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Journal of Fundamental Ontology

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Opening Note – *Linguistic Note*

by Giulio Goggi

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[I]

On the occasion of the Congress held in Brescia – "Heidegger in Severino's thought. Metaphysics, Religion, Politics, Economics, Art, Technique» (June 13-15, 2019) – Severino focused the attentione on some crucial points of Heidegger's thought. First of all, the fundamental question of the sense of Being and therefore of the sense of truth. Heidegger seeks the meaning of truth. But what does it mean? Everyone who seeks the truth is located in the dimension of non-truth, and it is not possible that non-truth leads to truth. Secondly, the question of technique in relation to that God of which Heidegger speaks in his interview given to Der Spiegel magazine: «Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten» («Only a God Can Save Us»). It is Known that for Heidegger technique is an imposition – Gestell – which organizes and controls everything. But also the very act of saving – Retten – is making a work, is a force that intervenes in the world. Hence Severino's question which may seem "scandalous" to a Heideggerian: shouldn't we say that the "Retten" belongs to the "Gestell"? Finally, a note on the phenomenological method that Heidegger takes as a starting point. Severino asked: why can't what appears be denied? If this is not explained, the phenomenological method becomes faith in the undeniability of what appears. But a truth that does not know how to hold itself absolutely firm against its contradictory, a truth of which the intrinsic value does not appear, «is like an invincible sword in the hand of someone who does not know he has an invincible sword: such a swordsman will be struck down at the first encounter. And rightly so: a "truth" that cannot hold its ground is not a truth» (Severino, *The Essence of Nihilism*, 2016, p. 59).

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[II]
This issue of «Eternity and Contradiction» is divided into two parts: as in the previous issue, the first one is dedicated to the comparison between the thought of Severino and Heidegger and develops some of the theoretical points indicated by Severino himself in the aforementioned Congress. And since during that Congress it emerged that Heidegger was aware of Severino's theoretical path in the fifties and sixties of the past century, it is possible to speak of «Severino in Heidegger's Thought», as well as «Heidegger in Severino's Thought». The essays in the second part are investigations into the logical-ontological and phenomenological value of the «originary structure" of knowledge. In the previous issues of «Eternity and Contradiction» emerged the meaning that Severino attributes to the expression «originary structure» and its «undeniability». And it emerged that it implies (among other things) the affirmation of the eternity of being as being. But it also begins to emerge that the conceptual apparatus indicated by Severino's writings may contribute to a noticeable renewal of the «scientific» landscape (here we see the case of biology and psychology) if the different disciplines take it into consideration.

Linguistic Note
In the previous issues of «Eternity and Contradiction» the italian expression «struttura originaria" has been translated like this: "primal structure". But the term "primal" is too close to the evolutionary conception. In Severino's philosophy the term «originario» is a very well defined term: it means what is basic, fundamental, not-originated, self-evident ("per se notum") i.e. what is not the result of research, but something that always and permanently appear. In english, "originary" in not a common term, but perhaps is best suited to keeps all the semantic density of term "originario" in Severino's work. For this reason, from here on out we will use "originary", and expressions like «struttura originaria", "significato originario" will be translated as follows: "originary structure", "originary meaning".

'Being' as the Being of Beings and as Independent of Beings

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Heidegger's thought alternately considers 'Being' as the Being of beings and as independent of beings. But the *independence* of 'Being' from beings inevitably imposes itself, as a logical consequence of a philosophy that conceives of becoming as the passing of beings from not-Being to Being and vice versa.

I. Premise

Heidegger's 'ontological difference' – the difference between beings and the Being of beings – presents a revealing fluctuation whereby Being, although it is the Being of beings, tends to constitute itself as independent of beings.

As we shall see, this tendency of Being to be independent of beings not only explains the interpretation that Severino offered in his BA thesis – *Heidegger e la metafisica* (*Heidegger and Metaphysics*) – but also represents that (crucial) aspect whereby Heidegger's 'ontological difference' newly presents, in a *specific* and certainly brilliant way, the underlying thesis of Western philosophy, namely: the thesis that Being *forms a compound* with essence, keeping it provisionally suspended over the abyss of nothingness.

II. The *a priori* nature of Heidegger's understanding of Being

1. As is widely known, Heidegger envisages the 'Being' of a being as its 'manifestation', and traces the Greek concept of 'aletheia' as non-concealment – as the being's emerging out of concealment – to the essence of Being: this is the letting-be of the being, i.e. letting the being (which emerges out of its concealment) appear.

In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (*Introduction to Metaphysics*), Heidegger writes that to be a being is "to step forth in appearing" and that not to be is "to step away from appearance, from presence", which makes becoming a stepping-forth and stepping-away from presence (Heidegger, 2000, p. 108). In *Die Frage nach der Technik* (*The Question Concerning Technology*) we read that the *bringing-forth* "brings hither out of concealment forth into unconcealment" ("Das Her-vor-bringen bringt aus der verborgenheit her in die unverborgenheit vor": Heidegger, 1977b, p. 10), from non-presence into presence. The forgetfulness of Being discussed by Heidegger

would therefore coincide with the forgetfulness of this dimension of appearing. It is philosophy's task to recall it by leading Being back into appearing, which is to say – given the identity between Being and appearing – by leading appearing back into appearing.

2. Through the above-quoted remarks, Heidegger sought to indicate something that, in his view, philosophy had grasped in its early days – starting with Parmenides – but had soon forgotten. However, by adopting this perspective, we risk overlooking the specific essence of Greek thought, according to which Being – which we directly apprehend via beings, i.e. via what 'is' – coincides with beings' being 'not-nothing'. The peculiarity of Greek thought lies precisely in its having brought the meaning of Being to light *in opposition to nothing*, the 'nihil absolutum'.

Besides, in Heidegger's case, the contrast between Being and not-Being (understood as 'nihil absolutum') seems "suspended in mid-air, since it is never explained where it comes from" (Severino, 1989, p. 303) – although it certainly has a powerful influence *also* on his thought. Indeed, given that 'to be' means 'to appear', and that 'to produce' means to lead into – and keep in – Presence, "the not-present is identified with Nothing: it cannot be said that it 'is,' since in that case Being would signify not the Presence of what is present, but that which can be either present or absent. And thus bringing to presence (*poiesis*) is still a making pass from Nothing to Being. Heidegger's translation was designed to restore to *poiesis* the meaning it had lost through centuries of techno-metaphysical distortion; but in fact he defines it according to the very way of thinking that was first expressed by Plato, and which today invisibly sustains not only our civilization itself, but even the diagnoses of the unknown sickness of our time" (Severino, 2016, p. 151).

According to Severino, genuine nihilism – the unknown sickness of our times – is not the nihilism of which Heidegger speaks: it is not the Heideggerian forgetfulness of the meaning of Being, but rather the persuasion that beings are nothing, a persuasion implicit in the view that becoming is the sphere in which things come into being and decay.

3. Against those critics accusing him of taking a nihilist stance, Heidegger firmly responds that the 'nothing' he is talking about – and which he claims to understand as 'Being' – is not at all absolute nothingness. Indeed, as we have seen, Heideggerian 'Being' is the appearing of beings: it is *the Being of beings*.

However, Heidegger also undoubtedly displays a tendency to regard *Being separately from beings*, a fluctuation clearly witnessed by a 'fraught' passage we find in the *Postscript* of *Was ist Metaphysik?* (*What is Metaphysics?*): in the fourth, 1943 edition, the philosopher states that "Being is no doubt [*wohl*] present as Being without being, though nowhere is being without Being" ("Das Sein wohl west ohne das Seinde, niemals aber ein Seindes ist ohne das Sein"). In the 1949 edition we instead read that Being "is never [*nie*] present as Being without being" ("Das Sein nie west ohne das Seinde"). With regard to this point, though, Heidegger's views seem to fluctuate within this same text, since he also states that "thinking of Being seeks no support from being" ("Das Denken des Seins sucht im Seiende keinen Anhalt"), as though it were possible to think of Being without paying any attention to being at all.

Later we will see that this independence of the 'meaning' Being from beings is something which actually cannot be constructed. Here I will anticipate that what we have is a criticism of Heidegger's ontology which Severino did not formulate when writing his BA thesis, but which he *could have*. In the foreword to the reprint of *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, we read: "If that essay of mine had been more *demanding* in relation to Heidegger's thought, it might have raised against it the kind of critical observations I was later to address to the [innatism] of Rosmini's 'Being'" (Severino, 1994a, p. 27).

Without going too much into details, we might say that the underlying thesis of Rosmini's innatism is that Being is the horizon within which every being can be known – it is the originary meaning that makes intellectual processes possible. The 'idea' of Being, Rosmini argues, "dominates the mind even all alone and bare, as one ultimately contemplates it after much abstraction" (Rosmini, 1972, sect. V, pag. I, ch. II, art. VI), without the need for any other notion in order to intuit it. We are therefore dealing with a *originary intuition* of Being, without which there could never be any relation between the intellect and beings: from the very beginning we are immersed in the light of indeterminate Being which precedes and underlies the knowledge of beings.

Hence the analogy with Heidegger's argument. Notwithstanding the difference between Heidegger and Rosmini (for according to the latter Being is not the mere appearing of beings, but the act of every being and every entity, the act of not being nothing), in Rosmini's innatism – Severino notes – "'the idea of Being' relates to the knowledge of beings in a way that is analogous to the Heideggerian relationship between 'the understanding

of Being' and 'the understanding of beings'". It is precisely in relation to this topic of the *semantic independence* of the meaning 'Being' that Severino could have developed his critique further.

4. Severino emphasised Heidegger's indebtedness to Aristotle and Kant. The German philosopher was indebted to Aristotle as regards the identification of 'Being' with appearing – not in the sense that according to Aristotle 'to be' means 'to appear', but in the sense that Heidegger drew upon a topic found in *De anima*.

As regards the intellect, Aristotle argues that it is the intelligibles potentially, insofar as it relates to them as the indeterminate does to the determinate. What is indeterminate is thought, the appearing of beings, where the purity and indeterminateness of the intellect means that it is nothing but the appearing of beings; differently put, its 'determinateness' ultimately coincides with its being the appearing, manifestation, and presence of beings. Now, the Being which Heidegger speaks of, Being as 'the nothing of beings' is precisely the appearing of beings.

Severino explains this juxtaposition of Being and nothing as follows: "I believe that one of the best ways to understand the relationship between Being and nothing in Heidegger is to think of colours and light. Light is the nothing of colours, although, from an optical point of view, light includes the totality of colours; but from the visual point of view – from the perspective of the immediate phenomenology of light – light is not a colour: colours are beings, light is that nothing of colour which nonetheless enables colour to be visible, just as Being enables beings to be. The Heideggerian *Sein* is not absolute nothing. What *Sein* and *Seienden*, Being and being, have in common is that neither of them is a *nihil absolutum*". Severino concludes: "On my part, I firmly believe that the origin of the Heideggerian concept of *Nichts* chiefly lies in the Aristotelian concept of *psyche*, or soul […]. The soul […] Aristotle states, *pos panta estin*, is all things in a way, for it is in none of them in particular, just as it is the Being of all beings, for it is not one being in particular" (Severino, 2007, pp. 104-105). Indeed, if the soul had a particular nature, this innate nature would hamper its knowledge of other things. Heideggerian Being is *absolutely other* with respect to determinate beings, in the sense that, just like the Aristotelian 'soul', it is not this or that being, but transcends all particular beings. Now, this originary light represented by the ontological horizon which Heidegger sets in contrast to the ontological one of determinate beings, emerges as the condition for the manifestation of beings.

It is here that Heidegger's indebtedness to Kant comes into play: according to Heidegger's interpretation, this originary disclosing itself of Being corresponds to the Kantian transcendental dimension, which makes the manifestation of empirical contents possible and cannot be derived from them. In other words, the ontic knowledge of beings requires the preliminary (a priori) knowledge of Being constituted by the transcendental horizon of manifestation, while what is manifested is that which manifests itself within this horizon, namely Being as *Dawider*, as transcendental object: pure thought is the pure horizon within which Being manifests itself as a pure object of thought.

What is known in ontological knowledge and is allowed to 'stand against', therefore, is not the being, but Being.

5. In *Heidegger and Metaphysics* the young Severino engaged with Heidegger's texts in an effort to discover an inferential procedure that might allow him to establish this originary 'Being' as the metaphysical principle of the manifestation of beings. Severino conceived of this principle "as something akin to the structure constituted by Aristotle's 'passive intellect' and 'active intellect'" (Severino, 1994a, p. 26) – which is to say, as something that lies beyond the actual manifestation of beings, insofar as it represents the condition for it.

The idea is that of an initial unveiling, understood as that within which the spectacle of beings unfolds, but which is not itself part of this spectacle: it is like a source of light that lies behind the spectacle of the world which it illumines, while not being illumined itself. As a metaphysical principle, something to be inferred: in *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, Severino writes that "under the drive of that fluctuation which leads Heidegger to understand the ontological [i.e. Being] as independent and hence separate from the ontic [i.e. beings], inference is seen as the attainment of a dimension transcending the phenomenal; so the Heideggerian doctrine of 'Being' presents itself as a form of 'apriorism' which is at the same time a form of 'innatism'" (Severino, 1994a, p. 26).

Hence the analogy with the aforementioned Rosminian innatism of the idea of Being, which is a priori with respect to experience, i.e. with respect to the manifestation of determinate beings.

III. The *impossibility* of Heidegger's understanding of Being

1. In *Heidegger and Metaphysics*, Severino's explicit reference was not actually to Rosmini's innatism. With regard to the 'Heideggerian fluctuation' which he himself emphasised (and whereby Being, as *the Being of beings*, tends to be conceived of as something *independent of beings*), Severino drew a parallel with a similar fluctuation to be found in Giovanni Gentile's actualism.

In *Teoria dello spirito come atto puro* (*The General Theory of Spirit as Pure Act*), thought is understood as something non-objectifiable that constitutes the source of the actual manifestation of beings: it is a 'non-actual' source, in the sense that it lies beyond the actual manifestation of beings. Now, while taking due account of the difference between Heidegger's *Being* and Gentile's *thought in act* – the former is a letting-be of beings, while the latter amounts to the manifestation of beings, inseparable from their process of production – Severino notes that "Heidegger too tends to conceive of unveiling, the event which unveils beings […] as something different and prior, independent and separate, compared to the totality of what is unveiled, i.e. as something which embodies that character of non-objectifiability which Gentile initially assigned to the Transcendental Ego" (Severino 1994a, p. 25) – and which therefore ought to be affirmed on the basis of a meta-empirical inference.

Severino writes "initially", meaning in *Teoria dello spirito come atto puro*, as Gentile subsequently dropped this assumption of a principle that, insofar as it lies behind thought in act, ultimately influences its development: in *Sistema di logica come teoria del conoscere* (*The System of Logic as Theory of Knowledge*), Gentile assumes that the Transcendental Ego can *enirely* be reduced to its being *the thought in act of what is thought*, to its lying *entirely* in actual thinking. In Heidegger's case, by contrast, what we find is that Being, in the very act by which it shows the being, withdraws into non-appearing: "The being itself does not step into this light of Being" (Heidegger, 1975, p. 26).

I now wish to focus on the following point: this appearing of the being, which escapes the dimension of the manifest being, and which makes Being/appearing a further (and independent) dimension compared to that which it illumines, is not merely something that is presupposed (and which ought to be reached through a meta-empirical inference), but is – properly speaking – something that *no inference can ever reach*.

2. Confirming our interpretation of the Heideggerian notion of 'onto-logical difference' as the expression of the abstract separation between Being and beings, in *What is Metaphysics?* the philosopher states that 'nothing', which is to say 'Being' in the sense just outlined, is more originary than negation. He further clarifies: "If our thesis is correct, then the possibility of negation as a mental act, and therewith the intellect itself, depends in some way upon no-thing".

According to this perspective, then, there is a originary dimension in which thought is immersed, and where no being or relation appears. In this context, 'negation' (and hence the very opposition between positive and negative) presents itself as a subsequent logical act compared to the sheer apprehension of the meaning 'Being': a subsequent act founded on the sheer apprehension of Being.

Mention had been made of the similarity between Rosmini's 'idea of Being' and Heidegger's 'understanding of Being': the similarity lies in the way in which the relationship between the originary dimension of 'Being' and the understanding of 'beings' is defined.

According to Rosmini, we can know ideal essences and pass a judgement of existence only if 'Being' is present in the mind *prior to any operation of the intellect*. The primacy of the 'idea of being' is logical and temporal: this idea is prior "by nature and by time" (Rosmini, 1972, sect. V, pag. I, ch. III, art. IV). Likewise, according to Heidegger, "we are able to grasp beings as such, as beings, only if we understand something like Being" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 6). Although Heidegger's concept of 'Being' cannot be taken to coincide with that of 'Being' in Rosmini's argument, the two philosophers share the idea of the necessary intuition of a *originary meaning* which, in developing his ontological investigation, Heidegger defines as *what must necessarily be understood beforehand, in advance*.

Severino could have levelled at Heidegger the same criticism he had raised against the meaning of the semantic independence of Being in Rosmini's philosophy, where it is assumed that Being can appear without its determinations. The fundamental criticism here is that, once freed from any connection with its determinations, 'Being' presents itself as a *limited* meaning. But it is contradictory to posit a 'limited' meaning as something which can subsist *absolutely* without having posited 'what limits' it. Severino writes: "The contradiction lies in this, namely: that not positing what limits means not positing the limitation, and therefore not positing even the limited, which, on the other hand, one *intends* to preserve in its semantic significance, or in its *being* limited [...]. It is argued, therefore, that if

what limits is not posited – is *absolutely* not posited – then neither is the limited posited: it is *absolutely* not posited. In other words, the meaning constituted by that limitedness *disappears as meaning*" (Severino, 1994b, pp. 554-555).

The abstract positing of 'pure Being' therefore amounts to the positing of nothing at all. Much the same criticism could be directed against Heidegger's Being/appearing, insofar as it takes the form of the positing of the independence of 'Being' from beings.

3. In order to further develop this criticism of Heideggerian 'Being', let us consider the following theoretical issue: if Being did not appear in the form of that self-identical Being which is *identical* to its being non-contradictory, Being could never appear.

Indeed, if any 'not-nothing', including indeterminate Being (in the Heideggerian sense of the appearing of the being) did not appear in the form of identity/non-contradiction, what would appear would not be that 'not-nothing', for its being meaningful in 'such and such a way' would not appear: what would appear would be *something else*. Yet even this *something else* is a 'not-nothing', and if Being in the form of identity/non-contradiction did not appear in any way, then neither would that *something else*, i.e. nothing at all would appear.

