

Eternity Between Space and Time

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From Consciousness to the Cosmos

Edited by

Ines Testoni, Fabio Scardigli, Andrea Toniolo
and Gabriele Gionti S.J.

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Contents

Abbreviations — IX

Ines Testoni, Fabio Scardigli, Andrea Toniolo and Gabriele Gionti S.J.

Introduction — 1

First Part: **What about Eternity?**

Giulio Goggi

The Eternity of Every Being and the “Trace” of the Infinite in the Finite According to Emanuele Severino — 11

Damiano Sacco

Emanuele Severino. *Sózein tà Phainόμενα* — 23

Leonardo Messinese

The Absolute Appearing of Eternity as the Original Meaning of Time — 35

Massimo Cacciari

Note on the Dialogue between Severino and Vitiello — 49

Roberto Tommasi

Time, Eternity, Freedom in Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Ricœur — 55

Second Part: **The Eternity Concealed in the Cosmos and the Secrets of Consciousness**

Roger Penrose

The Basic Ideas of Conformal Cyclic Cosmology — 69

Gerard 't Hooft

How Studying Black Hole Theory May Help Us to Quantize Gravity — 85

Fabio Scardigli

Uncertainty Principle and Gravity — 99

Gabriele Veneziano

The Big Bang's New Clothes and Eternity — 111

Giacomo Mauro D'Ariano

For a Science of Consciousness — 127

Federico Faggin

Freedom and Artificial Intelligence — 137

Giuseppe Vitiello

Brain, Mind, the Arrow of Time and Consciousness — 149

Third Part: **Eternity, Time and Faith**

Kurt Appel

The Eighth Day. Biblical Time as Openness of Chronological Time — 163

Andrea Toniolo

Time, Revelation or Negation of the Eternal? The Modern Metaphor of the "Death of God" — 173

Piero Benvenuti

Cosmology and Cosmologhia: A Much Needed Distinction — 181

Gabriele Gionti S.J.

God and the Big Bang: Past and Modern Debates between Science and Theology — 189

Alberto Peratoner

"Qu'est-ce qu'un homme, dans l'infini?". Eternity and Infinity in Blaise Pascal and in the 17th-Century Geometrizing Ontologies — 201

Leopoldo Sandonà

Eternity and Otherness from the Perspective of Dialogic Thinking. Inspirations and Contaminations in and from Romano Guardini, Franz Rosenzweig, and Nishida Kitarō — 213

Fourth Part: **Existential Corollaries**

Ilaria Malaguti

Eternity, Instant, Duration. *Tangere aeternum* — 225

Santo Di Nuovo

Finitude and Project: For Which Space? And for What Time? — 235

Diego De Leo

The Last Waltz: Finitude, Loneliness and Exiting from Life — 249

Luigi Grassi and Harvey M. Chochinov

Beyond the Limits of Mental Illness: Dignity and Dignity Therapy in Person-Centered Psychiatry — 257

Ines Testoni

Beyond Alienation: Severino's Removal of Pathological Contradiction — 271

Names — 285

Concepts — 289

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BB	Big Bang
BS	Breakdown of Symmetry
CCC	Conformal Cyclic Cosmology
CCR	Canonical Commutation Relations
CDM	Cold Dark Matter
CERN	Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire
CMB	Cosmic Microwave Background
COBE	Cosmic Background Explorer
DDI	Dilaton-Driven Inflation
DT	Dignity Therapy
DWQ	Dipole Wave Quanta
EST	Eternity between Space and Time
FLRW	Friedmann, Lemaître, Robertson and Walker
GM	Newton's gravitational constant and mass of the object
GR	General Relativity
GUP	Generalized Uncertainty Principle
GUT	Grand Unified Theory
HBB	Hot Big Bang
IAU	International Astronomical Union
IPPP	Institutional Program on Psychiatry for the Person
K	Kelvin
LED	Light-Emitting Diode
LHC	Large Hadron Collider
NG	Nambu-Goldstone
OPT	Operational Probabilistic Theory
PBB	Pre Big Bang
PDI	Patient Dignity Inventory
PEM	Principle of the Excluded Middle
PNC	Principle of Non Contradiction
PST	Primary Structure of Truth
QED	Quantum Electrodynamics
QFT	Quantum Field Theory
QIP	Quantum Information-Based Panpsychism
QM	Quantum Mechanics
RU	Ricciardi and Umezawa
SBS	Spontaneous Breakdown of Symmetry
SM	Standard Model
SMI	Severe Mental Illness
SR	Special Relativity

X — Abbreviations

VSED	Voluntary Stopping Eating and Drinking
WCH	Weyl Curvature Hypothesis
WHO	World Health Organization
WPA	World Psychiatric Association
Λ CDM	Lambda Cold Dark Matter

Ines Testoni, Fabio Scardigli, Andrea Toniolo
and Gabriele Gionti S.J.

Introduction

This book is titled *Eternity between Space and Time: From Consciousness to the Cosmos*. It is the outcome of three days of studies and discussions at an international conference held in May 2022 at the University of Padua during its 800th anniversary celebrations. Then, the title of the book is the same of the conference.¹ *Eternity between Space and Time* (EST) intends to challenge contemporary thought, untie a knot that bridles the entire history of human reflection and open up a new horizon of discussion about the relationship between infinite eternity and what appears finite, including consciousness. For over a century now, culture and academic research have established insurmountable boundaries between different fields of knowledge – thanks to and because of an increasingly rigorous and specialised methodology that differentiates the specificity of the objects of study in terms of philosophy and theology on the one hand and the hard sciences and physics, in particular, on the other. Between the aforementioned categories remains a reflection on the human condition, which is pushed in different directions at different times. Although the existence of contamination remains inevitable, such contaminations are not always highlighted. This book seeks to retrain the continuity of the same object of reflection and how it is the continuum within which any reasoning around the relationship between existence, reality and being gains its meaning even when the arguments seem strictly specialised and, therefore, incommensurable with respect to one another.

