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Opening Note

by Giulio Goggi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The Error of Wanting to Overturn the Hourglass: How the Heidegger-Severino Relationship Arose

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Background

The international conference “All’alba dell’eternità: I primi 60 anni de ‘La struttura originaria” (60SO) [At the dawn of eternity: The first 60 years of ‘The primal structure’] had just concluded. The event had achieved the desired effect, and the feedback in the media and on the web was extremely positive. Severino did not need to attract attention or create situations that would focus on him, but the opposite was true, i.e. it was those who deeply knew “his discourse” and had studied his texts who needed to discuss what they had understood. Nobody knew that Severino would leave us a year-and-a-half later, but among these same scholars, the desire to not waste any more time was intense.

The general impression was that Italian culture wanted to somehow curb rather than enhance the figure of the philosopher, perhaps because of the dominant influence of the Catholic world, which had serious and solemn issues pending with Severino, such as the declaration of the irreconcilability of his thought with the doctrine of the Church.

From my point of view, this sentence of the former Holy Office, which determined Severino’s removal from the Catholic University of Milan, subsequently negatively influenced the diffusion of Severino’s thoughts from Italy. Despite this limitation, the ability of scholars and researchers to reflect went in the opposite direction, but without ever being able to

find an authentic agora for a wide and open philosophical confrontation. What Severino liked very much, however, was that it allowed him to bring those who reasoned on his themes in the direction of incontrovertible reasoning. It was for this reason that I was committed to building an association to fill this unjustifiable void in the Italian cultural scenario.

Immediately after 60SO, in April 2018, I was already ready to make up for the lost Italian cultural time on another crucial aspect: the relationship Severino had with Heidegger's text. What I had wondered until then was why no one between 1970 and 1976 had organised a meeting between the two philosophers. No one had felt the need to do so. Perhaps no one had yet realised the importance of the two thinkers, except Cornelio Fabro, a tenacious opponent of any expression of immanentism, to whom Severino's condemnation by the Church was due.

Those were the years of terrorism in Italy. Where the extra-parliamentary right and left staged the intrinsic propensity for violence that a still immature and illiberal society intended to keep alive to guarantee the subordination and exploitation of entire categories of people. The focus was therefore on what social response to give to the powers that be in the control rooms and adjacent corridors that were keeping the democratic evolution of the country at a standstill. Emanuele Severino's thought, having been considered doctrine non-conforming, has inevitably suffered the consequences.

The proposal

Severino was one of the first Italian thinkers to realise the importance of Heidegger's thoughts, graduating at 21 years of age in 1950 with a master degree thesis on Heidegger and metaphysics. After Cornelio Fabro's sentence, while Severino was in Venice directing the department of Philosophy and Theory of Science and collecting his writings in the first edition of *Essence of Nihilism*¹, some translations of Heidegger appeared in the Italian context, such as "The problem of reality in modern philosophy"²,

- 1 Severino E. (1972). *Essenza del nichilismo*. Saggi, Brescia, Paideia, 1972; II ed. Milano, Adelphi, 1982; engl. transl. *The essence of nihilism*, New York, London, Verso, 2015.
- 2 Heidegger M. (1912). *Das Realitätsproblem in der modernen Philosophie*; it. transl. *Il problema della realtà nella filosofia moderna*, Padova: La Garangola, 1972.

“The doctrine of judgement in psychologism”³, “The doctrine of categories and meaning in Duns Scotus”⁴, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” and “Letter on Humanism”⁵. In the very year that Heidegger died, Longanesi published a new translation of *Being and Time* by Pietro Chiodi. Between 1970 and 1976, the two philosophers could have been welcomed into an open agora of thought, which would have allowed them to discuss and give rise to a unique dialogue. This did not happen. Someone says: Severino himself could have organised this meeting. Severino was always only a great philosopher, not an organiser of culturally relevant events. This work should have been done by others, and the fact that it was not done is a sign of a problem that the world of philosophy and culture must seriously address. Starting with Italy and moving towards Europe.

Although I am a scientist and a philosopher, I am also able to organise events “despite of everything”, that is, despite obstacles, opposition, the narcissistic self-interest of “little men”, and latent ideological resistance. I have always firmly believed that the open discussion of ideas is one of the fundamental ingredients for social maturation and the prevention of absolutist drifts. I care about this because I am a woman and I know the sense of discrimination and abuse.

I was still discussing the 60SO results with Severino, and I was still committed to the idea of promoting the revision of Fabro’s sentence – something I had been discussing animatedly with him for some time – when I had a very precise feeling: there was no time to lose. I did not say anything to him and thought to myself: *what do we risk losing again in the agora of thought that has formed around Severino if we don’t make the most of the time that remains?* It was then that I suggested to him: “Why not focus the next conference in Brescia on the Heidegger/Severino relationship?” I took for granted that there would have been another conference on him and that he would have accepted. I spoke as if I already knew that we had to go in that direction without hesitation: “This is exactly what Italian cul-

3 Heidegger M. (1913). *Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus*; it. transl. *La dottrina del giudizio nello psicologismo*, Padova, La Garangola, 1972.

4 Heidegger M. (1915). *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*; it. transl. *La dottrina delle categorie e del significato in Duns Scoto*, traduzione di Albino Babolin. Bari, Laterza, 1974.

5 Heidegger M. (1931/32, 1940). *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit, Brief über den Humanismus*; it. transl. *La dottrina di Platone sulla verità, La lettera sull’umanesimo*, Torino, SEI, 1974.

ture was unable to do when the time was right. We can do it now. Let's try to turn the hourglass upside down and do what history has failed to do. I am sure it will be a success". Severino was impressed by the proposal to overturn the hourglass because it was an image that could be philosophically reasoned with. It was about the impossible, and it was necessary to establish in what sense it was an 'error'. Since the philosophical answer on the impossibility of giving back to history what had been taken away from it was not, in fact, a negation of the proposal, I immediately spoke to Giulio Goggi about it, and together we began the long work of constructing the "call" that we launched in our networks.

We discussed the title and whether to maintain the organisational 60SO structure we had just closed with Giulio. We were frightened because we knew we would have to work hard, at least three hours each day to achieve an acceptable result. But the stakes were too high. In the end, the title was decided: "Heidegger in Severino's thought". The idea was to see if and how Severino's very precise interpretation of the German philosopher had been intercepted. Furthermore, it would have been important to take into consideration what Massimo Cacciari had said, namely that the question of being was played out between Heidegger and Severino with an *aut aut* relationship.

It was a success, as Giulio and I had predicted. The Catholic University and the University of Brescia immediately gave their consent and support, and dozens of authors sent proposals for contributions to be evaluated. Once the committee of referees had been established, the scientifically suitable papers were gradually accepted, read and examined by two judges. All the contributions were fascinating, original and philosophically relevant. It was confirmed: this was exactly what was needed, and the time had come to make room for this expertise.

The self-invitation and the role reversal between Severino and Heidegger

Now we had to figure out which foreign guest to invite. The previous year, for 60SO, we had invited Graham Priest, thanks to the precious collaboration of Federico Perelda. It had been a risky undertaking, due to the absolute lack of funds to pay qualified translators to simplify the dialogue between Priest and Severino. We knew this, but we had not had time to look

for resources, and we might not have found them anyway. Now we were still in the same situation. Giulio and I did not lose heart, and we began a discussion with other scholars. Ironically, we were both aware that the ideal would have been for Fabro to bring us the testimony of whether and how, in discussing with Heidegger, Severino's discourse had come about. We knew, in fact, from some confidences received from scholars, that Fabro himself had had the opportunity to confront and discuss Severino's theses with the German philosopher. It was impossible to overturn the hourglass in this case, too. But if someone knew, why not open the discussion before Fabro died? Before 1995? That was what outraged me. There had been plenty of time to reopen the discussion between Fabro and Severino on the Church's ruling and in parallel on what Heidegger thought of Severino's discourse.

Umberto Galimberti wrote in his enlightening book *Heidegger e il nuovo inizio* [*Heidegger and the New Beginning*]: “Cornelio Fabro (1911–1995), theologian, philosopher and academic, prepared a long and careful examination of Emanuele Severino's thought for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Holy Office), which in 1969 officially proclaimed the irreconcilability between Severino's thought and Christianity. In his contacts, Fabro sent Heidegger some of Severino's writings. And after reading them, Heidegger called Severino a ‘hyper-ontist’ (Hyperontisch)”⁶. “Hyperontisch”? Why are philosophers sometimes so convinced that they know and understand and do not problematise what is incomprehensible?

However, comprehensible or not, unfortunately, Fabro had also passed away and we could not invite him to discuss everything at the next conference.

We were in the midst of the heavy work of organising the general programme of the conference and we continued to discuss possible international names to be involved, when one fine day Severino telephoned me: “Madam, I have just received an email from Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, who informs me that he has received news of the conference and is willing to participate”... “Oh, gosh, the Destiny exists and is are unanimous as well! I could not think of anything else.

It was a joy to share this initial news with Giulio and with those who

6 Galimberti U. (2020). *Heidegger e il nuovo inizio. Il pensiero al tramonto dell'Occidente*. Milano, Feltrinelli, p. 97.

had participated in our organisational meetings. But the most important news was that Von Herrmann's assistant, Francesco Alfieri, had found a note in the still unpublished black notebooks in which Heidegger quoted Severino. On 13 June 2019, it was scorching. At the opening, after the authorities' welcome, Alfieri's speech was impressive: 'This conference should be held on Severino in Heidegger's thought'.

It was a triumph. Eighty splendid plenary and parallel papers. Almost two hundred attendees. The press gave great prominence to the event. Work began immediately afterwards on the proceedings, and the contributions to be published here in *E&C* were selected.

I knew that this conference would be the last one I would organise on Severino with him present, but I did not understand where this knowledge came from. I did not know how to handle it. I looked at him and he seemed to know it, too. He was very tired, but ecstatic.

Conclusions

"Maestro, I do not just want to hold a conference that restores to history a confrontation that the world of culture has not been able to set up. I do not simply want to turn the hourglass. I know it is impossible, even if it is conceivable. I also want to make it clear that Heidegger is the philosopher of the big questions and you are the philosopher of the definitive answers to those questions. Questions have meaning when they are answered. Unanswered questions are forgotten, even if the structure from which they arise has meaning. As you teach, 'problematicism' is neither absolute nor definitive. The relationship between you and Heidegger is like that between Socrates and Plato: Socrates knew that he did not know. But Socrates was also the one who knew that something fundamental had to be known. Plato ventured into the implantation of what is to be known when one understands that the time has come to embark on the path of knowledge. Heidegger, by posing the question of being, needed to understand what he was talking about by reopening the question of primal philosophy that had previously been forgotten. That is why he asked questions. Since he never met interlocutors at his level who could understand the questions he posed and answer them adequately, Heidegger lived the last years of his life alone. Heidegger lived his last years alone, searching for a God who would answer him and save him from the labyrinth in which he was lost, while leaving behind traces and markers to remember the path he had travelled—and he never went back. It is a pity, Maestro, that Heidegger never had the chance to meet and confront you".

On What Appears

Heidegger and Severino in *Concordia Discors*

(translated by Paolo Pitari)

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In this paper, I propose an analysis of the structural differences between Severino's and Heidegger's philosophies by addressing their two different answers to the question of what there is. The focus is thus on the characterisation of phenomenological immediacy, with particular attention to the problem of the plurality of subjects. I investigate the problem from both theoretical and historiographical perspectives, paying specific attention to the way in which Severino interpreted Heidegger's philosophy ever since his degree thesis *Heidegger and Metaphysics* (1950). The final aim is to understand – through comparison with Heidegger's position – how the language that testifies to the truth of Being should deal with the language of others and, above all, of other philosophies.

Keywords:

Phenomenology, Severino, Heidegger, Intersubjectivity, Interpretation, Originary truth

The history of philosophy must not be construed
as a battlefield but as the fertile soil from
which thinking must draw its nourishment
(Severino, 1994, p. 342).

Introduction

In line with the spirit of this issue of *Eternity & Contradiction*, this article refers directly to the presentation I gave at the *ASES* conference on *Heidegger in Severino's thought* (Brescia, June 2019). In that presentation, I used Severinian terminology to argue what I can summarise as follows: the gaze that knows how to read thinkers (or the languages of others in general) in light of the traces of the truth that appear even in the language of madness consists above all in *the ability to see other languages as the contrast between truth and error*, and therefore in refraining from ascribing any of them *exclusively* to the dimension of truth or (all the more so!) of error.

The presentation reached this conclusion by summoning Severino and Heidegger in dialogue. However, because of the schematic constrictions imposed by the limitations of congressional speech, Heidegger's contribution may have seemed extrinsic there. Therefore, in this present text, I want to clarify one of the many implications of that argument: specifically, that Heidegger's contribution is not extrinsic but indeed *intrinsic* and even fundamental to the argument itself. Accordingly, I want to argue once again in favour of the presentation's thesis, while also trying to show that the opening quotation above, which appears in Severino's degree thesis *Heidegger and Metaphysics (Heidegger e la metafisica)*, should be interpreted as a raw formulation of the same argument I'm making.

Specifically, I will argue that, in his subsequent works, Severino did not adequately respect his early attitude in conversing with *others* – that is, in the *Aus-einander-setzung* with the languages of others –, and that the dialogue with Heidegger – who here represents the backlight that is *essential*

to the enlightened – brings to light the meaning of this Severinian shortcoming. Therefore, what follows runs the risk of seeming like an objection to Severino’s thought. As for me, I prefer to consider it a contribution to its proper understanding. In light of the magnificent volume of Severino’s works, I trust that the reader will be so kind as to accept this preference.

The relationship between Heidegger and Severino is the focus of my doctoral research, and here I present a segment of its results. I align (to a certain extent) with the hermeneutic perspective adopted by M. Donà (2020): beyond the evident distance between Heidegger and Severino, what is truly at stake resides in their deeper consonance in thinking, and from this consonance must our thoughts draw nourishment. Yet, I think that perhaps we should speak of *complementarity* rather than consonance. I must properly determine these terms and the reasoning behind them, and I can begin by specifying this: to know how to look at the complementarity of these two philosophies is to know how to tame their radical distance. The terrain is slipper and steep here. These are dark times for dialogue. If we stay with the image of the battlefield, Heidegger and Severino – and even more so the scholars who studied in their respective *schools* – are two brothers who meet on the street wearing the uniforms of two enemy armies. They therefore fail to recognize each other as brothers. Not only that: they also believe to be the founders of the two enemy armies, and even the producers of their uniforms. Then they each claim to be the only one who’s capable of indicating the terrain on which we can *distinguish* between creator of uniforms, uniforms, brothers...*et sic in indefinitum*. Neither of them ever takes the appropriate first step towards *another* beginning: the recognition of their bond of brotherhood.

In introducing this metaphor, I must make it clear that – even if the aim here is to shine light on the essential role of Heidegger’s thought – these pages develop by following Severino’s language and intent (in line with the context of publication). To use Severino’s words from *The Originary Structure (La struttura originaria)*, these pages attempt to highlight the “elements that are considered significant or in any case more suitable for establishing an agreement,” even in the full awareness that choosing these elements “is one of the primary sources of misunderstanding and dissent” (Severino, 1981, p. 121).

Having said that, let us now focus on the problem at hand.

1.

I will spare the reader a long historiographical introduction and address the theoretical point directly by referring to a passage from Severino that, in its concision and explicitness, demonstrates the differences between his and Heidegger's philosophy in the most clear and meaningful way. Non-coincidentally, this passage appears at a crucial point in Severino's oeuvre: paragraph VI of "Returning to Parmenides" (in *The Essence of Nihilism*). The first words of the paragraph are notoriously dedicated to Severino's *apology* of philosophy as absolute and incontrovertible knowledge, as the guardian of truth and of its originary meaning upon which all other meanings of truth depend (or *within* which they can be what they are). This status obliges philosophy to take on the further task of establishing "what relation all the other activities of human beings bear to Being" (Severino, 2016, p. 60). In this context, Severino mentions Heidegger: "Truth as *simple adaequatio intellectus et rei* refers back to truth as the incontrovertible manifestation of the *res*. This, however, is not simple phenomenological manifestation (as Heidegger would have it), but is that Appearing in which Being submits itself to the law that opposes it to not-Being" (*ibid.*).

English-speaking readers, especially Heideggerians, should know that the translation of this passage as "Being submits itself to the law" is somewhat misleading. The original Italian (*«l'essere viene incontro dominato dalla legge»*) makes it clear that Severino's Being does not submit itself to anything. Rather, it "comes forward" (*«viene incontro»*), in the sense that it *appears* as dominated by the law that is itself Being's own meaning. Therefore, we must understand this passage in light of the one preceding it: "'Being is, while Nothing is-not.' Here, what is indicated is not simply a property of Being – albeit the fundamental one – but rather its very meaning: Being is that which is opposed to Nothing, it is this very opposition" (*ibid.*, p. 35).

We can readily grasp how the same overt theoretical structure unites the two philosophers and accompanies Severino ever since his degree thesis, where the exegesis of Heidegger's delineation of a "concept of truth prior to and more originary than *correspondence* (*Übereinstimmung, adaequatio*)" (Severino, 1994, p. 130) plays a central role. When the two authors refer to science's *constitutive disinterest* for the originary dimension of appearance, they always have the same structure in mind. To give just one of many examples from Severino: "There would indeed be no knowledge, and therefore no scientific knowledge, if the world were not manifest, if it did not show itself, if it did not appear: if there was no experiencing it. [...

] However, science is not interested in that background that is experience itself and from which science itself begins” (Severino 2016b, p. 11, ff.).

Neither science nor other human activities are interested in the appearance of the originary. They see things but they do not look at the seeing itself; that is, they do not respond to the great invitation that guides philosophy, the invitation to know thyself. Heidegger and Severino, on the contrary, want to look at the originary, in the shared conviction that its sight will then illuminate the dimension *wherein* human life itself appears. The originary is the dimension that can be questioned only by having already affirmed it, only by *having always already been within it*.

But on the understanding of the originary, Severino and Heidegger’s paths fork. Severino sees the *originary structure of truth* as the place where the being-itself of every being appears. Heidegger sees the “*Da*” (the “there”) of *Da-sein* (being-there) as the place that preserves the truth of Being. Both the proximity and extreme distance between Severino and Heidegger reside entirely in this first step. We must learn how to interpret it. We must understand their two different responses to the question concerning what *there is*. There is Being, but what does this mean? Let us take a closer look.

2.

For a more detailed analysis of the concepts that compose the originary structure see past contributions in this journal (Marassi, 2019, pp. 34-39; Goggi, 2019, pp. 44-50; Messinese, 2020, pp. 24-26). Here, it suffices to quickly recall the very general meaning of the two concepts presented in the above quotation from “Returning to Parmenides”: the phenomenological manifestation and the law that opposes Being to not-Being. These two concepts directly refer to the two immediacies whose intertwining constitutes the originary structure, which realises itself in the following judgment: “All that which is immediately known, in accordance with the kind of knowledge that is appropriate to it, is what is immediate” (Severino, 1981, p. 114).

The originary structure affirms the immediate appearance of Being (Ph-imm): its being immediately *per se notum*. “Being” means everything that appears and therefore is; or, in Severino’s words, the “synthesis...between the meaning ‘to be’ (*formal Being*) and the meanings constituted by the *determinations* that indeed are” (*ibid.*, p. 143). Also, the originary structure affirms that Being appears immediately as non-contradictory:

“the non-contradictory is the immediate (logical immediacy)” (*ibid.*, p. 175). This means that Being appears immediately – all things do! – as what is nothing other than itself: that is, as what is not-nothing. No thing, no meaning, *no being* is other than itself (not even the meaning “nothing”).

Severino writes that the originary structure possesses the character of incontrovertibility: whoever wants to deny it must presuppose it. Every negation of this structure is based upon – and takes place within – this structure. The development of the analysis of the originary structure notoriously led Severino to affirm the eternity – the being-itself – of every being. In particular, Severino demonstrated the impossibility of the deepest conviction of our historical culture regarding the experience of any object: that is, that “it *appear[s]* that the object *is nothing*” (Severino, 2016, p. 108) before it appears and after it ceases to appear.

If Being (the positive) is every single thing, every determined being-itself, and not-Being is every negation of this immediate being-itself – if, therefore, “the negative is not simply the pure Nothing (Parmenides), but is also the *other* positive (Plato)” (*ibid.*, p. 58) –, then it is necessary to say that it does not appear that beings are their own negation and, therefore, that the gaze that believes to be witnessing this appearance deserves to be called *nihilism*. For Severino, nihilism is the fundamental error concerning what *there is*. By isolating the earth (that is, the entire content of appearance, what there is) from its own *structural truth*, the gaze of nihilism – which is ultimately the gaze of mortals: our gaze, our life – constitutes the foundation of the boundless wealth of our languages, cultures, meanings, activities, etc. That is, it constitutes the foundation of the entire history of humankind.

Even the language that testifies to the *originary structure of truth*, precisely because it confers meaning to the series of signs (words, sounds, etc.) that constitute its testimony, belongs to the gaze of nihilism. But when nihilism speaks of the originary structure of truth, it looks beyond itself, and indeed *beyond language*, through language. To this we shall return shortly. As far as Severino is concerned, these brief remarks should suffice for now.

3

I should say a bit more about Heidegger. According to the above quotation from Severino’s “Returning to Parmenides,” in Heidegger we encounter only the phenomenological description of what there is. Yet, one thing must be clear: if we begin by establishing that “Being” means “beings”

themselves, then Heidegger too thinks that what immediately appears is Being; that is, things (even though common readings think it is well-known that Heidegger sees in the synonymy between Being and beings the origin of the oblivion of truth).

What is there appears. Yes, but what is there? The young Heidegger already tells us that this question is of fundamental importance because, when we reflect on *what there is*, we find ourselves “at the methodological cross-road which will decide on the very life or death of philosophy. [...] Either into nothingness, that is, absolute reification, pure thingness, or we somehow leap into another world, more precisely, we manage for the first time to make the leap [*Sprung*] into the world as such” (Heidegger, 2002, p. 53). In this 1919 Freiburg course entitled “Phenomenology as Pre-Theoretical Primordial Science,” a cross-road of this kind presents to us the cornerstone of Heidegger’s thinking—albeit germinal and not-yet-fully-self-aware: this is the idea that will turn Heidegger’s philosophy into a transformation of Husserlian phenomenology, an analytic of *Da-sein* as a fundamental ontology, a critique of Western onto-theology, an attempt to overcome metaphysics and to establish a new beginning in thinking. Here, Heidegger dwells on the question concerning *what there is*, on the content of appearance, as he describes what he sees when he enters the classroom. In doing so, he offers us a concrete sample of his point of view:

What do “I” see? Brown surfaces, at right angles to one another? No, I see something else. A largish box with another one set upon it? Not at all. I see the lectern at which I am to speak. You see the lectern, from which you are to be addressed, and from where I have spoken to you previously. In pure experience there is no “founding” interconnection, as if I first of all see intersecting brown surfaces, which then reveal themselves to me as a box, then a desk, then as an academic lecturing desk, a lectern, so that I attach lecternhood to the box like a label. All that is simply bad and misguided interpretation, diversion from a pure seeing into the experience. I see the lectern in one fell swoop, so to speak, and not in isolation, but as adjusted a bit too high for me. I see – and immediately so – a book lying upon it as annoying me (*ibid.*, p. 60).

Heidegger indicates a very clear and simple position: the immediate content of experience consists in the *immediate* appearance of the meanings that make up our concrete, daily lives: our *existence*. In the originary disclosedness of truth, we do not deal with elements of a theory, nor with

the variables of a logic, nor with the *beings* of traditional metaphysics: we deal with the *significance of the World*, the complex network of concrete meanings that make up our existence: books, bridges, hopes, tweets, vaccines, etc.

Let us try to define this point. In the 1925-26 course on *Logic: The Question of Truth*, Heidegger engages in dialogue with Aristotle to find a determination of the *lógos* appropriate to his renewed phenomenological attention to the concept of intentionality. He describes the originary disclosedness of the world of *Da-sein* as “the hermeneutical ‘as’”: every experience of the world, every appearance that makes the elements of predicative determination accessible, “is in and of itself a matter of ‘having’ something as something. [...] In short, it has the as-structure” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 121). In a footnote, he adds that “this ‘having’ is not a matter of merely observing. It is meant entirely in the sense of our everyday dealing with things” (*ibid.*). Once again, he sees the appearance of Being as not *immediately* composed of abstract objects (of elements of a theory) but of the meanings that make up our world, our concrete existence. In his own words: “more precisely, as existing [*Dasein*, P.M.B.] – whether in speaking, entering/exiting, or understanding – I am an act of intelligently [*verstehender*, P.M.B.] dealing-with” (*ibid.*, p. 123).

What there is is there only insofar as it appears *as* an appearance in the originary dimension of *Da-sein*. For Heidegger, on the basis of the structure of the horizon of the appearance of things, one must say that an appearance that is free from the hermeneutical “as” is obtainable only through the overturning of the immediate, through its reduction. Every other way of determining things can be understood only from the starting point of this originary structure of our *Being-in-the-World*. This is why Heidegger says that only through the modification of the originary *hermeneutic “as”* one can arrive at the derived disclosedness of “the apophantic ‘as,’” where the *derived* element of determination and theory appears.

In this *modification* of immediate appearance, the being as “subject-matter-about-which ([...] as the thematic *means-whereby*) gets covered-over to a certain extent as regards that-as-which it was properly understood” (*ibid.*, p. 132). The being thus becomes an object (a *Gegen-stand*) that is simply represented and that is present there as an element of determination-via-statements. The problem is that, precisely because of this flattening, this kind of *lógos* can never guide our inquiry into the question concerning the Being of beings. For Heidegger, *this* is the point: “In the

logic and doctrine of being of the Greeks, and in the tradition up to Husserl, λόγος as determination-via-statements has in fact been the guide for pursuing the inquiry into being” (*ibid.*, p. 134). Here, albeit obliquely, Heidegger’s great criticism of metaphysics and his invitation towards its overcoming in favour of a new beginning of thinking make their appearance. Of course, I only sketched the core of the systematic development of Heidegger’s thought. Nevertheless, I think that this suffices to indicate the great distance between Heidegger and Severino.

4.

If we look at their characterisation of the pure dimension of appearance, of the phenomeno-logical immediacy that underlies every *adaequatio*, we immediately grasp the radical irreconcilability between Heidegger and Severino. On Severino’s side, we have the immediate appearance of *beings* as originally connected to logical immediacy (their being-itself = not-other-than-itself), not because they are subjects to a “principle of logic” but because their being-itself is the very “breath of thought” (Severino, 2016, p. 79: this structural foundation leads to see the human world as *error*, i.e. as other than the incontrovertible truth). On Heidegger’s side, we have *simple* phenomenological immediacy, an immediacy that is not equal to the one appearing in Severino’s binomial: Heidegger’s immediacy is the originary dimension of the *significance of the World wherein Da-sein is thrown*.

From Severino’s point of view, then, the content of immediate appearance to which Heidegger refers – that is, the nucleus upon which Heidegger’s thought develops – is *error*. This is clear in the passage from *Future Philosophy (La filosofia futura)* in which Severino addresses Heideggerian phenomenology: “It is impossible to discern the authentic meaning of appearance and disappearance when appearance is concurrently thought of as the creation of beings and disappearance is concurrently thought of as their annihilation. [...] From the Greeks up to phenomenology, appearance has failed to appear as appearance – and this is one of the reasons why appearance has inevitably failed to show what authentically manifests itself and has instead altered it and ultimately *hidden it*” (Severino, 2006, p. 334).

The purity of Heidegger’s appearance is error, but there is nothing wrong with that. Severino never said that one cannot speak of error. In fact, he said that people have never spoken of anything but error: they

have never spoken of *what is not error*. We must also remember that, in Severino, *error* has no negative nor diminishing meaning, there is no component of psychological *diminutio* in his determination of *error* (or madness, alienation, etc.). Severino often iterated that error – isolation – is something grand and, in this sense, he used the words “error” and “truth” as one would use “yellow” and “red”: to indicate the *difference of what is different*.

In any case, Heidegger and Severino are certainly irreconcilable here. Severino’s well-known accusations about Heidegger’s oblivion of the *nihil absolutum* give further substance to this certainty. But can we just stop here and go back to our daily lives? Not exactly. We have made it clear that Severino sees the originary in the connection between phenomenological and logical immediacies while Heidegger sees it in phenomenological immediacy alone. Yet (as the above quote testified), Severino thinks that phenomenological immediacy is in both cases the same: the appearance of beings. But we have just begun to note that the distance between Heidegger and Severino consists above all in that *even simple phenomenological immediacy is not the same*. What fertile ground could be hidden beneath this Severinian “oversight”? (The objection that *Severino himself* sees that phenomenological immediacy is not the same – because in Heidegger it is separate from logical immediacy – is in-itself opportune but here beside the point.)

We must pay attention to this crucial problem. We must plunge fully into its depths. This won’t be possible if we limit ourselves to *affirming* the distance between Heidegger and Severino, reconstructing their arguments *every single time*, representing (*vor-stellen!*) their positions against one another. Doing so will only force us to recognize their radical difference. Instead, we must aim to see their difference in action. We must catch it red-handed, so to speak.

5.

The question concerning others, or intersubjectivity, is the privileged point of entry into this difference: it allows us to unearth the difference in its concrete manifestation. The problem of intersubjectivity is central in Severino’s thought, even if this centrality is in a certain sense hidden (see Bortoluzzi, 2018). In his first unsuccessful attempt to demonstrate the horizon of intersubjectivity, the young Severino (1951) – referring to his just-published book on Heidegger – already deems “unsatisfying the solu-

tion of the problem proposed by Heideggerian philosophy, notwithstanding its notable contributions in other areas of philosophical inquiry” (Severino, 1994, p. 510).

For Severino, the question concerning others is central but not decisive for the determination of the content of the originary (the two immediacies). Something appears (Being!) even without the *appearance of other* “appearances.” Concerning logical immediacy, this may be less intuitive, but it is nonetheless the case: to inquire into the *elenctic* value of the originary (that is, to testify to the foundation that denies its negation), one doesn’t need (*methodologically*, so to speak) to confront the “existing negations” that have been “the object of care, interest, or passion” of others: it is enough to consider “the concrete system of the possible negations of the foundation” (Severino, 1981, p. 110, ff.). In other words, despite the “dialogic framework of the *élenchos*, Aristotelian thought is capable of redeeming itself from the unfounded assumption of the existence of others” (Severino, 2005, p. 71 – see also the chapter entitled “Élenchos” in Severino, 1988). That is, it is enough that *pure consciousness* now – i.e. the consciousness of the “philosopher,” the originary circle – expresses the negation of the foundation, for the negation to manifestly appear as negated. It is the foundation itself that shows (= poses) its ability to remove its negation.

Thus, the problem of intersubjectivity isn’t essential to the *structural* testimony of the foundation, but it does provide the privileged point of entry into the difference between Heidegger and Severino, giving us the chance to see it in action. The “demonstration of intersubjectivity” appears in Severino’s oeuvre only when the theorem bearing the name of *Glory* (*Gloria*) – according to which every appearance must cease to appear – is applied to the *present* appearance of any configuration of the earth. The result of the theorem is the affirmation of an infinite constellation of finite circles of the appearance of destiny. This is a necessary feature of the syntax of the originary truth. Here necessity appears (the language that testifies to destiny possesses necessity), and with it so does the need to differentiate this affirmation of the existence of “others” from the analogous phenomenological affirmation based on faith (i.e. on the interpretation of the languages of “others”). The references of this criticism are sections 26 and 34 of *Being and Time*.

Specifically, Severino wants to show that the *interpretation* of the content of appearance is the institution of connections, not of isolated meanings. For example, “the squeaking wheel” is a connection between the

noise and its meaning, it is the being the squeaking of a wheel. But within the faith in becoming-other of the isolated earth no necessary connection can be affirmed (indeed, every necessary connection must be negated, as the coherence of nihilism teaches). Therefore, when a phenomenologist like Heidegger affirms as a *necessary* determination of *Da-sein* his being-*with-others* – that is, his being *originarily Mitdasein* –, for Severino, he performs an inappropriate move. Phenomenology – by itself! – *cannot* affirm necessary connections.

Ok, but what is phenomenology? What does *immediately appear*? Severino quotes the following passage from *Being and Time*: “Even when speaking is unclear or the language is foreign, we initially hear unintelligible words, and not a multiplicity of tone data” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 153). Severino’s comment is what interests us here: “But this proposition cannot mean that, when we hear the other speak, sounds are not heard and do not exist: this proposition must mean that sounds are originarily *united* with the dimension of meaning (that is, with the dimension of being-a-sign, which, as such, refers to meaning itself) and, again, that they are united non-contingently” (Severino, 2001, p. 207).