Ultimately, the originary understanding of Heideggerian Being/appearing – i.e. the 'abstract' positing of Being, conceived of *as separate* from the appearing of identity/non-contradiction – is not achieved. What is and appears cannot be this sheer apprehension of the 'meaning' Being, but rather the contradictory *intention* of positing this sheer apprehension.

Furthermore, not only is it necessary for Being in the form of identity/non-contradiction to appear, but what must also appear in a originary way is a certain content, namely the *concrete determinateness* which is claimed to be an existent. And the reason is this: being an existent and being a positive something, just like being identical/non-contradictory, are transcendental meanings – Severino calls them 'persyntactic' meanings, which is to say meanings constituting the form of everything 'that is'; and precisely because they are the form of everything 'that is', these meanings must relate to some content. Indeed, a form is always a *relation to something*: it it were the form-of-nothing, it would be the nothing-of-form.

Therefore, that Being which Heidegger speaks of, that Being which withdraws and into which, in this withdrawal, "the being does not enter"

in any way, is a Being-of-nothing, which is to say a nothing-of-Being, a 'nihil absolum'.

IV. Towards the affirmation of the *independence* of Being from beings

1. The Greek understanding of becoming, based on the infinite opposition between Being (the *not nihil absolutum*) and nothing (the *nihil absolutum*), underlies Heidegger's attempt to prescind from it (cf. II.2 above). And within this context, it is inevitable to conclude that Being *only accidentally* forms a synthesis with essence.

With regard to finite beings, in *De ente et essentia* (ch. V) Thomas Aquinas states that *Being* is something extrinsic (*adveniens extra*) with respect to their *essence*. The beings we experience are conceived of as that which, considered 'in itself', is nothing – "prius naturaliter est sibi nihilum quam esse" (Aquinas, *De aeternitate mundi*) – and which participates in Being only provisionally: it is *for as long as it is*. Generally speaking, merely considering a being *qua being* does not allow us to rule out that this being is not: we must prove that there is a 'being' whose essence is Being itself. In his *Teosofia* [*Theosophy*] (1998, n. 848) Rosmini argues that the ideal 'Being' is immutable and "belongs to God", who is infinite and unchangeable; in the case of finite essences, by contrast, synthesis with Being remains possible, so – in this respect – Being is an occurrence: the finite is what may either be or not be.

2. Indeed, the belief that beings become – that this is the fundamental evidence we have and that in becoming things leave nothing and return to it, according to the meaning assigned to becoming, once and for all, by Greek thought – is the very soul of the West, which also informs Heidegger's philosophy. According to the German philosopher, the beings we experience, just like Dasein (which is to say, man's being there), become: "That there are 'eternal truths' will not be adequately proved until someone has succeeded in demonstrating that Dasein has been and will be for all eternity. As long as such a proof is still outstanding, this principle remains a fanciful contention which does not gain in legitimacy from having philosophers commonly 'believe' it" (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 269-270). Heidegger displays a double attitude with regard to this point. On the

one hand, he claims to be unable to say anything about metaphysical problems (e.g. the existence of God, the immortality of the soul): "With the existential determination of the essence of man, therefore, nothing is decided about the 'existence of God' or his 'non-being', no more than about the possibility or impossibility of gods" (Heidegger, 1977a, pp. 252-253). On the other hand, he believes that thought can only provide provisional, historical answers: "However, the thinking that is to come can no longer, as Hegel demanded, set aside the name 'love of wisdom' and become wisdom itself in the form of absolute knowledge. Thinking is on the descent to the poverty of its provisional essence" (Heidegger, 1977a, p. 265).

This is a "real slipping" (Severino, 2006, p. 166) which leads from a sort of *situational problematicism* – whereby metaphysics presents itself as a possibility which does not rule out, as its outcome, the kind of *stable*, incontrovertible knowledge that the Greeks called *episteme* – to a *transcendental problematicism* according to which the problem instead transcends any solution, and any kind of knowledge claimed to indicate the ultimate meaning of the world's becoming is illusory. In this regard, it is worth quoting Severino's remarks in full:

> Now, Being is an *Ereignis*, event, a thought very close to the radical forms of the destruction of *episteme*. *Ereignis*-Being is no longer the foundation of the being, but rather that letting it be, which is to say that *void* that enables the being to become in the traditional sense. It is that void in which *appearing* consists that makes that void possible in which *not-Being* consists and according to which becoming is structured – which is to say, the fundamental meaning that the West has assigned to becoming. Just as the atomists posit the need for 'void' in order to save the evident becoming of every being, so *this* Heidegger, in a dizzying transposition of this saving of becoming, denies epistemic Being […], because, if it existed, there could not be that void, that nothing, which enables beings to become. Well, this is the valuable Heidegger that approaches the perspective of Nietzsche, Leopardi, and Gentile – a Heidegger who, unconsciously, comes up with the notion of ontological difference *in support* of becoming, which is the ultimate evidence for the West. Being, in other words, is not a *full* foundation, but must constitute itself as *Ab-Grund*, which is to say as that nothing (recoiling, making room for, clearing the field) that gives everything the possibility to become. Along this path, Heidegger approaches the *destruction* of *episteme*. He seeks to "save phenomena", *sozein ta phainomena*: to save becoming (Severino, 2006, pp. 169-170).

The very direction of Heidegger's argument – the fact that it approaches the most advanced positions in contemporary philosophy (Nietzsche, Leopardi, and Gentile), which deny the existence of unchanging forms and structures governing the becoming of the world – resolves the ambivalence of his 'ontological difference', leading it to the affirmation of the *independence of Being from beings*, whereby beings are left to fluctuate between Being and not-Being.

V.   Final note

Beyond the soul of Western thought which has guided and dominated its history – the belief that beings become by passing from not-Being to Being and vice-versa – there lies the eternal appearing of the truth of Being, in which it appears that this transition from not-Being to Being implies the absurd deadlock of identifying Being with not-Being. It appears that the self-identity of the existent implies its eternity (cf. Goggi, 2019, pp. 45-58) and therefore that Being is neither separate nor separable from beings: such issues lie at the very heart of Emanuele Severino's writings.

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Heidegger Interpreting Severino

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

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1. A necessarily possible interpretation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Priority

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.   Meaning as immediately known presence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. World and Philosophy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.   The World as the opening of ties

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And in *Letter on 'Humanismus'*:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Martin Heidegger and Emanuele Severino: A Dispute on the Meaning of Technology

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Martin Heidegger and Emanuele Severino reflected on the meaning of technology more than anyone else in the twentieth century. Their philosophies are irreconcilable. They converge on this simple recognition *and its implications*: techno-science dominates our time. But they disagree even on the interpretation of this domination. Exploring this disagreement will help us understand the leading dynamics of our civilization. Therefore, the intention in this paper is to unveil, for English speakers, the value of Severino's philosophy in relation to Heidegger and the meaning technology. We will see that, ultimately, their disagreement concerns the originary truth of Being and has repercussions on how they conceptualize technology and the possibility of redemption from it. Heidegger indicated the letting-be of beings in their freedom as the possible path beyond technology. Severino saw Heidegger's indication as destined to remain trapped in technology itself. If we understand why this was so – from Severino's point of view – this may open a new path for us: the path of day, the path that may truly lead beyond technology. The aim of this paper is, finally, to indicate one reason why delving into Severino's works is truly worthwhile: if it is possible for the truth to unveil itself beyond willing – where Heidegger couldn't see – then Severino's works may the place where this possibility appears in coherent conceptual form.

Keywords:
becoming, freedom, thing, destiny, necessity

What can oppose the decline of the west is not a resurrected culture
but the utopia silently contained in the image of its decline.
- Theodor Adorno, "Spengler after the Decline"

I want to warn and object: Let the things be!
I enjoy listening to the sound they are making.
But you always touch: and they hush and stand still.
That's how you kill.
- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Pictures of God*

Introduction[1]

Martin Heidegger and Emanuele Severino reflected on the meaning of technology more than anyone else in the twentieth century. Their philosophies are irreconcilable, but they converge on this simple recognition *and its implications*: techno-science dominates our time. Yet, they disagree even on the interpretation of this domination, and exploring this disagreement will help us understand the leading dynamics of our civilization.

The present paper specifically focuses on Severino's criticism of Heidegger because: (*a*) Heidegger's work is already well-known to English speakers, and (*b*) the same speakers don't have much access to Severino's

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1   Emanuele Severino (1929-2020) was an Italian philosopher. He wrote around eighty or more books. As of today, only one has been translated into English: *The Essence of Nihilism* (2016). English readers can also find a collection of essays, entitled *Nihilism and Destiny* (2012) and my own introductions to Severino's discourse on scientific specialization (Pitari 2019) and interpretation of Aeschylus (Pitari 2022). . The present paper introduces English readers to only one facet of Severino's discourse. I translated all the titles and passages from Severino's works here quoted (except for one citation from "Returning to Parmenides"). The bibliography lists them in alphabetical order according to their original Italian title.

works. The intention here is thus to unveil the value of Severino's philosophy in relation to Heidegger and the meaning of technology (for English speakers). Two historical anecdotes give a preliminary indication of Severino's importance: (1) in 2019, findings at the Heidegger archive showed that the German philosopher was particularly interested in Severino's work; (2) Severino's master thesis *Heidegger and Metaphysics* (*Heidegger e la metafisica*, 1948) anticipates the conceptual amendments that Heidegger would later make to *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* in his 1950 and 1973 prefaces (which proves the depth of Severino's insight).

But ideas are much more profound than historical anecdotes, and in them we shall dwell. In "The Ethics of Science" ("*L'etica della scienza*," 1988), Severino writes that "ours is the time that has faith in the power of science" (1988a, p. 82). In "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954), Heidegger writes that technology is where "there is *danger* in the highest sense" (1977a, p. 28). Each of these quotes presents a proposition that the other would agree with; throughout their works, they both insist that technoscience is the logical consequence of western metaphysics and is thus destined to dominate western civilization. Even if their interpretation of technology (and metaphysics) is irreconcilable, they agree that technoscience will dominate the world *because* western civilization has always believed in the one fundamental ideology of technology.

So, we must understand the meaning of technology. Technology is at bottom what we may call "the *lógos* of *téchne*": the idea that human beings are technological beings, capable of deciding how to organize means towards the realization of ends. Heidegger and Severino think that human history originates and develops within this fundamental ideology whose true concretization will be the age of technology—the time when this ideology will free itself from its internal contradictions and our most fundamental beliefs will reign undisputed. The *lógos* of *téchne* establishes the availability of things to human domination, and our ability to dominate them. This is our fundamental belief, and philosophy (western rationality) was born to rationalize it: the age of technology will be the time of unencumbered domination.

Therefore, technology means much more than "machinery and equipment developed from the application of scientific knowledge" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In its essential meaning, technology is the logic and discourse of *téchne*, the affirmation of our ability to dominate, transform, create and destroy things. Accordingly, science is the most concrete *application* of technology: its apparatus is its consequence, not its essence. In this

sense, the term "technoscience" is useful because it indicates that technology (the *lógos* of *téchne*) is the essence of science.

English translations present Heidegger's "*technik*" as "technology." The German "*technik*" is equivalent to the Italian "*tecnica*" that Severino uses. Translating these terms into English as "technology" is certainly correct, but with a caveat. In their common usage, "*technik*" and "*tecnica*" mean above all "technique": "a way of carrying out a particular task," "a way of carrying out the execution of a scientific procedure," "a skillful or efficient way of doing something" (*OED*). Heidegger and Severino use these terms precisely to indicate that technology means the *lógos* of *téchne*: our belief in our ability to dominate things according to our will, to transform the world.

We must keep in mind this essential meaning of technology as humankind's original interpretation of Being and as the logic of all human actions. Technology is what interprets the things of the world as *becoming*, wavering between Being and Nothingness and so undergoing transformation. On this basis, it postulates humankind's power to transform things, including ourselves. Only if becoming and control are the case can human domination be possible; otherwise, we couldn't change the world. The Ancient Greek word "*téchne*" indicates every human activity geared towards production and operated through reason. *Téchne* entails the belief that we are transformative, creative, destructive, rational, and free in becoming. Technology is exactly this belief in *téchne*. And isn't this belief what we all have in common? The answer is yes, and this is why Heidegger and Severino insist that the age of technology will represent the true realization of humanism (as conceived in the west).

Which gets us to what is truly crucial. Both Heidegger and Severino warn us that *téchne* is the essence and root of violence and that our concrete history follows from this fundamental interpretation of Being. The most fundamental disagreement between the two occurs in the definition of said violence. For Heidegger, the violence of technology is the seizing upon beings, the not allowing beings to be free in their becoming (this includes Severino's absolute knowledge, which doesn't allow becoming). For Severino, the violence of technology is the prior originary ideology that makes the thought of this seizing possible (and indeed necessary) in the first place: that is, the affirmation of becoming itself (Heidegger's thought affirms becoming and so belongs to violence).

Ultimately, then, their disagreement concerns the originary truth of Being. That is what's most important, but we'll refer to it only indirectly.

Our focus is on technology and on the possibility of redemption from technology. Heidegger indicated the letting-be of beings in their freedom as the possible path out of technology. Severino saw Heidegger's indication as destined to remain trapped in technology. To understand why this was so, from Severino's point of view, may open a new path for us, the path of day. What follows is my attempt to read Heidegger from Severino's perspective. Whenever a sentence doesn't directly explain Severino's works, it contains my thoughts, and these in turn attempt to unveil further consequences of those works.

Martin Heidegger on the Meaning of Technology

In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger interprets human beings as *Dasein*, the only beings who are conscious of existence and reflect upon its meaning, the only beings who give meaning to the things of the world. *Dasein* is the being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) whose existence is inextricable from relationship with things. Yet, this relationship grants ontological priority to *Dasein*, who establishes the meaning of everything else: this is why Heidegger says that *Dasein* alone "exists" and everything else "is." *Dasein* constructs the meaning of the world in accordance with its project. He is contingency and possibility: "Da-sein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 10). Existence is a "can be": it's history, temporality, and becoming. *Ex-sistere* means a constant bringing oneself out of oneself, a transcending that always moves beyond what is, towards what is not yet real but is possible. Human existence is a project, and only in light of this project can the things of the world acquire meaning. The difference between an authentic or inauthentic life is a choice. *Dasein* can choose to conquer or lose itself. Authentic existence is the choice to conquer oneself. Inauthentic existence is the choice to see things as "objective simple-presence" (*Vorhandenheit*) and as "tools ready-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*); that is, as scientific "objects."

But why is the scientific outlook inauthentic, and why is (or should) authenticity (be) any less objectifying than inauthenticity? Isn't it the case that in both authentic and inauthentic life *Dasein* creates the meaning of the world? Isn't this ineludible creation precisely what the existential analytic of Heidegger's phenomenology theorizes? If so, it remains unclear

how authenticity could distinguish itself from a projectuality that treats things as *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit*. This crucial problem remains open before us. Is *Being and Time* a work that presents human beings as technological beings, or is it not?

In the *Letter on Humanism* (1947), Heidegger writes that "the turn" (*die Kehre*) in his philosophy was "not a change of standpoint from *Being and Time*" (1993c, p. 231). This is the beginning of a pervasive ambiguity in his late writings. On the one hand, Heidegger begins to condemn the history of philosophy as the history of domination and violence. On the other, he does not renounce his definition of human beings as free in becoming. In addition, his explicit phenomenological attitude is to avoid all judgments – the goal of phenomenology is to describe "what shows itself in itself, what is manifest" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 25) – and yet he does often judge. For example, when he defines the entire history of metaphysics as the history of the oblivion of Being, is that not also a judgment? He points out that the west always interpreted Being as an object (*ob-jectum*) separate from consciousness; that from this ancient dualism, modern thought produced the idea of the subject, which then became no longer a simple substratum (*hypokeimenon*, *sub-stantia*, *sub-jectum*) but the knowing and thinking I (*ego cogitans*) and the foundation of truth; that, therefore, ever since Descartes, my ego is the only certainty; that the history of metaphysics culminates in this definitive subject-object opposition; that, as a result, truth becomes the correspondence between language, thought, and Being (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*); and finally that this interpretation of reality is a violent mistake – whose origin is the oblivion of the ontological difference between "being" and "Being" – that deserves to be called "nihilism" because it treats the world as an object-to-be-dominated. Is this not a judgment? Sometimes it seems it is, sometimes it seems it isn't. Heidegger's attitude oscillates in this general ambiguity.

In *Nietzsche* (1936-1946), he defines the will to power as the essence of technology and as the necessary culmination of metaphysics. This is the framework that determines all of his late writings. But what does "technology" mean exactly, for Heidegger? His most direct answer appears in "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954) when he discusses the two historical meanings of the term:

> One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity. The two definitions of technology belong together. For to posit ends and procure and utilize the means

to them is a human activity. The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong to what technology is. The whole complex of these contrivances is technology. Technology itself is a contrivance, or, in Latin, an *instrumentum* (Heidegger, 1977a, p. 4-5).

Heidegger sees in the Latin *instrumentum* the simultaneous presence of the two meanings of technology: technology as tool and equipment and technology as the activity of utilizing means to realize ends. This latter meaning entails that every human activity is technological, because to utilize means to realize ends is synonymous with acting. Therefore, human beings are essentially technological beings; that is, objectifying beings (who use things as instruments). This is why Heidegger here seems unambiguous in defining western metaphysics as the history of violence. But unambiguous he isn't (also, if we are essentially technological beings, why not embrace that? And what about authentic existence: how can that be non-objectifying if we are essentially technological beings?). The ambiguity becomes manifest in his citation of Hölderlin's "Patmos (For the Landgrave of Homburg)" (1803): "*But where the danger is, grows / The saving power also*" (ibid. 28)[2]. Heidegger quotes this poem to state that technology is both the danger and the saving power. On the one hand, he sees in technology the essence of violence, and on the other, he is recalcitrant to condemn it: he believes that "only a God can save us" (last interview with *Der Spiegel*), and he thinks that technology is "the saving power also." How is this not an irresolvable contradiction?

In "The Thing" (1950), he argues that the original Greek interpretation of the thing is the origin of violence, and that concrete contemporary violence originates in ancient metaphysical abstractions: "Man stares at what the explosion of the atom bomb could bring with it. He does not see that the atom bomb and its explosion are the mere final emission of what has long since taken place, has already happened" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 164). What happened long ago was the theoretical annihilation of things. We act according to our most fundamental interpretation of reality, and

2 Alternative translations of this passage are "But where the danger threatens / That which saves from it also grows" (Hölderlin, 1990, p. 45); and "But where there is danger some / Salvation grows there too" (Hölderlin, 1996, p. 54).

the explosion of the atom bomb is the necessary consequence of the Greek definition of the thing as what-can-be-dominated. This interpretation establishes that things are meaningless-in-themselves, they are mere tools for humankind. This is the annihilation of the thing, to treat things as nothing-in-themselves: "the thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten" (ibid. 168). For Heidegger, this means that our metaphysics fails to recognize the essence of the thing: things are not slaves to our mastery. Techno-scientific rationality is the culmination of this oblivion, and the explosion of the atom bomb is just an example of its concrete consequences.

