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## ONTOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS IN VITTORIO MATHIEU'S THOUGHT

*Vittorio Mathieu's ontology was developed in his last work, which bears the title Trattato di ontologia (Treatise of Ontology). The work, which seamlessly continues the previous writings, can be seen as the conclusive systematization of Mathieu's thought. The present paper summarizes the main contents of Mathieu's theoretical proposal, analyzing them from the perspective of neoclassical philosophy. Through the comparison of the positions of Gustavo Bontadini and Emanuele Severino, it is shown that phenomenological metaphysics cannot be considered as stable knowledge. Finally, it is suggested to keep Mathieu's results, but rejecting his opposition to classical metaphysics and, in particular, to the ontological valence of the non-contradiction principle.*

### I. THE TREATISE ON ONTOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

Vittorio Mathieu, a distinguished Italian philosopher, was born in Varazze (Savona) in 1923 and passed away a few years ago in 2020. His work received international recognition and garnered admiration from scholars around the world. Mathieu's academic journey involved the extensive study of prominent philosophers, including Kant, Plotinus, and Bergson, among others. He earned his degree in Turin under the mentorship of Augusto Guzzo, a Neapolitan philosopher who was a student of Sebastiano Maturi and followed the Hegelianism of Augusto Vera and Bertrando Spaventa.

In 1934, Guzzo was appointed to the chair of moral philosophy in Turin, and in 1939, he assumed the chair of theoretical philosophy, all while continuing to teach moral philosophy. The University of Turin during that era boasted notable figures like Nicola Abbagnano and Carlo Mazzantini,<sup>1</sup> a distinctive thinker who was among the early scholars to engage with Heidegger's

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<sup>1</sup> Mazzantini completed his studies with a degree in Law in 1919, followed by degrees in Literature in 1921 and Philosophy in 1922 under the mentorship of Erminio Juvalta. His thesis received enthusiastic praise when reviewed by Benedetto Croce. In 1925, Mazzantini achieved the



philosophy in Italy. Mathieu secured the first position in the competition for a professorship in the history of philosophy in 1960. Subsequently, he became a full professor in Trieste in 1961 and later in Turin in 1967. Mathieu was a national member of the Accademia dei Lincei and a member of the Accademia delle Scienze in Turin. He held prestigious international positions as well.<sup>2</sup>

Mathieu's magnum opus is the *Trattato di ontologia* (*Treatise on Ontology*), a work that, like a *Summa*<sup>3</sup>, encapsulates his entire philosophical journey.

In the first part of this article, I will provide an analytical summary of the contents of this volume. In the second part, I will delve into the primary features of Mathieu's metaphysical framework.

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status of *libera docenza* (habilitation). In 1949, he was appointed to the chair of history of philosophy at the Facoltà di Magistero in Genoa. He ultimately returned to Turin as a full professor in 1959. Mazzantini's philosophical perspective was based on a "fundamental" evidence: man is encompassed within the horizon of being. This horizon can be conceived as the virtuality of being, a "comprehensive" density, or transcendentality. In this framework, the various determinations do not "add" anything to being; instead, they "emerge" from it. Each determination is not only identical to itself (identity) but also constitutively refers to all others (virtuality). The structure of being is a weave that envelops the determinations without confining itself to any one of them. It transcends them *a parte ante* as a foundational original interlacing ("implesso") and *a parte post* as a final interlacing, which consolidates in itself the unfolding array of modes of being. For further insights, see C. MAZZANTINI, *Linee di metafisica spiritualistica come filosofia della virtualità ontologica*, in ID., *Filosofia e storia della filosofia*, Bottega d'Erasmus, Torino 1960, pp. 11-32. This position, in which the concept of 'virtuality' holds a central role, faced criticism within the context of the Gallarate Conferences. Gustavo Bontadini, a representative of the Neo-Scholastic movement, raised objections to Mazzantini's failure to fully develop the implication, which remained merely enunciated. Bontadini argued that this incomplete development left the inferential transition from the encompassing horizon of "immediate evidence" to that of "mediated evidence" in suspense: G. BONTADINI, *Estetica e metafisica*, in ID., *Dal problematicismo alla metafisica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1996, pp. 137-148, pp. 146-147, n. 12. For a commemoration of Mazzantini: V. MATHIEU, *Maestri scomparsi dell'Università Torinese: Giovanni Vidari e Carlo Mazzantini*, Accademia delle Scienze, Torino 1972. Cf. also V. MATHIEU, *Trattato di ontologia*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2019, *Epilogo*, § 3, p. 346. In footnotes, we will refer to this work as 'TO' followed by the page number, or indicate page numbers directly in the body of the text.

<sup>2</sup> Given the context of the journal to which this contribution is intended, we would like to highlight that Mathieu has also delved into the thought of Rosmini. However, this exploration will not directly concern what we will be analyzing in this article. For further details, refer to V. MATHIEU, *L'idea dell'illuminismo in Kant e in Rosmini*, in *Rosmini e l'illuminismo. Atti del XXI Corso della "Cattedra Rosmini"*, Edizioni Sodalitas-Spes, Stresa-Milazzo 1988, pp. 81-95.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. POMA, *Ricordo di Vittorio Mathieu*, in «Filosofia», LXV, 2020, pp. 9-10.

1. *The Definition of 'Ontology' and the Method of Differential Ontology: Ascending from the Spatial Level*

At the outset of the *Treatise*, we encounter the following definition of ontology: "Ontology is the study of 'being,' the present participle of the verb 'to be.' The present participle, often referred to as 'active,' indicates an action. Therefore, ontology is the study of the mode of action of being."<sup>4</sup>

The question arises, what action can be ascribed to being? The only action attributable to being is abiding, remaining within the continuity of presence. Being is eternal; it cannot not be. However, it is argued that beings exhibit a state of coming and going.

Given the difficulty of determining the specific action of being—since it is quiet in itself—Mathieu chooses to 'begin from below', commencing with our way of acting. This approach provides a more tangible starting point compared to the question of being, which has elicited and continues to elicit skepticism, especially in the context of neo-positivism and the philosophical perspectives that have historically emerged from it.

To seek a more concrete point of departure implies not taking being as immediate or originally given<sup>5</sup>. Instead, it is posited that the operational level is the foundation. Differential ontology departs from the spatial level, relying on a specific kind of impossibility termed "transcendental" by Mathieu.

This transcendental impossibility imposes not to remain confined within the spatial level, which metaphorically leads to a higher plane of reality. Within space, all points exist outside of one another. Differential ontology stands in opposition to the flattening of all levels down to the level of space.

a) *Modern Science and the Isolation of Space*

With each ascent from one level to another, there is a metaphorical distancing from space, not a quantitative one (we will explore the implications of this). This distancing reaches its peak, symbolized by the geometric concept of the point. Transitioning from the spatial level to the point entails qualitative differentiation and integration, as articulated by Bergson: "*the object of metaphysics is to perform qualitative differentiations and integrations.*"<sup>6</sup>

Bergson held the belief that every philosopher "conveys a single message, manifests only

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<sup>4</sup> TO, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> In this perspective, ontology represents a journey that, in some manner, leads to what is initially non-manifest. The issue to be addressed is the structural impossibility of such a transition. For further insights, refer to the considerations regarding the foundation as outlined in section II, paragraph 3.

<sup>6</sup> H. BERGSON, *An introduction to metaphysics*, trans. by T. E. HULME, G. P. Putnam's Sons, NY and London 1912, p. 72.

one idea,” and for him, that idea is the stratification of being. “The image of being that emerges from Bergson’s speculation is the image of a qualitatively differentiated and ‘stratified’ being.”<sup>7</sup> Although Bergson initially embraced positivism in his career, he later rejected the idea that scientific knowledge comprehensively encompasses all modes of being. The departure from the superficial level of reality does not entirely disregard concepts but acknowledges their validity, albeit solely in the context of the surface. “In other words, the transition from the domain of concepts, and therefore from superficial reality alone, to profound reality was conditioned by the *absolute validity* of these concepts on that superficial level, their appropriateness for that particular kind of reality, their effectiveness.”<sup>8</sup>

Even as various modes of being progressively move away from objectivity, the reference to objectivity remains pivotal. It is crucial to distinguish the superficial layer of reality, which is governed by science, from the entirety of being. Science comprehensively addresses the external mode of being (and, in this sense, its validity is absolute), but it does not encompass the exclusive mode of being. Ontology initiates from the spatial plane, as if to suggest that ontological difference originates from objectivity, and then delves deeper, exploring levels of increasing tension that fall beyond the scope of scientific inquiry, as being extends well beyond spatial boundaries.

Modern science isolates a specific aspect of being, namely space, which represents the outer and more superficial level. This is a fundamental characteristic of modern science: the isolation of spatiality (a concept notably absent in the Greek language). It takes a part of being and posits it as the entirety of being. “Only the remarkable success of mathematical-experimental science has enabled the isolation of that particular aspect of spatiality within the realm of physical being, allowing us to predict the behavior of nature with an unprecedented level of precision and to practically master it.”<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the isolation of a component of being, referred to as a ‘level’ of being by Mathieu, serves the purpose of exact *prediction* and *mastery*. In fact, when science encounters objects that do not conform to conventional notions of space, such as the quanta of action, it loses its predictive capability<sup>10</sup>. Modern science carries out this abstraction with a view to mastery. Emanuele Severino observes in his *History of Philosophy* that “from its very beginning, philosophy has turned to the unitary meaning of the *Whole* to *contemplate* it. In contrast, modern science turns its attention to individual *parts*, aiming to *master* them and thereby transform the world through its predictive capabilities.”<sup>11</sup> Severino<sup>12</sup> argues that

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<sup>7</sup> V. MATHIEU, *Bergson. Il profondo e la sua espressione*, Guida, Napoli 1971, p. 279.

