FOUNDING A NEW THEOLOGY THAT AFFIRMS THE ETERNITY OF BEING

REDRESSING EMANUELE SEVERINO'S

INQUISITION TRIAL

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Abstract

This article pursues two fundamental objectives. The first is to promote a movement of thinkers who urge the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith to review the inquisition process to which Emanuele Severino's thought has been subjected. The second is to begin to read Severino's entire contribution as a possible new and radical theology that can contribute to both a new hermeneutics of the Sacred Scriptures and a new scientific orientation that agrees with such theology. After describing some traits of the Severinian perspective (eternity, truth, nihilism), we discuss a few basic concepts from the Holy Scriptures (creation and God's freedom) through Thomas Aquinas's interpretation and amend these nihilistic concepts to show their possible hermeneutical continuity with the Severinian perspective. We then point out some potential and theoretical limits of the present discussion, which can be solved in future explorations.

Keywords: eternity, nihilism, creation, doctrine, faith

1. Introduction

Following precedents in the international literature [1, 2], this article pursues two fundamental objectives. The first is to promote a movement of thinkers who urge the former Holy Office, now the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (SCDF), to review the inquisition process to which Emanuele Severino's thought has been subjected. The second is to begin to read Severino's entire oeuvre as a possible new and radical theology that aligns with the Sacred Scriptures. Emanuele Severino is internationally recognized as an important philosopher whose contributions reflect the coherence of Italian thought [3]. Some also contend that his thought can instigate a paradigm shift in the history of Epistemology and Science [4]. This is because Severino irrefutably indicated

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the necessary eternity of any single being, affirming that everything exists forever in his *La struttura originaria* (*The Original Structure*) [5]. The concept of eternity inheres in both individual entities and in the horizon where these entities appear, and the theoretical structure of this irrefutable argument of eternity ('*necessario esser sé dell'essente che appare*' [the necessary being-self of the being that appears]) forms the core of Severino's thought.

We refer to the trial of Emanuele Severino conducted by the SCDF, and we propose that the matter be reopened and the sentence - issued in 1970 - reviewed. Severino, who died in January 2020, developed an entirely original mode of thought that exhibited the highest and most rational theological discourse. His dedication to precise logical-ontological argumentation made his work absolutely incontrovertible. The truth ('Destiny') of which he speaks is the most rigorous defence of the rationality inherent in God reflection in the history of thought, and, in pointing out this truth, Severino reveals the logical errors that have been committed throughout the history of Philosophy. Simply put, the incontrovertible discourse on absolute Being is an essential part of the absolute Being of God. This perspective could provide a new, incontrovertible foundation for Christian theological thought. However, the contested doctrinal disputes developed around this very aspect of Severino's thought, generating fear in the Church, which proceeded to respond in a reactionary way instead of facing the matter philosophically. Here, we will describe the facts, which have already been considered by Testoni [1].

In 1962, after the 1958 publication of the fundamental opus *La struttura originaria*, which demonstrated the inherent relationship between truth and eternity, Severino became a professor of Moral philosophy at the Catholic University. However, shortly after the 1964 and 1965 publications of the essays *Ritornare a Parmenide (Returning to Parmenides)* [6] and *Poscritto (Postscript)* [7], respectively - which made the eternalist core of *La struttura originaria* even more explicit - his academic position became very difficult, as he himself described in *Risposta alla Chiesa (Response to the Church)* [8], *Il mio scontro con la Chiesa (My Clash with the Church)* [9] and *Il mio ricordo degli eterni (My Memory of the Eternals)* [10]. Indeed, he had presented the idea that Catholic teaching is immersed in erroneous and nihilistic language that contrasts true revelation. Between 1968 and 1969, Monsignor Carlo Colombo, the rector of the Catholic University, Giuseppe Lazzati and Cardinal Garrone exchanged close correspondence on this topic, giving rise to an examination of all Severino's then-published texts by Cornelio Fabro, Joanne Baptipst Lotz and Enrico Nicoletti. Included in the Acta Apostolica, the response declared the incompatibility of Severino's philosophy with Catholic doctrine. In 1969, the prefect of the SCDF, Cardinal Franjo Seper, forwarded this verdict to Severino, inviting him to a meeting in Rome, which took place in January 1970 at the Holy Office. Severino recounted the meeting in the following way: "The procedure adopted by the Church with regard to me was the same as that which it had reserved for Galileio. As far as I know, the Church had not adopted those procedures for a long time and did not do so thereafter. I was intrigued and a

little flattered to find myself in the same rooms where that great - that great 'man' - had lived long before. But the relationship between the destiny of truth and faith is essentially more radical than the relationship between the Copernican system, and indeed between modern science, and faith." [10, p. 93]

