

# Symposium

## The Other Side of Italian Thought: Emanuele Severino

Contemporary Italian philosophy has become recognized internationally as a distinct tradition, often associated with a post-Foucauldian notion of biopolitics and essayistic forms enabling a quick reaction to the affairs of the day yet without compromising the systematic ambitions of philosophical thought. But Emanuele Severino (1929–2020) shows a radically different side of Italian philosophy: unabashedly metaphysical, uncompromisingly Parmenidean, and increasingly recognized as one of the most remarkable and challenging thinkers of the twentieth century — in the words of Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari, the only alternative to Martin Heidegger.

Over the course of six decades, from *La struttura originaria* (1958) to *Testimoniando il destino* (2019), Severino developed a most original and untimely philosophical project, which attempts to think the relationship between nihilism and the tradition of the West, the incontrovertibility of the truth of being, the contradiction of becoming, the eternity of all beings. Severino came to refer to his work as to ‘the language that testifies to destiny’, namely a testimony to the eternal and necessary structure of the appearing and disappearing of the eternal beings — the ‘destiny of necessity’ (*Destino della necessità*, 1980).

The symposium *The Other Side of Italian Thought: Emanuele Severino* aims to introduce the principal axes along which Severino’s thought can be unfolded to an international audience. The symposium thus joins an increasing number of international projects of the last few years: the first edited translation into English of one of Severino’s most important works, *The Essence of Nihilism* (2016, A. Carrera and I. Testoni, eds.), the foundation of an international journal dedicated to Severino’s thought, *Eternity & Contradiction: Journal of Fundamental Ontology* (G. Goggi, ed.), as well as the forthcoming English translations of Severino’s *Law and Chance* (*Legge e caso*, 1979) and *Beyond Language* (*Oltre il linguaggio*, 1992) (trans. D. Sacco).

The poster features a background image of Emanuele Severino, an elderly man with glasses, looking thoughtfully at the camera. The text is overlaid on this image. At the top right, the date '20 January 2022' is written in yellow. Below it, in red, is '14:00 ICI Berlin In English'. The title 'Emanuele' is in large red letters, and 'Severino' is in large yellow letters. Between them, 'THE OTHER SIDE OF ITALIAN THOUGHT' is written in yellow and blue. Below the title, 'Symposium' is written in white. To the right of 'Symposium', the organizers are listed: 'Organized by Giulio Goggi, Federico Perolda, Damiano Sacco, and Ines Testoni'. Below this, a list of speakers is provided: 'With Massimiliano Cabello, Alessandro Carrera, Fabio Farotti, Giulio Goggi, Michelangelo Stanzani Maserati, Federico Perolda, Damiano Sacco, Fabio Scardigli, Ines Testoni, Marco Vassle'. At the bottom right, 'Keynote Lectures by Ugo Perone and Luca Mitterati' is written. At the bottom, there is a line of small text: 'In cooperation with FISSPA University of Padua, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Berlino and the Italienzentrum of the Freie Universität Berlin'. At the very bottom, there are several logos, including the ICI Berlin logo and the FISSPA logo.

## Online programme:

**14:00**

### Introduction

**14:15–15:15**

Giulio Goggi  
Fabio Farotti  
Marco Vasile

### Part I: Identity and Contradiction

Identity and Eternity of Every Being  
The Secret of the World  
Negation in Severino's Philosophy

**15:30–16:30**

Alessandro Carrera  
  
Ines Testoni  
Massimiliano Cabella

### Part II: Time and Eternity

Every Child is a Severino Scholar:  
The Stubborn Persistence of the Past and  
the Contradiction of Being Born in Time  
Severino's Eternity Between Death Anxiety and Dying  
Tao and Destiny

**16:45–17:30**

Damiano Sacco  
Fabio Scardigli

### Part III: Law and Chance

Science and Metaphysics  
Determinism and Free Will

**17:45–18:30**

Federico Perelda  
Michelangelo  
Stanzani Maserati

### Part IV: Mind and Metaphysics

Severino and Contemporary Analytic Metaphysics  
The Concept of Mind and its Relationship  
with the Body and Consciousness:  
A Perspective from Severino's Indication

## In person and online:

**19:30**

### Lectures and Discussion

Luca Illetterati  
and Ugo Perone

Emanuele Severino:  
The Language that Testifies to Destiny

In this event, two of Italy's most renowned contemporary philosophers, Ugo Perone and Luca Illetterati, will discuss the irreducible novelty and untimeliness of Emanuele Severino's philosophical contribution. They will address both the way in which philosophy always constitutes a confrontation with untimeliness within contemporary discourse and the way in which Italian philosophy in general, and Severino's work in particular, have through the years staged this confrontation. Perone and Illetterati will each give a lecture and then discuss the specificity of Italian philosophy, the timeliness and untimeliness of philosophical reflection, and Emanuele Severino's singular contribution to these questions.

Emanuele Severino (1929–2020) was professor of theoretical philosophy at the Catholic University of Milan from 1954 to 1969. In the late 1960s, the Holy Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (the body that in 1908 took over from the Office of the Inquisition the task of defending and promulgating Catholic doctrine) carried out an investigation into his work reminiscent of some most eminent precedents, as a result of which Severino left his professorship. (The report of the investigation reads: 'Severino has criticised the very ground of the conception of God's transcendence and the tenets of Christianity in a way that arguably no atheism or heresy has ever done before.') From 1970 to 2005, Severino was professor of theoretical philosophy at Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Ugo Perone holds the Romano Guardini Chair for the Philosophy of Religion at the Humboldt University of Berlin. His work focusses on the question of the finite and the infinite. His best-known books are *In lotta con l'angelo* (1989), *Il presente possibile* (2005), and *Ripensare il sentimento* (2014). He has served as director of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Berlino and as founder and director of the Scuola di Alta Formazione Filosofica.

Luca Illetterati is professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Padua. His research focusses on German classical philosophy and in particular on Hegel. Among his monographs: *Natura e Ragione. Sullo sviluppo dell'idea di natura in Hegel* (1995), *Fra tecnica e natura. Problemi di ontologia del vivente in Heidegger* (2002), *La filosofia come esperienza del pensiero e scienza della libertà. Un approccio a Hegel* (2002). He is currently president of the Italian Society of Theoretical Philosophy and member of the Board of Directors of the International Hegel Society.