' existential events, their questions, their

joys, their sufferings, their anxieties, their experiences? Are they only modes of the Spinozian infinite substance, or, when they take the form of the simple opinion or of what is kept firm through an act of faith, are they a spectacle of Schopenhauerean appeareances stemming from the truth in itself? Even if all, really all, is being (*ens*) – these appereances, too –, and, so, eternally subsists, in an invincible manner. Being (*ens*) is "immediately known" and if only one thinks and reasons deeply, that is, philosophically (Severino, 2016, pp. 59-60), he/she sees in it the opposition between Being and not-Being as «known by itself» and undeniable (Severino, 2016, p. 61). Heidegger would object that this is a forcing argument that simplifies, impoverishes and assumes to stake an a-priori claim on meaning: these «speculations on Being and not-Being» claim a «hollow simplicity» that «seduces» only because it is cloaked with logical stringency (Ruggenini, 2008, p. 96).

Furthermore, 'logical' is wider and richer than the logistic representation opposing Being and not-Being. In the third paragraph of *Logic. The Question of Truth* (1925-26) one reads: «We can learn how to think, even (*gar*) how to think scientifically, only through a relationship with things (*im Umgang mit der Sachen*), […not through] a collegium logicum» (Heidegger, 2010, p. 12 [translation modified]). And in the *Poscript to 'What is Metaphysics?'* (1943), collected in *Pathmarks*, one reads:

> The suspicion towards 'logic', with respect to which logistics (*Logistik*) may be considered as its consequent degeneration (*Ausartung*), stems from the knowing of that thought which finds its source (*Quelle*) in the experience (*Erfahrung*) of the truth of Being […]. The exact thought (*das exakte Denken*) is never the most rigorous thought (*das strengste Denken*) (Heidegger, 2004, 308).

In Heidegger's wake, Derrida, never appreciated and never approached in a fruitful way by Severino, would say that the latter meets the delusion of fixing meaning as if it were a «presence», a subsistence only evident to the intellectual intuition of a «a transcendental consciousness» isolated from any concrete phenomenology of signification. The Severinian meaning of Being, therefore, as in Husserl, is nothing but an «ideal presence», a represented (!) idealization according to a «grammar pure logic (*grammaire pure logique*)» (Derrida, 1967, pp. 7-10, 16-17). Does Derrida's objection to Husserl's semiotic-semantic Platonism hold true also for the Aristotelian Severino? Certainly Heidegger, in the same way as Derrida, would

not miss remarking how no meaning present as an evident givenness of philosophical speculation could aprioristically include «all the field of possibilities of language in general» (Derrida, 1967, p. 7). As already shown in the paragraphs 14-16 of *Being and Time*, the human experience of existence is, at the same time, an experience, not merely empirical, of the world and of its significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*), be it as *Umwelt*, surrounding World familiar to us, be it as *Weltlichkeit* (worldliness) of the world, which founds, shakes, and opens the *Umwelt* (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 59-71). It is an experience that understands, thinks, and interprets what does not let itself to be fenced by fixed and evident presences, whether ontic or semantic. And even when Heidegger talks about «meaning (*Sinn*) of Being, or when he emphasizes the dimension of significance, this does not dent «the primacy of Being» and of its «manifestness», if always «in relation to Dasein» (Capobianco, 2014, pp. 8-11). So, Heidegger retrieves «the primordial logic» of Heraclitus in order to insist on the primacy of «what it is », that is what is experienced which *tò léghein* refers to: «For Heidegger, what 'logic' refers to as the 'subject' of a 'statement' is traceable back to an experience of its appearing and showing, its shining-forth» (Capobianco, 2014, p. 81).

4. World and Philosophy

> Dasein is in itself "ontological". […] Only when philosophical research and inquiry themselves are grasped in an *existentiell* way – as a possibility of Being of each existing Da-sein – does it become possible at all […] to get hold of a sufficiently grounded set of ontological problems (Heidegger, 1996, p. 11).