In fact, the concept of eternity is challenging because it appears to be exactly what it does not appear to be. However, EST intends to highlight how this concept supports the most rigorous investigations. The discussion is divided into the following four parts that include contributions from the keynote speakers in Padua: (1) “What about Eternity?”, (2) “The Eternity Concealed in the Cosmos and the Secrets of Consciousness”, (3) “Eternity, Time and Faith” and (4) “Existential Corollaries”.

The first part gets to the heart of the issue of ‘being’ and specifically how the whole question of what is and what is not arises in it, i.e. what language endowed with meaning indicates. The question concerns whether *being* may not be and addresses the issue by referring to two metaphysical philosophers of contemporary thought, Emanuele Severino and Martin Heidegger, who have posed the question

¹ <https://www.unipd.it/news/eternity-between-space-and-time-consciousness-cosmos-est>, last accessed 21 September 2023.

in a radical way. The connection between these two giant philosophers, who have reframed the importance of reflection on *being* by going back to the roots of Greek thought, had already been highlighted by the philosopher Massimo Cacciari on the occasion of the end of Severino's university teaching, who declared that the philosopher's lesson is not only "equal to that of Heidegger"² but also that there is an absolute opposition (aut/aut) between the two philosophers. The question was further considered in an international conference, "Heidegger nel pensiero di Severino" (Heidegger in Severino's Thought), held in Brescia in the year Severino himself passed away.³ These two thinkers represent a continuity while also maintaining a distance between substantial components of continental thought developing between Germany and Italy. If Heidegger's contribution remains widely disseminated internationally in a vehicular language, Severino's contribution is beginning to be so through the translation of his three very significant works into English: *The Essence of Nihilism* (2015), *Law and Chance* (2023) and *Beyond Language* (2024).

Therefore, the more exquisite philosophical part of EST intentionally comprises its reflection on *being* and its eternity within this framework. In particular, in the chapter "The Eternity of Every Being and the 'Trace' of the Infinite in the Finite according to Severino", Giulio Goggi lays out the most specific feature of the fundamental ontology developed by Severino: the thesis according to which every being, qua being, is eternal. Then, the chapter will dwell on the topic of the 'trace' of the infinite in the finite as every being is eternal and necessarily stands in relation to every other being; it is necessary for every being to somehow be present in every other being.

In line with Goggi, Damiano Sacco's essay titled "Emanuele Severino. *Sózein tà Phainómena*" introduces some key elements of Severino's theoretical apparatus through a discussion of one of the key axes of the enquiries related to science and philosophy, which are epitomised by the tenet of saving (the appearing of) the phenomena (*sózein tà phainómena*). This standpoint affords an assessment of the radical and singular character of Severino's reflection as part of which the truth and eternity of every being appear as the impossibility for the being and appearing of every being to not always be saved.

In his article "The Absolute Appearing of Eternity as the Original Meaning of Time", Leonardo Messinese traces a further continuity between Severinus and Bergson based on the foundation of Greek thought. The author seems to dwell on the trait that unites the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of time and then on the critical analysis done by Henry Bergson. Subsequently, he compares the Berg-

2 Cacciari in *Corriere Della sera* and in *La Repubblica* (Cacciari 2001).

3 The conference was held in Brescia on 13–15 June 2019. The proceedings, edited by Ines Testoni and Giulio Goggi, are available here: <https://www.padovauniversitypress.it/it/publications/9788869381577>.

sonian reflections on time with those of Emanuele Severino to introduce the thesis that the absolute appearing of eternity is the original meaning of time.

In his article “Note on the Dialogue between Severino and Vitiello”, Massimo Cacciari relates Severino with another Italian thinker, Vincenzo Vitiello, who has long dealt with Heidegger’s thought and the entire continental tradition. The aforementioned comparison highlights some noteworthy basic ontological nodes.

Finally, the contribution of Roberto Tommasi, “Time, Eternity, Freedom in Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Ricoeur”, investigates the relationships between space, time, freedom and eternity in Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Ricoeur. From the perspectives opened in this regard by the three thinkers emerges the aporetic oscillation between cosmological, existential and historical conceptions of space-time.

The second part of EST is titled “The Eternity Concealed in the Cosmos and the Secrets of Consciousness”, and contains essays dedicated to the aspects of space and time that are intertwined with Physics and Consciousness. In particular, the essays of ’t Hooft, Veneziano, and Penrose, explore the elusive concepts of time and eternity as they are conceived, on the one hand, in modern cosmological theories, and on the other, in those conceptual gymnasiums called black holes. In the latter, perhaps we begin to glimpse a profitable ‘mixing’, if not a unification, between the two great conceptual structures that still govern 21st-century physics, namely Quantum Theory and General Relativity. Scardigli’s essay also follows this path by exploring the mix of concepts between gravitation and quantum indeterminacy. Instead, the contributions of Vitiello, D’Ariano, and Faggin appear almost as a counterpoint to these writings. Using the conceptual tools of today’s theoretical physics, namely Quantum Information Theory, and Quantum Field Theory, the authors attempt an amazing exploration of the crucible where the very categories of space, time, reality and eternity are formed and built, i.e. (human) consciousness. These essays collectively provide the reader with ‘windows’ from which to glimpse unsuspected, perhaps astonishing panoramas that call for further journeys and explorations.

