

# On 'nicht...sondern...' (contrastive 'not...but...') \*

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This article presents an analysis of German *nicht...sondern...* (contrastive *not...but...*) which departs from the commonly held view that this construction should be explained by appeal to its alleged corrective function. It will be demonstrated that in *nicht A sondern B* (*not A but B*), *A* and *B* just behave like stand-alone unmarked answers to a common question *Q*, and that this property of *sondern* is presuppositional in character. It is shown that from this general observation many interesting properties of *nicht...sondern...* follow, among them distributional differences between German '*sondern*' and German '*aber*' (contrastive *but*, concessive but), intonational requirements and exhaustivity effects. *sondern*'s presupposition is furthermore argued to be the result of the conventionalization of conversational implicatures.

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## 1 Introduction

As is well known, English *but*, when preceded by *not*, sometimes translates into German *aber* and other times into German *sondern*, with a specific difference in meaning:

- (1) a. Mary is not stupid, but she is ugly.  
b. Maria ist nicht dumm, aber sie ist hässlich.  
(Mary is not stupid, but (nevertheless) she is ugly.)

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- c. Maria ist nicht dumm, sondern hässlich.  
(Mary is not stupid, but (instead)ugly.)

(Pusch 1976)

The reading in (1b), which can be forced in English by adding for instance *nevertheless*, is sometimes referred to as the *concessive* reading of *but*; the reading in (1c), which can be enforced in English by adding *instead*, is sometimes referred to as the *contrastive* reading. The semantics and pragmatics of the latter is the topic of this paper.

In many cases only one of the two translations of *but* is possible:

- (2) a. Lisa cannot yet walk, *but* she can only crawl.  
(Lisa kann noch nicht laufen, *sondern* (\**aber*) erst krabbeln.)
- b. Lisa cannot yet walk, *but* she can already crawl.  
(Lisa kann noch nicht laufen, *aber* (\**sondern*) schon krabbeln.)

(Pusch 1976)

The respective ungrammatical versions of (2a-b) demonstrate specific distributional restrictions that underlie the use of *aber*, *sondern* respectively. Such restrictions have been recognized for a long time in the literature (see Abraham 1975, Pusch 1976, Asbach-Schnitker 1979) but an explanation always seemed hard to come by.

Another commonly recognized property of *sondern* is the specific requirements on the intonation of the phrases conjoined by *nicht...sondern...*:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Here and in the following, CAPITAL LETTERS indicate focal stress, whereas the underlines mark the constituent which presumably bears the focus.

- (2) c. Lisa kann noch nicht LAUFen, sondern erst KRAbbeln.  
 (Lisa can yet not walk, but just crawl.)

In (2c), the given intonation and focal structure is the only possible one. It is an example of the ability of *nicht...sondern...* to rigidly constrain the information structure of its arguments. Further examples are presented below.

A third important observation that can be made for *nicht...sondern...* concerns exhaustive interpretation: exhaustive interpretation is known to be an optional (cancellable) process in answers to questions, and as an obligatory effect in, among others, English cleft-constructions and in Hungarian focus-movement:

- (3) a. Who walks?  
 b. John walks = only John walks =  $\forall x [\text{walk } x \leftrightarrow x = j]$   
 c. A girl walks = only a girl walks =  $\exists x [\text{girl } x \wedge \forall y [\text{walk } y \leftrightarrow y = x]]$

(Groenendijk & Stokhof 1990)

- (4) A padlón Péter aludt.  
 On (the) floor, Peter slept.  
 'It was Peter who slept on the floor.'

(Szabolcsi 1981a)

- (5) It was his coat that John lost = John only lost his coat.  
 (Levinson 1983)

Just this kind of strengthened interpretation can also be observed in the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...*:

- (6) Nicht John, sondern ein Mädchen geht spazieren.  
 (Not John but a girl goes walk.)  
 ‘Not John, but a girl walks.’  
 John walks = only John walks =  $\forall x [x \text{ walks} \leftrightarrow x = j]$ .  
 A girl walks = only a girl walks =  $\exists x [\text{girl } x \wedge \forall y [y \text{ walks} \leftrightarrow y = x]]$ .

In (6), *John* and *ein Mädchen (a girl)* have a strong preference to be interpreted exhaustively.

The main claim put forward in this paper is that the mentioned three properties of *nicht...sondern...*: distributional restrictions, intonation, exhaustive interpretation, follow from one and the same presupposition of *sondern*, namely that in *nicht A sondern B*, *A* and *B* are unmarked answers to a common question *Q*.

### 1.1 'Sondern' and corrective function

*Nicht...sondern...* has been assumed to be linked to the specific pragmatic function of correction in the literature throughout (Abraham 1975, Pusch 1976, Lang 1984, 1991- see Asbach-Schnitker 1979 for an early overview). In particular, the specific intonation pattern that comes with *nicht...sondern...* has been motivated in this context along the following lines: The focused material following the negative element (*LAUfen* in the above example (2c)) has been assumed to be the element to be corrected; the focused material following *sondern* (*KRAbbeln*) has been assumed to be the particular correction (see for instance Lang 1984). A formal model that tries to capture these intuitions has been presented in Jacobs (1982, 1991), where a special *replacive negation operator* is assumed, which is basically analyzed as a focus-sensitive particle like *only* and *also*. Jacobs' replacive negation operator however only explains the focal stress in the *left* conjunct of *sondern*. It does not predict anything about the intonation in the right conjunct.

But the intuition that *nicht...sondern...* has to be explained with reference to some concept of correction - although commonly agreed upon in the literature - might actually be quite misleading. Take the following examples:

- (7) Die aktive Beamtenbestechung sollte nicht mehr als bloßes Vergehen gelten, sondern wie die passive als ein mit Zuchthaus bedrohtes Verbrechen.  
 ‘The active bribing of an official should not be considered anymore as a simple offense, but - like the passive case - as a crime threatened with imprisonment.’
- (8) Birgit bedauert, dass Mathias sie nicht ins Kino, sondern in ein klassisches Konzert eingeladen hat.  
 ‘Birgit regrets that Mathias invited her not to the cinema, rather to a classical concert.’

Neither of these examples seems to be especially dedicated to be used for correction. Nevertheless, *nicht...sondern...* is quite perfect here and loses nothing of its characteristic properties. Furthermore, *aber*, the antagonist of *sondern*, is probably not completely excluded from corrective use:

- (9) A: Daddy can do everything!  
 B: Papa kann zwar *nicht* alles, *aber* doch eine ganze Menge.  
 ‘Daddy cannot do everything, but he can though do quite a lot of things.’

