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# **ANTHROPOCENE AND DEATH BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THE BLACK SWAN BETWEEN POPE FRANCIS I AND SEVERINO**

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## **Abstract**

This article considers the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to postmodern forms of representing Nature, limits and death. Taking Pope Francis I's encyclical on environmental issues as a starting point, it considers the relationship between the age of technology and the Anthropocene according to the contribution of posthumanism derived from the Nietzschean-Foucauldian perspective. The teachings of the philosopher Emanuele Severino on the problem of contingency and the idea of eternity are examined.

*Keywords:* Black Swan, Anthropocene, Postmodernism, Posthumanism, Emanuele Severino

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## **1. Introduction**

It is said that human beings may differ from any other inhabitant of the Earth in their ability to symbolise themselves and their context. This cognitive ability implies the representation of a totality and the relationships between its parts; therefore, it originates the awareness of finitude, causing behavioural expressions of the will to live. The Anthropocene, that is, the geological epoch in which humankind radically transforms the Earth's conditions, seems to establish that this behaviour has crossed a point of no return in biological life history, as Nature has definitively lost its long-established balance.

Recently, Pope Francis I addressed the powerful of the Earth to urge them to take the ecological problem seriously [[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)]. However, he made no reference to God's will in natural disasters as effects of divine punishment. Even with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic, the pope has never referred to a divine punishment inflicted on humanity to curtail

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the process of globalisation. His exhortative discourses seem to be in harmony with the contemporary *Weltanschauung*, which proceeds rapidly in converting every language, especially the natural one, according to technique semantics. The scientific development of technique, understood as the predisposition of correct instruments for specific purposes, as Emanuele Severino indicates [1], is transforming every existential scenario and the understanding of human life itself.

In the same direction, on 31 October 1992, after about 11 years of work by the Vatican commission to analyse Galileo Galilei's trial, Cardinal Joseph Jean Poupard stated that the 1633 sentence was unjust. As made clear in Pope John Paul II's speech on the same day, the Church's error was committed because Galilei supported a revolutionary theory without providing sufficient scientific evidence [[http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1992/october/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19921031\\_accademia-scienze.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1992/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19921031_accademia-scienze.html)]. Against this backdrop, the Cosmos completely loses all secrecy, along with any reference to arcane or transcendent dimensions. Rather, it is astronomically understood only according to macro and micro mechanics that no longer allow hyperuranic reflections through which to ponder the dwellings of the divine.

Following Severino [1], who underwent the same kind of trial in the same rooms as Galilei [2] but has not yet obtained any rehabilitation despite the possibility of finding a solution to the apparent incompatibility between his and Christian thought [3], we can say that what distinguishes this historical phase, generally called postmodern, is, on the one hand, the 'decline of the immutable' and, on the other, the age of technique [4]. The first indicates the decline of every indubitable certainty, while the second points to the triumph of hypothetical knowledge and its manifestation in a world changing according to scientific knowledge. The postmodern phenomenon, defined as the death of belief in God, corresponds with the most profound faith in Science and in the solutions that it seems to guarantee. This is testified by the fact that never before these times of pandemic has there been such a focus in decision-making places on the knowledge of scientists and not on that of someone who interprets the phenomenon as a function of divine will. As Michel Foucault's reflection highlights [5], language has been freed from theological implications to gain a scientific reference. For example, Susan Sontag's denouncement on how tuberculosis and cancer were stigmatised through moral metaphors shows that today illnesses can no longer be considered as 'moral' effects of sin: "The medieval experience of the plague was firmly tied to notions of moral pollution, and people invariably looked for a scapegoat external to the stricken community. (Massacres of Jews in unprecedented numbers took place everywhere in plague-stricken Europe of 1347-48, then stopped as soon as the plague receded.) With the modern diseases, the scapegoat is not so easily separated from the patient." [6]

