

# The problem of negation in the primal structure

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In the primal structure the negation is not only the formal constituent of the determinacy of any being but it is a being itself, that must be negatively determined. This means that the primal structure affirms the meaningfulness of such a proposition: “the *not* is not the other-than-the-*not*”. This article shows that in the primal structure an abyssal thesis seems to be demonstrable: ‘the *not* is the *nothing*’, that affirms that the negation semantically equals to the nothingness. The demonstration actually exploits an ambiguity between the verbal negation of being ‘is not’ and the different-from-the-‘is’. The logical-linguistic solution of this ambiguity is essentially inadmissible in the primal structure. At the same time, it seems that within it the difference between the two senses of the negation of the ‘is’ remains ultimately without a syntactic foundation.

**Keywords:**

**negation, nothing, being, positivity**

## 1. Introduction

«How few understand the “negation” and how rarely even they comprehend it»: these words by Martin Heidegger (2007, p. 189) are the most appropriate way to introduce the subject of the present work. The «primal structure» is thought by Emanuele Severino as the syntactic structure of the totality of the positive: «that without which no being could appear and in accordance with which every being is» (Severino, 2001, p. 420). In the primal structure *negation* is the heart of the most radical affirmation of the positivity of the being, for it is precisely because «each being is the negation of what it is not» (Severino, 1995, p. 137) that, according to Severino, everything can not become and *therefore* is eternal. Anything *is* a negation: the thought of Severino is the philosophical place where the «tremendous power of the negative» (Hegel) is such that the “negative”, in the widest sense of the word, is co-extensive to the positive.

An abyssal proposition (NN) *seems* to be formally derivable within the “borders” of the primal structure: ‘[the] *not* is the nothing’, that is the assertion of the *identity* of the negation to the nothing or, in other words, the assertion of the *nothingness* of the negation. The foundation of NN will prove to be fallacious according to an “ordinary” conception of negation (here we could even assume the failing of this demonstration as the defining characteristic of an “ordinary” conception of negation). At the same time the *problem* that will prove to be worthy to be investigated is *whether or not* that demonstration can be invalidated *coherently with* the conception of negation in force in the primal structure.

## 2. The nothingness of negation

NN involves two fundamental concepts, falling in the two traditional domains of “logic” and “metaphysics”: respectively, that of negation and that

of the nothing. Therefore to affirm the identity between negation and the nothing is to say that these domains overlap in the regions of those two concepts: precisely the overlapping that completely suppresses the possibility of the most paradigmatic “logic” elimination of metaphysics performed in the past century by analytic philosophy.

The semantical identity between the ‘not’ and the nothing does not entail the “nullification” of the negation, since in the primal structure the nothing itself is a *positivity*: that positivity constituted by the contradiction «for which the positivity of this meaning is contradicted by the absolute negativity of the meaningful content» (Severino, 1981, p. 213); in fact, for Severino each being is a concrete instance of the ontological “scheme” ‘x is’ (where the ‘is’ is what Severino calls «formal being» and the variable ‘x’ can be replaced by any determinacy) and the nothing is the *only* value of the variable x that reduces the ontological “scheme” to a self-contradiction. However the overlapping of negation and nothing would not happen without devastating consequences, looming just over the ‘is’. In the primal structure, as we’ll see below, the ‘is not’, namely the negation of being, is identical to the nothing. If negation (the ‘not’) is identical to the nothing *too*, both the ‘not’ and the negation of being ‘is not’ are identical to the nothing and so there is *no* semantical difference between them. Whatever happened to the ‘is’? (this identity between the ‘not’ and the ‘is not’ is not only entailed by NN but is the key passage of NN’s proof too; see paragraph no. 4).

