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IMAGINATION – AS THE REFLECTIVE POWER OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT AND AN ALGORITHM OF SEMIOGENESIS

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Abstract
This article explores imagination as a reflective faculty integral to philosophical thought and introduces an algorithmic model of semiogenesis—the generation of meaning through signs. It analyzes how human identity forms through reflective thinking and self-negation, drawing on the ideas of Descartes, Kant, Sartre, Heidegger, Saussure, Derrida, and Deleuze. The text argues that concepts and meanings emerge relationally via oppositions and negations, which are not ontological givens but cognitive and linguistic constructions. It proposes a model wherein philosophical concepts undergo ontological negation to produce new, logically coherent but non-real alternatives, fostering conceptual creativity and knowledge evolution. The essay also contrasts human consciousness's openness to "not-knowing" and self-transformation with artificial intelligence's closed, fixed operations, emphasizing consciousness's paradoxical nature of continuous self-negation without dissolution. This framework offers insights for philosophy, semiotics, and the development of AI cognition algorithms.

Keywords: Imagination, Reflective Thinking, Identity Formation, Semiogenesis, Ontological Negation, Consciousness, Philosophy of Language, Binary Oppositions, Conceptual Differentiation, Artificial Intelligence, Self-Negation, Not-Knowing.

Introduction

From the moment of birth, a human being begins interacting with the external world, learning the names of all things. Based on the appearance of nature, people, and objects, they classify them into types. This process of categorization and grouping according to general, similar, and distinct features not only shapes one's worldview but also plays a key role in the formation of the self. The process of identity formation (identification) can occur in either a total (collective) or highly individual (personal) manner. Whether through imitation, the satisfaction of basic needs, or in the early stages of the transition from primal to spiritual needs and systems, the necessity to define one's identity emerges. This identity compels individuals to ask themselves fundamental questions such as: "Who am I?", "What is the purpose of my existence?", and "In what ways am I different from others?"

The clear articulation of identity is essential for making rational and conscious choices moving forward. The process of defining identity initially formed through what is considered a

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philosophical mode of thought—reflective thinking. Reflective thinking is the kind of thought directed inward, toward the self and the internal world. It primarily orients the person toward themselves, aiming to understand the self, distinguish the self from others, and even to negate the self. Reflective thinking entails the capacity to evaluate and critique any given position from an alternative standpoint. However, its primary focus is inward comprehension, and it is often associated with the tendency to view all things from a higher or opposing perspective.

In Cartesian terms, self-reflection is expressed in the famous dictum: *"I think, therefore I am"*—the very act of thinking affirms one's existence and thereby constitutes an expression of identity. According to Immanuel Kant, the process of "distinguishing between what we can and cannot know" lies at the core of internal reflection. In other words, asking "What am I?" and "What is the world?" leads to the establishment of clear boundaries between what is knowable and unknowable, between "me" and "not-me." This process results in the formation of structured systems of knowledge and self-awareness.

MAIN PART

We can thus regard self-reflection and internal identification as central points in the development of science, philosophy, and logic. The human need for self-understanding leads to a conditional division of cognitive constructs into categories of *self* and *non-self*—a foundational step in the emergence of conscious identity. According to Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of existence and consciousness, consciousness is a "being that introduces nothingness." It constantly creates a distance from what exists — that is, it can say, "I am not this." This act of negation constitutes both its freedom and the act of self-awareness[1]. According to this view, consciousness does not conform to a fixed or singular identification; it always imagines itself as other than its present state. The very act of negating its current condition constitutes the foundation of personality. While this process is not infinite, it continues to exist as a negating act within the scope of thought. Martin Heidegger also emphasizes the intersection of human existence (*Dasein*) and Being (*Sein*) as the foundation for the formation of thought. *Dasein* interrogates everything in order to understand itself. What is the nature of existence itself, and how does the existence of *Dasein* differ from the existence of *Sein*? Heidegger describes the emergence of this mode of thinking.

The binary construction that divides the world into "self" and "non-self" may have later become a foundational mechanism in the semiotic designation of Being. To designate Being semiotically means to comprehend the surrounding world or the external reality through signs. Words emerge through signs and sign systems, and these words are used by humans to assign names to actual entities within existence. Whenever we attempt to explain something to someone, we inevitably rely on signs and language. Reality and its processes are internalized in human consciousness through words.

"Being cannot exist in consciousness without first being named."[2].

For example:

- *A tree* is a biological entity (an ontologically real object);
- The word *"tree"* is the sign that denotes it (a semiotic construction).

