

Valentin COZMESCU *

The Iconography of Nothingness in Noica's Philosophy **

Abstract: This paper has two main aims. The first is to show how Constantin Noica approached the inevitable problem of nothingness in his ontology. For this we had to mainly focus on two books of Romanian philosopher: *The Becoming unto Being* and *The Romanian Spirit in the Balance of Time. Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*. Noica uses five words when addressing the issue of nothingness: *void (overvoid), nothingness, non-being, vacuum, nothing*. Beyond this terminological inconsistency, one can identify three major meanings of *the nothing*: 1) non-being as a void of being inscribed in things; 2) the nothing as secondary non-being in the guise of ontological morbidity and contingency; 3) the nothing as a sense of emptiness. The second aim is to achieve a critical analysis on the manner in which Noica addressed the issue of nothingness, using as methodological (and suppositional) framework the metaphysical platform of Martin Heidegger. The conclusion of our analysis is that Noica, despite a genuine sense of being, committed a metaphysical evasion, deviating from the requirements of metaphysics.

Keywords: Nothingness, Constantin Noica, Ontology, Being, Spiritual Maladies, Sense of Emptiness

1. A brief introduction to Noica's ontology

Constantin Noica (1909-1987) represents a major milestone in Romanian culture and philosophy¹, often regarded as "the most important Romanian thinker". His philosophical interests encompassed the entire field of philosophy, from gnoseology, the philosophy of culture, axiology and philosophical anthropology to ontology and logic, from the history of philosophy to semantic philosophy, from ancient to contemporary

* Phd. Student Department of Philosophy, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iasi, Romania, email: vali_cozmescu@yahoo.com

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¹ Along with other Romanian thinkers, such as Vasile Conta, Nae Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Lucian Blaga, Mihai Şora, Mircea Florian.

philosophy, from editions, translations or interpretations to criticism and original philosophical work².

The ontology developed by Noica, and presented in *Devenirea întru ființă* (*The Becoming unto Being*), could be summarized as follows³: 1) being is not a plenitude in things, but a void; 2) being is not a stable and immutable instance, it pre-eminently presupposes motion, dynamism, process; 3) being is not an eternal presence, residing in a dimension parallel to the world of things and animals, but a presence which is embedded in the latter, a presence, however, which initially becomes manifest as absence; 4) being is not simple, it has a structure; 5) that which exists in a thing is not being, but an aperture towards being. More precisely, the aperture towards being is given by being's absence from the object, an ontological absence which could be defined as "shaping nothingness". This nothingness shapes the thing with a view to its own annulment, therefore, the thing is shaped at the same pace that nothingness is ontologically "filled". 6) "Ontological (ful)filling" implies checking the ontological model, that is, the emergence of the three fundamental terms in the structure of being: the individual, the general and determinations (named "the IDG [individual-determinations-general] ontological model").

The IDG ontological model is active in things and never can become saturated. Therefore, we cannot speak about an absolute being, consummate and stable. The deviations from this pattern give the measure of the real. Thus, any of the three terms can be absent, the other two coupling up in turn. Through excess or absence of a term, there emerge six "precariousnesses" that represent as many "degrees of being" or "stairs to coming unto being" of things. This ontological model with the being far from absolute and incorruptible, accepts precariousness and evinces two-