Is priority to be given to the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) or to philosophizing? In a Heideggerian perspective, this is an abstract, dualistic, and absolute question which presumes that it is possible to choose between world and thought. Viceversa, already in the Twenties Heidegger shows how our Being necessarily as Being-in-the-world is originarily one with the fact – not an accidental *Tatsache* – that we *are* destined to respond to philosophical questions. Belonging to the world, so, makes one with belonging to philosophizing, too (also to the handed down of the historicity of words), and viceversa. Of course, to Heidegger the ultimate root, in which our understanding and philosophising finds its necessity, is our Being-in-the world;

but the point is that *Dasein* is essentially destined to elaborate ontologically (and not only ontically) its own existing. Professional philosophers expose (*legen aus*) the ways in which human beings understand their existence, but, as underlined in paragraph 28 of *Being and Time,* this has nothing to do with an anthropological survey, rather, it is about a fundamental ontology that shows what it is originarily rooted in (Heidegger, 1996, p. 124). When professional philosophers forget about that, philosophical questions become cultural themes or mere historiographical objects, and thought falls prey of the most abstract and arbitrary theoreticism. This is one of the reasons why Heidegger trusts phenomenology at the same moment when he goes back to Aristotle, subtracting the first to the residual Husserlian primacy of cosciousness and the second to the tidy and rationalistic readings that medieval Scholastics, through Suarez's mediation, have consigned to modern metaphysics.

In full twentieth century, when the scientific objectivism exhibits a long series of successes, phenomenology appears to Heidegger the way to preserve the necessary possibility for the philosophical thought. The founding root of the latter are the unitarity and relationship with Being-in-the-world. The hermeneutical turn brought about by *Being and Time* does not distort Husserlian phenomenology (Bianchin, 2017, p. 8); still, it further moves the centre of gravity towards the things themselves and the world, the latter being meant as not only a situational horizon. The Husserlian primacy of relationality is re-launched in a practical-cosmological direction, thus strengthening the Husserlian critique of the modern positive sciences as «disconnected from the highest metaphysical questions of human existence» and irrelevant with respect to «significance for life» (Trizio, 20121, p. 204).

In a Heideggerian approach, unity and relationships gather, keep together, concrete existence, disclosure of worldliness and philosophical research in its most proper sense, that of the ontological existential analytics. This unitarity is certainly not to be meant as homogeneity and uniformity: between the usual conduct in our daily life and the authentic way of existing, between a way of thinking anchored to what first of all and mostly "they say" and becoming interpreters of the world as no-thing (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 174-5), in the same as between the pre-ontological understanding and the ontological understanding, there are breaks, gaps, discontinuities. However, all these dimensions are possibilities constitutive of our Being-in-the-world, otherwise they become theoreticist representations without world (*weltlos*) and groundless (*bodenlos*).

Existential analytics, too, is always an experience, a thinking experience starting from the relationship with the things themselves, which manifests itself as a life praxis assigned to us by historicity. This is why Heidegger thinks he can go back to Aristotle as the first of the Western phenomenologists. The Greek character of the Stagirite is shown in his not dividing *aisthesis* from *noesis* (Heidegger, 1996, p. 12), as much as in his typically starting from the observation of the human beings' behavioural modes (ethos) and articulation of discourses, as they are – not as they should be –, thus philosophically drawing from the praxis of life in the ways it is and unconceals itself (*alétheia*). So, while a modern thinker like Descartes aprioristically chooses the method that most fully responds to his need for certain knowledge (Descartes, 2006, pp. 10-16), a Greek like Aristotle thinks that there is not only one method to proceed (*On the Soul*, 402a 13-14; *Posterior Analytics*, II, 3-7), since it is the way truth is that dictates the method of research. Heidegger shares this perspective: as evidenced in the paragraph 7 of *Being and Time*, it is what is being investigated, «Being of beings», that prescribes the method to ontology, and the latter lets what we are in a constitutive relationship with come out (*aufheben*) (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 23-24). Heidegger can claim that this «has nothing in common with a vapid subjectivizing of the totality of beings» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 12) because *we are what is*, and because, by understanding-interpreting the relationship with the Being that is destined to us, we manifest, expose (*legen aus*) the truth of Being.