In his essay on the “Basic Ideas of Conformal Cyclic Cosmology” (CCC), Roger Penrose⁴ illustrates his new vision (2005) of the cosmological theory. The CCC proposes that the universe undergoes repeated cycles of (accelerated) expansion, named ‘aeons’, where the maximal (or infinite) extension of the previous cycle goes to coincide with the Big Bang stage of the successive cycle. No contraction (big crunch) is required in this model. This is made possible through the conformal structure that dominates space-time at the beginning and at the end of each

⁴ It is important to point out that Roger Penrose had a discussion with Emanuele Severino at the conference organised by Fabio Scardigli at the Cariplo Congress Center (Milan) on 12 May 2018. The outcomes of the meeting are collected in: Penrose et al. 2022.

aeon. The CCC solves the paradox of the super-special initial conditions required by the Second Law at the Big Bang, and among its observational consequences, predicts the presence of ‘circular rings’ in the temperature fluctuations of the Cosmic Microwave Background spectrum.

In Gerard ‘t Hooft’s⁵ contribution titled “How Studying Black Hole Theory May Help Us to Quantize Gravity”, black holes, far from appearing cosmic monsters or astrophysical curiosities, are instead described as the appropriate theoretical arena in which the basic principles of General Relativity uniquely intertwine with those of Quantum Theory. Therefore, it becomes possible to have a glimpse into the key roles that quantum effects play in gravitational interactions at ultra-short scales.

In his essay “Uncertainty Principle and Gravity”, Fabio Scardigli describes how the uncertainty principle, the cornerstone of quantum mechanics, should be modified when gravity is properly taken into account. Among the many different physical predictions of this ‘Generalized Uncertainty Principle’, the possibility of considering black hole ‘remnants’ as sources of the enigmatic dark matter is briefly discussed.

Gabriele Veneziano’s chapter “The Big Bang’s New Clothes and Eternity” describes how the traditional role of the Big Bang is completely overturned in modern inflationary cosmology: the Big Bang is the instant at which the Universe, after having been cooled down to zero temperature, suddenly ‘reheats’ through an irreversible quantum process. As a consequence, the Hot Big Bang is associated with neither a singularity nor the beginning of time. It becomes therefore possible to enquire about whether time had a beginning, and how was the Universe before the Big Bang.

In his chapter “For a Science of Consciousness”, Giacomo Mauro D’Ariano focuses on the topic of ‘consciousness’ or ‘awareness’. He wants to ground ‘consciousness’ on either a physics theory or a physics theory-like base in order to bring a certain ‘objectivity’ to it. He claims that consciousness has a quantum nature and can be explained with quantum (interior) information theory. At the base of consciousness, there are q-bits (quantum bits). However, this interior information is subjective and cannot be transferred because the passage from interior (quantum) information to exterior (classical) information destroys interior information. Interior experiences are processed as quantum information. They are identified by the author with the ‘qualia’ of the philosophy of mind.

In his essay “Freedom and Artificial Intelligence”, Federico Faggin tells that, after a mystical experience, he arrived at the conclusion that our universe is

⁵ It is important to emphasise that Gerard ‘t Hooft had a discussion with Emanuele Severino at the conference organised by Fabio Scardigli at the Cariplo Congress Center (Milan, Italy) on 13 May 2017. The outcomes of the meeting are collected in: Scardigli et al. 2019.

more than a materialistic reality as described by science. There exists the One, the totality of what exists. Consciousness and free will are part of the One and are described by a theory of quantum information. Consciousness is the inner space where signals from the external world are processed and become emotions, feelings and so forth. Free will is strictly connected to consciousness, it is the awareness that the experience I am having is my experience.

In his chapter “Brain, Mind, the Arrow of Time and Consciousness”, Giuseppe Vitiello proposes to model the brain as a quantum field theory system. This system continuously interacts with its environment, and its functional activity is described by dissipative dynamics. The environment is described as a time-reversed copy of the brain called the Double. The act of consciousness inhabits the dialogue between the brain and its Double.

The third part, titled “Eternity, Time and Faith”, is about theological–religious reflection.⁶ In particular, it makes the biblical–Christian conception of time interact with the visions of time and reality proper to science and to modern and contemporary philosophy. The classical conception of physical-mechanical time has led to thinking of temporality (the condition of ‘being in time’) as a limit to be overcome and reach eternity (a condition in the future). According to this perspective, the meaning of human existence, subjected to time and the limits of transience and finiteness, emerges insufficiently. The understanding of temporality as becoming and limiting, as a lack of consistency and permanence, and therefore non-being, has negatively conditioned the very idea of revelation, or the way in which existence relates to the transcendent or hierophany – the manifestation of the sacred in human experience. The biblical resumption of time as an opening and place of revelation makes it possible to reshape the debate between science and faith (without confusion and separation) and to think of finiteness in close relationship with eternity and otherness as the revelation of the eternal.

Kurt Appel’s contribution, “The Eighth Day. Biblical Time as Openness of Chronological Time” begins with the biblical creation story built according to a temporal narration. The seventh, or rather the eighth, day inscribes an openness

⁶ It is important to mention that there is ongoing work on the possibility of resuming the theological and theoretical discussion of Emanuele Severino’s thought and Christian thought. The congress and this volume are part of this type of reflection that has been ongoing for some years now among scholars of theology and philosophy. We particularly highlight a webinar held on 24 June 2021, from 9.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. titled *Cristianesimo e Emanuele Severino. Quali possibilità di confronto? Approcci filosofici e teologici* (Christianism and Emanuele Severino. Which possibilities for comparison? Philosophical and theological approaches), the results of which are collected in a volume with the same title edited by Andrea Toniolo and Ines Testoni “Cristianesimo e Emanuele Severino. Quali possibilità di confronto? approcci filosofici e teologici” Padova University Press, available at: <https://www.padovauniversitypress.it/publications/9788869382819>.

in time that eludes all functionalisation. The *eschaton* (the seventh day) is the transition into the radical openness of time.