The philosophical meaning of NN can be understood by letting it to dialogue with two radical theoretical thoughts. One is the famous thesis by Martin Heidegger (2001, p. 44), according to which it is not the case that there is «the nothing [das Nichts] only because there is the *not* [das Nicht], i.e. the negation» but «the nothing is more primal than the *not* and negation». Heidegger’s argument makes use of the power of revealing the «being in its totaliy», that the nothing would hold. The other theory, able to dialogue still more closely with NN, is that of the «pure positive» elaborated by Luigi Vero Tarca. The negation is the authentic «undeniable» formulated by philosophy, as only the negation is necessarily repeated by *its* negation (the revealing of this necessity constitutes the essence of the “*elenchos*”), but for the *same* reason it reveals to be self-contradictory: «the contrary of the negative, i.e. the negative of the negative, is in turn negative» (Tarca, 2016, p. 140). The essential consequence is that «the negation is the null-determination in the sense of the determination that is null: the negation is [the] nothing» (Tarca, 2001, p. 488).

Both Heidegger's and Tarca's theses entail that negation *doesn't* come "before" the nothing. This is precisely the essential image of the relationship between negation and the nothing that they share with NN.

### 3. The 'not' is a being

The theoretical "atmosphere" that surrounds the demonstration of the nothingness of negation is given by the semantical status that negation holds in the primal structure. Here the negation belongs essentially to the form of any being, since any being is determined only as negation of what it is not. However – and this is the essential issue of the problem – negation *doesn't* remain out from the totality of the beings that are *negatively* determined. In fact, in the primal structure the negation *itself* falls completely under negative determination; negation is *a being* that, like any other being, is *negatively* determined. This means that the primal structure says the *not* of the 'not': the 'not' *too* is a being and therefore is negation of what is not the 'not', i.e. of what is other-than-the-'not'.

Lightly forcing the meaning in which the word is used in the logical literature, the condition held by negation in the primal structure can be called "impredicative", in the sense that it contains this circularity: the determination of any being is founded on the concept of negation, but at the same time the 'not' itself is a being and therefore must be *negatively* determined. The "impredicative" status of negation is essentially alien to the theories of negation elaborated by contemporary logical thought. For Frege (1960) the negation – although it gives a concrete contribution to the characterization of the sense of the sentence in which its sign occurs – is an *unsaturated* entity that is «needing completion» for to constitute a complete sense. In not-p negation is the unsaturated part – an entity with the "form" 'not-(...)' – that must be fulfilled by the thought expressed by p. Consequently the thought expressed by non-p is analyzed by Frege as the combination between two parts, of which one, negation, is essentially characterized by a «need of completion». In the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* by Wittgenstein, in opposition with Frege's conception of the «logical constants», negation loses any denotative-referential status and is completely excluded from the domain of sense: «the sign "~" corresponds to nothing in reality» (prop. 4.0621). For Wittgenstein, negation is nothing but an «operation», that is performed *on* propositions *without* being included *in* the domain of the sense. These two theories are not compatible

each other but they implicitly agree in *not* acknowledging the status of “complete” meaning for negation.

The comparison between Frege’s and Severino’s conceptions of negation is really illuminating. For the two thinkers, negation of a “content” is an entity with the nature of a synthesis between two parts, but for Frege, contrary to Severino, «the two components [...] are quite different in kind and contribute quite differently towards the formation of the whole. One completes, the other is completed. And it is by this completion that the whole is kept together» (1960, p. 132). Frege will push this conception to its logical limits when he will write that «it is natural to suppose that, for logic in general, combination into a whole always comes about by the saturation of something unsaturated» (1984, p. 390). Instead, in the primal structure the constitution of negation of something as a synthesis between two parts does *not* entail that the connection must be thought, in obedience to the chemical metaphor inspiring Frege’s conception, as a «combination» produced by a phenomenon of «saturation». In the primal structure relations between meanings are not combinations.

#### 4. The formal structure of NN’s proof

The essence of what said above is that the primal structure demands the meaningfulness of such a proposition: ‘the *not* is not what is not the *not*’, that asserts that, like any other being, the being in which negation consists is different from all the other beings. Among the beings that are different from negation there is the ‘is’: far to have the status of a linguistic entity (the «copula»), in the primal structure the ‘is’ *is* a being itself. ‘the *not* is not the *is*’: it’s this proposition (gained, as we’ll see, by a semantical analysis of the ‘is not’) to provide the starting point of NN’s proof.