The Covid-19 pandemic has been compared to a 'black swan', a metaphor used to take up the Lebanese mathematician Nassim Nicholas Taleb's idea of studying how we analyse rare, unpredictable events, but no longer in terms of

divine punishment. Chance is as amoral as Nature. It does not respond to any immutable divine law. If, therefore, postmodern culture unmasked religiously based moral metaphors for any illnesses up to the time of AIDS [7], today the metaphor representing the new pandemic is essentially scientific. According to Taleb, Black Swan phenomena have relevant effects, and only after the fact do the events seem explainable and, therefore, predictable. In line with the most current epistemological perspectives that base prediction on probabilistic calculations, Taleb argues that the improbable rules not only history but also our lives, which are marked by surprising events impossible to calculate with known statistical methods. The Black Swan metaphor, in general, allows Taleb to confirm what Philosophy already admitted, along a thread that connects David Hume to Friedrich Nietzsche and, in Psychology, *Gestalttheorie* to cognitivism. Everything considered familiar and predictable results from a psychological bias that allows people to live while believing they can understand and control what is happening. History is based on the knowledge of what has been, and we have become accustomed to believing that knowing its dynamics makes it possible to avoid the course and recourse of negative events. On the contrary, Science, as hypothetical knowledge that calculates every prediction on the basis of probability, is always ready to demolish certainties to build its power on doubt. The constant appeal to scientific knowledge in recent months by both the media and politicians has made us feel more insecure and uncertain, instead of calming us down. This consequence was inevitable and, paradoxically, predictable because common sense does not know the functioning of scientific procedures that require facing the hard test of objection and refutation before being able to confirm the hypothesis [8]. This means that ordinary people suddenly have to deal, without competence, with Science, which is limited, does not know and cannot respond immediately even to the most critical issues, such as survival. From this point of view, we can say that the pandemic experience has restored salience to our fundamental uncertainty and the terror that derives from it, as it exposes us to the awareness of finitude - or having to die in the end.

After Taleb's indication of the Black Swan, the role of improbable but highly influential events in ecology and evolution has been considered. For example, recent ecology considers the sudden emergence of new deadly pathogens that might cause the rapid extinction or diversification of lineages. Indeed, the advent of a pandemic was predictable, but not which one and when. Covid-19 has forced humanity to experience unexpectedly the limits in which we are called to face an invisible enemy. Therefore, we do not know how to represent this experience as either a moral or biological fact. However, we can certainly say that this is a powerful epiphany of the Black Swan, which forces us to reflect on what we believe to be our condition as human beings. The flight of this obscure child of the sky explicates how uncertain and precarious our life is. Unforeseen and unpredictable events unsettle us, destroy every conviction of having power over what is near or far from us and, by doing so, affect our lives.

## 2. The uncanny of Covid-19

The pandemic has rekindled a generalised uncanny feeling, or, as Martin Heidegger [9] and Sigmund Freud [10] would partially agree, the experience of what seems to be known becoming suddenly unknown, even in the most technologically advanced countries. *Unheimlich* (uncanny) expresses the discomfort in front of a foreignness difficult to decipher, which consists of the loss of what is habitual, reliable and intimate, as domestic life should be. Covid-19 has forced humans of the most advanced Anthropocene to inhabit the space of everyday life no longer as home but as a place of confinement. Isolation and the reduction of social contact have opened the chasms of anxiety, bringing individuals back to their own solipsism. One's own home has become the notion of not being at home because one has to work there and withdraw from the world, which is suddenly inaccessible. Previously a shelter, the house has become a refuge to resist the attack of an invisible external mortal enemy, which has released its own curse, empowering the worst internal enemy to be eradicated: anguish.

The paradoxical aspect of this phenomenon is that it has affected humanity at a time when it seemed possible to feel at home everywhere. All possible spaces have been made accessible by restricting their relationship to time and erasing the authentic sense of proximity and distance through globalisation and, specifically, universal colonisation, leading, in Severino's opinion [11], to the Westernisation of all peoples. Thanks to improvement in technique, speed, which allows us to access the most remote places, has hegemonised the world, transforming every country into familiar spaces in keeping with the tastes of the West's inhabitants. The Covid-19 pandemic, perhaps the first we have had to manage since the post-war period in this almost entirely Westernised world, appeared as the terrible flight of the Black Swan, restoring borders and barriers. The whirlwind released by the powerful beating of its wings has stopped the carousel of constant and pervasive changes in the daily kaleidoscope, in which every corner of the Earth seems within reach, anywhere and anytime. The siege of the virus has made it clear that in reality, there are no reliable maps that allow one to move around knowing exactly where the safety levels are.