This is where we catch red-handed the radical distance between these two philosophers. Let me explain. Here, Severino writes that Heidegger “*cannot mean* that, when we hear the other speak, sounds are not heard and do not exist.” Here’s exactly where the abyss separates the two because *this is exactly what Heidegger means*. According to Heidegger, *this* is phenomenological immediacy, the *significance of the World*. Shortly above the quoted passage, Heidegger writes that “It requires a very artificial and complicated attitude in order to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise.’ The fact that we initially hear motorcycles and wagons is, however, the phenomenal proof that *Da-sein*, as being-in-the-world, always already [*je schon*] maintains itself *together with* innerworldly things at hand and initially not at all with ‘sensations’” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 153). For Heidegger, only within *this* immediacy can we reach, through its reduction, the theoretical level (the apophantic “as”) in which we speak of connections between sounds and meanings, in which we begin to dissect what in truth appears to us immediately *in one fell swoop*.

This is where the irreconcilability between the two authors is clear and *concrete*. For Severino, Heidegger describes something that takes place *within the originary dimension* that Severino testifies to. For Heidegger, Severino describes what takes place *within the originary dimension* that he, Heidegger, testifies to. This is radical incommunicability and, in my

opinion, here readers are called to overcome these respectively isolating gazes, this *battle* between antithetical positions. We must begin to *recognise what is united*, to see that such divergent visions on the same question depend merely on a *different object* of attention, on a different problem that the authors intend to confront. Should we not perhaps come to realise that these two philosophers illuminate the two sides of the originary, its two *souls*?

6.

The problem concerns the different meanings of phenomenology, or of phenomenological immediacy. Severino always characterized phenomenological immediacy as outlined above, ever since his thesis on Heidegger. From a historiographical point of view, we can understand the diversity of views between Heidegger and Severino in the light of a certain *methodological contradiction*, so to speak, that characterises the interpretation that Severino proposes in *Heidegger and Metaphysics*. On the one hand, this study presents its own interpretative structure with its own *aim*: that is, an *already endorsed* thesis which it must prove and whose goal is “to bring to light the *essence*, beyond its extrinsic and accidental configuration” (Severino, 1994 p. 18), of Heidegger’s thinking. This is why the first part of the work focuses on Heidegger’s re-elaboration of Kantian philosophy as an introduction to *Being and Time*. This part admirably introduces the interpretative structure that will remain decisive throughout the entire analysis (it even manages to “anticipate” Heidegger’s own considerations about the *Kantbook* in his 1950 and 1973 prefaces to it – cf. Heidegger, 1997). On the other hand, though, Severino’s methodological intent is also to “abandon all predetermined frameworks and follow the natural course of the philosophy in question” (Severino, 1994, p. 127).

Now, although these two sides do not necessarily constitute an antinomy, it seems to me that their coexistence is the origin of the oversight indicated above. As is well known, Severino, following Bontadini, wanted to see in Heidegger what his mentor saw in Gentile: that is, the end and definitive overcoming of gnoseological dualism (Being-thought) that characterised modern philosophy since the dualism of the Cartesian *cogito*. This overcoming would constitute the solid foundation for the revival of the edifice of classical metaphysics. Only then would the purity of the appearance of Being, the uncontaminated unity of experience, be regained. *Here* is precisely where the problem lies: Severino sees Heidegger’s phe-

nomenological immediacy as the pure immediacy of beings (that is, of Being itself, or of the unity of Being and not-Being that makes the edifice of metaphysics not only possible but necessary).

I am here alluding to the fact that, in this grand study on Heidegger – these pages do not do justice to its greatness –, in a certain sense the German thinker *isn't there at all*. This is a failed study, but not for the reasons that Bontadini had in mind. Severino wanted to outline the structure (the essence!) of Heidegger's thought, stripping it of its extrinsic guise. This procedure hit the mark in its reproach of Heidegger for his too-polemical (sometimes admittedly distasteful) attitude towards traditional structures of thinking, but it also completely flattened Heidegger's philosophy to its own guiding interpretative structure and practiced a radical expunction of the peculiar features of the philosophy under analysis. This is apparent, for example, when Severino speaks – alluding to the *phenomenological method* that he would analyse thereafter – of the fact that, “in Heidegger, the methodological foundation [that is, the unity of experience, phenomenological immediacy, P.M.B] is gained, so to speak, from the very beginning” (Severino, 1994, p. 119). Similarly, in “Returning to Parmenides,” Severino writes: “Yet that which is a result for the idealist is, for Heidegger, the beginning” (Severino, 2016, p. 35).

The young Severino knew that, in Heidegger, “method” does not indicate a way towards the truth that begins in non-truth but, rather, “the appeal to the originary truth” (Severino, 1994, p. 128). Therefore, one cannot help but wonder why, over the years, Severino kept denying what he had already clarified and kept emphasising that Heidegger's philosophy is a *seeking* that begins in non-truth. In doing so, he systematically forgot that Heidegger conceived the method exactly as he himself did; see e.g. Heidegger's *Contributions*: “*The one who seeks has already found! And the original seeking is this grasping of what has already been found, namely, the grasping of what is self-concealing as such. Whereas ordinary seeking finds in the first place, and has found, when it stops seeking*” (Heidegger, 2012, p. 64).

The *phenomenological method* is the central problem of our investigation. Phenomenology must go to *the things themselves* “beyond every presupposition and every unjustified problem” (Severino, 1994, p. 129). It must look at the phenomenon “as what shows itself in itself, what is manifest” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 25). But what does show itself? What is immediate *phenomenologically*? We have already explained the answers of Heidegger and Severino. But in a Severinian paragraph on the Heideggerian

method – where Severino believes to not “alter Heidegger’s intent by affirming that the phenomenological method attests the radical objectivity of *thinking* as thinking of something that shows itself in-itself” (Severino, 1994, p. 132) –, the word *hermeneutics* appears only once, in a footnote (fn 2, p. 131), and is then forgotten. And yet, this word is fundamental to Heidegger’s response to the phenomenological question:

The idea of an “originary” and “intuitive” grasp and explication of phenomena must be opposed to the naïveté of an accidental, “immediate” and unreflective “beholding.” [...] From the investigation itself we shall see that the methodological meaning of phenomenological description is *interpretation* [*Auslegung*, P.M.B.]. The *logos* of the phenomenology of Da-sein has the character of *hermēneuin*, through which the proper meaning of being and the basic structures of the very being of Da-sein are *made known* to the understanding of being that belongs to Da-sein itself. Phenomenology of Da-sein is *hermeneutics* in the original signification of the word, which designates the work of interpretation. But since discovery of the meaning of being and of the basic structures of Da-sein in general exhibits the horizon for every further ontological research into beings unlike Da-sein, the present hermeneutic is at the same time “hermeneutics” in the sense that it works out the conditions of the possibility of every ontological investigation (Heidegger, 1996, p. 32 sg.).

In German, “interpretation” can be *Interpretation*, *Deutung*, *Sinngebung*, *Auslegung*, etc. In the passage above, we read *Auslegung*. *Auslegung* is certainly used sometimes in the sense in which one may say: “I am interpreting (giving a possible interpretation of) the two authors”. However, Heidegger uses this term in the sense of exhibiting (*Aus-legen*), of showing the phenomenon as what shows itself in-itself. The phenomenon in-itself always shows itself immediately in the structure of the hermeneutic “as” and never in a presuppositionless grasping of something previously given: “Interpretation does not, so to speak, throw a ‘significance’ over what is nakedly objectively present [...], but what is encountered in the world is always already in a relevance which is disclosed in the understanding of world, a relevance which is made explicit by interpretation” (*ibid.*, p. 140).

In light of these considerations, we must say that Severino – starting from his degree thesis and throughout his *Denkweg* – sees in Heidegger only what the latter would call the formal meaning of phenomenology (the

formal meaning of the immediate phenomenological content), thus *de facto* relegating the analyses of “*the way in which* the content presents itself” (Severino, 1994, p. 132) to extrinsic and accidental questions, when – for Heidegger – these actually constitute the concrete truth of immediacy. From here on out, avoiding the true content of Heidegger’s thought becomes the methodical feature of Severino’s interpretation. Again, we can think, e.g., of chapter IV of *The Originary Structure*, where Severino praises Heidegger for having drawn attention to the opposition of Being and Nothingness (see also Severino, 2016, p. 79: we won’t dwell on this question here) and argues that “psychological contaminations – centred around the concept of *Angst* – and Heidegger’s anti-intellectual position, remain outside that essential drawing of attention” (Severino, 1981, p. 226).

These contaminations and position are actually *what constitutes the core of Heidegger’s investigation*. But Severino is right, and *this is the problem*, that he praises Heidegger for merits that Heidegger doesn’t care about just as Severino doesn’t care about what he considers contaminations. Another example is when Severino *rightly* focuses on the reasons why Heidegger doesn’t realise that he’s inheriting the Greek sense of becoming: “focused as he is on the need to highlight his concept of ‘phenomenology’ – which Husserl had already elaborated (I don’t see substantial progress here) –, and on the desire to ontologise the Husserlian phenomenological method (thus, ultimately, on the identification of “Being” with that method), Heidegger doesn’t pay attention to what he inherits” (Severino, 2006, p. 159). Here too Severino is right in his description of Heidegger’s relationship with Husserl (in terms of the ontologising of the phenomenological method) and in the conclusion that, for Heidegger, Being is “appearance” itself (see Severino, 2006, p. 316 ff.). Yet, this appearance is not *appearance* as Severino understands it; rather, it is the coming-forward of the concrete *significance of the World*, of the *significance* that shows itself in its self-concealing, in its withdrawing, in its oblivion that favours attention to particular meanings, to beings (see Heidegger, 2009, sections 10–13, for his criticism of Husserl).

Now, on closer inspection, this Severinian “oversight” is not really an oversight but the emergence of the essential trait of Severino’s interest in reading other authors or *other discourses* in general. Severino wants, on the one hand (*a*) to show the logic (which is always immediately onto-logic) intrinsic to every human language, philosophical or not, and on the other hand (*b*) to bring the discourses of others onto his own “chessboard” and position them within what (in recent writings) he calls the *authentic history*

of mortals. This is what language must focus on when it intends to testify to destiny—destiny being “the semantic structure of identities whose denial is self-denial” (Severino, 1992, p. 159). The result of this interest, of this *argumentative aim*, in relation to Heidegger, is the complete expulsion – one could say, the *oblivion* – of the hermeneutic: that is, of the *significance of the World* as phenomenological immediacy.

If we return to the early thesis on Heidegger, we can now better understand why this work is a grandiose two-faced Janus. It perfectly hits the mark and yet at the same time completely misses it. We do certainly find here the overcoming of the gnoseological presupposition in the illumination of the methodological foundation of the unity of experience. This allows the content of the philosophical edifice to be founded and not to remain unfounded (including traditional content, as Severino *rightly* reproaches Heidegger for overlooking). In this sense, as Severino writes: “The criticism that Heidegger moves to every gnoseological conception that *presupposes* the subject on one side and the object on the other is perfectly consistent with the (founded) conception of the originary unity of the manifestation of beings. The *world*, instead, is the *founded* presupposition of every gnoseological relationship, because the world, in *being-in-the-world*, is the originary truth, the *letting-come-forward*, the condition of every knowledge of beings” (Severino, 1994, p. 138).

Indeed, the *world!* The world that allows to *come forward* not naked beings but the immediate *significance of the World*, the concrete meanings of human life. Of course, to use the words of Severino’s mentor: philosophy is born from life and returns to life, but not to remain, in the meantime, *out of life*, and not to limit itself to a “rigorous observation of the facts” where “the vital impulse is somewhat cooled” (Bontadini, 1995, p. 6). But this is exactly what Heidegger tried to teach throughout his entire life: that it is impossible to leave life, that this leaving can only be abstract.

In this sense, Severino’s journey seems to begin from the originary (of phenomenological immediacy!) and to develop entirely within this abstraction. But is that really so? The answer must be: of course not! Life is always there, from the very beginning of the path. *Others* are always there from the beginning. Indeed, all of Severino’s work is a language, a discourse. It is the *language* that testifies to destiny. Everything happens in language, in interpretation, in life. No one can leave.

7.

We must strive to understand each other! The attentive reader of Severino will surely want to point out that, in the last few paragraphs, I've been treating destiny as a designation, thus denying its incontrovertibility. Yet, I'm aware of Severino's resolution of the *aporia* according to which, because one cannot escape from the historicity of language, then it follows (*it would seem to follow*) that all definitive and incontrovertible knowledge is impossible. As far as I'm concerned – and for what it's worth –, Severino's resolution is completely valid, but we must grasp its implications.

Severino shows in part III of *Beyond Language (Oltre il linguaggio)* that the differentiations in language ultimately – and necessarily – refer to a deeper identity that *underlies* these differences. This is the identity without which these differences could not be differences, the identity “implicitly recognised by the negation of identity” itself, and which is therefore necessarily present “in the multiple ways of being a sign of something” (Severino, 1992, p. 148). Naturally, this entire discourse is itself *enveloped in difference*, but this cannot mean that identity doesn't appear – because again this would deny the originary embrace of difference.

(*En passant* I should observe that, on the one hand, Severino's fundamental critique of the philosophies of the linguistic turn is certainly valid: these philosophies don't realise that their affirmation of the impossibility of transcending language ultimately rests on the *coherence of nihilism*. Therefore, they remain one step behind Leopardi, Nietzsche and Gentile, just as the latter's pupils remain one step behind him. On the other hand, though, the point here is that Severino considers Heidegger's judgment that the originary is “hearing-language” only in abstract terms, and that this *abstracting* is just another facet of Severino's oversight).

The identity that “*remains* undeniable in the infinite differentiations of language” is of course and above all *destiny* itself. Destiny is the originary syntax of the occurrence of the embrace of difference, the dimension within which “that this set of empirical events is a lamp is a problem, but that this set is a thisness, or a being, or other than the other: this is not a problem but a necessary connection” (*ibid.*, p. 156). Therefore, destiny is what lies beyond language, but we must pay close attention to the meaning of this expression. *Beyond language* can (must!) certainly indicate that the identity of destiny lies beyond the differences of the language that indicates it (just as the moon is not the finger that indicates it). But this expression can also indicate what awaits beyond the era of language, after the *sunset of the isolated earth*. It thus becomes necessary to say that destiny *does*

not lie beyond language in this second sense (it still does in the first, though). Why? Because I am speaking (writing!), because I am in the “situation in which identity never presents itself outside of difference” (*ibid.*, p. 151), because I want to speak, because I originally am (also) will, because “the human being finds himself to be will: to always [*je schon, always already!*, P.M.B.] be in language is to always be will” (*ibid.*, p. 155).

When Severino talks about this situation – about the will! –, he alludes to the fact that the will is “thrown by destiny into willing,” that the will does not decide to will “but is necessarily thrown into its own willing” (Severino, 2013, p. 199, emphasis P.M.B.). As Severino explains ever since *Destiny of Necessity* (*Destino della necessità*), mortals – the ones who want, who speak! – are necessarily the place wherein the dispute between “the isolation of the earth” (the isolated earth, the will!) and “the pure earth” (the non-isolated earth which itself remains in contrast with the isolated earth because it too belongs to the dispute that mortals are) appears.

Like destiny itself, the pure earth is “free from will and language, [...] unspeakable” (*ibid.*, p. 200). *Beyond Language* explores the necessity that the identity of destiny cannot be denied by the difference in its being spoken. This necessity entails the presence of a common dimension between the two earths: otherwise, they couldn’t differ from each other, and isolation couldn’t isolate anything. In Severino’s last book, *Witnessing Destiny* (*Testimoniando il destino*), the language of destiny goes as far as to call this common dimension the “non-apophantic semantic dimension” (Severino, 2019, p. 117). By virtue of the necessary existence of this dimension, which is irreducible to truth or error because it is the condition (identity!) of their difference, Severino can (or rather: *is forced to*) introduce the concept of *similarity* between the isolated and pure earths. In the introduction of this powerfully – originally! – ambiguous and amphibious (*amphi-bios*) concept of *similarity*, we entirely feel the weight and difficulty of Severino’s works from *Beyond Language* onwards. In these works, language speaks of destiny beyond language. In *Witnessing Destiny*, we read that “the language that testifies to destiny does not yet know how to decipher the correspondences” (*ibid.*, p. 119) between the traits of the isolated and pure earths. This specifically means that the language of destiny doesn’t yet know how to decipher the traces of truth in the isolated earth. But what can it mean to decipher the traces of the truth? Can it really mean something that *is not also interpretation?*

At the 2019 conference, I took the liberty of pointing out that, as *Witnessing Destiny* states, “the ultimate content of the non-truth of interpre-

tation is the destiny of truth” (*ibid.*, p. 30). It thus seems that we should exclude that “interpretation is a *regressus in indefinitum*” (*ibid.*). But it also seems necessary that between any interpretation and the ultimate interpreted (destiny) there be an infinite set of interpretations and interpreteds, because “every meaning of the isolated earth is complex and, therefore, the set of meanings that constitute it is infinite. Yet, every meaning of the isolated earth is precisely an interpreted-interpreter” (*ibid.*, p. 30). This means that, certainly, identity is beyond difference, but it is so because it remains completely enveloped in difference. Therefore, the problem of deciphering the traces of the truth in the traits of the isolated earth (of the hyposyntax!) *is an authentic problem destined to remain so in the age of language* (for clarification see Bortoluzzi, 2019). The deciphering of the hyposyntax *cannot* reach a conclusion. One cannot escape interpretation (language!). Mortals are *originarily, immediately* contrast. Accordingly, we begin to grasp that, in the language that testifies to destiny (that is, in the will to witness destiny), language *is the originary*: that is, it is what is phenomenologically immediate. In the diaporetic angst of the witnessing of the *syntax of destiny*, the human being begins to know himself for who he is: error, mortal, the contrast between truth and error. The originary truth is that truth stands in dispute with non-truth. The hyposyntax (the earth!) does nothing but incessantly remind – never tired of plying the eternal byways (Leopardi) – to the mortal his truth, the originary contrast that he is.

But do all hyposyntactic determinations tell this to mortals? Yes and no. Certainly, the foundation manages to testify to itself in the silent *diánoia* of the originary circle, thus freeing the “dialogic framework of the *élenchos*... from the unfounded assumption of the existence of others”. Certainly, even a leaf on the road – precisely as *content of the non-truth of the isolated earth* – can be part of the possible system of negations of the foundation. Yet not all hyposyntactic determinations can *truly tell* mortals the truth of their being contrast, interpretation. In fact, only those determinations that come forward as *languages of others* – i.e. the actual historical negations – can. Paraphrasing Aristotle, a plant cannot deny destiny.

For these reasons, in my conference presentation I said that the authentic linguistic problem (destined to remain a problem) is above all whether destiny in other circles is “hidden wisdom – or is rather manifest wisdom, as it is in the originary circle or maybe even wider; and, in fact, whether it is the language that testifies to destiny in the originary circle that is unable to decipher what in others or in some other circles is already deciphered”

(Severino, 2011, p. 334). This problem is in-itself already solved and nevertheless unavoidable, because language is will and, therefore, this problem tells mortals their truth. The abyss of otherness, the *significant and non-naively-behaviourist presence* of others (in opposition to neo-positivist belief), is the bearer of this message.

In light of this problem, the task becomes to learn how to speak of other languages as themselves the true contrast: not truth, not error, but *both!* The task is to learn how to listen to the language of others and hear in the song of the isolated earth the resounding of the contrast, the song of destiny. The task is to “*accept* conversation” when we meet others, even if this meeting is a “bijective relationship between two semantic planes” (Severino, 1981, p. 138), and to thereby “*make* the human being a philosopher: the establishment of the logos and therefore the transformation of the world” (ibid.). Indeed, of the *world!*

8.

So we must ask: is the *world* truly absent, are *others* truly absent, when Severino’s journey begins? Does phenomenological immediacy really only regard beings and not also the *significance of the World*? The answer must be no. The world and others are there, present from the beginning, in disguise; that is, wearing the *impossible* (yet positively significant) mask of an error that, when spoken (*an-gesprochen*), is only error and not also truth, the impossible mask of an appearance that is not also the appearance of the truth. Their presence-in-disguise is necessary to the adequate development of the testimony of the syntax, but then we must remind ourselves that they’ve always been there, *immediately*, because one cannot escape life. Otherwise, there’s a real risk of considering Severino’s works “simply an exercise in theoretical manoeuvres through which to expose the ‘falling into contradictions’ of the adversaries” (Berutti, 2015, p. 15).

Yes, many do read Severino in just that way, but this is to confuse the moon with the finger that indicates it, to confuse destiny with the language that testifies to it. This is to fail to understand that discursivity, in order to testify to the logical core that constitutes the identity of destiny, needs to *pretend* that time is not “the destiny of language” (Severino, 1981, p. 154). On the contrary, we must understand the *argumentative intent*, what language *wants to say*. When Severino says that only beings, without their historical-linguistic situations, constitute the originary phenomenological immediacy, he considers language – itself originary, unavoidable,

because he's speaking! – only in abstraction. He considers time as the destiny of discursiveness, of the relationship with the languages of others, only in abstraction. This is the correct approach because he must (wants to) testify to the syntax of destiny, he wants to free language from the nihilism that corrodes it. But we must not forget the meaning of the originary appearance of the *significance of the World*. Severino's slow diaporetic *didnoia* finally allows us to say: God + World = World. Indeed, the *world!* Severino's method must, *rightly*, abstract completely from mortal life, and therefore from *others*. But we must not forget, again, that this abstraction cannot erase the fact that phenomenological immediacy is the immediacy of mortal life. It *cannot*, in the strong sense: that is, it is impossible.

9

Severino's phenomenological "oversight" shows us how, when he speaks of the originary dimension of meaning – even though he refers (rightly, given his purpose!) to a pure phenomenology –, he *cannot but* intend the *immediate* concreteness of the *significance of the World* (*Weltbedeutsamkeit*) of which Heidegger speaks. From the historiographical point of view, therefore, we can say that Severino's oversight regarding the *core* of Heidegger's thought constitutes the paradigmatic matrix of his oblivion of the further undeniable meaning of phenomenological immediacy. To show this is not just to say that Heidegger too got something right, it is to begin to equip oneself with the tools that can enable one to adequately, *truthfully*, illuminate the meaning of the task that the truth of Being, once brought into language, confers upon mortals in their relationship with *others*. This task cannot say anything that is *practical-concrete* to mortals, it cannot tell them what to do, it "cannot define any concrete individual possibility" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 258). This task is the very coming-forward of the awareness of error; that is, of the contrast that mortals are, and therefore of the awareness that in the languages of others, even in the greatest distance from the testimony of eternity, eternity must always resonate (*An-klang*).

The refutation of error necessarily leads to its opposite. Ultimately, the greatest refuter of mortal history tells us nothing except this: there's no one to refute, there's only the task of listening, we must give birth to the true listening of the song of the isolated earth so that this song can manifest itself as "the song of the truth" (Severino, 2007, p. 374). We must give shape to words and actions capable of creating such listening. As Heidegger puts it: "All saying must allow the co-emergence of a capacity to hear it. Both

saying and hearing must be of the same origin” (Heidegger, 2012, p. 62). Again paraphrasing Aristotle, we must learn to distinguish, to have the patience to give each *lógos* its own name.

Let me give you an example as a first conclusion. In *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, the young Severino rightly condemns Heidegger’s polemic against logic on the question concerning nothingness. Heidegger here fails to distinguish different philosophical problems: “To ask ‘What is nothingness?’ is to inaugurate a new problem, clearly distinct from the traditional one, *which therefore cannot be accused of not satisfying the needs of the new one*” (Severino, 1994, p. 316 ff.). For Severino, Heidegger’s (historical) confusion lies precisely in this accusation: “Heidegger’s confusion consists in considering ‘logic’ and, in general, traditional philosophy, as an investigation that claims to *replace*, in the elaboration of the question concerning nothingness, the investigation that he himself conducts” (Severino, 1994, p. 316 ff.).

In my opinion, the analysis developed above regarding the meaning of phenomenological immediacy allows us to see that the language of destiny – the philosophy that develops by denying the system of possible negations of the foundation – leads the philosopher (the human being!) to becoming-aware that no historic language, no language of others *in general*, testifies only to error. Thus, if the testimony of destiny wants to remain firm in its refutation, then we *must* say that to witness the eternity of beings is to inaugurate a new problem, clearly distinct from the traditional one, *which therefore cannot be accused of not satisfying the needs of the new*.

This is the only way to show the concreteness of a thought that appears in originary unity with the history of negation, with concrete occurrences, with life! For this reason, we must say that the meaning of phenomenological-hermeneutic immediacy that Heidegger takes care of is immanent in the entire development of Severino’s thought. This meaning constitutes the true, inalienable unsaid that hides between the lines of what is said, even in its apparent antitheticality, even in the apparent superficial *either-or*. This meaning is the doctrine of Severino’s thought, the *doctrine* “to which we are exposed so that we might expend ourselves on it” (Heidegger, 1998, p. 155). As I said in the beginning, this indicates only a segment of the relationship between the two authors as I understand it. There’s still a lot to say. A lot of work to be done to remove our gaze from the inability to distinguish without “drawing too sharp a distinction” (Rilke, “The First Elegy”).

10.

A second, provocative conclusion: the foundation's wound. The expression *the foundation's wound* is used by A. Dal Sasso (2015) in a sense that we cannot delve into here. But the problem that may afflict Severino's thought can perhaps be indicated as another, related, foundation's wound. When Severino denies that *Heideggerian phenomenology* could ever establish necessary connections (see the above quote from *La Gloria*), he shows that he sees *only* error in the other, that he remains within a *mere* refuting attitude. He is thus forced to deny the necessity of a connection – e.g. between the wheel and its squeaking – that the testimony of destiny affirms with truth. In this gaze, it's as if the youthful request for an absolute foundation *beyond* the originary, beyond immediacy, still lingers on in Severino. That is, it's as if Severino never overcame his younger self, convinced of the validity of classical metaphysics, who wondered about the thrown ontic non-power of Heidegger's ontology: "How can an ontic non-power on beings have in itself the absolute conditions of its own *Being*?" (Severino, 1994, p. 260).

It is clear that the purpose of Severino's subsequent journey consists in the *demonstration* of the meaninglessness of this question; that is, in the demonstration of the *immediate necessity* of the appearance of this ontic non-power on beings, on every connection. Severino teaches us that human beings are not what they believe to be, they are not the lords of beings. He teaches us that the appearance of every semantic connection, of every wheel that squeaks, every flute that plays, every person who cries, is the appearance of an immediately necessary being whose negation – whose not-being – is impossible. Therefore, if we remain in an exclusively refuting attitude, we deprive ourselves of the possibility of understanding why Heidegger maintained – even though he did continually criticise the principle of non-contradiction –, in relation to its elenctic strength, that "the truth that pertains to this principle is a primally distinctive [*ureigene*] one" (Heidegger, 2010b, p. 47). Or why he spoke of *apaideiustian* (*uneducation!*) when – in the *annus mirabilis* 1964! – he wanted to hint at the meaning of the new task of thinking in the age of the end of philosophy.

According to Aristotle, *apaideiustian* (uneducation) is what characterises those who demand that everything be demonstrated (cf. Heidegger, 1972, p. 72). On closer inspection, Severino is the great Western *paidéia* – the supreme loyalty to the language of tradition – engaging in this grandiose work of *apaideiustian*: the demonstration of destiny.

11.

Third conclusion: mathematics. In his autobiography, Severino recounts that Gadamer used to characterise his philosophy as mathematics. Severino would reply that he preferred “mathematics to philosophy” (Severino, 2011b, p. 131). Linguistic misunderstanding can provide fertile opportunities for thinking. Many decades earlier, introducing the theme of the plurality of philosophies (of the languages of others), Severino wrote that, according to Kant, to be a field of endless struggles is to be the object of scandal, but “mathematics and physics are not scandalous” (Severino, 1982, p. 73). People engage in dialogue when they don’t get along, when they don’t have the same opinion.

Above, I tried to argue that Severino allows us to illuminate the structure of a *dialogue in accordance with the truth* in which every speaker “specifies, deepens, places in new perspectives what he hears from the other” (*ibid.*, p. 74). I tried to do this by showing that Severino’s thought forces us to see the history of philosophy (and the entire plurality of languages) as *not* a battlefield. Severino succeeds in doing this precisely because his philosophy is the new mathematics, the philosophy that escapes scandal (in the paradox of the most striking scandal). Indeed, if “the ‘sciences’ are not the truth but techniques of transformation of the world, and if mathematics is their syntax” (*ibid.*, p. 73), then the new mathematics is what establishes the *lógos* and thus truly transforms the world. It transforms the world by causing us to leap *into another world* (the world!) when it shows that every transformability has always been surrounded by the eternal non-transformability of the whole.

12

Fourth conclusion: poetry. At the end of this analysis on Heidegger and Severino, the presence of the other shows itself as the most genuine source of truth for humanity. Today’s language of philosophy struggles to tell this simple truth and its consequences. When it speaks of the truth of the self in the other, philosophy is still too fraught with negation, refutation, rejection, *pólemos*. In short, with the annihilation of the other (these pages have not argued that life is not *pólemos* too). Yet, philosophy is not alone, not even today. Where philosophy fails or becomes unable to progress, poetry (singing!) can come to its aid, provided that one is willing to listen to its language. Poetry can remind us that the other constitutes the most con-

crete meaning of the I, the most concrete meaning of the we, and that the other's presence determines the truth of my presence. Thus, the poet sings:

Your presence
Enters through the seven holes in my head
Your presence
Through the eyes, mouth, nares and ears
Your presence
Paralyzes my moment in which everything begins
Your presence
Disintegrates and actualizes my presence
(Veloso, 1975)

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Identity and difference: Severino and Heidegger

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The concept of identity represents one of the most significant concepts through which to measure the philosophies of Severino and Heidegger. For Severino, identity cannot be the identity of the different, because the identity of the different, or of the non-identical, is exactly the concept of becoming, which leads to the idea that wood becomes ash, and thus is ash, or, in general, that the subject is the predicate, that A is B, or not-A (which is a contradiction). Unlike Severino, Heidegger conceives of identity as a “synthesis of the different”, as is clear in his interpretation of Parmenides’ Fragment 3 in *Identity and Difference*: the same (*das Selbe*) is not the identical (*das Gleiche*). The problem of the relation between identity and difference can be traced back to the debate between Monists and Pluralists in Plato’s *Sophist*: this discussion will be the focus of the conclusion, where I try to show that the different (ἕτερον) is not the condition of the contradiction, but what prevents it.

Keywords:

Identity, Difference, Severino, Heidegger, Ontology, Plato, Parmenides

1.

The great theme of Severino's philosophy is identity: in relation to this concept, and indeed as a consequence of the way Severino *understands* it, all other issues in his work find their orbit – most notably, and *above all*, the issue of becoming. For Heidegger, in contrast, being is difference: the ontological difference means the original and transcendent condition of being; difference is indeed the very reason for this transcendental, i.e. the fact that being is *not* the entity. In what follows my focus will therefore be trained on these two statements – being as identity and being as difference – by taking into consideration the two most significant texts on this theme by these two authors: Severino's *Tautótēs*, published in 1995, and Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*, published in 1957.

2.

To *think* identity, for Severino, is properly to place oneself on a plane where there is no thought, but only being. This is clearly a Parmenidean theme, that of the αὐτό in the Fragment 3: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι. More radically than Parmenides, who by this αὐτό means the identity of being and thought, Severino places the question on an exclusively ontological plane. In fact, in so far as identity concerns a fact of thought, a νοῆμα (Severino, 1995, p. 120), it is not possible to escape diversity, so that identity is inevitably compromised: between thought and being there is diversity, therefore on the plane of being alone one must trace what identity properly means.

Identity, in short, is constitutive of the concept of being, the true ontological *prius*, and this is not a logical fact. Being is identity, and identity is being. Therefore, identity cannot be in any way conceived as the identity

of the different, because the identity of the different, or of the non-identical, is the concept of becoming and therefore a contradiction, the impossible. Becoming is the relation between the subject and the predicate: “To think that wood becomes ashes is to think that this becoming produces a relation between wood and ashes, and not a generic relation, but a relation between subject and predicate” (Severino, 1995, p. 128). After all, as paradoxical as it may seem, it is on the level of language that becoming is produced, and not on the ontological level. Language, in fact, isolates the subject and the predicate, and as a consequence of this isolation their relationship is understood as a passage from one to the other, and therefore as the passage from what the one (the subject) is to what it is not (the predicate), or as a passage from being to non-being. Western thought remains entangled in this contradiction, which is the contradiction of becoming. In fact,

to set and *at the same time* not to set the relation between the something that becomes and its other (not to isolate and at the same time to isolate the something from its other) is a contradiction: the *contradiction* through which the thought that affirms becoming fails to see that becoming is the identification of the non-identical and thus the affirmation of the existence of becoming is the *contradiction* that poses, as existence, the absolute non-existence of becoming (Severino, 1995, p. 23).

The contradiction that is produced in this way is precisely a contradiction, something that happens at the level of saying. Becoming is produced at the level of language, because it is at the level of saying that difference is produced. This – the difference – cannot be, as Heidegger would claim, an *ontological* difference, but it is always and only a logical, linguistic difference.

Metaphysics has tried to propose various solutions to this contradiction, the most important of which are considered in *Tautótēs*; none of them, however, gets to the root of the problem, which is basically the question of the very way in which identity presents itself. These solutions are the Aristotelian one, with the concept of substance; the Hegelian one, with the concept of the speculative; and, we might say, the Kantian one, with the concept of synthesis.