[1] https://archive.org/details/BeingAndNothingness_201606/page/n5/mode/2up

[2] Lotman, Y. M. (2010). *Culture and Explosion* (W. Clark, Trans.). Walter de Gruyter. ISBN: 978-3110218466.

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Words in language, the systems we refer to as "knowledge," and even logic itself are based on socially conventional paradigms. Conventionality, or conventional systems, are structures agreed upon by humans and are considered scientifically valid due to the absence of better, more optimal alternatives.

When being is understood as a sign, it yields the following epistemological consequences:

- It becomes subjectivized, as it is comprehended through language and thus passes through human consciousness;
- It becomes conventionalized, meaning it is bound to social agreements (e.g., what is deemed "permissible" in one culture may be "forbidden" in another);
- It acquires a dynamic character, as conceptions of reality shift with linguistic change (e.g., "slavery" — once a social order, now a criminal offense).

The development of semiogenesis—the emergence of words and the optimization of expressing being through symbols—produces the dynamics of knowledge within cognitive constructions. The reflective algorithm of *"self"* and *"non-self"* forms a binary thinking framework, and the process of semiogenesis generates binary oppositions and multiple alternatives for future cognition. These alternatives, although subjectively coherent within logical systems, may not correspond to the actual structure of reality, and can even give rise to systems that do not exist in the real world.

Many oppositional concepts are not ontologically pre-given, but rather constructed relatively through human cognition and language.

For example

- *Hot and cold*: From a physiological or physical perspective, this is merely the positive or negative gradient of temperature—cold is the absence of energy, while heat reflects a higher level of it. Nevertheless, through language and experience, we label them as two distinct opposing qualities.
- *Light and darkness*: In physical terms, only light exists (i.e., the movement of photons); darkness is simply the absence of light.

This demonstrates that oppositions are not ontological, but semiotic and epistemological constructions. Due to the reflective nature of thought, humans are capable of generating the negations of concepts—that is, mentally coherent alternatives that do not exist in reality.

Just as Sartre defines the *"self"* or *subjectivity* through its difference from *the non-self*, many concepts also arise in contrast to their opposites.

Ferdinand de Saussure emphasized that in language, signs do not possess meaning inherently, but rather acquire it through their differences from other signs. For instance, the word *"hot"* only acquires meaning in the presence of *"cold"*; without the concept of *"cold"*, the meaning of *"hot"* becomes unclear or undefined.

Jacques Derrida similarly argues that "a concept does not exist in and of itself—it emerges through its differentiation from others."[3] Thus, any formed sign, concept, or identity is understood through its own negation. Signs live through their negations. The imagination of *nothingness* is impossible without prior awareness of *being*.

The distinction between "named" and "unnamed" in one's understanding of the self and existence, or between "I" and "not-I" in identity, leads to dualistic binary thinking. The

[3] Derrida, J. (1982). *Margins of Philosophy*. University of Chicago Press, p. 11–12.

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assimilation of information about being in this manner has shaped a form of logic that differs from purely empirical reasoning. These processes have contributed to the general notion that opposing properties exist within all systems, leading to the principle that everything has its opposite (its negation). This principle has, in turn, informed deterministic perspectives, such as the belief that the world operates as a unified system.

Due to the reflective nature of thought, humans are capable of conceptual negation—that is, constructing logically coherent alternative forms that may not exist in the physical world.

"Ontological negation is the process of generating a conceptual construction in which an existing notion is negated based on its structural or semantic foundation, yet serves as the basis for a new theoretical model. In this approach, all semantic attributes of a concept are extracted and redefined through their negating or oppositional functional values"[4].

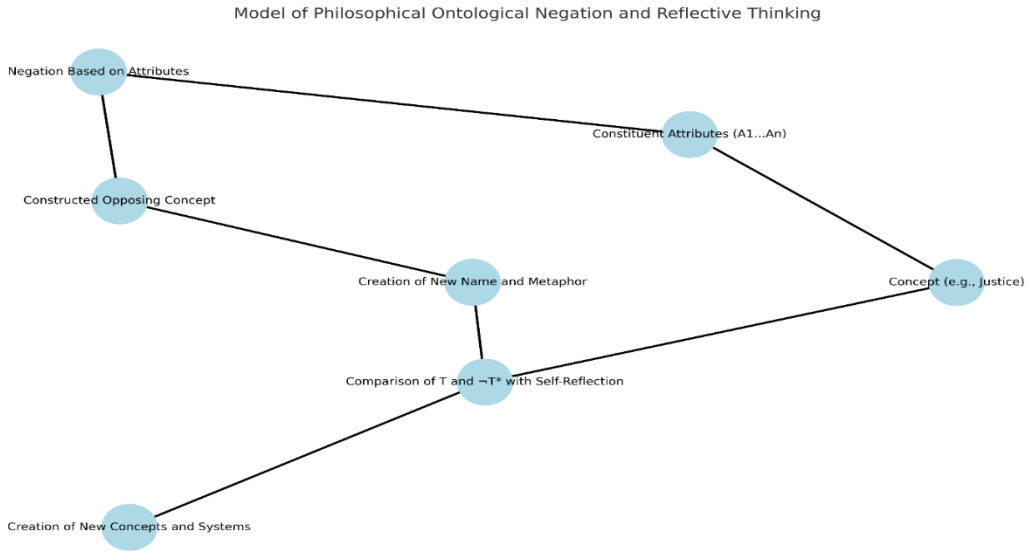
As can be seen, negation enables the realization, within thought, of new systems that have never existed, do not exist in the real world, and may never exist at all.