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, pp. 318-319.

<sup>9</sup> Ivi, p. 282.

<sup>10</sup> Ivi, p. 286.

<sup>11</sup> E. SEVERINO, *La Filosofia dai greci al nostro tempo*, vol. II, *La filosofia moderna*, BUR, Milano 2004, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> However, Severino disagrees with the notion that modern science renews and replaces the categories of Greek thought. He states: “on the other hand, it can be said that all the elements

modern science, which initially presented itself as incontrovertible knowledge (as exemplified by Galileo), has abandoned this status over the past two centuries. This shift marks a decline in the configuration of knowledge, as understood in terms of *epistème*<sup>13</sup>, and is indicative of a broader sunset of Western civilization<sup>14</sup>. It is important to note that the historical development of Western civilization is determined by the philosophical frameworks that have shaped it, contrary to Marx's perspective (according to which *the social being of man determines his consciousness*). Modern science has shifted toward a form of knowledge that is hypothetical-deductive, without, however, diminishing its ambition to exert control over the world. On the contrary, it has forsaken the concept of stable knowledge in order to strengthen its control: "precisely to make its control over things more radical, it renounces being definitive and incontrovertible truth."<sup>15</sup> Returning to Mathieu and Bergson, after the abstraction undertaken by modern science, which 'detaches' a layer (the outer level: space)<sup>16</sup> from being, philosophy asserts the irreducibility of the entirety of being to the spatial layer. It is illegitimate to equate the entire being with the level of space. Mathieu attributes the thought of this gap to metaphysics:

to express the onto-logical difference, one can use, for example, a direct negation of Parmenides' principle (according to which 'it is the same to think and to think that is'). In being, there is something irreducible to thought. However, for contradiction not to remain sterile, the 'parricide must take place *secundum quid*, not *simpliciter*'. In fact, metaphysics still claims to think that residue.<sup>17</sup>

Mathieu's ontology records a progressive differentiation from spatiality. In space, determinations become present, yet they sink into the depth; their being is not entirely contained within space. For instance, colour and sound—as outlined in par. 2. a) —constitute unities that surpass the spatial ontological level. Therefore, there is no competition between science and

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that make up the structure of modern science are already present in Greek thought. It is the way in which they come together in modern science that determines its novelty" (*ibidem*).

<sup>13</sup> "And it is characteristic of *epistème*, particularly in its Aristotelian form, to have the dual foundation that Galilei attributes to true science: 'manifest experience' and 'necessary demonstrations'" (ivi, p. 52).

<sup>14</sup> The immutability attributed by the West to religious, legal, ethical, or aesthetic content is a result of the way philosophy conceives of truth. The absoluteness of all the significant structures in Western history reflects the formal determination of truth in accordance with *epistème*. Cf. ID., *La Filosofia dai greci al nostro tempo*, vol. III, *La Filosofia contemporanea*, BUR, Milano 2004, pp. 281-282.

<sup>15</sup> Ivi, p. 283.

<sup>16</sup> MATHIEU, *Bergson...*, cit., p. 286.

<sup>17</sup> ID., *Saggio di metafisica sperimentale*, in AA. VV., *La mia prospettiva filosofica. Nuovo ciclo*, Università Gregoriana, Padova 1988, pp. 29-52, p. 33.

philosophy. “Philosophy—which has nothing to say about what is objective, having delegated this judgment to science—nevertheless remains the judge of what objectivity is, for objectivity is only an aspect, and what is an aspect can only be judged in relation to the whole.”<sup>18</sup>

b) *Space as the Transcendental Form of Operation. From Atomism to Mechanism*

As the ontologist approaches the point, the ascent turns into a descent, resulting in the increasing negation of spatial mode of being. In space, the alterity of one point concerning another is equivalent to its existence elsewhere in relation to the point from which it differs. Differential ontology safeguards the multiplicity of levels from collapsing into the zero level of space. This level is termed ‘zero’ because, as Kant asserts, existence represents the impossible addition to the possible, an addition that does not alter the content of the possible.<sup>19</sup> If existence were to alter the concept of the possible, what would come into existence would no longer be what was previously a mere possibility, but something distinct.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, departing from the zero level marks a transition into the dimension of existence, perpendicular to that of objectivity. The content remains constant; only the mode of being of that content changes.

Kant’s conception of space is inherently intuitive. Intuition corresponds to the possibility of moving objects within space,<sup>21</sup> while space itself possesses immutable properties beyond our

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<sup>18</sup> ID., *L’oggettività. Scienza e filosofia di fronte all’«oggetto»*, Mimesis, Milan-Udine 2014, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> TO, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> «Thus when I think a thing, through whichever and however many predicates I like (even in its thoroughgoing determination), not the least bit gets added to the thing when I posit in addition that this thing **is**. For otherwise what would exist would not be the same as what I had thought in my concept, but more than that, and I could not say that the very object of my concept exists»: I. KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*, English translation by P. GUYER-ALLEN W. WOOD, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 567-568 (A 600/B628). In Kant’s conception of existence, his reliance on rationalist metaphysics, which is characteristic of the univocal lineage that historically evolved from Scotus to Suárez and ultimately to Wolff, becomes apparent. For Wolff, existence is seen as the *complementum possibilitatis*. This lineage neglects the authentic Thomistic meaning of being as *actus essendi* by conceiving it as a fact: existence is understood as the realization of essence.

<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that, in the *Treatise*, the notion of space encompasses a diverse range of ideas (it designates a “family of concepts”). It includes “curved, physical space; flat, Euclidean space, which is indifferent to physics; historical space, originating from the Big Bang; Newton’s absolute space; Kant’s transcendental space, seen as the necessary form for our immediate operations; relativistic space, where measurements depend on the relative motion of observers; and Poincaré’s conventional space.” All of these types of space are united under the metaphor of the expanding circle “k,” as referenced in note 26: TO, p. 226.

control.

Our capability is restricted to the rearrangement of elements within space,<sup>22</sup> a perspective that aligns with atomists'<sup>23</sup> views, attributing all change to the displacement of atoms in the void (τὸ κενόν). Consequently, space becomes the transcendental form of operation.<sup>24</sup> Mathieu refers to intuitive space, which, even with the advent of non-Euclidean geometries, continues to serve as the operational space. It constitutes a datum, albeit a priori (given to the intellect—a non-empirical fact of intuition),<sup>25</sup> contrasting 'physical' space,<sup>26</sup> which is curved<sup>27</sup> and *constructed*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Operation is grounded in data and its displacement (TO, p. 47). This constitutes the pattern or a priori structure of operation.

<sup>23</sup> Euclidean geometry, which addresses the displacement of bodies, "is the geometry of ancient atomism": TO, p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> Such a space will inevitably possess two dimensions: in a one-dimensional space, to reverse the order of objects, they would have to cross each other (and if they are fundamental data, indivisible into parts, this is unfeasible). In fact, a project, on a sheet of paper, requires two dimensions, whereas for an instruction, of a discursive nature, one dimension, a strip, is sufficient. (TO, pp. 55-57). Galileo, in asserting that God's knowledge does not differ from ours, posits that there is no knowledge that cannot be translated into a series of choices, similar to a strip (he equates intuitive knowledge with discursive knowledge).

<sup>25</sup> It exists, and thus it imposes limitations upon us. Its absoluteness is *secundum quid*. Cf. n. 62.

<sup>26</sup> Mathieu interprets the expansion of space in a projective manner, envisioning it as the enlargement of a circle labeled as 'k', intersecting a star of rays (at infinity, the circle transforms into a straight line). This leads Mathieu to associate space with time, with both evolving in parallel. The big bang signifies zero time and zero space, posing the challenge of transitioning from nothingness, symbolized by the point of the big bang, to something, embodied by the growing circle. The activity enclosed within the point must not dissipate, yet it inevitably does so during the leap from a point to a circle (the nothingness here pertains to the absence of time and space). A continuum, rather than mere contiguity, exists between the points in space, and this continuity is crucial for the viability of the big bang hypothesis. Furthermore, Mathieu explains *gravity* not as an energy or a force acting at a distance between masses, but as the manifestation of the unity of the cosmos, which endures within its expansion (see TO, p. 215).

<sup>27</sup> In non-Euclidean geometries, the curvature of space serves as the absolute measure of quantities.

<sup>28</sup> Mathieu observes that, since cosmology, in principle, cannot produce the phenomenon it seeks to explain (the expansion of the universe is neither verifiable nor falsifiable from an

rather than given. If space functions as the form of operation, moving away from this level implies a reduction in the capacity to act. The higher one ascends, the more challenging it becomes to achieve objectives.<sup>29</sup>

Atomism posited that all phenomena could be generated by rearranging data, with the process of becoming mirroring the structure of our actions. It identified the ultimate data in atoms, fostering a delusion of omnipotence as it established “a homeomorphism between what occurs naturally and what we can accomplish.”<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously, it tempered this delusion by designating atoms as ultimate elements, impervious to any action. Atoms, being indivisible, represent ultimate data. Hence, since action entails the manipulation of elements, attempting to act upon atoms is inherently unfeasible.<sup>31</sup>

Within the sea of potentiality (the void), atoms interrupt the sea’s continuity, akin to ‘land-masses,’ spatial gaps impeding motion.<sup>32</sup> The contrast between fullness and emptiness—the atom representing the negation of space and space representing the potential for movement—parallels the differentiation between what is possible and what is impossible. The land obstructs the navigator’s movement in the sea. Since antiquity, the sea has symbolized the delusion of omnipotence, and legend has it that Hippasus of Metapontum, the discoverer of irrational numbers, met a watery demise as divine retribution.

