Beyond Alienation:
Severino's Removal of Pathological Contradiction

INES TESTONI

Professor of Social psychology FISPPA Department,
Director of the Master in "Death Studies & The End of Life" – University of Padova, Italy

Based on a significant reflection by Emanuele Severino on contemporary philosophy (i.e. Severino, 1996), this article explores the concept of "alienation" and its evolution from Hegelian theory to psychology/psychiatry and social science studies. The purpose of this article is to highlight the continuity between certain assumptions of Severino's original framework and the comprehensibility of diagnostic aspects inherent to the state of alienation, particularly in cases of schizophrenic spectrum disorders. Severino was a philosopher who presented the most radical understanding of alienation, in line with the concept of nihilism and involving the identification of "being" in relation to its absolute other – that is, "nothingness". The fundamental aim of this manuscript is to proceed along a path of investigation that considers Severino's thought as the foundation of the epistemology of a new science: one that does not start from the fideistic assumption of the oscillation between nothing and being.

Eternity & Contradiction. Journal of Fundamental Ontology
volume 4 • issue 7 • December 2022

45

Beyond alienation: Severino's removal of pathological contradiction

The concept of alienation underwent a significant decline following the end of the 20th century, until its revival in the context of studies on the centrality of Karl Marx's theories, which cannot be considered outdated because of and despite the Soviet totalitarianism. Rahel Jaeggi's (2014) contribution is of particular importance in this context. She sought to reactivate the discussion around the Hegelian–Marxian key concepts to understand the reasons for the contemporary era's malaise and inability to respond in a nonoppressive manner to the needs of humanity. Her timely phenomenological analysis rekindled interest in this concept but did not resolve the fundamental problem inherent to the reasons why alienation risks to be an obsolete concept. The difficulty consists in the fact that philosophical, epistemological and psychological reflections seem not to be able to exhaustively explain why alienation is an error that can be avoided and corrected. In this article, a proposal for a resolution is presented based on the fundamental contributions of Emanuele Severino.

The concept of "alienation", a term that comes from the Latin word "alienus", meaning "other", can be found in the philosophical, sociopolitical and psychological/psychiatric fields; it indicates the estrangement of someone from something or a condition of division of the subject from him/herself. It substantially indicates the separation of subjects and objects that belong together. At its root, this idea refers to a range of cultural, social and/or psychological pathologies involving a self (that can be a person but not necessarily) and an other. Since the separation between a subject and object does not necessarily appear problematic, all related theories focus on making sense of such an estrangement and provide reasons for why this issue is of particular importance, why the separation is challenging, why such a relationship should not be severed and why a reintegration of the divided parts is required. The fields of philosophy, political sciences

and psychology/psychiatry consist of different explanations for all these questions, but their intertwined lines of reasoning fundamentally try to intercept the incongruence of separation and determine the difficulties underlying connectedness.

According to Severino (1982/2015), the nihilism that characterizes the entirety of Western thought and its prephilosophical and mythological precursors forms the essence of the very meaning of alienation. From his point of view, all the explanations of this concept in various fields of knowledge are basically identical and undermined by a pervasive error: nihilism. In the present article, some cornerstones that characterize the discussion on alienation are introduced and connected with the constituent elements of Severino's originary structure of truth (OST). In particular, they are developed based on considerations of the relationship between psychology and psychiatry, along with the sociopolitical analysis that Severino offered in his work *La filosofia dai Greci al nostro tempo: La filosofia contemporanea* [*Philosophy from the Greeks to our time: Contemporary Philosophy*] (Severino, 1996). In the chapter "Scienze umane e decline dell'episteme", paragraph "Psichiatria e psicologia" [Psychiatry and psychology], the philosopher has stated the following:

> Contemporary psychiatry and psychology […] accentuate their [...] relationship with philosophy and the human sciences. And this is a phenomenon that can also be seen […] in all areas of modern science […]. Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism determine to a considerable extent a large part of contemporary psychiatry and psychology. It is an influence that explains the progressive affirmation of the various forms of 'social psychology': for example [...] the progressive replacement of the medical model, which aims to cure illness by acting on the individual, with the 'sociological model' of illness, which aims to establish the extent to which society or the specific social environment in which the individual lives is responsible for his pathological state. In this perspective, the conviction takes hold that the real sick person is not the individual, but the society in which he or she lives, and that the disease of society is capitalist alienation (R. Laing, D. Cooper, F. Basaglia).
> Thus a true anti-psychiatric attitude takes hold within psychiatric-psychological research, which rejects any technical-therapeutic intervention of the psychiatrist on the patient, based on the conviction that true therapy can only have a political-philosophical meaning, i.e. it is therapy that transforms society (and thus transforms

that same psychiatric therapy that in a more or less conscious way is the mouthpiece of social interests and privileges. (Severino, 1996, pp. 442-3).