For my experience, examples like these do not instantly convince every reader: Constructions like *nicht...sondern...* are so closely linked to the idea of correction that there is the temptation to adjust the meaning of the word 'correction' to whatever properties the so-called 'corrective' constructions might turn out to have, instead of abandoning the traditional prejudice. But I am convinced that no good can come out of such terminological confusion. I rather suggest to reserve the term 'correction' for a speech act where something is



do. There is of course the suggestion in (11) that Bertie is in need of a fast car. But *this* suggestion is well motivated by the literal meaning of the sentence alone: if Bertie hadn't been in such a need of a fast car, she probably wouldn't regret not having one.

Let's summarize: *nicht...sondern...* displays three characteristic properties: distributional restrictions, constraints on intonation, and exhaustivity effects. These, so will be argued below, derive from a certain presupposition of '*sondern*': that in *nicht A sondern B*, *A* and *B* are unmarked answers to a common question *Q*. The pragmatic function of correction will not only turn out to be superfluous, but it's relevance for the understanding of *nicht...sondern...* is also put into question by counterexamples where *sondern* is not used for correction. A fourth characteristic of *nicht A sondern B*, namely that *A* is suggested in the context, is to be distinguished from any corrective function of *nicht...sondern...*, and is furthermore likely to be not part of its lexical semantics.

## 1.2 Outlook

The rest of the paper will proceed with a discussion of the truth-conditional core of *nicht...sondern...*. This discussion will basically amount to the question of whether the *nicht* in *nicht...sondern...* is plain truth-conditional negation or instead some special operator which implements metalinguistic negation, replacive negation, or denial. Arguments will be presented that *nicht* in *nicht...sondern...* is indeed plain truth-functional negation. Next, the presupposition which is claimed to lie at the heart of *nicht...sondern...* is described in a rather abstract fashion. As already said, this presupposition roughly says that in *nicht A sondern B*, *A* and *B* are presupposed to be *unmarked answers to some question Q*. In the then following section, it will be demonstrated that the main empirical properties of *nicht...sondern...* can be

derived from this presupposition. A somewhat speculative look onto the diachronic origins of *nicht...sondern...* concludes this paper.

## 2 Truth Conditions

This section discusses the truth-conditions of *nicht...sondern...* as opposed to its presupposition which is the topic of the two subsequent sections. I basically want to defend in this section the claim that the truth-conditional aspect of the meaning of *nicht...sondern...* are simply as follows:

$$(12) \quad [[\text{nicht } A \text{ sondern } B]] = \neg [[A]] \wedge [[B]]$$

Any other aspect of the encoded meaning of *nicht...sondern...* I assume to be presuppositional. (12) follows traditional logical analysis: *nicht* is translated into ordinary truth-functional negation, *sondern* is translated into ordinary logical conjunction. (12) is furthermore the natural result of a mechanical interpretation of the syntactic structure of '*nicht A sondern B*' if one makes the natural assumption that *nicht* is syntactically embedded under *sondern* in the following sense:<sup>2</sup>

$$(13) \quad [[\dots \text{nicht } \dots ] [\text{sondern } \dots]] \dots$$

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<sup>2</sup> That *nicht* does not necessarily c-command the whole rest of the left conjunct is illustrated in (i):

- (i) Aber man fragt MICH ja nicht, sondern lieber Dan AYKroyd.  
 (But one asks ME not, but rather Dan AYKroyd.)  
 'But one doesn't ask me, rather more Dan Aykroyd.'

## 2.1 Metalinguistic negation

The major objection to (12) stems from the various cases of so-called *metalinguistic negation* which can often be observed in *nicht...sondern...:*

- (14) a. Der nächste Irak-Krieg ist *nicht* wahrscheinlich, *sondern* sicher.  
(The next Iraq War is *not* probable *but* certain.)
- b. Das ist *nicht* eiNE AdverbiaLE, *sondern* EIN AdverbiIAL.  
(This is *not* a-FEM adverbial-FEM,  
*but* a-NEUT adverbial-NEUT.)  
(Jacobs 1991)

- (15) a. The next Iraq War is not probable.
- b. This is not an adverbial.

(14a) doesn't imply (15a), nor does (14b) imply (15b). It has been argued that in (14a), the scalar implicature that would be triggered by the stand-alone *the next Iraq War is probable* is negated by *nicht (not)*, and that in (15a) the specific morphological form of the lexeme *adverbial* has become the target of negation. For a thorough discussion of the whole empirical range of metalinguistic negation, including the rejection of stylistic register, the reader is referred to *the* canonical text on metalinguistic negation, which happens to be Horn 2001, ch. 6.

How is it that non-truth-functional stuff - implicatures, morphology, style and the like - can become the target of negation? Both Horn (2001) and van der Sandt (1991) believe that there is always an utterance token preceding the metalinguistic negation which resembles the actually negated phrase. It is the pragmatic properties of this antecedent which are negated: the actually negated phrase merely functions as an anaphora which refers back to the original token. Jacobs (1991), on the contrary, ascribes the presuppositions, implicatures, morpho-phonological properties and stylistic register which are targeted by

*replacive negation* to the very token under the negative element itself, without being able to explain how these come into existence at the point of semantic interpretation where the negation operator is applied (see Jacobs 1991 for a self-criticism along these lines). Van der Sandt makes a concrete proposal as to how metalinguistic negation works which amounts to the claim that the pragmatic properties of utterances are kept in a Discourse Representation in propositional format and can then later be negated by a special *denial operator*. Horn insists that metalinguistic negation is "second-pass" and not part of the literal meaning of a sentence (which remains a contradiction in cases like (14a-b) according to Horn).

The mentioned approaches agree basically on two convictions concerning the metalinguistic negation cases: (i) they require an antecedent in discourse, and (ii) morphological negation, re-analyzed as denial or correction, plays a crucial role. Both convictions have however been drawn into question, by (among others) Atlas (1980), Kempson (1986), McCawley (1991), Carston (1996), Chapman (1996), Geurts (1998), Burton-Roberts (1999), Seuren (2000).

One early author who questions the first conviction is Atlas (1980) who presents discourses containing metalinguistic negation where no suitable antecedent is present. A similar example which involves the use of '*sondern*' is the following headline of a newspaper article:<sup>3</sup>

- (16) *Kein Haushalt, sondern ein Sieb - Die Löcher in Eichels Finanzhaushalt werden immer größer.*  
 'Not a budget, *but* a sieve - The holes in Eichel's financial budget are ever increasing.'

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<sup>3</sup> Die Tageszeitung, 11 November 2002.

The containing discourse, how ever far one supposes it to extend into the past, is somewhat unlikely to contain the utterance *Eichel's financial budget is a budget*. What is instead certainly the case is that this statement is suggested to be true in the context, a property of *nicht...sondern...* which has already been discussed above. But the existence of an empirical utterance act and the suggested truth of the uttered information are two different things that should not be confused. And the metalinguistic analysis relies on the existence of the former, not the latter.