In his “The Time, Revelation or Negation of the Eternal? The Modern Metaphor of the ‘Death of God’”, Andrea Toniolo suggests that before the modern physical ‘revolution’ on the conception of time/space, it was the modern theological (and philosophical) thought that threw the ‘classical’ view of time and history into crisis. This crisis is emblematically expressed by the metaphor of ‘the death of God’ (Nietzsche, Hegel and Jüngel).

Piero Benvenuti’s chapter “Cosmology and Cosmologhia: A Much Needed Distinction” distinguishes, without separating, between the scientific models of cosmic evolution (cosmology) and the possible global cosmological models (*cosmologhia*). These models are anchored in scientific models; however, they differ by the choice of solution of the stumbling blocks encountered by scientific methods. They can be represented by the multiverse hypothesis, the cyclical universe or other philosophical or theological hypotheses.

In his “God and the Big Bang: Past and Modern Debates between Science and Theology”, Gabriele Gionti introduces the contemporary view on the birth (Big Bang) and evolution of our universe as well as the Hartle-Hawking model of quantum cosmology. He presents two models of the relationship between science and theology (and Church teaching) that occurred in history: (1) the ‘concordist’ view, since Big Bang theory appeared quite in agreement with Christian doctrine of creation and (2) the ‘complementary magisterial’ view, in which we distinguish between the scientific and theological planes as two parallel ‘lines’. To avoid confusion, it is necessary to regain a good conception of the doctrine of creation.

Alberto Peratoner’s contribution titled “‘Qu’est-ce qu’un homme, dans l’infini?’ Eternity and Infinity in Blaise Pascal and in the 17th-Century Geometrizing Ontologies” re-proposes the suggestive anthropological reflection of Pascal, who derives the human consciousness of his own condition from the *géométrie*, i.e. from the concept of infinity as a representation of reality that shows his condition as suspended between infinity and nothingness.

Finally, Leopoldo Sandonà, in his “Eternity and Otherness from the Perspective of Dialogic Thinking. Inspirations and Contaminations in and from Romano Guardini, Franz Rosenzweig and Nishida Kitarō”, approaches the relation between time and eternity from the innovative perspective of dialogic thought, crossing contemporary philosophy and theology with Jewish and Christian thinking. The eternity is not a concept but a relation, as Rosenzweig says, “the ‘us’ are eternal”.

The fourth part titled “Existential Corollaries” intends to reach the existential dimension of the human being, who thinks of eternity and totality in its ontological, physical and theological infinity and then finds himself having to come to terms with his own condition of finitude, searching for the arguments that can

restore a substantial value and give meaning to life lived in experiencing different forms of pain and fatigue with which madness announces itself.

In her “Eternity, Instant, Duration. *Tangere aeternum*”, Ilaria Malaguti considers how the centre of human existence, the actuality of the ego with itself, is enclosed in the intertwining of *chronos* and *kairos*. In our temporal and chronological experience, can we think of *kairos* as the instant in which we are offered the possibility of a *tangere aeternum*? Can we think of the moment starting from an interiority that does not withdraw into itself but becomes attentive and rises in intimate contact with the eternal?

Santo Di Nuovo’s chapter titled “Finitude and Project: For Which Space? And for What Time?” reviews the challenges of finitude to philosophies, religions and sciences and reports the transhumanistic claim for artificially simulating an immortal consciousness. Based on some phenomenological suggestions and Edgar Morin’s concepts of world citizenship and ‘reliance’, it presents some hypotheses for implementing a shared project of transcendence to begin in our present world.

Diego De Leo’s chapter, titled “The Last Waltz: Finitude, Loneliness and Exiting from Life”, discusses how the instrumentalist culture of modern society seems to have difficulty in dealing with the idea of life destined to end. Death seems to be considered for only old people. This chapter describes the problematic confrontation with finitude and unwanted travel companions in the course of life, such as loneliness, depression and suicidal ideation – conditions that make one wish for a different culture of death but, above all, a different preparation for life.

In their chapter “Beyond the Limits of Mental Illness: Dignity and Dignity Therapy in Person-Centred Psychiatry”, Luigi Grassi and Harvey M. Chochinov consider how person-centred psychiatry and dignity-conserving care, including dignity therapy, should be practised in all mental health care settings to reduce the alienation, loss of identity, stigma and psychological, interpersonal, spiritual and existential suffering that people with psychiatric disorders have to face.

With her chapter “Beyond Alienation: Severino’s Removal of Pathological Contradiction”, Ines Testoni concludes the entire volume by bringing the whole discussion back to the opening discourse, that is to the Severinian ontological dimension that indicates the necessity of eternity. The substantial aim of this contribution is to highlight the inability to think of the eternal, i.e. how thought is still immersed in the radical madness of nihilism that consists precisely in thinking that being as becoming is nothing.

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First Part: **What about Eternity?**

Giulio Goggi

The Eternity of Every Being and the “Trace” of the Infinite in the Finite According to Emanuele Severino

Abstract: In this article I will lay out the most specific feature of the ontology developed by philosopher Emanuele Severino: the thesis according to which every being, qua being, is eternal – a thesis founded on the *indisputable appearing of being in the form of identity/non-contradiction*. We shall see that the eternity of every being does not make the changing of beings illusory. Ultimately, the same foundation also underlies the inequality between what presently appears and the totality of beings, which Severino calls *infinite appearing*. I will then dwell on the topic of the “trace” of the Infinite in the finite: as each being *necessarily* stands in relation to every other being, it is necessary for each finite being to *somehow* include the totality of its “other”.