Assuming that the psychological and social sciences are increasingly intertwined with and find their critical foundation in philosophy, the aim of the present article is to show the inescapable empirical and heuristic value of Severino's thought in explaining psychological and sociopolitical phenomena, even with respect to the most basic categories of thought concerning alienation. The final objective is to add to previous studies that recognized Severino's thoughts as providing a potential foundation for a new scientific sociopsychological epistemology aimed at liberating people from the anguish of alienation (Testoni, 2019; Testoni et al., 2017; Testoni et al., 2015; Testoni, 2021).

Alienation of philosophy and sociopolitical thought

The philosophical area focusing on alienation pertains especially to German idealism and the left-Hegelian movement. Within the idealistic system of thought, alienation is an event involved in the development of the spirit that divides and objectifies itself, finally returning to itself in a synthesis. This was particularly the perspective put forward by Georg W. F. Hegel (1807), from whose theory the dialectic concerning the spirit/nature/history's evolution has been derived: the alienation of the spirit ("Entäusserung", "Entfremdung") becomes the other, specifically as nature in space and as history in time. However, *Entäusserung* is also the process of idea formation and then of self-consciousness because the spirit remains itself even when it denies and objectifies itself. *Geist* is the subject that conquers the positive solution through the "determined negation" of alienation ("Aufhebung"), restoring the original form of self-unity. Almost all systematic forms of reflection on alienation are rooted in Hegel's theory.

The left-Hegelian movement immanentized the idea of alienation by applying it to concrete human beings – rather than to the spirit – and their class divisions and history of liberation from ideologies that maintain the social oppression of weaker classes. Feuerbach was the first philosopher to assume the Hegelian concept of alienation and subsequently decline it in a sociopolitical question (Feuerbach, 1948). He regarded the Geist as a mere philosophical idea produced by human beings, who constitute the

true subject, and then applied the split concept of consciousness to a radical critique of Christianism. As Sigmund Freud (1927) similarly stated in the following century, religion is an instrument of alienation that keeps poorer classes in a state of subordination to those of higher status because it extrapolates the essential characteristics of human beings and attributes them to a fantastic entity, God, who thus becomes the ideal subject for humanity to depend on. According to Feuerbach, this inversion is the essence of alienation, which philosophy aims to show by restoring to humans what authentically pertains to them.

However, according to Feuerbach (1948), Hegel's logic is similar to theology because the spirit corresponds to human thought outside concrete thinking subjects. "To abstract" means "to extract/pull out" or "to alienate". Thus, because of their abstractions, Hegelian philosophy and religion have been founded on the same alienating operation (Feuerbach, 1948).

Marx's ideas concerning alienation were greatly influenced by Feuerbachian critical writings. The philosopher took over the immanentization of Hegel's absolute concepts by bringing them back to real subjects, particularly by replacing the parallel idea of the metaphysical concept of state with the idea of a society composed of real human beings who are alienated and desubjectivized by their work. The concept of alienation was then extended to the concrete conditions of the oppressed classes. In *Contribution of Hegel's Critique of Right: Introduction* (1843, CW, vol 3, p. 175), Marx stated that religion is the "opium of the people". In Christianity, humans in concrete poverty are valued in religious heaven as a sovereign entity. However, the faith of the oppressed in this representation is functional in bourgeois society, wherein formal equality corresponds to real inequality. In contemporary society, individuals are free only in an abstract, non-real way. The working class is dominated by productive processes, with activities that are mentally and/or physically debilitating, and workers, separated by their products and production processes under the effect of illusion, sell their power to capitalists. This is the alienation of workers that results, on the one hand, in "dispossession/accumulation" dynamics (objects produced being destined for the capitalists who accumulate them and not for the workers) and, on the other hand, in workers' "de-humanization" (consumption of their life and spirit for the benefit of capitalists' richness and well-being) (Marx, 1844).