The existence of atoms is grounded in the concept of the impossible, signifying the inability to displace elements within them. The claim of omnipotence gains strength in the modern era with mechanism, which negates atoms. This transformation is particularly evident through Cartesian extension,<sup>33</sup> devoid of self-negations, in contrast to the atomists’ void interspersed with atoms. Mechanism, therefore, maximizes the consistency of ancient atomism’s homeomorphism, wherein everything is produced as we would produce it.<sup>34</sup> God operates as we do. Therefore, Mathieu contends that mechanism is the philosophy of billiards.<sup>35</sup>

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experimental perspective), cosmological space lacks the reality that intuitive space, the form of operation, holds for us (see TO, p. 232).

<sup>29</sup> See 1. d).

<sup>30</sup> TO, p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> TO, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> TO, p. 87.

<sup>33</sup> Contrasted by Leibniz, because, insofar as it exerts no resistance, it is imperceptible: so that Descartes’ evidence is the evidence of nothingness. TO, pp. 81-83.

<sup>34</sup> TO, pp. 73-74. The belief in omnipotence that Descartes had reinforced was shattered with the discovery of the finite and insurmountable speed of light: pp. 82-83.

<sup>35</sup> According to Mathieu, a latent anthropomorphism underlies mechanism. However, rather than attributing intentions to nature, mechanism relies on the concept of inertia. The transmission of movement by matter is non-intentional, representing an anthropomorphism of *non-action*.



2. *The Transcendental Impossibility of Remaining in Space*

Differential ontology progresses beyond the level of space, which has been our focus until now, to levels that are irreducible to spatiality. This shift is necessitated by an impossibility that is neither logical (based on contradiction) nor empirical (related to the inadequacy of means to an end). Mathieu terms this impossibility “transcendental.” As for space, transcendental impossibility refers to “when certain conditions of operation cannot be circumvented”.<sup>36</sup> This impossibility is not rooted in logical contradictions but stands on its own as an absolute limitation.<sup>37</sup> It is crucial to highlight that this departure from the spatial level does not involve traversing from one point to another, covering a quantifiable distance, such as the paths within space. There are no paths connecting various levels of being or modes of being. This transition is metaphorical in nature, yet this metaphor always retains an analogical connection to the spatial plane.

a) *Sounds, Colours, Smells, Feelings: Experience Alludes Beyond Itself*

To a certain extent, experience in and of itself exposes the inadequacy of attempting to reduce all levels to the level of space. Mathieu illustrates this by referencing the ontological gap<sup>38</sup> between a musical note, like the A note at 440 Hz used for tuning instruments, perceived as a qualitative and holistic sensation, and the same note regarded as a physical phenomenon consisting of vibrations propagating through the air. Experience attests to the insurmountable divide between these two modes of being. The Pythagoreans, in equating planetary motions with sounds, failed to consider the significant differences between these levels. who equated planetary motions with sounds, overlooked the significant disparities between these levels. On the other hand, atomists absolutized this distinction through the opposition between fullness and emptiness.<sup>39</sup>

Repeated frequencies are perceived holistically, whether in the context of sound or colour. The Savart wheel, as an example, vividly illustrates this transformation. When the wheel surpasses a certain speed, the frequencies become indistinguishable, converging into a qualitative unity. This serves as a compelling demonstration that the same entity exists in two distinct

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Occasionalism, as proposed by Malebranche, takes this idea to the extreme by completely denying any creature's action (TO, pp. 77-80).

<sup>36</sup> TO, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> TO, p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Another leap is encountered when considering life and death. Neither of them represents processes with a distinct starting point. Life is characterized as “a register where time is recorded” (Bergson), but within time, one finds themselves *in medias res*. The commencement and conclusion of life do not correspond to specific moments that can be traced on the “temporal line” (pp. 149-150).

<sup>39</sup> TO, p. 93.

modes of being.<sup>40</sup> With regard to colour, it is perceived as a non-spatial qualitative totality. Conversely, frequencies and repetitions, distinguished solely by their mutual externality, occupy a spatial domain. The being of colour might seem to be fully contained within space, but when one attempts to break it down into homogeneous parts, there is a threshold beyond which a particular colour ceases to exist.

Given that this happens, one must consider that the division, which applies to spatiality, does not take hold of the entire being of colour. Colour, which on one side spreads into space, on another sinks into a different “dimension”. This (metaphorical) dimension that escapes from spatial dimensions is what we call the ‘metaphysical depth’ of beings.<sup>41</sup>

The being of colour adheres to space, presents itself in it, but strictly speaking, it is not confined within space. Chemical qualities, particularly smell, are even more secondary qualities.<sup>42</sup> There’s a progressive subjectification,<sup>43</sup> moving toward punctuality. The greater the ontological distance from objectivity as one ascends through various levels, the more pronounced the subjectification becomes.

The ‘difference from objectivity’ can be represented by the progressive ‘concentration’ of being up to the limit level, in which all the richness of the concrete is contained in a point. This passage to the limit, which is typical of Bergson, can already be traced to Plotinus, from whom, through indirect transmission, it found its way into Dante (‘In its depth, I saw ingathered, bound by love in one single volume, that which is dispersed in leaves throughout the universe’<sup>44</sup>).<sup>45</sup>

In all these cases, multiplicity is unified into a kind of unity. Feelings, in particular, encompass a more diverse reality compared to sensations<sup>46</sup>. The manner and intensity of this unification vary from one individual to another. Unlike sensations, feelings exist solely in relation to oneself, lacking independent existence. The perception of a colour can be universally agreed upon (setting aside the exception of colourblind individuals), but feelings elude this intersubjective consensus, rendering them difficult to objectify. The level of feeling is considerably distant

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<sup>40</sup> TO, p. 94.

<sup>41</sup> MATHIEU, *Bergson...*, cit., p. 284. Cf., in TO, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> TO, pp. 105-106.

<sup>43</sup> “Smell is more ‘psychic’ than sound and colour, less dependent on the repetition of the identical (which is akin to the mode of being of the space because the identical ones, in order to differentiate between them, must be outside each other)” (TO, pp. 101-102).

<sup>44</sup> *Par.*, XXXIII, 85-87.

<sup>45</sup> MATHIEU, *Saggio*, cit., p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Feeling gathers a more varied reality than the repetitions of frequencies of sensations (colours, sounds): TO, pp. 106-107. It concentrates a maximum variety and reaches a variable depth.

from the spatial one, and when a feeling reaches a high existential intensity, it becomes inseparable from the individual, eventually invading their entire existence, as in many passionate dramas such as Goethe's *Werther*. This progressive subjectification represents a phenomenon of "vertical condensation".<sup>47</sup>

b) *The Notion of Movement*

Mathieu delves into the analysis of the impossibility that compels us to transcend space, focusing on the concept of movement. It is important to bear in mind that intuitive space is the transcendental form of operation, which consists of the displacement of ultimate elements. Within space, all the objects coexist, interconnected by pathways. No object is beyond reach. Movement, an integral aspect of the definition of space, necessitates that the points between which one moves are distinct, ensuring that one point is not the other. Yet, what moves retains its identity, transgressing the mutual otherness of spatial points. In essence, what moves must exist elsewhere while remaining the same. Consequently, in order to be conceptually comprehended, space compels us to transcend it. This constraint is not based on logical contradictions. Contradictions that surface at one level find resolution at the subsequent level. Commencing from the level of space, contradictions serve as the driving force behind the arguments of differential ontology. What is excluded at a lower level is subsequently incorporated at a higher level. Transcendental impossibility does not establish the laws of being per se; instead, it functions as a rule applicable at a specific level, only to be superseded at a higher level.

c) *Projective Geometry: The Meaning of Metaphor*

The gap between one level and another eludes measurement; more precisely, it diverges from measurement, which relies on the mutual externality of homogenous units, a fundamental characteristic of space. As previously discussed, despite the distinction from objectivity, reference to space remains indispensable. When describing the levels that move away from space, after traversing the dimension of existence (perpendicular to the zero level of space), one cannot avoid reprojecting this distancing back onto space. This limitation arises from the constraints of language, which struggles to express the surplus of higher levels over the spatial plane. Projective geometry proves to be a valuable tool for differential ontology.

First, let's provide some general clarifications. "To project means to connect the points of a figure to a single point outside the plane on which the figure is located, using straight lines. The intersection is called a 'section' and is the correlate of the projection".<sup>48</sup> Projective geometry is concerned with studying properties that remain consistent during projection and section operations. Hence, it is a geometry that "*disregards metric properties*".<sup>49</sup> and emphasizes qualitative

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<sup>47</sup> TO, p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> TO, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*

aspects. This characteristic makes it well-suited for differential ontology, which lacks the necessary vocabulary to describe the ontological gap between being and objectivity. The concept of projection should also be seen as a metaphor. In the context of differential ontology, during the transition between levels, the mode of being undergoes a transformation. As one approaches the point, that which was dispersed in space gathers into unity. In contrast, projection as a geometric operation does not entail this transformation; it simply causes the figure to diminish in size. Nevertheless, projective geometry is an apt source of metaphors for ontology. The central question in differential ontology revolves around the possibility that the reality gathered in a point is the same as that which is spread out in the ‘plane.’