1 Introduction

First of all, a terminological clarification is in order: what Severino means by “being” is anything that is not-nothing, e.g. a particular desk lamp, its ideal essence, the current state of the universe, the most fleeting of thoughts. The “being” of each of these determinations/differences signifies their not-being-nothing:

That something “is” means primarily that it is not a Nothing, i.e., that it manages to keep to itself without dissolving into nothingness. And, in general, the plurality of modes of existence is nothing other than a plurality of the modes of not being nothing; so that the plurality of determinations or differences of Being is itself nothing other than the plurality of modes of existence, and any single determination is a unique mode of existence (Severino 2016a, 85–86).¹

The thesis we will now be exploring runs as follows: it is impossible for anything that is, i.e. anything that is not-nothing, not to be, which is to say that it must necessarily be eternal. Here I will provide only an essential outline of the topic in question, and refer the reader to other publications for a broader discussion

¹ Except for passages taken from *Essenza del Nihilismo* (*The Essence of Nihilism*, Verso 2016), the translations of excerpts quoted from other works by Severino are mine.

(Goggi 2019; 2022). Finally, I will touch upon the singular meaning of time implied by the eternity of every being, as well as some significant implications concerning the relationship between the finite and the Infinite.

2 The Eternity of Every Being

1. To think that any given being could not have existed and that it could cease to exist is to envisage a time in which this given being (this not-nothing) is nothing, absolutely nothing. But *since it is impossible for the non-identical to be identical*, not only is it impossible for nothingness to belong to any being *when* (i.e. *for as long as*) that particular being exists, but it is *absolutely* impossible for nothing to belong to it. The foundation of the thesis of the eternity of every being *qua being* is the necessity that each being be self-identical, i.e. the impossibility that any given being be other than itself: since the identification of non-identical meanings is absurd, and since what is absurd is what cannot be, it is impossible for any being not to be. And this means that every being, *qua being*, is eternal.

2. Severino puts it as follows: the law of being is the law of the *opposition between the positive and the negative*. Note that what he means by “positive” is every being, every not-nothing, whereas by “negative” he means anything that is “other” with respect to the positive under consideration. For instance, if we take “this lamp”, its negative is not only any other positive which is not “this lamp”: what is also other than “this lamp” is “nothing” – not in the sense that “nothing”, i.e. the absolute absence of any positiveness, is in itself something, a being, but in the sense that “this lamp” is not nothing. Now, the need to affirm *the opposition between the positive and the negative* involves the affirmation of the eternity of every being because it involves that *specific opposition between the positive and the negative* that consists precisely in this, namely that every being is not nothing:

It is *necessary* to affirm that every being is eternal, because eternity is *one* opposition between the positive and the negative (it is that opposition by which the positive, any given being, is not nothing), which is to say that it is a form, a specific mode of that – the universal opposition between the positive and the negative, the universal determination of the being – the negation of which coincides with self-negation. The necessity of affirming the opposition between the positive and the negative [which is inclusive of every specific form of this opposition] *necessarily* implies the affirmation of that specific opposition between the positive and the negative which is the eternity of every being (Severino 1995, 243–244).

Severino has called this “the golden implication”, on account of its remarkable significance. It should be noted that in claiming that *everything is eternal*, we are not saying that everything exists according to a particular mode of being, for ex-

ample the mode in which spatio-temporal beings exist; rather, we are saying that every not-nothing is eternal, that is *every mode of being* (whether it be spatio-temporal, ideal, fictional, obscure . . .). Therefore, it is necessary to state that *every being*, i.e. *every meaningful being*, is not nothing and that it is impossible for it to become nothing or to have been nothing, since this becoming nothing and having been nothing implies the contradictory identification of non-identical meanings.

3 The Indisputability of the Opposition between the Positive and the Negative

1. Leibniz wondered why something exists, rather than nothing. This has gone down in the history of philosophy as the “fundamental metaphysical question”. But according to Severino this question leaves open the contradictory assumption that something (i.e. beings) could not exist, whereas beings *do exist*, for it would be contradictory for them not to.

2. If it is crucial to envisage the eternity of every being, founded on the necessity that each being be self-identical and other from what is other than itself, what is equally crucial is to show that this opposition between the positive and the negative is undeniable. Severino proves it via “refutation”, by developing – arguably like no other philosopher before him – the *elenctic* strategy that Aristotle has laid out in *Metaphysics*, Book IV. I will sum it up as follows: the negation of the difference of differents, however it presents itself, presupposes the appearing of the difference of differents; for if differents did not appear as differents, no negation of difference would emerge; but this means that, in negating the difference of differents, this negation negates its own foundation, i.e. what constitutes it (namely, what enables it to exist as a negation), and hence negates itself. Severino writes:

In order to have a real negation of the opposition (and not merely an apparent one), it is necessary that the positive and the negative should first be posited as different (and so as opposites), and that one then posit the identity of the differents, i.e., that the differents *qua* differents are identical. As long as the differents are not seen as different, they must unquestionably be said to be identical; but if they are seen as different, and if, indeed, they must be held fast as different, in order that the affirmation of their identity may be negation of the opposition of the positive and the negative, then this negation is grounded upon the affirmation of what it denies; and, this time, it is no longer grounded upon the affirmation of only a part of what it denies, but rather upon the whole content that is denied. Consequently, the negation is negation of that without which it cannot constitute itself as nega-

tion, and so is negation of itself; it is a quitting the scene of the word and of thought, a declaring its own nonexistence and its own meaninglessness (Severino 2016a, 69–70).

The negation of the difference of differents removes itself, *and it is precisely this essential self-removal that makes it necessary for every being to show itself in the form of identity/non-contradiction*, which implies the affirmation of the eternity of being as such.