Freud delves into the relationship between what is considered comfortable and safe in one's home, highlighting that when one perceives its enclosure and closure, the home becomes distressing because the presence of what we would like to remain secret shines through. Freud used the term *unheimlich* to indicate the experience of strangeness that inhabits what is familiar and suddenly changes to reveal a chasm that affects and involves us without our understanding of what is happening [10]. The uncanny is the tip of the iceberg of anxiety, and the paths that lead to this experience pass through various stages, oscillating from dismay to discouragement, from suspicion to fright, from apprehension to panic, from worry to anxiety, until they reach terror. These emotional states all relate to the representation of the future and what lies within it. Fear becomes anguish when

the enemy is invisible and can act beyond technical control. The compulsion to stay at home during the pandemic has become a distressing experience since it causes us to be in a usual space in an unusual way, without the certainty that the return of the osmosis between the inside and outside can be perceived as safe. In this way, giving in to the desire to return to the outside world makes the home, once authentically quotidian, into a space of strangeness. In agreement with Freud, we can say that the uncanny that characterises this expression of disorientation consists of no longer feeling master in one's own house, where what should have remained hidden instead begins to appear in a threatening way, jeopardising the sense of familiarity.

Indeed, the *unheimlich* elicited by the Covid-19 pandemic substantially constitutes a sudden exposure to an unusual, unknown way of being *haecceitas* ('thisness', from the Latin 'haec', meaning 'this'). In the most advanced areas of the Anthropocene, social and mediatic representations of existence conceal the solipsistic perception of one's own self in the shared language of the happenings of everyday life, that is, the interiorised Heideggerian 'they say' (*man*). Overcoming any usual prevision, the pandemic has brought out the exceptionality or, better, the 'facticity' of the solipsistic experience of individuality. Freud did not consider the relationship between the *unheimlich* and the feeling of solipsism to which every authentically introspective experience leads. This continuity was best examined by Heidegger through the concept of *Geworfenheit* (thrownness), which is intrinsically related to the idea of facticity. Inspired by John Duns Scotus, Heidegger assumes the theme of proximity to real life, discerning the problematic concept of individuality, or *haecceitas* [12-14]. Indeed, the essential *haecceitas* of the *Dasein* considered in *Sein und Zeit* [9] consists of its being there, here and, now, that is, being in a 'factual situation', responding to the task of being its own existence in a particular context. For Heidegger, *Geworfenheit* is the essence of the facticity of individual existence, which is 'thrown into the world', while the routine and habit of 'they say' (*man*) are the blanket within which the evidence of facticity is hidden. The *unheimlich* disclosed by Covid-19 highlights that although we believe we inhabit a Westernised world, familiar everywhere, because of its technique transformation, we are thrown into an unpredictable world, where nature suddenly appears indominable, while neither science nor common sense can completely control its evolutionary processes.

### **3. Limits and posthuman facticity**

The anguish evoked by Covid-19's Black Swan has torn apart the veil of Maya, which comprises the reassuring habits that make inhabitants of the West believe they are in control of life and its meaning, oblivious to their condition essentially determined by being natural. Indeed, after the Covid-19 pandemic, any sentimental glorification of humans' proximity to animals is to be questioned. The habit of seeing Nature as an enchanting and easily malleable

space has made us forget its violent essence, always indifferent to any moral conception of existence.

Postmodernism leads to the sundown of what Severino defines as *epistème* [15], signifying all references based on a traditional sense of incontrovertible truth and its ethics. The demise of episteme is the demise of any desire to establish truth with certainty - and ultimately, the demise of the idea that God can incontrovertibly ground the meaning of the world and human moral behaviour [16]. The age of technique, which characterises the contemporary Anthropocene, produces, on the one hand, liberation from all traditional regulatory impositions and, on the other, thanks to scientific knowledge, a great power in the pursuit of purposes that change the world on the basis of human needs. As Severino indicates, this era manifests the extreme form of will for power, the goal of which is the infinite increase of power to pursue any purpose [17].

However, new ethics appear on the postmodern horizon in the footsteps of Nietzsche's epigones, among whom are Foucault [5], Donna Haraway [18], and especially Gille Deleuze and Félix Guattari [19]. Founded on the idea of 'posthumous', considered the abandonment of any central and intrinsic value, Rosi Braidotti calls 'nomadic ethics' a posthumanistic vision of the subject that reflects the complexity of our times. This feminist philosopher proposes a non-unitary idea of the subject, in opposition to traditional conservatism, liberal individualism and techno-capitalism. Against any form of moral universalism, she calls for a new form of moral responsibility that takes life as a fundamental subject that cannot be considered an object of enquiry. This perspective reconfigures human beings on Earth as negotiating the tension between sustainability and complexity [20, 21].