A particular striking example to this point has recently been put forward by Bart Geurts:

- (17) Until the end of the 18th century, Englishmen didn't [dɑ : ns] but [dæns].  
(Geurts 1998)

If this sentence was the correction of a previous utterance in discourse, that antecedent utterance had to be something like:

- (17') Until the end of the 18th century, Englishmen [dɑ : ns].

Again, one can have serious doubts that (17) actually requires or at least suggests (17') as an antecedent in discourse. But there is more to this example: If (17') *was* actually uttered in discourse, this very antecedent had already to be interpreted metalinguistically: The temporal modifier *until the end of the 18th century* obviously does not restrict the time span were Englishman danced, rather the timespan where Englishmen used the accentuation [dæns] in order to refer to dancing. This indicates that the metalinguistic aspect of the expressed proposition is quite independent from both negation and corrective use.

That linguistic properties other than ordinary meaning can become the target of semantic operators other than negation has been observed by Horn himself ("*was the conductor Bernst[ʔ] or Bernst[á]n*" - Horn 2001). Robyn Carston (1996) has also pointed to the fact that certain examples of metalinguistic negation are closely related to *echoic use* in the sense of Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1995), and that metalinguistic readings can be found quite independent from negation and/or correction. Carston however shares with Horn and van der Sandt the conviction that metalinguistic uses are anaphoric in character - a stance that must be drawn into question, as the just presented examples show.

## 2.2 Quotation

Bart Geurts' example hints to a quite different view on metalinguistic negation that becomes increasingly popular, namely that metalinguistic negation involves hidden quotation marks (see Chapman 1996, Carston 1996, Geurts 1998, Burton-Roberts 1999, Recanati 2000, Potts 2004, Geurts (to appear)). It seems that such hidden quotation marks would resemble those overt ones found in written examples of *mixed quotation* like the following ones:

- (18) a. Alice said "Life is difficult to understand". (*direct quotation*)  
 b. Alice said that life is difficult to understand. (*indirect quotation*)  
 c. Alice said that life "is difficult to understand". (*mixed quotation*)

(Cappelen & Lepore 1997)

In mixed quotation, quoted and unquoted material coexist in one and the same syntactic structure. According Cappelen and Lepore, mixed quotation is like

direct quotation able to bring certain utterance properties under the scope of a semantic operator, namely the verb *say*. For instance:

(19) Alice sagte, dies sei "eine Adverbiale".  
 (Alice said that this be "an-FEM adverbial-FEM".)  
 'Alice said that this is "an adverbial".'

(20) a. Alice said that the "next Iraq War" is probable.

b. Alice said that the next Iraq War "is probable".

(19) has a reading where Alice has wrongly used a feminine form of *adverbial*. In (20b), but not in (20a), Alice is ascribed an utterance which can trigger whatever conversational implicature is related to the choice of the term '*probable*', as opposed to '*certain*'.<sup>4</sup>

There is not yet much agreement as to how quotation marks and their impact on truth conditions and/or utterance meaning is properly analyzed. But one approach, namely that of Bart Geurts (to appear), allows for a particular economic theory of metalinguistic negation: According to his view, metalinguistic negation just contains hidden quotation marks. These quotation marks in turn trigger a presupposition to the effect that a particular utterance situation, including a speaker, exists where the quoted material has been uttered, and the meaning that the quoted material had in the presupposed utterance situation is taken as the semantic value that the quoted part contributes to the very sentence in which it appears. Under such kind of analysis, the *nicht* in *nicht...sondern...* is just to be analyzed as plain truth-functional negation.<sup>5,6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For me, (20b) but not (20a) is able to trigger a scalar implicature in a properly imagined utterance context, but others I asked had divergent intuitions here.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed account the reader is referred to the cited text. Opposing views concerning the role of quotation in metalinguistic negation can be found in Recanati (2000)

### 3 The Presupposition

#### 3.1 Introduction

Now that the truth-conditions of *nicht...sondern...* have been argued to be plain negation and conjunction, the next two sections will look at the very presupposition that, so the claim makes *nicht...sondern* special. As was said before, this presupposition is informally described as follows:

- (21) In *nicht A sondern B*, the meanings of A and B are constrained to be *unmarked answers to some question Q*.

I consider A and B in this definition to be sentence-like objects and, not, say, DPs, PPs or VPs, in line with (12), and assume syntactic movement, ellipsis, deletion, type-shifting or the like in any occurrence of *nicht...sondern...* where the conjuncts do not surface as full clauses.<sup>7</sup>

Almost everything of (21) of course depends on what an *unmarked answer to a question* is supposed to be. The following informal definition captures what I take to be the essential properties of an unmarked answer:

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and Potts (2004), the further relying on pragmatic intrusion, the latter on semantically ambiguous negation for their resp. accounts of metalinguistic negation.

<sup>6</sup> Notice that Geurts' analysis doesn't predict that there is an antecedent utterance in discourse (which was a conviction ascribed to the classical analysis and claimed to be false above), since the presupposed utterance situation need not be actual - it might be accommodated, say in the scope of a negation or propositional attitude operator.

<sup>7</sup> This assumption is in accord with the analysis of the German negation (ordinary and "replacive") as an adverbial modifier in Jacobs 1982.

- (22) An *unmarked answer to a question*...
- i. intuitively resolves the question,
  - ii. licenses the exhaustive interpretation typically observed in answers,
  - iii. triggers the obligatory intonation that is found in answers to questions,
  - iv. is incompatible in the specific context with any other unmarked answer to the same question.

(22i) expresses that we are interested in direct and complete answers to a question. The answer should not only be "pragmatically" an unmarked answer, but also "logically". This point will be made more precise below. (22ii) and (22iii) express that we count the intonation and exhaustivity effects to be essential parts of the semantic object we are after. (22iv) is to be understood in relation to the notion of a *complete pragmatic answer* that has been put forward in Groenendijk and Stokhof (1990): Groenendijk and Stokhof (1990) assume that an interrogative describes a partition of the Common Ground (CG) which is roughly the set of worlds compatible with contextual knowledge. In particular, the interrogative in (23a) describes the partition of the Common Ground which is given by (23b):

- (23) a. who walks?
- b.  $\{ \{w \mid \text{exactly } X \text{ walk in } w, w \in \text{CG} \} \mid X \text{ a (possibly empty) set of individuals} \} \setminus \{\emptyset\}$

The elements of (23b) are called the *complete pragmatic answers* to the interrogative depicted in (23a). Groenendijk Stokhof maintain that these complete pragmatic answers are just the unmarked way to answer the question expressed by (23a). Since (23b) is a partition of the CG, as the reader is invited to check, its elements - the complete pragmatic answers of (23b) - are pairwise incompatible in the context. (22iv) thus just expresses a typical property of an

unmarked answer to a question, at least to the extent that Groenendijk and Stokhof's observation is correct that the unmarked answer to a question is a complete pragmatic answer.