4 The Singular Meaning of Becoming and Time

1. If the existence of time implies the existence of a “before” and an “after”, and if “before” and “after” are understood as the fluctuating of things between being and non-being, then time is non-existent: what exists is the belief that time exists, but this is “the time of the absurd” (Severino 2016a, 88), something that cannot exist and which therefore cannot be attested by experience. Let me better explain this point.

2. A body burns and is replaced by ash. What is it that appears to someone witnessing this process? Does it appear that the body has become nothing? Does its annihilation appear? Severino writes:

After the fire, ashes; which means: when the fire no longer appears, ashes appear. But that something that no longer *appears* no longer *is* – *this* is not manifest in Appearing. On the contrary – it is *interpreted* on the basis of the way in which something appears and disappears. When something appears that has never appeared before, one says that it has been born and that previously it was a Nothing; when something disappears and does not return, one says that it has died and become a Nothing. And men have learned that when something appears in a certain way, it has never appeared before; and when it disappears in a certain way, it will not return (Severino 2016a, 109).

Science says that the amount of matter in the universe remains constant, even though it takes different forms: the energy currently found in the universe was already present at the time of the Big Bang, but it was concentrated in a tiny volume. Let us consider the process whereby wood turns to ash and ask ourselves: “Before the ash was produced, did it already exist? And once the wood turns to ash, will it continue to exist?” Well, insofar as the wood and the ash are a certain amount of energy, they do not become nothing and do not emerge out of nothing. But what happens to the wood *qua wood* – i.e. to that specific form we call wood – when it turns to ash? And what about the ash *qua ash* – i.e. that specific form we call ash – before it is produced? Science and the whole of Western thought tell us that the wood (*qua wood*) no longer exists when it turns to ash

and that the ash (qua ash) did not exist yet before it was produced: if this were not the case, there would not be any becoming. But are things really so? Consider, first of all, the fact that appearing does not reveal this "no longer existing" and "not existing yet" *in any way*:

When the wood (qua wood) has becoming nothing, does it continue to be observable, experienceable, ascertainable? [. . .] Certainly, if one believes that things become nothing, one must believe that insofar as they become nothing, they are no longer observable, experienceable, ascertainable as they were before. [. . .] To experience is to experience an existent: it is impossible to experience what is now nothing (Severino 2015a, 188–190).

A similar argument must be made for ash: if one believes that the ash (qua ash) was nothing before it was produced, then, insofar as it was nothing, it could not be part of the totality of what is experienced: for one cannot experience nothingness. But this means, precisely, that it is impossible for experience to say anything about the fate of that which is believed to have gone into nothingness or to still be nothing. Certainly, there are certain modes of becoming in relation to which man has convinced himself that certain things have emerged out of nothingness and will return to nothingness:

In relation to many things, including many that are dear to him, [man] experiences that, when they no longer show themselves with the traits they used to display, they no longer return. [. . .]. And [it happens that] in relation to those things that are born one goes so far as to say that they have emerged out of nothing, because they have never been seen before: as if someone who witnesses this birth had the capacity to experience the infinite times past [. . .], and thus to discern that what was "born" in them just wasn't there, never has been there, i.e. was nothing (Severino 2015a, 191–192).

But since it is impossible to experience nothingness, and hence to experience annihilation, stating that things are born and die, that they are generated and perish, is an interpretation which alters what genuinely appears:

This means that becoming other is the content of a *theory* established on the basis of the delusion caused by the non-return of what no longer appears (but what human being has ever experienced the infinity of future times [. . .] so as to be able to claim that what has faded will never return?) (Severino 2015a, 192).

But what, then, is that which genuinely appears? If (and because) every being is eternal, the varying of things and situations we experience cannot coincide with the coming to be or ceasing to be of beings; rather, it must be the supervening of eternal beings within the eternal horizon of appearing:

The Becoming that appears is not the birth and the death of Being, but rather its appearing and disappearing. Becoming is the process of the revelation of the immutable (Severino 2016a, 111–112).

Not even that appearing which begins to appear and ceases to appear can be something that begins to be and ceases to be: when something appears, its appearing necessarily appears (for otherwise what would appear would be something that does not appear). It follows that when something begins to appear, its beginning to appear also begins to appear: within the total horizon of appearing – what Severino calls “transcendental appearing” – the appearing of something begins to appear (not: begins to be!); and when something ceases to appear, from the total horizon of appearing the same appearing of something ceases to appear (not: ceases to be!). Becoming occurs when eternal beings (and their eternal appearing) enter or exit the stable transcendental dimension of appearing; however, the supervening of this dimension and its departing from appearing cannot “appear”: for the appearing of becoming is only possible if this appearing is not becoming, but rather the unchanging background that encompasses the totality of time, which is to say every “before” and “after” that begin to appear.

3. As it is necessary for what begins or ceases to appear to also *be* before it begins to appear and after it ceases to appear – for every being is eternal – we will say that present beings are eternal, but so are past and future ones:

This day is (eternal), even when what now appears as the past was the present and when what now appears as the future will be the present; in turn, past and future beings *are* (eternal), in the concreteness that pertains to them when they have been and will be the present, even when this day appears. *If* this concreteness of theirs differs from what appears of them when this day appears [. . .] this means that, in the past and future appearing together with this day, this concreteness of theirs has (respectively) disappeared and not yet appeared (Severino 2015b, 139).