Aristotle’s solution to avoid the identification of opposites consists in presupposing something permanent, a substratum, at the basis of becoming (Severino, 1995, p. 16). In this way, however, we do nothing but shift

the problem, since the transition from one term to another is understood as a passage from one determination of the substratum to another: the sky remains, while its being clear or cloudy expresses the transition from the identical to the different. This passage involves the annihilation of the relation between the substratum and a certain predicate, a certain form (being serene and being cloudy): the relation between the sky and its determinations is subject to change, and thus to annulment, in the passage from one to another determination, from being serene to being cloudy. The annulment of this relation – in the sense that, only by annulling itself, it allows the passage from one determination to another – results in the introduction of a diversity among the forms of the substratum. For Severino, even science adheres to this solution, since for science everything is transformed and, in the permanence of energy, everything takes on different energy forms: “the sky, which in the cloudiness of the sky is the permanent, corresponds to the amount of energy that, in the combustion of wood, is kept constant, transforming itself into a certain set of new forms of energy” (Severino 1995: 18). Even science, therefore, assumes this contradiction, implicit in the becoming of the world, as its own horizon of thought.

Contrary to the Aristotelian solution, which consists in moving becoming to the level of the determinations of the substance, the Hegelian solution makes becoming the very place of their dis-solution: Hegel in fact “not only does not affirm [the] inexistence [of becoming], that is the inexistence of becoming other, but rather affirms that becoming other, concretely thought, is the *overcoming* of the contradiction that is produced when becoming other is abstractly understood” (Severino, 1995, p. 29). There is undoubtedly merit in Hegel’s speculative solution: it shows that becoming is what takes away the isolation of terms – proper to the intellectualistic perspective of the finite –, and that the finite cannot but remove itself, because of its intrinsic self-contradiction. In short, there is becoming because there is isolation, and since there is contradiction as long as there is isolation, becoming, as sublating of isolation, can only be the sublating of contradiction. “In the Hegelian dialectic,” Severino in fact writes, “the contradiction is not produced because something becomes other than itself, *but because something* (a finite, a finite ‘determination’) is *isolated*, so that the finite determination, that is, ‘such a limited abstraction, is valid for the intellect as something that is and subsists for itself’ (*Encyclopedia*, §80), namely, because something is separated from its own other” (Severino, 1995:, p. 32). As sublating of isolation, becoming other is therefore no longer a contradiction. However, the fact remains that even

here there is a passage, that is, an annulment, the annulment of the finite, which allows us to inscribe Hegel within the thought of nihilism. The finite, in fact, is nothing: it is nothing originally, constitutively, and its original nothingness is no more than its being potentially its own self-annulment, its being in power infinite, non-finite. Whereas in Aristotle becoming was thought as a passage from a finite determination to another finite determination, from a predicate to another, from A to B, that is from A to non-A, in Hegel becoming is thought as a passage from a finite determination to the infinite, and therefore, again, from A to non-A. The speculative result of dialectics, which is not “the empty and abstract nothing”, but something positive, the rational positive, is affirmed, however, at the price of an annihilation, the annihilation of the finite. The determinate negation, namely, is negation of the determination, of its finite dimension: all categories, passing through dialectical becoming, cancel their one-sidedness; this becoming, binding them in the absolute system of their totality, cancels their isolation, and therefore condemns them to annihilation. This is the conclusion that Severino draws from his analysis of the dialectical method:

Hegel’s decisive thought is that where there is contradiction there is *no* becoming other – becoming other is not able to constitute itself – while where becoming is truly and concretely constituted, there the contradiction is *sublated*. Becoming other, in fact, is truly and concretely realized where the relationship between something and the other is constituted and manages to maintain itself. True becoming other, the positive result of dialectics, the relation and the sublation of contradiction are the same (Severino, 1995, p. 39).

3.

What is at stake in this speculative movement is the way of conceiving identity: that is, it is the fact that becoming is conceived – both in Aristotle and in Hegel – as *identification*, i.e. as a process. Or, said in another way: the fact that identity is conceived as the result of a becoming. It is in fact as a process that becoming *identifies* – transitively, then – the different. Severino’s move is therefore to subtract identity from this processuality: it is, in fact, identity, not identification. A step in this direction is taken by what Severino calls the “non-dialectical *episteme* [which] conceives of iden-

tity as the original condition of becoming other, or even as independent of it” (Severino, 1995, p. 47). It is the Aristotelian solution, or the Cartesian one, in which the wood, or the wax – the substance – remains identical, even as its determinations change. But, as we have seen, even this solution is insufficient for Severino: above all because at bottom we are dealing here with *episteme*, that is, a subjective position, and where there is thought – as in every *episteme* – there is still becoming. For this *episteme*, substance, the permanent, is then, as it is for Kant, only a *requirement* of reason, a principle of the pure intellect (as the first analogy in the *Critique of Pure Reason* states), and not a true ontological determination. Removed from processuality identity lies on a terrain that is not, necessarily, the one of *episteme*, and ultimately, not the one from which we grasp the succession of finite determinations; it must be, rather, the one of eternity. Since the relation between the various determinations is finite, i.e. destined to annulment, be they between substance and accidents or between accidents, in order to avoid this annulment this relation must be thought as eternal. *Identity is the eternal being of the relation*, which Western thought, according to Severino, is unable to think, since it reduces it to an impossible contradiction (Severino, 1995, p. 109), to a logical, and therefore ideal principle. Identity is instead a real, and therefore eternal relationship. Every isolation of entities is the cause of contradiction: consequently, identity constitutes every entity originally, that is ontologically, in its relationship with all the others, in their totality. Not only are the entities thus rescued from isolation, but so too are their determinations, i.e. their predicates: the identity of the sky implies that it cannot be different from what it is, and therefore that each of its predicates – for example, *light* – is an essential, and therefore necessary and eternal, part of its appearance.

The appearance of being is the appearance of the identity of being. In other words, only if A, of which B (and A) is affirmed, is not an A closed in its own isolation, but is and appears as A in relation to B – that is, is and appears as A-that-is-B and B is in turn in relation to A – that is, is and appears as B-of-A -, so that, by affirming that A is B, the *identity* of the relation with itself is affirmed; only thus the affirmation, that is, the appearing that something is something, is not affirming that something is other than what it is. (Severino, 1995, p. 121).

This is what Severino calls a *non-alienated concept of identity*, that is, a concept of identity that is not identification of different, that does not in-

volve otherness, and therefore is not the impossible contradiction, thus necessarily non-existent. Because the condition of existence, it is now clear, can only be identity. And since becoming is instead the identification of the different, what is identical can only be subtracted from becoming and is therefore eternal. There is no process, therefore, no identification: identity is the ontological character of what appears, of what insofar as it appears is identical and eternal.

4.

The ontological scope of Severino's thought depends entirely, therefore, on his conception of identity: it is a real relationship, and indeed is being itself in its appearance, therefore inseparable – not isolable – from its appearance. In this appearance, identity, which is not therefore identification, appears. On the contrary, Western thought always thinks of identity not as an original structure, but as a result, and, as a result, not as an ontological structure, but as a *noema*, as a knowledge. This is the peculiar trait of transcendentalism, and of all Western thought since at least Socrates, the philosopher of “know yourself.” At this point, therefore, it is time to examine the other side of this gigantomachy around being, which is the side, precisely, of the other, of diversity.

In *The Principle of Identity* Heidegger asks what the αὐτό of Parmenides' Fragment 3 means: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι. Parmenides in fact left the meaning of this αὐτό in obscurity. The formula usually employed to represent the principle of identity, $A = A$, which this αὐτό would mean, says the equality of A and A, that is, that identical, in Latin *idem*, which we also express by means of a tautology, e.g. “the plant is a plant” (Heidegger, 1969:, p. 23). This abstract, and merely tautological, conception of identity would be, however, according to Heidegger, overcome by German idealism, which would have highlighted how in every identity, understood not as *Gleichheit* (*idem*) but as *Selbigkeit* (*ipsum*), is implicit a mediation, a “with”, that is, a synthesis.

Western thought required more than two thousand years. For it is only the philosophy of speculative Idealism, prepared by Leibniz and Kant, that through Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel established an abode for the essence, in itself synthetic, of identity. This abode cannot be demonstrated here. Just one thing we must keep in

mind: since the era of speculative Idealism, it is no longer possible for thinking to represent the unity of identity as mere absence of difference (*Einerlei*), and to disregard the mediation that prevails in unity. Wherever this is done, identity is represented only in an abstract manner (Heidegger, 1969, p. 25, modified).

It is on the basis of this understanding proper to German classical idealism that Heidegger then interprets the saying of Parmenides. The αὐτό of Parmenides' saying in fact claims, according to Heidegger, the co-belonging of being and thought, or that particular form of synthesis through which idealism defines, not the abstract identity, but the identity of consciousness, of what we designate with the term *Selbst*, the Self, the I. The "identity" to which speculative thought refers, which would more correctly be called sameness, is that of the I. The identical and the same, the *idem* and the *ipsum*, in short, *are not the same*. So writes Heidegger, commenting on Hegel: "But the same [*das Selbe*] is not the merely identical [*das Gleiche*]. In the merely identical, the difference disappears. In the same difference appears" (Heidegger, 1969, p. 45). So if it is true, as Severino writes, that Hegel would represent the most radical effort in Western thought "to think the 'identical – the *tautón*" (Severino, 1995, p. 47), this ταὐτόν should not be understood as *idem*, as *identity*, but as *ipsum*, sameness. Severino, however, captures this point well, observing that Hegel "identifies becoming other with the production of the 'other of another', that is, with the production of the 'same', of being for itself" (Severino, 1995, p. 47). If the identity is the *in itself*, the same is the *for itself*, whose structure is that of infinity, or life.

To speak here of life means that the same – which is the speculative – is not abstract identity, the "A = A," but concrete identity. As concreteness, the speculative is the production of truth as the unity of the process with its result, namely, unity of being and knowing. This final ταὐτόν is *more than what it was*: it is not the mere development, immanent and mechanical, of a monadic essence, but signifies an increasing, and in this sense it is something concrete. *Concretum* derives in fact from *cum-crescere*, a growth-with, a development that is at the same time an increase, an immanent synthesis. It is not difficult to see in this logical structure a form of "autopoiesis", and in fact here it is a matter, as Severino writes, of a "self-production" of identity and truth. The Self is not mere being: it is no longer pure being, as we find in fact at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, but it is a *known* being. It is substance that has become subject. The concrete is

the result of a reflexive act – of an autopoiesis, we said – and that is, of a knowing. There is no doubt that this introduces an epistemic moment within ontology, but this is, after all, the characterizing feature of the transcendental logic, from which Hegel is inspired, continuing and radicalizing Kant, to the point of making knowledge, not a moment extrinsic to being, but the very heart of being, its beating heart, we could say, if it is true that it constitutes the intimate movement of reality. With this, Hegel merely takes up Plato’s remark when, in the *Sophist*, he seems to rethink critically his own doctrine of ideas, that is when, in the *γυγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας*, he addresses himself to the “friends of forms.”

are we going to be convinced that it’s true that change, life, soul, and intelligence are not present in that which wholly (*παντελῶς*) is, and that it neither lives nor thinks, but stays changeless, solemn, and holy, without any understanding? (Plato 1997: *Soph.* 248e-249a)

Absolute, fully achieved, being cannot be conceived as something immobile. Plato does not justify this statement, which seems to be more a *desideratum* than a philosophical thesis, but the whole argumentation makes clear his reason: it is to avoid the separation – that is the isolation – between the ideal world and the sensible world, a world of motionless forms and a world of moving entities, that is to avoid dualism, but without falling into monism and its aporias.

If this is the idealistic solution to the Parmenidean problem, to attribute such an understanding of the *αὐτό* as *Selbst*, sameness or co-belonging, to Parmenides, as Heidegger does, seems rather anachronistic and questionable. In the *αὐτό* of Parmenides’ saying, being and thought co-belong in an original way, but it is not taken for granted that they are so according to that particular unifying structure, which is proper rather to the Kantian a priori synthesis: a synthesis which holds together what is at the same time differentiated, being and thought. If, as Heidegger writes, “Thinking has needed more than two thousand years really to understand such a simple relation as that of the mediation within identity” (Heidegger, 1969, p. 41), it is therefore doubtful that this is what Parmenides – however implicitly – meant. And the doubt is confirmed by the fact that those who have discussed his theses, *primarily* Plato and Aristotle, when they refer to what Parmenides meant, do make explicit their content in terms of *idem* identity, and not *ipsum*.

5.

At the beginning of *Tautótēs* Severino quotes a passage from Plato's *Theaetetus*: Not even in a dream and not even in madness, says Plato, can one think that "one is the other" (τὸ ἕτερον ἔστιν, Plato 1997: *Theaet.* 190c), for example, that "the beautiful is ugly", "the ox is the horse", "the wood is the ashes" (Heidegger, 1969, p. 14). The *fundamentum inconcussum* of ontology, the non-contradiction, cannot be violated even in a dream. All that leads to believe that the fact that different can be identified – and this is the concept of becoming, or of the a priori synthesis, or of the Self as the unity of the manifold of experience – is therefore less than a dream, is nothing, is the very principle of nihilism. Only identity, as the true ontological *prius*, makes it possible to avoid this nihilistic destruction.

However, I would like to attempt a different reading of this problem, starting from the following question: what if the contradiction were avoided, not in virtue of a tautological, symmetrical relation, but in virtue of a heterological, i.e. asymmetrical, relation? My reading takes its cue from the sentence of Plato quoted above, and in particular from what Plato says in the lines immediately preceding those quoted by Severino, where what cannot be believed even in a dream is expressed in an even more general way:

Now try to think if you have ever said to yourself "Surely the beautiful is ugly," or "The unjust is certainly just." Or – to put it in the most general terms – have you ever tried to persuade yourself that "Surely one thing is another?" Wouldn't the very opposite of this be the truth? Wouldn't the truth be that not even in your sleep have you ever gone so far as to say to yourself "No doubt the odd is even," or anything of that kind? (Plato 1997: *Theaet.* 190b).

It is impossible for the even to be odd, or, said otherwise, for the two to be one. Such a conclusion, however, is according to Plato exactly that to which all the philosophies which preceded him lead, and which, according to Plato, are proper to those who spoke "with numerical precision (*diakribologouménous*, *Soph.* 245d)," namely, by identifying being with one or many principles. Of them Plato says, with the Visitor's words: "Parmenides' way of talking to us has been rather easygoing, it seems to me" (Plato 1997: *Soph.* 242c). In all these philosophies the same aporia is produced: if in fact the being is one, then we must admit that in fact there are

two principles, the being and the one, where there should be only one reality, a paradox that recalls the first deduction of the *Parmenides* (*Parm.* 142b ff.): the one that is, absolutely identical and without differences or determinations, is split internally in the one and in the being; to name it as being and as one introduces necessarily a duality. The consequence is then that the one is equal to the two. For thus Plato writes: “Surely it’s absurd for someone to agree that there are two names when he maintains that there’s only one thing...” (Plato 1997: *Soph.* 244c). The same conclusion is reached if one thinks that the principles are more than one (e.g. cold and heat), because, since both *are being*, they would return to be one, so once again two would be one. “But—we’ll say—if you did that, friends, you’d also be saying very clearly that the two are one” (Plato 1997: *Soph.* 244a). Even more, if one thinks that being is a whole composed of parts, that is, fractioned, each part would be in turn a whole, so that the one would be at the same time one and identical with the multiplicity of its parts. “You’re right. If it has the characteristic of somehow being one, it won’t appear to be the same as the one. Moreover, everything will then be more than one” (Plato 1997: *Soph.* 245b), which, equivalently to the previous conclusions, is to say that the one is two.

The problem with these paradoxes is, in my opinion, that they are all based on a *numerical* solution to the problem of being, providing one or more principles: that is, making the principle something numerable, or discrete, “isolated”, in Severino’s terms. In all these cases, *one ends up being equal to two* or, equivalently, two is one. I would like to take this conclusion as a trace for a different solution to the ontological problem, which avoids the paradoxes of monist and pluralist theories: a solution that I would say is not *numerical* in the Greek sense of the term “number”, that is, not *arithmetical*.

This untenable conclusion, which cannot be believed even in a dream, namely that one is equal to two, or that even numbers are equal to odd numbers, is exactly the conclusion reached in the case of one of the most shocking discoveries of ancient mathematics, the discovery of incommensurable magnitudes. In the demonstration *ad absurdum* of the incommensurability of the diagonal to the side of the square, in fact, we come to the conclusion that, if they were commensurable, one would be equal to two, and the even numbers would be equal to the odd numbers. This means that to prevent this from happening – to avoid this absolute contradiction – we must say that the diagonal is incommensurable with the side, and therefore that *there is the incommensurable*. Namely: that there is some-

thing, an ἕτερον, which is completely different from one and two. This ἕτερον introduces, in the discrete and absolutely positive arithmetic of early Pythagoreanism, a new dimension. Theaetetus, the theorist of these magnitudes in the ancient world, called them, as we know from the famous mathematical lecture contained in the dialogue dedicated to him, probably not by chance, δυνάμεις. The δύναμις represents not only a “new number”, the true ἕτερον of ancient mathematics, but also a new ontological dimension: that of being able to be other, which is already, in itself, a form of non-being. Even the non-being, Aristotle says in fact, is said in many ways, and among them, there is the power, the δύναμις. What I mean is that, far from introducing contradiction in the world of numbers, *the incommensurable avoids it*, because, if the diagonal were commensurable with the side, one would be equal to two. The so-called “irrational” (as unfortunately, for historical reasons, these magnitudes have been called) is not something contrary to reason, but what makes it consistent and saves it from contradiction. The incommensurable, in short, is not a problem, but the solution of a problem. The “transcendental” difference that it represents – in which the sense of the Heideggerian ontological difference is enclosed – is the condition of possibility of every ontic difference, and above all of the identity of the entity, which avoids the ontological collapse – a real *Big Crunch* – that results in the identification of the one with the two. In short, there is non-contradiction because there is the incommensurable, the δύναμις, the ἕτερον, which is not the simple ἄλλο of the purely arithmetic, numerical multiplicity. This ἕτερον, which is neither one nor two, is not representable as something, as an entity. It answers the question that Plato poses in the course of his examination of monist and pluralist philosophies:

Listen, you people who say that all things are just some two things, hot and cold or some such pair. What are you saying about them both when you say that they both are and each one is? What shall we take this being to be? Is it a third thing alongside those two beings, so that according to you everything is no longer two but three? Surely in calling one or the other of the two of them being, you aren't saying that they both are, since then in either case they'd be one and not two (*Soph.* 243d-e).

The case of the diagonal shows, in conclusion, that in order to avoid contradiction, that is, the identification of the one with the two – which

cannot be believed even in a dream – it is necessary to postulate an ἕτερον with respect to the one and the two. It does not appear – in fact, it is not seen, as no one has ever seen the $\sqrt{2}$ –, it remains asymmetrical in relation to what appears. Such is, in my view, the meaning of Heideggerian ontological difference: a difference that makes every ontic difference possible, but which is not resolved – it is not commensurable and therefore does not give rise to a relation of identity – in any ontic difference. Only thanks to this "transcendental difference", to this incommensurability, is contradiction really avoided.

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Metaphysics of *Dasein* as foundation of metaphysics. Heidegger in Severino's thought

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In his early book, *Heidegger e la metafisica (Heidegger and Metaphysics)*, Emanuele Severino had considered the “metaphysics of *Dasein*” as Heidegger’s major contribution to metaphysics because it, by affirming the “finiteness” of *Dasein*, was seen as what makes possible the “fundamental question” of classical metaphysics, the one that asks about the absolute Foundation of the factual posing of being.

Within this interpretative project of Heideggerian philosophy, Severino critically introduced a problematic issue in relation to the way Heidegger refers to “Being”. He emphasized that “Being”, for Heidegger, is the *transcendens*. This means that Being, while always remaining the Being-of-being, in Heidegger tends to constitute itself as “separate” from the totality of being.

In the young Severino, there was a non-univocal interpretation of this *transcendens* and it was also understood as the “transcendental capacity of manifesting”, that is, the equivalent of the psychological dimension (or, from Aristotle’s perspective, that of the “soul”). Later on, instead, Heideggerian *transcendens* was identified with Being of the “ontological difference”, through which Heidegger, according to Severino, had to conceive the relationship between “Being” and “being”, if he intended not to deny on a speculative level the existence of (nihilistic) “becoming” of beings that, even for him, is *phenomenologically* evident.

In the perspective of a valorization of Heideggerian thought in relation to a contemporary resumption of metaphysics, according to me the *transcendens* to look at is the constitutive “transcendence” of *Dasein*, which was qualified by Severino as the same “possibility” of the metaphysical question and, then, of the affirmation of the metaphysical-theological difference. Instead, in the perspective that rather detects the inscription also of Heidegger’s thought in the nihilism of Western philosophy, it must be emphasized that the Heideggerian *transcendens* is Being of the “ontological difference”: Being, that is, as the condition of possibility of the (nihilistic) becoming of beings, according to which, for Severino, it is originally impossible to affirm immutable Being.

Keywords

Dasein, Being, being, becoming, ontological difference,
metaphysical-theological difference

1. The fundamental theoretical framework of *Heidegger and Metaphysics* in comparison with Severino's subsequent thought

The introductory pages of Emanuele Severino's youthful book on *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, when they are re-read in the light of the subsequent developments of his thought, allow us to grasp the distance that exists between the interpretation he offered of contemporary philosophy following the "turning point" inaugurated by the famous article *Returning to Parmenides* and the one that oriented the first phase of his thought, of which the book in question constitutes one of the most significant episodes.

In *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, in which the young Severino presented himself as belonging to the School of Bontadini, contemporary philosophy was to be understood "in its being devoid of the solution of its research" (Severino, 1994, p. 33). What it was considered "devoid of", was metaphysical knowledge; what characterized contemporary philosophy because of this absence, was "problematicism".

Metaphysical knowledge, as a response to "problematicism", for the young thinker, however, was not to be found in a future philosophical elaboration, but rather was to be rediscovered in "an answer already *given*" (*ibid.*), that is in classical metaphysics (see Severino, 1994, p. 34).

Of course – Severino added – as a response to contemporary philosophical indigence, "this metaphysics must in turn be re-examined in view of the needs and problems raised by modern and contemporary thought" (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, the essential terms of the relationship between the indigence of contemporary philosophy and metaphysical knowledge remained those indicated above.

Heidegger's philosophy was studied by Severino within this ample background perspective. The latter one, however, included another perspective directly referring to the very defining of Heidegger's thought and for which it was seen in its peculiar specificity in the contemporary panorama. What did this peculiarity consist of?

Severino noted two elements in particular, which he pointed out in the following terms: 1. in Heidegger “the awareness of the essential return of modern speculation to the fundamental thesis of classical metaphysics” is present; 2. the Heideggerian problem, considered in its central element, “is already engaged in an initial elaboration of those theses” (*ibid.*).

The more concrete meaning of these two interpretative indications will be shown below. For now is important to note, rather, what *the outcome of the research* carried out by the young Severino was regarding Heidegger’s relationship with metaphysics. He believed that the solution found by the German philosopher was “a *postponement* of the radical solution, which, however, has nothing to do with a transcendental problematicism, this one understood as the problem that raises again necessarily and structurally” (*ibid.*). In order to adequately understand the interpretative thesis contained in this passage, two aspects must be kept in mind: on the one hand, that Severino’s research also came to examine the *Brief über den Humanismus*, that is, the writing that shed light on Heidegger’s thought – then almost unknown – following *Being and Time* and the shorter writings composed in the late twenties of the last century; and, on the other hand, that Severino – in my opinion appropriately – relating to the “problem of metaphysics” read the *Brief* in terms of a substantial continuity with the previous writings of the German philosopher, among which it is good to remember, also for the role assigned to it by Severino himself in his interpretative strategy, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.

Severino was aware that, thus interpreted, “Heidegger’s thought will perhaps be different from how it is generally concerned”, but he felt that he had been able to offer in his book an adequate justification of the proposed interpretative line (see Severino, 1994, p. 35). It is certainly interesting to note what Severino observed in this regard in another volume published also in 1950: “In fact Heidegger’s philosophy is today *the least understood* and *the least appreciated* in its value as a positive contribution to the construction of metaphysics. The concept of Nothing *does not have*, for example, that meaning that is usually associated with him, but has its own particular calibration [...] *explicitly* indicated by Heidegger” (Severino, 1994a, in Severino, 1994, p. 388 n).

What we can detect in addition is that, following that way, he operated with regard to Heidegger a strategic move that was *analogous* to the one that Gustavo Bontadini had adopted in examining the philosophy of Giovanni Gentile, with results that Severino then, moreover, basically shared, while raising a specific reservation about the character of the “problematic-

cism” that Bontadini had attributed to Gentile. Severino, in fact, certainly considered valid the Bontadinian interpretation of actualism as “situational problematicism” because, if considered on the *theoretical* level, the Gentile’s dialectic of self-concept presented itself simply as a “situation” (see Severino 1994a, in Severino, 1994, p. 436). However, when that same dialectic had been considered on a *historical* level, then it should be noted that, in Gentile’s thought, it was presented as an “absolute affirmation” (cf. *ibidem*). In a more linear way, in Italy the philosophical position corresponding to that of Heidegger in relation to metaphysics was, for Severino, that which Gentile’s major disciple, Ugo Spirito, had reached, although with some fluctuations. Of which, with expressions very similar to those he adopted at the time for Heidegger, Severino wrote: “the *possibility of solution* by Spirito *takes the place of* the impossibility of solution by Jaspers and *is unscrupulously waiting* for a concrete metaphysical construction that gives the solution to the problem” (Severino, 1994a, in Severino, 1994, p. 395).

The elements that, on the other hand, characterize the subsequent Severinian reading of contemporary philosophy, including the Heideggerian one, can be summarized in the thesis that the true meaning of post-Hegelian thought, far from being a “problematicism” that is *in search of* metaphysical knowledge or, at least, *to surpass itself* in a “religious faith”, it is an expression – although only rarely explicitly conscious – of an authentic “knowledge”, even though it is radically opposite to metaphysical knowledge. What *kind of knowledge* are we talking about here for Severino?

The “Foreword” to the new edition of *Heidegger and Metaphysics* expresses with the utmost desirable clarity what has become, for Severino, the essential meaning of contemporary philosophy: “In contemporary thought, the persuasion that there is no immutable and definitive structure and knowledge is the persuasion that the solution to every problem is the reopening of a new problem: the becoming is the inevitable reopening of the problem, its keeping open beyond any solution, that is, of every *stopping* of the process in which Being consists. The problem *transcends* any solution; any stop that arises as an immutable and definitive structure or knowledge is illusory, its consistency is apparent. [...] Inasmuch the problem *transcends* every solution, that constitutes the *transcendental* problematic nature of existence; and the philosophical expression of such a problematic nature is *transcendental problematicism*” (Severino, 1994, p. 15). By virtue of this outcome, both the “situational problematicism” of Ugo Spirito and the metaphysical construction proposed by Bontadini’s

“neoclassical philosophy” must be excluded (see Severino, 2009, pp. 163–164). Fidelity to faith in becoming “requires that one find ‘problematic dialectism’ (‘situational problematicism’) of Spirito a step back from Gentile’s ‘metaphysical dialectism’ (‘transcendental problematicism’), in which the problem becomes the content of the solution (the becoming, the content of the immutable)” (Severino, 2009, p. 164).

In summary, from all said thus far, two essential elements can be noted. 1. Before, following Bontadini’s footsteps, the idealistic “becoming” was also traced back by Severino to the simple position of the *Problematicity of thought* and, therefore, as open to the Solution; at the same time, the position of the Problematicity was, as such, the *authentic position* of the Metaphysical Problem. 2. After, once we have understood the Problematicity, or the “becoming”, as the original *production of Being*, the position of such a Problematicity can only constitute itself as the Absolute, that is to say in its valence of Transcendental. Thus, it will imply both the impossibility of the Immutable, that is, of the Solution understood in the manner of metaphysics re-enacted by Bontadini, as well as of the *hope* of a Solution proper to the “situational problematicism” of Spirito.

Let’s go back and turn our attention to the Brescian philosopher’s relationship with Heidegger. If the “second Severino” will say that Heidegger’s closeness “to classical metaphysics is the proximity to the very matrix of the fundamental alienation of the West”, in the 1950 book that is being examined that same closeness had been seen as “the symptom of the truth of Heideggerian thought” (Severino, 1994, p. 22). What must be added on this point with regard to the new relationship that Severino has entertained with Heideggerian thought is that Heidegger, compared with the most authentic and radical outcomes that must be reached once the Problem (the becoming) is placed as the original situation of thought, is judged less rigorous than Leopardi, Nietzsche and Gentile. *As* the bearer of a thought that, while delaying in the Problem, objectively constitutes itself as an “introduction to metaphysics”, Heidegger is considered by Severino to be close to the matrix of Nihilism of the West. *As* he leaves open the possibility of a transcendent God, Heidegger himself remains a step behind the thinkers who are an expression of the most radical coherence that must be achieved once the Problem, or becoming, be considered in its ontological dimension. The Problem, at the end of the long journey consisting of the adventures / misadventures of metaphysics, appeared coherently to Severino the *True Solution*, to which metaphysics had attempted to oppose by affirming the existence of the Immutable beyond becoming.

The next step we want to take in this paper is to show some essential elements of Heideggerian thought that, for Severino, had to be taken out with theoretical acumen to justify the thesis of Heidegger's positive contribution to the construction of metaphysical knowledge.

2. The metaphysics of *Dasein* and the search for metaphysical knowledge

In a passage from *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, which serves as a passage to the last part of the book, we read: "Metaphysics of *Dasein* is the very essence of this, which destines man to the search of the answer why. But the radically developed research leads to the absolute Foundation of the provisional foundations that Heidegger's investigation has so far illuminated" (Severino, 1994, p. 322). With the expression "provisional foundations" Severino refers to some *foundations* of Givenness (which acts as "methodological foundation" of metaphysical investigation), but which, in a later consideration, fall from such a rank. It's about the "ontical foundation" and the "ontological foundation", which are respectively the objective condition (the act of Being) and the subjective condition (the subject manifesting) of the *appearing* of being, but that do not constitute *the absolute condition* of the "Being" of the being (see Severino, 1994, pp. 255-256). With regard to Heidegger, it should be noted that in *Being and Time* the function of ontological foundation is performed by *Dasein*, which is in relation to physical being not according to "power" (in relation to its act of Being), but only according to "conscience" (with regard to its manifestation). Severino states: "the opening of *Dasein* corresponds to the classic concept of *conscience*, as it goes beyond any gnoseologicistic prejudice" (Severino, 1994, p. 255), that is, the one that had characterized modern thought before the advent of German idealism.

The development of the "Metaphysics of *Dasein*" offered in the book of 1927, was considered by Severino the greatest contribution of Heidegger to metaphysics, whose "*methodological*" character must be specified. As I said, it was analogous – but now I would add that, in some ways, an even greater importance was recognized by Severino – to the methodological contribution for the restoration of metaphysics that Gustavo Bontadini had been able to grasp in the thought of Giovanni Gentile. Thus, this contribution was summarized by Severino in the following terms: "The 'meta-

physics' of *Dasein*, as a radical finitude of the latter, makes the fundamental question of classical metaphysics possible, which asks about the absolute Foundation of the factual standing of being" (*ibid.*).

The first moment of the investigation which, in this regard, should be carried out more analytically than is possible here, concerns the clarification of the precise configuring of the "finitude" of *Dasein*, which is equivalent to the highlighting of the "Metaphysics of *Dasein*" and what is implicit in it. The understanding of the "essence" of *Dasein* limited to what emerges from *Being and Time* – specifying, therefore: not yet the understanding of its "metaphysical essence" – according to the Severinian interpretation of Heideggerian thought, "urges to ask what even Heidegger recognizes as the fundamental problem of metaphysics: 'Why is there being and why not rather Nothing?'" (Severino, 1994, p. 322). Although in very synthetic terms, it must be further explained that the finitude of *Dasein* that is highlighted here implies its "unfoundedness", which opens to the search for *whence* and *towards where* of *Dasein* itself. Such a finitude is affirmed, first of all, because *Dasein* is *manifestative* of being, but it has no *power* over it. Therefore *Dasein*, already for this reason, that is, because it leaves unfounded being (which it manifests) in its "onticity" – according to the convincing interpretation that Severino gave of Heidegger in his book of 1950 – cannot be absolutized. Secondly, *Dasein* cannot be the absolute foundation of being even by looking at itself, at its Being "being". For this very reason, *the Problem* – which is a metaphysical problem – needs a response. Hence, for Severino, the famous Heideggerian question arose: "Why is there being and why not rather Nothing?". On the other hand, the perspective explicated by Heidegger regarding the meaning of such a question, without excluding – since it stands on a different plane – the one on which I am relying in this paper, is indicated in the last few paragraphs of the 1949 "Introduction" to his 1929 Prolusion (see Heidegger, 1998, p. 290).