### 3.2 A more formal characterization

The following definitions are intended to spell out (22) in a more formal fashion:

(24) **Axiomatically introduced entities:**

$W$  is the set of possible worlds,

$\{T, F\}$  the set of truth values,

$Quest$  is the set of question meanings ("questions" for short),

$Ans$  be the set of meanings of unmarked answers to questions ("answers" for short),

$\downarrow : Ans \rightarrow W^*$  maps an answer to the proposition it expresses / its truth-conditions.<sup>8</sup>

(25) **Unmarked answers to a question:**

$answers : Ans \rightarrow Quest \rightarrow \{T, F\}$  implements the notion of an unmarked answer to a question in the sense of (22).

Let  $R$  (for gRammar) be a relation between sentence tokens and logical forms, and  $[[.]]$  be an interpretation function over logical forms such that  $R$  and  $[[.]]$  together express the properties of Standard German. Let furthermore  $CG$  be the Common Ground - the proposition which expresses contextual knowledge.

$answers$  has the following properties:

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<sup>8</sup> In the following,  $\downarrow$  binds by convention stronger than other operators or functional application.

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- (i) (*resolving the question*) Assume that  $answers([[A^L]], [[Q^L]])$  holds and that there are tokens  $A^S$  and  $Q^S$  such that  $A^S R A^L$  and  $Q^S R Q^L$  hold. In this case, someone who utters  $A^S$  is by those speakers of German who believe that  $[[A^L]]$  is true, considered as directly and completely resolving the question posed by someone who previously uttered  $Q^S$ .
- (ii) (*exhaustive interpretation*) (i) still holds in those cases where  $A^S$  requires an exhaustive interpretation which is in a characteristic way stronger than the interpretation  $A^S$  receives in other circumstances.
- (iii) (*intonation*) In the situation depicted in (i), speakers also think that  $A^S$  has an intonation contour which is maximally natural for that situation.
- (iv) (*answers are disjoint in the context*) Assume that  $answers(a,q)$  and  $answers(b,q)$  holds for some  $a,b,q$ : Then either  $\downarrow a = \downarrow b$  or  $\downarrow a \cap \downarrow b \cap CG = \emptyset$  holds.

To summarize, the concept of an answer to a question is characterized for the present purposes in terms of two axiomatically given sets  $Ans$  and  $Quest$ , an operator  $\downarrow$  on the members of  $Ans$ , and a binary predicate  $answers$  relating members of  $Ans$  and members of  $Quest$ .  $answers(A,Q)$  is intended to just express that  $A$  is an unmarked answer to  $Q$ .

Some readers will already have noticed that (25) allows us to derive the concept of the *answer-set* of a question, understood as the following set of propositions:  $\{ \downarrow A \mid answers(A,Q) \}$ , where  $Q$  is a question meaning, just gives us the already mentioned logical notion of a question, as proposed and investigated by Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984) and subsequent work, which was illustrated above in (23).

The reader will also have noticed that (25) still doesn't provide any comprehensive definition or theory of an unmarked answer to a question but instead just lists some properties which are felt to be essential. This is an important aspect of the thesis being put forward in this paper: The claim is *not*

that the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* conform to some sufficiently well understood theoretical entity called "unmarked answer to a question". The claim is instead that the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* resemble in certain relevant aspects just those empirically found sentences which are well-described as stand-alone "unmarked answer to a question". The claim is thus both weaker and stronger than one that would rely on a concrete formal construction of the concept of an answer to a question: it says that you find - with respect to the aspects singled out by (25i-iv) - in the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* just what you find in stand-alone unmarked answers to a question, whatever that turns out to be, and how well or not well understood it might currently be.

### 3.3 A meaning rule

It is now possible to restate (12) - the truth-conditions of *nicht...sondern...*, and (21) - its presupposition - in a more explicit fashion:<sup>9</sup>

(26) **meaning of *nicht...sondern...***

[[nicht A sondern B]] is defined iff  $[[A]], [[B]] \in Ans$  and for some  $Q, Q \in Quest$  such that *answers*([[A]],Q) and *answers*([[B]],Q) hold.

In this case:  $[[nicht A sondern B]](w) = \neg \downarrow [[A]](w) \wedge \downarrow [[B]](w)$ .

According to this meaning rule, [[nicht A sondern B]] is not itself a member of *Ans*, a statement that could well be questioned. However, since nothing depends on this, I will keep with this maybe slightly inaccurate description of the state of affairs.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Here and in the following I make the familiar assumption that a presupposition is a constraint over the domain of the function which makes up the semantic value of the very expression which triggers the expression.

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to notice in this context that *nicht...sondern...* as an immediate response to an interrogative often sounds a bit unmotivated: "*Who walked?*" "*Not a boy, but a girl.*"

A more serious objection against (26) amounts to saying that it is not compositional: As will turn out below, a compositional version requires further assumptions regarding *Quest*, *Ans*, and *answers*, and will be discussed below.

## 4 The Empirical Case

After the main hypothesis concerning the presupposition of *nicht...sondern...* has been presented in the previous section, this section will make the empirical case by showing that this presupposition predicts just the main empirical properties of *nicht...sondern...* which were presented in the introduction, namely: intonation requirements, exhaustive interpretation, and distributional restrictions.

### 4.1 Intonation

(26) in combination with (25iii) just says that the intonation in *nicht A sondern B* is always parallel to some stand-alone occurrences of A and B as *answers* to a common question Q. As an illustration, consider again (10), here repeated:

- (10) *Nicht um 3, sondern um 4 kommt ein Zug von Paddington.*  
 (*Not at 3 but at 4, comes a train from Paddington.*)  
 ‘A train from Paddington doesn't arrive at 3.00 but at 4.00.’

The corresponding question and the relevant answers are likely those in (27):

- (27) a. When does a train arrive from Paddington?  
 b. A train from Paddington arrives at THREE.  
 c. A train from Paddington arrives at FOUR.



The crucial point in these examples is that they follow if one assumes that the underlying question Q has just two possible answers, as in (31a):

- (31) a. Has Nora cleaned her room or has she brightened up her room?
- b. (as unmarked answer to a:) \*Nora hat ihr ZIMmer aufgeräumt. (=29b)
- c. (as unmarked answer to a:) \*Nora hat ihr ZIMmer verschönert. (=29c)
- d. (as unmarked answer to a:) Nora hat ihr Zimmer AUFgeräumt.
- e. (as unmarked answer to a:) Nora hat ihr Zimmer verSCHÖnert.