The *law of duality* plays a significant role in these discussions. Following Mathieu’s explanation regarding the geometry of space, he states: “If in a valid proposition, you interchange the words ‘point’ and ‘plane,’ with ‘line’ remaining, you get another proposition that is dual to the first and equally valid. In fact, if it serves as the conclusion of a theorem, it no longer requires proof”.<sup>50</sup> In gnoseology, “if we define experience as a *plane* intersecting the star of rays radiating from the knowing subject, you will find the subject’s ‘cognitive intentions’ in these intersections. The object, as a figure or set of points, is dually contained within the punctual subject or self who undergoes the experience”.<sup>51</sup> This idea resonates with Aristotle’s famous formula that the soul is, in some sense, all things (ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἐστὶ πάντα).<sup>52</sup>

A similar notion of encompassing the whole within a part can be discerned in the thoughts of Schopenhauer and Royce, whom Mathieu compares to Aristotle. According to Schopenhauer, despite being part of the world, the subject contains it, leading to a paradox where the part contains the whole. In Royce’s framework, the Absolute functions as a self-representational system, akin to a perfect map representing itself, its representation, and so on ad infinitum.

Projective geometry also aids in understanding the transition from the finite to the infinite and the concept of metaphorical, non-measurable transportation through improper figures. Mathieu points out that “in projective geometry, there is an analogy between *proper* and *improper* points, but with a metaphysical gap that cannot be bridged because *finiti ad infinitum nulla proportio*”.<sup>53</sup> Even when moving along a straight line, one progresses from the infinity of its points to a single point at infinity, signifying a qualitative leap. This leap marks the impassable distance between these two levels, transitioning from an entity with  $n$  dimensions to an entity with  $n-1$  dimensions.<sup>54</sup>

In summary, philosophical statements

which may appear to be objectively formulated, do not have the task of mirroring objectivity.

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<sup>50</sup> TO, p. 121.

<sup>51</sup> TO, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> ARISTOTELE, *De an.*, 431 b 20.

<sup>53</sup> TO, pp. 125-126.

<sup>54</sup> TO, p. 136.

Instead, their purpose is to *express a relationship* with the object as defined by other statements, concerning *those aspects of experience that elude reduction to objectivity*. Given that the determination of a relationship can only assume an objective form, and, on the other hand, here it is a matter of translating the *non-objective* into this form, the objectivity of these statements can only be *metaphorical*. They convey into the objective realm even that which lacks its proper place here, without, however, allowing a direct comparison between the metaphor and the proper meaning, as the non-objective cannot be assigned any proper place.<sup>55</sup>

### 3. Integral Ontology

Having completed the section on differential ontology, Mathieu proceeds to introduce integral ontology by thoroughly examining concepts such as memory, time, and the self, all of which imply an inherent integration between levels.

#### a) Memory, Time, Self

Our investigation continues with the concept of movement. In movement, the moving entity passes through multiple points while retaining its identity. However, the very nature of space precludes such invariance. Thus, movement, not entirely confined to space, implies a negation of spatiality, namely an ontological continuity: memory. Memory, in turn, is rooted in eternity. The past can only exist as past if the contradiction of the past being present is resolved by transitioning to a different level. The presence of the past represents a 'reduced' eternity<sup>56</sup>.

In the realm of organic life, memory encompasses more than just continuity (where an object passes through various points while remaining unaltered; in aging, a differentiation of what ages occurs). It also involves the accrual of time. The integral<sup>57</sup> of life is defined by the accumulation of time plus the constant of genetic inheritance. "The study of organic time enables us to discern an *integral* mode of being that differs significantly from that of space. Space is experienced by journeying through it, while a living being constitutes *the integral of a varied path*: its experience plus the constant of inheritance".<sup>58</sup> Despite the predictability of its quantitative value, the response of an individual's memory in the present remains unpredictable. This leads to a *limit*, expressed through the autonomy of practical reason.

The reference point of the interest, essential for understanding human behavior, is the indivisible 'I' or self. Decisions arise from this profound, punctual, entirely concentrated level,

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<sup>55</sup> MATHIEU, *L'oggettività...*, cit., p. 69.

<sup>56</sup> TO, p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> "Using the 'calculus of fluxions' (as Newton called it) as a metaphor, we can say that memory is cumulative because it is the *integral* of all past differentials" (TO, p. 158).

<sup>58</sup> TO, p. 159.

breaking away from the antecedents and slicing through the continuum of time,<sup>59</sup> in which man is situated, with no capability to reverse its trajectory. Using projective geometry to illustrate interest, the subject serves as a point outside a plane from which one observes a figure, the object of interest, lying on that plane.<sup>60</sup> Interest introduces a third dimension, the point of reference, which is real, even though it lacks spatial content.<sup>61</sup> A projective relationship is thus established between content and a point.<sup>62</sup>

In the subject, as previously mentioned in 1. c) about emotions and as discussed in 1. g) regarding the law of duality in projective geometry, what disperses horizontally in space becomes *concentrated*, and the growth of distance from space is likewise *condensed*.<sup>63</sup> This accounts for the inextension of the subject.

Man, therefore, provides a privileged subject for the study of ontological difference. What constitutes 'I' is derived from the world, but 'I' come *into* the world (*Geworfenheit*). In this specific situation, there is no reason for me to be 'I,' and the problem might even be unformulable. An act defines us, raising all lower levels, commencing with the spatiality of the body, towards the apex of the 'I.' This act of 'standing vertically' is precisely existence (*ex-sistere*).<sup>64</sup> The 'I,' an inextended and inobjective point of reference, "condenses within itself the entire ontological difference".<sup>65</sup>

#### b) *The transcendentals*

Mathieu employs a phenomenological method grounded in experimental findings that hint

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<sup>59</sup> Another concept that entails the integration of various levels. Mathieu represents time geometrically (although we now understand that geometry supports the language of ontology) as a hyperbola, extending towards space on one side and eternity on the other: see TO, p. 259.

<sup>60</sup> TO, p. 165 ff.

<sup>61</sup> TO, p.168.

<sup>62</sup> TO, p. 170.

<sup>63</sup> TO, pp. 175-176. In contrast, matter spans various levels, but unlike the subject, which connects these levels through a unified projection, matter simply permeates and occupies them, lacking individuality and appearing more like a blend with ontological thickness. This thickness of matter endows it with a causal role: causality exists among masses (TO, pp. 202-205). Consequently, the corollary of this assertion is the absence of causality between ontological levels (TO, p. 203).

<sup>64</sup> TO, p. 245.

<sup>65</sup> TO, p. 246. The non-objectivity of the self results in the inscrutability of the other, which in turn guarantees the coexistence among people. Communication is made possible by the interpretive grasp of the deep unity and *meaning* within the discourse of the other.

at an original unity. Values allude to unity, and value is described as “a *vector* quantity that ‘points toward’ a perfect unity”.<sup>66</sup> Mathieu approaches the doctrine of transcendentals, which are properties inherent to every being as being, from a unique perspective, utilizing the notion of value. He elucidates its origin in eighteenth-century England, beginning with economic value, which is intrinsically relative and becomes absolute through the sovereign’s effigy imprinted on the coin.

*α) Beauty*

The most immediate of all values, and the starting point for integral ontology, is *beauty*. Aesthetic ‘perfection’ is apprehended through a higher sensibility, which Mathieu terms *the sensibility of the universal*, signifying a thing’s relationship with itself. Value emerges between two levels of the same thing, rendering it absolute, not depending on the relation to something else.<sup>67</sup> In the work of art, these levels integrate, and the work does not correspond to anything outside itself. This absence of correspondence with an external goal is particularly evident in music, which does not presuppose anything else, such as an external model or even a feeling, to which it must conform. In fact, music generates feeling; thus, in a sense, it is feeling itself.

The absoluteness of aesthetic value arises from the conservation of unity in perceptible form, even though it has “dispersed.” This dispersion leads to melancholy, a painful yearning for an impossible return, as it involves an impassable ontological gap, the *epistrophé*. The work of art carries the effigy of the absolute and imparts a face to the formless.<sup>68</sup>

Art represents a case of the sensitive manifestation of an original unity, explaining the shock it provokes. The original unity surfaces in the experience but resists reduction to practical design, remaining beyond the reach of objectivity. Consequently, its genesis remains inexplicable. An art critic certifies the authenticity of a work because its origin is unknown, similar to the way the origin of life remains uncertain. The critic may also err by conflating an ‘artificial’ product, like a replicable forgery such as the fake Modigliani heads that fooled Argan, with a genuine work that embodies non-reproducible unity.

To be more precise, the form of the work unifies multiple ontological levels, much like our inextended act of identification does for living beings. Consequently, the result, the work, cannot be reduced to the multitude of empirical elements available to the artist. The work challenges the paradigm of crafted design. Beauty, therefore, originates from the unrepresentable point (as Pareyson would describe it, the “*forma formans*”, the forming form),<sup>69</sup> which, by prospectively uniting lower levels with a vertex, indirectly establishes the governing principle to which the work adheres. Musical interpretation can give rise to ceaseless debates because there is no direct

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<sup>66</sup> TO, p. 261.