The second moment of an investigation that intends to "repeat" the *way* proposed by Severino in *Heidegger and the Metaphysics*, is closely connected to the first one. It consists in showing that the analyses of *Being and Time* lead to the thesis that time constitutes the "sense of Being of *Dasein*" (see Severino, 1994, p. 264) – of *Dasein*, let us repeat it, not of "Being in general" – and such clarification sheds its precious light on the inherent question of the Heideggerian position on the meaning of *Being* as such.

By this we mean that, similarly to what Heidegger affirms in *Being and Time* about the essence of man, not even the analyses of "temporality" lead

to a thesis of a “metaphysical” order and, in this case, to a thesis about the relationship between time and Being in which it is affirmed that *Being as such* is “time” and, therefore, is finite – according to an interpretation about Heidegger which is, however, still very widely accepted. On the contrary, those analyses show, on the one hand, that the temporality on which the Being of *Dasein* is based, in the unity of the three ecstases of the present, the past and the future, stands as “the unit of methodological foundation, ontical foundation and ontological foundation” (Severino, 1994, p. 259; for further study on these three areas of the foundation structure, the respective meanings of which have been indicated above, see Severino, 1994, pp. 254–261); and, on the other hand, that temporality itself “is nothing other than thought in its immanence to the real and in its transcendental to this one”: that is, that “time is *human thought*, in its finiteness, in its non-power over the manifested” and, consequently, that “time is the same *horizon* within which metaphysics can reach its decisive results” (Severino, 1994, p. 268; italics are mine). Once again, Severino detached himself from the understanding of a Heidegger “closed” in his *existentialism* and of which, instead, one came to show the objective openness to metaphysical knowledge.

The next step we are about to take will allow us to broaden the horizon of Severino’s Heideggerian interpretation, casting at least a first glance at what the Brescian philosopher intended to highlight by focusing attention on the Heideggerian concept of “Being”.

3. Heideggerian Being, Being of metaphysics and becoming

Within this interpretative project of Heideggerian philosophy, a theme of great importance was constituted by a specific “oscillation” that the young Severino found critically in Heidegger and that in the “Foreword” at the republishing of his 1950 book shows that it acquired even greater importance. The oscillation concerns the relationship “Being – being”, therefore the relationship of the ontological with the ontical. Severino wrote in 1994: “‘Being’, for Heidegger, is the *transcendens*; that is, it ‘transcends’ being, while always remaining Being-of-being; but this transcendence tends to be constituted, in Heidegger, as a separation of ‘Being’ with respect to the whole of being; so that “Being”, so separate, is no longer something that can be grasped phenomenologically, but something that must be

achieved by a metaphysical-metempirical inference” (Severino, 1994, p. 25).

Both in the same period of time when the book *Heidegger and Metaphysics* was composed, and in later times also very recent, Severino was strongly critical of the affirmation of this Heideggerian thesis about the “transcendence” of *Being* with respect to beings. If we refer to Severino’s new position, this *transcendence* is nothing more than the Being of Heideggerian “ontological difference” which – Severino always notes – beyond the knowledge that Heidegger himself may have, “is the way in which it is necessary to think about the relationship between ‘Being’ and ‘being’ if one wants to avoid the denial of the evident existence [for Heidegger] of becoming” (Severino, 2006, p. 119). Severino here means to say that Heideggerian Being, unlike full Being – the Immutable – of the metaphysical-theological tradition, is not the “ontical foundation” of beings implied by their appearing, to the point that Heidegger can say of *Being* that it is “not foundation”, i.e. it is *Abgrund*; but precisely because Being is so understood, it is congruent to “becoming” of beings: Being of Heideggerian ontological difference, *the Abgrund*, is for Severino the “letting-be” *becoming* of beings (understood as *beginning to be* and *ceasing to be* of beings). This is a criticism that, although it is based on the reference to the way which Heidegger, in the aftermath of *Being and Time*, proceeded to affirm the thesis of “ontological difference”, is evidently constituted in the horizon of the radical criticism matured by Severino at the “nihilistic” root of Western philosophy, because of the nihilistic interpretation, offered by the latter, about “becoming” of beings (cf. Messinese, 2018, pp. 245-266).

If we look instead at the kind of criticism that, immediately after the publication of his book on Heidegger in 1950, Severino came to formulate in a short Note of 1953 on this same point (see Severino, 1994b, pp. 347-353), the “material” content of his critical remarks to Being as *transcendens* is the same, but its theoretical context was clearly different, as Severino was still of the opinion that Heidegger’s contribution to the resumption of classical metaphysics – which for the Brescian philosopher, always keeping this in mind, then constituted the content of philosophical truth – was substantially valid. In that 1953 Note, one of the observations is, in fact, that Heidegger “often insists on the ‘aprioriness’ of ontological knowledge and its ‘independence’ from the ontical truth, in a Kantian way” (Severino, 1994b, p 347). But in that same paper, in tune with one of the theses of *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, Severino also presented a “benevolent” interpretation of this *transcendens*. This latter one, in fact, while on the one

hand was criticized as an erroneous hypostatization of *Being* separated from beings – that is, as the hypostatization of the *presence* of beings, without there being “being in its totality” – so that Being is grasped as “being”, however, thanks to what Severino called the “theoretical development” (see *ibid.*) offered by him in the book on Heidegger of 1950, *transcendens* was intended in positive terms. Noting that “it is legitimate to ask what this being [i.e. *transcendens*] is” (Severino, 1994b, p. 352), Severino believes it should be understood as the “transcendental capacity of manifesting” being (*ibid.*) that characterizes *Dasein*: that is, as what, in *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, had been called the “ontological foundation” of Givenness or experience and which had been indicated as an equivalent of the psychological dimension (or, in Aristotelian terms, of “soul”).

Conclusions

The conclusions of the twofold set of considerations set out in the second and third paragraphs, in order to remain within a Severinian hermeneutical as regards the issues addressed, may be as follows.

In the perspective of a *valorization* of Heideggerian thought in relation to a contemporary revival of metaphysics, the *transcendens* to look at, while bearing in mind Severino’s critique above indicated about a hypostatization of Being in Heidegger, is the constitutive “transcendence” of *Dasein* – which in the 1950 book is qualified by the Brescian philosopher as the “possibility” of asking the metaphysical question (that is: “why being and not rather Nothing?”). Heidegger, thus, appears as the one who “clears the way” to metaphysics in its traditional sense. In short, following such a perspective, one should basically “repeat” the speculative effort contained in Severino’s *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, which is to point out within Heideggerian thought the “methodological” foundation of metaphysical knowledge, although then Severino’s new theoretical position would now prohibit it.

Instead, in the perspective of wanting to emphasize including Heidegger’s thought as part of Western philosophy’s *nihilism*, according to the subsequent hermeneutic perspective introduced by Severino, looking at the Heideggerian *transcendence* we can see – but taking our distance immediately afterwards – the Being of “ontological difference”, that is, Being as the condition of possibility of becoming (nihilistic) of beings: that *be-*

coming because of which it is impossible to affirm the existence of the immutable Being, the eminent content of metaphysical knowledge. Obviously, it is this second aspect of *transcendens* that Severino invited us to look at from a certain moment on, as one of the contemporary examples of *forgetting* the truth of Being; that is, of *forgetting* the truth of the “Being-itself” of beings, whose affirmation leads to the sunset of the Immutable of metaphysics and, albeit unconsciously, awaits the sunset of the “technological paradise”.

However, Severino himself had also pointed out that, in Heidegger’s attempt to go *beyond* being, therefore in that *transcendens* which he himself criticized for its objective nihilistic implication, there is an echo of Heidegger’s “search for the divine” (see Severino, 2008, p. 167). In this way, it is as if Severino returns to look at Heideggerian *transcendens* – at Being – and to see there the entity that no longer corresponds to the classical “psychological dimension”, but to the “theological” one: to God. On the other hand, as we know, for Severino there can be no “search” for the divine, given that *every being is “divine”*. Thus, in spite of this serious observation, for our part we can, however, ask ourselves: what if the meaning of metaphysical “research” was not that, with a nihilistic flavor, of those who consider that the “original” – the original truth – is constituted by the Problem? Therefore, what if the search were not about the question of *whether* God exists, but rather about the answer to the question that develops the original knowledge, namely, “*Who is God?*”? In this case, Severino’s last remark, that I mentioned, could be come a cue for placing Heidegger’s “ontological difference” – whose criticality has been pointed out – in the background; and to put again in the foreground Severino’s youthful valorization of “metaphysics of *Dasein*” as an opening (or foundation in the Heideggerian sense) to metaphysics. The latter could thus receive an unprecedented “resumption”, consisting in justifying the statement of the metaphysical-theological difference as an answer to the question “*Who is God?*” (see Messinese, 2017, pp. 231-251).

This, however, is evidently a further discourse, which could properly be entitled “from the original metaphysicality of *Dasein* to the original metaphysics”. And therefore, once we have come to highlight the aforementioned point, it is well to end this paper.

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The Indifference of Being. Parmenides, Heidegger and Severino

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Parmenides represents the meeting point and conflict between two perspectives, the Heideggerian and the Severinian one. The return of Heidegger and Severino to Parmenides helps to evoke a being who does not differ and establishes the welcoming space of ontological transit. The circumstance therefore aligns Heidegger with Severino's attempt to conceive being without being, that is, being without difference, in the direction of the indifferent. Here, however, Heidegger's and Severino's path would seem to diverge – Severino is convinced of this. The paper aims to introduce the essential elements to start this comparison.

Keywords

Heidegger, Severino, Parmenides, Being, Nothingness, Indifference, Difference

1.

Severino and Heidegger (but I ought to add at least Gentile as well) share the persuasion that being is nothing but the being of entities. Besides, the fall of being into the entity represents the essential hallmark of contemporary philosophy (so to speak), which seeks to variously explore this fall.

I have written *persuasion*, to allude to *Peitho*, upon which – according to Parmenides (who actually sets out in another direction) – “truth attends” (Parmenides, 2009: fr. 2, 4). The being of the entity is *true*, so much so that to speak of *being* is to immediately point to the entity as *that-which-is*. When turned into the entity, however, being (which is precisely the being of the entity) is not simply the entity: for in being this, the entity – once it has carved out a suitable place for itself – vanishes in the indistinctness of being, which prevents any distinction (and simply is not). Being is therefore the being of the entity which, in the entity, diverges from itself and, while being, *is not*. In what sense?

Severino and Heidegger both draw attention to *appearance*: the *not* which being is in the entity, is its appearance (the appearance of the entity). This appearance is precisely identical to the entity because, unlike the entity, it is not something, but rather the entity’s non-existent coming to light and imposing itself. The *not* underpins the entity because the entity appears (and not in an abstract way): the being of the entity is that being which appears in the guise of the entity and hence releases a wide range of meanings (e.g. table, bottle, etc.). As already noted, being turns into the entity: the appearance of being therefore coincides with the being that appears, in the guise of the entity, without rejects or residues, but it is necessary to stress once again that the entity does not coincide with being; not because the entity is not, but precisely insofar as, in appearing, it appears and disappears.

With Severino and Heidegger we must therefore conclude that being *is and is not*, but only because the entity, in being, appears and disappears.

The phenomenological process, however, is destined to remain ambiguous until we establish the meaning of the *not* which thus pertains to the entity that makes itself evident. We must bear in mind that in Heidegger's background there lies Husserlian phenomenology, just as in Severino's background there lies Gentilean actualism (which from the start he viewed in the light of Heidegger's phenomenology). To argue that appearance is the *not* of the entity is to point to the identity of Being and Nothingness on which Gentile and Heidegger indeed dwelt, followed by Severino, by approaching the first Hegelian triad when dealing with Parmenides.

In this respect, the "quiet becoming" that Severino (Severino, 2020, p. 175) detects in Hegelian Being meets Gentile's actual "becoming" (Gentile, 1954, p. 11), which, insofar as it refers to an "unchanging" Being, does not need to grow quiet; but it also converges with Heidegger's idea of the "essence" of Being, which "makes itself known" in the existence of *Da-sein* (Heidegger, 1998, p. 87). In the wake of the *Science of Logic*, it was therefore a matter of entrusting ontology to the passing – the having already passed – of Being-Nothing *into* Nothing-Being, which, being everlasting, bore witness to the coming and going of entities.

What I am trying to suggest is that, along this path, the overcoming-fulfilment of Parmenidean Eleatism, evoked by the whole history of Western philosophy, passes through the narrow gates of a discourse which, by emancipating itself from Idealism, assigns Being the consistency of the spectator of every spectacle – past, present, and future. In this sense, given that the oblique reference to the transcendental realm of Husserlian-Gentilean inspiration, Heidegger and Severino's *return* to Parmenides does not at all consist in a theoretical, preliminary, or preparatory operation. Rather, it consists in the adoption of a primal experience which, by distinguishing the entities in being, *does not differ* and establishes the welcoming space of ontological *transit*.

2.

Severino writes: "‘Difference’ is that which has brought itself into something else, crossing the distance separating it from itself and from that other into which it has brought itself. [...] This “difference” (something different from another thing) is the outcome of ‘becoming’, of ‘movement’. ‘Differences’, in other words, are the ‘things’ that manifest themselves in

the world. They are indeed a becoming-other, having become other” (Severino, 2007, pp. 134-135).

Severino’s *being*, which distances itself from the wound (*dif-ference*, from *fero, ferio*) of the becoming other, and which overcomes the world’s obstacles, therefore displays the features of the *Indifferent*. But what is truly “radical” – to quote Severino’s own words – is the “violence” that language – which is called to bear witness to the “destiny” of the entity – must exercise upon itself in order to indicate “the inflexible, the unwounded, the not-different” (Severino, 2007, p. 139). Besides, the being evoked by Severino, particularly from *Returning to Parmenides* onwards, represents the *negation* of being which Western ontology – conveyed through the primordial wisdom of language – has established at the centre of the philosophical stage. According to the Indo-European roots that convey its meaning, “being” bears an essential reference to “differing”, which Severino deems responsible for the “folly” of the Western metaphysical project, marked by the paradoxical search – beyond the primal differing of being – for that “entity which does not differ and is not the outcome of any differing”.

According to Severino, therefore, *being* means that which, in being, does *not* differ – without the *not* here alluding to any differing. In other words, for the being envisaged by Severino, *not* differing means *negating* the difference that afflicts the *things* in the world evoked by philosophical thought, i.e. it means, for being, negating one’s own differing from the differing of the world. Indeed, by differing from the world, being would amount to a difference and *not* to the indifferent (the not-different). By contrast, Severino’s indifference of being, insofar as it alludes to the “not-different”, contains the *not*, so to speak, and thereby displays the concrete *negation* of difference: not the *external* negation which the “determined” devised by the West is always called to represent (*omnis determinatio est negatio*), but the *internal* one which, by abiding *in* the determined, spares the determined the outrage of the *not*.

Severino’s being, in other words, invites us to approach the idea of the internal negation (the “primal” negation, as Bertrando Spaventa wrote, reforming Hegelian Nothingness) which, by pointing to *nothingness*, emancipates itself from differing and from the external negation that accompanies it: precisely that *being* which, by not being (for it is the *not* of difference), is and imposes itself through its being evident in the guise of the *entity*. Indeed, being is the totality of entities, the undeniable fullness of the primal spectacle on which – as Parmenides puts it – mortals set “eyes that

do not see” (if not the differing of the different). With no leap or hesitation, being – insofar as it has always coincided with the entity (i.e. that-which-is) manifesting itself to any gaze capable of imposing itself – bears witness to the abstract part of a whole that, as such, is destined to remain concealed. And it is precisely the primal concealment of being (which, in being, appears) that leads “mortals” to see in the manifest entity that difference which heralds the folly of crossing the ontological abyss: the *not* of appearance, in which difference disappears, thus shows the difficult and elusive features of *nothingness*.

Now, according to Severino, once entrusted to the steady care of the *indifferent* which denies itself, in order *not* to differ, the entity finally escapes that ontological *indifference* which in his view instead afflicts the “world”, which is forgetful of being. The *world*, evoked by philosophy, announces the indifference of the differing entity, thereby crossing the infinite distance separating being and nothingness. In this respect, according to Severino, the indifference of being averts the indifference of the entity (the different) with respect to itself and the other-from-itself, to which it thus ultimately yields, becoming absent, without ever having been. Given all this, the different differs from itself and *therefore* is not at all (although once we have lost sight of the absurdity to which it makes itself open, it is precisely the different that heralds the endless and impossible search for the indifferent called to keep it within being). By taking the “path of day”, Severino’s *return to Parmenides* ends up making room for the firmly self-enveloped entity and for the gaze that grasps it once and for all: not the different (*from* being) indifferent (to being and nothingness), but the different (*of* being or *in* being) which does not differ (and therefore is always spared from nothingness).

3.

Heidegger’s notion of ontological difference in a way follows the same path, insofar as it invites us to think of that being which lies forgotten behind entities. Certainly, Severino stresses the fact that, in its attempt to establish *being* and *appearance* on the same level and in the footsteps of Husserlian phenomenology, this ontological difference represents “a model for the attempt (comparable to the neo-positivistic one) to purge the meaning ‘being’ from genuine philosophical language” (Severino,

2007, p. 319). According to this perspective, therefore, Heidegger's being – traced back to “appearance” – approaches the differing of the world by translating it into its coming to light, crossing the boundary separating it from the concealment invariably destined to always enclose the visibility of entities. By disappearing and appearing, the differing of the world both is not and is.

This circumstance, however, brings Heidegger in line with Severino's challenge of envisaging being *without* being, i.e. being *without* difference, in the direction of the indifferent. It alludes precisely to the need to reach, along this path, the *not* of each entity, which – without referring to an other entity above the first – “essentially unfolds (*west*) as appearing” (Heidegger, 2000, pp. 217 and 107). Heidegger's being differs from the entity insofar as it *is not* the differing entity, moving out of its concealment. Precisely by not differing (or differing differently from the entity which differs from being), *it gives itself* (*Es gibt*).

Heidegger too, then, announces his attempt to emphasise the role of the *not*, which being is, as that which, by being caught in oblivion, paves the way for its forgetful negation of itself: “The ‘not’ does not originate through negation; rather, negation is grounded in the ‘not’” (Heidegger, 1998, p. 92). And what is the *not* directed at? In what sense can we say that it *grounds* the negation of which the different takes hold by falling – and it is precisely by taking hold of it that it falls – into the eddy of becoming? The *not* – to begin to answer these two questions – is directed at that “nihilation of the nothing” (Heidegger, 1998, p. 92) displayed by being, which leads Heidegger to turn his gaze towards Parmenides, in view of that being which, in being, grounds *nothing*.

Insofar as it the *tautótes* of *eînai* and *noên*, which according to the Eleatic philosopher are indeed *the same* (Parmenides, 1991, fr. 3), being enigmatically diverges from itself, *before* any “before” and any “becoming” that witness difference. Ontological difference thus extends beyond ontic difference, whereby an entity is not other from itself, making ontic difference the outcome of a *distraction*: it is not the entity that imposes itself, but being (which is the genuine appearance of the entity).

However, according to Heidegger, if being *is* the appearance of the entity, appearance – by showing the entity – does not entirely turn into the entity which appears: a reject remains. How are we to interpret this? Here Heidegger's path and Severino's would appear to diverge – and Severino is convinced of this. By pushing the discourse beyond Husserl's Ego, beyond Kant and Descartes, Heidegger's challenge – not least through its reference

to the dawn of philosophy – stresses how, in celebrating the world’s visibility and its incessant differing (with Hegel, and in the wake of the crisis of dialectical thought), contemporary thinkers omit the essential. This silence is unavoidable, since there is no voice of being which – by removing any appropriation to which the entity, as the guardian of the own, lays claim (*Ereignis*) – does not confirm it, amid the din of the world.

The silence of being, in other words, would appear to allude to the irruption of that *nothing* which the indifferent continues to leave outside itself, in differing from the entity. It thus seems to Severino that Heidegger’s indifference remains within the entity, in the guise of a difference, thereby pushing the whole discourse towards that “pure and empty” being which – prior to any philosophical appeal to the things of the world – Parmenides removes from the primal spectacle of experience.

Parmenides, then, represents the point of encounter and conflict between two perspectives, the Heideggerian and Severinian. According to Severino, it is necessary to come to terms with Parmenides and with the nothingness that his Poem for the first time ambiguously introduced within the sphere of *logos*. In other words, it is necessary to *return* to Parmenides – not simply to *turn towards* him (I should recall that, at his 1973 Zähringen seminar, Heidegger, in all likelihood alluding to Severino, remarked: “it is not a question of returning (*zurückzukehren*) to Parmenides. Nothing more is required than to *turn towards* (*zuzukehren*) Parmenides”: Heidegger, 2003, p. 77).

Returning to Parmenides means structuring the primal imposing itself of that being which appears (as the totality of entities, which appear and disappear). In its “simplicity”, to which indifference ultimately alludes, being *becomes complicated* in the entities *destined* to immutably portray its features. *Turning towards Parmenides* instead means approaching – yet never reaching – the “simplicity” of a Being that leaves ontic *complications* to the whims of nothingness, mere nothingness, to be filled through a *leap*. Therefore, by evoking the “simplicity” of being Severino notes that while “Hegel [...] directly affirms the simplicity of ‘being’, which thus remains an assumption”, “neither does Heidegger go beyond this direct affirmation.” This means that without such a radical engagement with the ontology of the Eleatic philosopher (and hence with Hegel), the *different* – with “all the connotations of the ‘simply null’ from which Heidegger [...] wishes to distance himself – and all the aporias which are raised by the ‘simply null’ [...] resurface, and do so in their not having been clarified and resolved” (Severino, 2013, p. 347).

4.

The ambiguousness of Heidegger's "nihilism", which is inconsistent with the outcomes that Severino identifies in Leopardi, Nietzsche, and Gentile, rather seems to confirm Heidegger's adherence to the Western philosophical project (as revealed by Severino – an ally of the German philosopher at the time – in his graduation thesis). However, it also strongly evokes the need to *slow down* our journey along the path traced by Hegel and modern thinkers, all the way down to Nietzsche, whose philosophy ought to be regarded as the most mature outcome of that metaphysical thought which can be traced back to the Greeks.

Heidegger and Severino are both involved in the failure of Western philosophy (*Being and Time* and *The Essence of Nihilism* reveal – each in its own way – an awareness of this failure). Both, while denouncing the stalemate of reason, look to Nothingness and to the overcoming of "logic" in view of a path that finally makes it possible to approach it, via the establishment of the truth of Being. For both philosophers, it is necessary to envisage the *undeniable*, by bearing witness to it precisely *as* indifference, with and beyond Parmenides. Besides, "[t]here stand the gates of the paths of night and day" (Parmenides, 2009, fr. 1, 11).

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Aristotle, Leopardi, Severino: the Endless Game of Nothingness¹

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As Aristotle knew all too well, not being is an equivocal concept. This indeterminate character of nothingness turns out to be the main enemy of the principle of non-contradiction, especially due to its affinity to «chimeras» and poetic metaphors (Leopardi's «things that are not things»). There is an age old philosophical debate about nothingness, at times to defend the reasons for the eternity of being, at others to disprove them. In particular, the work of Emanuele Severino throws some light on the dispute between two giants of thought, Aristotle and Leopardi, with whom the neo-Parmenidean philosopher debated from an impartial position. The article provides food for thought in support of the indefinite and disturbing character – positive, yet 'apocalyptic' – of nothingness. What emerges is the ability of not being to resist both the univocal idea of nihil absolutum, as well as to the closure of a game in which the destiny of beings and the very sense of time remain at stake.

Keywords:

Nothing(ness), Indefinite, Contingency, Destiny, Nihilism, Time, Eternity, Contradiction, Apocalypse, Redemption

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1. The dawning of an aporia

Eternity is a child playing, moving the
pieces across the chessboard.

HERACLITUS

Inasmuch as it is saved from nothingness, the immutable inevitably evokes before us the disturbing abyss that philosophical reason has always tried to remove, in order to guarantee a reassuring *ubi consistam*. As we shall see, the swaying figures of non-being are debating over two great and adverse paradigms that have marked the parable of Western thought, emblematically represented by Aristotle and Leopardi. At the dawning of classical metaphysics, the Stagirite indicated the way to salvation *in* being and *in* the truth. Reversing this path, on the other hand, the philosopher from Recanati finds a scape-route *from* the truth and *from* the evil of being, in nothingness. Severino (2015) gives a compelling allegory in this respect, the «game» of chess involves two opponents: a «White Player» and a «Black Player». The White Player is a generic supporter of western civilisation, believer in the Eternals (here, Aristotle), whereas the Black is represented by Leopardi, who, ahead of Nietzsche, would win easily, overthrowing the entire metaphysical tradition (see Severino, 2015). Severino places very few other «inhabitants of the subsoil» alongside Leopardi, along the line of the 'consistency' of nihilism: Nietzsche and Giovanni Gentile (all three, thus, counter-figures of the Black Player). Emanuele Severino then demonstrates how Leopardi shares with Aristotle the nihilistic faith in becoming (from) other, and therefore the situation of playing on the same chessboard «built by the «White Player» (Severino, 2015, p. 11). The apparent checkmate given to Aristotle by Leopardi (just like with any other White Player) does not, therefore, close the game of nihilism (*ibid.*, p. 175). And hence the need to shift the game to a higher level from which both the Black and

the White player might appear on the same plane and on the very same chessboard of «the Erring» (*ibid.*, p. 183), come «*Players in the game of becoming other*» (*ibid.*, p. 187).

Thus, Severino reduces the «madness» of nihilism (the idea that the entity is nothing) to a perpetual game of chess between being and nothingness (becoming), in the presence of a «Third Player» and stone guest: the undeniable «Destiny of the truth». After lengthy comparisons with Aristotle and with Leopardi, Severino can therefore declare that game finished, having resolved the enigma of Fredegiso on the nothingness (Severino, 2007³, chap. 4; 2013a, p. 107; see Cusano 2011) and having unveiled the apocalyptic secret of the *Seventh Seal* which envelops the mysterious destiny of mortals. Of course, we allude to Bergman's film of the same name (where the famous image of the game of chess against destiny appears), but, more precisely, to the inspiration, in a certain sense both eschatological and 'apocalyptic' that begins with *The Glory* (Severino, 2001, pp. 549-551). By sheer coincidence, Bergman's *Seventh Seal* appears in the same year (1956) in which the neo-Parmenidean philosopher 'discovers' or rather, 'reveals' the eternity of beings (Severino, 1956, pp. 1-25). In the face of such a formidable solution (which also claims to checkmate all forms of nihilism), a number of questions, nevertheless, remain open, starting from that polyvocality of nothingness of which the Greeks were already well aware, and which was to re-emerge in the modern age, especially from Kant onwards. Admitting then that the respective positions of Aristotle and Leopardi might be considered nihilistic, in the Severinian sense, the fact remains that the two thinkers – respectively at the dawning and sunset of classical metaphysics – respectively present two, not univocal, visions of nothingness. Paraphrasing Shakespeare, one might say that there are more *non*-things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in any philosophy. In a way, nothing is far less than nothingness. It was Anaximander, the founder of Greek wisdom, to first think the power of nothingness and of the opposites in ἀρχή, the infinite possibility, the abyss of the «indefinite» (Aristotle, *Physics*, 204-205; *Metereological*, 340A 16). As we know, those such as Cusano, Leopardi, Schelling, and Heidegger (to name just a few of the key figures), would revisit, from various stances, the very same well of Saint Patrick. Although it is a little-known fact, the theory that everything becomes nothing from nothingness is a metaphysical theorem, already clearly enunciated by the sophist, Xenias of Corinth: «he said [...] that everything that is generated is generated by not being, and everything that is destroyed is annihilated by not being» (DK, 81; see

Untersteiner, 1996, p. 241). Xenias is not the only ancient thinker to have made the unconscious «nihilism» of the Greeks explicit, if it is true that Democritus too was able to declare that «μὴ μᾶλλον τὸ δὲν ἢ τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι», i.e. «the thing does not exist more than no-thing» (DK, fr. B 156). With Plato, we enter the scene of the metaphysical struggle between being and nothingness. The battle between those who supported everything as immobile and those who supported the flow appear in the *Theaetetus* (179D-181B), even before then in the famous gigantomachy described in the *Sophist* (245E-249D) between the proponents of flowing matters and the supporters of immobile forms. In this contest between being and nothingness, represented by the «tug of war» (*Theaetetus*, 180E-181A), Plato, in fact, puts the Parmenideans on the one side and the varied array of supporters of Heraclites on the other, maintaining a *super partes* position for himself. As we know, with his refutation (ἐλεγχος) of the sophist, in the dialogue of the same name, Plato puts in place the first big move to dispel the spectre of nothingness, embodying it and hypostatizing it in the conceptual form of ἔτερον. And yet, according to the neo-Parmenidean philosopher, the «absolute not being» remains barely «prospect-ed» by Plato, who leaves its aporia substantially unresolved (cf. Severino, 2007³, p. 210; Severino, 2013a, p. 106), without really managing to overcome the Parmenidean prohibition (Severino, 1985). Indeed, strictly speaking, it is a «parricide missed» (Severino, 1980, p. 150). The refutation of falsehood (and therefore of nothingness), had been a necessary move for Plato to arrive at founding a dynamic ontology, such as the one proposed in the *Sophist*. It was, therefore, necessary to flush the sophist out from his final refuge, represented by nothingness and by the impossibility to enunciate falsehood. But, in order to recognise the sophistic position as false (and therefore contradictory), it was necessary to circumscribe, and therefore somehow determine, nothingness, giving consistency to falsehood and to non-being, given that there is no *falsehood* where *non-being is not posed or not supposed*. The need to pose non-being in order to base a discourse on being is all, therefore, already implicit in Plato. With Aristotle, the truth returns to guarantee salvation in the eternal: not only have we always been safe from nothingness, as the Greek wise men of the 5th century B.C. thought (*Metaphysics*, 983B 13), but we find ourselves, right from the outset, «in the truth» (*Metaphysics*, 1061B 35). Being safe from nothingness, the truth of being, in turn, saves us from nothingness. The fact that we are always «in the truth» is precisely what Aristotle intends to guarantee through the essential character (διορισμός) of the most stable

principle (*βεβαιότητα ἀρχή*), in other words, the impossibility of finding oneself mistaken (Severino, 2005, pp. 24-25; 2013a, p. 35). But then again, how might this principle hold true without nothingness, or even without denial (see Severino 2007³, p. 211; 1980, p. 467)?

2. Aristotle's occult adversary

The ambiguity of nothingness in Aristotle is a mirror of the indefiniteness of being (Aubenque, 2017, p. 232). In fact, the polyvocality of being symmetrically corresponds with that of non-being: «being is given multiple meanings» even in the evidently negative sense of «corruption» of «deprivation» and of «negation» (*Metaphysics*, 1003B 5-10). «Wherefore» Aristotle clarifies, «also, the non-entity we pronounce to be non-entity» (*Metaphysics*, 1003B 9-10), or at least, so «some say» even if in a dialectic sense (*Metaphysics*, 1030A 26). The ancient aporia of nothingness, raised by Plato in the *Sophist* (237A; 256A) is subsequently reformulated by Aristotle (see Severino, 2007³, p. 210). In this attempt to conceptualise nothingness, the Stagirite betrayed a certain debt to his teacher (Plato), who had first conceived of not being as just being something definite, rather than absolute nothingness (in the Parmenidean manner). A passage from *Metaphysics* remains exemplary, in which the determination of being as much as nothingness is upheld so as to safeguard the principles of non-contradiction: «the terms «being» and «not being» have a defined meaning: accordingly, not everything can be this way, and, likewise, not in this way» (*Metaphysics*, 1006A 29-31; cf. *Physics*, 187A 5-6). On the other hand, one can understand the polemics conducted by Aristotle against the archaïcising approach attributed to Plato, which would have brought the birth of all things back to the two abstract and indeterminate principles of being and of nothingness (*Metaphysics*, 1089A).

As we will see, Aristotle battles against the spectres of the indeterminate, mobilising, together with the «most stable principle», the other cornerstone of his own metaphysics: that «form» (*εἶδος*) that never leaves matter indeterminate, guaranteeing the identity of the entity. The «potential being» represents the most obvious example of the positive transposition of nothingness, where the so-called «raw material» remains in the background like the concept-limit of the irreducibly undetermined. The nature of movement also remains undefined, which, in fact, for the Stagirite «can neither be situated amongst the realities in potency, nor

amongst those that are in act» (*Physics*, 201B-202A), therefore being unintelligible. Similarly, space is negatively defined as *neither* matter *nor* form (cf. *Physics*, 209B-210A). The double negative form (*neither* power *nor* act, *neither* matter *nor* form) which, in Aristotle, is conferred to space, and change, therefore, takes on the undecidable trait of platonic *χώρα*. Aristotle therefore strives to neutralise the intractable, disturbing and insidious character of the in-determined, whose uncontrolled and virulent charge is thus translated as far as possible into a positive key: at times as «potential being» at others as a *definite* negation of this or that category, and so on. But this attempt at conceptual ‘taming’ runs fatally against the irreducibly indefinite nature of nothingness, which often reveals the traits of the undecidable.

