Change the Past:
Factum Infectum Fieri Nequit and Eternal Return

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The purpose of this article is to show how a classic topic as the possibility to change the past, which is part of the contemporary debate as well, can be faced and rethought by some of Emanuele Severino's theoretical reflections. Thanks to this approach, it has been possible to understand the underlying reasons for the ambitious to change the past and why a goal like this one seems so hard to hit. Moreover, there will be the opportunity to figure out which is the best philosophical proposal, within the history of philosophy, in terms of coherence to achieve it. The outcome of this work is going to illustrate how the ambition to change the past is impossible as built on a nihilistic assumption.

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1. Introduction: being able to change the past

Being able to change the past is probably one of the most common desire, dream or fantasy for the humankind. It is easy to understand looking at the literature fields, both contemporary and science fiction, or the philosophical debate as well. Commonly, there is the attitude to think about the possible past alteration as something on the edge between reality and imagination. The reason for it lies in the fact that the content of what we would change is unchangeable, unmodifiable namely something already passed. There are not many examples of what we could call "unchangeable" since it is not easy to think about something which has a specific structure such as to not change or become. Probably, the reason for this difficulty is attributable to the lack of things with these characteristics. Moreover, if we retrieve the concepts of the philosophical debate within the last century, these examples become less and less more. One unchangeable example is fundable and it is still very healthy even though the contemporary philosophical reflection has destroyed the majority of these elements. This unchangeable is right the past. An event, a thing, and in general anything flew away is considered really unchangeable by all, intellectuals or not. Something already happened or realised is done and is not longer part of the present. That is why it is considered a past and as such, there is not any power, directed by a willingness or not, able to change it, and for that reason, we call it "unchangeable" or "immutable". This past unchangeability can be summarised by this traditional expression: *factum infectum fieri nequit*. From the ancient time the past unavailability to any kind of change was quite clear. Indeed, Aristotle illustrated it clearly in his *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Choice is not concerned with what has happened already: for example, no one chooses to have sacked Troy; for neither does one deliberate about what has happened in the past, but about what

> still lies in the future and may happen or not; what has happened cannot be made not to have happened. Hence Agathon is right in saying: «This only is denied even to God, The power to make what has been done undone» (VI, 1139b).

However, although the past is being described with this untouchable halo, there are relevant number of attempts throughout the history to reconsider its structure and unchangeability from both the scientific and philosophical perspectives in the contemporaneity. After all, the desire to change the past will never be setting and it is expecting that these attempts, even just in theory, would be made. If we look at the theoretical tradition, for instance, there are lots of cases. One example is present on the medieval age when were discussed the problem of the godlike omnipotence limits (Boulnois, 1994). Alternatively, more recently, the neoidealistic concept of the past as a creation from the spirit, or the hermeneutic principle by with any historical reconstruction is only hypothetical; we can also think about some interpretations of the relativity theory in the modern physic (Davies, 1995) and there are also plenty of hypothesis around the possibility of time travels (Torrengo, 2011). We are going to refer to the reflections on the past and its structure considering a great contemporary philosopher, Emanuele Severino, in order to try to investigate the human desire we explained before. Severino's account, in our opinion, will be revelatory to understand the real reasons underlying this problem, its core role within the contemporary debate and the possibility to evaluate correctly the conclusions achieved so far.

2. The unchangeables' fallen

On Severino's works, we will find the explanation of what is called the true essence of the philosophy in our era, namely the willingness to deny any possible unchangeable trying to stop the becoming. The becoming is considered the supreme evidence and it is structured as the movement between being and nothingness. This passage has always been assumed as absolutely true and clear by those Severino had called nihilists fully believers in this supreme evidence. This has assumed always more coherence until today where it is the Western's soul and of the entire world as well. As long as true that the becoming faith has never been questioned from nihilists or mortals, calling humans by Severino, only

due to the time carry out this supreme evidence has got more awareness and intensity. On one side, anyone would ever be so crazy to state that being can become nothingness and *vice-versa*. On the other side, Western's unconscious works exactly in this way thinking that "being is nothingness and nothingness is being" is the supreme evidence and this is what happens in the becoming process. Each mortal tried to create restrictions to the becoming because none has been able to see its real essence. Staying on the surface, humans believed to change the becoming in a non-nihilistic perspective, giving it a different structure with limitations being the unchangeable as a guarantee of its non-contradictory. All these endeavours had failed since they did not understand the becoming's deep meaning. These restrictions fell under the power of the becoming. Indeed, if the becoming is meant as the only and supreme evidence, regardless of understating its nihilistic effect, anything which tries to stop it will be overwhelmed because any limitations cannot exist anymore since they have not let the becoming being what it really is. The unchangeables appeared during the Western's history are examples of restrictions such as God, eternal truths, scientific knowledge, past immutability, and so on. All are destined to be fought and probably beaten as a limitation of the being process in its nihilistic conception, so Severino (1999) writes:

> According to the essential voice of the contemporary philosophy, the "truth" which cannot exist is the one is demanding to stay over the becoming of the world; given that the becoming existence is the only unchangeable truth, and this is the ground of the invincible demonstration by means the contemporary approach zforces to deny each unchangeable, namely every God and every immutable past (p. 23).

Clearly, it is impossible to believe that the being can nullify itself and vice versa, but this is the way followed by mortals, the nihilistic way, which is the one they believed to undertake. According to the false evidence of becoming, the powerness that comes from it is focused on destroying each eternal and unchangeable item. This will, in fact, is nothing else than the faith to the possibility that things can nullify themselves. Even if it is not one of the purposes of this article to retrieve all the Severino's think aspects, it is necessary to clarify why God and the past as unchangeables represent an obstacle for the becoming and why

earlier or later they must be challenged and possibly overwhelmed. Severino (2011) on this subject says:

> […] Western's God (and also any other God is assuming the same ontological-teological pattern) is the *entification* of what is still nothingness which is specific of the future, and of what is almost nothingness that is particular of the past (brings forward the being of what, on the contrary, is still a nothingness and keeps the being of what is almost nothingness). God makes entity the nothingness because he is the Law that mastering the time totality fills each gap presents into the nothingness which is specific of the future and the past. Thus, it makes impossible those becoming that is the supreme evidence undeniable and incontrovertible both for the Western tradition and its destruction (p.162).

God is the One who has the full and sure knowledge about everything that was, is and will be, regardless of the fact that at this moment what He knows does not exist in the act. What becomes cannot come completely from the nothingness whereas, if known by God, it cannot be nothing. In fact, it is impossible to know something that is nothing because either it is something, but in this case, it is not coming from the nothingness, or it is nothing, whereby it cannot be known as long as knowing something which is nothing is the same of knowing nothing. The godlike knowledge already knows in advance what it will create through the ideas, but the real products are *ex nihilo*. The becoming in its fullness cannot accept an eternal knowledge which can forecast it in some way. The becoming process must be always unpredictable to be coherent since no one can forecast what will come out from the nothingness, for the reason that it is something that comes from the nothingness where there are no things. God creates the world from its being nothing (*ex nihilo sui*), as he creates the other from himself, insofar he cannot have a glance inside this nothingness, as long as it does not contain anything. For this reason, God too is threatened from the unpredictability that comes from the nothingness, and Severino (2011) insists:

> In fact, inside God producer all the entities are contended in advance (either though he is the demiurge who sees the totality of "ideas" having them inside himself since he is seeing them or if he is the creator that has them inside in any sense). For this side, they

are produced *ex Deo*. However, there is a second side. If they were nothing, the totality of what God produces would already be in God, insofar he will have no need to produce them. Then, they would not be something produced as well. For this reason – as long as what is not produced (yet) are, in God, a nothingness – they are, as such, produced *ex nihilo*: God can produce them because, in him, they are nothing. Now, since the entities produced are *ex Deo*, God cannot be afraid of his own creation's action: he knows and dominates it completely. Nonetheless, as long as the produced entities are *ex nihilo* (they are created from their being nothing since they are still only in God), what will be producing from this nothingness, which is in God, is totally unpredictable not only by the mortals but also to God's omniscience. If the nothingness of what will be a creature – insofar that is in God and that it is necessary which was being known by God – is not apparent, the nothingness is not a dimension penetrable going in it would be possible to see in advance what will come out from it. Hence, it is God's omnipotence itself which is threatened by this unpredictability. Due to this unpredictability, God cannot be the Omniscient and Omnipotent (pp. 226-227).