In *What Is Called Thinking* (1951-2), Heidegger writes that "science does not think" (1968, p. 8). There is no negative judgment in this statement, the explanation is in *Gesamtausgabe I.16*: "using physical methods, for example, I cannot say what physics is. What physics is, can only be thought following the manner of philosophical question" (see Riha, 2012, p. 80). That "science does not think" simply means that science is a consequence (the final and most coherent consequence) of western metaphysics[3]. What happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the consequence of our most ancient interpretation of the world: "science's knowledge [...] already had annihilated things as things long before the atom bomb exploded. The bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long-since-accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing as a thing remains nil" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 168).

This is why "the essence of technology […] is the danger" (Heidegger, 1977a, p. 28). The essence of technology is the belief that we control the world according to our will, and all concrete violent historical outcomes are the necessary consequences of this interpretation of the world. Heidegger writes that "where Enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense" (ibid.). "Enframing" (*Gestell*) belongs to the essence of willful thought and action. Technology Enframes. *We* Enframe because we seek to control things: to use them as means towards the realization of our ends. In doing so, we oppress, subjugate, and annihilate things. We Enframe things within the function that we want them to serve. Enframing is our

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3 Severino argues as much in *Brain, Mind, Soul* (*Cervello, mente, anima*, 2016): "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" (2016a, pp. 11-2).

enacted desire to set upon things, to secure them as *objects*, tools-for-use. Enframing is the interpretation of things as *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit*. Therefore, "the threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence" (ibid.). So, *the danger resides in our hearts* because we interpret ourselves as technological beings. We are Enframing itself. We are the greatest danger. Sophocles saw this truth long before Heidegger, in *Antigone*, and Heidegger knew it: human beings are *to deinotaton*, the most violent beings.

Finally, in "Science and Reflection" (1954), Heidegger writes that "science sets upon the real. It orders it into place to the end that at any given time the real will exhibit itself as an interacting network, i.e., in surveyable series of related causes. The real thus becomes surveyable and capable of being followed out in its sequences. The real becomes secured in its objectness. From this there result spheres or areas of objects that scientific observation can entrap after its fashion" (1977b, pp. 167-8). This is how science actualizes our will to dominate things: by treating reality as measurable and controllable, transformable and dominatable—"an oft-cited statement of Max Planck reads: 'That is real which can be measured'" (ibid. 169). It is within this technological interpretation of the world that the annihilation of the thing, the advent of the age of technology, and violent domination are necessary consequences. Only within this oblivion of Being can the delusion of science as the highest knowledge appear:

> That annihilation is so weird because it carries before it a twofold delusion: first, the notion that science is superior to all other experience in reaching the real in its reality, and second, the illusion that, notwithstanding the scientific investigation of reality, things could still be things, which would presuppose that they had once been in full possession of their thinghood. But if things ever had already shown themselves *qua* things in their thingness, then the thing's thingness would have become manifest and would have laid claim to thought. In truth, however, the thing as thing remains proscribed, nil, and in that sense annihilated. This has happened and continues to happen so essentially that not only are things no longer admitted as things, but they have never yet at all been able to appear to thinking as things (*ibidem*).

After the turn, Heidegger consciously attempts to unveil the necessary consequences of technology. To interpret ourselves as having the power to

control the things of the world is to unleash the will to power. The *lógos* of *téchne* entails domination and violence, and techno-science is its realization. Technology and the will to power are synonyms. To want to organize and realize is to want to create and destroy, to assign to each thing its meaning in accordance with my will. This is the annihilation of the thing. This is why the history of western metaphysics is the history of violence. The future of the *lógos* of *téchne* is global Enframing, the cognitive and operational supremacy over everything. This is what our civilization dreams of. In Heidegger's eyes, our highest value is the annihilation of the thing.

Emanuele Severino on the Meaning of Technology

In *The Destiny of Technology* (*Il destino della tecnica*, 1998), Severino begins his analysis of contemporary civilization as follows: "today we commonly believe that scientific knowledge is the highest form of human knowledge (a conviction that itself expresses the dominating character of technology)" (p. 9). The key to this passage is in the parenthesis. Science is the *expression of* technology. We believe in science as the highest form of human knowledge because we believe in the *lógos* of *téchne*. This is why in *The Fundamental Tendency of Our Time* (*La tendenza fondamentale del nostro tempo*, 1988) Severino writes that "scientific prediction by now guides the entire existence of humans on earth" (1988b, 179).

The fundamental tendency of our time is to develop human civilization along the technological path. Technology has always been our most fundamental belief, and the age of technology will be the time when the *lógos* of *téchne* will coherently guide humans on earth (to the pursuit of indefinite power, without remorse). Technology has been our interpretation of the world ever since the dawn of human thought. The birth of philosophy is the western attempt to rationally defend this Greek faith: "it is on the foundation of this Greek faith that, for the first time, 'the human being' comes to light as understood by western culture, i.e. as the fundamental origin of action, i.e. of production and destruction" (ibid. 16). The Greeks were the first to rationally theorize human beings as technological beings. Plato and Aristotle set down that we can decide and act upon things, transform, produce, and destroy them (this is a theory, not an observable fact). In doing so, they established that our true fulfilment is the domination of the world. They developed the fundamental opposition between Being and Nothingness and so the idea of ontological becoming, birth and

death, creation and destruction, decision and action, transformation and domination. Only by inventing Nothingness could we make things available to domination. Only if nothingness is true, can ontological becoming be true. Severino writes that "at the core of the will […] to produce and destroy resides the *faith* that the world is historical, temporal, becoming, that reality is a continuous coming out of nothingness and going back to nothingness. One can want to dominate the world – that is, to control the power to produce and destroy it – only if, first of all, one wants the subduable to exist; that is, only if one has faith that the subduable exists" (ibid.).

The origin of all violence is our belief in becoming. This belief constitutes the real essence of technology. Becoming establishes the availability of things to domination. Severino has a book entitled *Téchne: The Roots of Violence* (*Téchne: le radici della violenza*, 2002), in which he writes:

> The technological project of unlimited production-destruction of things necessitates that the "thing" be an absolute availability to being-produced and being-destroyed. In this project, the "thing" does not present itself as available up to a certain point, beyond which it refuses to let itself be handled, but as entirely available. Indeed, for the first time in human history, Greek metaphysics brought to light the meaning of this absolute availability of the "thing" precisely when it tied the meaning of the "thing" to *Being* and *Nothingness* (2018, p. 222).

Doesn't Severino sound like Heidegger, here? The meaning of the "thing" originarily contains the essence of violence. This meaning is what our common sense believes in. The meaning of hurricane is the danger it brings. The meaning of wind is the energy it provides. The meaning of another human being is the joy or despair he or she brings in one's life (human beings are things too). Things become meaningful only in service to the project of the self. I am entitled to using the world according to my will. By dominating things, I treat them according to their nature. There is no real boundary. There are no just limitations. This is the true ethos of technology: the recognition that all limitations are unjust, that traditional ethics is unjust.

Does nature ever declare its indignation? Does the lion wonder what it shouldn't do that it can and wants to do? In truth, there are no ethical boundaries: there is only power and availability. It is *not* right to limit power. Power is good. Power and good are the same. Techno-science without

limitations is the true realization of Greek metaphysics, and of today's humanism. To dominate is to assume responsibility for my power. The moral obligation (the good) is to increase and use my power. This is the truth of technology.

After all, power is "the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way"; "the capacity or ability to direct or influence…the course of events" (*OED*). Power is the essence of every decision and action, of every organization of means and realization of ends. If we do change the world, then power is true and good. In fact, the coherence of this reasoning drives our history:

> The history of the west is the progressive seizing of things; that is, the progressive exploitation of their absolute availability and of their infinite oscillation between Being and Nothingness. The technological project of unlimited production-destruction of all things dissolves every limitation regarding that availability and, therefore, within it endures the celebration of the triumph of metaphysics" (Severino, 2018, pp. 222-3).

Doesn't Severino sound like Heidegger, here, again? But Severino sees in Nietzsche and Leopardi the summits of our civilization. Both saw how technology entails no truth nor meaning besides becoming and no morality besides domination. Nietzsche saw that the ethos of technology is the ethos of power. Leopardi did too, but he also made one further final step: power is itself an illusion, the last illusion, and beyond it is meaninglessness, the real fundamental truth of technology. In the *Zibaldone* (1817-32), he wrote: "All is nothing" (Leopardi, 2015, p. 85); that is, not even power means anything. The world is a juxtaposition of meaningless things available to meaningless projects, all destined to eternal annihilation[4].

Building an empire is meaningless, and so is saving children from malaria. This is the end gazed upon by Leopardi. But let us remain with Nietzsche for a second, to see why the ethos of technology is the ethos of

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4 Severino dedicated one work to Nietzsche, entitled *The Ring of Return* (*L'anello del ritorno*, 1999), and three to Leopardi: *Nothingness and Poetry: At the End of the Age of Technology, Leopardi* (*Il nulla e la poesia: alla fine dell'età della tecnica, Leopardi*, 1990), *Mysterious and Wonderful Thing: The West and Leopardi* (*Cosa arcana e stupenda: l'occidente e Leopardi*, 1997), and *On the Road with Leopardi: On the Destiny of Humanity* (*In viaggio con Leopardi: la partita sul destino dell'uomo*, 2015).

power. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-5), Nietzsche writes: "But to reveal my entire heart to you, my friends: *if* there were gods, how could I stand not to be a god! *Therefore* there are no gods. […] What would there be to create, after all, if there were gods?" (2006, p. 67). The answer is: Nothing. If there were gods, every human creation would be illusory. Everything would be dominated by gods. If there were a God (an Absolute Truth), He would establish the Eternal Law to which all Being is subject. He could never be surprised by any worldly outcome. Every worldly outcome would come into Being in accordance with His Eternal Law. Under His Necessity, there would be no open space for becoming, contingency, freedom, decision, action, creation, and destruction. Yet, we do create—this is the unquestionable evidence of technology. Therefore, there are no gods. We are free, decide, and act. Therefore, there are no gods. As a result, if we coherently develop our technological interpretation of reality, then no actions are violent, deplorable, or condemnable. Every individual creates meaning. Therefore, every individual can do whatever he pleases. There are no prohibitions and limitations and therefore no violence. Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov and Ivan knew this as well: "*everything* is permitted" (2017, p. 242; 2004, p. 263).

Our civilization hasn't yet realized what precursors like Nietzsche and Leopardi saw one hundred and fifty years ago. But we will get there—we *are* getting there. In "The Fundamental Tendency of Our Time and the Meaning of the Future" ("*La tendenza fondamentale del nostro tempo e il senso del futuro*," 1988), Severino writes that "the fundamental tendency now underway on earth is the transition from the ideological organization of existence to the technological organization of existence: the progressive reduction of the ideological obstructions to scientific rationality is an observable – and by now amply observed – phenomenon" (1988c, p. 52). Scientific rationality is the ideology of technology, and it does come with its own ethics. That science is a-moral is one of the great delusions of our time. The scientific world is a world where, as Severino writes in *Téchne* (2013):

> technology is "the last God," just as God was "the first technician." Whereas ethics used to ally itself with God because God was the most powerful power, now that technology presents itself as the most powerful power, ethics cannot but ally itself with technology. One can imagine what this alliance will mean, what events will unfold, in all contexts: moral, political, bioethical, etc. The old ethics

will be surpassed by the new ethics, where *the* value will be to espouse – as far as possible, and with the greatest coherence –, through law and custom, the only real reigning criterion: the limitless increase of power" (p. 22-3).

In *Being Born* (*Nascere*, 2005), Severino indicates how this overturning will occur:

> Today, human beings appeal to technology for salvation. When they turn to the savior – God or technology –, their goal is their own salvation, and they use the savior as the means. But then they realize that, if the savior is only a means that they own, then the savior is weak, because the weakness of the person who wants to be saved is reflected upon him. From then on, they assume as their new aim the power of the savior itself, and so their will becomes subordinate to the desire that the will of the savior be done. This will cannot be God's anymore. It can only be the will of technology (2005b, p. 263).

The will of technology will be done, and the will of God shall be no more— "God" indicates all traditional systems of belief, morals, and ethics. Our contemporary denigration of "ideology" is a symptom of this process. The original meaning of ideology is "a system of ideas and ideals" (*OED*). The term originates as the unification of the Greek *idéa* and *lógos*: "the speech, discourse, reasoning" (*lógos*) regarding "the form, notion, pattern one sees (*idéa*)." Ideology is the set of ideas by which someone relates to existence. It is essential to life. No one can live without it. Yet, "by now, through this term we indicate every human behavior that diverges, more or less significantly, from techno-scientific rationality (Severino, 1988c, p. 41), and in doing so, we act as if techno-scientific rationality wasn't itself an ideology. Severino writes, in *Beyond Language* (*Oltre il linguaggio*, 1992), that "language reveals the meaning that man confers to the world" (p. 59). If this is true, then our contemporary pejorative connotations of "ideology" speak precisely of the hegemony of the *lógos of téchne* on our time[5]. The fall of ideology is the fall of all traditions: Islam, Communism,

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5   *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* testifies to this: "ideology" is now "generally a disparaging term used to describe someone else's political views which one regards as unsound" (Audi, 1995, p. 360). But the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* is even

Monarchy, Nazism, and also Christianity, Capitalism, Democracy, Free Speech, and Human Rights. The ethics of technology is "'the will to strengthen, infinitely and unconditionally, the capacity to realize ends.' 'Capacity to realize ends' means capacity to bridge the gaps, solve problems, eliminate needs" (Severino, 2013, p. 15). We want to solve ever more problems, and to do so we must get rid of all ideologies and their ethical limitations. Human Rights (for example) is just one of these kinds of limitations[6]. Nietzsche's Zarathustra also said that "in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation" (2006, p. 66). We want to create, and creation needs destruction. We must realize our ends, no matter what suffering they bring along the way. The difference between Raskolnikov and Napoleon is precisely that Raskolnikov *cares*. This is why he remains a louse and Napoleon becomes a hero.

Another way to think about it is the following: to get rid of all ethical limitations is to live according to the state of nature described in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). In technology, the state of nature is the truth. Humankind has the "right to everything" (*ius in omnia*); more precisely, every individual has the right to everything (*ius omnium in omnia*). Therefore, "the war of all against all" must reign over existence (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). Hobbes postulates the need for a social contract to avoid this endless suffering. But that Hobbes deems the social contract preferable doesn't make it right. And what if one was powerful enough to dominate over everyone else? Why should this person submit to the social contract? Why not try to become such a person? If technology has "one unique end: the indeterminate strengthening of power. *Without any limitation* (Severino, 2013, p. 16), then no law can inhibit anyone from pursuing ab-

more technological: "ideology: any wide-ranging system of beliefs, ways of thought, and categories that provide the foundation of programmes of political and social action: an ideology is a conceptual scheme with a practical application. Derogatorily, another person's ideology may be thought of as spectacles that distort and disguise the real status quo. Promises that political philosophy and morality can be freed from ideology are apt to be vain, since allegedly cleansed and pure programmes depend, for instance, upon particular views of human nature, what counts as human flourishing, and the conditions under which it is found" (Blackburn, 2008, p. 178).

6   "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" establishes that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" and that "all are equal before the law…." These rights are metaphysical postulates founded upon our traditional ideologies. If we get rid of the fundamental ideologies, then we get rid of their consequences as well.

solute domination on a personal level. This general reasoning is explained most clearly in "The Ethics of Science":

> The ethics intrinsic to science is indeed science's will to realize the supreme end that science possesses *in and of itself: that is, the infinite increase* of its own power, the capacity to realize ever wider and differentiated sets of ends. Precisely because the Apparatus wants to dominate reality, in principle, it sees no inviolable boundary to power and domination. No level of power is final and insurmountable. And if the supreme end of the Apparatus is the overcoming of every limitation – that is, the infinite growth of its own power – then the Apparatus is bound only to its need to be the supreme form of the will to power, its will to sever every limitation (Severino, 1988a, p. 71).

In technology, this is the ethics of the Apparatus *and* of the individual. After all, *we* make up the Apparatus. *Téchne* is the root of violence, the delusion of domination that culminates in the despair of nothingness. For Severino, the fundamental tendency of our time is our moving towards the coherentization of this thinking. Its final meaning is summarized in *The Stone Wall* (*Il muro di pietra*, 2006):

> the philosophy of our time opens and paves the way to technology. If every truth and every God that aspire to tower over becoming are impossible, then human actions – and, first and foremost, technological actions – cannot be submitted to any limitations anymore. We entrust to technology – which owns the supreme capacity to bring into being what was nothingness and to lead back into nothingness what is – the task of establishing what must come into being and what must remain in nothingness, what deserves being and what doesn't. Technological thinking can thus arouse in humankind a sense of liberation and a form of enthusiasm never felt before. These liberation and enthusiasm, though, are salvific appearances that conceal the underground fire of anguish that is destined to shatter them, sooner or later. This is because, ultimately, the meaning of the world that comes to light in technology is that all things, all states of the world, and all human beings are ephemeral events that emerge without reason from nothingness and are destined to return to nothingness. In the end – of every life, of every conquest of the world, of every development of man, of all pleasures and of happiness – nothingness (Severino, 2006, p. 26-7).

Heidegger's Contradiction

So, Heidegger and Severino agree (albeit through opposite arguments) that technology, metaphysics, and the will to power are one and the same and constitute the essential thought of our civilization. Heidegger's thinking on technology is ambiguous to the core, though, and through Severino's eyes, Heidegger envisions a salvific relationship with technology because he cannot envision a humanity whose essence is not technology. That is, Heidegger hopes to find salvation in technology because, ultimately, he cannot imagine technology not to be true. This is the origin of his fundamental contradiction. This is why he wavers and finally remains trapped looking for salvation from violence in violence, for release from the will to power in the will to power, for the cure to poison in poison.