Based on the Marxian perspective, the Frankfurt School founded the critical theory of society and developed the idea of dehumanization. The

theory's main concept is desubjectification, which is operated not so much and not only by religions but, rather, by the manipulation of individuals through mass media ("culture industry") (Adorno, 1966). According to the Frankfurt School, individuals in contemporary culture are reduced to collective standards of behaviours through dynamics of persuasion that transform society into a mass of homologated individuals, functioning towards the needs of mass-production industries. Critical reflection (negative dialectics) thus takes on the task of demystifying mass ideology by shedding light on social onditioning (Adorno, 1966). In the diagnosis of Herbert Marcuse presented in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), individuals in advanced capitalist societies seem to be happy in their conditioned relationships because they identify themselves with their alienating circumstances, thus gaining satisfaction. From his perspective, a small number of individuals in modern consumer societies are empowered to conditionate the perception of freedom by providing masses of individuals with opportunities to buy their well-being and personal happiness. In this state of "unfreedom", consumers behave irrationally by working more than necessary to fulfil real basic needs, ignoring the psychologically destructive effects and the waste and environmental damage it causes (Marcuse, 1964).

Alienation from a psychological–psychiatric point of view

Psychological and psychiatric studies assume the reduction of any metaphysical dimension to the concrete state of individuals. Then, dissociative phenomenology is produced when the original subject becomes the object, and the objectivized self that is separated from the original self is inherent in patients with a specific biography and bodily health conditions. The aim of psychological and psychiatric discussion is to offer explanatory accounts defining the possible theoretical and empirical solutions that permit the reintegration of the separated parts of patients who cannot behave normally and who have dysfunctional intimate and social relationships (Black et al., 2014). Thus, mental alienation implies that an individual has become separated from him/herself and the world.

This kind of disturbance is typical of schizophrenic spectrum pathologies. The term "schizophrenia", derived from the Greek words σχίζειν (*schizein*: splitting) and φρήν (*phr n*: mind), was coined by Eugen Bleuler (1911) and indicates the separation of mental functions. Bleuler (1911) also nosologically introduced a specific feature of schizophrenia, namely am-

bivalence, which indicates an emotional cognitive state in which contradictory ideas and feelings/emotions are directed towards an object. This is one of the most interesting symptoms on which the incomprehensible behaviours of people suffering from schizophrenic disorders depend. The most important studies that have attempted to decode this symptom and recognize its causes originated in the fields of psychology and psychiatry and were inspired by the contributions of the Frankfurt School. Various concepts of alienation and self-estrangement have been considered to explain internal schizoid states with observable symptoms and external socioeconomic divisions. Political psychology arose from the Frankfurt School and Erich Fromm, with the aim of reversing Adorno's critical dialectic and resolving Marcuse's sociological diagnosis by drawing from the psychological dimension. Studies from this perspective have sought to locate the matrices of alienation in the social dynamics of relationships and communication, revealing how individuals are unconsciously influenced by the forces of power and thus alienated from themselves.

This critical discussion on alienation emerged after a focus on the extreme harms associated with lobotomy, electroconvulsive treatment and insulin shock therapy, and among its ranks were important scholars such as Thomas Szasz, Ronald D. Laing, Franco Basaglia, Silvano Arieti and David Cooper. Others influenced by this wave were Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Erving Goffman, who stand out in importance in the research area inherent to dehumanizing theories that aimed to normalize people suffering from certain forms of alienation. These scholars considered psychiatric treatments to be more damaging than helpful to patients. In line with this position, Umberto Galimberti (1999) in *Psiche e techne: L'uomo nell'età della tecnica* [*Psyche And Techne: Man In The Age Of Technique*] highlighted the connection between anxiety and alienation. Specifically, he identified the basis of the alienation and anguish produced by exorbitant amounts of work and stress among contemporary humans as resulting from modern society's demands for indefinite technical development. Human beings living in the most technologically advanced societies are ensnared in an increasingly asphyxiating spiral of production that leaves them unable to give meaning to their daily endeavours. The lack of individual existential purposes leads to alienation and the exponential growth of lifetimes devoted to the production of functional artefacts for the development of global production and technology.

In this regard, Jürgen Habermas (1981) emphasized the role of language and suggested that alienation originates from the distortion of moral

debate by dominating market forces and economic power. This kind of distortion results in alienation being extracted from the broader socioeconomic context and the resulting pain and problems being attributed to individual abnormalities or failure to adjust. Habermas's reflections developed under the influence of the antipsychiatry movement and were closely connected to the Frankfurt School's perspective.