It is important that a solution be found to the conflict between Christianity and Severinian theology, insofar as the former is meant to be a truth and not a myth. It is possible that a novel theology based on Severino's contributions can solve the problem of the philosophical foundation of Christianity. However, to realize such a project, it is necessary to revise the inquisition trial suffered by Severino, as was done in the cases of Galileo and Giordano Bruno.

2. The impossibility of becoming

Contemporary Philosophy and Epistemology, running in parallel with Science and Psychology, destroyed every possible truth value of religions, showing how their contents are nothing but consolations against the anguish of death and existential fatigue. As Emanuele Severino [11] clearly indicates, Western thought defines becoming as the oscillation between being and nothingness, and if this basic assumption is considered true, then it is futile to suggest that death is not annihilation. According to the philosopher, this assumption - which Science uncritically accepts as a foundation for its own speculative and pragmatic operations - entails faith, and this fundamental faith constitutes the most authentic point of conjunction between Metaphysics and Science. Because Science can do nothing against death except to postpone it for a few decades on average (and mainly for wealthy people), an interesting paradox arises wherein individuals, insofar as they equate their being with temporal permanence, dedicate an almost absolute faith in Science but return to a belief in religion when death - the impassable limit of Science - announces its presence. This they do despite the fact that they had previously discounted religion on the basis of its falsehood. Through this reflection, we hope to demonstrate how Severino's thought may provide a remedy to this paradox.

Severino reintroduces to philosophical language the incontrovertible character of the truth and solves the theoretical problems that, throughout the history of Philosophy, have arisen due to nihilism, which has made it impossible to define any incontrovertible discourse. He calls the 'Path of the Day' the discourse that is able to be non-contradictory, strictly logical, not rebuttable and capable of removing faith in annihilation - that is, the error of nihilism - from language. In contrast, the 'Path of the Night' is the fundamental error that develops within the 'faith in becoming', or in the conviction that being may not be, or rather is, nothing. This identification of being with nothingness is the radical negation of eternity. In fact, to establish that being oscillates between being and nothingness is to define it as nothing because it is no longer when 'it is past' and it is not yet when 'it is future'. This fundamental contradiction is the matrix of all Western thought, and it is this contradiction that we want to address because it is the origin of supreme anguish. Death and dying, from the

perspective of nihilist ontology, assume the radical meaning of absolute annihilation. This irrational faith means that Western representations of death are significantly more fearsome than those that appear in pre-ontological traditions and their mythologies. It is precisely for this reason that, in the face of death and the impotence of Science, the suffering entrust themselves to religions and ancient beliefs, but also to magicians and seers.

There is a difference between representing death as a moment of passage in which life abandons the world to reach other shores, and representing it as the definitive and impassable end of existence, beyond which absolute nothingness reigns [12]. In other words, simply believing that death is a passage without ever having contemplated definitive annihilation is different from believing it is a passage while knowing the meaning of nothingness. The latter vantage point elucidates the meaning of salvation. The loss of this meaning, once offered by Metaphysics and the theology founded on Metaphysics, has undermined the remedy that Metaphysics and religions intended to offer: the possibility of representing death as a passage, truthfully and not mythologically. The decline of metaphysical truth and the success achieved by the certainty that the only truth is the total contingency of being, as suggested by Science, have therefore definitively imposed on the representation of death the extreme expression of disillusionment. The success of scientific discourse and its epistemologies rests, at least in part, on this assumption: everything comes from nothing and everything will return to nothing. Contemporary Western thought is entirely immersed in this faith, though it does not understand its significance, entrusting itself to a scientifically constructed meaning of the world. As Severino pointed out, this is the reason why Abrahamic religions, based on metaphysics, have suffered a historically irreversible crisis [13].

