

Senses and Forms of Error in *The Originary Structure* by Emanuele Severino

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This article concerns Emanuele Severino's masterpiece *The Originary Structure*, which was published this year for the first time in English. The article investigates the concept of "error" presented in the text. To understand one first notion of "error" offered by *The Originary Structure*, is to understand the notion of the "whole": The "error", as what exceeds the whole, is nothing: "nothing" as nihil absolutum. This implies that if an error is discovered, it is discovered as what exceeds the whole and nevertheless, for Severino, is meaningful. This is by me shown with the transition from an "idealistic" perspective to a "realistic" one. But if the error is, what can still mean that it is an "error"? This question leads me to the second notion of "error": The error exists as what is, at the same time, present and absent, so it can be called an "illusion". After having gained these two senses of the error, I proceed to examine what specifically is an error in *The Originary Structure* by Emanuele Severino, and to notice it would be arbitrary to supersede contradiction (which is an error, for Severino) even if this were necessary: arbitrary about how to overcome it.

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The Whole and the Nullity of Error

Something is "necessary" when there exists nothing beyond it: "beyond the whole, nothing" (Severino, 2026a, p. 317; 1981). Here, the "whole" is not the existent—which, *moreover*, would be surpassed by nothingness—but rather the relation between the existent and nothingness. If, besides books, there is a glass on the table, the books *are not* the whole of the objects on the table, but only a part of it. Yet this totality is a determinate totality, not the totality of the existent: Beyond the table and the objects upon it, there exists, for instance, me, who perceives them. Precisely for this reason, such a totality is partial (= *something* exists beyond it).

If the whole were that beyond which something *perhaps* exists, it would not be the whole. Therefore, all expressions of the kind "absolutely other" or "beyond the whole" either signify nothing—and are thus merely expressions—or they signify nothingness itself, and therefore indicate a part of the whole. Indeed, if I did not remember whether Giovanni had been present or not at my birthday dinner, I could not be remembering the totality of those present at my birthday dinner.

The essence of that part of the whole which is the totality of everything that is not a nothing (= is a non-nothing) is "positivity", that is, existence.

What *peculiar* meaning, then, does the whole have from the perspective of *The Originary Structure*? To "deny" the whole would mean to exhibit something other than the whole. Yet something "other" can only be

insofar as it is *identical* with itself and *different* from that in relation to which it is other.¹ But the law constituting the formal side of the whole is precisely that of self-identity and difference from the other. *Therefore*, there cannot exist something other than the whole.²

Note on “Impossibility”

Things being so, “impossibility” is itself nothingness. Therefore, one cannot claim that something is impossible because it is contradictory, since otherwise the impossible would not be a nothing, but rather a contradiction, and the impossibility of contradiction would not be originary, but the result of the process of *forgetting* contradiction. The “immediacy” of non-contradictoriness must therefore be stated and conceived as follows: “beyond non-contradictoriness, nothing”, and not: “contradiction is a nothing”.

Note on the Polysemy of Contradiction

At this moment I am writing this article, but I would—let us suppose—like to be on holiday in Greece. Why do I say “would like”? It is because my being on holiday in Greece while I am writing this article can only be a *wanting to be* on holiday in Greece, namely, the *attempt* to be in Greece, where “being in Greece” is merely an expression. This expression does not fail to signify anything; rather, it signifies *nothingness*. Now, it is precisely this sense—the sense of “attempting” (Severino, 2026a, Chapter 8)—that Severino attributes to the word “contradiction” and to its paronyms. This meaning of contradiction is not only a *re-signification* of contradiction, at least with respect to how it has been understood by certain thinkers of the past³, but it is also a *different* meaning from the one that Severino himself assigns to it in other passages of *The Originary Structure*. Let us therefore begin by asking: Why does Severino need a re-signification? It is because this is the only way to avoid forgetting a considerable number of *semantic* situations without thereby admitting the impossible. It is, that is, a preservation through substitution.⁴

What, then, should we say of that different meaning? If “contradiction” means an empty intention, then every contradiction differs from every other contradiction simply by virtue of the fact that one is a determinate intention and the other is another determinate intention. They cannot, in fact, differ because of a difference in contents. And yet Severino acknowledges *the meaning* of coming into being and ceasing to be, of arising and vanishing, all of which are recognized as contradictions (cf. §5). There is therefore no doubt that, in his text, contradiction is polysemous.