In "Phenomenological Interpretation of the Greek *Epistéme* and 'Ontological Difference'" ("*Interpretazione fenomenologica dell'* epistéme *greca e 'differenza ontologica*," 1989), Severino writes that Heidegger even "attempts to criticize the explicit condemnation of technology – even when he glimpses the 'danger' in technology and alludes to 'salvation from it'" (2011a, p. 313). On the one hand, Heidegger sees the danger in technology and wants salvation from it. On the other, he criticizes the condemnations of technology and hopes to find salvation in it. The contradiction is evident, and Severino points to its root in Heidegger's ontology: "for Heidegger, Plato's definition of *poíesis* (production) is not mistaken; on the contrary, it must be the point of departure for a deeper reflection on the meaning of 'Being'" (ibid. 314).

In *Symposium* 205 b-c, Plato writes that "every cause (*aitía*) by which anything is made to pass from not-being an entity (*ek tou me ontos*) to being an entity (*eis to on*) is production (*poíesis*)." Heidegger thinks of *poíesis* as the foundation of truth. He thinks that Being discloses itself through production. But Severino warns us that *poíesis* is the most powerful *téchne*, it is the *téchne* that can turn Nothingness into Being and Being into Nothingness. *Poíesis* is the essence of technology, of the atom bomb, and of the annihilation of the thing[7].

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7   In *Future Philosophy* (*La filosofia futura*, 1989), we find a passage that further illuminates how Severino stands in relation to technology, the history of metaphysics, and Heideggerian phenomenology: "It is impossible to discern the authentic meaning of appearance and disappearance when appearance is concurrently thought of as the cre-

Heidegger believes that *poíesis* is true and, therefore, he is a profound affirmer of technology. In *Philosophy from the Greeks to Our Time: Contemporary Philosophy* (*La filosofia dai greci al nostro tempo: la filosofia contemporanea*, 1996), Severino writes that the spirit of Heidegger's philosophy is the "will to bring to light the authentic meaning of becoming" (2017, p. 362). Heidegger thinks that the temporal-historic existence of human beings is the originary truth. Therefore, he thinks that the *technological* character of human beings is the originary truth. To him, the unveiling of the truth (*alétheia*) shows that human beings are technological beings: projects, always *deciding*. A direct example of this is *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950), where Heidegger defines the work of art as that which "*puts up for decision* what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave" (1993c, p. 169, my emphasis). Another example is *What Is Metaphysics?* (1929), where he writes that "anxiety reveals the nothing" (1993e, p. 101). This proposition implies that "the nothing" *is* and, therefore, that ontological becoming is the case.

This leads us back to the fundamental disagreement between Heidegger and Severino. For Severino, becoming is the essence of technology. For Heidegger, technology is our seeking to objectify becoming. This is what Heidegger means by defining the inauthenticity of the technological Apparatus – in Severino's words – as the "inevitable consequence of the metaphysical concept of Being as form and objective presence" (ibid.) and as the "extreme negation of the freedom and historicity of existence" (ibid. 367). This is why Severino writes that for Heidegger science's "principle of organization and unification […] is incompatible with the historicity of the existence of human beings" (2017, p. 366) and that "Heidegger sees in the absolute organization of technology the most radical form of the metaphysical *epistéme*: the Apparatus that makes the historical becoming of existence impossible" (ibid. 372).

Severino argues that Heidegger's philosophy is one of the two mainstream positions that oppose each other today. On the one hand, there's historicity understood as the set of techno-scientific productions of exis-

ation 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, 2011b, p. 334).

tence (neo-positivism, pragmatism, and certain forms of neo-Marxism). On the other, there's historicity understood as the free play of becoming, where things are let be (Heidegger). Heidegger thus opposes those explicitly techno-scientific affirmations of becoming, and this is how Severino summarizes his view:

> So that historical becoming be; that is, so that the "soil" be not stolen—the soil on which "every great epoch of humanity, every pioneering spirit, every historical characterization of the essence of human beings can be born and grow"—one must not only think that Being is the powerless letting-be of beings (which, as opposed to the power of God, opens the free space wherein historical development can play) but also that Being is itself a pure historical occurrence, a pure fact (ibid. 369).

But because becoming is the essence of technology, then the opposition between interpretations of historicity is only illusory, and Heidegger's philosophy itself entails the affirmation of technology. Heidegger thinks of technology as in opposition to becoming. Severino sees that they are one and the same. If human beings are free in becoming, then they are projects, and projects are always technological: they always organize means towards the realization of ends. In this projectuality, things appear as tools, or else we wouldn't use them. If becoming is true, then the will to power is inevitable. This is why even Heidegger's freedom, letting-be, and *Gelassenheit* must fail to indicate the way beyond technology. These concepts strive to indicate another dimension, but they remain trapped in technological becoming.

Consider these theoretical and practical examples. In "On the Essence of Truth" (1943), Heidegger sets down his conception of truth-as-freedom, and he presents an ethics that follows from this conception. Here, he writes of "the essential connection between truth and freedom" (1998, p. 143) and defines freedom as follows:

> Freedom is not merely what common sense is content to let pass under this name: the caprice, turning up occasionally in our choosing, of inclining in this or that direction. Freedom is not mere absence of constraint with respect to what we can or cannot do. Nor is it on the other hand mere readiness for what is required and necessary (and so somehow a being). Prior to all this ("negative" and "positive" freedom), freedom is engagement in the disclosure of beings as such (ibid. 145).

Freedom is what "reveals itself as letting beings be" (ibid. 144). Who lives in accordance with the truth "lets beings be the beings they are" (ibid.). This person "withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are" (ibid.). The authentic life lets beings be. This is what Heidegger indicates. But this indication cannot be enough. Is this letting be itself a choice, or is it not? If it is a choice, then it must once again be an organization of means towards the realization of ends; that is, an expression of technology, Enframing, an imposition on Being. Heidegger here speaks of "engagement" in a context that affirms freedom, projectuality, possibility, and contingency. How not to understand these words as pervaded by technology?

If we look at *Gelassenheit*, Heidegger's greatest and final attempt to overcome technology, we find the same problem. For Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* means "releasement," abandonment, will-less thinking; it is to let beings be what they truly are. He introduces the concept in the "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking" (1959), where he imagines a discussion between teacher, scholar, and scientist:

> *Scholar*: "thinking […] is a kind of willing. […] To think is to will, and to will is to think." […]
> *Teacher*: "And that is why, in answer to your question as to what I really wanted from our meditation on the nature of thinking, I replied: I want non-willing" (1966, pp. 58-9).

The teacher identifies the will as the origin of suffering. To will is to suffer. Non-willing is salvation. But the teacher *wants* non-willing, and this obvious contradiction points to a clear impossibility: to want non-willing is to will non-willing, and to will non-willing is to remain trapped within willing—the very origin of suffering from which Heidegger is seeking liberation in the first place. To point out this contradiction is not to just play with words. Nor to be unfair to what Heidegger tries to indicate. Instead, it is to bring to light the most obvious instances of what prevented Heidegger from finding his way beyond technology.

Therefore, to point out this contradiction is not to be unjust to the fact that Heidegger was *not* a naïve subjectivist. He did write in "What Calls for Thinking?" (1952) that "*we never come to thoughts. They come to us*" (1993d, p. 365). He did set down in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (1971) that "man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man" (1993a, p. 348).

He did dedicate the *Letter on Humanism* (1947) to criticizing French Existentialism – exemplified by Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1939) – and to make it clear that such subjectivism founded freedom in the "I think" and had nothing to do with *Being and Time*. He did reiterate that "Man is rather 'thrown' from Being itself into the truth of Being" (1993c, p. 234), that "Man does not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of Being, come to presence and depart" (ibid.), and that "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being" (ibid. 245). Therefore, there is a lot in Heidegger against the subjectivist-technological interpretation of the world, but there is also a fundamental piece missing: the *final* fundamental piece that would allow him to truly conceptualize "care" as non-technological.

In fact, Heidegger himself has the scientist point out, in the conversation, the ambiguity of *Gelassenheit*—"this formulation has proved ambiguous" (1966, p. 59). But the further explication on offer is: "non-willing, for one thing, means a willing in such a way as to involve negation, be it even in the sense of a negation which is directed at willing and renounces it. Non-willing means, therefore: willingly to renounce willing" (ibid.). This is just an iteration of the previous contradiction. The scientist points out that "I want non-willing" is ambiguous, and the answer he gets is "Non-willing means willingly to renounce willing." The ambiguity isn't resolved, not in the least. Granted, the scientist's questions are themselves poisoned by willing, but he does have a point that the teacher fails to provide an answer for. If I am a project in becoming, then to want non-willing is itself a willing. Therefore, willing is pervasive and non-transcendable. Therefore, what the teacher is trying to indicate is impossible: it makes no sense. There's no answer to this problem here.[8]

Heidegger's ambiguity indicates that he's unable to respond to the scientist's counterargument, and within this ambiguity he introduces *Gelassenheit*, the "releasement" from willful thinking, the salvation from the will and technology: "*Gelassenheit* does *not* belong to the domain of the

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8   And in his 1925-26 course on *Logic: The Question of Truth*, Heidegger says that "as existing – whether in speaking, entering/exiting, or understanding – I am an act of intelligently dealing-with" (2010, p. 123). Again, if this is the case – if everything appears to me as something to be dealt-with in my existential projectuality – then non-willing is a logical impossibility.

will" (ibid. 62), it "remains absolutely outside any kind of will" (ibid. 59), it "can never be carried out or reached by any willing" (ibid.), it must come "from somewhere else" (ibid. 61).

It is clear that willing is the danger, here. But again, there's no justification for the assertion of a domain outside willing. Therefore, when Heidegger says that one must allow *Gelassenheit* to "wake up" [*Erwachen*] within oneself, this allowing must manifest itself as yet another expression of willful "re-presenting" thinking. That is, Heidegger's words (unwillingly) imply that *Gelassenheit* needs human allowance to be, and this implication belongs to the essence of technology. This contradiction keeps manifesting itself in the further explanations of *Gelassenheit*. For example: "you want a non-willing in the sense of a renouncing of willing, so that through this we may release, or at least prepare to release, ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not a willing" (ibid. 59-60). Again, Heidegger remains trapped within the suffering of the impossibility to will non-willing. He hopes to indicate a "higher acting [that] is yet no activity" (ibid. 61), but no acting can be no activity.

The are other elucidations in the "Conversation," but none of them solves the problem. Another example is when the scientist hypothesizes that "*Gelassenheit* is effected from somewhere else" and the teacher immediately corrects him: "Not effected, but let in" (ibid. 61). This exchange does show that the scientist – who thinks of "effecting" – is trapped in (pro-active) willing. But how is *letting in* itself not an action? How is it not (in-active) willing? Thereafter, the scientist and the scholar ask: "But then, what in the world am I do to?" (ibid. 62). And the teacher answers "We are to do nothing but wait [*Wir sollen nichts tun sondern warten*]" (ibid.). This is perhaps where the contradiction becomes clearest. The logical framework of "what am I to do?" pertains entirely to willful thinking. To coherently indicate a domain out of willing, the teacher should have invalidated the question. "To wait" is not "to do nothing." There is no such thing as doing nothing. To wait is to decide and to act. It is to organize means to realize ends. To wait to let-in the sought-for salvation of *Gelassenheit* is to pursue a technological project. It is to exercise technological domination of Being in accordance with one's will.

Another example is Heidegger's criticism of Meister Eckhart: "*Scientist*: 'The transition from willing into releasement is what seems difficult to me.' […] *Scholar*: 'Especially so because even releasement can still be thought of as within the domain of will, as is the case with old masters of thought such as Meister Eckhart'" (ibid. 61). It is remarkable to see that

Heidegger is aware that "releasement can still be thought of as within the domain of the will" and yet he still clearly fails to provide a conceptual framework in order to differentiate his thinking from those of Eckhart and the other old masters of thought[9].

From Severino's perspective, Heidegger thus appears as a voice of technology. Severino's ontology disputes Heidegger's fundamentally. In *Destiny of Necessity* (*Destino della necessità*, 1980), Severino writes that "freedom belongs to the essence of nihilism" (p. 19), and that only by believing in freedom can human beings believe that they are the *lords of beings*, lords who have the right "to annihilate the state of things (ibid. 32), "to decide what to assign to Being and to Nothingness" (ibid. 36), and so to treat things as if they were nothing.

We want to change the world. Severino responds: "this project is the *extreme* form of the will to power" (ibid.), and human technology (*anthropíne téchne* – Plato, *Sophist* 265 b-e) is its concretization. The original idea of ontological freedom (contingency) is "the *originary* expression of the will to power" (Severino, 1980, p. 37), and it is "the foundation of all control and domination" (ibid. 40). Technology "has become the only reality and the only evidence" (ibid. 37) for our civilization, and Heidegger (unwillingly) participates in its affirmation. But what we take for granted is only an interpretation that can be questioned. The age of technology *will* be the most rigorous concretization of Greek ontology, but not because – as Heidegger thought – technology Enframes becoming, but because it "will be the complete final expression of the will to dominate that is founded upon the will to interpret Being as freedom" (ibid. 41).

From Severino's perspective, the only possibility of salvation from technology (if there is any) lies in the possibility that the truth be non-technological; that is, that the truth reveal the impossibility of becoming, power, control, domination, violence, and transformation—the impossibility of human beings as capable of decision and action. Severino's philosophy intends to indicate precisely the necessary, incontrovertible truth of this impossibility—the coherent and immediate necessity of what Heidegger

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9   In *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (1990), Caputo writes that doing nothing constitutes the "preparation for the final stage of releasement where we have left the sphere of willing behind altogether, where man, as with Eckhart, has no will at all" (1990, p. 171). He forgets that Heidegger himself explicitly states that his thinking should have nothing to do with Eckhart.

could only incoherently postulate: that we are not the lords of beings, that this belief is a delusion.

For Severino, every appearance is an appearance of an immediate necessity whose negation (whose not-being) is impossible. This is a logical necessity that is infinitely stronger than scientific determinism. It is the logical necessity that was supposed to coherently found western rationality ever since its beginning (but didn't): "Being is, while Nothing is-not" (Severino, 2016c, p. 50). Everything else follows from there. *This* is the destiny of necessity, the originary structure (*La struttura originaria*, 1958) of the truth that cannot be denied and is "free from will and language, […] *unspeakable*» (Severino, 1980, p. 200). This is the principle of non-contradiction, coherently thought. The language that attempts to indicate this unspeakable necessity is what in *Going Beyond* (*Oltrepassare*, 2007) Severino calls "the song of the truth" (p. 374). Whether this language manages to indicate the truth, and whether this truth is – in fact – the truth, remains open to debate here. The aim of this piece was only to indicate one reason why delving into Severino's works is truly worthwhile. If it is possible for the truth to unveil itself beyond willing – where Heidegger couldn't see – then Severino's works may the place where this possibility appears in coherent conceptual form.

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The Validity of C Contradiction in Human Biology

Emanuele Severino and Thomas Metzinger in Dialogue

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This paper try to show that C contradiction has a great value, not only for ontological, logical or metaphysic questions but for biological and medical too. After having established how the part can (and must!) represent totality, excluding a form of *kenosis* or debasement for the whole, it is then practically showed how C contradiction deals with biological human structures of perception. They, according to Metzinger's perspective (that will also lead readers to know what is the hypothesis of the *ego* tunnel), are accustomed just to receive a small part of reality. Nevertheless, human being considers it as totality, opening a very interesting comparison with Severino's thought. What seems to be an error or a limitation reveals itself as the only way to perceive the reality as totality and a meaningful world. People who cannot perceive in the part the fullness of the whole, cannot distinguish relevant *stimuli* from irrelevant ones: that's what doctors call "aberrant salience".

Keywords:
C contradiction, perception, biology, medicine, salience

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1. The C contradiction and the astonishing circle between part and totality

Understanding what Emanuele Severino means with «contradiction», in all its shades and meanings, remains – despite the great proliferation of studies concerning the entire work of the Italian philosopher in recent years – one of the most coveted aims. In fact, it must be pointed out that contradiction is not a pure nothing, on the contrary, it is something that affirms itself with such strength that cannot be ignored or labeled as completely unfounded. In other words, contradiction, being opposite to something posed and determined, must be posed and determined too, in order to op-pose itself and contradict.

Severino deals with the contradiction in many places of his work (Cfr. Severino 1981; Id., 1995a tr. En 2016; Id., 1995b; Id., 2005), and for this reason it acquires a rich semantic nature, indefinable by those who dare to treat it with absolute and unwise carelessness. Of many ways of proposing the contradiction, this work will concern that special kind of contradiction known as "C Contradiction".

However, before concentrating on the form of the contradiction just mentioned, it should be noted that Severino affirms: "the authentic meaning of the distinction between contradiction (intended as the act of falling in contradiction) and the content of the contradiction […] is that contradiction is absolutely non-existent, confirming that it is nothing, but it certainly does not affirm the non-existence and being nothing of the contradiction intended as the possibility of falling in contradiction"(Id., 2005).

For this reason, although the concrete content of the contradiction is, for Severino, always removed, that is, always resolved, because of its inevitable auto-denying nature, it is equally sure that falling in contradiction is always possible and its existence has a well-determined ontological nature. So that possibility will be examined from a biological and organic point of view.

In other words, I mean to show the concrete value of contradiction as the only way to exist for living beings, and more specifically, for human beings. Therefore, the contradiction – and above all that majestic form of contradiction which is C contradiction – will prove to be the determining feature of Destiny. C Contradiction belongs to the destiny in a such strong and incontrovertible way that belongs to it also "its own self-denying negation" (Id., 1992, p. 160; Cfr. Id., 1981, p. 70).

The peculiar trait belonging to negation will not only be presented, in this work, as a logical self-amendment, contradiction will not only delete itself, confirming that everything is expected, necessarily, in the glory; such perspective will not limit itself repeating that, according to a logical consequence, "all the Being that appears in time always and forever abides in blessed company with all Being, outside of time"(Id., 1995, p. 30; tr. 2016, p. 83), but it will try to show, through the comparison with Thomas Metzinger's thought, that C Contradiction is not only «the destiny of truth as a *finite* presence of infinite appearing» (Id., 2005, p. 88) (that is the only way to have totality in the form of non-totality), but also the only way to *live* the concreteness of perception, involving all human possibilities and experiences. In other words, in addition to represent a logical and ontological necessity, it would – surprisingly – also prove to be a biological necessity that allows life to be what concretely is. This aim is reached, according to the perspective illustrated by Metzinger, for a practical-vitalistic need that involves the senses, or more specifically, the imperfect nature of our perception.

