

An Attempt to Integrate the Lacanian Formalism into Generative Relational Being

Wanhong Huang

huangwanhong@serendip.ngo

Abstract

Theories of value generation and of distributive justice presuppose that participants can recognize a relation as reciprocal and can identify extraction as extraction. These are interpretive capacities, and they are assumed throughout and explained nowhere. Inferentialist accounts of normative practice describe the keeping of deontic score and leave the participants' investment in the score unaccounted. No available framework in governance or economics explains why participants sustain the very relations that damage them.

Psychoanalysis supplies such an account, and this paper asks what may be taken from it and at what price. The apparatus is separated into three levels — the phenomena it addresses, the concepts it deploys, and the calculus of primitives in which those concepts are written — and each is examined for derivation, translation, or refusal.

The results are asymmetric. Three central mathemes are derived: the Other is what composition produces, the barred subject is an occupancy with nonzero residue, and the signifier of the barred Other is the non-coincidence of a position with its own claim. They are shown to stand in one process that the source lacks, in which the master signifier conceals the barring of the Other. Two primitives are dissolved: the object-cause of desire is the residue of an operation, hypostatized by a theory with nowhere to put it, and the lozenge proves undefinable for relating a subject to that reification. One posit is refused with argument: the Real reintroduces an exterior, and its phenomena admit a better account as structural exclusion.

One consequence reaches beyond the source. The attempt to make occupancy exact operates at the level of the order, where it is domination, and at the level of the participant, where it is exploitation. This yields a derivation of a condition that theories of generative justice have identified and left underived: a configuration providing no locus at which a participant's excess can register consumes the capacity by which it would go on generating.

The unifying operation is identified and left undefined. Every occurrence of the bar in the source calculus marks one thing: composition fails to close. Its formal identity is stated as the central open problem, with four constraints on any candidate.

Keywords: relational structure; subject position; composition; non-closure; psychoanalytic formalism; normative emergence.

A note on the standing of this paper. The paper reports a mapping that succeeds at some points, fails at others, and is undefined at the point on which everything else depends. The failures are reported at the same length as the successes. A mapping in which everything mapped would have discovered nothing, and the refusals in Section 11 are the evidence that the derivations in Section 6 amount to more than redescription.

Nothing here endorses psychoanalysis as a theory of mind, and nothing here depends on such an endorsement. The apparatus is used because it is currently the best available account of a phenomenon that the framework's own commitments require it to explain. Should a better account appear, the framework adopts it. The move is principled. A framework holding that all normative structure is historically generated and revisable cannot exempt its own theoretical resources from that condition, so the choice made here instantiates the thesis argued in the companion paper.

The author would welcome objection and correction, particularly from readers who can show that the operation left undefined in Section 13 is not an operation at all. Correspondence is welcome at huangwanhong@serendip.ngo.

Statement on the use of artificial intelligence.

The arguments of this paper were developed in extended dialogue with an artificial intelligence system. The dialogue shaped the substance of the arguments and did not confine itself to matters of drafting or of language. Several of the paper's central claims arose within it, and several were corrected within it, in both directions.

The author is the sole author, and takes full responsibility for every claim made here, for every argument advanced in support of a claim, and for every error that remains.

The disclosure is made in the ordinary interest of transparency, and it carries a further significance that the paper's own commitments require us to state. This paper holds that concepts are determinations of relational configurations, generated at positions, bearing the marks of their generation, and revisable in the historical process that produced them. A theory so committed can hardly treat the provenance of its own concepts as a matter to be passed over. The concepts advanced here were generated in a particular configuration, at a particular moment, by participants of more than one kind. That is a fact about them, and the account offered in these pages predicts that it should be. *We report it, in place of concealing it, because concealment would be the first refutation of what we argue.*