God's omnipotence and omniscience cannot compete with the becoming nihilistic coherence which calls into question not only the powers of Western and Christian God (and to all the religions as well) but also the past unchangeability as a limit that must be overcome. Going back to the topic stated at the beginning, the past necessity is a limitation for the becoming as long as there is always something, namely the past, which forecast the coming from nothingness, remaining untouched from the changing. The past, being a dimension not subjected to the changing as it is not present anymore, represents an unchangeable which is always stopping the complete coming from nothing of the being and in some ways, it gathers all the being already become nothing through the flow of time. Implicitly, mortals give the reason for this past double structure. On one hand, they believe everything passing away will get the nothingness. On the other hand, humans state what has been of what it is now nothing cannot disappear, but it will last forever. The past becomes what before that in some way it is present in each later and it is influencing the origin which would be unpredictable. To overcome the insurmountable limit represented by the past, there is only one way: transforming itself in something which can

be changed as the content of the will of power. Since one of the most important characteristics distinguishing the past from the present is the impossibility to change the past depending on the will of power or the becoming, it will be necessarily able to get the hands on it as well. It is mandatory to destroy the impossibility of past changeableness. For this reason Severino (1980) claims:

> The Western, indeed, is also the overcoming of past elusiveness and unreachability; it is the will to realise this overcoming. Within this over falling in the difference between the past and the present, namely also the past becomes a present. In the nihilistic glance, in fact, the past is what has become unchangeable – an unchangeable that results more resistant than the others Western unchangeables –but, due to this, is unavoidable that it shows itself like what the nihilistic coherence aims to destroy, based on the becoming evidence. As well as unavoidable the destruction of an unchangeable goal, under which the becoming is forced to follow and from which it is then made impossible as authentic becoming (namely as something that comes out from nothing). Hence it is unavoidable the destruction of past unchangeability – the destruction of its impossibility to be different anymore from how it is, – to which the becoming and the history must always relate and adequate to. It is not simply matter of being free from the existent order, which is called «liberation from the past» because that order has existed since long ago: it is a more radical liberation, namely the liberation from the being-been of what had been, of what had been but it is not anymore: the liberation from the fact that a certain order had been and, being-been, is by now a necessity that had been in that way (p. 202).

It essentially matters of destroying those we summarised briefly with *factum infectum fieri nequit*. This represents what is still under the idea that it existed what had existed. However, even if what has become past is no longer existing, this does not mean that its being-been is nullified. The *factum infectum fieri nequit* is nothing but the eternal being-been of those order that will be forever. According to Severino, this is the way to intend all the attempts appeared during the contemporary age to overcome past's unchangeability. They try to make the past available to be manipulated as well as the other unchangeables to transform the *factum infectum fieri nequit* into a *factum infectum fieri quit*. Severino (1980) writes:

To nihilism's eyes, the past seems, on one side, as what is become nothing, and, on the other side, as what is existed following a certain order: this order is becoming nothing. However, the being-been of the order has not become nothingness yet. In the Western's history, this being-been of the order seems to be, at first, as an absolute immutability, the *factum infectum fieri nequit* immutability. The nihilism coherence, since pushes to destroy all the unchangeables (among which we find also the determinism embedded into Einstein's relativity theory) projects the destruction of the past immutability, by means of projecting a situation where the *factum infectum fieri quit* (pp. 202-203).

3. The *factum infectum fieri nequit* irremovability

Among these chances to change the past, it is possible to find one which is, according to Severino, the most coherent and effective: Nietzsche's eternal return. Severino gives an interpretation of Nietzsche' account, which is really controversial, but it is considered as the extreme effort to destroy one of the most resistant unchangeables, namely the past. The past is what already happened and escapes from the will to power. Thus, the will must find a way to take it over. This way cannot be the same one which simply considers the past as a present; so, it does not matter of change the past in the same way it is possible to modify the present time. I have the power the changing now how the objects in front of me are disposed of, but I cannot change their past pattern. For this reason, many theories about potential ways to think and make the past changeable have been completely unmakeable. The will must want the past as it has always been wanted, so it must want reversely everything wanted. Severino (1999) gives the following illustration on this topic:

> A processing will of the past keeps going to have in front of it *what* she transforms and from what tries to stay away leaving it in its being definitely been what had been, as something not wanted in front of the will. The will is not powerless in relation to the past only if she continues – and eternally – to will it in the same way she wanted it; and only her, in the infinite past, has continued eternally to will it. The will capability to will backward everything she had wanted cannot be also the will to make not happened what happened, so it cannot be the will to replace the *factum infectum fieri nequit* with *factum infectum fieri potest*. This

replacing would bring it to the nullification of the past, and as such to the nullification of the becoming, namely the nullification of what is, contrarily, the supreme evidence. The past nullification has nothing to deal with the will capability to will backward the past because the nullification of the past is the nullification of this capability simultaneously. A will ables to make not happened what happened is not a powerful will, or particularly capable to change the past, but it is a will that nullifies herself, nullifying the becoming her lets flow and pass (p. 249).