So, before explaining in depth the position of the German philosopher, it should be remembered that C contradiction implies for Severino that the infinite appearing, that is the transcendental horizon of appearing, is expressed by the *part*, therefore, unexpectedly: «what appears as totality is not the totality, it appears both as totality and as non-totality» (*ibidem*)

We must then ask ourselves: what does it mean, specifically, to "appear in the part"? What does it imply, for the whole, to be represented by the part that, at first glance, seems just its contrary? How can the whole be said in the part without risking of being incomplete? Moreover, it must be remembered that the C contradiction has just this hard aim to reach: to be that logical space in which the appearances of finite must be sufficient to explicate the infinite and represent, more than anything else, the destiny of truth, just that truth that «cannot be denied by men or by gods, at any time, under any circumstance, in any universe» (Id., 1981, p 16). Therefore, the truth embodied by destiny, that one which remains inviolable,

without any possibility of being scratched or removed, is, paradoxically, entrusted to its part to be the whole.

So, it should be thought, maybe, that if the finite is entrusted (by the infinite itself) to represent all the shades of infinite, it means perhaps that the entrusting of the whole and its significance to the part cannot be read as a *kenosis* or a reduction that leads to an unbelievable abdication.

In 2013, Leonardo Messinese, published in *The future philosophy* an article in which he stated that the C contradiction is the place where the irreducible difference between the appearance of the whole and its constant hiding is manifested prominently (Cfr. Messinese, 1/2013, in *The future philosophy*, pp.115-129, in part. p. 115). It must be said, however this concept has been affirmed several times by past eminent thinkers too, showing that to be hidden does not mean to vanish or to rot. This concealment, on the contrary, this peculiarity of not appearing (or inability to be seen) has a significance that exceed the simply dichotomic comparison between seen/ unseen, light / shadow, whole/part.

The C contradiction – as mentioned at the beginning – therefore prove to be a very particular contradiction. In fact, it has an autonomous logical-ontological value from any position. A contradiction is usually related to a position that it wants to deny, on the contrary, the C contradiction reveal its strength, paradoxically, for what it does not express or omits. This omission, however, does not coincide with a real operation of debasing (it does not mean that what does not appear entirely is ontologically deleted. Furthermore, it does not represent a starting point for the foundation of a history of nothingness in which the nothing is), on the contrary, it indicates that the real history of being goes beyond its appearances: "the content of the normal contradiction is nothing; – Severino affirms in his last work – the content of C contradiction is not nothing, it is, in fact, properly, an abstract content that shows its concreteness only in a formal way" (Id., 2019, p. 40).

The content of the whole has only one possibility of revealing itself, demonstrating its own concreteness, which, however, must be only "formal" because if it were effectively given in all its totality, it would not be the same content that the contradiction itself would try to show. In other words: the abstract content of the whole, desiring to show itself in its totality, must renounce to show itself as totality. Thus, therefore, C contradiction shows in a very eloquent way that «the whole does not reveal itself concretely, so that what it shows is not the whole. It is the totality and is not the totality» (Id., 1984, p. 277).

2. Human nature and the *ego* tunnel: what does biology has to do with C contradiction?

Severino specifies: "man is, in essence, the opening of the whole, but the whole does not reveal itself concretely, so that what it shows is not the whole" (ibidem). For that reason, «the whole is totality and is not totality» (ibidem). Therefore, Severino also supports an anthropological vision together with the ontological one that refers to the destiny of truth as *manifest* and *not manifest*, irrefutable structure of being. Man is naturally turned towards the whole and his natural task is to remove himself from the contradiction (that is to avoid the contradiction) or, more specifically, to eradicate the contradiction. But when man discovers himself as destined to the totality of beings and also discovers their impossibility to dwell in the contradiction, he necessarily faces, paradoxically, the deepest point in which contradiction is still alive, and that because just trying to remove the contradiction, in order to affirm the whole, allows the whole itself not to be affirmed. In that way the contradiction is strongly reaffirmed although as removed or resolved. In other words: the removal of the contradiction of truth is not the denial of its content, but it is the concrete affirmation of it; it is the appearance of what with its absence causes the contradiction of the truth.

From these considerations stands out the following: by necessity and by nature of man, contradiction should be removed since man is linked to totality and to non-contradiction, but just for that, man is also accustomed to admit *the part* as real expression of the whole, that is the only way in which totality can concretely exist. Therefore, the removal of the contradiction to which man is destined, is, paradoxically, its *non-removal*. Only, therefore, not removing the contradiction, man can keep on removing it (with reference to its transcendental trait). About this question Severino affirms: "the progressive appearance of the fundament [intended as underlying principle or what is absolutely originary] [...] is the progressive concrete elimination of the contradiction of the fundament. And this progressive removal is the same progressive appearance of the concreteness of the original necessity. The overcoming of the fundament is the arrival of concreteness (Id., 1981, pp. 76-77). On closer inspection, it is necessary to reflect that this coming of concreteness is also the continuous and constant negation of the appearance of the whole, so that the progressive removal of the negation is, at the same time, its removal and, paradoxically, its perpetual and necessary confirmation.

In 2009 Thomas Metzinger published *The ego tunnel* in which the German philosopher proposed, from the first pages of his foreword, the following idea: what is believed to be deep and holistic is a "form of conscious representational content, and it can be selectively manipulated under carefully controlled experimental conditions" (Metzinger, 2009, p. 6). According to Metzinger, therefore, the necessary structure of reality, the totality of the world perceived (and the silent one not perceived) is configured as a representation that relies on its specific way of appearing. Therefore: "the content of our conscious experience is not only an internal construct but also an extremely selective way of representing information. This is why it is a tunnel: What we see and hear, or what we feel and smell and taste, is only a small fraction of what actually exists out there" (ibidem). The small part of the real we perceive represents also, however, the only horizon for us that exists. It is an horizon of limited possibilities and imperfections that, however, with its "persistence" digs, within the perceiving ego, it digs something immensely rich, vivid and real without which we would not be able to perceive anything. Through the words of the author: "[every color, sound, taste, every experience, everything] is nothing more than a low dimensional projection of the inconceivably richer physical reality surrounding and sustaining us" (ibidem) (which, however, because of its immensity and completeness we are unable to perceive). This inaccessible dimension for us, the "realm" of the totality of being and truth confirms to be only: "an ocean of electromagnetic radiation, a wild and raging mixture of different wavelengths. Most of them are invisible to you and can never become part of [our] conscious model of reality" (ivi, p 20).

In this sense and in relation to what has been mentioned at the beginning about the logic of contradiction in general, but above all as regards to the C form of the contradiction, also in the perspective showed by Metzinger the part will never be the whole but just for this very reason - confirming the genuine perspective of this contradiction and his immovability – the same part, is and will always be considered as the whole. Just this partiality and reduction is what man is able to perceive and absorb according to a codification built by himself, for himself and so, it is totality without really being it.

For this reason, according to Metzinger, man is endowed by nature – as also stated by Severino and has been already highlighted a few lines above – with a general orientation towards totality, indeed the German philosopher affirms clearly: "The PSM (*Phenomenal Self Model*) of Homo sapiens is probably one of nature's best inventions. It is an efficient way to allow a

biological organism to consciously conceive of itself (and others) as a whole" (ivi, p. 4).

For Metzinger, in other words, the founding structure of the ego and its self-perception (i.e., the PSM) has always been oriented, by nature, to conceive every human being not as the part but as totality. More incisively: every manifestation, every phenomenal appearance with which the human being constantly relates is not only that phenomenal appearance, that moment, but also and always the *totality of moments* that preceded or will follow that specific appearance. Even according to this perspective, therefore, the part represents the whole in the *only way* in which it wants to be represented. "our conscious models of bears, of wolves, of books in our hands, of smiles on our friends' faces, must serve as a window on the world. This window must be clean and crystal clear. – says Metzinger – [must have, that is,] a phenomenal transparency" (ivi, pp. 45-46).

Every representation, therefore, is in Metzinger's language, a model that introduces us to the totality without ever showing it completely. This phenomenal window must have a clear and throbbing character, an immediate and selective character, that, paradoxically, must show and obscure the horizon just to help what must appear and, at the same time, what, absolutely, must not. That's why human evolution has allowed the development of the ego which, for the German philosopher, is like a tunnel that allows, through a potent steering and reduction of external *stimuli*, the only possible relationship between man and reality. To be clear: this does not open at all to the absolute relativism of perception; what appears, always does according to the part, that is according to the rules of partiality, but not for this reason that appearance should be considered as misleading, faded or even unable to prove the existence of a world. In fact, Metzinger specifies: "consciousness is the *appearance of a world*. The essence of the phenomenon of conscious experience is that a single and unified reality becomes present: If you are conscious, a world appears to you" (ivi, p. 15). So appearance must be conceived as something in relation to consciousness that is the privileged focal point around which world can truly exist, just appearing to someone.

The ego with its consciousness is in all respects: "the ingenious strategy of creating a unified and dynamic inner portrait of reality" (ivi, p. 5), a portrait we never manage to perceive in its totality and, at the same time, however, we always have it in front of us.

As far as it concerned Severino, he would affirm, in agreement with Metzinger that totality of being corresponds and does not correspond to

the appearance of that totality because totality is really itself if it is not totality and so, in other words, it expresses itself in the *part*. But the only way to allow the part represent the whole without falling in contraction, avoiding any impossible reduction or *kenosis* of the totality is to admit, through a new coming configuration, a new horizon that is always ready to be surpass and be surpassed, configuring limits and possibility of human perception.

Likewise, we live in the reality crossing the ego tunnel so that reality is, in a certain way not totality, it is, in fact, the partiality that wonderful evolutionary and biological mechanism called ego tunnel allows us to live. It preserves us from totality just giving us a very particular totality. To be clear: I mean with this expression a totality that, on one hand, is however partial because it gathers only what human perception is able to obtain, on the other hand, it is however a totality just because what it is gathered is just *all* we perceive.

3. The salience and its aberrant form: medicine and C-contradiction

One of the greatest challenges for any organism that interacts in a sensorially complex world is to be able to distinguish efficiently relevant *stimuli* (whether they are attractive, aversive, or potentially supportive) from neutral ones, and respond adequately to them. The world surrounding the individual is particularly complex and seemingly limitless, while the perceptual *stimuli* that come from the outside compete for limited cognitive and physical resources. However, it is necessary to understand and re-discuss the meaning of limit in order to understand in what way a certain vision of the world can really exist, what is its usability and improvement. The limit, in fact, is, in this respect, even what preserves the organism and its correct body functions: by clearly establishing possibilities and structural deficiencies of the body, limit awareness defends it from possible damages.

Dynamis – the Greek word that refers to potentiality – reveals a meaning that is two-faced, calling into question possibility and limit. On closer inspection, they are not antithetical, showing, on the contrary, perfectly, the nature of man as who acts *despite* and *thanks* to limit.

The appearance of *a* world – this world that now is present, strictly this one that appears, the only one we are able to see – stands on the characteristics of the consciousness that succeed in preserving its constant location

in a unitary and limited reality, thanks to the right evaluation of external *stimuli*.

Although consciousness is many things: "memory, attention, feelings, the perception of colors, self-awareness, and higher-order thought" (ivi, p. 19), the ability to let appear a unitary world has remained intact over thousands of years. The appearance of the world, as it is, as a well-ordered totality, is always linked to the appearance of what seems to be the opposite, that is the part. Likewise, *dynamis* reveals what man can do just because it reveals, at the same time, what is man limit, so underlying what man cannot do.

According to these premises, salience, that is the ability to give importance to some *stimuli* then others (to give importance to the part rather than to the whole) allows the subject to experience concrete reality. In other words, the whole is formally denied, some of its parts, in fact seems to pass in transparency, and just for this, surprisingly, is possible to human being live the totality. Being denied the totality, it can be perceived. So, the denied parts of the whole are not erased at all, they are silently still alive in their own denial.

From a biological point of view, the process of attributing salience to a certain *stimulus*, in a certain time and in a certain space, exclude totality in order to recover it according to the index of importance and attention.

In this sense, that tunnel called "ego" seems to be like a linkage, which excludes the whole, emphasizing the part, just when, through its specific channels, it admits and makes possible the reality as totality concretely realized.

If the phenomenon of salience were not active, if it were not able to intervene as a sieve or as an "enhancer" of *stimuli* or internal sensations perceived, the subject would be lost in the whole which would be equivalent to nothing, having no meaning. On the contrary, every peculiarity of existence, or rather, according to Severino's terms, every slightest trail can legitimately «claim» to be the whole and to be eternal because: 1) as a part it shows the whole 2) through the specificity of the part, it acquired its own salience within the whole and for this reason (overall for this reason!), it can claim to be eternal (that is, to have its own specific meaning in the per-syntactic horizon designated by each everlasting moment).

The correct functioning of the mechanism for attributing salience is so important that when it does not happen we can speak, on a pathological level, of *aberrant salience*. It is described by medical researchers as the experience in which "*stimuli* that normally appear neutral become salient,

significant and able to capture attention, helping to structure the 'revelation'" (Cfr. Bowers MB Jr & Freedman DX 1966, 15, pp. 240-248; Cfr. Bowers MB Jr. 1968; 19, pp. 348-355). This "revelation" would mark, in the patient, the false sensation of an increasing of the meaning, the sensation, for example, of being at the beginning of some important step forward an *eureka* that can finally explain, in a global perspective, better things or certain events.

To put it differently: these patients are no longer able to assign the right salience to the *stimuli*, they are therefore convinced that everything is revealing itself indiscriminately, ignoring the great richness of partiality with all its necessary and blessed limits. Through Montale's words, on one hand they are convinced they have finally found the total point in which "things/ let themselves go and seem almost/ to reveal their final secret" (Montale 1925), but on the other, everything seems confused and meaningless. Everything shows itself as relevant for perception and so the subject remains stuck without any possibility to act or give attention to something. So, in order to recover a deeper sense of the whole, people affected by this disfunction, lose the perception of the world and reality. In this sense, the C contradiction – like the *ego*, rediscovered by Metzinger as a tunnel that conveys and makes possible every perceptive experience – demonstrates itself to be an effective and necessary «tool» not only for the logic of the originary but also from the a practical and medical-biological point of view, since without the *limit* imposed by the appearance of the part (which in fact only in a fictitious way marks a logical discontinuity with the whole) nothing could be confirmed as totality.

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The Unconscious of Nihilism
and the Unconscious of the *Élenchos*

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Emanuele Severino's work pushes thought beyond nihilism by identifying and unveiling unconscious of nihilism. I propose to demonstrate that there is something unconscious also in a key concept of Severino's work: in the figure of the *élenchos*, in its constitutive act precisely. I also propose to demonstrate how, by unveiling the unconscious of the *élenchos*' constitutive act, beginning from Severino's work one can advance further along this line of thinking. By this unveiling, the statement of a coexistence of eternity and temporality results, through which, paradoxically, eternity is affirmed with greater force, because its desirability is emphasized. I argue that this coexistence is not contradictory even though it appears to be so because it is not subject to the principle of non-contradiction, but this happens because it is a condition of the possibility of that principle. To achieve this aim, it is critical to fully comprehend a Freudian discovery that has remained un-understood and even unidentified as such by Freud himself: the discovery of the absence of contradiction of the unconscious.

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Introduction

Emanuele Severino's work pushes philosophical thinking beyond the whole preceding tradition united in the definition of nihilism: "Nihilism is the essence of the West", he states (Severino, 2016, p. 272), where – because the West "rules the whole Earth" (*ibid.*) – "even the entire history of the East has now become the pre-history of the West" (*ibid.*).

Severino defines nihilism as "the belief that being is nothing" (*ibid.*), i. e. that everything that is, every entity, is nothing. But how can one be convinced that the being, which is being and not nothing by definition, is nothing? And how can Severino's work free philosophical thinking from such a universal, albeit contradictory, conviction?

The unconscious of nihilism

1. Nihilism can believe "that being is nothing" because it does not acknowledge that it consists in such belief. No Western or Eastern individual could be convinced that being is nothing if he or she happened to be convinced of that.

Everyone is convinced that beings, or at least a major part of them, have not always been and will not always be: everyone is convinced that beings are subject to becoming. Severino claims that Western philosophy considers that being is "that of which it is to be said that it *is*, but *was not* and *will not be*" (*ibid.*, p. 272). He goes on to say that "it appears […] as that which, wholly or in part, issues from and returns to nothingness; it oscillates between Being and Nothing" (*ibid.*).

Yet, to consider that beings, or parts of them, oscillate between Being and Nothing is to be convinced that they came from nothing and will return to nothing. Thus, this acknowledges a period of time when they are nothing – in both the past and the future –, and "envisioning a time […]

when something becomes nothing, therefore, means envisioning a time in when Being (i. e., non-Nothing) is identifies with Nothing" (*ibid.*, p. 96). From this, it follows that the belief that beings become, "the belief that the thing is Becoming" (*ibid.*, p. 275), is "linked *with necessity* to the faith that the thing, as such, is nothing" (*ibid.*).

Nihilism, therefore, is being explicitly convinced that things become and this is based on being implicitly convinced that things are nothing. This latter conviction is hidden in nihilism's unconscious: "it is *Necessity* that the conviction that being is nothing [...] remains the 'unconscious' of nihilism" (*ibid.*, p. 280).

Hence, there is an unconscious of nihilism, which is essential to nihilism itself in two ways: because its content – "the belief that being is nothing" – is the essence of nihilism, and because nihilism can only exist because it is unaware of its essence, which hides in its unconscious. Nihilism can only dissolve once this unconscious essence is unveiled, i.e. removed from the darkness of the unconscious and exposed to the light of conscience. This because such belief is essentially contradictory, where the fundamental law of conscious thought is the principle of non-contradiction, which identifies and sanctions contradictions by amending them.

2. Severino's work can go beyond nihilism simply by unveiling its unconscious, by exposing its hidden essence to the light of awareness.

Once "the belief that being is nothing" has been unveiled and dissolved, the conviction that beings become has no basis and thus dissolves too. Therefore, it must be stated not only that all beings are something and not nothing, but also that they are not subject to becoming and thus are in themselves eternal. Everything that is, is eternal, even the most elusive of events, the tiniest of things, and all the "shades and shadows of things and of the mind" (*ibid.*, p. 63).

3. This statement, that may appear as the most paradoxical and absurd of all statements – how can the smallest of things, the most elusive of events like a gesture of the hand be eternal?! – in Severino's work acquires the status of undeniable truth.

The figure of the *élenchos*, which Aristotle had already used to demonstrate the undeniability of the principle of non-contradiction, is what makes it so, precisely an undeniable truth. Anyone seeking to deny the eternity of every being, i.e. its being firmly what it is, its being itself and not being able to become other than itself, should attribute the right to be

itself and not be able to become other than itself to that entity which is his or her own words, the words with which he or she precisely pronounces this negation. In this way, one would find oneself validating this firmly, hence *that* eternity, which one had intended to reject. That is, that everything is eternal is an undeniable truth inasmuch as it is also affirmed even by its own negation, for the attempt to deny it fails. The *élenchos* consists precisely in this, which – as can be seen – plays an essential role in Severino's work: the role of the undeniable foundation of what it states.