² We mention some of the most important books of Noica: *Mathesis sau bucuriile simple* (*Mathesis, or: The Simple Joys*), Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă, Bucharest, 1934; *Schiță pentru istoria lui "Cum e cu puțință ceva nou?"* (*A Sketchy Historical Endeavor on the Question: "How Is It Possible Something New?"*), Bucovina Publishing House, Bucharest, 1940; *Jurnal filosofic* (*A Philosophical Diary*), Publicom Publishing House, Bucharest, 1944; *27 trepte ale realului* (*27 Stairs of the Real*), Științifică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1969; *Rostirea filosofică românească* (*The Romanian Philosophical Apophantics*), Științifică Publishing House, Bucharest 1970; *Sentimentul românesc al ființei* (*The Romanian Feeling of Being*), Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978; *Spiritul românesc în cumpătul vremii. Șase maladii ale spiritului contemporan* (*The Romanian Spirit in the Balance of Time. Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*), Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978; *Povestiri despre om, după o carte de G.W.F. Hegel* (*Stories About Man: After a Book by Hegel*), Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980; *Devenirea întru ființă. I. Încercare asupra filosofiei tradiționale II. Tratat de ontologie* (*The Becoming unto Being, 1. Essay on Traditional Philosophy, 2. Treatise of Ontology*), Enciclopedică și Științifică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1981; *Scrisori despre logica lui Hermes* (*Letters on the Logic of Hermes*), Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1986;

³ This brief overview of Noica's ontology belongs to Sorin Lavric (see http://romanian-philosophy.ro/en/index.php?title=Constantin_Noica)

pronged structures, doubled according to an ontological or ontic plan: *becoming unto being* and *becoming unto becoming*, *regulating time* and *rotating time*, *the infinite of reason* and *the infinite of the intellect*, *truth* and *exactness*, *maladies of the spirit* and *maladies of the soul*, *second-instance being* and *first-instance being*, *structure naught* and *first-instance naught*, the individual turned *holomer* (an I-D, a part that rises to the power of the entire) and a *void individual* (things in Parmenides' view, an uninformed real content), *essence determinations* and *empty determinations*, *general turned unto concrete universal* and *void general* (for example, Parmenides' absolute being, uncovered by a real content).

To build an ontology model based on these ideas, Noica recovered philosophies of "German spiritualism", especially the philosophy of Kant and Hegel. Moreover, the Noica's dialectic is built step by step as a response to the Hegelian dialectic, by an attempt to overcome it. He wants to establish need to move from the famous Hegelian route – thesis-antithesis-synthesis (considered to be linear), to a circular moving: theme-antitheme-thesis-theme. And this change should be able to describe undulatory motion of being.

2. Methodological assumptions

Any critical approach inevitably requires some assumptions (sometimes explicitly announced, but more often implicitly) that guide the encounter with the object investigated. So our critical research will be held under this exigency. In this regard, we announce that for the establishment and planning the suppositional framework we appeal to Martin Heidegger, whose metaphysical platform we use foothold to explore the problem of nothingness in Noica's ontology. There are two main reasons why we assume and instruments (on methodological level) Heideggerian metaphysics platform. First, because Noica makes many references to the German philosopher, constantly trying to separate from him, although there are many similarities between the two thinkers. Secondly, which is even more important, because Martin Heidegger, by his metaphysical excellency, is undoubtedly one of the few philosophers who can provide relevant and even inevitable benchmark in any research concerning the ontology.

Above all, Martin Heidegger argues strongly that "being is the *only* and the *authentic* theme of philosophy"⁴. "This is not our invention, because putting this issue occurred with the beginning of philosophy in Antiquity and acquired the grandest form in Hegel's logic. [...] In a negative sense, this means: philosophy is not the *science about* of beings, but about *being*, or, using

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Problemele fundamentale ale fenomenologiei / Fundamental problems of phenomenology*, translated from German by Bogdan Mincă and Sorin Lavric, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2006, p. 36.

the Greek word, it is *ontology*⁵. In line with this, it can be stated even a "ethical" corollary which to complete somehow the Heideggerian sentence: "metaphysics (ontology) can never be a means, but always only purpose".

Once announced and defined by such an axiomatic formulation (as *the science of being*⁶, which has the being as single and authentic theme – the question "What is being?"), does not mean that metaphysics is a closed chapter, a common good that to have free and possibly effective. And even less, does not mean that metaphysics forgets or neglects its own essence, like an "irrefutable" principle which is only foothold without himself to find the fulcrum. In contrast, once announced and defined in this way, metaphysics finds one appropriate horizon in order to find (or not find) any essence: horizon of being, and only of being.