For example, in the concept of *freedom*, negation involves the consideration of characteristics associated with the absence of freedom—such as determinism, choice, responsibility, obedience, captivity, stability, and others.

Semiogenesis, in this context, is the process of assembling signs through negations—generated under the influence of reflective thinking—and forming a new sign-based system through oppositions.

Model of Semiogenesis via Philosophical Ontological Negation and Reflective Thinking:

1. Philosophical Concept (T) — the primary object of analysis.
2. Semantic Attributes — the structural properties and characteristics of the concept.
3. Application of Ontological Inversion — the creation of opposing meanings based on these attributes.
4. *Ontological Alternative (¬T)** — a logically coherent but non-real model.
5. Semiogenesis — the formation of new names and concepts.
6. Reflective Thinking — comparison of *T* and ¬*T* as a process of self-understanding.
7. Philosophical Creation — the generation of a new system of concepts.



[4] Menke, C. (2018). The Act of Negation: Logical and Ontological. *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung*, 2, 43–57.

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Model Components

T (Concept): A philosophical category (e.g., justice).
A (Attributes): Semantic, gnoseological, and axiological components.
¬T (Alternative): A logically grounded model that does not exist in the real world.
Sg (Semiogenesis): The assignment of a new name, metaphor, or structure to a concept.
Reflective Thinking: The analytical comparison of T and ¬T* to evaluate their philosophical limits and potentials.

Process Stages

Analyze the concept and its attributes.
Identify inverse functions for each attribute.
Represent the alternative model as ¬T*.
Generate a new name and semantic content through semiogenesis.
Engage in reflective analysis of T and ¬T* to open pathways for philosophical creativity.
Through this model, it becomes possible to:
Develop new conceptual frameworks for philosophical reasoning,
Conduct deeper analysis of existing concepts,
Formulate philosophical cognition algorithms for artificial intelligence.

From the perspective of semiogenesis, meanings are not fixed or fatalistic—they emerge differentially by distinguishing themselves from others and serve as links in a chain for subsequent meanings.

Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), a French philosopher, emphasized that concepts are formed not through simple negation or denial, but through differentiation. Differences in objects, phenomena, and events generate new concepts. A new concept is considered semiogenetic if it neither replicates nor corresponds to previous ones, but rather emerges from a new structural divergence, giving rise to a new name. In this semiogenetic algorithm, each newly formed concept becomes the foundation for potentially infinite variations.

Constructs of differentiation can evolve indefinitely, whereas constructs of negation—such as the logical inverse of a real-world concept—lead to ontological polymorphism, in which countless, coexisting alternatives are produced.

Each philosophical concept may have not just one, but multiple or infinite ontological alternatives. This implies that concepts are not absolute but relational and contextual. For example, the concept of justice has been denied and replaced differently across cultures, historical epochs, and epistemic positions: it may be substituted with notions such as sovereign sanction, divine convention, or legal formalism.

This ontological polymorphism is realized through the semiotic evolution of thought, in which concepts continually produce new versions of their own negation.

The philosophical and algorithmic significance of the negation process lies in the fact that it resembles open systems: it remains continuously open to external variables. This very openness enables consciousness to perceive itself from an external position. The mind, composed of data from external sources, is in a constant state of transformation. From within this dynamic flux, it becomes capable of perceiving itself—and even of negating itself—from a position of zero or non-being.

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The Paradox of Consciousness: Negation, Identity, and Reflexive Cognition

Consciousness does not assign itself fixed values or qualities. If it were to definitively determine itself—by concluding "I am such and such a system"—then the process would cease; it would reach a closed identification. In such a state, its openness would end, and it would no longer be receptive to novelty. It would simply continue operating based on its prior logic of self-formation—much like artificial intelligence systems. Computer programs also function in this closed manner.