Let us now proceed to exemplify a sense of the whole that is rejected by Severino, yet can be derived from his text: the sense of the whole as the experience of objects.

“Experience” as the Totality of Being

In Chapter 11, Severino presents that “stage” of his inquiry in which it still remains unknown whether the totality of present entities is or is not the totality of entities *simpliciter*: This is the problem at issue.⁵ “Present”

¹ I refer the reader both to the formal anticipation of the concept of the originary structure presented on p. 71 of Chapter 1 and to its more extensive treatment in Chapters 3 and 12.

² In this article, the expressions “identical to itself” and “non-contradictory” will mean the same thing. But what about nothingness? On the one hand, it seems to be *different* from the totality of the positive, and thus seems to constitute the whole; on the other hand, it seems itself to be a positive, since, standing before us, who are by no means nothingness, it cannot be *absolute* nothingness. This contradiction, according to which nothingness is and is not a positive, is addressed by Severino in Chapter 4.

³ Since the bibliography would be immense, I shall refrain from providing it and instead refer the reader to the remainder of my article, which will highlight two types of contradiction understood as contradiction proper.

⁴ “Contradiction”, “contradictory”, “aporia”, and “paradox” are not mere words, after all. Nor are they words that, by signifying nothing, thereby signify nothingness itself.

⁵ The problem, then, is not knowing nothing about something, but knowing that one is in doubt about something.

are the objects of my consciousness, among which—so to speak—my own consciousness itself stands out.⁶ In Chapter 13, by contrast, one reaches “originary metaphysics”, that is, the awareness of the necessity that, beyond present entities, other entities exist, whereby the problem is resolved. What, however, is meant by the metaphysical character of the metaphysical?

In order for something to be absent, it is necessary *to be aware* of what is absent—this is true for Severino too. When I feel nostalgia for my deceased grandfather, is my grandfather present or absent? I do not feel nostalgia for my *imagined* grandfather, because my imagined grandfather is present: I feel it for my *perceived* grandfather. Yet I am not perceiving my deceased grandfather either, and therefore he is absent. This kind of absence cannot *simply* be an absence but is rather the presence of the absent: a presence-absence. What, then, is simply absent? And for whom?

Everything that is simply absent, such as, for instance, coffee for the ancient Greeks, must necessarily be so *for someone else*, not for the one who is aware of it. Every “pure” absence, so to speak, is such only insofar as someone, *seeing* this absence, ascribes it to someone else. In this respect, since even the absent does not transcend experience, experience is the whole.⁷ Yet earlier we were speaking of the problem of understanding whether the totality of present entities was or was not the totality of being. If, however, the totality of present entities cannot but coincide with the totality of being, in what sense did we distinguish them? And in what sense does Severino distinguish them?

The totality of *experience* is not the totality of present entities, because the latter are those that are *simply* present: for instance, this white fog. But we have said that there exist not only present entities but also present-absent ones. *Here*, then, lies the difference. What, however, should we say of someone who experiences no nostalgia whatsoever and has no experience of any present-absent entity? The experience of such a person, although different from that of someone who, for instance, feels nostalgia, is likewise the whole, even though in this case experience is exhausted precisely in the totality of present entities. Once again, this does not mean that pure and simple absence does not exist, but rather that this lack affects *others*, *in the eyes* of the one who ascribes it to them, *but does not affect* the one who ascribes it—and that therefore these “others” too belong to experience. My experience, therefore, like every experience, cannot but be *the whole*. And yet, has not the sense of the “totality of being” changed with respect to the sense given to it by Severino?