Saying that "philosophy is not the *science about* of beings, but about *being*", Heidegger claim a ontological difference between beings (*das Seiende*) and being (*das Sein*). He proposes to understand being itself, as distinguished from any specific entities (beings). Being is what determines beings as beings, that in terms of which beings are already understood. Even if the philosophy is responsible for the meaning of being, Heidegger argues initially that there is no access to being other than via beings themselves, that a true understanding of being (*Seinsverständnis*) can only proceed by referring to particular beings, and that the best method of pursuing being must inevitably involve a kind of hermeneutic circle. A such particular beings which provides privileged access to the meaning of being is *Dasein* (which means not human being, but is nothing other than human being).

After Heidegger makes a comprehensive analysis on ontological structures of *Dasein*, he realizes that this beings is incapable to proving any metaphysical privilege inside of ontological difference. And because of this "anthropological" failure, ontological difference is forced to recoil upon itself, (re)focusing on the being (on the meaning of being). By this radical (re)orientation (*Kehre*) makes its way another requirement that metaphysics (thought) has honored: austerity of fact-of-a-leave-to-be. In this sense, metaphysics has its rigor in the way required to submit to herself: "a stagnating". Therefore, phenomenology is not, in essence, a dispensable and occasionally accessory of thinking. And the less, it can not be an excuse for any intellectual fashion or philosophical enthusiasm. Phenomenology is thinking itself, that strives to recognize themselves as thinking.

When trying to achieve this *Kehre*, thinking realizes that the ontological difference is sabotaged by the difference. Difference which, in turn, is

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Defined as "the science of being" it is obvious that metaphysics is a task of thinking. Moreover, just by trying to cope with this task, thinking it can recognize themselves as thinking, can meet its own essence.

sabotaged also by itself. And so the thinking must "to make place" for *nothing*, just because it might be capable of such a persistent and devastating sabotage. Therefore, it must be another requirement: *the recognition of metaphysical vocation of nothing* (that *along* with being). Recognition that actually means "to encounter" with nothing. Just nothing (disclosed in anguish – *Angst*) can testify being. Just silent word of being can speak about being, but without invoking some occasional smart, subtle, wise or pious silence. Heidegger is so overwhelmed by a single and simple revelation: only nothingness can make place for being. In this way, the *science of being* is also *science of nothing*.

But thinking which is in charge of the science of nothing is unable to account for nothing (that *along* with being). Because nothing is revealed as nothing (as full concealment being) only in the horizon of a *affective disposition* (non-thinking, especially pre-thinking). The nothing is therefore provided (and accessible) only by that affective disposition (*Angst*), it must attempt *to think the being without recourse to beings*, especially to thinking. In other words, it requires a *overcoming of metaphysics*. But this can be done only within metaphysics, and only through it. Overcoming of metaphysics are actually a *metaphysical overcoming of metaphysics*. Therefore, thinking that thinks the nothing, thus acting against its own essence, it actually reveals its essence.

Once made visible our methodological (and suppositional) framework, we will continue to show how Constantin Noica approached the inevitable problem of nothingness in his ontology. Following in the end to achieve a critical analysis on this issue.

3. The Iconography of Nothingness in Noica's Philosophy

Compared with M. Heidegger, the problem of nothingness (non-being) is for Constantin Noica somewhat a second matter, being approached more often indirectly and quite unsystematic. Therefore, in his philosophical work, it is quite difficult to identify a clear and unitary perspective about nothingness. On the contrary, there is a confusing terminology and conceptual inconsistency. For example, in *Tratat de ontologie* (*Treatise of Ontology*) speaks about an "Overvoid" inscribed into things (unlike Plotinus "Overflow") and a "shaping nothigness", while in *Şase maladii ale spiritului contemporan* (*Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*), where Noica lies its typology of maladies "in the edge of a work about being", it is argued that there is no void, but really just a "sense of emptiness" that manifests as four types of nothingness corresponding to the spiritual maladies: the nothingness of disintegration (in *catbolitis* malady), the nothingness of suspension (in *todetitis* malady), the nothingness of culture (in *atodetitis*

malady), the nothingness of extinction (in *acatholitis* malady)⁷. So, in Noica's philosophy, nothing (non-being) has several shapes, faces, that could even talk about a real iconography of nothingness.