The indeterminateness of non-being is denounced by the fact that it can be said in so many ways and with various meanings (*Metaphysics*, 1089A, 1067B 25-27 and *passim*; *Physics*, 225A 20-23; see Dorion, 2006, p. 81). In addition to non-being given to mean «potentiality» and «generation» the Stagirite lists two other forms of nothingness in *Metaphysics* (1051A-B, 1069B, 1089A): non-being according to each category (for example, «non-man», «non-white», etc.) and non-being, meant as «false», i.e. *not* true (*Metaphysics*, 1024B 31-32; *The Sophistical Elenchi*, 166B -167A). Other negative figures, such as «privation» (*Physics*, 191B-192A; see Severino, 2005, p. 105) and «corruption» (*Physics*, 225A; *Generation and Corruption*, 317B; 319A) are also added to that short list. In a passage from *Metaphysics*, Aristotle goes on to clarify that «generation takes place» from «non-being» understood as «potentiality» (*Metaphysics*, 1089A 28-29). But more frequently, Aristotle’s non-being tends to take on the evasive physiognomy of the indeterminate, as clearly emerges in the book *Gamma* in *Metaphysics*. Strictly speaking, the indeterminate is not nothingness, as such, but rather a being that is «affected» by nothingness. The logical-ontological structure of the indeterminate refers, therefore, to the Platonic *ἐπαμφοτερίζειν*, that is, to that oscillation between being and nothingness, the double negation: «neither... nor...» (*Metaphysics*, 1008A). This undecidability is represented by the sophist, and it is not surprising that, through the *ἐλεγχος* of the book *Gamma*, Aristotle intends to capture the indomitable, disquieting, fleeting, figure of nothingness. Behind the mask of *ἀμφοισβητών* (the generic adversary and negativist objector), the indeterminate is actually hidden, the *ἀόριστον*, the true occult enemy of the Stagirite. And thus, Aristotle reveals a horror in the nothingness and «void» a *horror metaphysicus*, as yet unknown to the tragedians, to the

lyrists (one thinks of the doctrine of *μὴ φθῆναι*), as well as all those Greek thinkers, linked, in various ways, to the Orphic tradition (from Anaximander to Plato). Hence perhaps the Aristotelian removal of the theme of death in relation to the destiny of the soul.

As we have seen, Aristotle battled strenuously against the indeterminateness of nothingness. With his dialectical-confutative move of *ἔλεγχος*, he tried, with the bare minimum of determination, extorted from his opponent, to put the maximum indeterminacy out of the game (cf. Berto, 2006, pp. 222-224; 2010, pp. 228-232; Severino, 2010, p. 84). For the Stagirite, even before the Sophists, the indeterminate remains the refuge of certain, archaic thinkers, such as Anaxagoras and Anaximander: «it seems that these people speak in the indeterminate (*ἀόριστον*); and that while they believe they are speaking of being, in actual fact, they are speaking of non-being, because the indeterminate is potential being» (*Metaphysics*, 1007B 26-29).

A passage in book *Gamma*, recalled by Łukasiewicz (2003, p. 85), but questioned by Severino (2005, p. 97), states: «In power, it is possible that the very same thing is simultaneously opposites, but in effect, not» (*Metaphysics*, 1009A 35-36). The principle of non-contradiction, therefore, would not be valid for potential being, at least in the reading of Aristotle offered by Łukasiewicz, which does, however, seem to be corroborated by a passage from *Metaphysics* which reads: «Therefore, being capable [*δυνατόν*] admits both being, and not being; therefore, the same thing is capable of both being and not being» (*Metaphysics*, 1050B 11-13). Supporting the impossibility of contingency, in *Destiny of Necessity*, Severino analyses the Aristotelian expression *ὅποτερ' ἔτυχεν*, which – following on from the Platonic *ἐπαμφοτερίζειν* – introduces an insidious element of indeterminateness: «the contingent neither is, nor is not» (Severino, 1980, p. 73). The contingent entity «is not destined» either to being or to nothing: «it is not, nor will it be, this way rather than that way» (*On Interpretation*, 18B 9). This indeterminacy, poised between being and nothingness, would claim to be the supreme evidence of becoming, were it not for Severino who succeeds in showing how such a claimed evidence does not, in any way, represent a phenomenological content of appearance, but is rather the projection of a theoretic assumption than the reality that manifests itself (see Severino, 1980, p. 75).

In Aristotle, therefore, an important role is played by contingency, referred to by him with expressions such as *ενδεχόμενον*, *ὅποτερ' ἔτυχεν*, *δυνατόν* (Severino, 1980, p. 73 sgg.). *On Interpretation*, does not just deal

with the indeterminacy of particular expressions (such as «non-man»), that represent «neither a discourse nor a negation». Here, in fact, the same contingent entities appear to be indeterminate, as all sensitive substances, all the entities and phenomena of the sublunar sphere. Aristotle thus introduces the notion of contingent (*ενδεχομένον*) «but it appears that it is possible for the same thing both to be, and not to be» (*On Interpretation*, 21B 12). And so, indeterminacy reigns supreme in the well-known question of future contingents, which, according to some, would, from a distance, open the doors to the so-called polyvalent logics. We think, for example, of propositions such as: «Tomorrow there will be or there will not be a naval battle» (*On Interpretation*, 19A 30), the truth of which cannot be decided today, based on the principle of non-contradiction: «It is not necessary that everything that is, is, nor that everything that is not, is not. In fact, being, for the necessity of all that it is, when it is, is not the same as being absolutely for necessity of all that it is. The same thing is said of that which is not» (*On Interpretation*, 19A 24-27; see Severino, 2005, p. 31). Elsewhere, Severino notes the mirroring between the ‘cadence’ of the expressions «until when [...] until then» of fragment 15 of Empedocles and the afore-mentioned Aristotelian passage from *On Interpretation*, 19A (Severino, 1985, p. 69). In *Physics* (235B 15-16) Aristotle insists on this point: «It is necessary that everything either is, or is not» given that neither the realm of being, nor that of non-being, exhaust everything in our sensitive world. In fact, the Earth represents «the vainest part of all» (*Metaphysics*, 1010A 30), as if to say the most insignificant, regardless of how many people, later on, will point to the centre of the universe as the privileged point of being (Blumenberg, 2009, chap. 10). To the sphere of the contingent and the indeterminate, Aristotle also adds that vast field of the «accidental» and the «casual» which, being similar to the nature of nothingness, cannot be the subject of science (cf. *Metaphysics*, 1026B 21). On the contrary, for Severino (1979), the same vision of science remains linked to the nihilism of the «case» (in *Law and Case*, the randomness to which the same scientific theories would remain prey, are shown). The Aristotelian definition of accidental (*συμβεβηκός*) as «that which happens neither always nor for the most part» is well-known. In *Physics* (197A 8; 196B 28) there is also talk of «indeterminate causes» as well as «accidental causes» (see Wieland 1993, p. 326 sgg.).

The indeterminate therefore remains a ‘reserve’ that exceeds nothingness, the un-thought of par excellence, so much so that Aristotle likens it to a limit-concept such as raw material (which, like Anaximander’s infini-

ty, remains pure power of the opposites). It is not by chance that such a vagueness will give new breath to the theme of the «undecidable» in the twentieth century (think of Derrida).

3. The hendiadyc nothingness of Leopardi

Whereas, according to Aristotle, becoming cannot exist without eternity (cf. *Metaphysics*, 999B),² for Leopardi, becoming, on the contrary represents, the supreme evidence that allows us to deny any kind of eternity. So, between Aristotle (an accomplished expression of classical metaphysics), and Leopardi (the great precursor to contemporary philosophy), a sort of fatal chess game is played out, as already mentioned earlier (Severino, 2015). Reversing the Aristotelian scheme, Leopardi place becoming (and therefore, nothingness), as supreme evidence. «Take away the ideas» of Plato, in other words the reasoning of an over-sensitive world, and everything returns to contingency and the case: everything appears «without reason» based on nothingness (Severino, 1997, pp. 112-113). While in Aristotle the ways of the eternal are, so to speak, paved with the reason, in Leopardi they find themselves illuminated by the illusion, «because the nature of things still requires again that nothing be eternal» (*Zibaldone*, 166)³. To face the spectacle of nothingness (the only «eternal thing» in the chorus of *Federico Ruysch's mummies*), Leopardi resort first to nature and poetry (meant as «an almost last resort») and only after that to the «noble nature» of the genius, to that nature of «another species» (*CXI Thoughts*, I), able to unite the «true philosopher» and the «great poet». This complex figure is able to console us – albeit with an ephemeral spell – offering us the illusion of a fleeting salvation from nothingness. It must be acknowledged that Severino knew how to penetrate the evolution of «genius» and «contradiction» in Leopardi, like no-one else, from the very first passages of *Zibal-*

2 The Platonic scheme (the essence precedes the existence), reproduced in its own way by Aristotle, remains at the center of every kind of ontological argument. In my view, Leopardi inaugurates contemporary thought with its ontological 'counter-argument' (Capitano, 2016, pp. 545-551 and *passim*).

3 Referring to the *Zibaldone di pensieri* (*Zibaldone of Thoughts*), Severino always prefers the short title of *Pensieri* (*Thoughts*), which moreover recalls the first edition of the work: *Pensieri di varia filosofia e bella letteratura* (*Thoughts of Various Philosophy and Beautiful Literature*). Here we will mention *Zibaldone*.

done right up to the last verses of *Ginestra* (*The Broom*). Unlike Aristotle, who had sought an absolute principle to immunise us against nothingness, for Leopardi reason remains «the true mother and cause of nothingness» (*Zibaldone*, 2942). The very principle of non-contradiction begins to waver, limited to the sphere of man, starting from the zibaldonic notes of 1818 to the point of investing nature itself in the years of *Operette morali*. In Leopardi, reason does not protect us from nothing, rather it throws us into that truth of nothingness that remains the unheard secret of Silenus. But it is precisely here that the greatness of Leopardi lies: in contemplating the spectacle of nothingness, uniting philosophy with the illusory and visionary power of poetry. It is not by chance that Severino considered Leopardi the highest paradigm of nihilism and contemporary thought. From the first hundred pages of *Zibaldone*, the man from Recanati speaks of the «nothingness of things» (*Zibaldone*, 84), which is then immediately condensed into the image of «solid nothing» (*Zibaldone*, 85), or rather, a nothingness that surrounds another nothingness: «I was scared to find myself in the midst of nothingness, a nothing myself» (*ibid*). In the same way, the «real and solid shadow» of the song *Ad Angelo Mai*, refers to the paradox: «It seems absurd and yet it is absolutely true that, since all reality is nothing, there is not other reality or other substance in the world but illusions» (*Zibaldone*, 99). The core motif of the song (dated 1820), comes from the nothingness that «only increases» since the modern world, with its expanding geographical horizons, is reduced to *in breve carta*. Once the world of ancient illusions has vanished, it is certain that «everything is in vain» and that our life will fluctuate from «nothingness» to «nothingness» (from the «cradle» to the «grave»). This uselessness of everything seems even clearer from the Copernican «revolution» onwards, which threw our planet into the «mass» of infinite worlds (see Fontenelle). On the opposite side to Aristotle, the contradictions of nature in Leopardi appear «palpable» and «innumerable» (Capitano, 2016, pp. 426-431). We are not dealing with simple metaphors: in our opinion, Leopardi's thought is one of radical contradiction (far more radical than that of Hegel), an «ultra-tragic» thought, because the tragic – made impossible by the collapse of the eternal – now turns to absurd (Capitano, 2016, pp. 413-426). In Leopardi's thought there is therefore a reversal compared to the entire metaphysical tradition centred on being and on the eternal: «everything is nothingness», i.e. being, as such, appears to be nothing, contradiction, especially after the turning point of 1824. Leopardi realises, as Severino adamantly points out, the «total contradiction» of being and nature as such, «the suicide of being as

being» (Severino 1997, pp. 431-439). The «turning point» takes place in the Spring of 1824, when Leopardi denounces the «contradiction in nature», in other words the dissension of a nature that denies the happiness promised and destined to the living, thus making «life [...] imperfect» (*Zibaldone*, 4087). A little later on, in certain annotations which expressly recall the *Dialogue between a Nature and an Icelander* (see *Zibaldone*, 4099-4101), the contradictions of nature were to explode in the most dramatic and deflagrating way. Nonetheless, similar antimonies do not appear so obviously from the outset, as they come from some of Leopardi's aphorisms that move from afar in that direction. In fact, contradiction proceeds by conceding, gradually, to man and to society, and then expanding to reason and, therefore, the whole of nature, to being as such. Furthermore, Leopardi would go as far as to say that only nothingness can save the being from evil (*Zibaldone*, 4175). On that point, an inadvertent aporia of nothingness should be noted: from the two premises that «everything is nothingness» and «everything is evil» we cannot simply conclude that nothingness is evil (according to a certain line of Platonic ancestry). If anything, evil is represented by being as such, from the being that exceeds nothingness. This, then, is how nothingness can be seen by Leopardi as the only «good», not so much because it annuls contradictions as because it discloses that imaginary realm of chimeras in which alone there can be happiness. On the contrary, according to Severino, the «things that are not things» reveals the implicit contradiction in becoming (Severino, 1997, pp. 465-467; 2015, pp. 213-221; cf. Capitano, 2016, pp. 681-835, 852).

On that subject, it is worth going back to underline how, in Leopardi (even without the severity of Kant or Schopenhauer), nothingness does not appear univocally as *nihil absolutum* or *nihil negativum* (in its various forms: negativity, death, caducity and the destructive carousel of time). In fact, the «things that are not things» that throw a ray of light onto the garden of universal evil, echo «an imaginative power [...] to conceive the things that are not things» (*Zibaldone*, 167), to take over reality and imagine that «the soul [...] cannot see» (*Zibaldone*, 171). These «not things» will to appear, even after the turning point of 1824-1826, as very positive figures in the nothingness of the «sensitive and imaginative man» (*Zibaldone*, 4418), which recall Rousseau's «*pays des chimères*» (*Zibaldone*, 4500). In the *Canticle of the Wild Rooster*, creative nothingness («all things that are, are emerged from nothingness»), is simultaneously distinguished from *nihil negativum* that drag everything into the vortex of caducity: «Since is not able to die what does not exist, then all things that exist arose out of

nothing». The ambiguity of nothingness also appears in an aphorism from *Zibaldone* in 1821 and also in the *Memorable sayings of Filippo Ottonieri*: «Children find everything in nothing, men find nothing in everything». Here too it is not difficult to see how distant the imaginative-poetic nothingness is compared to the *nothing* that moves forward in the age of reason. From this «mother and cause of nothingness» (i.e. the reason), Severino analysed the destructive drifts in the «age of the Technique».

The neo-Parmenidean philosopher has always insisted on the univocity of nothing, even with regard to Leopardi. But, as he himself recognises, the agonizing nothingness, that hovers right from the first hundred pages of the *Zibaldone*, cannot be likened to that nothingness of the *Infinite* [in which, for the poet, would be «sweet» destruction. He himself also highlighted the role in Leopardi of that life-giving and comforting nothingness of the «genius» which rises above that destructive nothing and source of «perpetual death». Furthermore, just as he is denouncing the «authentic contradiction», the author of *Arcane and Stupendous Thing* has to admit to a certain distinction between these two versions of nothingness: «pure nothingness is ‘better’ than that nothing that devours being» (Severino, 1997, p. 467). The ambivalence of nothingness in Leopardi cannot, in this sense, be reduced to that «pure nothingness» from which, for Severino, the very same «illusion of nihilism» would descend (*ibid*). Moreover, the Severino does not ignore the ambiguity of nothingness that runs through a whole line that goes from Plato to Neoplatonism, from Schelling, right up to Heidegger and Lévinas, with appendices that even reach as far as contemporary Italian thought (*Il nulla e il Nulla [The nothing and the Nothingness]*, in Severino, 2000, pp. 18-26). On the other hand, the ambiguous nature of Leopardi’s nothingness (as well as that of Heidegger), had already been duly noted by Alberto Caracciolo (1994) who, on the other hand, had positioned it equivocally within a religious perspective as indeed did Pareyson and Givone each in their own way (Givone, 1995, pp. 135-154; 2001, pp. 165-172). More recently, Massimo Donà rightly distinguished the «nothing-for-us» (nothing-of-sense) from the «nothing-in-itself» (the ontological nothing). In his opinion, Leopardi’s nothingness should be clarified rather as «nothing-of-determined» (see Donà, 2013, pp. 171-172; Capitano, 2016, pp. 873-879).

It is also true that in 1821 Leopardi went through a phase in which nothing seemed to identify with the divine principle of «infinite possibility»: «In short, the principle of things, and indeed of God, is nothingness» (*Zibaldone*, 1341; cf. Severino, 1997, pp. 111-113). Hence the many (of-

ten misreading) interpretations in terms of «negative theology». On the contrary, the ‘creative’ nothingness of the afore-mentioned page from *Zibaldone* is an example of that *nihil positivum* which will manifest itself in Leopardi above all as a sign of poetic illusion. Dante’s fantastic «things that are not» of (*Vita Nova*, XXV, 8 Barbi), are transformed in Leopardi into exceptions to the universal evil: «there is nothing good except what is not; things that are not things» (*Zibaldone*, 4174; cf. Capitano, 2016, pp. 724-725). These ‘not things’ refers, in our opinion, to the metaphorical figures, to the poetic chimeras and the «illusions of the imagination» as well as the poetic notion of the vague and the indeterminate. Against the backdrop of Leopardi’s ‘meontology’, we encounter other happy aspects of nothingness: the *μη φῶναι* of Silenus and the Buddhist nothingness (Capitano, 2016, pp. 743-756; 2019, pp. 83, 93). Subtly similar to the Silenic doctrine and also to the «vanity» of the Qoèlet, it is, in fact, to the Buddhist nothingness to which the *Zibaldone* alludes: «an ancient philosopher, an Indian etc.» (*Zibaldone*, 4175), with reference to a vague doctrine of «non-being» meant as only «good» in a universe in which «everything is evil». Leopardi turns often the glove of nothingness upside down, offering opposites points of view: sometimes to show a happy aspect of the imaginary (as in the case of the child and the «imaginative man»), other times to bring us back to the bleakest and vain show of human unhappiness. A simple glance at nothingness does not exist; whereas the glance of the imagination is naturally creative, so reason remains essentially nihilistic. It is not by mere chance that the last words of Leopardi lead to a triple «truth», sceptical and negative: «we know nothing», «we are nothing» and «there is nothing to hope for after death» (*Zibaldone*, 16 September 1832). It is a triple negation, the truth of which appears to Leopardi at the end as undeniable as incredible it does to most people.

4. The chessboard of the «Third Player»

Severino’s two important volumes dedicated to the genius from Recanati from the nineties (*Nothingness and Poetry; Arcane and Stupendous Thing*) form part of a most singular philosophical path, which, as we know, contemplates the «eternity of beings» and the «Destiny of the truth» (see Goggi, 2016, pp. 198-204; Capitano, 2016, pp. 841-853). In a similar context, Leopardi appears as the highest peak of western nihilism, if, by «nihilism» we mean that mad persuasion that remains underlying to the west-

ern faith in becoming nothingness (and coming from nothingness) that now pervades the entire planet. At the dawning of contemporary thought, in Leopardi the truth no longer represented the remedy, as in Aeschylus (cf. Severino, 1989), but – in a reversed perspective, compared to the traditional scheme of metaphysics – becoming is transformed into the undeniable evidence that inexorably announces the sunset of the Eternals. In this sense, according to Severino, Leopardi remains the utmost and most coherent interpreter of the error of the western world (an error, however, destined to collapse, together with the abysmal contradiction of becoming. For Severino, it is a question of the twofold (and inadvertent) contradiction implied by becoming, which, on the one hand poses being and nothingness as identical, yet on the other, it presupposes them to not be identical (cf. Severino 1997, pp. 471-481: 478; 2015, pp. 213-221).

Starting from a radical re-thinking of Leopardi's nothingness to exalting the meaning of certain famous notes in *Zibaldone* in October 1820 on the «works of genius» (*Zibaldone*, 259-262), Severino arrives at an admirable reading of *The Broom*, the grandiose swan song in which the poetic genius of Leopardi finally united with his philosophical side (the «noble nature»), «comforts» the «desert» thanks to its «perfume». In this sort of mindful illusion (that does not exclude «true love» from itself), humanity – albeit with a temporary remedy and fleeting consolation – remains safe from nothingness (cf. Severino, 1997, pp. 513-527). Removing every consideration regarding the dynamics of the sublime, *Il nulla e la poesia* (*Nothingness and Poetry*), at times interprets infinity as illusory «content» (when poetry still proceeded separately from philosophy, such as in the famous 1819 idyll), and at others, as «form», which manifests itself in the «power of song» (cf. Severino, 1990, pp. 328-330). In the same essay, Severino addresses Leopardi's criticism of technique, denounced in the *Palinodie to the Marquis Gino Capponi* (1835) as a false remedy for modernity and as an expression of reason's «will to power». In *Arcane and Stupendous Thing*, the irrepressible spread of contradiction from society to nature, to reason itself, and even to the «suicide of being» (Severino, 1997, p. 219), is observed over the entire period of Leopardi's parable, with the greatest attention being paid to the ruthless polemic of Leopardi against Christian nihilism. Nonetheless, at the risk forcing the issue, both the poetic «chimeras» («things that are not things»), and the distinct dimensions of mystery, paradox and absurdity are reported by Severino at a level of pure contradiction. In particular, the nonsense that is expressed in an axiological and existential dimension such as that of Leopardi (but also Rensi and

Camus), cannot be reduced to pure logical contradiction: 'meaningless' differ from nothing at all (Capitano, 2016, pp. 851-852).

Traveling with Leopardi completes at 2015 the trilogy consecrated to Italian thinker, comparing the philosophical position of the latter to that of a «Black Player», who if, on the one hand, seems to win against the «White Player» (in other words, the entire tradition of thought linked to faith in the Eternals), on the other hand is destined to be beaten by the «Third Player», i.e. Severino himself. This «Third Player» represents metaphorically the «gaze of Destiny». For him, «to dispel the darkness» which in Leopardi's thoughts, envelopes «the peak of contemplation of becoming» – i.e. the frightening contradiction –, will be the first move of his game, even though it is not yet the «fundamental move» (Severino, 2015, pp. 174-175). In fact, it is a matter of casting a glance towards a higher chessboard, given that the one on which the white player (Aristotle or Hegel, even), and the black player (Leopardi, ahead of Nietzsche), followed by an infinite phalanx of mortals have played, represents the illusory «chessboard» of «the Erring» (Severino, 2015, p. 183). In this way, the Third Player believes he can win the match, shifting the game to the more solid base of the «primal structure» (*ibid.*, pp. 202-209), from which language can indicate the «undeniable». Heidegger's critique of «deepest thought» Nietzsche's (*ibid.*, p. 166-167), suggest an analogous relief by Severino to that which, in any case, remains his own «privileged interlocutor» (*ibid.*, p. 221): in fact, Leopardi was to withdraw from the abyss of contradiction. Just as Heidegger had observed that Nietzsche's «top of contemplation» (the doctrine of the «eternal return»), remained «shrouded in mist», so Severino want to clear away the darkness lurking around Leopardi's «top of contemplation», in other words the apex of nihilism: «the authentic sense of *nihilism* (essentially more radical than the way in which Nietzsche and Heidegger intend nihilism), is the faith that beings become something else, temporarily reaching out from nothingness» (Severino, 2015, p. 203).

Some pages of Leopardi's huge diary, written between 1824 and 1826, clearly spell out the contradiction of being as such (see *Zibaldone*, 4099-4101; 4174-4175). Thus, Severino can conclude that

Leopardi's thought comes very close to that «thing that is not a thing», which is implicated by becoming, the nomination, but the nomination without flinching, without realising even, that the «thing that is not a thing» is absolutely impossible, necessarily im-

plicated by becoming. Whereas he states that «non-being». meant as the «thing that is not a thing», is the only good («there is no other good»). [...] The abyssal contradiction of becoming is right under Leopardi's eyes, but somehow, without realising, he has pushed it out of the way, and so he doesn't see it. Indeed, he believes that it is the only «good». (Severino, 2015, pp. 219-220)

Leopardi was about to turn his gaze «towards the stars», abandoning his «black robes», but he didn't do it. Perhaps he did not get as far as grasping the «abyssal» contradiction between being and nothingness, implicated by becoming, as Severino reproaches him him. However, it is certain that our Black Player did not remain indifferent towards the numerous, frightening contradictions of nature, nor when faced with the immense mystery of a being who seems to exist purely to annihilate his unhappy «creatures». The contradiction of being as such – as Severino well knew – was to strike Leopardi more than any other Western thinker, to the point of pushing him to reject the principle of non-contradiction, as we read in this page from the *Zibaldone* in 1825:

An evident and undeniable contradiction in the order of things and in the mode of their existence, a terrifying contradiction, but not for that reason any less true: a great mystery which can never be explained, unless we deny (according to my system) every absolute truth and falsity, and abandon in a certain sense the very principle of our understanding, *non potest idem simul esse et non esse*. (*Zibaldone*, 4129; cf. 4099-4100)

Without knowing it, Leopardi commemorated the most remote of battles: the one between being and nothingness. To pick up on an iconic image from *Ritornare a Parmenide* (*Return to Parmenides*), the «battle between being and nothingness» – recalls the one fought way back in time «amongst ancient armies, who fought against each other during the day, while the enemy leaders drank together in their tents at night – enemies, therefore, only *if and when* they were on the battlefield» (Severino, 1995², p. 21). Similarly, the black and white players also partake of that «nocturnal affair of being and nothingness» (*ibid.*, p. 22), that hidden understanding of nihilism which would end up by making their every move in vain.

The Black Player's victory will nevertheless be ineffectual and unfinished, and his game immeasurably distant (Severino, 2015, p. 221) compared to that of the Third Player, who will therefore see the chessboard of

«becoming-other» else crumble at his feet. Severino «demonstrates the madness of the Black Player's great moves and so, therefore, also those of the White Player», hinting, in the margin, at «*other* determinations of destiny» that instead «will go very far» (Severino, 2015, p. 206). The «great moves» of the two players are made ineffective and are disqualified, almost to warn us that the game (between being and nothingness, truth and error) is quite another, played, as it were, with other rules and, above all, *on another chessboard*. Thus, Severino shows how the «game» destines those who still insist on playing on the «chessboard» of «error» (i.e. on the «*structure of error*»), to be defeated (*ibid.*, p. 209). This, therefore, would be the truly «fundamental move»: going beyond the «isolated Earth» of error through the «Earth that saves» (*ibid.*), wanting to recall the vaguely eschatological and apparently mystical intonation of the language of Severino's last writings. Hence, the decisive move, the *ἔλεγχος* of our titanic «Third Player», who repropose more rigorously the Parmenidean dilemma.

5. *The Apocalypse of the Eternal*

«The entire life of man, the entire life of the whole universe, is nothing other than an un-ending and bizarre game of chess of two fields: black and white; a game in which nobody wins, if not fatal death». This aphorism, taken from Wackenroder's *Fantasies about art* might help to illustrate the state of our game, in which none of contenders can win, if not death itself, given that even the eternal, erected to defend themselves against the white player are destined to stand up to the reasons of nothingness. Yet here is how, with the «Third Player», we are transported to a level of contemplation *sub specie aeternitatis*, in which – to say it with Leopardi's apocalyptic imagery, appears «a new sky, a new earth» (*Aspasia*, v. 27). In John's *Apocalypse* (21, 1), in fact, we read: *Et vidi caelum novum et terram novam*. Severino himself recalls the famous passage which exposes the apocalypse («non-hiding» is the literal meaning of ἀποκάλυψις) of *Glory*. In *The Glory*, indeed, the allegorical figure of the Good Friday of solitude» appears as a prelude to the «Easter» of liberation (Severino, 2001, pp. 318, 543-549). (The image of «Good Friday» will be picked up at a later date in other writings, such as *Dike* and *History, Joy*). In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel had already exploited the theological figure of the «speculative Good Friday» to demonstrate the need to overcome nihilism (Capitano, 2016, pp. 463-466). In «one single event», so we read in *The Glory*, «sets the sun of mor-

tals and of death» (Severino, 2001, p. 548). A similar apocalyptic «event» nevertheless appears to already have been superseded by the developments of *Oltrepassare* (*Passing beyond*), in which, through a complex phenomenology of «circles of appearance», the immense, phantasmagorical epiphany of the eternal unfolds, including the destiny of being and of man. Such a joyful glorification of eternity («The Glory of Joy»), appears in front of our eyes as the last grand attempt to be made by western thinkers (after Spinoza and Hegel), to redeem time in eternity and the contingency in necessity, to immunise the world against death and to remove the root of pain, the tragic and the absurdity of existence. It is a titanic move, which, in its logical paroxysm, results in the most complete overcoming of nihilism, but also in the defeat of freedom and the sacrifice of contingency and, in a way, of the whole world of life.

As we have seen, Aristotle had put in place a powerful theoretical device to save the becoming from the eternal. Overturning this position, Leopardi would have declared, for his part, the irrevocability of time and the irretrievability of the past («never again»), except in the fleeting illusion of «remembrance» (*Zibaldone*, 644; cf. 4278). This concerns the «horror» of eternal nothingness. Time, however, remains one of the most mysterious and persistent figures of those temporal modes of non-being that are expressed in the well-known formulae: «no more» and «not yet». «One single time is never», Goethe once decreed, inverting Pascal's dictum: «L'Être éternel est toujours, s'il est une fois» (Brunschvicg, 559), i.e. «the eternal is always if is once». For his part, Severino interpreted the thesis that «once is for always» in the most radical and original way, given that the very appearance of any being, according to him, implies its own eternity. In *Gloria* we even read that:

Everything that *once* appeared in the circle of destiny and then fell into oblivion is destined to appear again, in a single event, and to remain permanently in appearing of every single circle of the infinite constellation, which, in infinity, will unfold in the Gloria, after the sunset of earth's solitude. (Severino, 2001, p. 551, *our italics*)

Without making comparisons with previous versions of philosophical eternism – consider McTaggart (see Tugnoli, 2018, chap. 6.7; 2000, pp. 287-484), Broad, Price (see Perelda, 2018, chap. 6.1) – Severino had been declaring «the eternity of beings» ever since 1956, claiming later the primacy of this discovery on the physical theory (Severino, 2013b, pp. 194-

195; 2019, pp. 49-50). Almost half a century later, Severino will write, moreover recalling involuntarily Broad's similitude concerning «moving spotlight view»:

The earth [...] does not go forwards into circles with one single gesture that makes them immediately visible altogether. It is a house, the constellation of circles, where the lights of the earth are not all lit together in different rooms of the constellation, but the earth enters them, illuminating them one by one, and her light appears like a progressive and infinite enlargement – that is the appearance of eternal, always wider, luminous places, where every place is a finite togetherness of circles». (Severino, 2007, p. 391)

The eternist vision of our philosopher brings to mind another famous passage from the *Apocalypse* (10, 6) which had not failed to strike the imagination of Dostoevskij: «In the *Apocalypse*, the angel swears that time will no longer exist» (*The Demons*, II, V)⁴. This means that death, like time, is an illusion, as Severino shows in the trilogy inaugurated by *The Glory* (*Go beyond* and *Death and the earth*) and as, with visionary inspiration, Hermann Broch had already envisaged at the end of the *Death of Virgil*, when «everything suddenly appeared to him in a single, profound simultaneity». For his part, Thomas S. Eliot has cast a shadow of suspicion on the possibility of redeeming time in eternity: «If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable» (*Burnt Norton*, I, in *Four Quartets*). The Nietzschean gesture of redeeming the past thanks to the «eternal return of the equal», remained a hypothesis consistent with other redemptive myths announced by the prophet of the «death of God». Severino (1999) has persuasively demonstrated how the Nietzschean doctrine of the «eternal return» is basically much more consistent and less 'mythical' than what was previously admitted by the interpreters. With this move, Nietzsche thought he could proclaim himself the «winner of God and of nothingness». But all that is (or falls) in the past is (or remains), eternal (see Severino, 2001, p. 141), and no myth of «redemption», not even that of the «eternal return» would be able undermine its immutability or unrepeatability in the slightest. To take an example dear to Severino, if wood now

4 For an interpretation of Dostoevskij as 'underground thinker', comparable to Leopardi, see Severino, 2006, pp. 53-88; 2019, p. 151.

appears as ash, that doesn't mean that it has disappeared into thin air, but rather that *it will have been forever*: once is already forever. But at times it seems that not even the very same language of Severino's writings remain immune to the perils of nihilism. Suffice to think of expressions such as the following: «when, throughout the unfolding of the Glory, the destined time arrives» (Severino, 2001, p. 549). Such phrasing would seem to assume *a time* in which something did *not* happen, did *not* unfold, had *not* yet appeared. But despite the moves following the *Glory*, our chess master will always be able to appeal to the need to not be distracted by looking at his finger pointing to the moon, paying attention to «destiny» witnessed by language (just as Heraclitus asked not to listen to him, but to the *logos* (cf. DK, fr. B 50). Nonetheless, it must be recognised that not even the Black Player has ever stopped observing the moon and contemplating the stars, even if from the other side of the chessboard. «Singer of nothingness», Leopardi did not claim to be «the perpetual flower of eternal joy that “d'eternità s'arropa il vanto”» (Severino, 2013b, p. 30). Even if we don't see the end of the game, we could perhaps conclude with the judgment of Jorge Luis Borges: «to deny eternity [...] is no less incredible than to imagine its total redemption» (*A History of Eternity*).