First of all, let us reflect on the sense in which we have used “experience”. For instance: experience is consciousness of things insofar as I *instantiate* it. In this sense, I experience *both* being aware of something *and* nostalgia. When, however, I said that present-absent *objects*, as well as simply present objects, belong to my experience, I meant “experience” as the *synthesis* of what I instantiate and of objects. This synthesis is the totality of being. (From now on, however, we shall call “experience” instantiation as such.)

We must, however, distinguish *instantiation* from the fact that I instantiate an experience. Indeed, “others” are known precisely as other instantiations of an experience, and it is by virtue of instantiation that presence-absence too is an experience (experience is instantiation). That *I*, however, am the one who sees a lack is *what* allows us to say that nothing is absent from *my* experience. At this moment, I experience the whiteness of the fog while conversing on the phone with Roberto, my friend. For whom, between Roberto and myself, can the whiteness of the fog be *simply* unknown? And who is capable of realizing that it is unknown? If the answer were

⁶ “Phenomenological immediacy”, cf. Severino, 2026a, Chapter 2.

⁷ What we call “presence-absence” is undoubtedly a contradiction. More precisely, it is being simultaneously conscious and *unconscious* of something, with this unconsciousness usually being called “absence”.

that the object is unknown to me, then precisely for this reason the object would not be unknown to me. Only to Roberto can the object be unknown, and this *only insofar as* I am aware of the unknown object, whatever the object may be: an object of consciousness or of presence-absence. Moreover, for Roberto that object is *not* absent if one “puts oneself in his shoes”, and in doing so I *become* Roberto. He is therefore no longer an “other”.

It remains established, therefore, that every experience-of-objects is, for itself, the totality of being. It can fail to be so only if it is someone else’s experience, or only “in the eyes” of someone else. I cannot therefore *seek* the totality of being, but can only see others seeking it, just as others cannot seek the totality of being, but can only see me seeking it. In this respect, and without any rhetoric or misunderstanding, one must say that only others can be in error (in seeking), whereas *the I*, as the *possession* of every object, is truth, that is, the whole. But if truth cannot be *attained*, what, then, *was* the act of seeking? It was arriving at the *knowledge* that the I was and is the truth.

Only if I do not put myself in the shoes of others, to whom I may certainly ascribe deficiencies, are they erring. But it suffices that I adopt the standpoint of another for *everyone* to be truth. The goal, then, is not truth, but the understanding of truth (or, if it is lost, the recovery of truth), and therefore the aim of communication is to make truth understood, not truth itself. Thus, finally, the rejection of truth is not the rejection of truth, but rather the rejection of understanding truth.

Note on Self-Consciousness

But on what basis do we affirm experience? Must it stand before us, that is, must it be merely *an object of* consciousness?

Now, consciousness is either only consciousness of something other, or it is self-consciousness. In the former case, it follows that what cannot be affirmed is precisely that very consciousness of things, insofar as it is not an object to itself. Thus, one may affirm the existence of the sky and the stars, but not of the one who beholds the sky and the stars. In order to avoid this inability to affirm consciousness, the consciousness belonging to the originary structure is realized as *self-consciousness* (Severino, 2026a, Chapter 2). Yet, precisely because it is self-consciousness, it is not *merely* an object but is at once subject and object. That consciousness is a “subject”, however, means precisely that consciousness is an experience. Hence, on the one hand, even self-consciousness is *the experience* of self-consciousness; on the other hand, consciousness of something other is itself an experience. A non-instantiated, unexperienced consciousness is therefore impossible.