With Severino's thought, the 'Path of the Day' has begun to appear, and the Church has no choice but to decide whether to resolve its doctrine in a mythology or to return to its foundation in an incontrovertible way. The new challenge that Philosophy poses to the contemporary tendencies of the Church, fideistic or perched on traditionalism, is to not rely only on the 'heart', or on what is believed to be 'acceptable', because this solution is no longer convincing. This is not simply because it does not stand up to the comparison with science and technology. Rather, after Severino's incontrovertible argument for necessary eternity, we can definitively do without mythological consolations or blind obedience to existing interpretations of theophany that are refutable and refuted by epistemologies and history. The real work that awaits the theologian and any religious doctrine that aspires to be based on truth is to confront Severino's argument and begin that path of language redemption that Severino commenced in the '*Response to the Church*' [8].

3. Creation - the first problem between Catholic doctrine and Severinian thought

The first knot to unravel regarding the SCDF's criticism concerns the creationist question: the set of theological and philosophical reflections on the origin of the world and the entities that first appeared. In this sense, the creationist concept opens the question of origin, which is an eminently metaphysical problem - if, by Metaphysics, we mean what lies beyond Physics - that is, contemplating the origin of the world as it appears. We must go back to Parmenides to situate the problem of being as a fundamental metaphysical question. The metaphorical parricide of Parmenides performed by Plato and Aristotle embodies Western thought's decisive forgetfulness regarding the meaning of being, which proceeded until Heidegger succeeded in recovering the primary instance of this problem without, however, providing a definitive solution.

From Plato and Aristotle onwards, we consistently find a metaphysics of the entity in which the problem of being (in the transcendental sense) is replaced by the problem of the distinction between being as difference (the determined entity) and being as other than absolute nothingness. Within this distinction, the metaphysical discourse of Thomas Aquinas takes form. Through this metaphysical discourse, Christian revelation, which Severino calls the 'Sacred', starts pursuing the 'Path of the Night': that of alienation from the authentic truth of eternal Being. However, torn from the language of Metaphysics, the Sacred can represent an authentic problem for the truth of being: "The encounter between truth and the Sacred is, first of all, the relationship of truth with an ontologically ambiguous language that is already prey to metaphysics, though it can also become a vehicle of truth. For this to happen, it must be snatched from metaphysics – that is, it must be understood as a saying that speaks the truth of Being. [...] But if the truth makes him speak the language of the Day, then the Sacred says things that deviate or obstruct the truth. [...] The Sacred says that God lived as a man among men. This becomes a problem for the truth only if it is understood as the language of the Day. And the same words acquire different meanings depending on whether they are said in the language of the Day or in the language of the Night. The Sacred also says: πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο (Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, Sec. Ioan., I, 3). Metaphysics does not even suspect that the meaning of this γίγνεσθαι may be different from the meaning to which it is accustomed, and 'creation' thus becomes the absurdity of a region of being (πάντα, created things), which could have been nothing and could become nothing again." [13, p. 160-161]

Thomas Aquinas's first project regarding a metaphysics of the entity dates back to the early work *De ente et essentia (On Being and Essence)* [14], in which he shows how the concept of essence, which is rendered with the Greek word *ousìa (ουσìα)*, is central to understanding the relationship between being and entity in Aquinas's thought: "There are therefore three different ways of possessing essence in substances. There is in fact something, like God, whose

essence is his very being [...] The being who is God is such that nothing can be added to it, and because of his very purity he is distinguished from every other being. [...] In a second way the essence is found in intellectual created substances, in which the being is other than their essence, even though the essence itself is devoid of matter. Their being is therefore not absolute, but received, and therefore limited and finite according to the capacity of the receiving nature; but their nature or quiddity is nevertheless absolute; not received in any matter. [...] In a third way the essence is found in substances composed of matter and form, in which not only is the being received and finite, because they receive the being from another, but the same nature or quiddity is received in the marked matter." [14, p. 121-125].