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The Primal Structure of *Agàpe*

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The Primal Structure posits the primal truth-justice nexus, but does not thematize it: for Severino the truth of being is supreme justice, because, if that were not the case, the Primal Structure would only be source of cognition and not of injunction. Severino, in fact, makes injunction and cognition, moral necessity and logical necessity, coincide. My hypothesis is that the works that followed *La Struttura Originaria* contain the necessary development of the Primal Structure and show how ontological difference, qua ontological difference, can be an ontological difference only provided it is also theological. Severino postulates but does not explain this movement, because theological difference necessitates an ethical connotation. Deontology of the foundation must return to ontology of the foundation. I will try to show how imagination is primal compared to concept, which ultimately uses imagination to secure itself to the existential.

Keywords:

Primal Structure, *Agàpe*, Imagination, Justice of affection, Emanuele Severino, Pierangelo Sequeri

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

The relation between finite and infinite

It all starts when something appears. For French philosopher Marc Richir the articulation of reality occurs via *Wesen sauvages*, wild essences that appear in language, that are perceptible in language – when there is language –, but that have nothing to do with language. Whenever something that cannot be reduced to language and that does not belong to language itself enters our language, when we experience meaning beyond language, that is when we acknowledge the authentic phenomenality of what precedes cognitive datum within what Richir terms *phanthasia*.

The *Wesen*, that part of reality that resists meaning, like Jacques Lacan's *objet petit 'a'* are logical figures that have no image and that are not even concepts but which establish a nexus between cognitive, affective and practical moments. The world of *Wesen* is that world of affections that presents its evidence and phenomenological effectivity in the cognizance of what a phenomenon cannot saturate: phenomenomenity – language included – activates *Wesen* but they nonetheless remain within a realm of non-saturatable meaning, therefore outlining imagination as the origin from where all the conceptual-logical or empirical reductions derive. Milanese theologian Pierangelo Sequeri formulated the following example to illustrate what it is that language reduces to an empirical phenomenon and to show what it is that sensitivity can grasp of the residue of that reduction: given the same pressure, superficial electricity, and humidity conditions, our sensitivity infallibly perceives the difference between a reassuring mother, a doctor in his attempt to formulate a diagnosis, a friend acting supportively, and a reproaching father.

A theoretically similar process has been also formulated by Alain Badiou in his interpretation of the count-as-one notion, as an operation based on an inconsistent multiplicity, whose synthesis leads to a coherent multiplicity. Ontology therefore becomes a presentation of the un-shaped, of the a-thematic. Even for Badiou the mathematical operation has a residue, a residue he calls “void” that consists of the unpresentable part of a presentation.

There is no one, only the count-as-one. The one, being an operation, is never a presentation. It should be taken quite seriously that the ‘one’ is a number. And yet, except if we pythagorize, there is no cause to posit that being qua being is number. Does this mean that being is not multiple either? Strictly speaking, yes, because being is only multiple inasmuch as it occurs in presentation. In sum: the multiple is the regime of presentation; the one, in respect to presentation is an operational result; being is what presents (itself). On this basis, being is neither one (because only presentation itself is pertinent to the count-as-one), nor multiple (because the multiple is *solely* the regime of presentation). [...] It seems rather that ‘being’ is included in what any presentation presents. One cannot see how it could be presented *qua being* (Badiou, 2006, pp. 24-25).

There is something beyond language, there is something that precedes thematization, and then there is a first level, where what is at play is the deontology of the foundation, which is tied to linguistic form. Emanuele Severino bases his philosophical position entirely on the *principium firmissimum* (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1006 a 18-25) and understands the primal truth in $A=A$: one being equals itself, and that being, qua being, in order to remain that being must be inseparably united to the fact that a being is a being only against all the relations that determine it as a being (Severino, 1984, p. 188), hence the difference between distinction and separation. Concurrently, while addressing truth, language alters truth because it isolates it, separating it from the whole, from totality: words isolate a part and a part of the truth is not the truth. Truth is interrelation and language is supervenience. Yet for Severino there exists that zone of language that coincides with the necessitative logic, which deactivates the linguistic form turning it into something that must be overcome (Severino, 1992, pp. 235-244). Language, however, is not only something whose grammar implies the isolation of elements and consequently their separation from the whole. Language also determines the form of truth as a logical truth with

the power to align all that is isolated earth to itself: even if we were to say that in a given Primal Structure a thing is not that thing, we could never say in the appearance of that thing that that thing is not the thing that appears (Severino, 2012, pp. 121-122). Since language isolates, the product of the separation is another being different from the being of the Primal Structure. The act of saying is such only in relation to the isolated earth, to the finite circle of appearing, where compared to the $A=A$ of the primal truth, beyond what can be expressed via language, all that remains is a $\neg A$ (Severino, 2015, p. 85). The sole principle of non-contradiction saturates and completes reality. For Severino, the potential residue – often explained with the metaphor of the net that tries in vain to contain the sea – is contained within the grid of being: the net is a something and the sea is a something, therefore the principle of non-contradiction is that incontrovertible truth that encompasses all which appears. In my opinion, that sea that “is” is only what the net of ontological grammar can contain, because not all of the sea can be contained by the tautology that everything is itself and cannot be other than itself.

Severino provides a logical form to an imagery that precedes any thematization and he needs an imaginary space, not only every time the logical principle must articulate its necessity, in philosophy as well as in eschatology (destiny, appearance, disappearance, pure earth, isolated earth, earth which saves, glory, joy), but also when it must address reality (life, death, violence, technique, history, memory, interpretation). In short, every time there is a shift from being to necessary being, from appearance to its necessity – that is therefore, from appearance to its justice – logic no longer suffices, and must be complemented by imagination. The logic of the incontrovertible proves reliable when it shows it knows how to interpret phenomenological data (first imaginative moment) and discloses a promise that can only be imagined (second imaginative moment). The incontrovertible is not enough if it does not disclose a perspective, because the incontrovertible is itself subject to an aesthetic moment. Without being reliable, the incontrovertible can be read as despotic or simply as indifferent to the existence of the individual.

Sequeri sees sensitivity as a receptor of primal meaning (the generative *chora* parallel to Richir’s *Wesen*). The human connection is grasped via the precision of “impressions”. This is where the difference between empathy-language and code-language emerges via the “empathy-language of the mother”, with its at all times (at every perception) affective flavour – whatever its form, be it a caress or the sound of her voice – the child will later

organize all this content into a linguistic code that is pre-existent to the child and that he or she will use in future. The knowing of the other is precise and comes about via impressions of fondness, tenderness, sadness, and all things part of the sphere of affections. Only later will there be questions and deductions (Sequeri, 2016, p. 145). The “being” of the empathic glance, sound, and gesture is not immediate: what is immediate are instead the a-thematic modulations of affections, which are precise knowledge, experiences of meaning beyond the experience of language.

What is the primal beyond language? What is the primal beyond its logical form? We are inhabited by a precise knowledge before this knowledge has access to any form that may thematize it. Arguing the primal, Severino himself states: «The movement that should lead to meaning is already, since its beginning, inside meaning» (Severino, 2015, p. 70). There exists something that precedes language and that therefore precedes even its logical form. This makes us wonder whether imagination is primal compared to logical form – logical form that for Severino conditions the truth of the imagination, conditions the *Wesen sawvages* that cannot be invalidated by language, but that are the precedent that activates language: form is substance and language is thought. Depending on the form we choose to give to imagination, we will have the justice of its truth.

The common search of the incontrovertible

Faith can be read as being transcendental, that is, as that necessary opening allowing the subject to position itself before the happening of things.

Without *pístis*, that provides substance to separate things and a subject to the unapparent, *epistème* is void of knowledge (and *pístis* without the *epistème* of affection is blind even to things that are visible) (Sequeri, 2016, p. 132).

Or alternatively, faith can also be read as the gateway to the only possible and not incontrovertible instances.

In an assertion faith is always a self-contradiction (that is to say, it is always a self-contradictory antinomic situation); but *the assertion that is the content of faith is not always self-contradictory* and it is not necessarily one of the forms, that with self-contradiction, are nega-

tion of the primal. It can be, but it also may not. Should it not, we would say that this assertion is neither true nor false, which means that in a moment ulterior to the current situation of the primal it may be verified as true or false (Severino, 1984, p. 99).

I think it is interesting to note how both these orientations are in search of something reliable. Severino argues that initially, to exorcise and set ourselves free from the anguish of death we turned to myth that however proved insufficient precisely because unreliable; our gaze then turned to philosophical knowledge, for its capacity to provide stable and rational lines of reasoning, incontrovertible, therefore reliable, arguments. Contemporary philosophy however, distances itself from absolute truth. Severino assesses the situation starting from the concept of “the death of God” in Nietzsche: it is our faith in becoming that has led to the impossibility of establishing any form of absolute. If becoming is the original evidence, in particular in the form of the human expression of creativity, there cannot exist an all-encompassing absolute, because this absolute would contain what for us would be a new creation but that in truth, since it is contained, has been always existent.

If there were gods, how could I stand not to be a god! Therefore there are no Gods (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 65).

The concept of *epistème* in Greek philosophy, which is based on the notion of becoming, has led to the exclusion of the absolute due to its limiting impact on human potential. For Severino philosophy has never conceived that the thought of becoming is a thought of contradiction, a thought of the impossible implying that for a thing to become in time, that thing must be and at the same time must not be that thing. Parmenides’ saying «Being is and cannot not be, non-being is not and cannot in any way be» (Parmenides DK 28 B 2) did not suffice, because it led to the belief that the real world, that evidences becoming, is plain and simple illusion.

Severino describes faith in becoming since becoming is impossible, just like the Western folly and its form of nihilism as a positive affirmation of nothingness.

The contradiction of becoming, in fact, is not purely defined as non-being, that is to say, the being nothing of the being that comes

out of and returns to nothing, but as ‘the overpowering of negative over positive’, as the affirmation of the ‘annulling nothing’ of being. The absurdity of becoming lies not in the fact that the being is not, that the being is nothing. The absurdity of becoming lies in the fact it is the nothing that makes the being nothing, that is to say, the nothing – according to the old lesson – is a positive with the power to annul being (Severino, 2017, pp. 35-36).

If something is itself, statically unable to become anything else, it means that everything is eternal and that reality is the appearing and disappearing of eternals. So, to explain the theoretical structure of appearance we have the famous metaphor that Popper addressed to Einstein: the story of our life is like a series of frames that together form a motion picture, where everything “is” simultaneously but is made real by the projection.

For Sequeri the problem must be placed within the framework of the “ethics of foundations”: we must return deontology of the foundations to ontology of the foundations. To understand the true reasons of the crisis of metaphysics, we should approach the matter starting from the removal of morality of the absolute. The place of moral conversion is tied to the sphere of affections. Moral reasoning cannot prescind from a justice of affection that presents itself as a transcendental phenomenology. The discourse on affection appears to be the one thing that all humans have in common, yet preserving their diversity and sensibility: children don’t learn to cry in their mother tongue. They cry as human beings. Affection is the lowest common denominator of ethics, and this is what makes its discourse intrinsically ontological, founding. The idea of justice transcends conscience which sets itself above the classic transcendentals (truth, good, beauty). The difficulty lies in transporting the ethical into the realm of affection, since the latter is understood as emotional and “vaporous”.

What is presented as the “immorality of the absolute” is basically a rigorous ontic discourse upholding the principle of identity. Morality is decided within the discourse on justice of affection. What is at stake is to understand how being must be in order for it to be the way it should be, and not merely for it to function, to live, to consist or increase. What must be grasped is the necessary being beyond all good reasons, because inside this “necessary being” there is that incontrovertible justice of the human-that-we-all-have-in-common.

Either logical or corresponding to the order of affections, the reliability of both forms of incontrovertible tends towards a necessary being that is

inevitably tied to imagination. I believe it is precisely in the dialectics between being and necessary being that we will be able to discover a Primal Structure that is incontrovertible *and* reliable.

According to the being qua being of the beings or according to the justice of agàpe?

The things from which (*ex hōn*) there is generation of the beings are the same things in which (*eis taūta*) there is the dissolution (of the beings) according to necessity; in fact these same beings (*autā*) mutually provide justice (*didónai dik n*, do due penance) and reparation for (their) injustice (*tês adikias*), according to the ordinance of time (Anaximander [in Simplicius], DK 12 B 1, as quoted in Severino, 2015, p. 30).

The Anaximander Fragment seems to be the manifesto of Severino's thought, where the truth of being emerges as ultimate justice: but injunction coincides with cognition, and moral necessity coincides with logical necessity.

The problem is very simple: injustice is the isolation determined by the positive signification of nothingness that has determined history in its various forms of nihilism, where given the plausibility that things can simultaneously be and not-be, faith in becoming is what moves the will of the individuals, since individuals believe, delusively, they are living inside the generation and corruption of things. Justice, therefore, must be the beginning of the process of recognising every eternal being as more and more interwoven in its necessary connections inside the Primal Structure. The justice of the destiny of truth and the injustice of the non-truth of nihilism, just like the authentic and inauthentic life in Heidegger's thought, exist in the Primal Structure not as two incompatible dimensions, but rather as two compatible and even mutually necessary and implicating traits.

The point of separation in the definition of necessity of justice is the conviction or non-conviction that the logic formulation $A=A$ saturates reality. Yet, every time the necessity of imagination in Severino's thinking shifts from being to necessary being, that should be read as a symptom, as a clue. We find ourselves before the counter-intuitive and counter-factual of truth. For Severino and for Sequeri, truth is counter-intuitive and counter-factual. For Severino because the logic incontrovertible reveals the

existential point of view based on becoming, for Sequeri, because to love according to justice is not immediate for anyone. At what price? The existence of the error is a misunderstanding. A mistake is interesting when it introduces us to eternity (Severino, 2015, p. 152), but not quite so interesting when it turns what we existentially feed on into an illusion.

Even when in the isolated earth we think we love or that someone loves us, we are somehow aware that things are not that way, although we make an effort to “reject” this discordant voice (but even during the course of this effort traces of destiny and doubt surface, saying that that love is not what we believe it to be, just like in sorrow one of the two opposing wills negates its existence and the other affirms it) (Severino, 2015, p. 356).

If logic saturates, the real world is that which can be saturated. And what about the rest? It is an illusion or an error as we were saying, or a horror of error. And so, in a whirlwind of necessity, humans are entirely absorbed by an incontrovertible despotism: it is necessary they decide the way they decide. Every time justice is a content, I will have to surrender to error or negotiate to what extent it is legitimate or not legitimate to distance myself from the content in a specific historical moment, or the content will impose itself decreeing what is good and what is bad. Therefore, the shift is from good to affection according to justice (truth-justice). For Severino it is necessary that man decides the way he decides (Severino, 2015, pp. 304-305), and the immorality of the absolute coincides precisely with this ontic rigour. Justice is not a content, but rather a quality of the soul, a sensitivity for the sense of a just form: form is substance, sensitivity is substance. It is clear that will cannot always coincide with violence, because it is a violence of wanting things to be different from what they are, which corresponds to wanting what is impossible.

Violence presupposes an inviolable order to act against. So this means that violence is not wanting what is possible, but wanting the impossible. Educational will is will, will wants the becoming-other of things, and the becoming-other is the impossible. So will and violence are the same. Every will wants the becoming-other, wants the impossible and therefore *every* will is violence (Severino, 2012, p. 97).

The self-referential will that on the logic of the means, in order to reach its ends, interprets reality as something that can be manipulated to its ends is different from that will that wants to stop an aggression and is also different from that will that wants to feed the hungry. Something escapes from the grid of the ontic system and it is when something escapes, when something cannot be symbolised and signified, that justice begins. To think that I cannot change the other introduces me to an ethical discourse on acceptance and establishes a dialogue with the French heritage of Heidegger's thought (Blanchot, Derrida, Lévinas, Nancy); yet there is a difference between solitude and isolation. When there is a content adhering to justice its meaning is univocal and it asserts itself. The same happens in the perspective of the other who appears in my life: if it is necessary for things to be that way, I am a mere spectator of what may happen to me. Contemporary thought introduces the category of alterity, a category that Sequeri underlines is still a way to remain within the ontic discourse, since it revives the characteristics of classical metaphysics. The language of alterity allows the absolute to address the question of its morality, but this alterity is once again despotic, it imposes itself, regardless of any form of justice. There is a shift from the "necessary conditions" of the absolute to the subjection that imposes itself as "moral responsibility". How can we build a bond when in the relationship there is someone, be it God or be it a person that, regardless of everything, establishes itself as "that which is"? What reliability, if any, can there be in a relationship when we must surrender to the consequences of something that has already established itself? The morality of the absolute is not based on the model of the *causa sui* but neither on the model of the *causa aliena*.

Phanthasia is a tool that shows us how affection grasped by means of sensitivity brings forth an attachment to that which inhabits memory and inspires expectation and hopes. There is a residue of reality. Compared to conceptual logic, the intuition of a logic of affection wants to be performative: the concept ponders what must be optimised, but proves distortive when it concerns happiness.

Happiness happens on a purely human level and erasing all forms of error does not allow us to get to the question: with no errors and no contradictions we are still missing something, we are still not happy. Affection is that aesthetic creativity which harmonises the promising character of life and which, within its reliability, reveals a justice inherent to it. An eternal justice, of course, but such eternity is not enough to resolve the finite error. Only an eternity capable of bestowing justice can be a reliable eternity. Be-

yond language there is not a Primal Structure merely built on necessary connections. Beyond language there is a primordial impulse structured with ambiguous and ambivalent potential that demands the justice of a form capable of revamping desire in its twofold ethical and testimonial duty towards the meaning of life. Freedom does not derive from logic. Freedom is the courage to not give in to any representation of the world in order to be able to grasp every time the expression that can give shape to the human-that-we-all-have-in-common, so that no one falls victim to affection. Only a justice in the order of affections is capable of retaining the residue and reintroduce the excess. There are many residues, and not all symbolic. What remains in the Primal Structure of the provocation we find in Plato's *Parmenides* about hair, mud and dirt (Plato, *Parmenides*, 130 a3-e4)? Yet Severino states that the eternity of being implies the indispensable nature of each being. If only one single crumb went missing, there would be no infinity. The system inevitably recognises each being but cannot give it justice. "Hair, mud and dirt" are entirely affective. They are not encountered within knowledge but they are tolerated, suffered, and finally removed (Ronchi, 2008, pp. 27-57). What is vile, whatever it might be, lives and finds space within the horizon of a sensitivity willing to take it upon itself. We could say that the residual lives due to the residue of what human capacity to thematize cannot reduce to a phenomenon, to a thing among things. What happens to the outcast, to the innocent victim? What does their destiny say about a truth that simply wanted them that way in the weave of necessary connections?

Justice for Severino and for Sequeri is never given once and for all: the quest of the necessary being is incessant, for Severino in order to eliminate the logical contradiction, and for Sequeri in order to authenticate the order of affections.

The being in the truth is the primal disclosing of meaning that answers the question of the super-transcendental nature of meaning: how should the being be to be as it must? What is the necessary being of being? What is the necessary being of being for it to be reliable?

The simple knowledge of things does not imply any justice, the things that are known as true within my existence are despotic or might be truths that do not describe my life, that is extrinsic truths that can be accepted but that, however, do not pertain to me. In its attempt to rehabilitate an incontrovertible that does not lose reality even from an existential point of view, Severino's Primal Structure risks becoming so distant from human experience that it might become completely irrelevant for everybody,

falling into the paradox of he who in his search for God lost the world of men.

Zarathustra answered: 'I love mankind'. 'Why', asked the saint, 'did I go into the woods and the wilderness in the first place? Was it not because I loved mankind all too much? Now I love God: human beings, I do not love. Human beings are too imperfect a thing for me. Love for human beings would kill me.' [...] 'Do not go to mankind and stay in the woods! Go even to the animals instead! Why do you not want to be like me – a bear among bears, a bird among birds?' [...] But when Zarathustra was alone he spoke thus to his heart: 'Could it be possible! This old saint in the woods has not yet heard the news that *God is dead!* (Nietzsche, 2006, pp. 4-5).

Truth is a ratio and $A=A$ is insensible. When there is insensibility in what should be the ultimate word on the world, the risk is that someone, as Dostoevsky wrote, might return the ticket (Dostoevsky, 1992, 208). Are we sure that the eternal is enough to resolve the justice of the finite (Žižek, 1997, pp. 89-91)? What eternal can consider itself just without adapting its logic to human existence? The sensitivity of the spirit cannot be brought to an ontic level, this sensitivity is pre-existent to us and we encounter it when we are born.

It is not a matter of mere emotion, but of establishing the truth-justice nexus of the Primal Structure. Tragedy cannot be absorbed in the being/non-being dialectics (Sequeri, 1996, pp. 463-464); from this point of view Severino offers a significant contribution, because on the one hand, man can no longer be thought of in relation to nothingness, on the other, evil cannot be reduced to the incumbency of nothingness. Severino clarifies that everything is because everything is an eternal being, but there are some beings that although being true, must be fought, because we cannot obey the rigour of a truth that does not obey the justice of meaning, the justice of affection. Only that which is just deserves to be, only that which is just deserves to be eternally and must necessarily be for eternity. Justice is that something that is eternally worth somebody's affection even if the world were to end: the justice of affections understood as the logical form of eternity.

There is a primal form that bestows justice beyond any rational logic against error or in favour of optimization. One learns to love in a counter-intuitive and counter-factual way but such form, such justice, accomplishes all destinations of Destiny. I believe it might be of interest to reconsider

the persyntax of Severino's Structure in the light of a justice of affections understood as a necessary condition to that particular overcoming that might be identified with Glory; only on the condition that deontology of the foundation is reconnected to the ontology of the foundation.

We need to rethink error where the truth that attests all things is structured with the theoretical register of appearing. It would also be interesting to use the grammar of generation to read that particular appearing as (make)-being in affection (Sequeri, 2012, pp. 115-116). The absolute of the identical is affection.

Traces of deontology

For Severino death coincides with the death of empirical will. Will is faith in the impossible, that is, wanting that things can be, can become, something different from what they are. Wanting the impossible is the root of all pain. Severino's eschatology implied by the theoretical concept of overcoming with the preservation of the eternal, reveals an inner and implicit axiology tied to the elementary experiences of life such as overcoming pain and heading towards joy. Could it be that the Primal Structure contains an axiology, somehow? This means that in the glance of destiny, the appearing of this necessity is the will with which destiny wants (while overcoming it) the totality of pain (Severino, 2015, p. 359).

With the death of empirical will, isolated earth stops supervening and pure earth appears as no longer contrasted by isolation. The isolation of the earth has been accomplished, the series of events that composes the single isolated earth has ended and this implies its fading out in all the circles of destiny and the advent of the earth that saves (Severino, 2001, pp. 499-563).

Formally denied, faith in isolated earth continues appearing, at least in the primal circle, yet, still without the earth that saves supervening. This accomplishment signals the defining of a series (no other determinations of isolated earth and of pure earth supervene), that is the history of the single individual, but the death of one empirical will is not the death of all the empirical wills, necessary condition for the advent of the earth that saves to resolve all the contradictions of isolated earth. The splendour of Joy is static; time does not flow because no eternal supervenes: so the first light with no interval will be the Glory of Joy.

The background of this circle is the persyntax, the content that appears

in a finite circle of destiny with the death of empirical will. The background (Severino, 2011, p. 415) is “larger” than the pure earth and it includes the destination pertaining to each circle. I believe that it is precisely with the concept of “destination” (Severino, 2001, pp. 502-503 and 2015, pp. 247-249) that we start to grasp the presence of traces of deontology in Severino. Glory is from eternity with regard to the meaning of a single circle, the Glory of Joy that is, the Glory of each history of each I of destiny. The destination is the specific way each circle has of manifesting the common structure and Severino adds one detail that in my opinion is no small thing. Let’s bear in mind that the exceptions to a theory is where the great truths of the theory itself can be grasped. Each destination is specific to each circle, the destination differentiates each circle from another and it cannot be a persyntactic dimension. Severino writes: «[The destination] is the only iposyntactic dimension belonging to the background, the only iposyntactic determination that in the circles of the finite appearing of destiny, does not belong to the earth» (Severino, 2011, p. 416), and this is the condition that allows the background, that is identical in each circle, to be necessarily united to infinite different destinations (Severino, 2007, pp. 389-429). Severino’s eschatology is the imagined necessity, and although we know all we need to overcome are the contradictions, the Primal Structure takes care of the elementary facts of each individual life, destiny wants the Glory of Joy of each one of us, all the necessary connections are set out in order for the history of each one of us to be in the Glory. With regard to the contradiction C, the eternity of each “singularity” finds its necessary conditions inside the Primal Structure: because the infinite of destiny cannot appear in the finite circle of destiny, the destination is implied. After all, it’s the elementary facts that instruct logic in its necessity in order to determine what happens at the death of an empirical will. Pain is overcome and Joy is the direction. Why isn’t the Primal Structure indifferent to the problems of our existence? Why should the removal of contradiction correspond to a solution of existential problems?

Glory is the tangible everything that in the impossibility of appearing in the finite circle requires its infinite manifestation.

Addressing the ‘dead’ means addressing the eternal and their eternal thrones. And the eternal thrones are also the living who authentically address the dead. But the thrones of the dead are the wisdom of destiny, no longer contrasted by the isolation of the earth. In the thrones of the living this wisdom is instead still contrasted by such isolation (Severino, 2011, p. 430).

Glory is in the isolated earth, in the gift of the destiny of eternity of being qua being; Glory is in the pure earth that is not contrasted by isolation, that is the truth of the life of each of us; and formally in its infinite manifestation, Glory is in the arrival of the earth that saves after the instant where time has not gone by, since the eternal does not supervene in the finite circle and isolation has faded in all finite circles. Even though isolated earth is the appearing of the appearing of appearing, and hence not an illusion but the folly of will that wants other from itself, dispersing all the justice of affection and reducing an innocent victim or severe illness merely to pain deriving from contradiction (Severino, 2011, pp. 546-547), Glory is there to accompany, the eternity of Glory is always present.

The truth's negation of erring (and of error) is the opposite of the indifference for erring and the error [...] 'This life of ours' 'continues infinitely' in the sense that the eternal infinite expanse of the overcoming of erring – the eternal expanse where the passion of the truth of erring, the eternal infinite expanse of the Glory and of the Glory of Joy exist together – manifests itself infinitely in the circles of our being 'I' of destiny. And the place that is at the beginning of that eternal expanse is the summoning of all 'our lives' in the event that unites 'good friday' and 'easter' (Severino, 2011, pp. 555-557).

Yet in a different way, in the truth of every I of destiny: and a justice of affections is sought, too.

Isolated earth is that form of appearing in which primal faith resides. It appears in the final circle of destiny. Among the contents of isolated earth there appears the place where pain and pleasure, understood in the broadest sense, are more intense – pain and pleasure that are also the opposite extremes encompassing all shades of 'affection' and which make that place the fundamental state of affection (Severino, 2011, p. 449).

Severino realizes that affection requires justice, but reduces pleasure to what is wanted and pain to what is rejected, that is, to that affective insufficiency already displayed by narcissism, self-referential affection, in the isolated earth. Narcissism can't be solved by deconstructing will, but rather by directing will towards its own justice and therefore towards what deserves to be in eternity. The truth of destination that Severino senses in the foundation is the justice that has always inhabited the human. There exists

a good fraction of the I that knows how to generate the human, because love descends and the world thrives on that dispersal that does not make a narcissistic return. The fundamental question is not “Who am I?” but “Who am I for?” Human tradition of remains alive because many human beings at a certain point of their lives, look around and ask themselves, more or less confusedly “Who am I for?”. This happens because if one does not find the things, the thoughts, the generation, the invention, the creation, the intelligence, the affections, the connections one is destined for, one dies.

If we spend our lives trying to succeed, to nurture ourselves, to clarify ourselves, to investigate ourselves, we are dead. If we find “who” we are living “for”, we become enthusiastic about life, we experience happiness. All the parts of ourselves that find their own destination blossom, become beautiful, exciting, thrilling and are worth many sacrifices. According to Severino’s philosophical position however, although trying to include the elementary experiences of life, destination only offers a limited justice consisting in the removal of contradictions, ultimately translating into depriving the human of its quintessentially human experience. Eternity is not enough to be Glory of the finite. Only a just eternity – in keeping with an ontology that knows how to distance itself from the ontic dimension including those residues that move even the imagination of the most impeccably exact and coherent systems – can be the justice of affection. The incontrovertible is not enough to be reliable if justice doesn’t take responsibility for a destination of the experience of the truth of the human-that-we-all-have-in-common. Severino seems to understand this: «Destiny is the *truth of obtaining*, that is to say the truth of *satisfaction*, of *pleasure*, and thus of *happiness*. The truth of the state of affection that is united to the truth-of-the-will-that-obtains is first and foremost the background and therefore the destination of the circles of destiny. This truth is the dawn of Joy (that therefore is not a ‘psychologic’ determination since it is a dimension that belongs to the empirical I of will). The dawn of Joy appears already forever» (Severino, 2011, pp. 450-451). The matter at stake here is the rediscovery within the primal of imagination of those residues that logical form is not capable of saturating, and the understanding of the justice of necessity.

In line with Derrida’s deconstruction theories, I believe that formulas wear out and I appreciate Severino’s deconstruction of *creatio ex nihilo* and of the concept of resurrection (Severino, 2015, pp. 288-291), welcoming the Hegelian provocation about the unreasonableness of a resurrection

that looks like a rabbit pulled out of a hat or a lucky lottery win. I believe that eternity inscribed in the truth-justice nexus of the Primal Structure is an undeniable gain, but instead of a grammar of being built on the *principium firmissimum*, I would posit, based on an epistemology of imagination, a grammar of the modular being: the world is made of quantities and of qualities but also of the graduality of things.

The divide, which undermines affection precisely because it has not been taken into account in the definition, is unbridgeable in the logic of entitative evidence and its cognitive appearance: a good that is good *per se* does not need to prove its authenticity, all it needs to do is be an object of desire with a correspondence in the subject. The “necessity of the just-being and of affection” *emerges* in its difference from the truth and from the good, but it is not *constituted* by the opposition to them. All the contrary. Yet, it experiences its unity and its difference in the divide and in the *modal fulfilment* of truth and of good: irreducible and incommensurable to the epistemic and ontical resolution of their identity essence (and reality) (Sequeri, 2016, p. 132).

To reabsorb the importance of graduality means returning to the ontic register of black and of white, of the all and of the nothing. Graduality is necessary for a justice of the being: shades of yellows, shades of reds, shades of greens. In relations and in experiences it is really a matter of colour tones and sound tonalities.

Being-as-a-modulation is what is grasped by sensitivity to sense. The variations of the body are phenomena of the spiritual quality. This is true for a plant, a stone, and particularly for a human being, and it is also true for God. The experience of eternity is the experience of sensitivity: the primal experience of the body that cannot be reduced to the experience of the perceived mortal body. The Primal Structure is the modal Primal Structure of the sensitive being. A finite being can never cease starting, never cease being born, never cease finishing, and as a consequence individuals experience being eternal.

Deleuze refers to an example Spinoza gave, which I believe is very interesting: an all-white immaculately clean wall, with two figures drawn on it in pencil. When the wall was completely clean, before they were drawn, did the two figures exist? Could they have existed somehow before they were drawn? Could they exist independently of the wall? Spinoza’s answer is no. Where can this image take us, asks Deleuze. How can we identify

the essences, the singular relations, the actual relations that are not occurring? What can a body do?

Death will never concern neither the constitutive relationship itself nor the essence of the individual. [...] The relationship itself conveys the essence of the body, regardless of its actual fulfillment and of the elements that take part in it. The relationship and the essence are eternal - and we are not talking about a metaphorical eternity at all. [...] The essence of a body exists before it and continues to exist after it. (Deleuze, 2007, pp. 151-152)

The white colour of the wall is present in its various shades. The tone of the colour white can change. The tone of the colour is something different from the drawn figures. The experience of eternity does not correspond to the indefinite experience of immortality. If imagination is primal, if imagination is what allows us to desire, if by welcoming the responsibility of our desire we look for that existential form that knows how to safeguard the human-that-we-all-have-in-common, if there uncontrovertibly exists a justice of this desire inside the order of affections, then the experience of what deserves to be in eternity is possible.