In this floodplain, posthumanism and ahumanism flow refuses to romanticise the interaction between the human and the nonhuman environment, establishing a new way of conceiving nature and the human relationship with it without underplaying their contradictions and discontinuities [22]. Inspired by this, the materialistic posthumanism discussion focuses on human beings becoming 'animals' or 'cyborgs', on respecting other beings in a transspecies, egalitarian and social-bonding way. This expression of self-limitation, ethically required of a human individual, could certainly be the reason that such a perspective remains a niche theory for an academic elite. Even Darwinist evolutionary theories admit that man is an animal and the human species is destined for perpetual transformation, but they also contemplate the domination of the Earth. Posthumanism, however, would like to reduce the power of the human species to the advantage of maintaining the balance of Nature. This viewpoint consigns humanity to one of many natural species, contrasting with any rights founded on anthropocentric dominance, and allows humans no right to destroy nature or set themselves above it. Indeed, a substantive aspect of being merely natural is discussed by confuting humans' placement as the central knowers and agents. The systematic practice of overpowering Nature and the environment consists of peddling the illusion that there are no limits to respect

because scientific knowledge permits Nature to be controlled and the construction of an artificial world orientated according to anthropocentric needs.

From the posthumous viewpoint, the concept of facticity assumes the contingency of everything, and humans are considered to be just one of many factors involved in human actions, conscience and thought because they are nature in nature. As Cecilia Åsberg and Braidotti affirm: "Human nature is not the oxymoron we imagined it to be. In this new planetary age of the Anthropocene, defined by human-induced climatic, biological, and even geological transformations, humans are fully in Nature. And nature is fully in us." [23] Humans are simultaneously world-changing agents and witnesses to processes they cannot wholly understand and manage because of the casualty and unpredictability of the same Nature.

Along the same line, but more radically than in postmodernism and posthumanism, in the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux's speculative realism [24], contingency signifies that scientific knowledge indifferently permits an event either to occur or not. In this sense, nature is as unpredictable as the entire cosmos. Meillassoux radicalises the idea that there is no causal necessity at all and, therefore, that any law of nature is absolutely contingent: "I call 'facticity' the absence of reason for any reality; in other words, the impossibility of providing an ultimate ground for the existence of any being. We can only attain conditional necessity, never absolute necessity. If definite causes and physical laws are posited, then we can claim that a determined effect must follow. But, we shall never find a ground for these laws and causes, except eventually other ungrounded causes and laws: there is no ultimate cause, nor ultimate law, that is to say, a cause or a law including the ground of its own existence. However, this facticity is also proper to thought. The Cartesian Cogito clearly shows this point: what is necessary in the Cogito is a conditional necessity: if I think, then I must be. However, it is not an absolute necessity: it is not necessary that I should think. From the inside of the subjective correlation, I accede to my own facticity, and so to the facticity of the world correlated with my subjective access to it. I do it by attaining the lack of an ultimate reason of a *causa sui*, able to ground my existence." [25]

Facticity, therefore, characterises every aspect of the world that is understood as 'hyper-chaos', in which the principle of sufficient reason has no value: "Contingency expresses the fact that physical laws remain indifferent as to whether an event occurs or not - they allow an entity to emerge, to subsist, or to perish" [24].

#### **4. Fear of death as the essence of the uncanny**

Braidotti underlines how Philosophy has emphasised death as the finitude of being, spreading a profound sense of loss and melancholia [26]. In her opinion, from this perspective derives the need for compensation, which is at the basis of the Anthropocene and eclipses its responsibility towards Zoe-centred egalitarianism. The anthropocentric vision that puts us to work frantically every

day, raising expectations, is promoted by the fact that we feel that a scientifically and technologically constructed world can somehow significantly remove death. Instead, death remains the limit that neither Science nor technology can yet change. If everything about life is completely inscribed in the power of medical sciences, which have been able to double our time in this world as inhabitants of the West, even compared to in the last centuries, death is still considered the limit that no knowledge can concretely remove. As Heidegger, Freud and Severino argue, the most important disorientation arises in front of this boundary, where we cannot but feel anguish. Death, in this scenario, takes the form of what eclipses and overturns any possibility of continuity with what we have learned from the past.