It does not matter of retrieving the past to satisfy a hedonistic pleasure. The real power is to will it eternally and exactly how it has been wanted. The act of recreating the past, when completed, becomes something past as well, growing the being-been dimension. That is why neither the godlike omnipotence nor Gentile's idealism, as Severino highlighted, can have a real effect on the possibility to destroy the past unchangeability (Severino, 1999). The will would fight a losing battle which would not do anything else than confirming and extending the being-been dimension at the expense of the power of will and of becoming that will be more restricted. The possibility to change the being-been is then the problem core and it is also very clear from both the medieval question around the godlike omnipotence and Nietzsche's eternal return account. Again, why is the past unchangeability a so strong enemy to overwhelm? In some way, we have already explained the reasons behind its power. However, now we are going to illustrate it clearer, showing the *factum infectum fieri nequit*'s real effect. According to Severino, we can start from a simple example in order to highlight the truthiness of this account. Let us assume that we want to move an object, such as a lamp, from its position to another one on its left. To represent it, we can indicate it as mlL (m = movement, l = left, L = lamp). What does it mean to change the past in relation to our example, then? To answer, we should find out if it is possible or not to move L, which is the lamp before its move to the left, in another way from how we did it. Changing the past means, following the example, to be able to make a different movement of L and not of mlL, as long as mlL is the present and L is the past after the movement is done. To think a different L's movement, for instance to the right, means to think a mrL or, which is the same, a non-mlL. However, if it is possible to move differently L, there would be a contradictory situation where L has been moved simultaneously to one direction and to the other: there would be an

impossible coexistence of both mlL and non-mlL. The lamp would and would not have been moved to the left at the same time, let us assume to the right in order to have mlL = mrL, which infringes the non-contradiction principle. At this point, there are other attempts to try to avoid the contradiction, but also these, as we will see, will be wrong. Indeed, if we say that there are any contradictions to state both mlL and non-mlL as long as they are not happening on the same time, but, let us assume, one before and one after, we are not doing anything else than denying to non-mlL the status of alternative past from mlL. The reason for it is that if non-mlL would be a movement which occurs after mlL's one, neither L being-been nor mlL unchangeability will be denied. Simply, the lamp would have been moved before to the left and then to the right, but the being-been of these movements, will not be modified. Another option could be to state that to the movement to non-mlL of L corresponds mlL's nullifying in order to avoid the contradiction where both are together: mlL and non-mlL. L would be moved to non-mlL and simultaneously mlL would be nullified, and the past would be modified then. The problem here is related to mlL's nullification because, during its implementation, non-mlL leaves untouched mlL's being-been. As such, there is again a contradictory situation with a time coexistence of both mlL and non-mlL. In fact, non-mlL's being which should be the same as mlL's not being would stay together with mlL's being-been. There would be again a situation where before would happen mlL and then non-mlL, but this, as we illustrated, is not enough to state the past changeability. The last chances available seem to be those which believe not only mlL is nullified by the arrival of non-mlL, but also mlL being-been is nullified due to non-mlL coming. Alternatively, there is the option which thinks that mlL is never existed when non-mlL occurs. Both are impossible as well and indeed Severino (2011) states:

> To will the transformation of the past L in non-mlL would necessary, insofar, not only the nullification of mlL, but the nullification of mlL's being-been as well, namely it would be necessary the impossible. Being the impossible the fact that mlL's being-been becomes the not being-been of mlL and therefore the being-been of mlL would not be the being-been of mlL. (Since the *factum infectum fieri nequit* is thought outside the destiny structure, it is, as the others traditional logical-ontological principles, the *faith* that the entity is not other from itself). Finally, it is impossible that, due to the will to transform the past

of L in non-mlL, it must believe that mlL had never been. Indeed, if mlL appeared on the isolated earth (if it is truthiness of the destiny that it appeared on the dream of isolated earth) is a contradiction to believe that it had never been; if, instead, mlL has never appeared, the will to transform L in non-mlL is not then a will the past (L) because L is a proper past since before that in non-mlL had transformed in a certain way – for instance in mlL, which is a being-been compared to non-mlL (pp. 286-287).