<sup>67</sup> TO, p. 274.

<sup>68</sup> TO, p. 268.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. L. PAREYSON, *Estetica. Teoria della formatività*, Bompiani, Milano 1988, p. 75.

point of comparison with the musical work, as the point itself cannot be objectified. However, interpretation is not a matter of arbitrary choice; the underlying principle or energy that defines the work becomes apparent through the work of exceptional interpreters, exerting an unequivocal attraction on the audience. Interpretation, distinct from mere execution, is neither replicable nor preplanned. A musical piece succeeds “when it is what it should be” (the same principle applies to interpretation).

*β) Truth and Goodness*

Building upon the diversification and integration of levels, Mathieu also elaborates on his own theory of truth. Truth and correspondence are traditional concepts that are interrelated, giving rise to critical questions. Truth is classically defined as the correspondence of an utterance to reality. However, since comparison is only possible when referring to reality (and, therefore, as the term of comparison itself becomes something internal to the descriptive context), the issue of correspondence is resolved into that of the coherence within a system of statements. The decline of the epistemic view of mathematics, as demonstrated by Hilbert’s program and Gödel’s findings, has highlighted the impossibility of excluding contradictions in the development of the axiomatic hypothetico-deductive system for arithmetic. This has further challenged the notion of truth as pure coherence.

Mathieu counters Frege’s view that mathematics invents by asserting that it does so *to discover*; the coherence of the mathematical system relates to an object “which on its own *is never given*”.<sup>70</sup> Mathieu also regards the constructs of physics as real because they serve to *unify experience*. In accordance with the integration of levels advocated in integral ontology, he ultimately shifts towards a conception of “responence,” a crucial point around which his historical reconstruction of the theory of truth revolves. Responence signifies the alignment of an utterance with itself. Truth is achieved by integrating ontological levels.

The *Treatise* concludes with a chapter on goodness. Like beauty, it has a punctual origin (the one who performs a good deed for someone else, generating a pleasurable effect), but its destination is equally punctual (the one who receives it and enjoys the pleasure). Goodness exists from point to point, fitting well within integral ontology because it “crosses the levels of existence twice”.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, there is an ontological necessity for someone’s reception of goodness. “In theology, Creation itself is often conceived as directed toward the purpose of establishing receptors for divine love”.<sup>72</sup> Love must imprint itself on the other, with whom one tends to identify.

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<sup>70</sup> TO, p. 298.

<sup>71</sup> TO, p. 309.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.



## II. II. SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS: MATHIEU'S 'ALLUSIVE METAPHYSICS' METHOD

I will now offer some general insights into Mathieu's metaphysics, which is thoroughly detailed in the *Treatise* but has been developed across numerous previous works.<sup>73</sup> We will assess whether his chosen mode of argumentation is superior to the traditional approach to metaphysics, often characterized by its quest for incontrovertible knowledge. This exploration will help elucidate the fundamental components of Mathieu's theoretical framework.

Mathieu characterizes his metaphysical method in *Tesi per una metafisica sperimentale (Theses for a Metaphysics of Experience)*.<sup>74</sup> In this text, he refers to a "Plotinian" metaphysics, intended

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<sup>73</sup> We must mention, in particular, *L'oggettività...*, cit., and *Il problema dell'esperienza*, Edizioni Università di Trieste, Trieste 1963. For a comprehensive understanding, we recommend referring to G. RICONDA, *Vittorio Mathieu (1923-2020)*, in G. CUOZZO-A. DALL'IGNA (eds.), *Quaderni di "filosofia" - metafisici torinesi*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2022.

<sup>74</sup> V. MATHIEU, *Tesi per una metafisica sperimentale*, in AA. VV., *Metafisica, oggi*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1983, pp. 31-37. Cf. E. BERTI, *Metaphysics and Argumentation in V. Mathieu*, in G. DEROSI- M.M. OLIVETTI, A. POMA, G. RICONDA (eds.), *Trascendenza, trascendentale, esperienza. Studi in onore di Vittorio Mathieu*, CEDAM, Padova 1995, pp. 13-22 and D. ANTISERI, *La metafisica sperimentale di Vittorio Mathieu*, ivi, pp. 35-43. Precisely because the *Treatise* summarizes the author's previous work, it is possible, in the second part, to dispense with that volume, favoring writings such as *Theses for a Metaphysics of Experience*, which, however, are equivalent in content to some sections of the *Treatise*. In fact, the *Theses*, by focusing on intensive ontology and the phenomenological method in metaphysics (thus on the ascending speculative movement toward the *punctum* starting from the immediate phenomenological evidence by which experience points beyond itself), lend themselves well to comparison with the neoclassical thought of Bontadini and Severino. In other words, in the *Theses*, the metaphysical core that the *Treatise* unfolds in systematic form is presented in a condensed exposition that emphasizes the methodology employed by Mathieu and thus facilitates a comparison with the equally transcendent metaphysics of Bontadini and early Severino. Furthermore, the line of neo-scholastic thought from the Catholic University, although rooted in Masnovo's Thomism (later continued mainly by Sofia Vanni Rovighi), had also been influenced — through Fr. Chiocchetti — by Gentile's actualism, which deeply affected Bontadini's gnoseology as well as Severino's theory of appearing (despite Severino's clear break from actualism). Neo-scholastics in the vein of Bontadini thus represented an anomalous type of neo-scholastic: it is even more difficult to label them as neo-Thomists. Similarly, Mazzantini (not the early Mazzantini of the *Heraclitus*, but the mature Mazzantini) referred to himself as a neo-scholastic and had been a commentator on Thomas Aquinas directly in Latin; but his neo-scholasticism was highly distinctive, infused with spiritualism, and far removed from Belgian neo-Thomism or the intensive Thomism of a Cornelio Fabro. Mathieu, who with his ontology in a certain sense continued Mazzantini's lesson (and was perhaps the only one to do so), is thus a thinker who can be classified under an

to be “grounded,” though not “incontrovertible” discourse.<sup>75</sup> He also emphasizes that the metaphysics of experience is structured this way because it does not point “to *another* reality we access by completely departing from the one we are familiar with,” but rather “to reality as a whole, but in a *manner* that significantly differs from the way science has accustomed us.”<sup>76</sup> Two central issues intersect: metaphysical discourse can be grounded without being incontrovertible, and metaphysics stays rooted in experience without stepping outside of it. We will discuss these issues separately, starting with the second.

### 1. *Immediate and Mediation*

The leap that metaphysics makes does not leave experience behind. Overcoming experience must always be conceived and achieved within the horizon of the immediate, even if the positive—the immutable whole—surpassing the phenomenological immediate, which is affirmed through mediation, is not immediately present. Now, the adoption of the immediate as the basis for mediation is not limited to a particular form of metaphysics, such as Mathieu’s allusive metaphysics, which employs phenomenological methods and recognises in experience the indications of a unity that transcends it. The impossibility of transcending the form of the immediate needs to be justified by reducing the negation of this impossibility to a contradiction. We have now reached the intersection of these two issues: the incontrovertibility of metaphysical knowledge and the foundational role of experience (in the sense that experience is indeed transcendable, but its overcoming must still occur within the orbit of thought).

As is well-known, idealism has established the non-transcendability of pure experience, so that even the metaphysical discourse, while being a mediation of experience, belongs to the horizon of the immediate by the mere fact of its formulation. However, the validity of idealism in delineating the concrete as an untranscendable horizon does not impede a mode of transcending experience that takes into account and assimilates the logic of the concrete. One can agree on the non-transcendability of experience (metaphysics does not jump out of the reality we know), as long as we refer to experience cleansed of the ‘interferences’ of modern gnoseology, which, as Bontadini showed, was based upon the presupposition of being before thought. According to Bontadini, Gentile’s actual idealism would have eliminated this ‘naturalistic’ presupposition, by clarifying that thought is simply the manifestation of being. Then it would be necessary to precise that the purity of Kant’s conception of experience, which Mathieu accepts, should also be

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unconventional ‘neo-scholastic’ transcendentism, a very flexible category in which Bontadini’s school can also be included. What also sets him apart from spiritualists or personalists is his non-hostility toward metaphysics, which he, in his own way, embraces and revises according to the insights gathered from studies on Plotinus, Kant, and Bergson.

<sup>75</sup> MATHIEU, *Tesi*, cit., p. 31.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*.

questioned from a historical perspective.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, the horizon of the concrete allows a 'concrete transcendence' of experience, as long as it is the free progression of thought that inevitably leads to it.

When metaphysics acknowledges the detachment of experience from the dualistic presupposition that posits being before thought, rendering it unthinkable, it emerges free from dogmatism and *enriched* by the long and arduous journey of modern philosophy. However, it is essential to outline that the logic of the concrete, which is the logic of idealism (and represents the rigorization of Mathieu's general consideration mentioned above, that one does not leap outside of experience), is not only a grounded discourse but also incontrovertible. Furthermore, a grounded discourse cannot be anything other than incontrovertible since groundedness is precisely the capacity, inherent in truth, to absolutely remove its negation. Hence, Mathieu's initiation of his 'Plotinian' metaphysics, grafting metaphysics onto experience, is not solely a methodological *choice* of allusive metaphysics using phenomenological reasoning. The endeavor to abstract from the concrete—which, in our context, would involve the construction of a metaphysics surpassing experience—also falls within the horizon of the immediate. This project is itself a determination of the immediate.