The difference introduced by that ontic-ethical level that we have thematized in this paper can be considered from two different standpoints: from a philosophical and a theological (revealed theology) standpoint. Both systems affirm the un-deductible quality of the ethical dimension as opposed to that of a simple ontic description of reality, and particularly of a neoparmenidean ontological description such as Emanuele Severino's. The specific difference that, in the light of Pierangelo Sequeri's theoretical-theological lesson we can formulate on the basis of the previously collected reflections and that can concern the theological *proprium* of a primal structure theory, consists in the articulation of an ontology of a primal affection. This involves a re-figuration of the logic of the onto-logic, which in this framework coincides with the grammar of the truth of the justice of affections. This grammar is in fact the sensitivity for that sense that occurs beyond any language thematization. In the context of Christian theology, the incarnation of the Son in Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnated Logos, the manifest grammar of being, becomes, in his human historical quality, the revelation of the truth-justice nexus of the Primal Structure. His resurrection is the eternal of *agàpe*, form and destination of every human. The wording "be created in Christ" (Col 1,15-17) indicates that justice that is

the experience of eternity for every human, the discriminant of what deserves eternity, that something that is eternally valid even if the world should end. This is the origin of each overcoming, as the Pauline script reminds us: «And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *agàpe*, I am nothing» (1 Cor 13,2).

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Mystic forebodings of destiny

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The world in which we believe we live – the world of pain and death – is the face that the earth comes to show in its being separated from the destiny of truth. In this errant horizon, the spectacles that gradually appear are its desolate individuations. Including all forms of wisdom, with which, trusting in death, the mortal seeks refuge from death. The wandering, however, is not a thought that is far removed from destiny, but is its distortion. In which that, in some way, leaks out. Given the correspondence between “isolated heart” and “pure earth”, it seemed interesting to us to identify isolated wisdom, in which, although, immersed in the folly of becoming nothing, the greater similarity to destiny resonates overall than all the others. In this paper we identify it with “Christianity”, in its multiform face: mystical, visionary, speculative, traditional – in any case *not* “demythologized” (= reduced to a minimum by the hidden blade of nihilism).

Keywords:

Misticism, Foreboding, Destiny, Glory, Eternity, Necessity

1.

The isolation of the beings from the *Destiny of Truth* (which is the *Destiny of Eternity* is that which competes to *every* being for the sake of being) – the isolation of the “earth”: things and people, but also every great world event in history and therefore every form of culture such as science, art, religion, and philosophy – is founded upon the *non* isolated earth. «If a *non* isolated earth were not, the isolation would not isolate anything, thus not bringing about any isolation» (Severino, 2018, p. 318).

This implies that to every segment of the isolated earth *corresponds* a segment of the *non* isolated earth (currently veiled “beneath” to that which imposes itself, in contrast to its pure face), the one which it’s *most similar* to (see. *ivi*, chap. VII-VIII) – notwithstanding the abysmal difference: on the one hand the being is *believed* to be destined to desperation and to nothingness, whilst on the other the “same” being is destined to eternity and joy. «This means that such pure earth [= the *non* isolated earth from the destiny of truth] leaves its traces in the isolated earth and the former in the latter. In the isolated earth, traces of pure earth appear, but they are contrasted by the isolation» (p. 502).

We have said: the “same” being, which holds a double nature is taken by the vortex of the nightmare of nihilism on the one hand, and is free from this robbery which disrupts its pure face on the other. Indeed the horror of the nihilist *Folly* (the persuasion for which the being becomes nothing and that thus – by inevitable inference – *everything* becomes nothing and thus *is* nothing: Leopardi) is not only faith and a dream, «because to it corresponds what is most similar in the pure earth of the truth of destiny».

The whole content of the isolated earth is faith, not truth; but faith and the non-truth, as such, is not simple alterity and separation from truth: but because to it corresponds what in the pure earth is most similar to it» (p.541). «... folly [the belief that the becoming of the world consists of the

“evidence” of the becoming (identical) to another [=to another being and/or to nothingness] on the part of the becoming being and, once it has become it, to being it: *at once therefore being and not being itself* [...] is not to think all but to what is the content of *destiny*, but it is rather the disruption of the content of the *Destiny*, that disruption which, with a metaphor, we could see as the image that forms when a stick is put into water and is seen as broken. There is an alteration in the essential traits of destiny” (Severino, 2007 pp. 284-285). In the same way, the becoming as a start of the *apparition/disappearance* (the true immediate-phenomenological evidence) by the beings (the *eternal*: the immediate-logical evidence wherein *it is necessary to be itself or, elselly said, impossible to be other than itself*), immersed, so as to say, in the tide of the folly of nihilism, which appears as a beginning and a ceasing of existence, a *departure and a going back to the nothingness* of the beings.

2.

(What do we mean by “logical and phenomenological im-mediateness”? The former where there lies the necessity to assert immediately, as a necessary predicate of the being such as it is, therefore of *every* being, of *eternity*: if indeed the *immediate* level of the negation which is to be (every being: committed *parricide*, beyond Parmenides) is not to be, requiring a mediation to assert its eternity, would assume that such im-mediation, as a basis, did not exclude what it absolutely excludes, meaning that to be (every being) is not to be; the latter in the sense that the content that appears needs not a mediation so as to appear, in as much that its apparition is, in fact, “immediated”.

On the other hand though, one may wonder: *Why is it not possible to reject both assumptions?* That could be answered, because maybe we *should not do so*. And this is why: because we would be assuming its value, which is to be instead demonstrated. This is why *we cannot*. And why can we not? Because neither the negation of the principle of non contradiction (=the negation of the difference of the differences), nor the negation of the being which appears, *presume that same being which they refute*, thus ending in a self-negation. Such is the negation of the difference (between x and y, and x and non-x) which presumes that which it nullifies, as otherwise the negation cannot stand (and, as it stands, in its being as such, it is not being oth-

er but itself), so the negation of the being that appears, necessarily implies, in order to allow its negation, in its own configuration and that we are willing to deny, that in «such negation, this configuration will appear» (Severino, 2007, p. 250). In both cases, they deny their very foundations, (so themselves).

In this regard – made crystal-clear in the now endless Works of Severino – we will have to say, in his words, that «the original structure of destiny [the Shape of the destiny of truth] is the unity of the *élenchos* [=refutation] of the negation of the being itself and of the *élenchos* of the negation of the being that appears» (p. 249).

Thus the *concrete* logical-phenomenological im-mediation, has within itself its own mediation, in that *it is originally one with its own negation at the appearance of its self-negation*. Concrete Im-mediation: mediated im-mediation.

«The negation of the original structure, meaning the difference of the differentials [logical im-mediation] and of the existence of that which appears [phenomenological im-mediation], is the self-negation in that it refutes what without which it would be impossible» (Severino, 2019, p. 275).

3.

We were afore mentioning that to every segment of the earth, isolated by the destiny of truth – with the words of T.S. Eliot – to every segment of the *waste land*, (even though with a much more radical meaning than what he pictured) corresponds a dimension of the pure, non isolated earth, being that every aspect of it overturns and chokes the Pure Breath of the corresponding dimension, so that in the latter lies the necessity of the existence of the being that is *most similar* to that segment which is essentially lacking and full of pain.

«Destiny and the isolated earth sing, with the same notes, opposite songs, of truth and of wrong. In the song of wrong emerges therefore, but upside-down, the song of truth» (Severino, 2007, p. 374).

This is what is a priority for the great forms of culture which appeared on the earth (both Western and Oriental: even more for the latter, less aware, from an ontological point of view, and not yet free from that aura, yet fascinating and suggestive of the Myth), such as they are to conceive themselves as an Attempt to respond to pain (so to becoming nothing and

from nothing) tacitly assuming the non-transcendable aspect and thus *relying, unawares, upon death (nothingness) to win death (nothingness)* (See Severino, 2018).

Let's now turn to the great forms of knowledge of the isolated earth – to which each has a hidden correspondant in the pure earth. Those meant, underlying, as grand characters into making a *one great* formidable Knowledge yet in its multiple, differentiated development of *progressive coherence* when compared to its basic (alienated) “evidence” shared by all: the becoming as the becoming other/nothing; these in turn, just like their correspondant multiple, structured and unified by the *only* Knowledge, here worded by the philosopher Severino, in an attempt to testify it, in the light of which the veil of their death will appear from now on, triumphant with no exception, and will be recognised as such.

And we claim, it is clear, that all the isolated knowledge, in its assumption of universality (we may take, as an example, “Capitalism”, a genre mistakenly unrecognised as a branch of philosophy – needless to say “great”, as philosophy always is, otherwise it is not of philosophy we speak – and therefore a global vision of man and the world as a whole!), which disrupts the Destiny of Truth *from a certain perspective*, in which a certain part of Destiny (keep in mind the correspondence mentioned at various times) is given value to, in a radically altered form, keeping into account that the will of the totality that every knowledge assumes within itself, involves indirectly and correspondingly the whole of the Destiny. That is to say in every shape of the isolated knowledge (Illuminism, Idealism, Communism, Technoscience...) in which there are forms of the Destiny of the totality (the totality of the Pure Knowledge), even when throttled and hurled over by some sort of erring dimension.

From what has been speculated, we further consider: what knowledgeable disruption of Destiny is most similar to this? What disharmonic and dissonant “manifest harmony”, in the abysmal distance is the least distant from the pure “hidden harmony”? What dark light, which in the history of the world has been conjectured, uselessly shining light upon death, *priorly assuming that this, as it is, is true and real* (and so, out of the question, as *annihilation*), can, notwithstanding, more than any other, shine, in some way, a received reflected light by some secret Source, so that it may, although it may be blindly reaching out, powerfully foretell and tell? What mistaken truth, in its mortal sickness, has perceived by intuition, further than others, the Infiniteness of glorious infinities that lay spread out at the end of the Night? Or in what metaphysical folly has Joy – beyond the pow-

er of will, therefore beyond “man”, the mortal one, and beyond “God” himself – been awaiting since forever the advancing of the totality of the entity into the Path of Day, hidden itself in a less rigid form?

And of course, on the contrary: what erring of the mind expresses the zenith of Folly and so its maximum coherence and distance from Destiny? In what terrible knowledge is the extreme and incurable pain expressed, so as to reach the peak of the horror and so the maximum dissimilarity (however not without common ground: eternal in being although “being”!) with the Destiny and its Glory?

What does Destiny tell of? That *all* is eternal and because of this, Destiny has always been directed towards Glory. It is not about a “God”, who eventually “generously” can give to others than himself, an immortality which does not belong to his *naked* nature (the “creature” –, that, *sibi relicta* is not but a nothing). The maximum distance from Destiny, we must say then, is a whole nothing and bad. And not because of, we must stress this, an eventual suggestive good *boutade*, but, all in all, gratuitous and with no foundation. On the contrary, it is reinforced with a very rigorous inference, on the basis of the “evident” becoming nothing and that from nothing (on the part of the immediate manifested beings).

We could then affirm, that if Christianity is the chief way in which, in the isolated earth, the Destiny of Truth (even more, as for the intrinsic and inherent logic of Christianity, which is *infinitely* distant) is more present (less remote, less contrasted), then the philosophy of Leopardi embodies the opposite view (in which Nietzsche though, takes two steps forward: the joy of the superman for the absurd becoming, which, on the contrary, “the man” Leopardi, because of a contradictory principle residue, still suffers; and the concept of becoming – not in a fantastic dimension, but by rigorous inference – as an “eternal return of the equal”). Between the two extremities, we would like to say, «all the “middles” of which the western [now worldwide] culture and civilisation is composed of, are placed» (Severino, 1995, p. 309).

And so if the farthest opposition between Destiny and nihilism states: all is eternal and glorious/ all is nothing and painful; all that is within the nihilist thought, the maximum opposition is between Christianity (we are talking about the distorted knowledge, which is ever the more similar to Destiny) and the thinking of Leopardi/Nietzsche.

The first – within the scope of the first undisputed assumption (but taken as absolute undisputable truth) of becoming nothing and coming from nothing – all tended to meditate on how to retrieve the ruined orig-

inal unconscious (in truth irretrievable), attributing “eternal life” to all things, bodies and souls – imagined in all of their glory in their resurrection (which implies the *destruction*, and generally, we lose sight of it, of its previous configurations), which will compete to Nature as a whole. (Indeed «the new skies and the new lands» are quoted in unison by Isaiah (65, 17), St. Peter (II, 3, 13) and St. John (AP. 21, 1) implying the *destruction*, therefore of the sheer irretrievability of the correspondent “older versions”).

(In that grand affresco of Christianity which is *The city of God* (Bompiani, Milano 2015), St. Augustine, quoting a passage of the Gospel (pp. 1152-3) (“But not a hair of your head will perish”: *Luke* 21, 18), insists with particular strength on the liberation, not from the body, but of thy body (a scandal to the Greeks, who turned down and judged absurd the speech of St. Paul in the Areopagus of Athens on the resurrection of the dead: *At* 32-3). Also for St. Augustine, educated by Greece (Plotinus, Plato), there was no doubt on the becoming as an «annihilation of life» (*ivi*, p.613), but evermore «if we want to be Christians – he writes –, we must believe that there will be the resurrection of the dead in the flesh too» (*ivi*, p. 1032). He believes so to the point of stating that “up above”, to our resurrected bodies, «will be removed not the possibility, but the necessity of eating and drinking; they then will be spiritual beings, not because they will stop being bodies, but because they will live thanks to the spirit that will give them lives” (*ivi*, p. 631); subjugated by the spirit, the body will not need any aid: «it will certainly not be the body of an animal, but a spiritual one, yet having the substance of flesh, but without its carnal corruption” (*ivi*, p. 1176). So: a flesh-not flesh (a square circle): the great difficulty of St. Augustine in trying to transform an authentic non-sense into a “mystery” is understandable (and as such, not acceptable by reason). It is known that the theme of the resurrection of the dead presents formidable anticipations in the Old Testament: see Isaiah first («he will swallow up death forever... Your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise, those who dwell in the dust will wake up and shout for joy»: 25, 8 e 26, 19) and Daniel: «Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake...»: 12, 2).

4.

«I believe that today’s sufferings – writes St. Paul – are worth nothing when compared to the glory that will appear to us. The spasmodic waiting of

things created, is indeed, in those expectations of the manifestation of God's sons and daughters. That which was created was, in fact, experienced as transient [=to become nothing: the "evidence" that St. Paul himself does not dream to discuss] not by thy own will, but by him [Adam] who made it so [we will consider that transience is not primarily rooted in Adam, such as St. Paul here suggests, but by a God who is deeply immersed in the conviction to have drawn these beings out from their nothingness; whose potential "eternal life", as a consequence, does not belong to them *by nature*, but *by grace*, thus corroborating their essential and unsurpassed nature of transience], all this in the hope that creation itself will be freed from the subjugation of corruption [remaining though "creation" and so reaffirming the folly and servitude intrinsically implied in the act of creation where nothing becomes (identical to) being] in order to reach the freedom of the glory as sons and daughters of God. From the beginning to now the entire creation, as we know it, has been groaning in one act of giving birth» (Rom. 8, 18-22). A greatly perspicuous passage (although there are very many – splendid ones – in the letters of the Apostle) regarding the desperate intensity with which we try (in vain) to attribute to all things without exception what (eternity) – in opposition to Destiny – has been taken away beforehand. So that, (conceived as) *separate* from the very beginning from its own being, the "thing" – firstly man – will eventually be able to become one forever only in view of a miracle (grace), confirming in this way, to being, unto thyself, nothing. But the effort – the great intuition *if we think of the Destiny of Truth*, that otherwise would be nothing but myth and rhetoric (of which the twentieth century man is in no need) – to envisage as "divine", what is assumed as nothing, is nonetheless unique: «You are all gods – you may read in the Psalms (82,6) – you are all sons of the Most High! But like mortals you will die»; and Jesus reasserts this same message in the Gospel of St. John (10, 34): «Jesus answered them: "Is it not written in your Law: *I have said: you are gods?*"»; and this is what St. Paul reinstated, to some extent, in his speech at the Areopagus of Athens: «For in him we live and move and have our being... We are his offspring. Therefore since we are God's offspring...» (At 17, 28-29).

Other is the *mystery*; other, a completely different one (going back to notation 1), the *absurd* – in which, repelling it from reason because *impossible*, we cannot believe it (the first to admit such assumption was St. Thomas). But (it is the leitmotif of this work) *the absurd in question* – *taken the stick from the water in which it appears to be broken* – *reveals itself as the truth*: even the flesh, like the "spirit" *and every one of the not-nothings*,

are eternal, not before annihilating themselves in their flesh-in flesh, then resurrecting as a spiritual flesh (and then again, thus, the contradiction); *but as such!* And in that the absurd *for those who believe in the absurd* that in the becoming the being is at stake!

For those same who then, through and in spite of the grave filter of the contradiction and of the folly, *perceive, feel, fortell, guess, make out from a haze* what is not for them possible to assert (is in fact, that *everything*, the physical property of nature and also the individual human flesh, is destined to eternity – *one way or another*).

5.

On the other side, Leopardi and Nietzsche.

On the one hand, the great Italian Poet and Philosopher Leopardi who anticipates of 60 years Nietzsche's proclamation of "the death of God" and is thus anticipating the more radical left-winged followers of Hegel and the very Existentialism. On the basis of the evidence of the becoming of the world, in fact, Leopardi infers that «nothing exists prior to things. Neither forms, nor ideas, or necessity or even reason of being, one way or another. *All comes after existence*» (Leopardi, 1988, P 1616); if indeed the «pure real fact [=the evident becoming]» (P 1342), were anticipated in any way, whereas "something" (privileged, independent, eternal) existed «afore things» (*Ibid.*), as absolute Essence of these, then these would be reduced to appearance and dream. Whereas instead, were the opposite to be: the terrible concreteness of the world and the pain that belongs to it, such as becoming nothing and coming from nothing which has the power to undermine anything that makes it illusory and thus reduces it to a mere «arbitrary novel of your fancy» (P 1615), is what Nietzsche unveils by its origin and will then define it as the "Real World". The root of any kind of Platonism is the same as Christianity itself. But indeed: «if all pre-existing platonic forms of things were destroyed, you would have destroyed God» (P 1342).

«Oh infinite vanity of truth!» (P 69), sighs Leopardi.

We can observe that the truth, as in such cannot be vain, ("arid" and "cold", just as he declared). And if we really were confronted with something lifeless, then it could not be the truth! This is a contradiction that disturbed Leopardi's thinking, in which it is still "man" who talks, and not yet the "superman" of Nietzsche, who is *joyful* of what terrifies and shocks

man, triumphing in the nonsensical Dionysian eternity – which means of *its own!* Until it conceives the becoming *by deduction*, on the basis of its very own evidence, as its *eternal return of the equal* (see Severino, 1999).

Here are, in a nutshell the knowledgeable opposite ends, in which the “medium views” – although of high value, we may turn to Hegel for instance – as viewed in this context, somewhat lose strength.

6.

Which leaves us with a great question open.

We are speaking about “Christianism”. But let us linger on this point. “Christian” were people such as St. Paul, Arius, the Cathars, the extraordinary woman by the name Margherita Porete, it also was the heresy of the Free Spirit (just to name one), the Orthodox church (which negates the *filioque*), and St. Thomas and Eckhart, both Dominican Fathers, to point to Modern figures, and not mentioning many others, like Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dostoevskij, Simone Weil up to the great philosopher Giovanni Gentile – whose whole work was prohibited by the Roman Church –, even though the author would call himself a Christian, a Catholic in fact (see Gentile, 1992). The list goes on with G. Bontadini, a Neo-Thomist of the 20th Century, reaching the most relevant mystic Italian scholar (Eckhart as a representative), M. Vannini, an objectively sided Christian, let us say, with an actualistic and spiritualistic approach, but who, surprisingly, does not seem to know the philosopher Gentile at all.

Here we are faced with a problem: which one of these “Christian beliefs” is “the most similar”, in the abysmal distance, to the Destiny of Truth, as an incontrovertible statement, (= as an integration, in origin, of the self-negation of its own negation) of the eternity of everything?

We answer: the least that has been touched by the nihilist coherence that, nevertheless, by necessity, it holds within, and is, as a consequence, more “visionary”, although it will thus entail, notwithstanding (so in a contradictory fashion), the commitment to assign eternity to every thing as much as it may muster. We have also seen this to be true for the individual bodies (as they are “resurrected”). (As for the disgraced Spinoza – the *res extensa* – is not only eternal, but divine and as such, it is certainly not specific to this or that individual, sensitive body).

But where, for instance, in Gentile’s work (as in Vannini’s; even though the former is more committed to giving an “actualistic” view to his as-

sumptions, the latter tends to take position on matters without a concrete basis¹), the “evidence” of the becoming *becoming* (of the *thinking* thought: the act in acting) certainly yields mere *illusions* («parts where fancy wanders freely»: Gentile, 1994, p. 145), the substantial independence of the soul from the body, personal immortality and faith in another world (ivi, XIII, 4). Without even mentioning the resurrection of the body, of which the “Christian” Vannini did not hesitate in attributing to the fancy of St. Paul, who, in his stead, would reduce it to a mere extrinsic credo and contrary to the evangelical belief (an authentic *dys-anghélion*), subordinate to the miracle (=abhorrent adoration of power) the real Christian faith, as interior experience of exceeding oneself and the never-ending *detachment* from thyself (Eckhart): the true Christian resurrection, not reduced to myth, of one who makes himself one with the divine spirit ceaselessly denying himself (=mystical death). So, Gentile: «Becoming Immortal, not remaining attached to one’s shell like an oyster to its rock» (1994, p.157).

And it is, furthermore, significant, that, in spite of their differences, both Gentile and Vannini (but not only), consider their work that of a *radical demythicization* of Christianity as the access to the real God! In this way, they lose what pushes to the so-called “demythicization”, which is that force with which the becoming of the world is imposed (both philosophers call it the “spirit”), which has a demanding nature and as so requires to have *nothing* around it. Thus, it requires not to be enscribed – as otherwise the essence of tradition requests to be – in an ontological heterogeneous eternal (so “divine”), that will fatally cancel its “evidence”, relinquishing it, ultimately (and so from its very origin) to impossibility. There where the precipice in which, with no return and *completely beyond their intentions*, both fall, is the path to a “God” (to an “Absolute”), *but it is Dionisus* – the last “God” who really and truly is, with no reservations, coherent to the basic nihilistic assumption: the Becoming itself (the Case).

1. That is, first of all, considering metaphysical theology to be an absolute “false science” and, actually, “chatting” (this a recurring judgment, generally, in his works: 2007, 2011, 2018, 2019), a mere correlative of psychology (the latter also interpreted, for many good reasons by the way, as a wrong form to merely reduce of man to the psychic dimension). In this way, he has exempted to tackle, denying, the high *lógoi* that are the foundations of the great aristotelic argument and then the neo-aristotelic medioeval and further on the neo-aristotelic-thomistic in the twentieth century (G. Bontadini above all): the *lógoi* (and they do exist, if for anything they should be proven false) of the ontological dualism (which has been admitted, even by Vannini, if we stand by the absolute declared onto-metaphysical *heterogeneity* between God, the eternal and the fleeting creatures).

Instead we wish to stop at the Christian *threshold* of this abyss (in truth already part of the precipice itself), considering it in its “mythological naivety”. This is surely felt, from a Greek standpoint, as a becoming something else, like coming out and going into nothing (although, in this sense, we are already alien to the myth), in addition to being turned to the eternal (as was rigorously considered by Parmenides: extratemporal) – here, of course, there is no naivety; we are dealing, nonetheless, than with the grandiose ontological framework woven firstly by the Greeks (we will add the concept of “free will” to that, which was elaborated in particular by Aristotle in the *Etica Nicomachea*, IV, 4) –, but, therefore, in this matter there is no intention of abandoning (like *de jure* would say – and will say!), to the substantial and immortal nature of the soul, to its individual multiplicity, to the existence of the beyond and to the resurrection of the body. And it is to this “simple” and “utopistic” Christianity that we want to refer to especially (although, it is certain, forebodings of the Destiny of Truth are traceable in *every* knowledgeable form. We can consider Heraclitus (fr.27), as resounding in words so little considered all in all: «Men, when they die, are awaited by things that they do not hope or consider» – just as his traces are present in everything).

Let’s outline the meaning of this “simplicity” (as it cannot be done regardless of any dominant metaphysical presumption – so was for St. Augustine and before him for St. Paul).

It is not indeed a kind of Christianity that is devoid of *lògoi*; and yet it tends to understand, according to a lesson of Pascal, that it is a tool to unveil the fallacy of the same *lògos*, instead of being a way to demonstrate definitive metaphysical truths. «Nothing is conform to reason as is this repudiation of reason» (Pascal, 1973, n. 140). It would be like saying that true philosophy (the most absolutely attainable one by human reason) consists of bringing the limits of philosophy itself to light (and in this way the relativity of human reason): «The supreme step of reason stands in recognizing that there are an infinite number of things that go beyond its capability» (n. 139); this would mean that «to mock philosophy, means to truly do philosophy» (n. 4).

(We would like to underline that Pascal – and that all the other philosophers who preceded him and will succeed him – surely took for granted a number of great metaphysical truths that we cited above and that he was given directly from the Greek philosophers: firstly the “evidence” of becoming nothing; such as is shown by E. Severino, which is surely not a

piece of *evidence*, being indeed a *doctrine* (which has the same root of Folly) and so would rather be a meta-physics: «All things came out from nothing», would write Pascal: *ivi*, n. 158).

Thus said he gave room to the “feeling”: *I feel*, said Pascal (we can think back to Rousseau and, *mutatis mutandis*, to Dostoevskij). And, as it is renowned of Pascal, it is the “heart” that feels, not reason; «The heart, not reason, feels God» (*ivi*, n. 148). By now, following through with the elements of our argument at hand, is it not crystal-clear that the famous synthesis of “misery and greatness” with which Pascal identifies human nature (after the original sin) expresses, in its own way (alienated and at the same time foretelling) the concept of Severino that is the “disruption of the truth of Destiny” (after that “sin”, the authentic original “sin”, is consisting in the event of nihilism)? A “misery” then, although confined and founded on “greatness”, which inevitably seeps through, and so to which humankind is destined: the misery of a dethroned king (*ivi*, n. 215)! (*Formally* – and we only mean formally – Severino could not but agree).

And could that be what the secret “simplicity” – of the *facilitas* – that Cusano was meaning to explain to his Brothers regarding the “mystical theology”, when he dedicated the text *De visione Dei* to them? (Cusano, 2013, p. 65). Meaning, as much as one can ponder upon it, a very deep, thoughtful, inescapable (“simple” and “easy”) *feeling* that “God” extends infinitely beyond what, in a faulty manner, we demonstrate. A sort of “science of love” – as termed by St. John of the Cross –, as an *obscure night* not only to the senses but also to reason, in which «the extreme inferiority of human stance in face of the supreme knowledge and to the divine feeling appears. It also shows [to the thirsty soul] how limited and improper, for how eloquent and wise all the terms and words with which, on earth one talks about celestial things, and how it is impossible to know them with natural tools *without the enlightenment of the mystical theology* [our italics]. And as, in light of the knowledge, it [the soul] finds truths that cannot be reached by human and earthly paths, he calls this contemplation, and does so correctly [ours and not ours anymore, as St. Paul would phrase it] “secret”» (John of the Cross, 2009, pp. 117-118).

Well, of course! We think of the various “demonstrations” of the existence of God, of the foundations of the “principle of non-contradiction” – firstly of Parmenides and after of the “parricide” of Plato, of Aristotle and all those that followed –, which was born with a nihilistic malady and therefore, at first, expressive of the rhythm of becoming, understood as the

sphere in which the entity is, *when* it is and *when* it is not, is not² (nothing could be clearer – or more of a mistake, at the same time, as implying, implicitly, the identity of the absolute opposites). Interpreted in this way, it is inevitable that such a principle as a most renowned *principium firmissimum*, holding the viper in its bosom, only apparently can represent the foundation to demonstrate the Unbecomable divine (here, we say, the secret reason of the feeling of lacking and frustration of which Pascal accuses the “demonstrations” regarding the metaphysical and theological field: the dialectics on faith of Pascal – I know, I do not know, I believe – and that would greatly be caught up with by Kant in his two *Critiques*), inevitably ending up overwhelming what the servant cannot be – but becoming its Master (maybe the being, in the becoming, is when is not and is not when it is? Certainly not, ergo. *Ergo the opposition of the opposites, that we explicitly intend to keep firmly set, is the mask of absolute plausibility that the mask of Folly can implicitly wear dethroning unrestrained*). But just: “us” – “capable of” (=open to) God, *we feel* that something very different (that same infinity) is opening its doors, something way beyond this “world” (and that disappointing demonstrated “God”)! That which the “*mystical theology*” of any time has always *easily* and *simply* foretold, foreshadowed, guessed. St. Augustine would say that we would not *feel* it if He had not marked us with a torment of a heartbreak that no spectacle of the world (and no theological theory), would ever appease (*inquietum est cor meum, Domine...*). So, in the image is concealed and burns That which of the image is imaged.

(The “heart” of Pascal (=Deus in nobis= faculty of the infinite, superior to reason= love flame of God), is embodied as the Christian-fideistic transcription of the soul, full of truth in a platonic-socratic maieutics philosophical dimension: this dimension, setting of an endogenic force (=“infinity” within us is what deep inside us we are *by nature*); the esogenic one (=“infinity” within is the presence of a “guest” that belongs to us *by grace*). In any case and in both cases, those who were to feel the “ardour” less (the *mysterious* call, to philosophy or to faith in Christ: “mysterious” because being touched or not by it, presents itself as a pure “event”), not so would not have within such treasure, that would then result in (enigmatically enough) less ripe or, which would be the same, would feel it less strongly;

2. On the “principle of non-contradiction” (in between quotation marks!) as «fundamental rule that Nihilism [dressed as metaphysics] gives to itself», see E. Severino, 2015, pp. 329 and 343.

so, this individual would be inevitably, but indirectly, directed towards it, through dimensions of less value, making of it and necessarily an “absolute” (assumption of the finite as infinite): money, honour and pleasure...).

Is this the mystical theological “simplicity” and that of its “object”? The enlightenment (enigmatic: *spiritus flat ubi vult, gratia quia gratis datur*) with which, *suddenly*³, “we feel” (not at a psychological level, note: we are here dealing with the highest level of *lògos*, not of speech – and we may here think to how harshly Schelling was criticised by Hegel) the idea of infinity (of “God”) that we have within, *unitely* to our need of *detachment* from anything that is finite (with this thorn in the soul, the platonic prisoner climbs up the steep hill of the cavern of thyself and of things)? To the various views – every hour and not ever – of the infinite Object: of One. But it is not about “vision”, lectures Plotinus, but about «an ecstasy, a simplification (ἔκστασις και ἁπλωσις)» (*Enneadi*, VI, 9, 11).

And from the start again: what enigma hides in this “simplicity”? How are we to interpret it? As the exercise (a virtuous one) of the *detachment* is far from the rhetoric of not-knowing anything/not-wanting anything: who practices it assumes to know (in truth, it is nothing but a grand faith) nonetheless the ontological picture designed by the Greeks (as we afore mentioned), included the “free will”; and it is not true that he wants nothing – *in this sense, it cannot be not asked to God* –; on the contrary (Nietzsche knew it rather well), it is through this very act, *that he believes he can want and obtain anything!* His very eternal happiness! Even if not like this person or that other, but yet it is to “thyself” he is thinking of: a will of salvation that is also a will of power (and viceversa).

(Vannini wrote a comment in this regard: «The sacrifice [the detachment] is a sacrifice of the small, egotistical self: he who sacrifices sacrifices himself» (2019, p.72). Thus expressed, meaning without specifying the

3. «Suddenly, just as light sparking at the setting off of a spark», the knowledge of truth (that does not lie in language), «is born in the soul and takes its nourishment from it» (Plato, *Letter VII*, 341 d); «... suddenly to him [= who has been educated philosophically in love matters], a beauty, marvellous by nature will be revealed... an eternal beauty, that is not born and does not die...» (Plato, *Symposium*, 210 e); «...at this point [of the ascent to the One] the individual gets rid of every teaching and... suddenly he sees; and he does not see “how”, but the vision fills his eyes with light...» (Plotinus, *Enneadi*, VI, 36, 19). In Christian domain, it is the sudden lightning, that is spoken of in St. Augustine (*De Trinitate*, VIII, 3) and Margherita Porete (*The mirror of the simple souls*, chapp. 58 e 132) and that took inspiration from St. Paul's folgoration (At 9, 3).

different *sub eodem*, the assertion appears contradictory. Indeed the “one who detaches himself” cannot in fact be, *simpliciter*, the same “detached one”. But in this contradiction there lies a precious lapsus: *in the horizon of the faith* (of belief) – and not of *epistème* and incontrovertibility (=the same essence of philosophy – that Vannini, on the other hand, never takes into account) –, so is only of will, which is to say groundlessness, arbitrary, dogmatism... *and it is the very little “I” to be the protagonist* (not the *lògos* in him: reduced to a content of faith, the “*lògos*” it is such only in words). The “other” – the so-called real self, the big I – is a *believed/wanted* by it unto which he hopes, committing suicide in the detachment, to achieve salvation/power. So this very individual (as a “believer”, the “new man” says St. Paul) operates “virtuously” for the destruction of its very own evidence (its not believer immediate nature: the “old man”), for something merely hoped for. *He accepts to put to death his precarious evident existence for a not precarious not evident existence.* Fideistic astoric individualism: the exact opposite of the “spiritualism” according to Hegel (opposite to what Vannini’s thought was). E. Severino stated in (2017, p. 227): «Even when a mystic man [in a most radical time of abandonment] opens his arms wide to let the divine in, he believes that this absolute passiveness of his, compared to divine power, is the most efficient way to take part in this power, compared to which, all worldly ones grow pale»).