If, Heideggerianly, as we are said in the paragraph 7c of *Being and Time*, «the [philosophical] science of the Being of beings – ontology» is «phenomenology» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 33), it is because it does not assume a frontal, objectivizing posture, schematizing or inferential (!), with respect to the empirical data that attest the presence of things, but, rather, from the start it lets «what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself (Heidegger, 1996, p. 30): Being of being that we, humans, are. I do insist: what is crucial to Heidegger is to philosophically preserve the rooting of thought in the originary unitarity that ties, in a practical-existential sense, human *being* to the world in which he/she is situated-open. This always presupposes the priority of the 'existential' way-of-Being over whatever theoretical awareness or move.

In *Topics* I, 10, 104a-5-7, one reads: «for no one in his senses would make a proposition of what no one holds, nor yet make a problem of what is obvious to everybody» (Aristotle, 1991, 248). Should philosophy presume that its task is to rule out or to correct the obvious, according to Hei-

degger it would cut its own link with the world, thus becoming theoreticist construct, not philosophy. A worldless (*weltlos*) philosophizing is no authentic thinking, exactly as a "philosophizing" «immersed in the publicness of the they (*man sagt*)» and «mastered by it» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 156) is no authentic thinking.

Far from the obvious, far and separated from the surrounding world, philosophical thought would be unable, also, to do experience of the worldliness of the world and, so, of the truth of Being. Philosophy does not consist in handling logical principles or christal-like categorial schemes, detached from the world, rigid as much untouchable.

The statement «what is taken for granted as being self-evident is the true and sole theme of philosophy» (Heidegger, 1982a, p. 58), tells that philosophy is not called to *reason* in order to get out of the cave lived together with the many (*oi polloi*), but, rather, to *experience* deeper, with thinking patience, what of the obvious is taken for granted. «In fact we are dealing with "something self-evident (*Selbstverständlich*)" which we want to get closer to» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 24), ready to get nearer to what is in an experiential-understanding relationship with us, rather than being busy with handling constructs provided with smooth and theoreticist evidence, prepared to order the empirical world. If Heidegger has often repeated (Kisiel, 20154, p. 8) that among the writings he had mostly been impressed by there were Husserl's *Logical Investigation*, in particular the sixth one, this is because there Husserl throws light on the notion of 'categorial intuition' and on the reciprocal interpenetration of sensitiveness (Kantian sensibility) and intellect, of perceptive and logical elements, beyond any dualistic temptation (Husserl, 2001, VI, pp. 43-8).

Heidegger would say that Severino keeps away from all this, in the grip of a need for incontrovertible certainty that can survive only in the shadow of the separation between (empirical) experience of the world and speculative rigor.

In Part I of *The Originary Structure* one reads:

> The pre-philosophical does not know how to stay still, that is, it has *no* reasons. All the "reasons" are given to it by philosophy. […] This does not exclude that the philosophical horizon might preserve those contents of the pre-philosophical moment whose validity can be established. […but] *Being* in truth simply means not to be in truth […].
> Therefore, the dialogue between "man" and "philosopher" […] is

actually a misunderstanding. [...] The task of the philosopher lies – negatively – in *not* accepting the dialogue [...]: and – positively – in *making* man a philosopher; instauration of logos. (Severino, 1981, pp. 137-8).