## 2. *The Response of Inferential Metaphysics to the Non-Transcendability of the Immediate*

We now direct our focus towards another critical question. We must contemplate how to reconcile the valid assertion of the non-transcendability of the immediate with the equally valid assertion, once it has been demonstrated beyond the level of enunciation we are presently discussing, of an otherness of the whole in comparison to the totality of the phenomenological immediate (henceforth referred to as "the totality of the F-immediate").<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, we need to explore whether and how this transcendent positive can be, in some manner, present—at the very least in the sense that it is discussed, or even in the sense that the otherness itself, between the immediate and the positive that surpasses it, becomes present.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. G. BONTADINI, *L'esplosione del gnoseologismo nella critica kantiana*, in *Studi di filosofia moderna*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 1996, pp. 281-383.

<sup>78</sup> In fact, as was already stated in the previous paragraph, the metaphysical question concerns experience, which we will refer to as the "totality of the phenomenological immediacy"—that is, the totality of immediacy in the sense that it assumes as the immediacy of φαίνεσθαι, of appearing—and asks whether this is the whole, or if the entirety of the positive extends beyond experience.

<sup>79</sup> If metaphysics ascertains an inequality between two positives, namely the totality of F-immediate and the immutable whole, with the whole including the totality of the F-immediate as its moment, then the mediational value of this affirmation warrants examination. For a more in-depth exploration of this topic, refer to E. SEVERINO, *La struttura originaria*, Adelphi, Milan 1981, Chapter XIII, par. 21, where the L-immediacy of the assertion that the immutable whole surpasses

Inferential metaphysics must grapple with the issues mentioned, irrespective of whether

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the totality of the F-immediate is concretely posited. The proposition is L-immediate since the distinction between the immutable whole and the totality of the F-immediate is originally posited. In brief, it is discernible that any meaning must belong to the semantic domain of the whole. If any determination were not included within the whole, this would lead to the self-contradictory nature of the whole as the initial extreme of mediation. Let us assume that a certain predicate suits a middle term, which, in turn, immediately suits the whole. Therefore, the determination *x* suits the whole L-mediatly. However, this L-mediated suitability constitutes an alterity to the whole. Consequently, the whole to which *x* suits L-mediatly is not the whole; it is a *formal position* of the whole that mediation ascertains as a *self-contradictory meaning*. Hence, mediation posits the whole as that to which every determination necessarily suits, and, as a result, *it removes the mediational value* of the affirmation of the immutability of the whole, rendering it logically immediate. Cf. *La struttura originaria*, cit., Chapter XIII, parr. 10 ff. Cf. F. SACCARDI, *Form and matter of the semantic whole. Notes to The Primal Structure*, in «Eternity & Contradiction. Journal of Fundamental Ontology», II, 2020, 3, pp. 44-51. It is worth noting that, at this stage of Severino's work (during the years of 'The Primal Structure'), there is no abandonment of metaphysics. "In this way, the truth of the 'circle' of phenomenological immediacy and logical immediacy led to the truth to be recognized in the *metaphysical* consideration of beings, according to the classical meaning of the term 'metaphysics'; this primal metaphysics even leads "to the affirmation of the relationship of creation between God and the world": L. MESSINESE, *The two faces of the "primal structure"*, in «Eternity and contradiction. Journal of Fundamental Ontology», II, 2020, 3, pp. 21-42, p. 25. This position will change in *Returning to Parmenides* (and its *Postscript*). Cf., for a partial translation, E. SEVERINO, *The essence of Nihilism*, Verso, London-NY 2016, Part One. However, the identity of essence and existence is already affirmed in *The Primal Structure* on p. 517. This thesis is incompatible with classical Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics. Leonardo Messinese questioned the possibility of reestablishing the transcendence of Being while accepting Severino's conclusions and focusing on the concrete circularity between the two spheres of phenomenological immediacy and logical immediacy. "Faced with this [the *Postscript* to *Returning to Parmenides*, by Severino] speculative outcome, I intend to pose the following question: *the opposition of being as a being to 'not Being'*, according to the dictate of logical immediacy freed from any mixture of nihilistic elements, *excludes the doctrine of Creation and the affirmation of the transcendent Being of the world according to the 'metaphysical' meaning of transcendence?*" (MESSINESE, *The two faces*, cit., pp. 36-37). For Messinese, the appearing of the world does not self-justify. In other words, why does finite appearing exist? Why is there not just God, but also the world? The task in metaphysics lies in engaging with the world, for, according to the logos, the unforeseen is the world, not God. While the phenomenological becoming is not nihilistically understood as the emergence and annulment of beings, where beings originate from nothingness and return to it, the challenge of a speculative integration of experience remains. Cf. *ivi*, pp. 36 ss.

the inference results in a logically mediated affirmation or, as we can only hypothesize without full development, a logically immediate affirmation (although the inferential nature of a metaphysics that asserts L-immediately a positive beyond the F-immediate would need further examination). It is important to emphasize that the mediation inherent in metaphysics does not negate the immediate. Quite the contrary, the immediate serves as the horizon within which mediation takes place. To the extent that logical mediation establishes a connection between the given and the other that goes beyond the given, this connection, when it becomes present, is a determination that falls within the totality of the immediate. In short, it can be said that inference verifies the existence of an inequality between the immediate and the whole.

### 3. *The Groundedness of Metaphysical Knowledge*

A few additional remarks regarding the groundedness of metaphysical knowledge. Metaphysics, as a 'grounded' discourse, does not depart from the foundation; rather, it determines it.

But this act of grounding something is not a departure from the foundation to something merely other from the foundation: this otherness is indeed the very position of the foundation, liberated from the contradiction ( $C^{80}$ )—or a certain quantification of that contradiction—that afflicted the foundation before becoming the foundation of mediation.<sup>81</sup>

In contrast, Mathieu's ontology explicitly takes the form of a journey, a path that commences from the standpoint of the finite. Mediation accomplishes the removal of the contradiction that affects the immediate as the basis of mediation, and thus, it must be regarded as the ultimate realization of the immediate. The otherness relative to the foundation, of which mediation is the position, is the foundation inasmuch as it is uncontradictory.<sup>82</sup> "The realization of the totality of mediation is, therefore, precisely as the absolute negation or removal of the foundation, the complete development, or total realization of the foundation. The process that leads to the absolute realization of the foundation is thus the process that leads *to posit* the foundation

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<sup>80</sup> On contradiction *C*, see Severino, *La struttura originaria*, cit., ch. VIII, par. 9. f). See also below, n. 56.

<sup>81</sup> *Ivi*, p. 360.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*.

as what it is.”<sup>83</sup> With this clarity, the ‘heuristic power’<sup>84</sup> of logical argumentation does not rest on the efficacy of *transcending* the immediate or on a grounding that is the discovery of something other than the foundation.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4. *The Equal Validity of Various Types of Arguments*

Mathieu enumerates various ways in which metaphysics can argue its claims alongside logical inference. The Plotinian procedure of the metaphysics he elaborates is *allusive* in nature. His metaphysics alludes to an original unity that cannot be crafted by displacing elements (as would occur in a craft and Democritean model: in atomism, displacement is not intentional, but

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*. It would be necessary, however, to demonstrate, which cannot be achieved within the scope of this concise overview, that the totality of the immediate, referred to as the foundation, does not equate to the whole. The foundation constitutes the opening of contradiction, where the intended positing does not align with the actual positing, thus determining a formal position. The removal of the contradiction is obtained through the concrete position of the whole. Attempting to summarize schematically: Severino designates “S” as the primal meaning or “totality of immediately affirmed being.” In relation to S, there are some immediate determinations, the *variants*, for which it is projectable that S no longer includes them. Conversely, there are others determinations, the *constants*, such that S is not posited if any of them is not posited. Cf. *La struttura originaria*, cit., Chapter VII, par. 1. In the form of a theorem, denoted in *The Primal Structure* as theorem N, “It is a contradiction for S to be posited even if not all the constants of S are posited.” Severino designates this contradiction as “contradiction C.” Cf. *ivi*, Chapter VIII, par. 7. d). However, the theorem does not imply that the very realization of the contradiction, consisting of the positing of S without all of its constants being posited, is contradictory (indeed, it is evident that certain constants supervene with respect to past positions of S; this interpretation of the theorem thus contradicts the F-immediate). In such cases, the removal of the contradiction does not occur canonically by the elimination of its content but rather through the positing of constants, which, when unposited, provoke the contradiction. In other words, the outcome of the non-positioning is not the nullification of the positional plan. S is, in fact, posited, even if it cannot be posited, and therein lies contradiction C. The removal of this contradiction is the task of the primal. Let us clarify, however, that in *The Primal Structure*, contradiction C is an intrinsic component of a metaphysical framework where the whole represents the transcendent being beyond the totality of experience. Yet, in the subsequent phases of Severino’s philosophical evolution, the theological characterization of the whole dissipates. Cf. L. MESSINESE, *Alcuni rilievi sulla “contraddizione C” della verità*, in «La filosofia futura», *Discussioni su ‘verità’ e ‘contraddizione’*, 1, 2013, pp. 115-129.