Braidotti's position is refutable, as it was not Philosophy that caused a depressive representation of death. On the contrary, as Severino teaches [26], Philosophy - and in particular Metaphysics and epistemic thought - has tried to find a radical solution to death, understood as the annihilation of being. Psychologically speaking, it seems that the terror of death, and the pain it originally causes, characterises the human species. Death is the real fearsomeness against which, ultimately, there is no possible conquest. And as much as individuals know that they will have to die eventually, they actually ignore what this expertise implies. Psychology is strongly interested in this phenomenon, with the field of Terror Management Theory (TMT) dedicated to it [27]. TMT's success is due to its ability to address, in a scientifically reliable way, the relationship between death anxiety, individual identity construction and culture. Researchers in this territory take as a reference point Freud's concept of the unconscious, recognising the importance of this psychic dimension that influences people's behaviour outside of their consciousness. If Freud interpreted symptoms as expressions of unconscious instances of which the individual had no awareness, similarly, for these scholars, attitudes and actions are conditioned by unconscious mechanisms over which it is difficult to have control. While for Freud, however, the idea that shapes the unconscious is a sexuality that seeks its own fulfilment by opposing socially imposed norms, in TMT, the root of human behaviour is not in the erotic appetite but rather in the terror of death and the desire to avoid it. From this point of view, in absolute agreement with the evolutionary perspective, all human relationships are entirely conditioned by the survival instinct, which is always challenged by the paralysing terror of death. This terror has produced sophisticated defence strategies to ensure a tranquillity that allows us to live grazing on the plains of wealth [28].

TMT theory has produced hundreds of empirical studies supporting the hypothesis that the dissonance of wanting to fight or struggle to live, while knowing that you have to die, is underpinned by the construction of symbolism necessary to deny and conceal finitude. In the West, this type of denial has reached perhaps its most obvious form, so much so that aesthetics seem to be even more important than health. This bizarre contradiction is understandable only if we inscribe it in the complex apparatus of strategies that integrate the



instances of concealment of finitude and what the body says as it ages, falls ill and loses its functionality. All this is due to an important historical process that began precisely when science and technology started to take over religions' ability to build the world.

Following TMT, it is possible to say that the uncanny that has characterised the pandemic is the effect of mortality's salience, making evident the inevitability of death related to facticity and the unpredictability of contingency. It brings out the anxiety that the peaceful state of daily well-being maintains at an unconscious level. The desire to eliminate the state of suffering in which anguish consists activates cultural and scientific removal strategies, such as medical research that remedies contagion.

At this point, the uncanny elicited by the Covid-19 Black Swan has manifested anguish by highlighting how the unpredictability of facticity, characterising the human condition, implies chaos and death. As Meillassoux describes, "For facticity fringes both knowledge and the world with an absence of foundation, whose converse is that nothing can be said to be absolutely impossible, not even the unthinkable" [24, p. 40]. In other words, "Everything could actually collapse: from trees to star, from stars to law, from physical law to logical laws; and this not by virtue of some superior law whereby everything is destined to perish, but by virtue of the absence of any superior law capable of preserving anything, no matter what, from perishing" [24, p. 53].

The Covid-19 pandemic has confronted humanity with its inability to control and predict the effects of the changes it is making in the world, and it has proved how these effects are deadly. The casualty of being infected and dying has brought to light the most authentic sense of finitude as being casually thrown into it by pure chance.

## **5. Suicide**

It seems that nomadic ethics should be post-scientific. The limits that humans have to accept imply the ability to welcome death. Indeed, posthumanism, through its identification with nature, affirms that the environment can only survive if humanity stops exercising its power, destroying the balance of life on Earth. Assuming Guattari's perspective, Patricia MacCormack's ecosophical ethics [29] explore many ways to see the world differently, beyond the traditional specist representations, in favour of a non-hierarchical, transversal approach. Her fundamental aim is to produce a more ecologically sensitive worldview. Far more radically than posthumanism but in continuity with Braidotti's viewpoint on death, the ahumanist MacCormack states that we are in the midst of a growing ecological crisis, throwing the status of 'human' into question in a deep ecology [30]. Promoting an 'ahuman' perspective, she considers the possibility of human extinction and the apocalypse as an optimistic and desirable beginning. Her *Ahuman Manifesto* reflects on how humanity should reinvent humans, specifically to overcome the Anthropocene and move toward a new world [31].

