

## Foreword

I had the pleasure of meeting Emanuele Severino (1929--2020) only once. This was at a conference in 2018, *All'Alba Dell'Eternita: I Primi 60 Anni de'la Struttura Originaria*. At that time, I knew nothing about his work—though I did know from talking to two of his students working in the Anglosphere, Franz Berto and Elia Zardni, that he was the most significant and influential Italian philosopher in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Emanuele hailed from Brescia, a town in North East Italy, and the town hosted the conference to honour the local lad and his achievements. The central core of Severino's view was the Parmenidean one that nothing changes. Clearly, this is a highly unorthodox view, and one, therefore, with some profound consequences. As one can also imagine, it does not sit well with the Catholic Church. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, in 1970 the Church condemned his ideas, as a result of which he lost his job at the University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, and moved to the University of Venice.

A key plank of Severino's defence of his view was an appeal to the Principle of Non-Contradiction. This is a principle of which I am known to be highly critical—and it must be said that on this matter it is Severino, and not I, who is on the side of orthodoxy. I was invited to the Brescia conference to debate the Principle with him.<sup>1</sup> The discussion had to be carried out in translation since he did not speak English and I cannot speak Italian; and I must confess that I lost most of the discussion when it became fast and furious as the audience (comprising many of Severino's ex-colleagues, ex-students, and a few local dignitaries) started to participate—though there was no doubt whose side the home-crowd was on! I don't think that either of us changed our views. Perhaps that was not to be expected. However, this was all done in good spirit, and Severino and I had a very congenial discussion over dinner afterwards when we discovered that we could both speak (enough) French.

I confess that I still don't know a great deal about Severino's views. Very little of what he wrote has been translated into English, there is as yet no article on him in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and he is not well known in English-speaking philosophical world. It is for that reason that I very much welcome the present book. I hope that it will make his challenging views better known in the Anglosphere. Perhaps even those who are familiar with his work will find it helpful. Severino, it must be said, is not an easy philosopher to read and understand—in English or Italian.

I congratulate all those who have worked hard to bring this volume to realization, and wish it every success.

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<sup>1</sup> My own contribution to the conference was later published as 'Emanuele Severino and the Principle of Non-Contradiction', *Eternity and Contradiction: a Journal of Fundamental Ontology* 2 (2020), pp. 42-66.