In Italy some scholars (Soncini and Munari 1996) have sought to compare the “Parmenidean” Einstein to Severino and the thesis of the eternity of every being. As is widely known, Einstein’s special theory of relativity leads to the remarkable conclusion that all things within space-time – things past, present, and future – are eternal. However, Severino himself noted that the *necessity* that his writings bring into play is something essentially different from the *hypothetical-deductive logic* underlying scientific demonstrations. As we have seen, the eternity of every being *qua being* is a specification of the impossibility for anything (i.e. any being) to be other than itself. Severino speaks of the “originary structure” of knowledge to refer to this fundamental and indisputable appearing of every being’s self-identity, which is far from hypothetical and implies the eternity of every being:

not just the eternity of those beings that belong to the space-time dimension, but also the eternity of the *non-spatial* dimension of every being. What is eternal is not only every configuration of the world, but also every state of consciousness, every emotion, and every concept. Furthermore, according to Einstein – as for Parmenides before him – the experience of change is *illusory* because it shows beings passing from non-being into being: in his famous *Letter to the Family of Michele Besso*, Einstein wrote that “the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion”. According to Severino, by contrast, experience attests to variation, but not to the transition from non-being; hence, it is not at all illusory, and nor is time, understood as the supervening of eternals, their appearing and disappearing within the everlasting horizon of appearing:

Every being is at all times, in the sense that although it does not appear at all times, it coexists with what progressively appears in time, which is to say at all times (Severino 2015b, 140).

Severino is the philosopher of the eternity of every being, but he is also the philosopher of time understood as the coming forth of eternals. He has called this coming forth of eternals “Glory”, showing that it is destined to continue forever. And since every being is eternal, every being “is” even before its appearing, and continues to “be” even after it has disappeared. So the totality of what presently appears cannot be the dimension of the totality of beings, which leaves nothing outside itself. Severino calls it “infinite appearing”, pointing out that a totality which did not appear to itself (i.e. that lacked its appearing) would not be the totality of all beings.

5 The “Glory” of Every Being

1. The originary structure of being is the essential predicate of every being. It represents a set of interrelated meanings (being, nothingness, appearing, identity, difference . . .) that is untranscendable, in the sense that it constitutes what lies in the background of all appearing: no being could appear if it did not appear as what is identical to itself and other from what is other with respect to it. Now, any supervening thing that were untranscendable – just as the background of all appearing is untranscendable – would be something that (insofar as it is supervening) begins to be united necessarily with the determinations of the background. But this beginning to be implies the absurd, i.e. the (initial) nullity of that being in which this union consists. Therefore, it is impossible for any supervening thing to interrupt the spectacle of the supervening of eternals:

an untranscendable supervening thing is impossible and self-contradictory, insofar as it implies the nullity of being (and, strictly speaking, implies the nullity of itself [. . .]). Therefore, any supervening thing is necessarily transcended; and since any transcending thing is a supervening one, it is necessary for the supervening [of beings] to unfold infinitely (Severino 2007, 237).

The fundamental meaning of this Glory – which is ultimately “the genuine meaning of time” (Severino 2007, 205) – is the infinite unfolding of beings within the finite circle of appearing; and since the beings destined to supervene are infinite, so must be the beings destined not to supervene. The totality of this content must belong to the infinite appearing of beings, which is infinite insofar as nothing appears beyond it and the beings appearing within it are infinite.

2. The Glory theorem – i.e. the claim that it is impossible for what supervenes in the originary circle of appearing to be something untranscendable – also implies the existence of an infinite multiplicity of finite circles of appearing. Indeed, the actuality of the supervenient (i.e. the actual appearing of what supervenes in the transcendental horizon of appearing) is itself something which supervenes, and hence cannot be untranscendable either. In this case, what we have is the necessary transcending of the *actual appearing* that pertains to that which supervenes, insofar as it appears within the originary circle of appearing; and this transcending can only be the supervening of beings within a *different* dimension of actuality from that which pertains to the originary circle of appearing:

This different and transcending actuality, in other words, supervenes in *another circle of finite appearing* (Severino 2001, 172).

And since the appearing of what supervenes in this second circle is itself supervenient, it must be argued that it too is transcended by what supervenes in a third circle, and so on, *in indefinitum*. What are infinite, therefore, are the finite circles of appearing: those dimensions within which the originary structure of the truth of being has always shown itself (and will always show itself), i.e. the appearing of the being-itself of every being and its implications.

3. In relation to infinite appearing (which is the dimension of the totality of beings) there is no supervening or disappearing, in the sense that nothing enters or exits it. But this does not disprove the totality of the supervening that appears in the infinite finite circles of appearing. It may be argued, instead, that within infinite appearing that supervening appears in the totality of its unfolding: within it something eternal appears, namely the infinite unfolding of those beings destined to make their way into the infinite finite circles of appearing and much more besides – infinitely more. This has nothing to do with any kind of theological transcendence: Augustine, Aquinas, and any creationist perspective are over-

come. The finite which appears in infinite appearing is that finite which appears here and now: in finite appearing it shows itself in an abstract way, whereas infinite appearing is the very totality of the positive in its semantic concreteness; therefore, it coincides with the surpassing of the finite and hence too of finite appearing (and of the totality of the contradictions of the finite), where being appears in a processual way.

6 The “Trace” of the Infinite in the Finite

1. The finite is a contradiction not because, as Hegel assumed, it becomes other than itself (for “becoming other” is impossible), but rather because it necessarily stands in relation to every other being and to the totality of beings, which do not appear in their concreteness. We have seen how the originary structure of knowledge is also a finite horizon:

Since [the] originary [meaning] is and means what it is and means only in its connection with the All [. . .], in the isolation of the originary from the All (i.e. in the non-manifesting itself of the All in the originary), the originary is not the originary (Severino 1981, 73).