As the reader can easily check, the intonation in (30) is now correctly predicted. I want to propose that there is an additional requirement that the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* are the *only* answers to some question Q, which I take to be a pragmatic constraint on the accommodation of the presupposition expressed by (26):

- (32) **Constraint on Accommodation:**  
 { A | *answers*(A,Q) } must be minimal for the Q mentioned in (26).

Such a constraint can be motivated along the following line: By relevance, the question Q mentioned in the presupposition corresponds to a salient decision problem. Again by relevance, this decision problem is highly specific and thus more informative.

Alternatively, (26) could be modified to explicitly require that { A | *answers*(A,Q) } is minimal.

The following example illustrates a problem that is completely analogous to that in (28):



appropriate questions can be found which trigger the indicated intonation patterns:

- (37) a. Did Peter or Peter's cat eat the lasagna?  
 b. Did the main prize go to a Polish film, or to Prikljutschenija Buratino?  
 c. Was the Nobel Prize for Economics founded by Alfred Nobel, or first in 1968 by the Nobel Committee?

Current approaches to question-answer congruence like those in Rooth 1991, Krifka 1992, Schwarzschild 199, have some problems to correctly predict the intonation found in these examples. These examples are thus a nice illustration of the fact that the claim made in this first part of the paper: the conjuncts in *nicht...sondern...* resemble stand-alone answers to questions - trigger empirical predictions even in the absence of a comprehensive formal analysis of the involved phenomena, that is, the concept of a complete answer to a question.

#### 4.2 Exhaustive interpretation

As already stated in the introduction, exhaustive interpretation which is optional in questions to answers often occur obligatorily in *nicht...sondern....*, as in (6) - here restated:

- (6') *Nicht John, sondern ein Mädchen geht spazieren.*  
 'Not John but a girl walks.'  
 John = John and nobody else.  
 A girl = a girl and nobody else.

The availability of exhaustive interpretation immediately follows from (26)/(25ii) when taking into account the fact that the same kind of exhaustive interpretation can be observed in the stand-alone versions of *John walks, a girl*

walks. That some exhaustive interpretation is also *obligatory* in this case follows from (26)/(25iv): Without exhaustive interpretation of at least one of the two DPs, *John walks* and *a girl walks* would hardly be mutually exclusive. (26)/(25) generally predicts that some exhaustive interpretation obligatorily applies in all those instances of *nicht A sondern B* where A and B (in their non-exhaustive reading) are compatible with each other in the context, and where no other reinterpretation process is available which renders pairs of answers A and B mutually exclusive.

### 4.3 Distributional restrictions

As for the distributional restrictions of *nicht A sondern B*, consider again example (2) from the introduction - here repeated:

- (2) a. Lisa cannot yet walk, *but* she can only crawl.  
 Lisa kann noch nicht laufen, *sondern* (\**aber*) erst krabbeln.
- b. Lisa cannot yet walk, *but* she can already crawl.  
 Lisa kann noch nicht laufen, *aber* (\**sondern*) schon krabbeln.

In (2b), A corresponds to *Lisa can already walk*, whereas B corresponds to *Lisa can already crawl*. Assuming that children learn to walk only after having learned to crawl, A always implies B. The translation with *sondern* is then readily ruled out by (26)/(25iv), which require A and B to be incompatible in the context. In (2a) however, *Lisa can already walk*, *Lisa can only crawl* are readily incompatible in the context under the same assumption that children learn to walk after having learned to crawl.

Most examples for the distributional restrictions of *nicht...sondern...* can be reduced along the just presented line of argument to the exclusivity

requirement on A and B. There are however examples that seemingly contradict this simple requirement. Take for instance:

- (38) a. \* Dies ist *kein* Haus *sondern* ein Gebäude.  
 (This is *not-a* house *but* a building.)
- b. ? Dies ist *kein* Gebäude, *sondern* ein Haus.  
 (This is *not-a* building *but* a house.)

(examples and judgements by Abraham 1975)

(38a-b) clearly violate (26)/(25iv). My claim is that these examples become fully acceptable to the extent that they are interpreted as involving mixed quotation:

- (39) a. This is not a "house" but a "building"
- b. This is not a "building" but a "house"

Such quotation readings might resolve to, say, I didn't say that this was a "house" - I said that this was a "building", or one doesn't refer to this as a "house" - one would just say "building"- depending on the context. My thesis is then that it is such a quotation interpretation that makes these examples satisfy (26)/(25iv). Abraham, who presented (38) in the first place, has himself noticed that the judgments suggested by him are highly context-dependent. It furthermore turns out that such sentences are less unacceptable and in tendency uninterpretable when being embedded below, say, regret, again somehow in dependence of the utterance context:



scope relations of (41a) not available for (41b)? As the next subsection will demonstrate, this state of affairs mechanically derives from the meaning of *nicht...sondern...* as soon as the latter is formulated in a compositional fashion.

## 5 A Compositional Meaning Rule

The meaning rule of *nicht...sondern...* which has been used so far, namely (26), is in an obvious way non-compositional: the meaning is not decomposed into the meaning of *nicht* and *sondern*. In addition to any general preference for compositionality the reader may share or not, a compositional version of *nicht...sondern...* seems to be desirable because *nicht* is actually not the only possible partner of *sondern*, as the following examples show:

- (42) Auf diesen Lorbeeren sollte sich aber *niemand* ausruhen, *sondern* sich in Zukunft mit Hilfe von Kursen permanent weiterbilden.  
 ‘But *nobody* should rest on this laurels, *but* in future continue one's education with the help of courses.’
- (43) Unsere Zeit findet dabei *kaum* ihren Ausdruck in einer entwickelten Naturphilosophie, *sondern* wird sicher weitgehend durch die moderne Naturwissenschaft und Technik bestimmt.  
 ‘Our time *hardly* finds its expression in a developed philosophy of nature, *but* is certainly largely determined by modern science and technology.’
- (44) Wie Dante denn auch der dritte Reim *selten* oder *niemals* geniert, *sondern* auf eine oder andere Weise seinen Zweck ausführen und seine Gestalten umgrenzen hilft.  
 ‘As Dante is *seldom* or *never* ashamed by the third rhyme, *but (rather)* it helps him to do its duty in one or the other way and shape his figures.’

Such variability in the partner of *sondern* suggests that the negative element is not part of a compound lexeme *nicht...sondern...*, but instead compositionally contributes its meaning as usual.

A second argument for a compositional treatment is example (41b) above, since it will turn out now that a compositional meaning rule is able to explain why *unfortunately* must have wide scope in this example.