Heidegger, too, for instance in the first pages of *On the Essence of Truth*, often lingers on the estrangement of philosophy from the "sound" common sense in need of useful obviousness, rather than of questionings (Heidegger, 2004, pp. 177-8), but, in his view, the philosopher sees and lets see the same truth of the world, deepened and distanced. He would see in Severino, therefore, a phenomenologist *manqué* who sets things dualistically, thus remaining hostage of the distinction between Being and appearing. Although, according to Severino, «appearing is not appearance», exactly as «the becoming of things is [not] mere illusion (Severino, 2016, pp. 168, 170), Heidegger would say that the Italian thinker does not really recognize the sameness of Being and *Phänomen*, and that he keeps on talking about 'phenomenon' as *Erscheinung*, though distinguishing it from *Schein*. In the same frame Heidegger would detect legacies from the Cartesian model – emphasized, for example, in paragraph 21 of *Being and Time* – that opposes «sensatio» to «intellectio» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 89). According to Descartes, «the senses do not enable us to know any being in its Being»; «they tell us nothing at all about beings in their Being» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 90). In underlining how «appearing does not attest the opposite of that which is demanded by the logos» (Severino, 2016, p. 109), Severino remains in the shadow of Cartesianism: *aisthesis* does not deny what is, but neither does it reveal it, limiting itself to not being able to show the impossibility of what logos says. In short, the nevralgic point is that Severinianly the experience does not attest truth but stops earlier, incapable to affirm as much as to deny it. It exhibits of it the empirical-phenomenical trait, the appearing and the disappearing of Being on the stage of empirical experience (Severino, 1980, pp. 175-6), still this remains far from any hermeneutical cosmological-existential phenomenology.

Severino, in fact, is convinced that what appears and disappears phenomenically be in need of logos to say the being. In a footnote of *Destiny of Necessity* he writes:

Experience is silent about the fate of what escapes to it (that is to say, it is unable to say whether the being that has not appeared yet or that no longer appears is become, or not, a nothing). [...] Expe-

rience, when kept as distinct (not as separated) from logos (*logo*), is truly silent about what logos (*logo*) speaks about – and by keeping silent it does not deny, so, the consequences of logos (*logo*) (Severino, 1980, pp. 116-117).

Heidegger would say that Severino presumes to profit from the gap between experience and logos (*logo*); the latter cannot be confuted by the first. Experience finds in logos (*logo*) a light more stable than whatever interpretation. In Heidegger's view, the fact, explicitly acknowledged by Severino, that experience does not attest the eternity of beings, or, Severinianly, the truth of Being, would confirm not only the theoreticism without world of Severinian philosophy, but also a residual fracture between reason and "empirical" experience, i.e. what is empirically observable. There is more to it: in Severino Heidegger would notice a way of proceding definable as eristic, close to what Aristotle, in *Physics* 2-3, attributes to Parmenides: the Eleatic does not see things, but «one single principle» with one single meaning, drawing from it, however, consequences on the multiplicity of physical things.

The missed phenomenology brings with it the missed philosophical hermeneutics, too. Severino cannot but misunderstand the hermeneutical sense of interpretation, which he reduces to the «decision», without any foundation, to assign a meaning to «certain data» and to the «will» to keep firm a controvertible belief or representation (Severino, 1979, pp. 59-63). So, «the error lies not in Appearing, but in the way Appearing is interpreted» (Severino, 2016, p. 168). Severino opposes the praxis, also socially meant, of interpreting the empirical data, nihilistically misunderstood, to the incontrovertible speculative rigor of those who think starting from the necessary non-contradictoriness of Being.

The hermeneutical-philosophical sense of interpretation, however, is not to be confused with the *Deutung* that confers meaning (*Sinn*) to objects, but is instead *Auslegung*, that is, *ex-positio*, and, so, phenomenological exposition and manifestation of what is, of what we are, in existing. Heideggerianly, «understanding» is «a fundamental mode of the *Being of Da-sein*» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 134), not a cognitive performance, and philosophical hermeneutics highlights how this understanding articulates and shows itself through interpreting behaviours. The conflict between Heidegger and Severino is not merely theoretical; it goes back to the way their philosophizing relates to the Being-in-the-World. If Severino disqualifies the deniable and non-final character of interpretation (Cardenas,

2020, 164), this is not simply because he conflates philosophical hermeneutics with Gianni Vattimo's "weakist" inflection – the latter being involved in what remains farthest from Heidegger: the liberation from the power and violence of any veritative authority. The point, if anything, is that the missed phenomenology makes impossible for Severino to appreciate the tying force and the non-arbitrariness of the existential, cosmological, practical and linguistic, relationships. As regards, for example, the so-called twentieth-century «linguistic turn», Severino is convinced that the primary purpose of the latter is to deny «any form of absolute knowledge» and that Heidegger ends up by considering «true reality» as «inexpressible» (Goggi, 2015, pp. 296- 7), just as if truth were a thing in itself that does not appear. Whereas Heidegger stresses the phenomenological essence of language in which this manifests and lets us see the truth of Being as it is: crossed by different, not simply diverse, necessary possibilities.