The unconscious of the *élenchos*

1. Pushing thought beyond nihilism, Severino's work thinks something had not been thought of before and would have appeared unthinkable: it pushes forward what had previously been the boundary of thought.

But is there something that has become visible from this new boundary, i.e. from the boundary of thought that his work has advanced? Hence, is there something that can become thinkable only thanks to his work but that, at the same time, pushes beyond it?

If Severino's work has pushed itself beyond nihilism by unveiling its unconscious, advancing beyond it will be possible if something unconscious will be identified in it too.

2. Now it seems to me that there is something unconscious in one of Severino's work key concepts: the fundamental figure of the *élenchos*.

This figure, as we have seen, consists in the undeniability of what is stated from the failure of the attempt to negate it. However, in order for any attempt of denying to fail, it must first exist. Only an intention that exists in a first moment and that becomes concrete with an act, can in a second moment fail. Furthermore, an intention destined for failure can progress to failure, and not stop in time, only because it is unconscious to be destined to this failure. That is, the attempt to deny the eternity of beings, can exist only because it is unaware that it is doomed to fail.

This implies that there is something unconscious in the *élenchos*' constitutive act, in the act of its formation (Pulli, 2022). In other words, if the negation of the eternity of beings was aware of turning into an affirmation, it would give up from the beginning on itself: not only it would not complete the act of constituting itself as a negation, but it would not even begin it. Hence, its attempt to deny, before and even more than failing,

would cease to exist. It is true that the failure of this negation consists in the fact that it cannot be such, but in order not to be such, it must first exist as what it believes to be such: as that which maintains its own truth in its own unconscious.

And, just as nihilism would not exist if there were not its unconscious, so the *élenchos* would not exist if there were not its unconscious.

Eternity and temporality

1. If the pushing of thought beyond nihilism, advanced by Severino's work, derives from the unveiling of unconscious of nihilism, what will derive from the unveiling of unconscious of the *élenchos'* constitutive act?

It appears to me that two opposing consequences derive from this. The first consequence is that the eternity of beings will no longer result an undeniable truth, given that it is the failure of the attempt to deny it that makes it undeniable, and the failure of this attempt presupposes that such an attempt has been made; where awareness of being doomed to fail would lead to its vanishing. If there is no the attempt to deny the eternity of beings, there cannot be its failure, and the eternity of beings, not being affirmed by the failure of its denial, will no longer be undeniable. This does not mean that the eternity of beings will be denied, but that it will have to coexist with the opposite affirmation of their temporality.

The second result that derives from the unveiling of the unconscious of the constitutive act of the *élenchos* is that the eternity of beings will be affirmed with more force. Indeed, the act of rejecting it would not only fail to do so, but it would not even seek to do so, and it would cease to exist as a denial attempt. The eternity of beings would thus be even more solidly protected from the attack of its denial: precisely because this attack, even more than failing, would not exist at all.

2. These two consequences – the coexistence of the affirmation of the eternity of beings with the opposite affirmation of their temporality, and the simultaneous acquisition of a greater force by the affirmation of eternity – both derive from the same element, which is the absence of any attempt to deny the eternity of beings (which in turn derives from the unveiling of the unconscious of the constitutive act of the *élenchos*).

Hence, they cannot exist without each other; they can only live together, only simultaneously and inseparably: the eternity of all being must co-

exist with the opposite affirmation of their temporality and at the same time is affirmed with greater force.

3. But how can eternity coexist with temporariness? It seems to me that this coexistence is what happens every time we truly succeed, with intensity and completely, to live what we live, every time that life does not appear to us as what escapes us. If what we live in a given moment had nothing temporary it would have no intensity, and it would have nothing absolute of its own, unique and unrepeatable. What intensity could one experience in a given morning, if it could be experienced in any circumstance, instead of just in that determinate unrepeatable, irreplaceable circumstance in which it has been lived?! What is the meaning of living now what could be experienced at any moment? And how could that particular experience be fully, exclusively what it is, if it were only one of infinite, equal experiences?!

But if this temporality were to give itself on its own, the threatening shadow of nullification would weigh on everything we live: "All that he would otherwise have loved and admired seemed to him to be shorn of its worth by the transience which was its doom", observes Freud, referring to "a young but already famous poet", in the short, intense essay *On Transience* (Freud, 1915b, p. 305). If we lived everything we live only in an elusive and anguished way, we could not equally say that we are able to live it fully and completely.

Only when something is experienced together as eternal and as temporary can escape from the shadowy cone of the threat of nullification and at the same time enter the cone of light, in the intensity of its uniqueness, thus acquiring a full, double splendor.

4. But how can this coexistence of eternity and temporality be at the same time an affirmation of eternity with greater force?

It seems to me that such a question must be answered simply: by virtue of its desirability, where the desirability of something implies its lack. Who "desires, desires what is lacks, or does not desire if it does not lack", Socrates says in Plato's *Symposium* (Plato, 1997b, 200 b, p. 482).

Therefore, the desirability of eternity implies temporality. Now it is just the desirability of eternity that makes it possible to affirm eternity with greater force: because it affirms its value. By virtue of its desirability, thus of its coexistence with temporality, eternity is not affirmed alone as a neu-

tral and obvious fact, but together with precisely what gives it its value: hence, in the most effective and complete way.

The absence of contradiction of the unconscious

1. Among the many possible objections to this discourse that can be made, and which I myself would make, the most compelling one seems to me the following: admitting the coexistence of eternity and temporality implies making two mutually exclusive affirmations at the same time – beings are eternal and beings are temporary – thus, this is contradictory.

But this coexistence appears as what makes livable what is livable. Is it then a contradiction that must be admitted in order to be able to account for the vitality of life? I prefer to argue that the coexistence of eternity and temporality, precisely inasmuch as it is vital, *is not* a contradiction, it only *seems to be* so. And it seems to be so for a limit of our gaze, for a limit of our thinking. Thus, we shall return to the problem from which we had started: to the work of Severino who, by pushing beyond the entire tradition of Western philosophy that preceded it, has pushed forward the boundary of thought, and the possibility of pushing thought even beyond this new border. That is, can we configure a way of being of thought, in virtue of which admitting and denying eternity, in its *appearing* as a contradiction, would *not result* a contradiction?

2. I would like to articulate the answer to this question in two stages. Firstly, I shall try to show how there is an area in which something can appear contradictory without being so: the area of apparent contradiction. Secondly, I shall try to show how the coexistence of eternity and temporariness can fall within this area.

That the area of apparent contradiction exists seems to me to be attested above all by a discovery made by Freud. A discovery that he did not consider further in any way, and which he did not even identify as such, so that in his same work, and even more so after Freud, it remained completely misunderstood. It is the absence of contradiction of the unconscious.

3. In a famous passage, Freud states that in the system unconscious "the logical laws of thought do not apply [...], and this is true above all of the law of contradiction" (1932, p. 73). Previously, he had stated that the contradiction is absent in the system unconscious; not the principle of non-

contradiction, which reveals the contradiction when it exists, but the contradiction itself: "exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process, [...] [etc.], are the characteristics which expect to find in processes belonging to the system *Ucs.* [unconscious]" (1915a, p. 187). He made no distinction at all between the absence of contradiction and the absence of the principle of non-contradiction, so that the absence of the principle of non-contradiction in the unconscious has appeared as a specification of the absence of contradiction of the unconscious previously mentioned and it was thus universally understood.

However, the absence of contradiction in a system does not necessarily imply the absence of the principle of non-contradiction in it. Contradiction, indeed, may be absent in a system not only because the principle capable of detecting and sanctioning it is absent, but also simply because it is not present in that system. And it is possible that this is not present not because the contradiction is allowed to exist unchallenged, but rather because the need to oppose contradiction is so pervasively active to prevent the coming into being of contradiction.

If no fines are imposed for traffic offenses in a small town over a given period of time, this could be because, for example, the new traffic police commander is an extremely good-natured person who is on the verge of failing to fulfill his duties and has extended this good-naturedness to his colleagues. In short, it is possible that traffic violations were not identified and sanctioned. But, the fines may not have been issued because all citizens, possibly as a result of an effective road education campaign, were very careful to follow the traffic law. Aside this metaphor, in the first case, an infringement of that fundamental rule, not of the traffic law but of thought, that is the principle of non-contradiction, existed but was not identified and sanctioned, whereas in the second case no such infringement ever existed. The principle of non-contradiction was absent in the first case, and the contradiction itself was absent in the second case. Therefore, the absence of contradiction of the unconscious is not the same as the absence of the principle of non-contradiction: it is a specific and deeper characteristic of the unconscious.

But underlining its difference from the absence of the principle of non-contradiction is not yet sufficient to define the absence of contradiction of the unconscious. To be fully identified and defined, this latter must be distinguished not only from the unconscious absence of the principle of non-contradiction but also from the absence of contradiction of conscious thought. Otherwise, it could not be that feature of the system unconscious

that it is, that trait that distinguishes such system from conscious thought that it is. Contradiction is, in fact, absent even in conscious thought: a correctly formulated conscious thought is such in that it is precisely free of contradictions. To fully define and individuate the absence of contradiction of the unconscious, and to reveal it in its complete specificity, it is thus also necessary to differentiate it from the absence of contradiction in the consciousness.

Now, to differentiate it from the absence of contradiction in the consciousness, the absence of contradiction of the unconscious must be understood as a non-contradictory result of the same elements that appear as such in conscious thought. Not because the principle that reveals the contradiction is missing, but because the contradiction does not exist at all. The absence of contradiction of the unconscious must be understood as a harmonious coexistence of what in conscious thought would be contradictory opposed. Two or more elements that in conscious thought are incompatible, in the system unconscious would have found a way to coexist.

Now, if there is a psychic area, that of the deepest unconscious where this occurs, it means that it seeks refuge in this area – as if to avoid a misunderstanding – something that appears contradictory to conscious thought without being in itself so. This area contains what in itself is not contradictory, although it may appear so, even if it appears so to conscious thinking.

4. If true, this means that conscious thought, by communicating with this area, has the possibility to go beyond itself, to push its boundaries further forward.

In this case, it is the inverse of what occurs as a result of the other characteristic of the unconscious, the absence of the principle of non-contradiction. By virtue of the absence of the principle of non-contradiction, it is possible that something contradictory in itself may seek refuge in the unconscious, taking advantage of the circumstance that, since the principle of non-contradiction is absent, the contradiction is not detected and sanctioned; and this is what happens to the essence of nihilism, for which, by contradiction, beings are nothing. In that case, unveiling the unconscious content, exposing it to the light of consciousness, implies that it dissolves. In that case, a path from the unconscious to consciousness is determined, a path in which something unconscious moves towards the way of being of consciousness. By virtue of the absence of contradiction of the unconscious, something that is not contradictory in and of itself takes refuge in

the place where this characteristic is understood rather than being misunderstood. Thus, exposing this content to the light of consciousness may result in its dissolution, but only when conscious thought may not seize the opportunity to evolve, to push itself beyond its boundaries. In this case, a path from consciousness to the unconscious is determined, a path in which something conscious goes towards the way of being of the unconscious.

5. But how can there be anything that is not contradictory if it appears to be so? And how can it appear contradictory, if it is not so?

This question, it seems to me, can be answered if we think further about the absence of contradiction of the unconscious. To be more specific than how I have been so far, we must understand the absence of contradiction of the unconscious not simply as the not being contradictory of something but as the having nothing to do with contradiction at all. Freud has said something analogous about another characteristic of the system unconscious: the absence of time. After noting that "unconscious mental processes are in themselves '*timeless*' " (1920, p. 28), he immediately adds that "the idea of time cannot be applied to them" (*ibid.*). Because the characteristics of the unconscious are linked – given that they form a system – we must think likewise about the absence of contradiction: if the absence of time is defined as the inability to apply the representation of time, the absence of contradiction must be defined as the inability to apply the concept of contradiction. This because being contradictory and not being contradictory both derive from the application of the concept of contradiction. This means that the absence of contradiction of the unconscious refers to something that is neither contradictory nor non-contradictory but rather exists outside of the concept of contradiction.

Now, that the absence of contradiction *is not* contradictory is obvious because it results from its definition. And this means that it follows the principle of non-contradiction. What does it mean instead that the absence of contradiction is not even non-contradictory? It means that it is not subjected to the principle of non-contradiction. Yet, this not being subjected to the principle of non-contradiction does not mean that it violates it, otherwise, it would not be absence, but presence of contradiction. What can it ever be – then – this not being subjected to the principle of non-contradiction that yet is not violating it?

It is its condition of possibility. There may be, so to say, couples of opposite statements that do not respond to the principle of non-contradic-

tion only because they constitute the condition of its possibility. Thus, it is true that they do not respond to the principle of non-contradiction, and that is why they appear contradictory, but it is not true that they are contradictory. They do not respond to the principle of non-contradiction, i.e. they are not submitted to its law, because they are what establishes it.

6. But what can all this mean in practice? What could be an example of this not being subject to the principle of non-contradiction which is not a violation of it because it is what establishes it?

It seems to me that the most stringent example, a sort of prototype of the apparent contradictions, is the one constituted by the notion of the border. To show this, I would start with what the so-called paraconsistent logics, and in particular dialetheism, defines as «true contradictions», where my intent is precisely to show that such «true contradictions» are not true contradictions but only appear so. By «true contradiction», also called «dialetheia», one means the pair of opposite statements that are both true. In his short essay *What is so bad about contradiction?*, Graham Priest, an eminent figure in dialetheism, uses the example of threshold, thus the border in space: "I walk out of the room: for an instant, I am symmetrically poised, one foot in, one foot out [...]. Am I in or out the room?" (Priest, 1998, p. 417). The answer he gives, contradictory but true, is: "I am both in and not in" (*ibid.*). Or, he adds, one could also say: «neither in nor not in" (*ibid.*).

He then uses the example of border in time: "Maybe Socrates *is* both sitting and not sitting sometimes: at the instant, he rises" (*ibid.*, p. 416). In this regard, Francesco Berto observes: "the notion [of dialetheia] could also be implicated in our simple and basic ability to recognize the border [...] between one thing and another" (Berto, 2007, p. 59, my tr.).

Now, it seems to me that dialetheiaessentially refers to boundaries. But the boundary between two things is what allows each thing to be what it is and only that, i. e. not to violate the principle of non-contradiction. The boundary between being seated and being standing is what allows us to say that Socrates is seated when he is seated and that he is standing when he is standing. That is, to avoid the contradiction of saying that he is also standing when he is sitting and is also sitting when he is standing. Likewise, only insofar as there is a boundary between a tree and what surrounds it, the tree cannot be what surrounds it; and it can, not contradictorily, be only itself. In short, borders are what allows the affirmation that each thing is what it is and is nothing other than what it is, that is the principle of non-contradiction.

In this case, therefore, we see how opposite statements may not respond to the principle of non-contradiction only insofar as they constitute the condition of its possibility, only insofar as they establish it. They seem contradictory insofar as they do not respond to the principle of non-contradiction; and they are non contradictory insofar as they are what establishes it.

7. If the essential characteristic of apparent contradictions is that of constituting the condition of the possibility of the principle of non-contradiction, the coexistence of eternity and temporality seems to possess it. Socrates being seated and not seated at the moment he gets up, which is what allows us to avoid the contradiction of declaring him standing when he is seated and sitting when he is standing, is in fact a coming together, at the same time, of eternity and temporariness. At that moment he as being seated, he is still seated; his being seated has not become subject to becoming. Instead, as he is not seated, he is already not seated, his being not seated has become subject to becoming. Thus, in that moment, his being seated has resulted at the same time as subject and not subject to becoming, temporary and not-temporary: which means temporary and eternal.

What I mean may perhaps be clearer if we refer directly to the prototype of Priest's example, to the instant being out of time which Plato speaks about in *Parmenides*: "this queer creature, the instant, lurks between motion and rest – being in no time at all – and to it and from it the moving thing changes to resting and the resting thing changes to moving" (1997, 156 d-e, p. 388). And if we refer at the same time to the unconscious being timeless of which Freud speaks ("unconscious mental processes are in themselves '*timeless*'" [1920, p. 28]). In the unconscious, and not by chance, time is absent in the same way that contradiction is absent. But what does it mean to be timeless?

It means that it is absent what puts an end to things: if there is no time, there is no ending of things in time, so everything is eternal. But that time is absent also means, at the same time, that it is absent what allows things to continue. As is the case when you tell someone, who may be making the last corrections to a paper to be delivered: "I'm sorry, there is no more time". This means that the deepest unconscious is the area in which Socrates' way of being when he gets up always applies: the coexistence of eternity and temporariness.

8. Thus, even of such coexistence of eternity and temporality, even when it is understood in the broadest and most general sense, can be said

that is not subject to the principle of non-contradiction since it constitutes the condition of its possibility.

As we have seen, this coexistence makes life *livable* by giving eternity and temporality their own value: it gives eternity the value of letting things escape from the shadow of the threat of annihilation, and it gives temporality the value of situating things within the cone of light of its intensity. Thus, that coexistence restores life to itself, to being itself and not other than itself, therefore it removes life from the contradiction of not being itself. It is the condition that allows *life* to avoid the contradiction of not being itself. Thus, that coexistence is not subject to the principle of non-contradiction not inasmuch as it violates it but inasmuch as it establishes it. By making life *livable*, this coexistence of eternity and temporality restores life to its fullness, to the possibility of being completely – not contradictorily – itself.

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Phenomenology without Presuppositions.
The Appearing of Being in Emanuele Severino's
The Originary Structure

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The short contribution aims to redefine Severino's phenomenology in the light of Giovanni Gentile's actualism, interpreted as a repetition of Plato's «parricide», to be placed side by side with Severino's, in the direction of a more concrete and more authentic truth of being. In the following pages it is suggested that actualism has contributed, not without some ambiguity and hesitation, to lead the philosophical discourse on the path that *The Originary Structure* has undertaken with an unprecedented awareness of what is at stake.

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1. *Premise*

The topic I wish to address, if only in a summary way, is related to the philosophical context in which Emanuele Severino came to develop the notion of originary structure he was to present in the work bearing this title. More specifically, I aim to redefine Severino's phenomenology in light of Giovanni Gentile's actualism, interpreted as a repetition of Plato's "parricide", to be viewed alongside Severino's one, in the direction of a more concrete and more authentic truth of being. In other words, I wish to argue that actualism contributed – not without some ambiguity and hesitation – to leading philosophical discourse onto the path that *The Originary Structure* took with an unprecedented awareness of what was at stake. I will therefore explore some less obvious steps along the itinerary traced in those pages – not without some ambiguity and hesitation, as I just stated: the kind of ambiguity and hesitation that, through a return to Parmenides, enabled (or indeed forced) Severino to turn to Gentile as the spearhead of Western nihilism.