In the following we’ll expose the “formal structure” of NN’s proof. We will do this without submitting to the “sovereignty” of formal logic. This distancing from formal logic has nothing to do with a (weak) proclamation in the name of “continental” philosophy but is essentially demanded by the subject itself of our investigation. In the intention of Severino, the primal structure *is not* an axiomatic system constructed in the domain of the “signs”. Not to take this intention seriously would mean a great lack of critical spirit.

The formal structure of NN’s proof is constituted by three premises (P1, P2, P3) that support the conclusion. It can be schematized as follows:

- P1: the ‘not’ is not the ‘is’ (that is, the negation has a different meaning from the ‘is’);
- P2: the ‘not’ is the ‘is not’ (that is, the negation has the same meaning of the negation of the ‘is’);
- P3: the ‘is not’ is identical to the nothing (that is, the negation of the ‘is’ has the same meaning of the nothing);
- therefore NN: the ‘not’ is *identical* to the nothing.

## 5. The foundations of premises

Both P1 and P3 are explicitly stated by Severino in his works. They arise from fundamental determinations of the primal structure as structure of the totality. In the primal structure the negation of the ‘is’ (that is expressed in the Italian and English language by respectively the linguistic expressions ‘non è’ and ‘is not’) holds the semantical status of a complex meaning composed of two parts or moments: the ‘not’ and the ‘is’. Each of those two parts *is not* the other: «The ‘is not’ is a complex meaning [...] whose parts are the ‘not’ and the ‘is’, that, concretely understood, are [...] a) the ‘not’ that is not the ‘is’ and b) the ‘is’ that is not the ‘not’» (Severino, 2011, p. 242). The first premise (P1) of the proof of NN is precisely the affirmation in a): the ‘not’ is not the ‘is’.

Last premise P3 springs out from the necessity, stated by Severino, that in any occurrence the ‘is not’ is equivalent to the ‘is nothing’, i.e. to the affirmation of the nothingness; both in the “existential” (‘x is not’) and in the predicative (‘x is not y’) contexts, when we deny the being we are *affirming* the nothingness: «The ‘is not’ (or not being) is (therefore means) the nothing» (2013, p. 140).

Instead P2 is definitely the responsible of the fallacy that, as the perspective of the “ordinary” logical thought can immediately recognize, affects the demonstration. The proof schematized above is logically valid, of course; the problem concerns the truth of P2. Let’s see how P2 comes out. In the primal structure, Aristotle’s theory of negation is rejected. Negation of a predicate R is *unconditionally equivalent* to the affirmation of the “negative” predicate not-R: ‘is not R’ *means* ‘is not-R’ (e.g. ‘the stone is not the table’ means ‘the stone is the not-table’), where the hyphen makes the difference, for it signals that we are now in front of an *affirmation* of a negative “term”. With Severino’s words: «The being is [...] *the synthesis* [that] can not be transcended by the ‘not’, but it is the transcending of the ‘not’

(which is why it never gives a ‘non è’ [i.e. a negation of being] that may not be translated into a ‘è non’ [i.e. an affirmation of being a negation]» (1999, pp. 163-164)». Here we won’t investigate deeper the foundation of the attribution, to the being, of an invincible syntactic power to transcend negation. What interests us here is that, by this “rule of translation”, the “negative” proposition ‘the *not* is not the *is*’ can be translated into the *affirmation* that the ‘not’ *is* the negation of the ‘is’. By interpreting the negation of the ‘is’, in the “negative” predicate-position, as meaning the ‘is not’, we obtain P2. Now the proof of NN is given: since (P3) the ‘is not’ is identical to the nothing, what the proposition comes to assert is that the ‘not’ is the nothing.

## 6. The ‘not’ is the ‘is not’

It’s easy to recognize that the derivation of P2, so crucial for NN’s proof, exploits a semantical ambiguity affecting the “negation of the *is*”: that between the verbal negation of the ‘is’, whose we make use to deny that something is something (‘... is not...’), and the *different* from the ‘is’ (‘... not-*is*’), i.e. the *different* from that specific meaning in which the ‘is’ consists. The foundation of P2 is successful only if the “negative” term, produced by translating the proposition ‘*not* is not *is*’ into the affirmation of being the “negation of the *is*”, is interpreted *as* meaning the ‘is not’. This is precisely the confusion that must be avoided. In fact, the logical form of the “negative” term in the predicate-position must be distinguished from that of the verbal negation of the ‘is’. The “negative” term in the predicate position is constituted by the ‘not-*is*’: its meaning, differently from the ‘is not’, is that of a concrete instance of an abstract scheme ‘not-*x*’ for *x*=‘is’.