3.1. *The Void into Things and the Shaping Nothingness*

In the "Introduction" to *Treatise of Ontology*, Noica says that being itself should be revised, whereas traditional ontology has been perhaps what has been wrongly attributed to Plato: *the world has doubled with one incorruptible*. The being can no longer be one of parmenidian type, endowed with all the attributes of perfection (unborn, eternal, complete, unwavering, uninterrupted), one of calmness and peace, but none one in heraclitean meaning, one of the empty conflict. "It is instead one of *tension*, due to its terms, which are in the act and in pre-equipoise or weakening."⁸

For Noica, only being *wrapped* may be a model of being, present and active in all that is reality. This model operates everywhere and is the truth of philosophy. "With this truth have nurtured all philosophies. Some have started from *general*, the other from *individual*, the other from *determinations* (phenomena, manifestations); because there are epochs or situations of thinking what advertisement to put into light a term or another. Some philosophers have redone the *entire* model (but in one way, as Hegel himself, with the structure: general-determinations-individual); other philosophers have remained uncovered, through the failure of one of the entities, but that's exactly why open and stimulating. If saturation of model leads to accomplished being, that we understand as «the becoming unto being» and where start the dialectic proces, instead the *tendency* towards saturation is the catalyst of the world and the spiritual life itself"⁹. Therefore, Noica asserts that ontology based not only all philosophical disciplines, with all three terms of them and with their exercise, but expresses in her essence the spiritual life, with its meanings manifested, signifying whatever is real or ideal procesuality.

Assuming that the being has two meanings – the being in general and the being of each thing –, Noica divides his ontology into two parts: the first examines the being of things (which means being of an atom, of a

⁷ Cf. Laura Pamfil, "Noica, a Thinker in a Time of Need and the Philosophy of Becoming unto Being", in *Romanian Philosophical Culture, Globalization, and Education. Romanian philosophical studies VI*, edited by Alin Tat, Stefan Popenici, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington D.C., 2008, pp. 53-84. This study of Laura Pamfil is for us a very effective guide for the research that we undertake.

⁸ Constantin Noica, *Devenirea întru ființă. vol. II. Tratat de ontologie (The Becoming unto Being, vol. II. Treatise of Ontology)*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1998, p. 193.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 191-192.

substance, of a tree, of a man, of a thought); the second examines the being itself, which relies on first.

Even at the beginning of the first part of its ontology, that in which examines the being of things, Noica announces a fundamental assumption: "anything that is not expressed the being". At first, any ontology has to confront the *nothing*. And always, nothing is nothing to *something*. When it starts from the being, it said "being is not this, nor it", immediately reach Hegel's claim that the being is permanent passage to nothing, and that it is nothing, a *void of things*. When it starts from things, then that to say that things are not being also lead to void, but at a *void of being*. There is a difference between the two types of voids: void of things is "logical" – ontology passing suddenly in logic –, while void of being is ontological, and if it leads to becoming, will make it to the end and keeping an ontological sense. When it says that "the being is not that, nor that", being increasingly hides in her incomprehensibility. But if it says that "neither this, nor that it's not being", a horizon of being or even a question on them becomes possible¹⁰.

Because anything that is not expressed the being, means that the being is an absence in things. And is not an some absence, but one *in* them. Other absences are *around* thing, not in it, being outside thing that it is not something else, for instance, that the tree is not the river. Conversely, the absence of being is in thing. It's not enough being in it, or it's not really being. Being consequently made it a "possible place" of her. The being is distributed everywhere, in any thing, but nowhere did not appear as such. Every thing is a Monad which could reflect the whole being. Things are not the being, and nor all things at one place are not the being. All things together are in parentheses, as *not being* the being¹¹.