The importance of communication and information processing was also the focus of another approach that was strongly influenced by and, in turn, influenced the antipsychiatry and Frankfurt School movements: that of the Palo Alto School, which takes its name from the Californian locality where the Mental Research Institute, a centre for research and psychological therapy, is located. Research in this area primarily emphasizes dysfunctional communication or information that conceals substantial contradictions within itself and occurs within vertical relationships. These contradictions are concealed by ambiguity and ambivalence, which are not immediately recognizable and make it impossible for subordinate individuals to understand the authentic thoughts and aims of persons with power over them.

Attention to the problem of dysfunctional communication and information processing was ignited by Gregory Bateson (Bateson et al., 1956). The anthropologist introduced the "double bind theory", according to which contradictions are considered the origins of schizophrenia and posttraumatic stress disorder. A double bind is a dilemma in which an individual (or group) receives two or more contradictory messages. In scenarios involving a differentiation of power or status, this can be dramatically distressing: it generates a situation in which a successful response to one message results in a failed response to the other (and vice versa), so the subordinate person responding will automatically be perceived as being in the wrong, no matter how they respond. Since this contradiction is concealed by ambivalence and ambiguity, the double bind prevents the person from resolving the underlying dilemma or opting out of the situation. This type of communication takes place in a scenario where individuals in power seek to maintain the status quo by keeping their subordinates in a state of disorientation.

At the political level, the most classic example of this kind of contradiction, involving a mix of ambivalence and mystification, is that of Hitler praising peace in *Mein Kampf* (see Testoni, 2021). At the psychological level, dysfunctional communication in a family can potentially lead to schizophrenia among the children (Watzlawick et al., 2011). Individuals

with mental disorders, which may have originally stemmed from contradictory intimate and social relationships, can experience deep existential alienation within their communities due to other people's, and potentially their own, negative attitudes towards them and result in dysfunctional behaviour involving continuous attempts to adapt to an essentially hostile environment. This wide area of research on communication contradictions has revealed that, in today's consumerist society, individuals are estranged from their sense of self due to the repressive injunction to be happy; such an injunction does not allow room for the recognition of alienation and could be seen as an expression of alienation itself (Habermas, 1981).

As Severino (1996) indicated in his reading of contemporary philosophy, the concept of alienation, interesting as it is, runs the risk of being insubstantial since relations are no longer considered necessary. With the decline of metaphysics – particularly the aspect of metaphysics that Severino defined as 'epistemic' and was aimed at demonstrating the necessity of connections between the parts of a whole or totality – contemporary epistemology considered all relations to be merely probable and thus fundamentally linked to chance and entropy (i.e. Prigogine, 1978); in addition, scientific knowledge has been historically determined as fallible (i.e. Popper, 1959). On the basis of this assumption, which came to light in its entirety with the most radical coherence of the idea of contingency developed philosophically by Nietzsche and Leopardi (Severino, 1996, 1999) and assumed by the hard sciences, no integral unity of any subject is necessary.

However, thanks to Severino's indication, the theme of alienation once again gained importance and became valuable in the psychological–psychiatric sphere to understand common ways of reasoning as well as the extreme sense of suffering that nihilism entails and that manifests in mental disorders. In fact, the solution to the concept of alienation can be obtained from an awareness of the substantial dynamics arising from nihilist contradictions.

The substantial madness of Western thought and its solution

Ronald D. Laing was an influential psychiatrist in the area of psychological research that emphasized the role of contradictions in schizophrenia. In line with the antipsychiatry movement and the Frankfurt School and Palo

Alto School's course of research, the psychiatrist argued that problematic families and socioeconomic oppression can cause alienation or "ontological insecurity" in individuals (Laing, 1967). Going against how mainstream psychiatry and society diagnosed alienation disorders, he stated that schizophrenic symptoms could be considered adaptations to dysfunctional environments (Laing, 1967).

Emanuele Severino, in his work *Techne: Le radici della violenza* [*Techne. The roots of violence*], paragraph Il "segreto della follia" ["The secret of madness"], quoted Ronald Laing (Severino, 1979, pp. 283–4), as given below. In the lines preceding this quote, Severino reported what Laing (1959), in *The divided self. Study of existential psychiatry*, wrote about one of his patients with schizophrenia, who jokingly began to perceive the dissolution of her own identity, which then merged with the trees in a forest to the point that she could no longer return to herself.