Corollary on the Meaning of “Originary Metaphysics” and Transcendental Consciousness

The affirmation of any metaphysical entity (and therefore also of the “originary metaphysical”) is either the recognition of the metaphysical as present—in which case it is no longer *metaphysical*—or the recognition of its transcendence. But what is “transcendence” here? It is precisely presence-absence, and it is the only experience one can have that differs from the pure presence of something.⁸

Moreover, although its field of objects is broader, presence-absence is also the way in which the “past” and the “future” are known: “The totality of the Ph-immediate, instead, surpasses time in the sense that the totality of time is present, or it is the Ph-immediate: Time is the Ph-immediate content of consciousness” (Severino, 2026a, p. 190). (This, however, should be understood with the qualification that follows.)

Severino distinguishes the present entity (the “phenomenologically immediate”) from the present-absent entity (the “metaphysical”), which is affirmed on the basis of “logical immediacy”, yet he insists that the

⁸ “Metaphysics”, as an attitude rather than an object, is “nostalgia”. Transcendental consciousness is as well (see below).

metaphysical entity itself is phenomenologically immediate.⁹ He is certainly right, provided that we recognize this implies a *new* sense of the “phenomenologically immediate”: It is no longer the presence of things, but rather the presence-absence of things. The immutable is known in this way. But does the distinction Severino draws between the “physical” and the metaphysical stop here?

Error as Excess With Respect to the Whole

For Severino, the metaphysical entity is not impossible in the absence of an experience of it. I, as the originary structure affected by becoming, am not the ground of the immutable (Severino, 2026a, Chapter 13). Yet, according to the perspective developed in the previous section, an object is impossible if no experience *whatsoever* is had of it. The “metaphysical”, therefore, understood as an entity beyond experience, *was* for us a nothing—that is, an error. It was *only because* this meaning was unknown to us that we affirmed what we affirmed.

Once the meaning of the metaphysical has been grasped, we can *no longer* be who we previously were. But if this means claiming that what we were is a nothing, then what has changed is not the meaning, *the essence*, of error, but rather *what* is affirmed as error. An “idealism” has been replaced by a “realism”, but the meaning of “error” as *being nothing* has not been replaced. But what other sense of error is available to us—one that *does not* estrange us from who we once were? Does *The Originary Structure* help us answer this question? I shall respond in the next section.

Now, the experience that comes to reveal the limit of another experience is a common experience. In the present case, however, we cannot doubt that, so long as this further experience has not occurred, no such limit exists; and if it does occur, that limit will exist only in the eyes of others (even if *we ourselves* eventually become those “others”). From the standpoint of the experience described in the second section, the idealist truth was by no means a partial truth: It exhausted truth itself, that is, it was the totality of being. To forget this is to become estranged from oneself and to fall once again into the trap of the first sense of error, even though its value has now been reversed. We are *now* in a position to affirm a limit to the idealist perspective of the second section; but if, for this reason, we were to claim that this limit had always already existed, then we would also have to claim that there had never been any idealist perspective at all, but that it had already been absorbed into realism (that is, we *had always already* been realists). Without any loss of precision, one may simply say this: “Idealism” has a meaning. We are thus at the point of exhibiting the second sense of error.

“Negation Being Understood Here as the Positing of Something as Superseded” (Severino, 2026a, p. 79)

Let us interpret this expression as *the presence-absence* of error. Here, the present-absent entity manifests itself as error *with respect* to what is simply present, which thereby acquires the status of truth. Returning to the earlier example: The realist *sees* the world as independent of experience, yet for the realist idealism is not a mere word; rather, it is the error whose presence-absence is required in order for realism to be true. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the idealist.

But did we not say that “we can *no longer* be who we once were”, and therefore that error must be a nothing? Or is it rather the case that, precisely because “we can no longer be *who we once were*”, error is not a nothing?

⁹ “This ‘other’ than the totality of the immediate belongs on the one hand, i.e. as a present meaning, to the totality of the immediate, but, on the other hand, i.e. insofar as it is what the meaning itself expresses, it precisely lies beyond the totality of the immediate” (Severino, 2026a, p. 367).