In the privacy of each thing is a void of being. Analyzing the condition of this void, Noica says that he can have a positive effect. Although things can contradict the being, however the being does not contradict the things. To define this situation, Romanian philosopher invokes the principle of *unilateral contradiction*, principle that will be instrumented in the entire his ontological building.

Developing the idea that "single the being is not, the rest is part of being", Noica claims that the periphery of being is everywhere and its center nowhere. By the lack of the centre, the world is not des-centered, but finds balance by something that "is", or is otherwise in it. So, lack of the center means: 1. the disappearance of the fullness of being (it is, in things at least, a void); 2. the disappearance of the fixity of being (it is not immobility, but action); 3. the disappearance of permanence of being (it is not a

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 198.

co-eternal presence, but a intimate presence (absence), fleeting with the thing); 4. the disappearance of the simplicity of being (it has a structure)¹².

1. By the disappearance of the fullness of being, but being a *inner* void, the being is part of a *nihil privativum* – it is an absence in all things, and is a kantian "nothing" as *ens intelligibile*, one inscribed in all things and, to the extent that emerges as nothingness, a *shaping nothingness*.

2. By the disappearance of the fixity of being, the void is not only in the consciousness that it is seeking, but also in things. Noica argues that the void of being becomes active, meaning that the things seek an access to being. So it is no longer an *lazy nothingness*, but it passes as *ens intelligibile*, or as the archetypal pattern, in a *shaping nothingness*. Being distributed everywhere, the being generates and regenerates constantly the reality. It has to be seen in things and working, instead of being left in her inertia.

3. By the disappearance of permanence of being, and the void being active *inside*, then it is a form of intimacy, not a permanent presence and existence, i.e. a co-eternal presence. All the attributes previously granted it and detached from the real (unity, permanence, eternity) fall from the vantage of the being into things; the only one attribute that is recovered is that constantly refused by philosophical tradition: *co-naturalness of being with things*.

4. By the disappearance of the simplicity of being, it is not only formative intimacy of things, it is also their measure. In an ontology attached to reality, judgment criteria may depend on a true structure of being and on the measure to which the structure was achieved. There may incompleteness of being, but may occur precariousness of its; can be partial sustainable fulfillment, or sometimes temporary total fulfillment; also the precarious are sometimes doomed to accelerate and assets reality, sometimes to lead to disintegration and extinction.

All those presented in this section were meant to outline an image of the ontological structure that Noica assigned to the *void of being* (to the *nothing*, the *non-being*). Otherwise, this image of nothing configured by Romanian philosopher has the highest ontological consistency of all those that can be identified in his philosophy. Because, as I have already stated, there are a kind of "anthropological" *nothing* (*secondary non-being*), whose species are exhibited in *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*. In the case of human, where the being is the inner most active than elsewhere, since he has spirit, so extra responsiveness ontological, the precariousness of being manifested in the form of "spiritual maladies", that give or refuse ontological achievement.

¹² Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 206.

3.2. The Secondary Non-being and the Spiritual Maladies

The IDG ontological model accepts precariousnesses by the absence or refusal of one of the terms of being. These, on the one hand play a positive role as they get the world out of chaos, and, on the other, play a negative role for they lack the strength of elevating it unto becoming. They offer the first and the most extended ontological level, embodying stunted becoming, a level where the biggest part of the uncreated material world as well as the vastness of the unfulfilled human world dwell, both individually and socially¹³. "The world can be full of this secondary non-being. And if in the world of lifeless matter it is not striking, since here secondary non-being is the rule and being the exception, in exchange in the world of life and man (...) non-being and non-fulfillment are, in a way, a truly cosmic failure. This means only that the conversion has not occurred"¹⁴.