In order to understand Thomas's metaphysics of the entity, it is necessary to introduce the original Will as a will that composes essence and existence. This logic of composition presupposes a separation between essence and existence, in the sense that essence does not originally imply existence and existence does not originally imply essence. The becoming of the entity implies the existence of a will that combines essence and existence in the entity. All this can be seen in Thomas's discourse, both through simple apprehension, in which the entity is caught in its immediate presence to the intellect, and through double apprehension, in which the intellect ascertains the entity's mixed composition of essence and existence. One understands how the problem of being and its ontological status are resolved through the ideas of simplicity and perfection; in absolute Being there is no composition but simplicity, because its existence coincides with its very essence, and perfection, because it lacks nothing and nothing can be added to it. This simple and absolute Being Thomas calls God. On the other hand, the entity composed of essence and existence is defined as a 'creature', which is to say that it receives existence and therefore being from another. The creatural entity is both immersed in and distinct from the accidents of the field of existence; therefore, its essence does not vary with its ways of existence (which, according to Thomas in *De ente et essential*, constitute a secondary being).

4. The critical points of Tommasian metaphysics in reference to the notion of ontological difference - the problem of Genesis

The action of the original Will generates, in Thomas's metaphysics, an entity whose ontological difference from authentic Being is legible only on the plane of existence. The entity receives existence from absolute Being ('first cause') through participation. That is, the transcendental value of Being is forgotten, being located instead in the '*esse existentiae*' - the effected existence of the entity itself. Due to the link between original essence and derivative existence, it is necessary to define the ontological difference between these natures on the plane of the entity (wherein Being is understood as the entity that is the totality of entities), and not on the plane of existence alone. The link between essence and existence is an original link that cannot be dissolved, and it

is always guaranteed in Thomas's 'new', original perspective because essence constitutes the entity's self. Thus, in any intellectual act, the entity always shows itself (appears) as the original synthesis of essence and existence, which appear to be co-extensive with the entity itself. In this way, authentic Being - that entity that is the totality of entities - always shows itself (appears) in any intellectual act. We will say that this Being is infinite in that it transcends each finite entity that belongs to it (and with which it is in relation) as a totality. It is such a Being that this new perspective intends to call God.

The doctrine of Creation, as elaborated by theological language, is affected by Greek ontology - especially those aspects that express the possibility of becoming other than a creatural entity through the creative act itself. This possibility of becoming other suggests that both the Old Testament (and Genesis, in particular) and the original Greek philosophical texts (the fragment of Anaximander) were affected by the isolation imposed by the original Will, as it is within this isolation that the sense of becoming other emerges.

The myth of Genesis attempts to pre-ontologically resolve the problem of cultural origin experienced by the people of Israel, and it does so by employing a narrative of becoming something else, wherein the sense of becoming other is represented in the passage from disorder (κὰος - Kàos) to order (κὸσμος - Kòsmos). First, through the act of creation, the 'God of Israel' brings order to a disordered situation. The Garden of Eden represents this perfect state of order. Then, following man's disobedience. God restores order by expelling man from earthly paradise. However, these are not necessarily distinct phases, as the two movements from disorder to order are symbolic iterations of the same relationship. The myth reveals that man creates disorder through his desire, and the 'God of Israel' is simply a mask representing man's will for power (which, using theological language, we can define as original sin). The will for power creates disorder and then tries to impose order. Christ 'unmasks' this 'false idea of God', revealing that man's will for power was created to defend himself from the threat of nothingness, which arises through becoming something else.

In the Greek philosophical tradition, we find a parallel of the Genesis story in the fragment of Anaximander, which contains a passage describing a shift from the indefinite to the definite/defined that may be compared to the ontological sense of becoming other. The consequent nihilistic alienation of the entity from eternal Being is pronounced in this text, as existence is framed as a punishment inflicted on the entity, who must bear the guilt of having detached itself from the àpeiron (ἄπειρον) [15]. This punishment is the annihilation of the prevaricating entity in order to re-establish the original unity of the *àpeiron*.

The theological elaboration of the concept of 'God the Creator', especially under the impetus of philosophical and scientific modernity, demands that God be 'absolutely free' in the creative act itself - that is, not predetermined by anything. Thus, in Christian theological reflection, the concept of God is taken up in the manner of Genesis and Greek metaphysics, with God creating the world from nothing and actualizing this ontological sense of becoming something else, thus setting the doctrine of creation on the 'Path of the Night'.