CONTENTS

Part I. The Problem	4
1 The Lacuna in the Available Frameworks	4
1.1 The gap in theories of generative circulation	4
1.2 The gap in theories of authorship	4
1.3 The gap in inferentialist accounts	4
1.4 The gap in economic accounts	5
1.5 The explanandum, stated narrowly	5
2 The Terms of the Borrowing	5
2.1 Not truth, but adequacy to a problem	5
2.2 The relation is vertical	6
2.3 The single thesis taken, and its safety	6
2.4 Discipline	6
Part II. The Framework	7
3 The Form of the Inquiry	7
3.1 No ontological commitment is made	7
3.2 Coherence of the general shape	7
4 Composition, Positions, and Occupancy	8
4.1 Composition generates positions	8
4.2 The dyad is pre-normative	8
4.3 A causal route, not a viewpoint	8
4.4 Occupancy constitutes the occupant	9
Part III. The Mapping	11
5 Method	11
6 Level One: Concepts Derived, Not Borrowed	11
7 Level Two: Concepts Translated, With Loss	12
8 Level Three: The Calculus	13
8.1 The unlocking observation	13
8.2 The primitives, by structural role	13
8.3 The non-coincidence, formally	14
8.4 Separation: the non-coincidence runs on both sides	15
8.5 The formulae, and the mechanism the source lacks	15

9	Power and Its Ossification	16
9.1	Power is asymmetry; interpretive monopoly is a kind of it	16
9.2	The conversion sequence	16
9.3	The Other is a variable	16
9.4	Exploitation as the participant-level case	17
9.5	Participatory constitution of subjectivity	18
	Part IV. Refusals and Limits	19
10	Dissolved Rather Than Refused	19
10.1	The object-cause of desire	19
10.2	The lozenge	19
10.3	A false friend, flagged	19
11	Refused, With Argument	20
11.1	The Real	20
11.2	The four discourses	20
11.3	The remainder	21
11.4	The deep formal reason	21
12	The Framework's Surplus over the Source	21
13	The Central Open Problem	22
13.1	$\ominus$ is undefined	22
13.2	The requirements on the composition rule	23
13.3	One gap, four masks	23
13.4	An honest statement of standing	23
14	Conclusion	23

Part I. The Problem

1 THE LACUNA IN THE AVAILABLE FRAMEWORKS

1.1 *The gap in theories of generative circulation*

Theories of generative justice are organized around an explanatory chain: material interaction produces value, value circulates, and justice consists in the circulation returning value to those whose activity produced it, in place of permitting its alienation (Egash, 2016). The chain is strong at every link, and the political content is real. Extraction is named as a category of injustice, and the naming carries normative weight.

One step lies outside the chain. Between the generation of value and the demand for its return there lies a capacity: the producer must recognize the value as theirs, must identify its non-return as extraction where exchange would also fit the facts, and must experience the alienation as a wrong. These are interpretive achievements, and they follow from no material relation. A theory that begins at material interaction and ends at justice has passed over them.

The capacity is present often enough. The difficulty is that the theory assumes it, and the assumption becomes visible precisely where the capacity fails. The historical record is dense with cases in which those from whom value was extracted experienced the extraction as no wrong at all, defended the arrangement that consumed them, and identified with the position that impoverished them. A theory that assumes the recognitive capacity has no account of these cases, and they are common. They are the ordinary condition of what has been called ideology.

1.2 *The gap in theories of authorship*

The same difficulty is visible, and has been noticed, in accounts of ethical standing organized around authorship: a norm one can recognize as one's own has a standing that a norm merely imposed does not (Mazouz, 2019). The move from ownership to authorship is a real advance, and it is a tell. Ownership is a relation to a thing. Authorship is a relation to a *meaning*, and meaning has no material substrate.

Authorship, like recognition, is presupposed. The account leaves unaddressed what makes a participant the kind of being who can author, and what determines whether a given participant occupies a position from which authorship is available at all. It begins with subjects already capable of authorship and asks how norms may be made theirs.

1.3 *The gap in inferentialist accounts*

Accounts of normative practice in the inferentialist tradition supply what the two preceding lack in one respect: an explicit mechanism by which normative status is instituted, namely the practical attitude of taking participants to be committed and entitled, and the keeping of score on those commitments (Brandom, 1994). Norms are not imposed from outside; they are instituted in the practice of holding one another to them.

This comes very close to what is required, and the closeness makes the remaining gap instructive. Two things are absent. First, the account explains neither the arising of scorekeeping practices where they arise nor their degradation. The practice is described; its emergence and its decay are left dark.

Second, and more seriously here, the scorekeeper has no libido. Nothing in the apparatus explains a participant's *investment* in the score, identification with a position, or attachment to a status that damages them. The subject of inferentialism is a creature of commitments and entitlements, and it has no attachments.