What is impossible is not the coexistence of a realist and an idealist—and there are many other such oppositions—but *the identity* of the realist and the idealist. *Whoever* is a realist cannot be an idealist (and these “positions” are far from being of interest only to philosophers), but whoever is a realist may once have *been* an idealist: This is precisely what has just happened to us. It should be noted, moreover, that in this way idealism can no longer be the truth of everyone (cf. §2), but at most the truth of everyone except the realist.

Certainly, an account of what it means to be an idealist and of what it means to be a realist requires a specific treatment. But such a treatment cannot proceed by obliterating the very *difference* it seeks to explain. Nor can it avoid adopting some position with respect to that difference, even if that position is merely the suspension of judgment.

From this point onward, we shall refer to this “new” sense of error as illusion. (It should also be specified that the suspension of judgment may itself constitute an illusion.)

Since the transition from the second to the third section may have seemed abrupt, let us pause to consider more carefully what meaning must have emerged in order for us to conceive a limit to the idealist perspective advanced in the second section.

Is “Realism” the Affirmation of an Entity Transcending Consciousness?

To avoid unnecessary complications, let us conduct the argument by reducing experience to *conscious* experience, thus excluding presence-absence, and by reducing “idealism” to the thesis that every entity is necessarily an object of consciousness.

In the second section, the absent entity was the entity that is *not* an object of consciousness. This sense of absence cannot be affirmed unless one knows what consciousness is. Moreover, we knew ourselves to be *consciousness*. We thus were ourselves *self-consciousness*. Now, how can one who sees oneself as seeing perceive something *that is not* the object of one’s own seeing? What meaning can “object” have, if I know myself to be an act of seeing, other than that of an object *seen*? If, then, “absent” means something that is not the object of the consciousness that I am, the absent is properly a nothing. Yet, by affirming a limit intrinsic *to this perspective*, we have affirmed that this is not *the only* sense of absence. How, then, are we to conceive this other sense?

If “realism” is the affirmation of an entity that transcends the consciousness *that I am*, then realism is impossible. If, on the other hand, realism consists in *losing oneself* in things, in attending to nothing but things, then realism exists, and is perhaps the most widespread attitude among those entities which, after all, are themselves consciousnesses. But consciousnesses for whom? Certainly not for themselves, for in that case they would be *self-consciousnesses*, but, for example, for me, who *sees them* lose themselves in things. That I, by contrast, do not lose myself in things is entirely irrelevant, since I have already established the existence of realism when I have seen someone perceive things without perceiving that they are perceiving things. Thus, it turns out that *I myself am* what is purely and simply absent—but not for myself, because this “absence” has no *for-whom*; rather, it is simply the presence of things, and of things *alone*.

Every affirmation of a metaphysical entity—that is, every *realism*—is therefore necessarily either a losing oneself in the metaphysical entity, or the admission of the possibility—whether past or future—of such a losing of oneself.¹⁰

¹⁰ What we call a “nighttime dream” *becomes* a “dream” *when* one awakens, just as a lovestruck young man ceases to be absorbed in the company of his beloved when the professor calls his attention back to the lesson in class.

Furthermore, it remains true that even if, *once* America had been discovered, one were to maintain that it already existed before its discovery, this realism is possible only after America has been discovered. For, from the standpoint of one who has not yet discovered it, the world, although indeed a world “in itself”, is nonetheless a world without America.

The Movement Proper to the Senses of Error

Only if error is understood as a nothing can one *come* to grasp error—whether it is something that previously existed but was not known, or something that, because it was not known, did not even exist before¹¹—as one can likewise *come* to forget it.

With regard, instead, to error as illusion, the only possible movement is *the exchange* between truth and illusion, whereby what was true becomes illusory, and what was illusory becomes true.