> The game consists in pretending to 'disappear', to leave 'empty' the place one occupies on earth, 'blending in' with what is around; it consists in pretending no longer to be there ('and I would no longer be there'). Then the game becomes serious: the little girl in the park ends up convincing herself that she is 'blending in' with the world around her and 'no longer being there'. But when this happens to her, anguish over the nothingness she sees herself becoming also sets in. 'Then I call myself by name many times, as if to make myself come back'. The little girl in the park becomes an irredeemable psychotic when, despite every effort, she can no longer 'make herself come back' into existence and remains there in nothingness. […] This is not an isolated case. Psychological and psychiatric analyses record a large number of cases in which the sick person is convinced of 'not being there any more', like the little girl in the park, or of never having been (since childhood, his parents 'treated him as if he were not there'), or of not being himself, but another person, or a thing - stone, fire, wood, ornament. Even in cases where the sick person identifies himself with something else (person or object), he has reduced himself to a nothingness.

Indeed, many schizophrenic spectrum disorders present similar symptoms. For example, the so-called "Cotard's Syndrome" is characterized by an inability to perceive oneself, and patients interpret their emotions as being dead. In such cases, anguish is expressed along with anhedonia, which corresponds to the feeling of annihilation. The Capgras delusion presents

the conviction that a close individual (a friend, family member or pet) has been replaced by an identical impostor. For both these expressions of psychological imbalance, the difficulty lies in clearly defining why these persons are "alienated".

Severino considered the schizophrenic woman described by Laing a prototypical example of the madness of all Westerners, as they had inhabited the nonsensical perspective of nihilism. As the philosopher indicated, at the basis of the possibility of understanding any statement, there is a reference to the abysmal difference between truth and error (Severino, 1982/2015). Madness is the negation of truth, and alienation is the expression of an error. Based on *La struttura originaria* [*The originary structure*] (1981) and *Essenza del nichilismo* (1982, *The essence of nihilism*, 2015), it is possible to recognize the very first axes that permit one to understand the essence of alienation as an error that can only be recognised by the truth. The concept of truth proposed by Severino refers precisely to the incontrovertible, the structure of which shows the self-contradicting and self-negating nature of statements that want to deny the true assertion. The OST and, more precisely, the "originary structure of the destiny of truth" are based on the "originary foundation" of the eternity of being, which involves four axes on which the identity of being with it/oneself and not with nothing is pivoted.

In the first axis, the foundation of the originary structure of truth over arguments that seek to negate truth occurs through the *élenchos* – the argumentative dynamic that shows the self-negation of erroneous (folly) content. *Élenchos* is based on the undeniable fundamental opposition of the positive (affirmation) and negative (negation). This first axis is related to the second axis, which involves the principle of noncontradiction (PNC; or the law of contradiction) (Aristotle): for all propositions p, it is impossible for both p and not p to be true; symbolically "$\sim(p \cdot \sim p)$", in which $\sim$ means "not" and "$\cdot$" means "and". In the chapter "Returning to Parmenides" in *The Essence of Nihilism* (1982/2015), Severino reiterated the incontrovertible assertion that being is not and cannot be nothingness and that nothingness is not and cannot be being. In discussing Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IV, Gamma, 3–6, he affirmed that without the PNC, we cannot know anything that we do know. In other words, if I affirm that being is being, I am not affirming that being is not being, or that being is nothing.

The first two axes imply the following axial elements:

The third axis presents the principle of identity: A A; every being is

identical to itself, or "(∀x) (x=x)", in which ∀ means "for every" or simply that "A is A". Another formulation of the principle, derived from the basic form just defined, asserts that if a propositional function F is true of an individual variable x, then F is indeed true of x; symbolically $F(x) \supset F(x)$, in which ⊃ means "formally implies". In sum, being is being.

The fourth axis involves the principle of the excluded middle (or third) (PEM): either p or ~p must be true, with no third or middle true proposition between them; symbolically, "p ∨ ~p", in which "∨" means "or". This implies that, between affirmation and negation, there is no third proposition.

Then, eternity means that it is necessary that each being be and be as it is (A ≡ A). It is impossible for any being not to be (~[p · ~p]). Everything that appears is not nothing but a being and thus eternally itself. Everything that appears is and is forever, since whatever is cannot come into being from nothingness or cease to be by falling into nothingness. "Appearing" means entering into the horizon of experience. Nihilistic alienation is the identification of a being to its negation – that is, to nothingness. Since nothing is not being, beings cannot turn into nothingness, and nothing cannot really turn into beings. Any faith in considering beings as oscillating between nothingness and being involves the alienation of being.