The “phenomenon” of the ambiguity between the two senses (verbal and not verbal) of negation of the ‘is’ does not depend on the grammar rules of historical languages, although they can influence the linguistic visibility of the “phenomenon” by regulating in opposite ways the reciprocal syntactic positions of the negator and of the copula (e.g. the Italian language says ‘non è’, while the English says ‘is not’). This ambiguity can be easily dissolved in an “ordinary” logical context, where the difference between denying the being and affirming the different-from-the-‘is’ is obviously, as we will see more deeply below, a matter of use/mention distinction. The problem that the next paragraphs will try to investigate is *whether or not* the primal structure can actually solve that ambiguity in order to es-

cape the formal derivation of P2 inside its logical space and, *consequently*, of the nothingness of negation.

## 7. The ambiguity between the 'is not' and the 'not-is'

The starting premise of NN's proof asserts: the 'not' is not the 'is'. The proposition resulting by translating denial [of being the 'is'] into affirmation [of being the negation of the 'is'] will have necessarily this logical form: 'the *not* is  $N(not, is)$ ', where  $N(not, is)$  is the "negative" predicate produced by the "absorption" of the negation into the semantic field of the predicate. The semantical ambiguity exploited by NN's proof concerns precisely the determination of the logical meaning of  $N(not, is)$ .

As seen above, the interpretation of  $N(not, is)$  as meaning the 'is not' is the key passage of NN's proof. This interpretation is a misunderstanding of the "negative" term, based on the confusion between the two difference senses of the negation of the 'is': 'is not' and 'not-is'. In fact, neither the 'is not' means the different-from-the-'is' (i.e. the meaning 'not-is') nor it means the position of being of the 'not'. In other terms, neither the instance of the abstract scheme 'not-x' for  $x='is'$ , nor the instance of the abstract scheme 'is x' for  $x='not'$  can equal the "verbal" negation of the 'is'. The 'is not' is *that* sense of negation of the 'is' that can not result by replacing a variable in an appropriate "open formula".

The proof of the nothingness of negation fails in the primal structure only if the distinction between the two senses of the negation of the 'is' is preserved by the translation of the negation of being into an affirmation of being a negation. It's precisely the preservation of that distinction, to become highly problematic in the primal structure, because of the "pressure" exerted by that translation on the proposition '*not* is not *is*'. Therefore the problem concerns precisely the actual possibility *for the primal structure* to preserve the distinction between the two sense of the negation of the 'is'. In the primal structure the 'is not' is a complex meaning constituted by the semantic synthesis between the two different meanings 'is' and 'not'. In the same way, the different-from-the-'is' (not-x, for  $x='is'$ ) and the being-the-'not' (is x, for  $x='not'$ ) are, in the primal structure, semantical synthesis constituted by a connection between the 'is' and the 'not'. *The same* is true for the 'is not'. In the primal structure all these complex meanings share the status of syntheses between the same semantic parts. *How* can the primal structure affirm the distinction between the 'is not' and those other



two meanings? This question is philosophically imperative. Since in the primal structure the 'is not' equals the nothing, the collapse of the distinction between the 'is not' and the 'not-is' would mean the inability to distinguish the different-from-the-*is* from the absolute negation of being. In this way the primal structure would be unable to accept a positivity *other than* the meaning 'is'. The 'is' would establish its eremitic realm inside the primal structure and the possibility to affirm the plurality of beings would vanish.