Another secondary non-being is pure and simple contingency which gets stuck in statistic and also the so-called *ontological morbidity* that exudes the exclusiveness of a single ontological term. Ontological morbidities can be represented either only by void individual (which is an ontological futility, and with man a spiritual one, too), or by void determinations (that bring ontological disorder into the real), or by the general void (which, for all the prestige of its possibility by itself alone is not capable of expressing being). All this is called morbidity because "in fact, the world *is not*, in the absence of exclusiveness of an ontological term"¹⁵. It shuts down access to being, while the precariousness already mentioned are not morbid since they couple two terms and can open up to a third.

As we stated at the beginning of this section, in *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*, where Noica lies its typology of maladies "in the edge of a work about being", it is argued that there is no void, but really just a "sense of emptiness" that manifests as four types of nothingness corresponding to the spiritual maladies: the nothingness of disintegration (in *catholitis* malady), the nothingness of suspension (in *todetitis* malady), the nothingness of culture (in *atodetitis* malady), the nothingness of extinction (in *acatholitis* malady). In the following we present these four types of nothingness.

1. *The nothingness of disintegration* is characteristic of the second form of *catholitis*, a malady of the one who is aware that he lacks the general sense that could fulfill him. To illustrate this type of nothingness, Noica refers to existentialism, considering that it has an inadequate understanding of "nothingness" (the anguish represents the best example for this type of

¹³ Cf. Laura Pamfil, loc. cit., pp. 61-62.

¹⁴ C. Noica, *Sentimentul românesc al ființei* (*The Romanian Feeling of Being*), ed. cit., p. 92.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

misunderstanding of nothingness). There are thinkers, like Søren Kierkegaard, who get stuck in the individual and in determinations, not able to find a way of access to the general (in this case, God) of whom they are, nonetheless, aware. With French existentialism, through Sartre, things are even clearer, since existence determinations go explicitly before those of essence. “The movement, through determinations, from general, so harmonious with Plato, becomes tortuous here, since the individual eventually gets buried in determinations instead of opening up through them; the very meeting with the general, if it happens, «turns into a tremor», as the Danish philosopher puts it, not a coming to order”¹⁶.

What existentialism fails to understand is the very fact that “nothingness is not annoying in a certain field of reality”¹⁷, as in various fields of research, chemistry, biology, etc, it has been proved that a void, an empty space can very well coexist with solids. What existentialism ignores is that it stumbled upon a certain naught, not an absolute nothingness. The void of being with its blocks can give sentiment of nothingness, and this is an unreality subtler than the void. “Consequently, there is no void but there can be nothingness (i.e. the sentiment of emptiness) when conversion to a general sense that gives consistency to determinations is absent; [...] in the middle of an apparent solid it can prompt you to say: «There is nothing here, in fact.»”¹⁸.

2. *The nothingness of suspension* appears within *todetitis* malady, which represents the absence of the individual and the excess of the general. It is a malady of perfection that characterizes, among others, the theoretical disposition of man, confiscated by a general sense that prevents access to the individual. Noica says that this is the case of the great general entities and of their logical reflections. This nothingness of the suspension of things in the sensible world is more subtle than the rupture, and it is not by accident that it is a feature specific for Parmenides’ being, “perfection stricken” and lacking in individual. It is the same with absolute space and time, the same with the principle of identity in logic¹⁹.

3. *The nothingness of culture* is generated by *atodetitis*, a malady of lucid refusal of the individual. It remains to be seen whether this type of naught is not the same with suspension naught for as that culture can lead, as Romanian philosopher puts it, to “a musical sense of existence” and a suspension above all individual realities²⁰. The nothingness of culture is one of the *daemonia* of determinations with no anchor in the individual, which leads to a sentiment of loss when faced with the multitude of information

¹⁶ C. Noica, *The Romanian Spirit in the Balance of Time. Six Maladies of Contemporary Spirit*, ed. cit., p. 47.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 50.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 108.

we have to acquire. Noica remarks that “the more we explore and learn, the more our ignorance grows instead of diminishing”²¹. So far nothing negative, yet the evil (and here the term has no negative connotation) arises only when we note that the accumulation of knowledge, be it for nothing, has not been accompanied by one of meanings. This explains why there are big cultural trends, general orientations, knowledge techniques that, no matter how refined, say nothing at all or make room for this saying of nothing²².