The second, third and fourth axes of the OST can be applied to the concept of psychic alienation in a similar way. Severe psychological/psychiatric disorders begin to be recognized when a person no longer identifies him/herself and others, when s/he confuses him/herself and others with something else (e.g. "I am not myself; I am a tree." "My mother is a chair.") or when s/he is unable to differentiate affirmation and negation (e.g. "Maria is my mother; Maria is not my mother." "Antonio is my brother; Antonio is not my brother.") and keep them separate (e.g. "I do not know whether Maria is my mother." "I do not know whether Antonio is my brother."). These three aspects are all reducible to basic conceptions: "I do not exist"; "a part of me does not exist"; "my mother Maria does not exist"; "my brother Antonio does not exist".

Alienation is the clearest expression of betrayal. Indeed, Severino has shown how each of the founding traits of the concept of truth belongs to the history of Western thought as well as how Western thought has betrayed its own intentions and failed to manage these principles. Westerners want to truly understand the sense of being and of reality but, to the contrary, are unable to respect all the fundamental axes of truth. The basis of betrayal lies in the claim that the appearance of "becoming" in the world

amounts to the appearance of the annihilation of beings that become. Nihilistic alienation that characterizes the entire history of Western thought considers beings to be more or less destined for annihilation. The conviction that becoming, seen as inherent to contingent beings, exists in the oscillation between being and nothing assumes that there is a time when being is nothing; it *simpliciter* assumes that A is not A, affirming and negating that A is A.

Faith in becoming – that is, the belief that beings that inhabit experience oscillate between being and nothingness – is a fundamental error. The impossibility of the existence of a time in which beings that appear are "not yet" or "no longer" is the foundation of the impossibility of creation and annihilation; "it is impossible" means that the claim that "a being is not" negates the OST structure. More specifically, it is a negation of the opposition between the positive and the negative and would mean affirming that a being is "other" than itself. Alienation consists of the negation of the fundamental principles of any logical assertion: the principles of identity, noncontradiction and the third excluded. This implicit negation is the basis of the auto-negation that the *élenchos* of the OST explicitly describe.

Further, another axis can be added, one that involves the scientific observation of phenomena and it is inherent to the way in which humans observe and interpret facts. In *Legge e caso* (1979; *Law and Chance*, 2022) Severino added an "Introduction" to his translation of Carnap's *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt* and discussion of Carnap's philosophy. The strict analysis of the logical positivist position that is inherent in what appears was a significant task, which Severino undertook precisely to analyse one of the most coherent manifestations of contemporary thought. This rigorous analysis shows that while Severino's concept of "appearing" was radical, it was also so cogent that it could be assumed by the most thorough neopositivist thinkers. In fact, the most severe observation of everything appears indicates that it is impossible to say that one can observe an act of creation and an act of annihilation. It is absolutely impossible to say that "nothingness" appears.

Conclusion

What Marxism, the Frankfurt School, antipsychiatry and the Palo Alto School succeed in clueing in is that a process of social alienation underlies the madness of individuals, which is based on an erroneous faith that mys-

tifies the meaning of what it really is. However, their analysis fails to authentically explain what this erroneous faith is based on – what the most authentic and radical form of alienation consists of – which Hegel himself failed to identify. For this reason, the concept of alienation has declined substantially in recent years. Today, however, it is possible to resume this path of reflection and free the inhabitants of the West, who believe they are annihilable and, therefore, that their being can be nothing from the oppression of anxiety.

Severino has shown that, contrary to Western philosophic assumptions, no becoming appears in the sense of the appearance of the annihilation or the becoming ex nihilo of beings. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that Severino's perspective denies experience and that claiming the eternity of every being amounts to denying the manifold display of appearance. On the contrary, Severino contended that the content that actually appears in no way testifies to the annihilation and creation of beings. Believing that the scenario in which we are immersed testifies that creation and annihilation are hallucinated by alienating faith. To consider the "becoming" testified by experience as the coming from or returning to nothingness is thus the content of madness.