The Gentilean setting of Severino's first metaphysical project, developed within Bontadini's school, can hardly be underestimated. Certainly, the "originally theorematic nature of metaphysics" celebrated by Severino – as the belonging of metaphysics to the structure of immediacy (whereby the "metaphysical journey" is not made starting from an initial withdrawal to a preliminary "level of rest", but is rather "made originally) – does not represent only the outcome of the "elimination of naturalistic realism" caused by the contemporary "end of the philosophy of knowing"; nor is it "to be understood as the assignment to that elimination of some metaphysical significance" of an immanentist sort (Severino, 1981, p. 109). Nevertheless, it is also important to bear in mind that it was precisely Gentile's *System of Logic* – which explores "the fundamental law" of being (identity, non-contradiction, the excluded middle) – that suggested to Severino what meaning he should assign to the originary presence of be-

ing: "the overcoming of the abstract immediacy of any pure being in itself" (Severino, 1981, p. 172).

It is worth noting that while this circumstance links *The Originary Structure* to the development of Gentile's *System*, it also marks the former's distance from the latter: in Gentile's work, this overcoming of the abstract is still something abstract, or proves to be conceived in abstract terms, until it is translated into that actuality whose light envelops all (present, past, and future) things *here and now*. *The Originary Structure* parted ways with Gentile precisely because Severino – a supporter of Bontadini's neoclassical metaphysics – saw this point as marking the crucial break between actualism and the philosophical tradition. Gentile had dwelled on the related inertia of abstraction in the belief that it might open the door to metaempirical inference of the theological sort, when in fact it ought to have closed this door for good. Severino had immediately realised this, highlighting the impossibility of keeping the two moments in Gentile's approach separate. Not least through is preference for Heidegger over Gentile, Severino had adopted (and corrected) Bontadini's strategy, aimed at 'domesticating' actualism. In Gentile view, *the abstract*, i.e. thought being, without ever going beyond the act of thinking, ultimately coincided with the concreteness of pure experience, impossible to transcend and dominated by that being *which is not defective*. The Hegelian changeable and finite, subject to the alternation of beginning and ending, needed to be resolved into the immutable and infinite witnessed by the actual manifestation of the world, in which nothing begins or ends. This dialectical beginning therefore suggested the complete tracing of the first moment back to the second one, destined to give it concrete form. In Hegelian fashion, it assigned the second moment the role of the genuine first one, thereby pushing the whole argument away from tradition and giving it a disconcertingly and unexpectedly new direction. I would argue that it was precisely Severino who spelled out this new direction, by abandoning metaphysical transcendence – in the wake of Gentile's concreteness – while nonetheless resisting actualism and its persistent and ultimately coherent reference to the Platonic-Aristotelian notion of the becoming of being.

Now, not only is it impossible to overlook the setting of *The Originary Structure* without missing certain aspects of its theoretical framework, but it is quite clear that both perspectives, insofar as they traced being back to the actuality of thinking, pursued – in keeping with the Socratic-Cartesian model – a solution that would radically clear the field from all presuppositions: from the point of view of content, originally swallowed up by the

positing (or presence) of being; and from the point of view of form, originally turned into the consistency of non-contradictory content. In this regard, Gentile had invoked "absolute formalism" and taken being to indicate "the positive insofar as it is posited" (Gentile, 1987, p. 232); consequently – and I am here quoting from *System of Logic* (Gentile, 1940, pp. 182-183) – the positive may be said to be what it is (an "object", Gentile writes) insofar as "the negation and consequent contradiction, which is negated, are bound to be of the same object" which is freed from it. *In being*, the object "also denies and erases the absence of being itself when it does not reflect itself and identify with itself." In such a way, the overcoming of realism found its most essential outcome, which undermined any attempt to keep being – even if only for an instant – beyond the gaze opened up by the I. By evoking the concrete identity of being, actualism thus bound together in a originary bond the two branches of philosophical discourse, the phenomenological and the logical, which were destined to meet in the *same* object, identified as the actual and inescapable imposition of actuality – logic and phenomenology, phenomenology and logic.

2. *Phenomenology and logic*

Upon closer scrutiny, in *The Originary Structure* the distinction between the two *moments*, the phenomenological and the logical, undoubtedly points to the *logic* they are destined to share. Logic is indeed the logic of being, but being is that being which appears and which, in appearing, extinguishes every other excess. In other words, the phenomenological weave clearly points to the differing of ontological consistency, yet on the basis of the determination which manifests itself. By virtue of the latter, attention must now be drawn to the "being-for-something-else" of being, which is to say – but here it would be necessary to critically explore the Aristotelian-Husserlian concept of intentionality – to that "*fieri aliud*" which "simply coincides with letting the other thing (being, reality) appear" (Severino, 1981, p. 172). Being *is* by manifesting itself; *hence*, by identifying itself, it comes to differ from itself: this is the essential indication that Severino provides in relation to the originary manifestation of determinations.

In this respect, *The Originary Structure* follows the path outlined by Plato, along which one comes across *determination*, which differs from *being* without ever plunging into *nothingness*. "The term 'being' indicates a

synthesis […] between the meaning 'being' (*formal being*) and the meanings constituted by *determinations*, which – indeed – *are*" (Severino, 1981, p. 144). They *are* – I would add – insofar as they appear, without appearing being added to or removed from the *determination* that comes to light and withdraws from the light, while remaining in the light. Besides, it is evident that "as different from 'Being'", determinations "are that 'Not-being' of which it must now be affirmed that it 'is'" (Severino, 2016, p. 155), since they primarily coincide with those determinations that appear. This being the case, the connection between being and non-being, which Plato significantly evokes through the word *epallaxis* (*Soph.*, 240c4), translates into that *mutual alteration* which, without affecting the ontological resource, only points to the manifesting itself of originary manifested being.

Now, to be more precise, the argument which Severino reaches, supported by Gentile, alludes to a kind of being which *becomes null* in the determination which appears, while the determination *becomes entified*, disappearing from the stage. While – to put it with Bontadini – appearing disappears into being (which appears), it must also be added that being becomes null in appearing (the appearing of being). The circle – to put it with Rosmini, this time – is a solid one: nothing is left over or discarded; nothing exceeds that being which appears. We may also note, therefore, that through his perspective Severino, who in a way follows Gentile's formulations, traces nothingness back to the 'other than oneself' (for *everything* which is, is the 'other' of an 'other') that each entity, in existing, leaves outside itself. In other words, if the totality of entities alludes to the nothingness that every entity leaves outside itself, this is precisely because, in existing and thereby negating nothingness, each of them reveals the non-being of the other, as though against the light (Severino was later to evoke the image of a 'trace'). This is not only the absolute non-being to which Plato bids farewell in the *Sophist*; it is not only non-being as determinate being, unaware of nothingness; rather, it is the unique synthesis of the two within the everlasting horizon of transcendental appearing: nothingness is that which every determination leaves outside itself, even through those determinations which, *here and now*, it is not. So while it is evident that *The Originary Structure* is permeated by a spirit which the letter of the text – influenced by neoclassical formulas – is not yet capable of deciphering, it seems quite possible that Gentile's approach crucially contributed to shattering the metaphysical shell of Severino's early thesis.

Within this picture, the stratification of (transcendental and empirical) appearing which is repeatedly invoked in *The Originary Structure*, by

drawing upon Gentile's vocabulary, enables the coming and going of determinations, bearing witness to the "quiet becoming" of being. In the late 1960s, Severino (Severino, 2020, p. 175) continued to interpret this as "the secret of the Hegelian concept of becoming", where being and nothingness share this role in turns. However, it must be added and stressed once more that the Hegelian secret is also – and especially – the Platonic secret entrusted to the pages of the *Sophist*. It was a matter of finally deciphering that "secret of philosophy" which Gentile (Gentile, 1940, p. 98) had identified with the Platonic formula of the "unity of being and non-being", by inviting Western thought to finally grasp "becoming" as the whole of being, rather than as the unfolding of a disquiet destined to plunge into a quiet result – the outcome and starting point of that ideal dialectic exposed to the inrush of the negative. It is not the case that everything becomes through the alternation of being and nothingness, but rather that *the whole* becomes, coming into (and at the same time withdrawing from) the light that shines on its determinations *here and now*. "Not being that reveals itself, but being that consists precisely in its revealing", is how Gentile put it (Gentile, 1942, p. 166).

3. *Against the logic of anticipation*

The presupposition for appearing, therefore, is not being, but that being which appears (whose appearing is appearing). The most mature fruit of philosophical idealism thus fell on the fertile soil of the originary structure, which in its own way preserved it, turning it into a sprout that pointed to a dimension that included the coming and going of existent determinations, yet without anticipating it. Severino's approach therefore appears to be essentially anti-metaphysical, if metaphysics takes it upon itself to point to being as an anticipation of the world. In this respect, the appearing of being is not rooted in a foundation destined to heal the ontological *wound* inflicted upon determinations of the world; rather, being rootless, it consists in the infinite appearing of being which appears and disappears. Besides – as Severino aptly clarified – the logic of anticipation is the logic of nihilism, according to which being, while seeking a safe refuge, ultimately exposes itself to nothingness and yields to it, altering itself. The logic in question, despite countless reassurances to the contrary, is incapable of preventing nothingness from bursting upon the stage of being, even when

it narrows down the gap between the two, without ever being able to bridge it. After all, is it not from nothingness that being's obedience to the law which governs it springs, by guarding its development and breaking free from the latter (without being ever simply coinciding with this law which governs it)?

When we instead look at the act of thinking, we see that the appearing of being does not ensure that break in ontological continuity which – as Gentile suggests – prevents the circle of experience from having any consistency. Established by the immutable, determination is destined to extinguish itself, by giving back to the immutable that being which determinations have never really possessed. In this regard, Gentile insightfully notes that, in its awareness of the contradiction which traditional philosophical discourse runs into, philosophical realism – realism being the essence of philosophy, in his view – gradually provides experience with an anticipation of itself, thereby providing the world with an anticipation of itself (George Berkeley clearly took this direction). The outcome is baffling: on the one hand, insofar as it differs from the anticipation of itself, experience does not differ from it and from nothingness; therefore, if it is to be genuinely conceived of, it cannot in any way be subtracted. On the other hand, insofar as it differs from experience, anticipation ceases to anticipate it and forever abandons the task which it cannot avoid.

The originary structure is therefore intended to make room for the presence of an unprecedented "difference", such as to render being precisely "'different from itself'", because this "diversity is not established between two positives, each of which lacks something which the other possesses", but rather between being (identical to thought) and the determination which bears witness to it, by coming to light. In other words, it was necessary for Severino to assign being a 'coming to light' free of any presuppositions that might govern its development. Infinite appearing, which according to Severino encompassed the totality of manifest determinations, did not anticipate (or was proceeding not to anticipate) the finite appearing that bore witness to its incessant alternation: it was this appearing, *without* being it. Severino spoke of "ontological difference", pointing to what Heidegger – through his famous formula – had instead concealed, slipping back into that logic from which he had sought to radically distance himself.

4. *Ex se oritur*

As it folds back – so to speak – onto the determination which ventures into the finite circle of appearing, Severino's being does not come from something else, but rather *from itself*, although it never lingers on the threshold of appearing, paradoxically awaiting its turn to make an entrance on stage. In this respect, *The Originary Structure* establishes a horizon within which, bearing all due distinctions in mind, there is no longer room for anything except the venturing of being into the finite circle of appearing. In coming to light, being comes from being itself which, in differing, announces its presence in the determination which is to manifest itself. Before being, then, there is only being; but this 'before' (*being*) is, clearly, only the 'before' of the 'after' (the *determination*), with no ontological leaps or gaps. As there is no being apart from the determined being which arrives *in* and departs *from* that circle, we realise that the actual appearing of being, in its unfolding, bears witness to the nullity of all its previous consistencies.

Severino therefore follows in Gentile's footsteps, yet ultimately turns his back on him, in the belief that the previous nullity of being, evoked by actualism, still alludes to some origin (and therefore to an ontological fluctuation on the Platonic sort). But where does Gentile's act originate from (if it indeed originates from anything)? "Eternal, it cannot be preceded by anything; but [precisely] insofar as act coincides with becoming, it is never consumed," Gentile writes (Gentile, 1942, p. 227). What this means is: never *made*, being is never annihilated, if not through the determination, which – without entifying it – appears (and to the degree that this determination appears). Besides, the appearing of being evoked by Severino is also, and especially, the *annihilation of nothingness*, which is what the determination consists in as, being exposed to the *before* and *after*, it is in each case encompassed within the finite circle of the originary structure. The determination, which carves out a portion of the whole for itself, unaware of the eternal constellation destined to portray its genuine features, is indeed *nothing*; therefore, by lingering within itself, *nothingness* annihilates itself and entifies itself, expected by something else – precisely and exclusively because everything appears, *while* something appears and disappears. In this respect, as there is no nothingness from which being originates by entifying itself, since there is only being that annihilates itself by manifesting itself, or appearing that vanishes by being, the actual appearing of being does not entify the nothingness destined to precede it; rather,

it confirms its nullity (visible – from the reverse perspective – in determinations, which, in arriving and departing, bear witness to the concealment of everything they are not).

The (phenomenological, ontological or theological?) difference made explicit by the reference of finite appearing to infinite appearing enables us to access being as that which – to quote Gentile again (Gentile, 1942, p. 81) – *ex se oritur* and not *ex facto*. The brocard recalled by the Sicilian philosopher refers to *ius* as that justice which imposes itself independently, encompassing the freedom of the eternal. Certainly, this is "becoming" – as suggested by Hegel, whose portrayal of the inextinguishable Gentile draws upon – but it is becoming as *autoktisis*. This philosophical concept, one of the most notable outcomes of Western philosophy, equates *positing* with *what is posited*, yet without blurring the two. It can thus point to the features of a positive, whereby it is *novelty without facts* or the *world without things* that proves dominant on the contemporary philosophical stage. To repeat: "Not being [fact, thing, datum] that reveals itself, but being that consists precisely in its revealing" – by diverging from itself. Actual becoming, therefore, as the appearing of being (which appears and disappears) does not plunge into the quiet screen of the world, giving rise to the spatio-temporal punctuality in which Western nihilism lies. What is quiet is rather the disquiet itself: the passing of an eternally past being from itself to itself, in the fulness of a gesture which, by making the originary spectacle multifaceted, exposes itself to the gaze of a spectator who identifies with it *once and for all*.

The Originary Structure announced and outlined this theoretical space, awaiting the hand – the hand of Necessity – capable of bringing out its shapes and colours. Besides, by taking a step forward, after Parmenides, yet without following Plato, it was not at all a matter of bidding farewell to becoming, which actualism had emphasised in its own particular way, but rather of safeguarding it for the first time. As Severino put it, "only if *everything* is eternal, is becoming possible" (Severino, 2007, p. 18).

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The Discussion between Leonardo Messinese and Emanuele Severino in View of a Rigorousization of Classical Metaphysics

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This essay focusses on the proposal for the rigorousization of classical metaphysics that has been put forward by Leonardo Messinese, presenting his critical dialogue with Emanuele Severino concerning the originary truth of the being and its implications for the future of entities. The purpose of this paper is to solicit the continuation of the dialogue between Messinese and Severino, after having highlighted the reasons that lead Messinese to consider only partially convincing the solution provided by Severino about the complete understanding of the «variation» of the experience, which led him to re-propose the «Principle of creation».

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Premise

In this essay I wish to present the essential features of a proposal of rigorousization of classical metaphysics carried out by Leonardo Messinese, whose originality consists in making use, in many respects, of what Emanuele Severino claims regarding the truth of being although Messinese takes a different path compared to Severino's thought about the final outcomes of its philosophical production.

Later on I will proceed to enucleate the essential terms of the confrontation between the two philosophers, reporting the «reasons» of the agreement and of the disagreement which still apply today.

By doing so, given the relevance of the matter being discussed, I wish to encourage the continuation of the debate; after having highlighted the reasons that lead Messinese to regard the solution provided by Severino about the complete understanding of the «variation» of the experience, which led him to re-propose the «Principle of creation» as a more concrete intellectual understanding as only partially convincing.

Leonardo Messinese's proposal

The philosophical intent of Leonardo Messinese is a continuation of the metaphysical rigorousization implemented by Gustavo Bontadini – which invited his students and friends to provide "help to further perfect short discourse" (Bontadini, 1996, p. 3) – and on its further clarification and specification, carried out mainly on the basis of Severino's teaching, which Messinese has always considered as an indispensable point of reference to achieve the goals he pursued.

The main work where Messinese confronts Severino's thought, and in particular *La struttura originaria*, is called *L'apparire del mondo* and was published in 2008. In this core text he wishes to enhance the contribution offered by Severino regarding the rigorousization of classical metaphysics.

It is necessary to remember that the speculative itinerary of *La struttura originaria* ends with a chapter entitled «The originary metaphysics», of which I will here mention the fundamental theses. In that work the unchanging being acquires the traits of the Creator, for which *the becoming wholeness* is: affirmation that expresses the ontological dependence of the becoming and the immutable whole. Moreover, the author claims that the becoming wholeness does not necessarily belong to the immutable being, but the fact that this is a decision of the immutable, with the result that the freedom of the creative act is also affirmed. More precisely, as Messinese indicates, although in this fundamental passage the *term* «creation» is not used even if its *res* is. The immutable whole is what positively poses, what makes the becoming reality true by willing it freely, deciding precisely that it shall be.

This is the originary metaphysics of Severino that Messinese intends to enhance by keeping always in focus, and partly accepting, the «self-corrections» that Severino has made to his discourse, especially in *Ritornare a Parmenide* and in the related *Poscritto* (cfr. Severino, 2016, Part one). He himself specified it in the opening pages of *L'apparire del mondo*, a text that "consists in the attempt to re-read the metaphysical speculation of the early Severino in the context of the 'later' Severino, but with the theoretical intent to valorise the originary *intentio metaphisica*" (Messinese, 2008, pp. 21-22) of Severino's philosophical discourse, showing "the possibility of benefiting, albeit in a different way, of *both* the phases of Severino's thought in order to offer a contribution to the rigorousization of classical metaphysics" (Messinese, 2008, p. 24).