## 8. Can the primal structure solve the problem?

The logic-linguistic thought can easily solve the ambiguity that is produced by the proposition '*not is not is*' once the denial is translated into an affirmation. Infact the standard solution here is obviously provided by the *use/mention* distinction: while in the 'is not' the 'is' and the 'not' are *used*, in the positions of the subject and of the nominal part of the predicate they are *mentioned*; consequently in the proposition '*not is not the is*', that speaks *of* the 'is' and of the 'not', the two different occurrences of the 'is' and of the 'not' give respectively rise to two *different* meanings. Infact in the first occurrence of the 'not' (where the 'not' occupies the position of the subject), no denial is performed, as well as no affirmation of being is performed in the second occurrence of the 'is' (where the 'is' is in the position of the predicate). Consequently the translation of the denial of the being into an affirmation can not riproduce the 'is not' in the field of the predicate, because what the negation *not* is applied to, once imported in that field, is the 'is' in the role of a *mentioned* meaning: that is to say, in the second occurrence the 'is' does not play the function of copula but is a symbol whose *denotation* is constituted by the meaning of the copula.

Instead in the primal structure, where the 'is not' is a complex meaning constituted by the semantic connection between two parts, in the two different occurrences of the 'is' and of the 'not' the *same* meanings do appear. Surely in the primal structure the meanings don't remain the "same" when their context changes. Nevertheless, the 'is' that occupies the position of the nominal predicate is *precisely* one of the two parts that compose the complex meaning 'is not' (and the same is true for the 'not' regarding the position of predicate). On the other hand in the primal structure the 'not' (like the 'is' and any other being) can be self-identical only on the basis of the proposition that affirms its being different-from-the-other: the propo-

sition '[the] *not* is not the other-than-the-*not*' expresses the self-identity precisely of *that* 'not' that, together with the 'is', composes the 'is not'.

It's already clear that the use/mention distinction can not find any place in the primal structure. In it propositions like 'the *not* is not the other-than-the-*not*' (or even our proposition '[the] *not* is not [the] *is*'), in which something is affirmed *of* the 'not', *are not* distributed over a logical-syntactic "level" different from that on which "normal" propositions like 'the house is not the man' rest. In few words, mentioning "devices" are not admitted in the primal structure and there are no language/metalinguage distinctions. The next paragraph will try to investigate, deeper in its foundation, the "heterodox" condition in which the primal structure puts the negation, and to clarify the essential reason why the use-mention difference's theory must be totally refused in it.

## 9. The "primal" nominalization of the meanings

In the primal structure the 'not' is a determined being itself, belonging to the totality of the negatively determined beings. The negative determination of any being includes the concept of negation, but at the same time the 'not' is a being itself and therefore must be *negatively* determined. This configures exactly that kind of logical situations that could not be accepted *simpliciter* by the dominant logical thought. Since the primal structure aims to be the syntactic structure of *totality*, typings and logical hierarchies of variables can not be accepted in it. Everything is a being, i.e. a that-which-is. This means that everything, in its concreteness and determinacy, is an individual instance of the scheme 'x is', where x is an "absolute" variable, free to range over the totality of being without any restriction of its domain. The 'not' is one of the possible values of the "absolute" ontological variable.

We can say that in the primal structure anything, without any particular condition to be satisfied, is primally "nominalized". This is true of negation itself, since the 'not' too, regardless of what makes it different from a "substance" in the aristotelic sense of a table or a stone, can replace the ontological variable. In the primal structure the problem of the correspondence between meanings and entities is primally solved in a positive way. With the words of Quine, the «gulf between meaning and naming» (1948/1949, p. 28) is primally filled. The "bridge" that ensures the correspondence between entities and meanings is constituted by the *identity*

that Severino intrepidly establishes between meaning something and being something: «In its widest meaning, the term ‘meaning’ refers to every anything, that is to any being» (2013, p. 107); and again: «All is a meaning [...]. The being has not a meaning: it *is* a meaning» (2007, p. 366).