This illustrates how it is impossible to will the past, as to think of changing it. It is just possible to deceive of being able to change it. The demonstration stated before shows how the past and presence difference is necessary and how it is impossible for the will to transform the past as she believes to change the present. According to Severino, the factum infectum fieri nequit is part of logical-ontological traditional principles even if within a nihilistic faith to the becoming-other of things. It ensures the past unchangeability based on the non-contradiction law. Nietzsche's eternal return, on the other hand, is not directly against the law as long as it does not aim to make nothingness what was, whereby, with a different account, it tries to make what has been as wanted in the exact way it has been, forever.

4. The eternal return unstoppability

To outline a little bit more how Severino's account describes the eternal return capability to rise as the effective action of taking control on the past by the will, it is important to explain how the past seems to the majority of the people. The past is always considered as something which nullifies both itself and its content on one side and, on the other side, as ongoing in its image. When an event becomes the past its content nullifies itself, but the remembering of it stays as existent on the memory. The remembering is not the past, but only a faded picture of it, which is something and not nothingness since it is remembered. The memory is then the continuing into being of the passed picture, even if the past is so far nullified. That is why normally it looks impossible to think that the will is able to get the hands on the past as long as it is already nothing. The ambitious of eternal return, the superman's will of power, as described by Nietzsche, must be outlined as the capability to will

eternally the real existence of the past content in order to take it out from the nothingness where it is gone. The will achieves its top level on the eternal return and it must throw out the past from the nothingness it stays as past to have it in its real form. In this perspective, Nietzsche does not differ from the common view of the past as the process where the content is nullified and the image of its continued existence. Moreover, if we want to understand what is the result of going into the nothingness by the being, we will discover that it is nothing else than the being-been of being. Any being as long as it is passed becomes a being which being-been. The being-been is the past of the present being and that is why Nietzsche is in line with the Western's thought. Normally, the will believes to have power only on the present, so on the being not on the past which is the being-been. Nevertheless, it is exactly what the will tries to do in order to change the past. The real power on the past is not to make it different from what it is or to create it again in a different manner. The real power is to want it again exactly how it has been eternally to make it eternally wanted. In this instance, then, Nietzsche's eternal return must be read: to transform "what was" into "what I wanted that was". As Severino (1999) says:

> The power on the entity totality by the will that wants the eternal return is superior also than the God's omnipotence because also this one […] cannot do anything on a past that appears as already solidified in its being-been what it had been – God's omnipotence cannot has no power if we expect those absurd form of power which wants to make *infectum* the *factum* (and, as we already said, it is surely not this absurd that the extreme power of the eternal return will believes to realise), but in the sense that God's omnipotence, once something has been produced and made a *factum* by it, the omnipotence has no more power on it. The supreme power on the *factum* does not consist on modifying, creating or recreating it, but on willing it in the same way it has been wanted, namely in the infinite return of the will that wanted it, and therefore in the infinite return of all the things which had been wanted, and they are the totality of the things. Only if the wanted is wanted in this manner, it does not establish as an eternal which makes powerless the will and impossible the becoming. It is, indeed, this supreme form of power to be *necessary* required by the becoming evidence (pp. 394-395).

The highest form of power belongs to the eternal return. The will which wants the eternal return of all the things is not following the logic says that to have power on the past you must be able to change it. The becoming has no longer an unchangeable eternal which determines it in advance having a nullifying effect. It has an eternal wanted beforehand, that being wanted, it is not escaping from the will and, apparently, from the becoming. In Nietzsche's eternal return there is not an immediate contrast between his perspective and the *factum infectum fieri nequit* since the latter seems too strong to be overwhelmed to the former. Thus, Nietzsche's account gets around this obstacle trying to want eternally the past without changing it. This is the only way to attempt a power extension of the will on the past. Generally, the will is a little bit ambiguous in relation to the past because she must want eternally each content she wants, but she must also not want anymore what she wants in order to want also all the others wanted which build the will becoming. Only the eternal return seems to overcome the contradiction insofar if the will wants eternally again everything she wanted, this will without differences allows that herself, in the future, do not leave what was being-been in the way it had been, but she will want it again eternally. Future and past will be eternally wanted anyway, even if the will can, at some point, stop to want what she wants. There will never be a future eternally future or a past eternally past which can escape from the will making the becoming impossible. According to the becoming coherence, only the eternal return can set itself as unchangeable as long as the past does not rise as an insurmountable limit.