Nothingness - another mask of man's will for power that expresses, in ontological terms, the most radical sense of becoming something else - is identified as the origin of the entities created by God's 'technical act'. All this leads to the formula '*creatio est productio rei ex nihilo sui et subjecti*' (creation is the production of things from nothing and subject to nothing), which lies at the heart of the theological doctrine of creation, bringing with it the linguistic ambiguity of Hellenistic metaphysics. In *Ritornare a Parmenide* [6], Severino highlights how this formula, which was taken up by scholastic theology to preserve God's absolute freedom in the act of creation, endorses nihilism by citing ontological nothingness as the origin of creatural entities. This oversight is a consequence of forgetting the sense of being promoted by Parmenides, and by all theology that refers to his ontological thought.

To correct this oversight, it is necessary to amend our interpretation of 'creatio est productio rei ex nihilo sui et subjecti' based on an understanding of how this expression was coined. It was not intended to affirm a nihilistic concept of God, but to refute the pantheistic theses that threatened the integrity and coherence of the revealed Truth. We find evidence for this in two authoritative, magisterial declarations of the Catholic doctrine on creation: (1) the declaration against the Albigensians and the Cathars [16] of the Lateran Council IV and (2) canons II and V in the Constitution 'Dei Filius' of First Vatican Council: "Se qualcuno non confessa che Dio ha prodotto dal nulla il mondo e tutte le cose che esso contiene, spirituali e materiali, nella totalità della loro sostanza; o se dice che Dio le ha create non con una volontà libera da ogni necessità, ma tanto necessariamente, quanto necessariamente ama se stesso; o se nega che il mondo sia stato creato per la Gloria di Dio: sia anathema (If anyone does not confess that God has produced from nothing the world and all the things it contains, spiritual and material, in the totality of their substance; or if he says that God created them not with a will free from all necessity, but as necessarily as he necessarily loves himself; or if he denies that the world was created for the glory of God: let him be anathema)" [16, p. 1057].

What the First Vatican Council intends to highlight is the 'productas' (from 'pro-ducere' - that is, to carry on, to manifest) of the creatural entity ('rei'). The creatural entity does not limit God in the creative act but manifests his absoluteness. Through the formula 'creatio est productio rei ex nihilo sui et subjecti', the conciliar doctrine sought to refute the theses of those who believed that All is God (pantheism as the annulment of ontological difference and Giordano Bruno's and Spinoza's necessitarianism), not those who believed that God is the All in which all things are (a position we could call pan-enteism), as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Acts (cf. Acts 17.27-28): "In him we live, we move and we exist".

The importance of the theme of creation is linked to the fact that, if we admit that entities can come from nothing, we also admit that they fall into nothing. Death in this sense means the absolute transience and contingency of entities. The impermanence of becoming therefore consists in the oscillation of entities whose being depends on the order of time, as per Aristotle.

5. Implications of Severino's criticism for death anxiety, religion and fundamental Western faith

From a theological point of view, the Catholic religion is still strongly linked to the will of truth expressed in metaphysical language, but contemporary thought has long since set aside God, or at least the pretension of referring to an absolute Being that is absolutely different from the world and humans. Because theories of disillusionment (Feuerbach, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche) and neo-positivist (Carnap, Hahn, Neurath, Feigl, Churchland, etc.), falsificationist (Popper) and post-positivist/falsificationist (Kuhn, Feyerabend, etc.) epistemologies have ruled that it is impossible to define any incontrovertible truth, it has been determined that humans are not an error of God, but God is an error of humans. For this reason, Anselm of Canterbury's ontological argument regarding Platonic ancestry, already brilliantly challenged by Hume and Kant, has definitively lost all rational value. With the idea of truth gone, contemporary thought entrusts Science - and Epistemology in particular - with the primary task of establishing what is credible and what is illusory. Thus, every fact worthy of consideration is reduced to the 'visible' - that is, to what can be measured or described according to conventionally established rules. This implies that everything that is invisible is only waiting for the light of systematic observation to emerge, and therefore that nothing that has been or will be studied need rely on transcendent explanations. In this dynamic, the physicalist reductionism that defines any human idea as an expression of the functioning of certain cortical circuits (Place, Smart, Armstrong, Jackson, etc.) has become increasingly prominent.