Similarly arguing against philosophies that consider animality through a priori hierarchical categories, Claire Colebrook urges prioritising the end to nonhuman animal suffering. Her discussion catalyses an imperative to rethink the meaning of suicide. Humans are suicidal animals because they are not able to accept their animality and want to go beyond their natural dimension: “Perhaps human suicide occurs at the point at which we are most confronted with our animality” [32]. In her opinion, the relationship between humans’ inability to recognise their animal boundaries and the destruction of nature not only implies human suicide but also a new way of considering suicide: “Our current global crisis is indeed one of suicide: so entranced have we been by our own autonomy that we have forgotten that we become who we are through a world and life that is not our own. Our self-maintenance and mastery are destroying the milieu where we live and, in turn, the species we are. However, is this suicide an exception? Can it be avoided without other suicides? It would not be exceptional, insofar as the story of life is one of a series of suicides: the metabolic processes that led to human existence were preceded by a series of environments that became extinguished through time, allowing for other milieus and eventually leading to the Anthropocene era. To halt the accelerated suicide of our current milieu would, perhaps, require a strange (suicidal) war on the story of life. Man has so far – for his own and animal survival – been at war with the very milieu that is his life. Ending that war requires an attack on what it is, a suicide. Such a suicide would be in accord with all the extinction processes that have led to radical evolutionary becomings. At the same time, though, a decision to no longer be human would be the most unnatural and suicidal of gestures.” [32, p. 141]

These point of views are, on the one hand, a critique of the development of mankind’s power to reduce the extinction of other animal species and, on the other hand, an awareness that destroying the balance of nature entails the death of the human species itself. Paradoxically, however, these positions imply a change of perspective towards suicide, which, instead of being something to be avoided, becomes a solution for the salvation of the balance of Nature. MacCormack takes this viewpoint: “Because there is a way out of human exceptionalism, of devastation, and it does not involve isomorphic oppression, enamourment of power, or impossible solutions—humans must embrace the death of this species. With love, with joy, with grace, with care. The death of the human species is the gift we have from the natural world that offers a way to allow the Earth to flourish and teach us to care, slowly, quietly, without ego or love for dominance.” [33]

## **6. Conclusions**

The most recent postmodern, posthumanist and ahumanist critiques of human power on Earth in the age of the Anthropocene seem to be producing new ethics that value the suicide of humanity. These ethics ask humans to limit themselves to the point of choosing their own extinction. From this point of

view, we should interpret the advent of Covid-19 as a will to eliminate the human species by Nature, which is trying to defend itself with its own tools against unsustainable human domination. Good post-humanists and a-humanists, ethically, should oppose any human will to find a vaccine and let the natural extermination of humanity take place.

Suicide characterises human behaviour and has been emphasised by various ideologies, but none has yet produced a significant outcome in terms of reducing the human population. On the contrary, the will to live is the basis of all conscious and unconscious motivations that progressively strengthen technique to solve the problems of life and death. Precisely for this reason, says Severino, the development of technology is destined to increase exponentially [17]. Severino further points out that technology will solve environmental problems specifically because humanity does not want to become extinct. The real limit of technology, he finds, is the fact that it is based on nihilistic error, and, therefore, the manifestation of the 'destiny of truth' will decree its decline [34]. However, the concept of truth that Severino refers to is radically different from any traditional *epistème* metaphysically considered, which is why his thought has been condemned by the Catholic Church. Similar to Giordano Bruno [2], but more radically, Severino returns to the Parmenidean indication of the eternity of everything to rigorously affirm that nothing is accidental or contingent because nothing can oscillate between being and nothing. He shows how the Western concept of 'chance' consists of believing that it is possible to come to and fall into nothingness without a cause. Therefore, everything that happens, being necessarily eternal, according to the philosopher, cannot in any way come and go into nothingness [35]. This eternalist position is decisive with respect to the terror of death. What we fear most, in fact, is the annihilation into totality, of which we believe death consists [36, 37].

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