Returning now to the development of the thought of the «later» Severino, it is precisely the *Poscritto* to *Ritornare a Parmenide* that plays a role of great importance: it is here that Severino supports the non-phenomenological evidence of becoming in the ontological sense, which he affirmed previously until *Ritornare a Parmenide* included: experience does not testify to the production/cancellation of entities but only their appearance/disappearance, and this must also be said of their appearance.

In *L'apparire del mondo*, Messinese welcomes the outcome of the *Poscritto* to *Ritornare a Parmenide* related to phenomenological immediacy, but it is not for this reason that he believes it is no longer necessary to mediate experience at the metaphysical level as it might seem because of the elimination of the opposition between experience and logo, which for Bontadini constituted the «springboard» to affirm the transcendence of the absolute. Indeed, it is precisely this acquisition that allows a better re-

covery of the metaphysical discourse. Therefore, Messinese does not put itself «somewhere in between» the «creationist» approach of Bontadini and the «non-creationist» one of the later Severino but, within a speculative framework that in its result converges with that of Bontadini, believes that some traits of Severino's thought allow us to propose again the creationist metaphysics on a step of higher speculative rigour.

The becoming attested by experience, therefore, should no longer be understood in an ontological sense; this would cause metaphysics to fall into criticism moved by the later Severino to metaphysics in its entire historical path, so this would essentially be «physics».

On this point Severino believes that the thesis of the «seriousness of history» of progress put forth by Giovanni Gentile, which involves the «destruction of the immutable» possesses a greater coherence – but not a greater truth. This brings along with it the rejection of all metaphysics that reaches the affirmation of the immutable as the raison d'être of becoming in the ontological sense (Severino, 1978, pp. 121 and following). Once the becoming has been understood as the «oscillation» of the entities between being and non-being, there cannot be any immutable existence (Severino, 1980, pp. 47-48).

Messinese (2013), instead, claims that

> this critical outcome towards philosophical theology [...] is not necessary when [...] one affirms that the becoming of things attested by experience should not be understood as coming from nothing and return to the nothingness of the *being* of the entities (p. 172).

So on the one hand the non-nihilistic conception of becoming understood as *variation* is not in conflict with the possibility of metaphysical inference; at the same time, however, this «change» – according to Messinese – must also be justified. In other words, he underlines "the need to not leave the manifestation of being, which is 'processual', to its simple dimension of phenomenological attestation, but also to assume it in the sphere of the logo and, in this sense, to establish it, to show the '*ratio*' essendi in a determined way" (Messinese, 2014, p. 49).

I would like to point out the advantage of Messinese's position compared to that of Bontadini, which precisely is its not violating the logo, even as regards the simple «abstract consideration» of the phenomenological becoming. If this were to happen, the road to the inevitable collapse of the immutable would reopen. In a particularly eloquent passage, Messinese (2014) states that:

It is good to underline, in particular, that becoming here is not the-oretically exploited as 'ontological', becoming so that it, on one side, would need to be freed from the contradiction that, *sibi permissus*, would belong to him (this is Bontadini's position); but then, on the other hand, it would remain subject to criticism that was raised by Severino (p. 49).

It is Messinese (2014) himself, on the other hand, to remark how

one of the recurring themes in my critical dialogue with Severino, in relation to the 'originary structure', concerns the exhibition of the raison d'être of the totality of the experience, that is the Unity of the Experience (in the words of Bontadini) or of the totality of the F-immediacy (in the words of Severino) (p. 43).

It is also significant to point out that another contemporary thinker, Gennaro Sasso, who belongs to a philosophical context that is very different from that of Messinese, asks a similar question to Severino. Sasso (2010) notes:

Should we wonder why the being, of which we, in an incontro-vertible way say that it is eternal, and therefore non-becoming, be-comes manifest in the sign of partiality and processualness, the an-swer could certainly not be sought in the immutability and eternity which, taken and considered as they are, can only explain, give rea-son of themselves, and not of their opposite: however, it cannot be sought in the appearance that, by the force of the evidence itself, of-fers only the facts of the processualness but not its reason (p. 155).

Messinese also claims, as does Gennaro Sasso, that what remains to be explained, and which leaves room for the inference of the *transcendence* of the Absolute, is precisely *the fact* of the variation of experience, which does not form a perfect equation with the same being as it affirms at the level of logical immediacy: so the true metaphysical question for Messinese (2012) is "Why the *entities* (multiplicity and becoming) and not just the being (= Being)?" (p. 141). It is the variation of experience, inclusive of the multiplicity of entities, the «unexpected» of the thought which affirms the original truth of being and which, therefore, demands to be justified: what Messinese emphasizes is that we need to explain in a more determined way the «variation» of appearing.

The solution proposed by Messinese that aims to a more concrete insight into the multiplicity and variation attested empirically refers to creation. He therefore finds, in the Principle of Creation, considered as the most concrete determination of the Principle of Parmenides, the answer to the problem of the full understanding of the experience's taking upon itself the quality of being: the being of the experience that appears variant and manifold implies the Being (with a capital «B»).

Creation, however, does not take on the nihilistic aspect that Severino perceived in it, understood as the making of the world by God, which draws the entities from their non-being, but rather makes it possible to give a concrete explanation of the «not» that the entities of the experience implicate with respect of the being's fullness, that is of the inequality between the totality of being and the totality of appearing. The metaphysical integration of experience is achieved precisely with the introduction of the Creator God as a more complete justification of the experience's being.

Severino's reply to Messinese

I will now move on and consider Severino's reply to Messinese. It will be necessary to consider Severino's reply from two points of view:

– as regards the observations made by Messinese about the more concrete «raison d'etre» of becoming that characterizes Severino's philosophy;
– and as regards the solution proposed by Messinese himself with regard to this question.

Regarding the first point, Severino in one of his 2009 texts recalls that he already provided in Chapter III-IV of *Destino della necessità* an explanation to this problem and in particular in that same work

> there is a strong, well-defined indication of [...] the contradictoriness of a finite appearance whose content is not variant, i.e. in which a certain dimension of the essents [...] does not arrive in the way it "de facto" arrives [and therefore] the "variation" of the essents beings is the arrival of the eternal in the transcendental circle of appearing, that is this arrival is the "reason" of that variation (2009, p. 141).

In that work the necessity of what happens is affirmed by the very fact that this something happens: the hypothesis that what happens may not happen would mean denying the character of being to something that «is» because it happens and that therefore, like any other entity, it is eternal; therefore if every entity is eternal, that entity which is the happening of the entity is also eternal. The summary of Severino's position, as expressed in a more recent text, is as follows:

> every essent is eternal; but *the eternal* could *have been not able* to come in that circle, or arrive in a different way from what appears? *Destino della necessità* shows that true necessity implies *also* the necessity of arriving and of the way in which the eternal arrive *in the appearing* of destiny (2013, p. 349).

For Severino, Messinese criticizes the way in which he indicates the raison d'être of the appearance of the entities – that is, since every essent is eternal, that entity that is the happening of the entities is eternal too – judging it not sufficient,

> because he believes that it is due to the abandonment, in the development of my philosophical discourse, of what in his opinion should not have abandoned, i.e. the theological-creationist dimension still present in *La struttura originaria* and in the same *Ritornare a Parmenide*. So mine would be a 'broken path' (Severino, 2009, p. 142).

Considering this response from Severino, it seems that we can say that the two participants to the discussion move on two levels that are not perfectly aligned. Indeed what, for Messinese, constitutes the problem to be discussed, is the very fact that we give an arrival (a variation) and a multiplicity of surprising entities, because, as stated above, this is not in perfect identity with the L-immediacy, as being L-immediate is indivenient and unitary, so the answer of Severino would not seem to be on the same line as asked by Messinese and also, as we have seen, by Gennaro Sasso. The answer provided by Severino in his reply, in my view, is to restate what was already stated in *Destino della necessità*, without providing an adequate answer to the question that is inherent in the imperfect equation between experience and logo, which in my opinion continues to assert itself and being deeply relevant. This is, then, the question to be taken into consideration, the one on which reflection should be addressed and around which the philosophical dialogue between the two interlocutors can continue.

Turning now to the second point, we will briefly consider the reason why Severino does not consider the solution proposed by Messinese to be adequate. Severino basically states that the Messinese solution is "a leap in the dark" (2009, p. 142). This is the solution for which, in Messinese's words (2008): "the being that is *beyond* the totality of the experience is, with respect to experience, *absolute totality*. We call this absolute 'totality', *Absolute Totality of Being*" (pp. 314-315).

This is due to the fact that, for Severino, an adequate justification for the statement of the *transcendence* is not provided. He remarks:

> in addition to the experience there is an 'other being' this does not in fact mean, in itself, that this 'other being' is the 'absolute Totality of being', that is the 'Being' with the capital B (which for Messinese is 'God'). Since my critic does not justify his statement, the leap is still a leap in the dark. '*Another being*' can only be a part of the 'totality of being' (that is, of the 'totality of the beings') (Severino, 2009, p. 142).

For the later Severino the «other» separated from the experience is the «infinite totality of the beings» («the infinite appearing»). However, in my humble opinion, if saying this means – for Messinese – not to provide the most concrete «raison d'etre» of what experience attests, then, things being that way, to envisage an «identity» separated from the being that transcends experience appears to be a completely legitimate operation, as will be better specified in the following paragraph.

Messinese's counter-reply

An initial response from Messinese to Severino's critical observations is provided in the article titled *La teologia razionale e la determinazione dell'Altro dall'esperienza* of which some useful points will be reported below for a better review of the debate.

The initial moves put in place by Messinese, before responding to the criticism of Severino, are the following: first of all, Messinese notes the presence of some elements of resemblance between Severino and classical metaphysics with reference to the «integration of experience»:

– Severino refers to the finite-infinite link to give adequate intelligibility to the variation attested by experience

– Severino poses both the «what» and the «how» of the finite-infinite relationship, as does classical metaphysics.

On this point, Messinese recognizes the presence of both aspects in the Severino way of proceeding, which – he himself noted – had not been adequately highlighted in *L'apparire del mondo*. In fact he writes: "I should have more appropriately talked about a *different way* to 'integrate' the experience, compared to that proposed by Severino" (Messinese, 2009, p. 547, note 25).

In fact, Severino, in his reply, pointed out how Messinese had not taken due account of what he had "within hand's reach" (2009, p. 141) in his writings, or of the justification that makes sense of the variation of experience and that is "the 'variation' of the essents that appear is the arrival of the eternals in the transcendental circle of appearing, that this is the reason of that variation" (2009, p. 141). In his main work, Messinese considered it necessary to develop the «antinihilistic logo» so that it was able to present the «theoretical understanding» of beings that change (2008, p. 295), understanding that it is the "*how to make intelligible* the entering and exiting of the Appearing [or even] *how to give reason* of the 'variation' of the Appearing" (Messinese, 2008, p. 300).

There remains however – among others – a particularly significant difference between Severino's position and classical metaphysics on the way of understanding the finite-infinite relationship, a difference that is constituted by the different way in which the finite-infinite relationship is represented. In fact, while recognizing that Severino also has this decisive aspect of the finite-infinite relationship, according to Messinese the *way* in which Severino poses the «how» of the relationship is not fully satisfactory and we will later face more closely the reason behind this statement. Therefore it is not enough to state that even in Severino both aspects of the finite-infinite relationship are present in order to call «settled» the issue about the determination of what transcends the experience: rather, it is necessary first of all to understand whether the solution proposed by

Severino has the incontrovertible trait that it affirms and, subsequently, ascertain whether it is possible or not to propose a different solution capable of explaining the «how» of the finite-infinite relationship more satisfactorily.

Before proceeding to consider these aspects, we will now analyse the way in which, in the essay, Messinese re-proposes the elements of agreement between himself and Severino, the same elements that at the same

time differentiate them from classical metaphysics, in particular the way in which the inequality between the wholeness of being and the totality of experience is affirmed.

A first element is precisely the fact that for Severino and Messinese the «wholeness of being» is not perfectly equal to the totality of experience, as instead affirmed by immanentist philosophies: while this is still compliant to classical metaphysics, it is the way in which this conclusion is reached that distinguishes the latter from the position of Messinese and Severino. In the words of Messinese (2009): "*since* essents do not come out of nothing and do not return to nothing, so that the *being* that appears and disappears 'is' before its appearance, and is still, after its disappearance, *then* it is necessary that the totality of appearance is not the totality of *being*" (p. 547); by reading this excerpt it is possible to make at least two observations: it is the truth of being that constitutes the motive to justify the affirmation that the totality of experience does not exhaust the totality of being. If this were so we would say that the essent that appears and disappears enters and leaves the being, that is, the appearance/disappearance of the essents should be understood as entering into being and going out of being, contravening in this way to the truth of being. From this point of view, Messinese reaffirms his adherence to the truth of being described by Severino and his distancing himself from the nihilistic way in which Western philosophy has always understood the becoming of entities that are manifest in experience, interpreted as entering into being and coming out of it.

Moreover (second observation) another element of difference between Messinese and Severino appears in the last part of the work, where Messinese calls «totality of being» what Severino calls «totality of the essents» and which lead Messinese to present the passage I mentioned earlier as a «rewriting» of the following passage by Severino (2009):

> *since* every essent is eternal (does not come out of nothing and does not come back to it) so every essent that appears and disappears is already, before its appearance, and is still, after its being disappeared, *then* it is necessary that the totality of what appears is not the totality of the essent, and that the *other* separated from the totality of the essent (that is of the eternals) that appear is the dimension of the eternal as they do not appear in the finished circle constituted by the totality of what appears (p. 142).

As you can see, the first part of the two essays overlaps perfectly as to the content while distancing itself considerably from the fact that what

Messinese calls «totality of being» is for Severino the «totality of the essent». For this very reason we have summarised here what unites and what divides the two philosophers.

More specifically, the term of the issue that distances the two interlocutors, and which Messinese intends to bring to the centre of the discussion, consists therefore in determining what lies beyond the totality of the experience, which is understood by Severino in the «pluralistic» sense, as totality of the essents – or appear infinite (and that Messinese defines also "weak metaphysical transcendence" (Messinese, 2009, p. 550) – and in a sense that is linked to the metaphysical tradition of Messinese, as the totality of Being or *Ipsum esse subsistens* .

We may sum the above up in the words of Messinese (2009):

> *the omne punctum* of the discussion with philosophy before Severino does not seem so much to regard the alternative immanentism/transcendence if 'immanentism' refers to the statement that the 'totality of Experience' identifies itself with the 'Absolute […] even for the Severino that critiques classical metaphysics, we cannot close ourselves in the 'totality of experience' (p. 546).

Therefore (2009):

> Having established the need to affirm the inequality between the Unity of Experience and the Whole, one must go and see if the other with respect to the Unity of Experience is, as Severino now believes, 'the dimension of the eternal [i.e. of the essents] because they do not appear in the finished circle constituted by the totality of what appears'; or is it the transcendent God of the metaphysical tradition and of Severino himself in the first phase of his thought (p. 547).

Messinese wishes to reaffirm what has already emerged in *L'apparire del mondo*, i.e. that the reference of the becoming being to the Creator God, allows us to affirm the raison d'etre of the *finite appearance* of being, in a more rigorous form than that provided by Severino (Messinese, 2009). This solution is not the mere repetition of a thesis belonging to classical metaphysics, but is directly related to what Severino himself said in *La struttura originaria.* Therefore, it is the «early» Severino that holds the answer: it is the whole perceived as immutability that provides the opening

of concrete logical immediacy (Severino, 1981²), that is, the principle of non-contradiction considered in its ontological value, so that absolute Totality can only be the same absolute Being, and it is the reason why the absolute totality of being cannot be identified with the infinite totality of the beings but with the Being. With the own Severino's words (1981²): "The non-contradiction principle has the same essential meaning of the ontological topic: immutability or absolute permanence of the whole […] it is the same Absolute being, that is the position of the non-changeability of the whole, the opening of the concrete logical immediacy is the same presence of the Absolute being» (p. 531).

The eternity attributed to the essents by Severino must therefore be preached in their relationship with the immutable Being, that is, the Being in its fullness that «overcomes all negativity and finitude», namely the *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*: it is on the basis of this reference that the authentic meaning of their eternity must be determined, that which Severino calls the «truth of the essents». The relationship between the Totality of experience and Being is what is traditionally defined by the term «creation», so that the beings are eternal as they are ontologically dependent on the Eternal One, which is therefore the condition of their being and their being «eternal». Messinese (2009) writes:

> What Severino calls 'eternity of the essents' is actually the eternity that shall be preached by the essents in relationship with their needed reference to the *unchangeable whole* and, therefore, to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. It will be on the basis of this reference that the 'truth of the essents' must be completely determined, in particular the authentic meaning of their 'eternity'" (p. 554).

The reflection of Messinese is then further developed in the speech with which he participated to a conference held in Venice in 2012 – the Conference was held at the Ca' Foscari University and dedicated to Emanuele Severino, and it was called «Il destino dell'essere. Dialogo con (e intorno al pensiero di) Emanuele Severino» – which reiterates the need for a complete justification of that 'negative' constituted by the appearance of appearing and disappearing of being (Messinese, 2014). The foundation of phenomenological becoming concerns the justification "of the negative of the Unity of Experience [which] is precisely the 'non-identity of being with oneself' that formally characterizes Unity of Experience, as considered in connection with the L-immediacy" (Messinese, 2014, p.

50). That is, the incomplete identity of that region of being which is the being F-immediately attested (Unity of Experience) with the L-immediate being: "this is the 'negativity' that must be [...] founded [...] is this the phenomenological dimension that must be brought to a full circularity with the logo" (Messinese, 2014, p. 50).

Messinese judges that, in order to fully explain the «negative» of the Unity of Experience, two possibilities are available, each an alternative to the other:

– the Being enters and exits from appearing because it enters into being and leaves from being (Messinese, 2014, p. 50), that is, it becomes in an ontological sense;
– or "the being enters appearing and disappears *because 'it is the finite appearance'*, by virtue of the relation of creation, *of the infinite Being*" (Messinese, 2014, p. 50).

The first possibility is not practicable because it contradicts the truth of being; so only the second remains standing: the asymmetry in the relationship between God and the world radically justifies the asymmetry between the «totality of the appearance of being» and the "being as such" (Messinese, 2014, p. 51). It is by virtue of the theoretical introduction of God the Creator that, for Messinese, the originary truth of being, or to use early Severino's words, the «originary metaphysics» are realised.

Conclusions and Future Study

This essay has tried to offer – I hope objectively – the essential terms of the confrontation that Messinese developed with the thought of Emanuele Severino. I believe, for the reasons explained in the course of the work, that this is a comparison that deserves to be researched more in depth with the hope that those who refer to the philosophy of Severino may receive further arguments in response to the requests of Messinese that I myself have tried to comment on in my essay, after trying to highlight the core points.

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