The contradiction of the finite is determined by the abstractness of its position – whereby what is posited is not what one intends to posit – whose removal is given not by the negation of its content, but by the concrete manifestation of the All, which is precisely the appearing of the totality of beings. Bearing in mind the conclusion we have reached through the Glory theorem – namely, the need for supervening beings to unfold infinitely, by supervening within the transcendental horizon of appearing – we may argue that the transcending of the contradiction of the finite

is an infinite journey, an indefinite expanding of the finite circle, such that the contradiction of the finite, qua finite, infinitely endures in its being infinitely transcended (Severino 2005, 89).

It may thus be argued that infinite appearing coincides with the eternal transcending of the totality of the contradictions of the finite. Every being therefore belongs to the totality of beings, as does the infinite unfolding of beings destined to supervene in the infinite finite circles of appearing. We shall now see in what sense it is necessary to argue that in every being the infinite totality of beings appears: not only in the generic sense whereby we say that the appearing of X is the appearing of its being other with respect to all that is other than X – so that

the analysis of X generically reveals the formal meaning of the whole – but also in a far more specific sense.

2. As every being is eternal, each being *necessarily* stands in relation to every other being; and since this relation is necessary, it is necessary for every being to be *present* in each individual being. Let X and Y be two beings: if X in no way appeared in Y (and if Y in no way appeared in X), there would be no relationship between X and Y, whereas the eternity of every being implies that X and Y are *necessarily* related each other (and to every other being). And if there was no relationship between X and Y, then neither X would be other than Y, nor Y would be other than X, i.e. neither X nor Y would be themselves. But how is X present in what is other than X? First of all, Severino notes that this presence is possible insofar as what is present is not the other in its concrete determinateness:

It is *necessary* that any being X – in and in relation to its concrete determinateness – be nothing *in any other being* Y, and that the concrete determinateness of Y (i.e. of any other being) be nothing in X. The concrete determinateness of X in Y is nothing. [. . .] In other words, it is necessary that something in X be nothing in Y and vice-versa: for otherwise X would be Y (Severino 2015b, 142).

In Y the “abstract form” of what is other than Y will thus be present (likewise, the “abstract form” of what is other than X will be present in X). And the abstract form of X, which is present in Y,

is not separate from the concreteness of X [. . .]; in fact, it is the ‘representative’, the ‘spokesman’ of that concreteness (Severino 2016b, 181).

Severino calls this presence “trace” and argues that it is a kind of *inclusion*: X, as the trace of X, is present in Y, and this is not a contradiction only insofar as X is present as what is negated, given that Y is not (i.e. does not mean) what is other than itself. In every being we must therefore distinguish between its *concrete part* (whereby it differs from its other) and its *abstract part*, which is precisely the presence in it – as what is negated – of the abstract form of its other:

The fact that X, *qua* X, is present, in Y, as what is negated means [. . .] that X *qua* X, in Y, is nothing; but the fact that the abstract form of X is present, in Y, as what is negated does not mean that, in Y, it is nothing; rather, it means that Y is, in itself, the negation of this form, which in turn is a being. This means that, given the abstract form X’s belonging to Y, the negation of this form (the fact of not being identical to this form) is not proper to Y *qua* Y, but rather to that *part* of Y that is not such a form (but it is proper to Y insofar as it includes such a part): it is that *concrete* part of Y which, being itself, is the negation of all that in Y is the *abstract* form of all that is not Y. The abstract form is the abstract part of Y. It is by virtue of its concrete part that Y is Y. If this concrete part did not exist, what would exist would not be Y, but the abstract form of all that is not Y (Severino 2016b, 189–190).

In those cases in which the relationship between X and Y is such that X is part of Y not only because there is a necessary relationship between X and Y, but also because X and Y are configured in a certain way – e.g. when X is “this lamp” and Y is the totality of beings of which “this lamp” is part – the concrete determinateness of X is also contained in Y, without thereby disproving what has previously been argued:

The part exists in the whole, as that whose existence is affirmed; yet, the part is not the whole and therefore in some sense, or according to some aspect, “being a part” is nothing in “being the whole” and vice-versa; and the abstract form of “being a part” is – as what is negated – in “being the whole”. “And vice-versa”, meaning: just as the whole includes – as what is negated – the abstract form of the part, so the part includes – as what is negated – the abstract form of the whole (Severino 2015b, 146).

Moreover, if it is true that each being is made up of its (*concrete* and *abstract*) parts, and that none of a being’s parts is the being itself, it is equally true that no being can be reduced to the sum of its parts isolated from each other. What makes a being a “totality” is the relationship between its parts, and since every being is eternal, what is also eternal (and hence necessary) is the relationship between its parts:

Every totality [“not just those totalities that are in turn parts but also totality *simpliciter*, which is not a part of anything”] is the unity and relationship between its parts. [. . .]. But a totality is not the mere set – the mere “sum” – of its parts, for a totality is the eternal and necessary relationship between them (a specific relationship, which distinguishes each totality from all others): it is “constituted” by this relationship; and this means that such a totality is itself. Nonetheless, the fact remains that even though the parts of a being are bound by an eternal and necessary relationship, none of them are the being itself (Severino 2011, 261–262).

Ultimately, the necessity that each being (including that being we call the appearing of beings) should stand in relation to every other being (and to the totality of beings) implies the necessity that every being eternally include – as we have seen – the traces of all other beings:

In the appearing of the sound of rain, the trace appears of sunshine, the sky, the most distant galaxies [. . .] every other being. [. . .]. In the appearing of the most irrelevant part of the Whole, the infinite traces of every other being appear (Severino 2001, 223–224).

Every being echoes with an infinite multiplicity of sounds, a kind of infinite symphony: these are traces of the infinite totality of beings and hence also of the infinite finite circles of appearing, and of the infinite unfolding of Glory itself: such traces are necessarily present. And while within the finite horizon of appearing – where the concreteness of beings appears in a processual way – the Infinite as