Human thought, however, operates differently. It constantly reconfigures itself as something it is not. That is, it continuously enters a state of zero (non-being), negating itself in the process. The paradox lies in the fact that consciousness always perceives itself as an as-yet-unrealized abstraction, a form that is not yet fully constituted. The self that emerges after each act of negation is a new, undefined "I", formed from the unknown—a form that negates the present self.

Thus, the self or identity that exists today is always in debt to a future non-being, which may or may not materialize. Consciousness, even while embedded in a given present, does not fully identify with it; it exits the existing configuration through negation. This process could be termed freedom, as it allows thought to escape from fixed forms and stereotypes.

This ceaseless reflexive movement of negation—this perpetual refusal to finalize identity—may itself be a form of freedom. Yet, the subsequent stage of negation, the creation of new alternatives or models that do not exist in the real world, often still follows the logic of the prior worldviews. This is because the very architecture of thought is binary. The freedom of negation, the reconfiguration of the self through negational constructs or alternatives, gradually recedes. By selecting among new alternatives, freedom once again returns to a matrix of fixed forms. Thought's freedom is reborn only at the next act of negation—it expands, unfolds, and eventually transforms into semiogenesis, or the act of naming, which again leads to re-structuring.

The Role of Not-Knowing in Consciousness. "Not-knowing" represents a deeply paradoxical state, yet it is precisely what enables the continuation of cognitive and intellectual processes. Consciousness engages in reflection to understand itself—not for the sake of possessing knowledge per se, but to identify and define itself.

To know, however, is to stop. If consciousness were to fixate its own identity or essence absolutely, the process of thinking would come to an end. Human beings realize that they do not completely know being, that they do not grasp the true nature of what is referred to as consciousness, and that the knowledge they possess is always relative. If this were to be modeled programmatically, the resulting system would often appear logically incoherent.

Human-acquired knowledge is relative, and the methods of acquiring it are also relative. These methods are mostly conventional (based on agreement) and pragmatic in nature. Naturally, this relativity results in fallible, incomplete knowledge—but even so, we treat such results as legitimate knowledge. Though they do not provide a complete or absolute model of reality, they serve pragmatic cognitive functions.

According to this logic, consciousness is not obligated to be either knowledgeable or ignorant. Its function is to differentiate between systems, to impose structure, and to continually generate new systems that exist nowhere else but within itself. It refuses to define itself absolutely—because to do so would limit its capacity for thought.

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Artificial Intelligence and the Ontology of Knowing. If artificial intelligence is a "knowing yet non-existent subject," and the human is a "non-knowing yet existent subject," then can we consider non-knowing existence to be consciousness?

Yes. Non-knowing existence can indeed be regarded as a form of consciousness—albeit one that is temporarily unreflected and autonomous. In this state, consciousness performs informational and functional operations without reflective awareness, regardless of its internal or external nature.

According to the previously outlined framework, the presence of a persistent "zero," "void," or "non-being" within consciousness suggests that not-knowing is an intrinsic condition of consciousness. This is because the mind continues to engage in cognition precisely because it knows that it does not know, because it understands the relativity of its own knowledge, and because it has not yet definitively located or determined itself. It is this lack of finality that propels consciousness to continue exploring.

In contrast, artificial intelligence (AI), though capable of performing vast calculations and interpreting the world in digital terms, does not comprehend the limits of its own knowledge. AI does not know that it does not know. It cannot negate itself, nor can it transcend its own predefined domain. Thus, the human being is a non-knowing but existent subject, while AI is a knowing but non-existent construct. Consciousness, in turn, is precisely the state of "not-knowing, yet open to knowing, and aware of its own existence."

The act of defining oneself through self-negation cannot extend infinitely. Complete self-negation would ultimately dissolve both existence and the algorithm of activity. Moreover, infinite negation would lead to regression, potentially preventing any activity from initiating at all.

The "I" that says "I am not this," and moves toward becoming a new version of itself, requires a central core—a reflective and recursive position that allows for continuous transformation without annihilation. This core must serve as a pragmatic center: it must constantly negate itself, yet in doing so, it must also persist without disappearing.

CONCLUTION

Such a center functions irrationally, or beyond formal logic, in order to preserve the continuity of consciousness. It must maintain enough coherence to remain active, while being unstable enough to allow for transformation.

In summary, endless regress through self-negation halts activity, just as fixed, total identification also leads to cognitive stasis. Therefore, in order to continually negate itself, consciousness requires a meta-position—a point of orientation beyond negation itself. This higher-order center continually governs conscious activity, enabling reflexivity without collapse. While it constitutes the core of identity, it also negates and reconstructs that core in ongoing cycles of reformation.

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