In the primal structure the negation is *primally* nominalized. This needs now an important clarification in order to avoid dangerous misunderstandings. The primal nominalization of the meanings that articulate the totality *is not* a linguistic procedure, like that of the “mentioning”, that entails a modification of the meaning. By occupying the position of subject, the ‘not’ does *not* undergo a modification of its meaning but, by contrast, is (primally) allowed to be the meaning which it is. The primality of nominalization of the meanings is precisely what is definitely denied by Edmund Husserl in his theory of the «distinction between independent and non-independent meanings»: «[...] meanings of any category, even syncategorematic forms like *and*, can be put into the subject-position otherwise occupied by substantival meanings. If one looks closely, one sees that this happens by a *modification of meaning* [...]. If we say ‘*And* is a conjunction’, the nuance of meaning normally corresponding to the word ‘and’ is not put into the position of subject: this is occupied by an independent meaning directed to the word *and* ...» (2001, p. 64). The *primality* of the occupation of the subject-position for any meaning entails the denial of any «modification of meaning».

## 10. Three attempts of solution

Although the ambiguity between the two senses of negation of the ‘is’ is not explicitly signaled by Severino, three attempts of solution, more or less indirect, can be traced in his works. Two of them try to exploit, in different ways, the circumstance of the semantical identity between the ‘is not’ and the nothing. The other evokes the (supposed) difference of the kinds of meanings respectively contained in the structure of the ‘is not’ and in that of the ‘not-*is*’.

a) Severino is deeply aware that the primal structure seems to encounter a problem when it tries to determine the semantical structure of the ‘is not’. In fact, in the primal structure the meaning ‘is not’ appears to be complex and simple *at the same time*. It is a complex meaning, since, as previously stated, the primal structure thinks the ‘is not’ as a synthesis between the ‘is’ and the ‘not’. More surprisingly, for the primal structure the

'is not' *can not* be a complex meaning and therefore is *simple*. The essential reason for this impossibility is that, if determined as an entity composed of parts, the 'is not' necessarily falls under the contradictory (and infamous) concept of a whole that contains itself as its part. This is explained very clearly by Severino: «it is necessary that each of the two parts of the 'is not' (the 'is' and the 'not') *is not* the other. Therefore it is necessary that the 'is not' includes itself as its part [...]» (2013, p. 125).

The foundation of the contradictory inclusion of the 'is not' (or 'not being') in its (supposed) parts, each of which *is not* the other, rests in the fact that for Severino not being something equals *being* a not being (and therefore an 'is not') – an equation that brings us back to the “translation” from which P2 springs out. The solution of the aporetic situation produced by the “primal” determination of the semantical structure of the 'is not' (that reveals to be both a complex and a not-complex meaning) consists in *accepting* this contradiction *through* its complete re-absorption into the fundamental contradiction of the nothing. The possibility for this solution is given precisely by P3, namely the identity between the 'is not' and the nothing: «Since the nothing is a self-contradicting meaning, the situation in which the 'is not' reveals to be a complex meaning that includes itself as its part [...] is not a new aporia of the nothing, but *a further contradiction of the nothing as meaning*» (2013, p. 143).

It is natural, now, to wonder whether it would be possible, for to *solve* the problem of the ambiguous relationship between the two senses of the negation of the 'is', to renounce to any attempt of giving a foundation of the distinction between those two senses, by *letting* them be identical to each other and discharging this contradiction *on* the nothing, that (as Severino says) is semantically identical to the 'is not'. Instead, the application of this kind of solution to this case would be catastrophic for the ontology of the primal structure. In fact, *if* we let the 'is not' and the 'not-*is*' be identical each other, then there happens to the 'not-*is*', i.e. to the different-from-the-'is', what is true for the 'is not': to be identical to the nothing. But, as already seen above (no. 7), *if* the primal structure can not track down a distinction between the different-from-the-'is' and the nothing, the onto-logical space for the affirmation of plurality of the beings disappears from it.

b) There is a passage from *Crossing*, in which Severino seems to implicitly attempt a foundation of the difference between the two senses of the negation of the 'is': «The meaning 'not' that occurs in the 'is not' and in the 'not-x' is simple too [...] The 'is not' is the synthesis of those two sim-

ple meanings [i.e. of the ‘is’ and of the ‘not’]; the ‘not-x’ is the synthesis of a simple meaning [i.e. of the ‘not’] and of x (that or is complex or is such as its semantical simplicity is only a matter of fact» (2007, pp. 328-329). As seen above, the essential character of simple meanings is that their analysis is self-contradictory: the whole would be included *in* its (supposed) parts. The ‘not’ is this kind of meaning since «if it were complex it would be constituted by moments that [...] would *not* be the other than itself, therefore the ‘not’ would already occur in the synthesis in which the ‘not’ should consist» (2007, p. 329). Instead, Severino says, for the x occurring in the ‘not-x’ it can not be excluded that an analysis would reveal an “hidden” semantical complexity.