<sup>84</sup> MATHIEU, *Tesi*, cit., p. 32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ivi*, p. 37.

everything is produced by varying the position of ultimate data).<sup>86</sup> What unveils this original unity is experience itself. For instance, life is a unity that is not artificially crafted. This argumentation is *phenomenological* in nature. “In this sense, Plotinus’s procedure can be considered ‘phenomenological’ because he never speaks of what lies outside experience without linking it to its *manifestation* in experience itself. The original, which transcends experience, is primarily encountered within experience itself—as something beyond the scope of our ability to operate, and therefore to know empirically (and therefore to exist on the basis of our own will).”<sup>87</sup> An intriguing note on analogy follows: “Analogical metaphysics... is a *Christian counterpart to allusive metaphysics*,”<sup>88</sup> capable of a ‘vertical’ projection that is not found in flat logical argumentation.

Now that we have clarified the meaning of grounding, we can understand that metaphysics is grafted into experience. But it is not just that experience serves as the ‘grounding plane’ of mediation; the logical structure of mediation is also crucial. This structure of the mediational process, as outlined, is largely irreplaceable. What is at stake here is not a mere methodological choice but the ability of knowledge to stand firm against its negation. Therefore, a well-founded discourse must inevitably be incontrovertible. The allusive method does not show its capacity to remove its negation. It encounters certain impossibilities, but as Mathieu explicitly acknowledges, these are always *secundum quid*.<sup>89</sup> In addition, it would be worth evaluating the historical development of analogical metaphysics, which Mathieu compares to his allusive metaphysics, and its degree of incontrovertibility.

##### 5. Exclusion of Man’s Omnipotence

Operational impossibilities, such as the production of life, can logically always be overcome, as the project to overcome them is not immediately contradictory. We cannot a priori exclude the possibility of producing a ‘biological’ unity; instead, we must demonstrate why it is absolutely impossible to achieve and why the dimension of existence cannot be projected onto the operational plane. If we limit ourselves to the assertion that experience shows an irreducible residue, it is still conceivable that this irreducibility can be surpassed. Exclusion would only be justified if it were not based on phenomenological (controvertible) evidence, but on logical grounds.

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<sup>86</sup> Ivi, p. 34.

<sup>87</sup> Ivi, p. 35.

<sup>88</sup> Ivi, p. 36.

<sup>89</sup> Kantian space ‘constrains’ us, constituting a fact of intuition. An example of this constraint is evident in the impossibility of exchanging right for left, as illustrated projectively by Mathieu (highlighting the irreducibility of senses in the same direction). Therefore, by studying incongruent counterparts, Kant would have also unveiled the existence of intuitive space. For further details, refer to TO, pp. 117-124.

The ‘non-relational’ biological unity<sup>90</sup> is recognised as the content of our experience because its unproducibility is currently evident. However, given that the horizon of the F-immediate is the horizon of becoming, we should not rule out the possibility that what is currently unproducible may become producible in the future.<sup>91</sup> The young Bontadini expressed this concept by stating that man is “power” that circulates with consciousness (man empowers himself according to the consciousness he has of himself), but there is a part of the total power—the non-ego—that does not circulate with the consciousness that this power, which is man, has of itself. One of the ways to escape from this imperfect circularity of reality—which is not rational if all power does not circulate with consciousness—is for all power to indeed circulate with man’s consciousness (making man omnipotent).

However, everyone can see that the *search* for such a mediation<sup>92</sup> would not be necessary if *man*, or more precisely I, as consciousness, really and absolutely *circulated* with the power of which I am conscious, that is, if my will (in which the circular unity of power and consciousness is precisely expressed and measured) were omnipotent. In this case, indeed, the immediate knowledge that the self has of itself would already contain the mediated knowledge, that is, the knowledge of the absolute *principle* of reality, which would be the self itself.<sup>93</sup>

Phenomenological argumentation does not provide the reason for the contradictoriness of man’s omnipotence and, therefore, cannot declare it impossible. It is thought of experience, which is structurally dialectical. Thus, even if experience were to extend beyond itself (if it somehow contained, allusively as Mathieu would say, a metempirical positive), the thought of this experience—as connected to a transcendent principle—would not rest in a definitive synthesis.<sup>94</sup>

#### 6. *Speculative Constructiveness: The Firmest Principle*

A final aspect of Mathieu’s metaphysics relates to the principle of non-contradiction. In the *Treatise*, it is argued that “in fact, the principle of non-contradiction establishes nothing, as it

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<sup>90</sup> That is, the original unity that, according to Mathieu, would manifest in experience.

<sup>91</sup> Mathieu asserts that even if one were to artificially produce life, “the ontological difference between the living and its ingredients would remain” (TO, p. 242). However, if life were to be produced, the non-relationality of the vital unity would also disappear.

<sup>92</sup> The mediation of Truth in itself from itself. The dialecticity of thought, understood in an incremental sense as a constant self-transcending, does not negate the potential for stable knowledge. In other words, the theological problem does not lose its significance after idealism; the dialecticism inherent in Gentile’s pure act does not preclude the notion of transcendence. On the contrary, a rigorous conception of transcendence must be formulated based on idealism.

<sup>93</sup> G. BONTADINI, *Saggio di una metafisica dell’esperienza*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 1996, p. 234.

<sup>94</sup> Ivi, p. 210.



lacks ontological significance.” Furthermore, “the principle of non-contradiction does not provide a foundation for anything because it does not exclude anything. It does, however, exclude the contradictory, but the contradictory is nothing. Conversely, however, nothing is not contradictory at all: if nothing were, no one would have anything to object to. Nevertheless, ontology exists because there is something, and something else is *impossible* for reasons beyond mere contradiction”.<sup>95</sup> Let's proceed systematically.

The principle of non-contradiction does not exclude anything. In other words, the negation of the principle persists as unremoved. Indeed, the mere affirmation ‘being is not non-being’<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> TO, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> One might object that the choice of this formulation is arbitrary, as it is also possible, for example, to adopt a ‘logical’ formulation—without implications on the ontological level—of the same principle. Let us therefore take the logical formulation as Łukasiewicz extrapolates it from certain Aristotelian textual sources. According to Łukasiewicz, the ‘logical’ formulation can be found in Γ 6, 1011 b 13-14: “the firmest principle of all is that contradictory statements cannot both be true at the same time” (Ὅτι μὲν οὖν βεβαιοτάτη δόξα πασῶν τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἀληθεῖς ἅμα τὰς ἀντικειμένους φάσεις). The “ontological” formulation, on the other hand, would correspond to the first, authentically Aristotelian, formulation of the principle in Γ 3, 1005 b 19-20: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό; “it is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation” (trans. TREDENNICK). According to Łukasiewicz, the equivalence between the two formulations would derive from the famous passage of *De Interpretatione*, where a bidirectional correspondence is established between the being white of an entity and the truth of the proposition that affirms that the entity is white (similarly, for the entity’s not being white and the proposition affirming it as non-white): “Thus, if it is true to say that a thing is white, it must necessarily be white; if the reverse proposition is true, it will of necessity not be white. Again, if it is white, the proposition stating that it is white was true; if it is not white, the proposition to the opposite effect was true”; εἰ γὰρ ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν ὅτι λευκὸν ἢ οὐ λευκὸν ἐστίν, ἀνάγκη εἶναι λευκὸν ἢ οὐ λευκόν, καὶ εἰ ἔστι λευκὸν ἢ οὐ λευκόν, ἀληθὲς ἦν φάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι: *De int.*, IX, 18 a 39-18 b 2. Now, it goes without saying – according to Łukasiewicz’s analysis – that, by virtue of the correspondence established in this passage, if two judgments asserting and denying the same predicate of the same subject were both true, then the same entity would both possess and not possess the same determination (which is prohibited by the first formulation); conversely, if the same entity both possessed and did not possess a determination, two contradictory judgments would both be true (a violation of the principle in its psychological formulation). According to Łukasiewicz, the two formulations, referring to each other in the manner highlighted, are equivalent, despite there being no explicit statement from Aristotle on this equivalence (nor, for that matter, on the twofold formulation of the principle). Łukasiewicz promptly clarifies that this is an equivalence of “logical” nature only, since the truth of judgments is not the real cause of the entity: we are correct in affirming the entity’s