After all what has been said in section 2 above, in *nicht...sondern...*, *nicht* should simply express ordinary negation, whereas *sondern* carries the presupposition that makes *nicht...sondern...* special. The first step to such a compositional solution is to postulate a negation operator, *neg* in the following, which is defined on elements of *Ans*, and provides the meaning of *nicht*, as well as the negative meaning aspect of the negative elements in (42)-(44) above:

(45) **negating answers to questions**

(i)  $[[\text{nicht}]] = \text{neg}$

(ii)  $\downarrow \text{neg}(A) = W \setminus \downarrow A$ , for all  $A \in \text{Ans}$ .

(ii) just says that *neg* implements ordinary negation. Now, intuitively, in order to turn (26), here repeated

(26) **meaning of *nicht...sondern...***

$[[\text{nicht } A \text{ sondern } B]]$  is defined iff  $[[A]], [[B]] \in \text{Ans}$  and for some  $Q, Q \in \text{Quest}$  such that *answers*( $[[A]], Q$ ) and *answers*( $[[B]], Q$ ) hold.

In this case:  $[[\text{nicht } A \text{ sondern } B]](w) = \neg \downarrow [[A]](w) \wedge \downarrow [[B]](w)$ .

into a compositional version, *sondern* must somehow be able to determine from the meaning of some left conjunct *nicht A* whether or not *A* answers *Q*. Formally, this means that a predicate *answers\** with the following properties must be available:

(46) **negation and answerhood**

*answers\**(*neg*(*A*), *Q*) iff *answers*(*A*, *Q*), for all  $A \in \text{Ans}$  and  $Q \in \text{Quest}$ .

The meaning of *sondern* can then be specified as follows:

(47) **meaning of *sondern*...**

[[C sondern B]] is defined iff [[C]], [[B]]  $\in$  *Ans* and if for some Q,  $Q \in$  *Quest*, *answers\**([[C]], Q) and *answers*([[B]], Q) hold.

In this case: [[C sondern B]] =  $\downarrow$ [[C]]  $\cap$   $\downarrow$ [[B]].

As it turns out, (45)-(47) together suffice to explain that *sondern/but* forces *unfortunately* to take wide scope in example (41b), here repeated:

(41b)\* Unsere Wohnung ist leider *nicht* gross,  
 Our flat is unfortunately *not* big,  
*sondern* zum Glück gemütlich.  
*but* luckily comfortable.)

Assume for the sake of argument that *sondern/but* takes scope over *unfortunately*:

[[41b]] = [[C sondern B]],  
 where  
 C = our flat is unfortunately not big.  
 B = our flat is luckily comfortable.

Let Q be some suitable question.

Let A = neg(C)

(47) predicts the following presupposition:

$\text{answers}^*(C, Q) \wedge \text{answers}(B, Q)$   
 $\Rightarrow \text{answers}(A, Q) \wedge \text{answers}(B, Q)$  (by Def. A)  
 $\Rightarrow \downarrow A \cap \downarrow B \cap CG = \emptyset$  (by Def. answers - (25.iv))  
 $\Rightarrow W \setminus \downarrow C \cap \downarrow B \cap CG = \emptyset$  (by Def. A, and Def. neg - (45.i))  
 $\Rightarrow \downarrow B \cap CG \subseteq \downarrow C$  (set theory)

The last line now just says that the fact that our flat is luckily comfortable contextually entails that our flat is unfortunately not big, which seems to be an implausible if not impossible context restriction that isn't accommodated.

### 5.1 A remark on *answers*\*

Let's summarize: In order to formulate a compositional meaning rule for *nicht...sondern...*, two further properties of unmarked answers to question must be postulated: Firstly, it must be possible to negate answers (elements of *Ans*). Secondly, this negation must interact in a regular way with the answerhood relation expressed by *answers*, such that it is possible to determine the answerhood properties of some answer A from the value of  $\text{neg}(A)$ . Where could this latter regularity stem from? One idea that comes to mind amounts to the assumption that *neg* is its own inverse:

$$(48) \quad \text{neg}(\text{neg}(A))=A, \text{ for all } A \in \text{Ans}$$

*answers*\* is then implemented as follows:

$$(49) \quad \text{answers}^*(A,Q) = \text{answers}(\text{neg}(A),Q).$$

There is one reason why (48) might however actually be unwanted: An empirical property of *sondern* which hasn't been discussed so far, amounts to the fact that *sondern*, in contrast to *aber* (concessive but), obligatorily selects non-incorporated negation in its left conjunct:

- (50) a. Er ist *nicht* freundlich, *sondern* ziemlich unhöflich.  
(He is *not* friendly *but* rather impolite.)
- b. \* Er ist *unfreundlich*, *sondern* ziemlich unhöflich.  
(He is *unfriendly* *but* (instead) rather impolite.)
- c. Er ist *unfreundlich* *aber* ziemlich höflich.  
(He is *unfriendly* *but* rather polite.)

Perhaps these contrasts have to be explained along the following lines: Assume that affirmative polarity, as well as the kind of incorporated negation which is operative in lexemes like *unfortunately*, doesn't give rise to the regularity expressed by *answers\**. This means in particular that:

*answers\**([[he is unfriendly]],Q)

would be false for any Q, which in turn makes *he is unfriendly* always a bad left conjunct for *sondern*. This explanation however requires that (48) does not hold since otherwise the following pair should be equally fine, which it isn't:

- (51) a. Er ist selten nicht gekommen, *sondern* war oft sogar zu früh.  
 (Heis seldom *not* §come *but* was often even too early.)  
 'He seldom *didn't* come *but* was often even too early.'
- b. \* Er ist oft gekommen, *sondern* war oft sogar zu früh.  
 (Heis often come *but* was often even too early.)  
 'He often came *but* was often even too early.'

If double negation of answers to questions cancels out, as postulated by (48), and if *answers\** is indeed the very reason for the obligatory selection of a negative element by *sondern*, (51b) should be (modulo subtleties) the same as (51a).

But is it actually semantics/pragmatics which is responsible for the obligatory selection of a negative element by *sondern*? Couldn't this be just a syntactic constraint? One hint that it is meaning is the following:

- (52) a. He wasn't friendly. He was *instead* actually rather impolite.
- b. \* He was unfriendly. He was *instead* actually rather impolite.

The same selectional requirement that can be found in *sondern* in the frame of a sentence, can be seen to be operative in adversative *instead* across the very sentence border. There must thus be some meaning property that distinguishes rigidly between the utterances "*he wasn't friendly*" and "*he was unfriendly*", and the best candidate so far is the predicate *answers\**, or any characteristic semantic part of it which requires its first argument to be "explicitly negative".