5. The World as the opening of ties

Heidegger and Severino share a strenuous battle against indifference. Each of his own way insists on the binding force of tie uniting the beings among themselves and to themselves. If we look for a Severinian definition of nihilism beyond that of 'contradictory annihilation of being', we encounter exactly the characterisation of indifference. From the start, for example in *Returning to Parmenides*, Severino acknowledges the implications of the so-called Platonic "parricide". As a matter of fact, «the truth of Being uncovered by Parmenides is unshaken even after the Platonic "parricide"» (Severino, 2016, p. 45), but Severino acknowledges the necessity that the sphere of Being be not undifferentiated, but, rather, that it be diversified in manifold beings, each one with a determined identity (Severino, 2016, pp. 39-45; Spanio, 2019, pp. 29, 33, 42). As said above, Severino lets the creationistic division between *essentia* and *existentia* be ruled out and in fact he holds, in a way that would certainly catch Heidegger's interest, that positivity of the identity of any being and positivity of the existence of such being are originarily one (Severino, 2016, p. 44). That is why, for the Italian thinker, «the voice of [authentic] philosophy», that «is heard above all other voices […] as the most *firm*» (Severino, 2016, pp. 45-6), conjugates the identitary determinateness and the eternity of every being. In a Heideggerian perspective two are the most pregnant points: (5.1) for Severino «the authentic 'ontological difference'»,

one of the German thinker's key-notions (Heidegger, 1999, pp. 176-7), is nothing but the diversity between two opposed dimensions, «immutable» and «coming-to-be» (Severino, 2016, p. 46). This confirms what said in the preceding paragraph: in order to overcome the separation between 'logical pole' and 'phenomenological pole' it is not enough to state that «that which manifests itself is not a [...] "phenomenal" image of Being, but Being itself» (Severino, 2016, p. 43). In fact, that philosophizing for which the truth of Being – immutability and eternity, in Severinian terms – does not manifest itself is not yet phenomenology. (5.2) Heidegger would observe how Severino is unable to think difference in any other way but as diversity (Severino, 1980, p. 176) – a neutral, ontological diversity –, thus keeping in line with the Western tradition born with the Platonic diairetic tecnique – each being is identical to itself and diverse from any other –, and taking this perspective to its most complete extension. On the contrary, according to Heidegger, one thinks beyond the nihilistic tradition, only when one is not afraid to questoning the identitary determinatess, too, the one that pigeonholes in "equalizing" schemes the opening of beings and that asks the latters to correspond to a stable *ordo naturalis* and/or logical-ontological ever since. In point of fact, in Heideggerian terms, the identical is not the equal, «the same (*das Selbe*) is not the equal (*das Gleiche*)» (Heidegger, 2006, p. 55).

The most important implications of the question of indifference, however, concerns the phenomenon of relations-ties. According to Severino, nihilism consists exactly in interpreting as loosened or loosable the ties (Severino, 2016, p.42) that unite Being to itself and, so, every being to its Being. Nihilism isolates the part and the whole as if no unitary originary relationship existed (Severino, 1980, pp. 116, 121). «To the eyes of destiny every relationship is necessary »(Severino, 2015, p. 144), while the folly of Western contradiction represents to itself every relationship as accidental or gratuitous. This is a theme Severino already cultivates in *The Originary Structure*: either one thinks rigorously and so one acknowledges the stability imposed by the originary meaning of Being (Severino, 1981, p. 139), or, with respect to every thing that is, one thinks that it becomes «indifferent to choose affirmation or negation» (Severino, 1981, p. 135). To put this in terms not strictly belonging to Severino's lexicon, the nihilistic indifference manifests itself as a reel of possibilities, one in alternative to the others, that seem perfectly interchangeable the one with the others. Wills, opinions, beliefs and various appetites presume they can handle this indifferent and undifferentiated possibilism by blocking some firm points,

but these are anyway bound to be swept away by the nihilistic replaceability. To Severino, in keeping with his philosophical defence of identitary stability, to think that something may become other than itself, by identifying itself with other than itself (Severino, 2015, p. 22) and contradicting the originary diversification of the totality of beings, is folly.