5. Over the eternal return and the *factum infectum fieri nequit*

Nietzsche's proposal, read by Severino, is so very interesting because he makes the past depending on the will which wants it eternally and, in this way, she makes it changeable under a certain perspective, reaching the goal where lots of other proposals failed. However, it is necessary to highlight how behind this perspective, there are still several issues. The eternal return will believe to have power on the past insofar she wants it exactly how it is, but in this way, she is confirming again its unchangeable structure. Both the will which beliefs to be able to act on the things and the becoming will find their selves crushed again under the weight of the same doctrine they used to obtain the strongest power. The eternal return of all the things is itself an eternal as such it includes a limitation for the

becoming, indeed, as eternal never become other. The becoming achieved the maximum power through the eternal return, but from this eternal has been cancelled. The eternal return, in fact, anticipates and establishes in advance the future, damaging the news that can appear thanks to the becoming because everything that will happen, there would be happened already always. The past unchangeability is not only untouched from the eternal return, but it is also influencing the future itself. The will would be free within its will, but the actions she does are eternally the same ones, and they will appear again infinite times. The will which wants to be free from the past unchangeability ends to be a slave of its willing always the same things. Moreover, the major issue, Severino highlighted, is that the eternal return is not an ordinary result which depends on a specific point of view, whereas it is the necessary outcome which comes from the radical attempt to make the becoming totally consistent with itself. For this reason, the difficulties encountered during the explanation mentioned before are not due to the eternal return, but because of the contradictory of the becoming itself. The true problem lies in the becoming and only in a second time on the instance which can try to express best its essence, for this reason Severino (1999) writes:

> The becoming process implies necessarily the non-becoming, namely the denial of itself. That means the becoming is a contradictory concept in itself. Assuming the eternal – being it eternity – is a concept implies the denial of those difference between being and nothingness that establishes the original structure of Western's thinking and in its fulfilled meaning requires that something is not its other. The eternal return of everything anticipates and establishes in advance the totality of the future. It defeats the becoming in a more radical way than God's eternity, because the fact that God exists is the fundamental illusion of the metaphysical thinking; but that the eternal return exists is an imperative necessity, required by the same essence of the becoming (p. 414).

If the problem, following Severino, is present on the becoming itself, which consequences should we draw on the way of thinking the past and the possibility that it could be changed? The identification between being and nothingness is the contradiction inherent to the becoming as long as it is usually considered by the mortals. Thus, our way of thinking

the past should firstly make it free from this contradictory status. We saw how commonly when an event becomes past, it is linked to its nullification and how of this being-been will remain only its remember. However, now, according to what we said so far, the question is: under which fundament we can claim that what seems past for our memory is only a picture of something that is nothing now? If the past became nothing, we cannot say that an image of it appears. Indeed, a remembrance of something which is nothing could not appear. The remembrance is something, but if we say that it remembers a nothingness, we are saying nothing else that it is not remembering (which means that you are remembering the nothingness, obviously). Furthermore, we would state that the remembrance is not remembering anything. To remember nothing is the same of not remembering. Clearly, if the past would really be a process where the things are going into the nothingness, remembers and memory would not have any content. It is impossible to remember what is nothing because there would be nothing to remember. Refusing these conclusions, we could answer to these considerations stating that it is not correct to say: the remembrance is a remembering of nothingness, but it is a remembering of the being-been of something which is now a nothingness. The remembrance is not dealing with the current and proper being of an event, but with its being-been and since the being-been is not a nothingness, it is impossible to state that the remembrance is based on the nothingness. Actually, it is exactly on this point that Severino stresses, claiming that this approach identifies the entity nullification which becomes past with its positive being-been, and, moreover, it is impossible to see the contradiction embedded on saying that something, whatever it is, from being becomes nothing during the passage from the present to the past. The being cannot identify itself with the nothingness; thus, if something is, exists, it cannot become nothing. If we would still believe it, we should explain how it is possible that something which becomes nothing keeps its being-been, or its not being nothing. The being-been of something, now in the present moment, matches with its being nothing, insofar if it would not be nothing, it will be still present and not something past. It would be so and not a being-been (or something no more present). Severino (2011) gives the following illustration of his position:

> It is impossible that what had been would be, when and because
> it had been – namely when and because is nothing, – an entity;

thus, like it is impossible that a squared circle would be a circle. It is possible to believe that it is, only if we divide its being circle of its being square; so it is of the circle, divided in this way, that is not contradictory saying that is circle […] However, claiming this, we are not referring to a consistent unit in the entity which would be the squared-circle, but we are referring to a circle *and* to a square, and if now we identify those unity with this duality, it is possible to deceive to be able to claim without contradiction that a squared circle is a circle. Similarly, it is impossible to state that what had *been* had been (when and because it had been) an entity. In fact, what had been is an entity-that-*had-been* (when and because it had been) an entity because what *had been* an entity-that-is-nothing. Therefore, as long as it is an entity which had become nothing, it is an entity which is nothing. But it is impossible that an entity-that-is-nothing would be an entity (when and because it *had been*), only if we divide its being entity from its being nothing, and it is claimed of its being entity that is an entity. Not even there, insofar, we are referring to the entity-that-is-nothing unity, but we are referring to the entity *and* the nothing; and if, at this point, we identify those unity with this duality, it is possible to deceive to be able to claim without contradiction that the entity-that-is-nothing, *namely* the entity-that-*had-been*, is an entity. Therefore, it is impossible that the remembrance remembers what had been and it is now nothing (pp. 527-528).

Only an existent can appear in the remembrance, something being and it is not nothing. However, the scenario where something can become a nothingness is the impossible which is never realising. Thus, the past cannot match with the nullifying of entities, so the being-been cannot have any existence if it matches with the nullifying of something. For the same reason, changing the past is something impossible. Indeed, if changing the past brings about the fact that something which had been, was not being or, in other words, that something which cannot not be a nothingness nullifies itself. That is why the possibility to change the past is impossible since it matches with the idea to make nothing the being. Changing the past, essentially, is impossible in so far as it is the same of making nothingness something that is (Severino (1995) wrote a lot on the contradiction of becoming nothingness and also on the becoming something different from itself). Being and nothingness cannot be identified and on this crucial concept of Severino's account,

our claims must be reorganised. That something that had been, cannot not being-been it is true only if being and nothing are not identified. The *factum infectum fieri nequit*, insofar, should be understood correctly through a logic where the past does not match with the nullifying process. Severino illustrates how the being-been if implying the nothingness of the being, has no reason to exist as a concept. Further, it would be correct not to say: "that what was being cannot not being-been", but "that what it is, cannot not being". What it is, staying always on the being, cannot becoming nothingness, it will always be what it is, eternally. The *factum infectum fieri nequit* not seems to find a secure place into Severino's approach. On the contrary, it would stay embedded in a nihilistic's logic where the being goes to the nothingness and vice versa. Precisely, in our opinion, the *factum infectum fieri nequit* would not be denied but rethought better. It shows the impossibility of becoming other in and of the past thanks to its foundation on the non-contradiction principle. Thus, if it would be reinterpreted in a non-nihilistic perspective, we will find it expressed in different ways. For instance, the "what was being cannot not being-been" can be replaced by "what had appeared, cannot not being appeared". The non-nihilistic becoming, stated by Severino, as appearing and disappearing of entities, would do a step back to leave another figure of the *factum infectum fieri nequit* which is non-nihilistic as well. What had appeared cannot not be appeared: "*quod apparuit nequit non apparuisse*". The eternal return should be correctly understood as the eternal staying into the being of everything that exists, appears or not appears. It cannot exist as continuous and cyclical in and out from the being to the nothingness and vice versa. What it remains eternally into the being. On the eternity of entities and the consequences of it, we must send back to Severino's works, since here it is important to conclude highlighting how the topic around the possibility to change the past can be placed in a specific philosophical context as emblematic demonstration of the essence presents on the ground of the contemporary debate. The radicalisation of the becoming nihilistic conception forces to think about the fallen of each unchangeable and the past as one of those. What stated so far, thanks to Severino's account, shows also the impossibility of a project where the becoming would be intended in a nihilistic way as the ambitious to be able to change the past.

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