The widely shared idea is that, because the world already has all possible, humanly comprehensible causes within itself, everything that refers to perfection exhibits 'undue inference'. In this sense, it is impossible to establish a priori that what appears partially presupposes a completion that allows us to infer perfection beyond the visible. The Gestalt psychologists spoke of *amodalen Ergänzungen* (amodal completion) - that is, the perceptive faculty of optimally completing a form by inferring the parts that do not appear to the senses - as a refined strategy that the brain uses to reduce fatigue when deciphering the complexity of an irregular stimulus. Because we cannot control the mechanisms that activate this process, when we perceive something, we interpret reality in the simplest possible way, whether we want to or not. Using this faculty as a metaphor, one could also say that the metaphysical God is the hypostatization of an undue inference through which the world is explained in the simplest possible way. And precisely because God is a cultural bias, inferred from a limited and subjective perspective, taking God as a model of perfection or a standard for what the world must be like can only be false and produce violent results. Metaphysical explanations, in this sense, aim to impose on Physics a simplification that scientific discourse does not need because science is not afraid of complexity.

Science is certainly able to offer the most important solutions for survival, to an incomparably greater extent than all religions, which often compromise survival by causing wars. As such, contemporary thought reasons that religious faith exists to provide existential meaning and to alleviate death anxiety, which arises from living in a paradigm where death signifies absolute annihilation. Without the ability to refer to a transcendent dimension of being, humans will experience great anguish when confronted with death. With respect to the relationship between religion and Psychology, the 'American Psychological Association Resolution on Religious, Religion-Based and/or Religion-Derived Prejudice' [17] stated that religion is an important influence in the lives of the vast majority of people, permeating all human cultures and becoming increasingly diverse throughout the world. Indeed, because of religion's profound effect on individual and group behaviour, the authors cited religion as an important area of study. Further, they confirmed that Psychology, as a behavioural science, respects various faith traditions and theological systems, acknowledging their profoundly different methodological, epistemological, historical, theoretical and philosophical bases. However, all this is reduced to a mere object of study, as any other kind of psychological issue. The APA position rests on an epistemological foundation that fundamentally confutes the metaphysical perspective on which religions are based. The empiricist, evolutionist and neo-positivistic roots of behaviourism and cognitivism, from which almost all psychological research derives, considers humans from a natural point of view, defining them as mere animals. Whereas religion explicitly defines death as a passage, thereby providing a buffer against mortality anguish, Psychology - as with all sciences - implicitly adopts the opposite representation. In fact, the more materialistic the underlying epistemology, the more the meaning of death equals absolute annihilation [18]. All this serves to say that, although religions have been refuted based on their metaphysical foundations, being valued instead for providing consolation, consolation does not necessarily entail delusion, and disillusionment and anguish do not necessarily preclude delusion. The problem pertains to the truth, which is the foundation of certainty.

6. Italian theologians following Severino

In Italy, some Catholic theologians and Catholic philosophers dedicated to theological reflection are already confronting Severino's thought. They share the conviction that the theological redefinition of the concept of creation may be important for future Catholic Christian theology. This requires a resolution of the apparent incompatibility between Severino's thought and traditional Catholic theological doctrine.

Among theologians, Giuseppe Barzaghi discusses the possibility of rewriting the language used to express the theological doctrines of creation and incarnation according to Severino's arguments: "But is it really completely absurd to seek a point of contact, or to identify the point of view from which

these theses, so important, solemn and rigorous, can be reconciled with the Catholic sense of revealed doctrine? I think it is possible. And this would allow, from a philosophical point of view, the acceptance of Christianity as a problem and possibility by the truth of being." [19] With reference to the theological notion of creation, Barzaghi asserts that nothingness is not the reservoir from which God draws entities. The problem, with respect to the Sacred Scriptures, is linguistic and hermeneutical. Moreover, because God's action is God himself, to say that creation emerges from nothing means that it adds absolutely nothing to God that is God is All. In this sense: "The world adds absolutely nothing to God, for God can neither increase nor decrease, given that He is all Being and is infinitely perfect" [19, p. 85].