## 6 Why Presuppositional?

I have claimed several times now that the particular requirements on *A* and *B* in *nicht A sondern B* which have been the topic of this and the previous section are presuppositional in character: that they do not contribute to what is literally said, but to the requirements on proper use.

Is it so? My immediate intuition, as well as that of others I asked, says so. But there is also a more objective means to tell truth-conditions from presuppositions: It is generally believed that presuppositional content differs from truth-conditional content in that it "survives" negation (and some other embedding contexts) in the unmarked case, though it can be canceled in the marked case:

- (53) a. "It is not the case that the King of France is bald."  
 b. *projected presupposition*: there is a King of France  
 c. *cancellation*: "In fact, France is a Republic."

This can be verified for the logical implication of (59)/(25.iv) which says that the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* exclude each other in the context:

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- (54) a. "Es stimmt nicht, dass *nicht* um 3, *sondern* um 4 ein Zug von Paddington kommt."  
'*It is not true that a train from Paddington doesn't arrive at 3.00 but at 4.00.*'
- b. (*projected presupposition:*)  
There doesn't arrive a train from Paddington at both 3.00 and 4.00.
- c. (*cancellation context:*)  
"In fact, a train from Paddington arrives at every full hour."

(54a) naturally suggests the truth of (54a). However, the continuation of (54a) with (54c) cancels both the exclusivity of *A* and *B*, and the exhaustive interpretation of *at 3*, *at 4*.

## 7 Apparent Counterexamples

Although the characterization of unmarked answer to a question in (25) does not literally require that these involve exhaustive interpretation, the examples presented so far suggest that answers which are intuitively considered to be unmarked nevertheless typically involve such a particularly strengthened interpretation. Consider:

- (55) a. Who has a light? Hans!
- b. Where does one drink red wine? In Italy, for instance!

The answer in (55a) when interpreted non-exhaustively, as well as the answer in (55b), which resists exhaustive interpretation due to the presence of *for instance*, are instances of so-called *mention-some* answers (Gronendijk & Stokhof 1984). They would be considered by many to be examples for *marked* rather than

unmarked answers. This makes the following two examples rather problematic for the very thesis put forward so far:<sup>11</sup>

- (56) "Wer hat Feuer?" "Hans zum Beispiel !" "*Nicht* Hans, *sondern* Bernd."  
 'Who has a light?' 'Hans, for instance!' 'Not Hans *but* Bernd.'
- (57) "Rotwein trinkt man *nicht* hier, *sondern* zum Beispiel in Italien."  
 (Red wine drinks one *not* here, *but* for instance in Italy.)  
 'One doesn't drink red wine here, rather for instance in Italy.'

In both cases, *sondern* seems to combine with mention-some answers. The use of *sondern* in (56) is to my intuition a bit strange, but certainly not totally out. The use of *sondern* in (57), on the other hand, sounds completely natural to me. How do these examples fit into the picture drawn so far? My tentative answer is that in both cases, the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern... are* in fact unmarked answers at a certain level of interpretation, namely that level where the presupposition of *sondern* is satisfied, and are mention-some answers only at some higher level of interpretation. Three observations to this point:

- (i) Both in (56) and in (57), the conjuncts are still interpreted exclusively: The speaker in (56) takes it for granted that Hans and John do not both have a light, and in (57) the speaker takes it for granted that the location pointed to by *here* does not belong to those which are exemplified by Italy.
- (ii) A third answer in addition to the *A* and the *B* in *nicht A sondern B* seems to be excluded: The following two are rather odd:

- (58) ? "Wer hat Feuer?" "Hans zum Beispiel !" "*Nicht* Hans, *sondern* Bernd. Und Paul."  
 'Who has light?' 'Hans, for instance!' 'Not Hans *but* Bernd. And Paul.'

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<sup>11</sup> Many thanks to Katrin Schulz and Gerhard Jäger for hinting me to these examples.

(59) ? "Rotwein trinkt man *nicht* hier, *sondern* zum Beispiel in Italien.  
Und in Griechenland."

(Red wine drinks one *not* here, *but* for instance in Italy.

And in Greece.)

'One doesn't drink red wine here, rather for instance in Italy. And in Greece.'

(iii) The examples cannot be freely embedded in their relevant interpretation:

(60) "Bernd hat Feuer!"

Maria bedauerte, dass *nicht* Hans, *sondern* Bernd Feuer hatte.

'Bernd has a light'. Maria regretted that *not* Hans *but* Bernd had a light.

(61) ? Maria bedauerte, dass man Rotwein *nicht* hier, *sondern* zum Beispiel in Italien trinkt.

'Maria regretted that one does *not* drink red wine here, *but* for instance in Italy.'

(i) and (ii) suggest that there is *some* exhaustive interpretation still taking place here. (iii) indicates that the mention-some reading of the conjuncts is a rather marked effect which is not generally available.

I cannot yet offer a complete explanation for these mention-some cases, but I would like to suggest something along the following lines: Assume, following for instance Austin (1950), that sentences do not directly describe the world, but instead describe some part of it, typically a temporally and spatially restricted section, a *situation*. My stipulation is now that the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* in (56) are complete unmarked answers, and also receive an exhaustive interpretation, but one with respect to a question which *concerns a relative small situation* which is contained in the bigger the situation the previously uttered question "*who has a light?*" is about. This smaller situation might include just, say, one maximally relevant person who has a light, which is *Hans* for the person who uttered *Hans for instance*. The subsequent utterance of "*not Hans but Bernd*" comments on this small situation by saying that this

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maximally relevant person is not Hans, but Bend. What gives the utterance of "*not Hans but Bernd*" the mention-some flavor is the particular context, which makes it clear that the small situation (the maximally relevant individual having a light) is actually embedded in a more extended situation, namely the one "*who has a light?*" is about. In other words: The utterer of "*nicht Hans sondern Bernd*" gives a mention-some answer to "*who has a light?*" by means of giving mention-all answers to a more restricted question.

I believe that basically the same mechanism is at work in the second example, (57). My claim is that *zum Beispiel* (*for instance*) operates non-recursively and just adds to the statement it is attached to the comment that this statement is to be considered as presenting just one example for a more general fact. What is going on in (57) is then roughly the following: Truth-conditionally, the conjuncts of *nicht...sondern...* provide unmarked answers to some question regarding where one drinks red wine, and regarding some limited situation. The *zum Beispiel* which is attached to the second conjunct, which is identical to the truth-conditions of the whole statement, marks via presupposition that the whole statement was intended to present just an example for something more general. This leads the hearers of (57) to re-interpret the mention-all answer "*one drinks red wine in Italy*" as a mention-some answer to some more general question which concerns a more extended situation.