Transition

Whether the polysemy of error that we have identified in *The Originary Structure* is genuinely a polysemy, or whether it is instead an ambiguity of error, I do not intend to determine. This is because the remainder of the article will be entirely devoted to indicating *the meaning* of that which, depending on whether one opts for polysemy or ambiguity, will be regarded either as exceeding the Severinian perspective or as illusory from within it. We shall therefore focus *on contradiction* (in the traditional sense), and thus on the meaning of non-contradictoriness and on that of movement, seeking to understand the ways in which they overlap.

Non-contradictoriness, Contradiction, and Movement

In the first section, we said that something is non-contradictory if it is identical with itself and different from something else. In the section titled “Historical Notes Concerning the Aporia of Becoming and Its Resolution” (Severino, 2026a, pp. 399-406), it is stated: “becoming consists in a transition from non-being to being” (p. 401). The most effective sentence, in my view, for making clear that such a passage is contradictory is the following: If something (for instance, this table) had always been and would always be what it is, it would neither come into being nor perish; *therefore*, coming into being and perishing are a not-being-what-one-is. They are “contradictions”. Shall we therefore say that *movement* is contradiction?

“Movement” is also the flight of a swallow across the sky. But the flight of the swallow can be conceived as *an eternal* moving of the swallow: What contradiction would there be here? There is none. Indeed, we said that *it is coming into being and ceasing to be* that are contradictions, and that it will therefore be the coming into being (or ceasing to be) of the swallow’s flight that constitutes a contradiction. I do not think the observation that even *the rest* of the swallow is not a contradiction will cause any scandal. Moreover, this rest (“immobility”) does not coincide with non-contradictoriness either, because both movement, rest, and the entity in movement or at rest are non-contradictory.

¹¹ In the first case, error is what exceeds the totality of *known* things; in the second, it is what exceeds the totality of things *simpliciter* (which, for the idealist, *coincides* with the totality of known things). In both cases, error exceeds a past totality. There is therefore no error when one is dealing not with a totality, but with what is *perhaps* a totality. If, in fact, I do not know whether the pen and the computer exhaust the objects on my desk, should I come to discover that there is also a pencil and nothing else, this would not constitute an excess with respect to a past totality, but rather a transition from doubt to certainty. Nor would it constitute such an excess if I were to discover that there had in fact been only the pen and the computer on the desk. I hope it will be useful to refer the reader back to the first paragraph.

Note on Parmenides' Thought

If Parmenides' thought is the thought of one who claims that non-contradictoriness is the whole, then this thought *does not forget movement*, provided that movement is understood as *translational* motion. If it does forget it, this does not occur because displacement is contradictory, but for other reasons. For this reason alone, among others, when reading the first book of Aristotle's *Physics*, one has the impression that Parmenides has not been done justice and that it has not even been understood that the introduction of a substratum as something permanent with respect to the coming into being and ceasing to be of contraries (or intermediates) is by no means an exclusion of those contradictions that *precisely* consist in *the coming into being and ceasing to be* of contraries (or intermediates). Severino, then, is right (and follows Parmenides) when he sees in the relation between evident content and logical content an incompatibility; and he is right (and follows Parmenides) when he asserts eternity as the *necessary* consequence of the affirmation of non-contradictoriness alone.¹²

Before entering into the question of the location of contradiction (whether in the passage or in the terms) of becoming, I remind the reader that we have already identified a kind of contradiction that is not movement: I am referring to presence-absence.

The Location of the Contradiction of Becoming

According to Aristotle, becoming is always "from something, to something", that is, becoming is always enclosed by terms: "πᾶσα μεταβολή ἐστὶν ἐκ τίνος εἰς τί" (*Physics* 225a). But what is *the passage* from one term to the other? A swallow in flight comes to a stop. *While* it is coming to a stop, is it perhaps both flying and at rest? If the answer is "yes", in what sense, then, do we *distinguish* the passage from the terms? What occurs in the "instant" of that passage? Or perhaps there is no such instant, but only *the overlapping* of two temporal intervals? I believe that the solution to these problems can be found in the *Physics*, but since this is not the place to address them, I shall discuss them only insofar as is necessary to show *the possibility* of a non-contradictory term of becoming.