4. *The nothingness of extinction* characterizes contingent reality to the limit. It is generated by *acatholitis*, a malady of civilization that misses the ontological balance offered by the general sense. This is the case when the individuals that demand to be fixed by certain free determinations end up in the instability of particular cases that proliferate *ad infinitum*, trying to give a quantitative answer to the fundamental absence of sense. “Where is not even a trace of a general sense, everything succumbs to the bad infinity of particular cases.”²³ Instead of doing justice to the humble real – a lifelong obsession with Constantin Noica – the result is a true sentiment of nothingness; this is how extinction naught emerges at the very core of the real, like a vast nothingness or a crude experience of nothing. But even when we do not attain the feeling of nothingness, at play is a universal contingency that can no longer be the sign of the positive, but at best of the “positivism” so detested by Noica. The negative sense of the contingent springs from the fact that it concentrates certain determinations on an individual situation, closing access to the being while the possible gives itself new determinations opening up to being. Thus the contingency of a situation becomes the extinction of its very possibility²⁴.

4. Conclusions

First, we try to synthesize those exposed before about the iconography of nothingness in Noica's philosophy. As could see, Romanian thinker uses five words when addressing the problem of nothingness: *void (overvoid)*, *nothingness*, *non-being*, *vacuum*, *nothing*. Beyond this terminological inconsistency, one can identify three major meanings of nothing: a) non-being as a void of being inscribed in things; b) the nothing as secondary non-being in the guise of reject being, of ontological morbidity and contingency; c) the nothing as a sense of emptiness: disintegration, suspension, culture, and extinction.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

²² Cf. Laura Pamfil, loc. cit., p. 64.

²³ C. Noica, *The Romanian Spirit in the Balance of Time. Six Maladies of Contemporary Spirit*, ed. cit., p. 18.

²⁴ Cf. Laura Pamfil, loc. cit., p. 64.

To perform a critical analysis, we identify those ontological assumptions which were assumed and operationalized by Noica. First of all, is at stake the assumption of *ontological difference between being and things* (objects, world, reality, human being). Based on this assumption, Noica takes another fundamental idea for his ontology: *the being is not a plenitude in things, but is a void*. Along with this assumption, Romanian philosopher takes a further three: *the being is not a stable and immutable instance* (it pre-eminently presupposes motion, dynamism, process); *the being is not an eternal presence* (residing in a dimension parallel to the world of things and animals, but a presence which is embedded in the latter, a presence, however, which initially becomes manifest as absence); *the being is not simple, it has a structure*. Another important assumption assumed is the idea of *possibility of a ontological fulfillment (enrichment)*, which implies checking the ontological model – the emergence of the three fundamental terms in the structure of being: the Individual, the General and the Determinations (“the IDG ontological model”).

Along with this fundamental assumptions, should briefly mention a few more important ideas of Noica’s ontology: 1) *the being is distributed everywhere, in any thing*, in the sense that *things are open to being* (but the opening to being is not done without a closure); 2) *the closure that opens is the original situation* involving: tension, distention, field; 3) *the being of things is a limitation, but one that does not limit*.

No doubt, Constantin Noica was very well informed (with full lucidity) on requirements and inevitable challenges of metaphysics. But, despite a certain metaphysical disposition (that *Romanian feeling of being*), we consider that his ontological project contains several metaphysical delicts (which can be defined as an *metaphysical evasion* – deviation from the requirements of metaphysics²⁵). Through careful analysis, can be seen that the Romanian philosopher not insisted enough on these requirements, thus failing to honor them. Therefore, the foundation of his ontological edifice seems to be arranged (and even improvised) just to make possible the edifice itself, one that turns out to have, in addition, a great ambition for originality²⁶. Thus neglecting the foundation, the essential requirements of metaphysics.