Heidegger would not answer by starting from some ethical or political preoccupation with regard to this identitary crystallization which imposes to things and persons to conform to something originarily established. Heidegger, in my view, would acknowledge that Severino is in a philosophical contest and, at the same time, is hostage of an unconfessed tuning with the modern way of thinking. But Heidegger himself, from the Twenties to the period following the turn, questions the phenomenon of indifference as equivalence (*Gleich-gültigkeit*) of what is optionable in an interchangeable way (Heidegger, 1999, pp. 48-49). In any case, the Heideggerian answer to Severino would be exquisitely ontological in an existential way, notwithstanding that already in the years of his *Contributions to Philosophy*, for instance in the paragraphs 23 and 24, he thinks he has to abandon the term 'ontology' (Heidegger, 1999, pp. 41-2, 63).

Are isolation and separation impossible (Severino, 2015, p. 29)? Are they mere juxtapositions by spatial-temporal contiguity – David Hume *docet* –, or are they unifications extrinsically prescribed through some artificial will to rule? Heidegger would be, rather, Heidegger *is* interested exactly in these eminently *modern* phenomena. However, as a phenomenologist of the Being-in-the world, he dis-covers and lets emerge binding ties in the relationships in which we are situated-open in our existence. In other terms, to Severino he would contest his being diverted by a theoreticist need of absolute stability that prevents him from taking with philosophical seriousness the concrete force of the relationships we are (made of) and in which we abide.

Experience shows that our existence is involved in numerous relationships that open possibilities at the same time that they bind them. This is a crux that has repercussions also on the phenomenon of freedom, as one can read at paragraph 31 of *Being and Time*:

> As an existential, possibility does not refer to a free-floating potentiality of Being (*Seinkönnen*) in the sense of the "indifference of will (*Gleichgültigkeit der Willkür*)" (*libertas indifferentiae*). […] Da-sein has always got itself into definite (*bestimmte*) possibilities. (Heidegger, 1996, p. 135).

The philosophical-phenomenological experience of the existential dimension, which is never split from the *existentiell* ontic experience, shows the force of the practical, historical (*geschichtlich*), and linguistic ties linking Dasein to what is and can be. The opening of possibility, even in the seemingly poor form of alternative, does not enfeeble neither subtracts truth to those constitutive relationships.

There is more to this: in a Heideggerian frame, the opening of possibility, concretely rooted in the existential relationships that we are, is the one that discloses future and reveals life's significance. Severino finds it hard to recognize all this, because – as Heidegger would say – he does not preserve, through and through, the unity of the theoretical and the practical, and the action of life appears to him to depend on philosophical stringency to draw its own truth. The Severinian questions remain worldless, placed in a logical-theoretical pattern: *should it be possible that..., then it would mean that it is not necessary, then it would mean that the tie is loosable, corrupted by gratuitous replaceability, oscillating in an absurd indifference.*

The Severinian approach appears strong because always logically argumented and keen on catching every contradiction. Now, one might object to the «Heideggerian reflection» that, in a tacit and unjustified way, it employs various logical assumptions, falling anyway into heavy contradictions, too (Cusano, 2017, pp.10, 12). Is the German thinker not holding that Being *is* nothing and *is not* absolute nil? Heidegger himself, therefore, proposes statements that imply the «negation over which the logic of non-contradiction is built» (Cusano, 2017, p.13)? In my perspective, Heidegger would first of all state that his own considerations are prior to every customary antithesis between logical and illogical, or rational and irrational. One reads in paragraph 34 of *Contributions to Philosophy*:

> Whoever, thinking himself quite clever, immediately discovers here a "contradiction" – because what is not cannot «be» – he always thinks way too short with his non-contradiction as the standard for what is ownmost to beings (*als Maßstab des Wesens des Seienden*) (Heidegger, 1999, p. 52).