A swallow, having been at rest, begins to fly. How can its initial rest be expressed? Can it be expressed without falling into contradictions? Everything depends on understanding whether, in order to see the swallow at rest, I must also see the nothingness of its future movement (cf. the quotation in the following footnote, outside the main text). Indeed, if the swallow moves, then this movement *comes into being*, and the passage from rest to movement is a double contradiction: It is the being-nothing of rest insofar as rest ceases, and it is the being-nothing of movement insofar as movement begins (cf. §5). But the swallow is *still* resting in the nest. Certainly, afterwards it moves (which is why we said "still"). How, however, can we express its *still* being at rest in the nest?

As regards the content of the present moment, beyond the resting swallow, nothing exists. *This* is the mode of expression and thought that allows us to account for the swallow's rest as something that has not yet ceased. And yet we have said that the swallow later moves. Here lies the crucial point. On the one hand, rest is *visible* without being absorbed into the contradictoriness of its cessation; on the other hand, since the swallow has subsequently moved, it is a rest identical with nothingness. *How is it possible* to have before us rest both as pure rest and as rest identical with nothingness? How is it possible that the contradiction of the identity between rest and nothingness does not completely absorb rest into itself, as every contradiction worthy of the name should?

¹² Thus, the "being" of the entity is both its non-contradictoriness and its eternity.

Now, the only possible answer is that contradiction is and is not the whole. I have thus anticipated a principle that will be formulated and reapplied in the sixth section.

Finally, I should point out that in the text I have examined there is no actual treatment of the contradictoriness of becoming, but only a hint at it,¹³ which Severino develops elsewhere (Severino, 2026b). This subsection has therefore had the sole purpose of showing in what sense one can distance oneself from the thesis expressed in that hint.

Note on the Contribution of the Universal to the Thing

This white of the fog, just as the coming into being and perishing of things, are known as such, even if neither non-contradictoriness nor contradictoriness are known. We affirm this on the basis of the fact that, before understanding this white of the fog as a non-contradictory entity, it was nevertheless already known to us, and we distinguished it without difficulty from the dark blue of the night, just as we distinguished the survival of one chick from the death of another. This observation should serve as intellectual equipment for subsequent investigations and should protect us from the unpredictability of arriving, on the basis of a new universal, at the comprehension of a meaning that had already been exhibited.¹⁴

In this respect, Parmenides does not even forget the coming into being and ceasing to be of things *as such*; rather, he forgets them when they are understood as contradictions. He has already risen to the “ontological” comprehension of the world, and it is from this standpoint that he proceeds.

On the Ways out of Contradiction

That I feel nostalgia for my deceased grandfather means that he is and is not an object of consciousness: presence-absence (cf. §2). Since contradiction is the identity of different things, it exhausts the different sides within itself, so that contradiction is the whole.

Yet there is such a thing as an exit from contradiction. How is it possible to exit the whole? Evidently, contradiction is and is not the whole. It *is* the whole because it exhausts its sides within itself; it *is not* the whole because its sides exceed it. If we were to formulate the issue differently, either contradiction would be forgotten, or non-contradiction would be forgotten. Let us therefore turn to showing the ways in which one exits contradiction.

First of all, let us say that when one exits contradiction, one does not exit *from nothing*¹⁵, and therefore, if the “seeming” being of contradiction consisted in its not existing at all, one has not exited contradiction. But what, then, would it mean to exit, for instance, from the contradiction of the presence-absence of my father? Example: My father is *before me*, but not *before my mother*. The exit, then, consists in the *differentiation of respects*. Let us suppose that, returning from a long journey, I feel nostalgia for my father shortly before the plane lands, and that I then meet him at the airport, at the height of joy. In the meantime, however, he is absent for my

¹³ Cf. p. 446 in Severino, 2026a: “And nor is it possible to state that, as part of the domain of the immutable, the concrete presence of the whole is something that arises, for, in that way, one would be affirming that the being constituted by that concrete presence is not (before arising)”.