By placing metaphysics under a *foreign* imperative, other than that required by the meaning of being (“what is being?”), Noica not only

²⁵ As already mentioned, for our critical analysis we appeal to Martin Heidegger, whose metaphysical platform and route we use foothold to explore the problem of nothingness in Noica’s ontology.

²⁶ In all the details of ontology developed by Noica is clear thinker’s ongoing effort to delineate all other ontological construction of the history of philosophy. Risking therefore to sacrifice the profoundness of thought for originality. There are even a passion for originality, pathos which often makes Noica to force some distinctions, to innovate somewhat abusive many linguistic constructions without a solid semantic consistency.

circumvent but somehow even overturn the essential task of metaphysics: to be, first and ultimately, *science of being*. And not *science of constructive ability of being*. Noica seems was not especially interested in the "what is being?", but rather "what can be done with the being?" or "at what is good the being?". Otherwise, it can be relatively easy to observe that the *Treatise of Ontology*, written in the late period of the life of the philosopher, rather has been developed to provide a foundation and an ontological legitimacy of those ideas about anthropology, axiology and culture, ideas assumed and developed in the previous period to the *Treaty*, starting with youth. By committing this evasion of the essential requirement of metaphysics (exclusive care for the meaning of being), Noica also commits other two metaphysical delicts which eludes those landmarks that guides strongly metaphysics on the road towards itself.

It is, first, *the maintenance of ontological difference between being and things* (using the services of becoming unto being), to provide a space of "game" for things, especially for human being. With the main stake ontological rehabilitation of precarious world of things (by uplifting Individuals with excellence of General), Noica not give up ontological difference even when, in the latter part of the *Treaty of Ontology*, reflects on being itself. Although this meditation would be supposed to be the occasion of a radical (re)orientation on being. Or at least it would have been the occasion a reassessment of ontological difference as such.

The second metaphysical delict, as "grave" as very essential evasion, is that Noica *does not recognize metaphysical vocation of the nothing*. Moreover, Romanian philosopher commits a premeditated denigration of metaphysical dignity of nothing, precisely because the nothing would devastate radically the entire ontological construction planned by Noica. He claims that *the nothing* (as *non-being*) does not have the consistency of an entity which radically delimiting the being (or consistency of an entity which is identical to being). Even when states that in things there is a void of being, however this does not lead to the abolition of the things. On the contrary, the total absence of being in things, *non-being* inscribed in things makes them to be called towards being, to be open to being. Make them *become unto being*, in order to achieve ontological consistency and fulfillment. In this way, the non-being inscribed in things is actually a "shaping nothingness". This nothingness shapes the thing with a view to its own annulment, therefore, the thing is shaped at the same pace that nothingness is ontologically "filled".

Although the nothing (as void of being in things) is the spark that ignites the engine that provides the whole dynamic of ontological system, however it does not have the same metaphysical dignity as the being. Noica did not

argue how is it possible that the *void of being* in things (namely *non-being*) to be the source (cause) of proces of an ontological enrichment? Why has non-being a deficit of being? Moreover, the Romanian philosopher asserts that is no need to look for an explanation of these questions, because, for him, becoming unto being is a certainty beyond doubt. In other words, is an metaphysical option that cannot be debated or amended. But we say that, in fact, is an metaphysical evasion²⁷.

²⁷ In her study on condition of nothingness in the Noica's philosophy, Laura Pamfil make also some critical remarks: "We end here the brief excursion into man's constitutive maladies and possible nullifications, to mention, though, that this does not represent a negative sign either, being «an ontological stimulus», as Noica put it. Sickness in a «bad» sense is only the consciousness of the fleeting, of the perishable and of the futility of any fact, and Noica admits it noncommittally without stressing the fact. «In exchange, the maladies of being, in other words of the spiritual being, have or can have something of a human positive in their deregulation. Man's disorder is his source of creation». Unfortunately, at the height of metaphysical optimism, Noica rapidly expedites the question of the nothingness and of real sickness in human being" (Laura Pamfil, loc. cit., p. 65).