Furthermore, the philosopher's theory affirms that humans suffer because of what they believe they are; if they believe they are mortal (i.e. annihilable), their suffering can only be extreme and incurable. The anguish of the contemporary period is due to the fact that humans think that they are totally annihilable or are convinced that they are nothing. Since this thought is at the basis of any reasoning, everything loses sense, and the anguish that arises is terrifying. However, appearance and experience cannot attest to the fact that what no longer belongs or what does not yet belong to experience has become nothing or remains nothing. Thus, it must be the case that every variation in the world is the beginning of the appearance of eternal beings.

Knowing all this is not the same as not knowing it, simply because of the undeniable and logical understanding of the concept of "eternity".

Feeling alienated due to the anguish and fear of being nothing? What about eternity?

References

Adorno & Theodor W. (1966). *Negative Dialektik*. [*Negative Dialectics*]. Berlin:

Suhrkamp Verlag.

Bateson G., Jackson D. D., Haley J. & Weakland J. (1956). Toward a theory of schizophrenia. *Behavioral Science*, 1(4), 251-264. https://doi.org/10.1002/-bs.3830010402

Black D. W., & Jon E. Grant M. (2014). *DSM-5 guidebook: The essential companion to the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). New York: American Psychiatric Pub.

Bleuler E. (1911). *Dementia praecox oder Gruppe der Schizophrenien* [*Dementia Precox, or the Group of Schizophrenias*]. Wien: Franz Deuticke.

Carnap R. (1928). *Der logische aufbau der welt* [*The logical construction of the world*]. Berlin: Weltkreis-Verlag.

Feuerbach L. (1948). *Das Wesen des Christentums* [*The Essence of Christianity*]. Leipzig: Otto Wigand.

Freud S. (1927). *Die Zukunft einer Illusion* [*The Future of an Illusion*]. London: Hogarth Press.

Galimberti U. (1999). *Psiche E techne: L'uomo nell'età Della tecnica*. [P*syche And techne: Man In The Age Of Technique*]. Milan: Feltrinelli.

Habermas J. (1981). *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Vol. 1: Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung. Vol. 2: Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft.* [*The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*], [*The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. II: Lifeworld and System*]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hegel G. W. F. (1807). *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [*The Phenomenology of Spirit*]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Jaeggi R. (2014). *Alienation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Laing R.D. (1959). *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Laing R.D. (1967) *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Marcuse H. (1964). *One-dimensional Man*. New York: Beacon.

Marx K. (1943). *Contribution of Hegel's Critique of Right: Introduction, in Collected Works* (Vol. 3) New York and London: International Publishers, 1975.

Marx K. (1944). M*anuscripts, in Collected Works* (Vol. 3). New York and London: International Publishers, 1975.

Popper K. (1959). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Prigogine Y. (1978). *From Being to Becoming. Time and Complexity in the Physical Sciences*. San Francisco: Freeman & Co.

Severino E. (1979). *Legge e caso* [*Law and chance*]. Milan: Adelphi.

Severino E. (1979). *Techne: Le radici della violenza* [*Techne: The roots of violence*]. Milano: Rusconi.

Severino E. (1981). *La struttura originaria* [*The originary structure*]. Milan: Adelphi

(1st ed. 1958).

Severino E. (1982). *Essenza del nichilismo* [*The Essence of nihilism*]. Milan: Adelphi (1st. ed. 1972).

Severino E. (1990). *Il nulla e la poesia. Alla fine dell'età della tecnica: Leopardi* [*Nothingness and the poetry. At the end of the age of technique: Leopardi*]. Milan: Rizzoli.

Severino E. (1996). *La filosofia dai Greci al nostro tempo: La filosofia contemporanea [Philosophy from the Greeks to our time: Contemporary Philosophy]*. Milan: Rizzoli.

Severino E. (1999). *L'anello del ritorno* [*The ring of the return*]. Milan: Adelphi.

Testoni I., Ancona D., & Ronconi L. (2015). The Ontological Representation of Death. *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying,* 71(1), 60-81. https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222814568289

Testoni I., Facco E., & Perelda F. (2017). Toward A New Eternalist Paradigm for Afterlife Studies: The Case of the Near-Death Experiences Argument. *World Futures*, 73(7), 442-456. https://doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2017.1357935

Testoni I. (2019). Eternity between a novel theology and a new science from Giordano Bruno to Emanuele Severino. *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 15(5), 117-132.

Testoni I. (2021). *Il grande libro della morte* [*The great book of death*]. Milano: Il Saggiatore.

Watzlawick P., Bavelas J. B., & Jackson D. D. (2011). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of Interactional patterns, pathologies and paradoxes*. New York: Norton & Co.