It would seem right to conclude that the difference between the ‘is not’ and the ‘not-x’ ultimately rests over the semantical status of *both* the constituents of the ‘is not’ as *simple* meanings, differently from the ‘not-x’. Instead, this conclusion would circularly assume what should independently reveal, namely that in the primal structure the ‘is not’ can not result from replacing the variable x by *precisely* the “semantical value” constituted by the ‘is’, that is a simple meaning.

c) The ‘is not’ semantically equals the nothing (premise P3). This is not true for the ‘not-is’: the nothingness is only *one* possibility for to be different from a certain meaning (here the ‘is’). Why not take this circumstance as an immediate semantical foundation of the difference between the two senses of the negation of the ‘is’ in the primal structure?

The problem of this semantical foundation is that it fails to be reflected in the *syntax* of the proposition ‘*not* is not the *is*’, once this “negative” proposition is translated into the “affirmative” proposition ‘*not* is N(not,is)’. The ‘is not’, being *identical* to the nothing, is different from the ‘not-is’, that means the different-from-the ‘is’. On the other hand the ‘not’ is not the ‘is’. *Why* should the ‘not’ in the semantical field of the “negative” predicate N(not,is) not *reconstitute* the meaning ‘is not’? The semantical foundation of the difference between the ‘is not’ and ‘not-is’ does not provide an answer to *this* question. If the semantical difference between the ‘is not’ and the ‘not-is’ is not reflected in the *syntax* of those complex meanings, the impossibility of the reconstitution of the ‘is not’ in the predicate-position remains without a foundation. And for the primal structure this means to be exposed to the possibility that the negation appears identical to the nothing.

## 11. Beyond “signicity”. Conclusions

The proposition ‘*not* is not the *is*’ comes out from the deepest kernel of the primal structure. It affirms that the ‘not’ and the ‘is’, that are precisely the two parts of the complex meaning ‘is not’ consisting in the negation of being, are different from each other. In the two occurrences of the ‘not’ and of the ‘is’ the primal structure can not recognize a different «logical syntactic application» (Wittgenstein, prop. 3.327), and that is, for each of them, two «different symbols» (Wittgenstein, prop. 3.323) in the signs. The fundamental reason for this is given by the primal “nominalization” of the ‘is’ and of the ‘not’. Their positions, respectively, in the field of the subject and of the predicate, are *not* the result of a linguistic procedure performed on, and through, signes: they express an primal necessity for the self-identity of the negation

In the primal structure the concept of ‘sign’ and the “signicity” themselves (i.e. the general condition of being-a-sign) entails a negation of the self-identity of being. Reversing Heidegger’s criticism against the conception of language centered in the designative function of the word, Severino affirms that «the language is will: will that something be sign of something. Therefore the language too exists only as faith to be able to turn something into a sign, and something else into its denotation» (2019, p. 231): the language is a form of *negation* of the self-identity of being and consequently belongs to the essence of nihilism. In the primal structure the disclosure of world, that according to Heidegger is performed by the primal essence of language, is entirely attributed to the «appearing»: «the thing is the meaning, therefore the being», but «it is necessary that the thing ultimately appears as thing and not as a thing itself surrounded by the word» (Severino, 1992, pp. 235-244). The thing is ultimately «beyond the language».

The constituents of the proposition ‘*not* is not the *is*’ are ultimately meanings that have left the “signicity” *beyond themselves*. In the primal structure the solution of the ambiguity of the negation of the ‘is’ can not have a linguistic-segnic foundation. The primal structure seems to hide the reason why the proposition ‘*not* is not the *is*’ should escape the conclusion that negation appears identical to the nothing. Should we say that the problematic nature exhibited by the negation of the ‘is’ is the trace of the bright affirmation of positivity of all the things that shines in the heart of the primal structure?

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