whiteness because the entity is white; it is not because we affirm its whiteness that the entity is white. However, in Łukasiewicz, the judgment is not concretely conceived: and here the comment refers to an entire conception of judgment that can only be briefly indicated here, but which, at its core, is the one already pointed out in Italy by Gentile's actualism and in Germany by phenomenology; in short, the *expressive judgment* is one that derives its validity from experience as pure presence, therefore it asserts that what appears, i.e. the uni-totality of the given, exists, and exists because it is evident that it does. For Łukasiewicz, judgment is the attribution to an object of a determination (attribute) that it either possesses or does not possess. But judgment—and this is where the unjustified bias of the equivalence toward the “logical” dimension arises, as Łukasiewicz arbitrarily separates it from the ontological dimension—is not an extrinsic juxtaposition of terms that are external to each other and that judgment, somehow, would connect. Judgment, first and foremost, is the appearing of a complex of determinations that are affirmed as related in this way because their relation appears, is present; and judgment expresses what is attested, insofar as it is present. Therefore, the justification of the impossibility that two judgments assert and deny the same thing of the same thing, under the same respect, while both being true, lies in the impossibility for the belonging of the same determination to the same thing to both appear and not appear: in other words, the impossibility that the same—the appearing; the entity that the appearing is—both exists and does not exist. The various formulations (which are not actually different formulations) of the principle are always the same principle: but the problem becomes even more significant when one realizes that the separate formulations enumerated by Łukasiewicz are not actual formulations: rather, they fit into the justification of the διορισμός, which entirely escapes Łukasiewicz. He does not take into account that what he considers to be a formulation of the principle is, for Aristotle, a segment of the justification of the essential διορισμός of the principle, namely the impossibility of error with respect to the principle, and indeed the necessity that, with respect to the principle, the opposite of error is always accomplished, which is to be in the truth: *περὶ ἧν οὐκ ἔστι διεψεῦσθαι, τοῦναντίον δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἀεὶ ποιεῖν, λέγω δὲ ἀληθεύειν* (*Metaph.*, K 5, 1062 a 34-35). The demonstration of the διορισμός, in Γ 3—which is not the demonstration of the principle, since the βεβαιωτάτη ἀρχὴ πασῶν is, in fact, that from which demonstrations proceed—is briefly structured as follows: contraries cannot coexist in act within the same thing (*εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐνδέχεται ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τῷ αὐτῷ τὰναντία*: 1005 b 26-27), and an opinion is contrary to its contradictory opinion (*ἐναντία δ' ἔστι δόξα δόξη ἢ τῆς ἀντιφάσεως*: 1005 b 28-29); thus it is impossible for the same ὑπολαβῶν (he who would be in error; where ὑπολαμβάνειν always refers to the appearing of a content) to think that the same thing both is and is not, since contrary opinions would apply to this subject: *ἅμα γὰρ ἂν ἔχοι τὰς ἐναντίας δόξας ὁ διεψευσμένος περὶ τούτου* (1005 b 29-32). Here too, we encounter the belonging and non-belonging (since one of the contraries is the privation of the other) of the same to the same thing in the same respect. The demonstration of the διορισμός of the principle therefore rests—and must necessarily do so, given that the

does not exclude its negation, nor does the negation exclude the affirmation. There is a 'vanishing' of the affirmation into negation and vice versa, an impasse that is transcended when one of the two terms remains fixed (when the groundedness of one of the two opposite terms emerges).<sup>97</sup>

This scenario arises with the position of the immediacy of the position of the non-contradictoriness of being: the predicate 'not being' applies immediately, as denied, to the subject 'being.' The negation of the non-contradictoriness of being, since it contradicts the immediacy of this non-contradictoriness, is inherently contradictory; the negation is removed.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, the assertion 'being is not non-being' stands firm. However, the negation is removed not in the sense that *self-contradicting is nothing*. Mathieu claims: the contradictory is nothing. If the 'contradictory' is taken as the negation of the non-contradictoriness of being (as happens when Mathieu hypothesizes that 'non-being' is<sup>99</sup> and, therefore, denies that 'being' cannot not

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principle is the most known: γνωριμωτάτην, 1005 b 13—on the principle itself. Even in chapter VI of book Γ, the impossibility of affirmation and negation both being true at the same time—εἰ οὖν ἀδύνατον ἅμα καταφάναι καὶ ἀποφάναι ἀληθῶς: 1011 b 20-21—upon which it is demonstrated that contraries cannot coexist in act, is the impossibility for the appearing of a content both to be and not to be (affirmation being the conviction as the appearing of a content, and negation being the non-belonging of something to something: therefore, the appearing of the non-being of this belonging).

<sup>97</sup> SEVERINO, *La struttura originaria*, cit., pp. 146-147 and pp. 173-175.

<sup>98</sup> Ivi, p. 176.

<sup>99</sup> The hypothesis that being is not, of which the absurdity is no longer perceived, marks, according to Severino, the setting of the meaning of Being which "had already begun within the Eleatic school itself, with Melissus. He, not Parmenides, is the father of Western metaphysics; with Melissus begins that *betrayal* of Being by which metaphysics has come to dominate common consciousness, which deems it perfectly natural that things are not (i.e., supervene and vanish)." In fact, from Melissus derives the principle *ex nihilo nihil* (οὐδέν ἐκ μηδενός) that underlies classical metaphysics. But Melissus does not hesitate to hypothesize that being is not: εἰ τοίνυν μηδέν ἦν. Cf. fragment 1. "This torpid meaning is not even startled by the situation in which *Being is not* (τὸ ὄν εἶναι μηδέν). The darkness has already grown so thick that one no longer feels ill at ease in using the very words that indicate the *essence* of the absurd: Being is nothing." The exclusion of the generation of being by Melissus is thus flawed. "Thus, he comes to exclude the generation of Being not simply on the basis of the principle that if it were to be generated, before being generated, it would be nothing, but by adding that if it were nothing, nothing could be generated from Nothing (οὐδέν ἐκ μηδενός)." SEVERINO, *Returning to Parmenides*, English translation cit., § 4. G. Reale has criticized Severino's historical reconstruction, asserting instead that Melissus would deepen the Parmenidean sense of being rather than betraying it, formulating an extensive dilemmatic reasoning of which the quoted propositions would constitute only one of the two horns. Cf.

be), then the negation is a meaningful *positivity*; the self-contradicting it is a non-nothing. The content of the contradiction, however, is nothing. There is a positive signification—a signifying of something specific: σημαίνειν γέ τι<sup>100</sup>—of the negation of the non-contradictoriness of being, where that negation only constitutes itself as the *intention* of negating the non-contradictoriness. If it negated it without implying it, it would also remove that uncontradictory positivity that it, as negation, is: it would be itself and other than itself, negation and affirmation (it would not be negation).

To realize itself as negation, the negation restricts the range of the uncontradictoriness to itself; therefore, it does not negate the uncontradictoriness.<sup>101</sup> (This aspect is of particular relevance to Severino because, if the contradiction itself, and not just its contradictory content, were nonexistent, nihilism could not be the *positivity* which dominates Western history).<sup>102</sup>

We observe that the ‘performative contradiction’ negates what it does, affirming *in actu exercito* what it denies *in actu signato*. This phenomenon serves as a prelude to *élenchos*, characterized by the “recognition of the non-transcendability of the negated elements” or the reunion with the negated structure of which negation is an instance.<sup>103</sup> In this context, “*Élenchos* represents the acknowledgment of an *anankaion* of a non-fatalistic nature.”<sup>104</sup> The “effective” negation of the structure of the apophansis would be a “pure intention to say,” isolated from its execution (the act of saying). However, even such a renunciation of expression remains something determined, insofar as it differs from non-renunciation.<sup>105</sup>

As for the ontological range of the principle of non-contradiction,<sup>106</sup> I can only provide

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G. REALE, *Introduzione a Melisso*, in M. UNTERSTEINER-G.REALE (eds.), *Eleati. Parmenide-Zenone-Melisso. Testimonianze e frammenti*, Bompiani, Milano 2017, pp. 669-920, pp. 728-733.

<sup>100</sup> *Metaph.*, 1006 a 2.

<sup>101</sup> SEVERINO, *La struttura originaria*, cit., pp. 177-178.

<sup>102</sup> ID., *Fondamento della contraddizione*, Adelphi, Milan 2005, p. 22.

<sup>103</sup> Cfr. P. PAGANI, *L'élenchos e la sua forma*, in «Divus Thomas», CXXIII 2020, 3, pp. 28-53, p. 37.

<sup>104</sup> Ivi, p. 42.

<sup>105</sup> Ivi, p. 43. Rosmini seems to approach the concept of performative contradiction when stating that, given the original intuition of being, the error into which man falls is inherently in contradiction with some truth to which the same man also assents. As Pagani observes, the principality of truths formally ontological in scope “can only act as a guide to the very negations they may undergo”: cf. PAGANI, *Rosmini e l'élenchos. Tra pratica e teoria*, in «Rosmini Society», III, 2022, 1-2, pp. 243-255, p. 251.

<sup>106</sup> Which was not accepted by some Thomists such as Cornelio Fabro. See A. A. ROBIGLIO, *La logica dell'ateismo: Il principio di non contraddizione secondo C. Fabro*, in «Divus Thomas», CII, 1999, 1, pp. 120-143.

some general insights here. Since the principle of non-contradiction does not allow its negation to stand as unremoved, it excludes the hypothesis that being is not. Therefore, it holds not only logical but also ontological value (being *has to be*). Mathieu's hypothesis, "if nothing were," is absolutely removed. It can also be argued that the division between logic and ontology represents a *diminutio* of the logos. While this principle is undoubtedly a 'principle of saying,' since thought is intentional, as Bontadini comments,<sup>107</sup> it also functions as a principle of content. The theme we explored earlier—the logically immediate affirmation of the positive surpassing the totality of the phenomenological immediate—also intersects with the principle of non-contradiction. According to the thesis presented in *The Primal Structure*, the principle of non-contradiction is considered "the metaphysical discourse in act."<sup>108</sup> The ontological implications of the principle of non-contradiction become even more profound in this sense.

In conclusion, section two has underscored several incompatibilities between Mathieu's metaphysics and metaphysics as incontrovertible discourse (setting aside the differences between Bontadini and Severino, which have not been addressed). Instead of attempting an irenic reconciliation among the involved parties, it appears justified to recognize—notwithstanding the incongruent elements—the remarkable value of Mathieu's work, even for those who adhere to the metaphysical framework outlined in the second section. The *Treatise* warrants thorough reconsideration and stands as a distinctive exemplar within the contemporary philosophical landscape, representing an original and robust lifelong speculative endeavour.

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<sup>107</sup> G. BONTADINI, *Per una teoria del fondamento*, in *Metafisica e deellenizzazione*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1996, pp. 5-23, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> SEVERINO, *La struttura originaria*, cit., p. 208.