¹⁴ Severino would certainly not agree with what is maintained in this note, and he would not agree because whoever excludes the self-identity of what they say and of what they are talking about is in contradiction *from the outset*. What means, after all, would such a person have at their disposal *to exclude* the possibility that they are themselves in contradiction? However, a discussion of this issue—namely, the issue of the entity isolated from its “being”—is, in its own way, beyond the scope of my article.

¹⁵ Although we use this expression in a different sense from Severino, for whom escaping contradiction means ceasing to attempt (cf. the *Note on the Polysemy of Contradiction*).

mother, for whom my brother, my cousins, the room in which they are located, *and nothing else* are present: Only for this reason can my mother fail to confuse my father's absence with his presence-absence. Hence, if we return to reflecting on my nostalgia, we must say that *even now* my father is present and absent, but present to me and absent for my mother. Neither side of the contradiction has been lost.¹⁶

And yet, sometimes it happens that I return from a journey feeling nostalgia for my father, but instead encounter my mother waiting for me at the airport with surprise, and my experience is exhausted in her alone. In this case, my father is simply absent, and this absence is such insofar as I *lose myself* in the presence of my mother (cf. §4.1). Here, one side of the contradiction—namely, the presence of my father—has been lost, whereas the other has remained; and yet this does not mean that I have failed to exit contradiction. Let us call this the unilateral exit from contradiction.

As the reader will have noticed, we denounce the polysemy of the “resolution” of contradictions *because* there is more than one way of exiting contradiction (leaving aside the possibility of remaining within it). Even if, therefore, one *were to establish* the necessity of exiting contradiction, the following would remain unjustified: Why exit it by differentiating respects rather than unilaterally? Why exit it through this side rather than through the other? What, moreover, is the exit from contradiction if not the loss of contradiction itself? But what can be *lost* can only be the *first sense* of error (cf. §4.2), because the second sense of truth as presence cannot dispense with error (cf. §4).

We have thus reached the final consideration of this article. The contradiction (Severino, 2026a, Chapter 13) produced by the fact that non-contradictoriness prevents the coming into being and ceasing to be of things (cf. §5), while *at the same time* this coming into being and ceasing to be appears, can certainly be resolved through the twofold affirmation of *metaphysical* immutability (cf. §4.1) and the physical precariousness of things. Differentiation of respects. But it can also be “resolved” by affirming that no immutable entity exists, or that no ephemeral entity exists. Unilateral exit. Why this one rather than that one? Why that one rather than this one?¹⁷

References

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¹⁶ Certainly, what has been lost is the fact that my father was absent *for me*, but that this *should* be lost is clear because otherwise the contradiction itself would not have been lost. Moreover, what is distinctive about the example is that, since for someone who is aware of the absence of something, that absence cannot exist, not only did the contradiction have to be lost, but neither could the aspect of it according to which my father is simply absent for me be preserved, because this *aspect* of the contradiction is impossible (or is possible *only within* contradiction).

¹⁷ As for that “twofold affirmation”, matters are certainly more complicated, since *The Originary Structure* affirms *the identity* of the being of what becomes with that of what is immutable. And yet, precisely because they are so complicated, they cannot be so simple as to allow us to interpret Severino's text as asserting the exclusive existence of the metaphysical immutable, even if only for the fact that, otherwise, the contradiction between immutability and precariousness would not even arise—a contradiction which, for its part, would have *led* to that assertion of exclusivity. *If*, then, in the final chapter of *The Originary Structure* there is something like a “resolution” of the contradiction between experience and the logos (something that Severino himself subsequently denied, arguing that the text remains within contradiction), then this resolution (as I interpret it) can only be, since the becoming *of the being* of things is there acknowledged to have meaning, the twofold affirmation of the immutability of *metaphysical* things and the precariousness of *physical* things.