And in *Letter on 'Humanismus'*:

> Thinking against 'logic' doesn't mean defending the illogical, it just means rethinking the logos (Heidegger, 2004, p. 348).

Anyway, the crucial point is another: Heidegger's is not a reflection, but, rather, a hermeneutical exposition-manifestation of what is wider and more grounding than any simple opposition between correct and incorrect, rational and irrational, coherent and contradictory. Heidegger does not deny the *bebaiotáte arché*, but situates its binding power within the relationships between words and things manifested in discourse. In the fourth lesson of the second part of *What is called Thinking?* one reads:

> The sentence «The triangle is laughing» cannot be said. It can be said, of course, in the sense that it can be pronounced as a mere string of words; we just did so. But it can not be said really, in terms of what it says. The things that are evoked by 'triangle' and 'laughing' introduce something contradictory into their relation. The terms do make a declaration, but contradict each other. They thus make the proposition impossible. To be possible, the proposition must from the start avoid self-contradiction. This is why the law, that contradiction must be avoided, is considered a basic tenet of the proposition. Only because thinking is defined as lógos, as an utterance, can the statement about contradiction perform its role as a law of thought. (Heidegger, 1968, p. 155).

Being able to say the phrase 'the triangle is laughing', as much as being able to speak of *nihil absolutum*, does not violate the necessity not to contradict oneself, since the latter is not a law that extrinsically rules the lógos. Rather it is the latter, in the real action of its own carrying out in intrinsic relationship to things and speakers, which shows the impossibility of contradicting oneself. The Heideggerian emphasis, which in the passage just quoted is focused on the logic of the lógos, is therefore on the practical articulation of speech, always in relation to things themselves.

The way-of-Being of Da-sein and the way of Being of the Heideggerian philosopher intertwine, characterized as they are by their letting themselves be caught – resolutely, through and through – from Being. This dissolves indifference, revealing its impossibility, or its merely derivative character. Existing as Being-in-the-world calls us to resoluteness, but the latter does not stem from reflection (*Reflexion*), nor does it consist in deciding between Being or not-Being. At stake is not the nth task/duty, but a way-of-Being we are destined to: to expose ourselves completely to our belonging to Being, manifesting/witnessing what comes first and grounds, also, every possible subjective decision (Heidegger, 1999, pp. 70-1).

For Heidegger, Being is nothing, no-thing, insofar as it is not a being,

that is, it is *non-being*. He would also consider Severino a nihilist who has reduced this 'non' to the mere 'not' of heterological identity diversity. Severino, in fact, thinks rather in terms of the opposition of Being to *not-Being*, and therefore to what seems to him to be the only alternative to the ontic dimension. Severino would therefore appear to Heidegger as a hyperbolic triumph of onticity (*Seiendheit*) and ontotheological determinateness, which claim to control «the silent [space-time] power of the possible» (Heidegger, 1996, p. 360). Read Heideggerianly, Severino is more Western than Aquinas and Descartes: it will in any case be through comparing with the thought of the latters, rather than with Heidegger's one, that future Severinism will receive further philosophical attention. Yet Heidegger will be beyond, where the ontotheological and digital grammar will show its limits. Heidegger has existential wisdom to offer: «Be-ing reminds of 'nothing', and therefore 'nothing' belongs to Being» (Heidegger, 1999, p. 338). It is not an absolute nothing and at the same time it is an autotelic flourishing that erupts as non-deductible from the showy and equal to itself presence of beings. The truth of Being cannot be handled according to ordered and coherent ontic presences, and manifests itself to those who have a thinking experience of hints and *nuances*, walking «philosophically» on the limit – it is a *Grenze*/boundary, not a *Schranke*/fence – between determinatess and indeterminatess.

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