This, in a nutshell, for what is to be said on the subject. What about the “object”? Must we think about the One (God, Infinity), of the mystical theology in compliance to Plotinus and, *mutatis mutandis*, to Buddhism? Just as the absolute indetermination of Brahman (and its correlative *nirvana* as “extinction” of every *principium individuationis*)? M. Vannini had interpreted it this way, bringing the same Eckhart to this side (and, of course, to see it from this standpoint, we can find hints in the texts of the great Dominican; although there are even *others* and opposites too) – and also Hegel!

Despite this, we must highlight that the plotinian One does not coincide at all with the extremely indeterminate being of Parmenides, in that it is not constituted of an “empty” unity but of a “whole”: «The One is all things» (*Enneadi*, V, 1,1), Plotinus writes (Parmenides would certainly not have agreed!). In this way, as an inevitable consequence, beyond the intentions of Plotinus, the One *can not hold within the trace of the multiple*. In fact, to say that the many pre-exist *simpliciter* as “one”, would be like saying that they do *not pre-exist at all*. As a consequence: 1. Of the One, we could not say at all, as, on the contrary, Plotinus does say, stating “it is all

things”; 2. It would be necessary to recognize that the multiplicity of things are produced, not from One, *but from nothingness*. To this follows, as a claim, that the One is *all but a pure simplicity* (and not even, to see it in a just light – but we will leave this matter for the moment – a pure act, being potential at least as a “world”).

7.

In his very rigorous radicalism (within the scope of nihilism), Gentile finishes with the assumption that all becomes nothing except the eternal process to become it (meant as the transcendental I). In his own way, as mentioned, Vannini has his own train of thought. So both baptize “God” – the Christian God! – and this tiny, super-energetic shred of reality (*ego te baptizo piscem*, just like Mazzarino baptized the meat during Lent making Louis XIV’s mouth water). Vannini thus finds himself very close to radical Atheism and radically consequential of Nietzsche, who thus tries, but absolutely absurdly, to Christianize his contents (conceiving «the *Übermensch* as a man renewed by grace [yes, I heresay: but by Dionysius!]» (Vannini, 2019.p.38), but omitting completely the decisive and corresponding concepts of “will of power” and “eternal return to equal”; the latter, as we know, judged by Nietzsche, as (his) very most profound thought!).

In line, instead, with the intentions that underlie the present text, we interpret the “One” (and its “simplicity”) not as a God-killer who creates to annihilate (living on others’ deaths) – “It seems [=appears] that the being of things has, as its one and only objective, death. Not being able to die, that what was not, so, from nothing came the things that are not» (Leopardi, 1982, p. 287) –; not therefore, that icy and mortal “simplification”, that, like an axe would fall on an infinity of things annihilating them all and that Hegel, mystical in his own way (but the *system of categories* – the Idea – Vannini does as though they never existed!), celebrating the divinity of the Concept, defines as «an immense abbreviation faced with the singularity of things» (Hegel, 2016, p. 18). Simplification, abbreviation: slaughter! Would we prefer to call it “love” and “peace”?

(“Love for the creatures”: an authentic terminological contradiction that goes completely undetected at customs of the bad reason (=the “principle of no contradiction” – between speech marks) but, certainly, as an innocent and good thing! Where you consider a being a “creature”, it means to priorly assume it to being *a nothing* and so *to treat a not-nothing*

as a nothing. Eckhart – 2014, p. 697 – often repeats this axiom of *the most pure violence possible*: «All creatures are a pure nothing... they are made of nothing, are and were nothing». And A. Silesius, a great versifier of his, would not stop re-stating it (2018, II, 21): «The world is an empty nothing»).

8.

On the other hand we think that the true “One”, to whom all Christian mystical (theology) unconsciously aspires to, is that “One” that is the *sui generis* witnessed by E. Severino’s philosophy and whom, notwithstanding all, appears to us as the “most similar” knowledge. The “One” interpreted as the infinity of the infinite eternities that includes from the start, this painful and desolated earth of ours, that from the very beginning has also always been stretched out to infinity and beyond it, to the Glory and Joy of Everything. In which, as we may say, will find complete satisfaction *the errant and at the same time the foretold intuition* about “substantiality” of the “soul”, the “salvation” of the many (the actually infinite: see Severino, 2001, V) ”souls”, the existence of the “otherworld”, the “resurrection” of the bodies, and the very “transcendent existence of God”; and, in particular, *to really be on the other side of the operating* – which is the *Folly of making something become something else* (=will of power = to make be what was not and not be what was) – on God’s behalf (and on divine “man’s” behalf: the authentic *overman*, who does not wish to gain anything with money, not even his “salvation”, *because he does not want simpliciter any longer*). *Divinidad*, it is prophetically named by S. Juan de la Cruz; *Gottheit*, the “diviner” Eckhart: the *True Detachment* from the *Regio dissimilitudinis infinitae* – the world of the faith of the becoming nothing –, perceived as something “bad”, but at the same time confirmed because considered “evident” by Plato, Plotinus and St. Augustine (*Politico* 273 d; *Enneadi*, I, 8, 13; *Confessioni*, VII, 10). (Just as it will be for Leopardi!, who however will deal – this is the epochal difference – with the terrible and strict consequences).

(«I pray God to free me from God»: so Eckhart (1985, p. 136), with an unparalleled synthetic power, alludes to a superior “God”, infinitely beyond that “God” that is such *for the creatures*, even in his Trinity form. We wonder: what does he *foresee* from afar, when, through his formidable and out-of-time philosophy (*the mystic is the speculative*, Hegel, his admirer,

will then say), breaks through the veil of the prevailing orthodoxy, looking on the one hand *beyond “God” and beyond the “man”*? On one hand, putting the *Gottheit*, concretely infinite and inutterable, up against *Gott*, a convenient simulacrum and golden calf of the lazy souls; and thus the indiscernable Abyss of the transcendent Divinity to the mediocre and instrumental representation that “man” uses, his relative mirror («God and the Divinity are separated so far apart such as the sky is from earth»: *ivi*, pp. 78-9; «God operates, the Divinity does not operate... God and the Divinity are separated by the acting and the not acting»: *ivi*, p. 80). On the other hand, comparing “man”, firstly and essentially meant as *Grund der Seele* (“bottom of the soul”) and so *divine* as equal as God, to “man” as a mortal self, in flesh and soul. So it is then true that it is not understood how the Trinitarian God (*Gott*) – and as a logic consequence, the man and the world – *are generated* by Divinity (*Gottheit*), in the same way as the Spirit compared to the plotinian One *which produces it*, seen the complete inactivity of the first).

Then, “God” – if we still wish to use this term (unreal and largely prejudiced from a nihilistic perspective) –, meant as the eternal and infinite All. Whose inexpressible “transcendent” complexity (an infinity of infinities), is no other than its eternal explication (but this term is not to be read in a productive-poietic way) of its *super-simple* Root: “A=A” (the appearance-of-being-thyself).

(To “be thyself” implies, indeed, the conscience, the reflection (the “apparition”); only for which “A” is worth “A=A”. Supposing “A” as isolated, as simple “noema”, by the reflection for which it is put equal to itself – “A=A” – and thus as “dianoema”, so “A” would appear (*in the realistic theory* that affirmed it as independent from the apparition/thought); but, appearing as “A” isolated, it could not exclude its not being not-A and so *it would be and would not be itself*. But this is impossible, ergo. (See E. Severino, 1995, p. 106). We can deduce that «the being as such being appears» (E. Severino, 2007, p. 546) or, said otherwise, that *the apparition belongs to the essence of the being as such*).

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The Silence of Becoming

Severino, Husserl and Time-Consciousness

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With its several problems and *its aporetic nature*, the absolute intimacy between consciousness and time highlighted by Husserl's reflections rightly belongs in the discussion of the dimension of profound persuasion, the unconscious faith in the becoming of time and its rootedness in the *Essence of Western Nihilism*, described by Emanuele Severino in his works: the nihilistic unconscious that things are nothing, the unconscious persuasion that there is a *time* in which being and nothing coincide, a *time* in which the impossible is given, that a being is and also is not, that the self is different from self. As regards the Nihilistic meaning of Becoming, the faith in becoming different of the beings, is the continuous process of the *death* of what becomes different until real death, physical death in the sense of the extinction of any Becoming. And this brings us back to the crucial topic of the phenomenology of Husserlian time. The re-emerging through memory, the re-presentation of the present past of *time-consciousness* is not simply a ghost of what has been. But this becoming, the repetition of the present in something else through the *retentional modification* enacted by memory, inevitably stops in the face of death, the *absolute modification* of no long being able to become.

Keywords

Time, Faith, Becoming, Phenomenology, Death, Eternity

1.

In the understanding of Husserl's phenomenology, the question of time is one of the most important characteristics. Husserl's crucial theme of transcendental subjectivity and the intentional structure that characterises it cannot in any way be set aside from the essential fact that it is both constituent and constituted in time-consciousness. Time-consciousness, in the phenomenological meaning that progressively emerges during Husserl's reflections from 1905 on in his lessons, is the result of an analysis that *eliminates* objective time with all the affirmations concerning it. Husserl's intention in this analysis was to enclose the real *worldly time* of the natural sciences and psychology, so that the experience of time is understood in its purity as the immanent *flow* to consciousness: this is "assuming a time that is, but this is not the time of world experience but rather the *immanent time* of the flow of consciousness" (Husserl, 1969, p. 5).

This is not, however, an undifferentiated flow. The assumption of the flow of consciousness theme in Husserl should be understood in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's declarations in the *Phenomenology of Perception*: "time presupposes an overview of time. It is therefore not like a river, it is not a substance that flows. The fact that this metaphor has been able to survive since Heraclitus until today, is because we furtively put a testimony of its flow in the river" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 470). Husserl's *view* is both reflexive and descriptive: reflexive through its exercising of the reduction that reveals the intentional structure in which and through which experience objects are constituted; descriptive, in rendering the details of the structural elements, the eidetic forms underlying the creation of experience objects, and the phenomena in their giving themselves in the respective intentional acts of consciousness:

What comes under the field of phenomenology is none other than the description *that* specific acts *intend* [...] the detection of the a

priori truths that belong to different constitutive moments of objectivity. As far as *the a priori of time* is concerned, we try to clarify it by scouring *time-consciousness*, highlighting the essential constitution and extracting any graspable contents and character acts specifically concerning time, to which the time laws basically belong [...] I am referring to laws of an obvious nature such as the following: that stable, temporal order is an infinite two-dimensional series, that their relationship is irreversible, that transitivity exists, that each time has a before and after, etc. (Husserl, 1969, p. 10).

The phenomenological approach thus differs clearly from that of the natural sciences and for Husserl objective time must therefore be excluded (cf. Husserl, 1969, § 1). It is through this operation that the consciousness of immanent time emerges as the consciousness of pure experiences, which are intentional experiences that are headed towards the temporal determinations of an immanent object. And in virtue of this correlation, each objectual temporal determination has to express itself as an intentional act.

Initially the analysis of time-consciousness is carried out following the graspable content of grasping the transcendent perception pattern, according to which the object is perceived in its totality, as it is possible to perceive directly only its particular (verifiable) aspects, and its adumbrations. Similarly, the analysis of immanent time, that of temporal objects and their duration implies that, owing to its own completeness, each current phase of perception refers in continuation to the past phase by means of retention and to the future one by means of protention. On the basis of this graspable scheme the memory would be what makes past realities progressively reappear in the shadow and then disperse in the continuous alternation of retentions.

In this analysis, the temporal object has two meanings for Husserl: one in the broader and one in the stricter sense. In the broader sense it refers to any perceived object (for example, a tree in the garden, a lit lamp, etc.) that appears in time and occupies a defined *now* in a spatial relationship of there compared to the absolute here of my lived body (*Leib*) and it is a synthetic unit, a unitary apprehension, an apperception of those essentially partial outlines, those perceptive shadows that can gradually be verified, through which the perceived object is offered. On the other hand, the stricter sense refers to an individual perceptive object that intrinsically contains a temporal extension, a duration, the parts of which are distributed over time (for example, that of a succession of notes in a melody). Both meanings, however, require an act of objectivising consciousness, as a form

of apprehension rather than a mere sensation. An analysis of the intentional activity of time-consciousness thus requires a description of how temporal objects are constituted in perceptive acts of consciousness. This means a three-fold interweaving of intentional correlation: the perception object that is currently remembered was present as perceived in the past and the object of future expectation will be understood as an object of present perception. The essential characteristic of this operation is the discovery that it is the present that takes place within a continuous web that binds and links these different threads of time.

However, from the lessons in the 1906-1907 winter semester on (Husserl, 1969, §39, pp. 106-109), this description is gradually transformed, with the introduction of the idea of a consciousness of absolute time, of pure intentionality in which consciousness *retains*, keeping the temporal object and, *simultaneously, retains itself*: it retains the past objects in the present and retains itself in what no longer exists. Husserl calls this retention of the past duration of the temporal object transversal intentionality (*Querintentionalität*) and the retention of the past flow of the absolute consciousness, longitudinal intentionality (*Längsintentionalität*). For Husserl, these two intentionalities form an indissoluble unit in which the temporality of the relationship in itself and the relationship with the objects is closely related: “interwoven in the unique flow of consciousness there are therefore *two intentionalities* that are inextricably united and reciprocally necessary as two sides of the same thing” (Husserl 1969, p. 109). It therefore emerges as the consciousness of an object in time whilst at the same time the consciousness of myself as an experience of time; this therefore means describing the constitution of the temporal objects in the perceptive acts in the light of the temporality of the perceptive, constituent acts themselves. The consciousness of an intentional object is also conscious of itself, *self-conscious*, but *absolutely* and not in an objectivising manner. In this sense, immanent consciousness is a *manifestation of itself*: it gives itself without there being any distance between its apparition and its reality. And in this sense, time-consciousness must therefore always be understood as time-consciousness *and*, also as time of consciousness; in other words, it is a circular description that leads to the phenomenological theme of the *self-manifestation* of consciousness: an absolute consciousness of time that retains itself and is in *itself* retaining.

2.

Consciousness of temporal succession is therefore impossible if there is no tie between past and present perception. According to Husserl, “It is clear that the actual perception of a temporal object is of a temporal nature, that the perception of the duration in turn presupposes the duration of perception, and that the perception of any temporal figure also has its own temporal figure”. A first level of the interior time-consciousness exists in which each moment of perception is already given a duration of the temporal object, and in which the duration of the perception makes it possible to follow the temporal object as it continuously unfolds. Thanks to the fact that a duration of the temporal object already exists at each moment of perception, the duration of perception therefore makes it possible to follow the temporal object in its continuous and living unfolding, as is the case, for example, in the perception of the duration of a sound compared to a melody. However, a second level also emerges, a last layer of consciousness that Husserl calls the “flow of the absolute, constitutive consciousness of time” (Husserl, 1969, p. 101). This level is transformed into the absolute consciousness of time; it is absolute because it constitutes different immanent temporal objects, it is the condition of possibility and is therefore in its turn not constituted, it is not within time, and it is “nothing that is temporally objective” (Husserl, 1969, p. 102).

In this manner the phenomenological reflection of time-consciousness *focuses* the entire structure of an intentional experience in which, before it is thematised, the consciousness *lived* in an unthinking (*silent*) form of forgetting the self. Husserl describes the life of consciousness – *regardless of its degrees of attention* – as a “look from the ‘now’ towards the new ‘now’”, (...) something *original* that for the first time prepares the way for future intentions of experience” (Husserl, 1980, p. 259). It is therefore the perceptive experience of the present, the presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) that is the foundation of all time-consciousness. However, consciousness of the present is not a simple instantaneous consciousness of a punctual now of objective time. According to Husserl, an act of perception is a continuous process that is crossed by a bond of consciousness, by an act of apprehension that has unity; as a result, in a present phase the consciousness of the previous and successive phases is therefore already necessarily implied in this process (Husserl, 1969, pp. 232-234). The memory (recollection) and the expectation (future anticipation) that flow in to it, are acts of represen-

tation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) that enact the doubling of the present; they must not be confused with presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) but must be distinguished from the continuous interweaving of non-independent retentional-protentional moments – since they are all necessarily bound together – of any intentional act that takes place in the present. What is being discussed is the importance of the structural alternation, along the uninterrupted axis of the absolute consciousness, of retention and protention, which establishes itself more and more from Bernau's research materials 1917-18 in the phenomenology of Husserlian time as a genetic phenomenology: the formation of a *continuum* of auto-differentiation that reveals itself as the actual condition of possibility for the *functioning* of time consciousness (cf. Husserl, 2001).

In longitudinal intentionality, absolute consciousness therefore never understands itself as an object, but in transversal intentionality it understands all objects. From the very moment that its two functions are said to be *inseparable*, absolute consciousness is original consciousness, in other words, consciousness of the origin of the difference between subject and object. However, paradoxically this consciousness never has full possession of itself. On the contrary, phenomenological reflection highlights the development of a passive genesis in which consciousness does not understand itself other than in there already having been a retentional modification. The presence of the consciousness that is identical to itself therefore forms against the background of absence. None of this contradicts the central role occupied by the original impression in absolute consciousness. Since it is constantly accompanied by retention, the original impression does not exhaust in the least the present of the consciousness in its revival of itself. If the time of this auto-giveness of the absolute consciousness can still be called *present*, then one must say that the *present* is the meeting or the difference between the present and the past. This original present (*Urgegenwart*) is therefore *in itself* a present-that-becomes-past (Bernet, 1994, pp. 234-235).

In the *functioning* of its triple temporal declination as *primary memory*, *original impression* and *primary expectation*, the original consciousness of time therefore proves to be a *continuum* of auto-difference that constitutes itself as this actual *difference* and, together, as its *internal condition of possibility* (cf. De Warren, 2009, p.175). This function of original time-consciousness defies definition and can only be described metaphorically as a flow since, according to Husserl:

It is something that we have given that name *on the basis of what is constituted*, but there is nothing temporally “objective” about it. It is *absolute subjectivity* and has the absolute characteristics of something that can be indicated, *with an image*, as the flow of something that originates at a point of actuality, at a point that is an original source, in a “now”, etc. In the experience of actuality, we have the original source point and a continuity of moments of resonance. And we have no names for any of these (Husserl, 1969, p. 75. Cf., similarly, the resonance of this *inobjectival* subjectivity in Husserl, 2001, pp. 277-278: “The I is not a being but the counterpart of anything being, not an object but the original position regards anything that is an object. The I should not actually call itself I, it should not call itself anything at all because otherwise it would have already become an object. I is the Without-name that is above anything one can grasp, not that exists, it hovers, it is above everything, on the contrary, it is what functions, grasping and evaluating, etc.”).

This function of consciousness as an *absolutely original phase* of the *living now* (*das Moment des lebendige Jetzt*) (Husserl, 1980, p. 150), is one of the most essential research themes of Husserl’s work on time-consciousness, “extended effort until the end of his work to name the living actuality, the *urtümliche stehend-strömende Vorgegenwart* of the absolute consciousness” (Bernet, 1994, p. 233; cf. Husserl, 2006, pp. 29-34).

Nevertheless, according to Husserl retentional consciousness is also of a finite nature and not just tendentially infinite: that of the progressive dissipation of retentions to achieve a *silent* horizon in which intuitive visibility and affective strength dissolve completely; this condition is, however, equally constitutive because it can give a past and presentification in the retentional consciousness, otherwise, “*nothing* would be past for me, and my life would be strangled in the amassing clutter of my living present as it expands without end. [...] What we experience never leaves us, but remains “dormant” within our past open to reactivation in acts of reawakening called remembrance or reflection” (De Warren, 2009, pp. 186-187; cf. Husserl, 2001, p. 67).

3.

With its problematic density and its *aporetic nature*, the absolute intimacy between consciousness and time that is highlighted by Husserl’s reflections

rightly belongs in the questioning of this dimension of profound persuasion, the unconscious faith in the becoming of time and its entrenchment in the *Essence of the Occident*, which Emanuele Severino studied with such skill in his works: the Nihilistic unconsciousness that objects are nothing, the unconscious persuasion that a *time* exists in which being and nothing coincide, a *time* in which the impossible is given: that the being exists and does not exist, that the self is different to the self, “that the *being*, as such, is separated from its *being*, and that therefore, to be, it must become; in other words it must proceed from not being to being [...] ultimately means, will not be able to join its own nothing once and for all after having being provisionally separated from it” (Severino, 2011, p. 216).

I believe that the aporetic overview of the phenomenology of Husserl’s time-consciousness, at least as regards its *two-dimensional* characteristic is, to a certain extent, very similar to Brouwer’s binary form of the temporality of intuitionism that Severino discussed; according to the latter, “it originates from the perception of a passage of time, from the separation of a moment of life into two distinct things, one of which makes way for the other, but is preserved by the memory” (Severino, 2019, pp. 361-362). According to Brouwer, if we remove every qualitative unit that belongs to this bi-unit (a sort of reduction), what remains is the empty form of their common substrate, and in this form the basic intention of mathematics is constituted:

It is the perception of a passing, of a temporal movement in which any moment of experience, or of “life” is divided into two things. That one of thing makes way for the other means that what divides itself is the thing that makes way for the other. By dividing itself, this thing is *something that becomes something else*. In this becoming something else, the initial something [...] becomes nothing: its being preserved in the memory actually means that its real existence has not been preserved, or rather, it has become nothing. However, together [...] the initial something becomes something else (Severino, 2019, p. 362).

The sense of these affirmations, the observation of their contradictory nature, rests on the fundamental *indication* that was never abandoned throughout Severino’s thoughts: that of the destiny of truth, in which *its original structure* is established once and for all: the place of the “appearance of the being self of the being, of all the beings that appear” and “the negation of which is auto-negation”. For Severino the original sense of need is *indisputably* founded in this *place*: the impossibility that any being

as such does not exist and therefore also the necessity of its eternity (cf. Severino, 2019, pp. 18-19). “Since each being must be eternal, *it is therefore necessary* that what appears to be a coming out of nothing and a returning (and that seems to be thus because it appears separate in its being from the eternity of each being) is instead the appearing and disappearing of the eternal” (Severino, 2019, p. 101).

The negation of being self of the being, auto-negation not only in as much as it negates the *being self* of the being *in actu signato* negating itself in *actu exercito*, but also in as much as it negates the *appearance* of the being self, since if it is not the appearance of being self, it would not even be able to negate it. Without this appearance the appearance of the being self would therefore not be able to constitute itself; because by negating it, it negates the very thing that it is impossible to exist without: and therefore “the auto-negation of the negation of the being self is, at the same time, the auto-negation of the negation of the appearance of the being self” (Severino, 2019, p. 70). The eternity of the being as a being means the eternity of each being and therefore also of the being that consists in contradiction, the negation of this eternity, that Nihilistic faith in time that basically characterises what Severino calls the appearance of the isolation of the earth from the Destiny of truth. It therefore appears as such, as a being, but appears together with the impossibility of its own content, which is a *nothing*, since it is the self-contradictory negation of the truth of Destiny.

In the language that Severino calls the testimony of the truth of Destiny, the meaning of becoming assumes a profoundly different meaning from the Nihilistic one of the beings entering and leaving from nothing. According to Severino, against the background of the eternal and ageless spectacle of the totality of beings, it is a matter of the always *infinitely* changing appearance and the disappearance of the beings that appear in what is called the finite circle of appearance. The finite circle of appearance is what embraces the appearance of each being that appears as a condition, auto-including itself in their appearance (in a *formally* similar way to the auto-expression of Husserl’s absolute time-consciousness). Like its part, this transcendental horizon belongs to the endless background of destiny, the *persintactic field*: the whole of these constants that appear wherever something appears, for example the eternity of the being as a being, and therefore of every being, and existence’s need for the infinite appearance of the totality of beings.

In accordance with the intentions of this language (where, as Severino frequently points out, interpretation must be distinguished from what is interpreted), an absolutely unprecedented sense of becoming appears:

How the “unexpected arrival” and “the beginning to appear” cannot mean, in the original structure of destiny, the beginning of being by the appearance of what starts to appear; thus, “no longer appearing” does not mean the loss, an end of the being by the appearance of what is no longer appearing. The disappearance of a being is therefore the start of another being’s appearance. When the voice of the wind disappears, it is followed by the appearance of a silence in which the things that remain have a different appearance. The unexpected arrival of this silence is the completion of the appearance of the voice of the wind (Severino, 2019, p. 85).

So therefore *every* being that achieves this appearance or disappearance has always necessarily implied *every* other being, is indebted to the necessary bond with the totality of beings for its appearance. “However, in the finite in which the original circle of destiny consists (as in every other circle), the totality (the infinite) of beings does not appear and it is impossible that they appear” (Severino, 2019, p. 81). This is what Severino calls contradiction C of the original structure of Destiny, according to which, “not demonstrating the necessary concreteness, what appears as the *totality* of the beings *is not the totality* of the beings (cf. Severino, 2019, p. 67). The appearance of destiny in the finite is a contradiction C; it is, however, no normal contradiction and is therefore not “a positive meaning of nothing” but the abstract mode in which the truth of beings appears: the necessary relation of each being that appears, with the infinite appearance of the totality of the beings.

According to Severino, there is no contradiction between the affirmation that the variation of the content that appears in the original structure is the appearance and disappearance of the eternal *that belong to the infinite appearance* of the totality of the beings and the affirmation that the eternal *that appear in the infinite*, and therefore also the eternal *that appear and disappear*, *differ* from self since they belong to the infinite appearance. Precisely because everything that appears in the finite is contradiction C, it is not only removed from the surpassing of its content, but from the surpassing of the finite form of its appearance, because its content, *as such*, is the same in the infinite and finite appearance, and this is why it reaching the finite is the beginning of the appearance in the eternal (Severino 2019, p. 103).

The language that bears witness to destiny therefore necessarily also belongs to the isolated land where, however, this testimony shows the

persyntactic dimension where this isolation is already eternally surpassed. The need for the concrete surpassing of the finite form of the eternal in which the dimension of erring, pain and death of the isolated land is the *promise* of the Destiny Severino formulates in *La Gloria* (cf. Severino, 2019, pp. 120-121; cf. Severino, 2001). *La Gloria* shows the need for every eternal that has arrived in the circles of destiny to be surpassed and that the original structure is therefore liberated infinitely (*infinitely* being impossible that the infinite in which every contradiction is eternally removed, appears in the finite) by the contradiction of the isolation of the land as well (cf. Severino, 2019, pp. 127-128). Severino's papers resolve the problems implied in this promise one after the other.

4.

The fundamental task of *Struttura Originaria* (cf. Severino, 1981²) was to indicate the need to find a way out of contradiction C. The *practical* proposal indicated in *Studi di Filosofia della Prassi* is unable to do so when it says that a certain faith could be what saves the original structure of the truth of contradiction (cf. Severino, 1984). The question remains basically the same in *Essenza del nichilismo* (in *Sentiero del giorno* and in *La terra e l'essenza dell'uomo*) (cf. Severino, 1982²). *Destino della necessità* "shows the need that the problem of the liberty of deciding and the contingency of events should be resolved negating their existence". However, the problem whether the Earth "is destined to solitude [to the isolation from destiny] or to the surpassing of solitude remains unsolved". *Gloria* solves these problems, showing "the need that the isolation of the Earth is surpassed and that the Earth that is saved from isolation proceeds along an infinite path where the infinite appearance of destiny reveals itself more and more concretely in the constellation of the circles of destiny". Chapter XI shows how the persyntax that appears in each circle is "the infinite syntax" that the finite appearance and the infinite appearance of destiny have in common (cf. Severino, 2001, pp. 439 and following pages; cf. Severino, 1980). What remains unsolved, however, is the problem that despite going beyond, the solitude of the Earth has to be extended, albeit for a finite period after the death of the empiric will. The problem that also remains unsolved in *Oltrepassare* is resolved by *La morte e la terra* (cf. Severino, 2007 and Severino 2019), where it is shown that "the instant" the death of the empiric will is immediately followed by is in turn immediately followed by

the decline of the isolation of the Earth, making a return to the solitude of the Earth impossible” (Severino, 2019, pp. 121-122).

As regards the Nihilistic meaning of Becoming, the faith in becoming different of the beings, is the continuous process of the *death* of what becomes different until real death, physical death in the sense of the extinction of any Becoming. “Something else becoming different is the death of what it was and no longer is. All it needs is a distant voice to “break the silence”, [...] but this breaking is its no longer being, in other words its death. And death is no metaphor, it should be understood literally: now that silence is nothing” (Severino, 2019, p. 165). And this brings us back to the crucial question of Husserlian’s phenomenology of time. Reemerging through memory, the re-presentation of the present past in *time-consciousness*, which, as we have seen, is not simply the ghost of what has been. According to Husserl, it is therefore not a nothing, something that reappears in its no longer being, since the past preserves (it is believed), albeit in a *modified state*, together with the preservation (and retaining) of itself by the absolute consciousness of time. This Becoming, the repetition of the present in something else by means of the *retentional modification* of the memory, stops inevitably in the face of death, with the absolute alterity, the *absolute modification* of no long being able to become. In a note written in 1932, Husserl compares this transcendence to the enigmatic sense of death in the sense of an absolute alterity in which the reflection on time is completely dissolved; he talks of a “place for the possibility of death that cannot be represented in egological auto-observation, and which cannot have any kind of intuition that conforms with what was experienced” (Husserl, 1973, p. 452).

According to Severino, the enigma of the absolute silence of death that coincides with that of becoming, is enrooted in that of the faith that is called *transcendental bad faith*:

Uninterrupted silence [...] after a certain period of time is interrupted; and then more time goes by and now the silence of “before” “reappears”. It is the isolated earth that believes that “the silence before reappears”, and that is, that in the silence of before and in this new silence there is something identical that remains, despite the interruption that divided them. [...] When the new silence appears, the silence of before, if it appears, appears in the memory, in other words, it has become different; it no longer exists; it is dead. [...] One can doubt the “truth” of what one remembers. [...] In the destiny of truth the impossibility appears of remembering what,

since it no longer exists, is now nothing and the impossibility appears that there is a substrate which constitutes itself as what is identical between dead silence and nothing, and the new and living silence. This silencing of what nevertheless appears is “the transcendental bad faith” in which each faith consists (Severino, pp. 168-169).

This is therefore no conscious choice or decision but a fundamental condition in which doubt is closely linked to the certainty that characterises the earth that is isolated from the destiny of truth as the faith of becoming different. Transcendental bad faith is the faith that a substrate remains from which, in the form of memories, the fragments of the past can emerge of what no longer exists; but it is also the faith in which the original will of power appears, a will that is persuaded by being able to intervene in turn to *modify* this becoming different, a process that is inevitably destined to stop in the face of the total interruption caused by death: according to Severino, this is the same faith that I call my life (cf. Severino, 2019, p. 170):

In the isolated earth of each circle, in differently explicit and conscious forms faith in the existence in one's own life believes that one's own life is a becoming different in which continuing is interrupted in two primary senses: in the sense that after interruption memory does not restore the entirety of the past, but separate parts of it, and in the sense that death interrupts the way in which our life is a becoming different once and for all. [...] Death interrupts the permanence of life much more radically than other forms of interruption. The body no longer intervenes to transform the world and itself; and this means that the will, which is inseparable from the world, no longer wants the world, or rather, is no longer will (Severino, 2019, pp. 174-175).

In the language testifying Destiny, death on the other hand, takes on a radically different meaning: death is the appearance of the fulfilment of a will in the finite circle of the appearance of destiny, achieving the fulfilment of this will, the isolation of the earth in which it consists is also fulfilled (it is the *perfectum*, that appearing in full). However, this fulfilment does not mean the total decline of the isolation that necessarily requires that it decline in all the infinite circles of destiny. The death of the will that appears in a circle of destiny is however, the fulfilment of this will, which is the last stage of this appearance (cf. Severino, 2019, pp. 190-192). Since

it is a fulfilment, it *requires* “in the circle in which the will dies”, a being that is *different* from the being whose continuation in appearance is being fulfilled, a *different* being in which destiny is no longer opposed by the isolated earth (cf. Severino, 2019, p. 192).

At the very *moment* that will disappears and dies, and individual death takes place as a last will, the background of Destiny appears in its concrete, infinite totality; it appears, however as the last *reflection* of the background opposed by isolation and that is “appears [...] in its being *still* opposed by the isolated earth; it does not emerge beyond the opposed; it is still enclosed. For a moment” (Severino, (2013), p. 97). At this *moment*, in which the interpreting will is completed, the completion of language therefore also takes place: its *silence*. This is not just silence in the sense of a final silence in which every faith consists as the will to govern the becoming; it is a silence whose language is withdrawn *absolutely*, the silence evoked by the promise of the infinite appearance of the eternal performance: the silence of the splendour that has to follow *immediately after* this moment (cf. Severino, 2019, p. 198).

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