The theologian Pierangelo Sequeri also proceeds along the same line of thought. In his treatise on Fundamental theology *Il Dio affidabile (The Reliable God)*, he addresses Severino's lesson as a point of no return [20]. From his point of view, there is no scandal in recognizing that Severino's reflection on original Being solves the problem of nihilism. Sequeri, starting from Heidegger's reprise of the fundamental metaphysical question 'why being and not nothingness?', attributes to this Marburg thinker the 'complete sense of nihilistic landing': "the 'nothingness' here has now become a hypothesis whose possible reality is to be taken seriously, just as 'God' was until a moment before" [20, p. 463]. According to Sequeri, this question is meaningless from the speculative point of view, and it hides a much more relevant theme: the problem of finiteness. Expressed in theological terms, this is the problem of creatureliness: "The question is in fact, and speculatively speaking, meaningless: nothingness is not a hypothesis that presents an alternative to the strictly formulated essence, and from its development no real alternative to traditional metaphysics is born; this is because it belongs to it as one of the most obvious and least 'provocative' protocols. If anything, the question is a symptom: the completely essential theme that it actually brings to attention would be: 'why do I apprehend the feeling of nothingness instead of the simple consciousness of finiteness?'" [20, p. 463]

The only ontological reflection that allows us to re-found the concept of creatureliness starts from the recognition of the impossibility of becoming, understood as an oscillation between being and nothingness: "The entity - every entity - does not come from nothing and does not end in nothing ever and for any reason. It is certainly not without consequences that credit is given, explicitly or implicitly, to this aporetic. The naive foundation of an entity's 'non-being' in 'nothingness' - which precedes speculation on the structure of 'finiteness', almost as if nothingness were a sort of region or abyss contiguous to the limits of the entity, ready to swallow up the now-consumed entity - is responsible for many instances of hermeneutical mismanagement - 'nihilistic' indeed - of the theme of 'freedom' or 'creation'." [20, p. 464-465]

Finally, Leonardo Messinese's reflections resemble Severino's first works, and particularly those condemned by the SCDF - namely the *Poscritto* [7] of *Ritornare a Parmenide* [6] and *La struttura originaria* [5] - in that they attempt to mediate between the doctrine of the Church and Severino's argument

for necessary eternity. Messinese clarifies how the Church's debate with Severino's thought has effected a 're-foundation of classical Metaphysics', thereby justifying Severino's objections to the Western philosophical tradition. This presents the possibility of revisiting Christian theological thought through a Severinian perspective [21].

7. Conclusions

In this article, we presented some substantial problems in the relationship between Theology and knowledge within Western thought. In particular, we asserted the merit of Emanuele Severino's thought for the pursual of incontrovertible truth, despite the SCDF's pronouncement that Severino's philosophy is incompatible with Catholic doctrine. The goal of Catholic doctrine is to present a metaphysical solution to the problem of death. However, after Feuerbach, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud and others showed that an immutable, salvific Being (God) cannot possibly exist if contingency exists, and that the idea of God exists only to save humans from the anguish of annihilation, metaphysical arguments against contingency became indefensible, exhibiting only fideism. For several years, some Catholic scholars, philosophers and theologians have endeavoured to show that this incompatibility can be overcome by re-establishing all the central themes of Catholic theological doctrine, starting from Severino's theoretical points on the language of the Destiny of Necessity.

We agree with this perspective and have therefore taken up one of the crucial problems (that of creation) that contributed to the SCDF's condemnation. By comparing Severino's thought to that of Thomas Aquinas, our thesis intended to show how Severino affirms the absoluteness of the creative act without contradicting the ontological difference between God and creatures, which manifests as the original relationship between the totality of entities and each created entity. Redefining the theological notion of creation based on the philosophical language of Emanuele Severino (which itself recalls classical ontological wisdom) is the first step to overcome the 'apparent incompatibility' between this language and Catholic theological doctrine. The liveliness of the theological and religious debate around Severino's thought, despite the SCDF's sentence, encourages us to proceed in our search for a solution, furthering the discourse that began in *La struttura originaria* and that took shape in Severino's subsequent works.

We do not claim here that this article has solved the problem of Creation. We have simply laid the groundwork for a meaningful and in-depth discussion of how creation can be understood in a non-nihilistic way - that is, on the necessary eternity of all entities. Other topics that require redefinition therefore include redemption, resurrection and freedom. The solution can only derive from a rigorous eternalist ontology capable of founding an original and future theology.

Freed of nihilistic error, the wisdom of Christianity will not fade away, but will reveal the traces of the Destiny of Truth. This task falls to a 'future' theological wisdom.

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