To summarize: at least some mention-some answers do not necessarily cancel exhaustive interpretation at the truth-conditional level, but are a posteriori effects of the interpretation of the whole utterance.

## 8 The Diachrony of 'sondern'

In this last section of the first part I'd like to present a hypothesis about the diachronic origins of the presupposition and truth-conditions of *sondern*. The story goes as follows:

- (i) *sondern* started out as a sentence marker and only later acquired its full syntactic flexibility as a conjunction-type connective. The truth-functional meaning component - logical conjunction - is simply the basic manner in which consecutive assertive statements are interpreted, which became lexicalized in the predecessor of *sondern* when it turned from a sentence marker into a conjunction-type connective.
- (ii) The particular presuppositions of *sondern* are the effect of a conventionalization of relevance implicatures: Interpreting an assertion as the answer to a contextually supplied question certainly makes the assertion relevant, and that such mode of interpretation regularly obtains well justifies its categorization as a relevance implicature. It is just this kind of relevance implicature that I take to be conventionalized twice (once for A, once for B) in *nicht A sondern B*.

As an illustration, consider the following example:

- (62) Was ist ein Ende? Das Ende ist nicht die Stelle, wo das Seil aufhört. Sondern in der Seemannssprache heißen alle Leinen und Seile einfach nur "Ende". Wenn ein Seemann also sagt: "Bring mir mal das Ende.", dann meint er: "Bring mir mal das Seil."  
*'What is an 'end'? The end is not the point where the rope ends. But in the sailor's language, all cords and ropes are simply called 'end'. When a sailor says: 'Bring me the end', then he means: 'Bring me the rope.'*<sup>12</sup>

*sondern* is used here as a sentence marker. This can be seen from the punctuation which mirrors phonological phrasing, and from the syntactic

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<sup>12</sup> Kundschafter-Beobachterprüfung und Bronzelilie der Pfadfinder - Benenne die Teile eines Seiles, as found in the Internet.

position of *sondern*, which is that of the adsentential *aber* and *denn*, and syntactically highly marked for the case of *sondern*.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the question to which the conjuncts below *nicht*, *sondern* resp. provide the answers is explicitly given in the text. Speakers had well interpreted the proposition below *nicht*, and the subsequent statements as answers to the explicitly given question, even if presented a variant of (62) where *sondern* had been elided. (62) would thus work well with a historical predecessor of *sondern* which is a sentence marker that is somehow rhetorically adequate for the rhetorical figure: *question - negated false answer - asserted true answer*, without being at all restricted to such contexts.

The German connectives *stattdessen* (*instead*) or *vielmehr* (*rather*, *lit.: much more*) may serve as an illustrative example of how such predecessor of *sondern* might have been looked like; *stattdessen* and *vielmehr* have interesting things in common with a certain class of concessive sentence connectives which include *nevertheless*, *notwithstanding*, *just the same*, *even now*, and others: For these, Ekkehard König (1988) has observed in his typological study on concessive connectives that they are often composite in nature and have a very transparent etymology. He furthermore proposed that their meanings have evolved from the conventionalization of relevance implicatures - it was this hypothesis that has inspired my own hypothesis on the evolution of the meaning of *sondern*. König finally observes that concessive markers came into existence

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<sup>13</sup> 'sondern' can precede the preverbal *Vorfeld* position, as is demonstrated in (i):

- (i) Nicht Peter, sondern Luise kommt.  
 'Not Peter comes, but Luise'

This peculiar configuration is however always licensed by a focused phrase in the *Vorfeld* position (see Jakobs 1982), and is accompanied by *not* being in a likewise peculiar position. Both features are absent in (62).

late in the history of the languages, and are rare and generally unspecific in meaning in Old English and Old German.

While it may well be true that *stattdessen* and *vielmehr* are rather young, it seems at first sight that *sondern* can be traced back to Old High German *suntar/suntir*, as is illustrated by the following versions of the line *But deliver us from evil* of *Lord's Prayer*, whose modern German version includes, of course *sondern*:

- (63) a. *suntir* irlose unsih fona dem ubile (AHG)  
 b. *sunder* verloese uns von Übel. (MHG)  
 c. *sondern* erlose vns von dem vbel. (Early NHG)<sup>14</sup>  
 ‘but deliver us from [the] evil.’

As (63a) indicates, some etymologically related word *suntir* already appears in Old High-German as the translation of the Latin conjunction *sed*. But this does not even prove that *suntir* included the meaning of *sondern* as a meaning variant, since rather different complementizers seem to fit the place that *suntir/sondern* occupies in this example: Among the complementizers one finds in various Old and Middle High German variants that roughly mean *and*, or *also*. Sometimes the complementizer is simply missing.

A superficial look at other sources suggests instead that a predecessor of *sondern* which overlaps in distribution with modern *sondern* is unlikely to be widespread before Middle High German: The *Middle-high German Conceptual*

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<sup>14</sup> Adelung 1809: “128. Notker um 1000” p.196, “132. Ein Ungenannter um 1400” p.189, Luther 1522.

*Database*<sup>15</sup> does not contain any single use of a verb morphologically related to *sondern* which displays the typical characteristics of its modern counterpart. In the texts of the *Bonner Frühneuhochdeutschkorpus* on the other hand, which includes samples from between 1350 and 1700, *sondern* or its variant *sonder*, when used as a sentence conjunction (not as an adjective), is always preceded by a negated sentence. *sondern/sonder* furthermore sometimes exhibits the syntactic flexibility of modern *sondern*, and can be embedded, as is illustrated in (64):

- (64) Ein solchen tugentlichen Khuenig/ begern wir auch zuhaben/ dem nit das Gold/ *sonder* Waffen liebten. (1557)<sup>16</sup>  
 (A such virtuous King / seek we also to-have / who *not* the gold/ but *weapons* likes.)  
 ‘We seek to also have such a virtuous King, who doesn't like the money but weapons.’

This *sondern/sonder*, even in adverbial or adsentential use, had of course a broader meaning than the contemporary form (see Rieck 1977, Pfeifer et. al. 1989).

The comparison of the two corpora suggests that *sondern/sonder* became popular as some kind of contrastive sentence marker not before Middle High German. *sondern*'s history was therefore not so far away from those of the adversatives that König investigated.

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<sup>15</sup> The *Middle-high German Conceptual Database* ([mhdadb.sbg.ac.at](http://mhdadb.sbg.ac.at)) announces itself as containing the most important literary texts from the period in question.

<sup>16</sup> Taken from: Das Bonner Frühneuhochdeutschkorpus ([www.ikp.uni-bonn.de/dt/forsch/frnhd/](http://www.ikp.uni-bonn.de/dt/forsch/frnhd/)), Text 115: Sigmund Herberstein: Moscouia, Wien 1557.

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