1.4 *The gap in economic accounts*

Mainstream economic accounts treat preferences as exogenous. An agent has a preference ordering, acts on it, and the question of where the ordering came from lies outside the model. The exclusion is a methodological decision, defensible for many purposes.

It is indefensible here. A theory undertaking to explain how participants come to *want* participation in generative relations, or how they come to identify extraction as unjust, cannot take the wanting as given. The preference is what is at issue.

1.5 *The explanandum, stated narrowly*

The four gaps converge on a single phenomenon, and the paper's use of the psychoanalytic apparatus is licensed by that phenomenon and by no other. Narrowness in the statement is essential. A licence stated broadly ("subject formation," "desire," "the symbolic") licenses everything and thereby nothing.

The explanandum. *Why do participants sustain the very relations that damage them?*

Rational choice cannot answer: preferences are given, and given preferences that produce self-harm are simply irrational, at which point the model has stopped explaining. Theories of generative circulation cannot answer: they show that value fails to return, and must then assume the producer experiences this as a wrong. Inferentialism cannot answer: scorekeeping without investment has no account of attachment.

What is required is an account of the subject's *attachment to the position that constitutes it*, including where that position is destructive. This is the grip of ideology; it accounts for the difficulty of generating counter-power; and it accounts for alienation being characteristically experienced as one's own inadequacy in place of a structural fact.

The requirement is load-bearing, and it is ornamental in no degree. Any normative theory demanding of participants that they re-open a monopolized interpretive position owes an account of their persistent refusal.

2 THE TERMS OF THE BORROWING

2.1 *Not truth, but adequacy to a problem*

The apparatus is used, and it is not endorsed. It is the best available account of the phenomenon isolated in Section 1, and no rival tradition presently does that work as well. The claim is comparative and defeasible, and it is offered as such.

The footing is required by the framework's own commitments. If all normative structure, theoretical structure included, is historically generated and subject to revision, a theory may not exempt its

own resources from that condition. To say “we build on this because it is true” would claim a standpoint outside history that the framework has independently argued to be unavailable. To say “we use it because it currently works, and we expect it to be superseded” is consistent with the framework’s content and honest about the framework’s status.

2.2 *The relation is vertical*

One structural fact determines everything that follows. Psychoanalysis begins with a symbolic order that is *already there*. The chain of signifiers, the locus of the Other, the function that institutes the law: these are given at the outset of the analysis and receive no explanation from it. Psychoanalysis theorizes what happens to a subject who *enters* a symbolic order. It offers no theory of how symbolic orders arise, and claims none.

The framework developed here takes up the prior question: the generation, by relational configurations, of the positions that subsequently become symbolically occupiable. The two therefore stand in no competition, and the question of importing one into the other is malformed.

The present framework stands *upstream*. It supplies what the psychoanalytic apparatus presupposes. Neither competition nor dependence obtains between them: the apparatus is a theory of a level whose emergence the present framework attempts to explain, and it is accordingly neither a foundation to be adopted nor a rival to be refuted.

The claim is demonstrated in Part III. The demonstration consists in deriving three of the apparatus’s central primitives from composition, and in exhibiting a process relating them that the apparatus lacks.

2.3 *The single thesis taken, and its safety*

One thesis is taken directly, and its safety follows from its being common property. *The subject is constituted in the occupying of a position, and stands posterior to it*. This is common ground across the psychoanalytic, the Althusserian, the performative, and the pragmatist traditions (Althusser, 1971; Butler, 1997; Mead, 1934), and it is Hegelian in origin. Convergence across four independent traditions is evidence of robustness, and the appropriate citation practice attributes the convergence in place of any one of its members.

2.4 *Discipline*

Two rules govern the use of the apparatus throughout, and they are stated in advance so that violations may be detected.

1. **The mechanism is stated in the framework’s own terms.** A claim expressible only in the vocabulary of the Real, the object-cause, or the four discourses is a claim the framework has failed to make its own. It would *be* the apparatus, and would fall with it.
2. **The refusals are load-bearing.** A mapping in which every term found a counterpart would be evidence of nothing, since a sufficiently elastic vocabulary absorbs anything. The value of the mapping

in Part III depends entirely on the existence of what fails to map, catalogued in Section 11.

Part II. The Framework

3 THE FORM OF THE INQUIRY

3.1 *No ontological commitment is made*

The framework asserts nothing about what exists. It withholds, in particular, the claim that relations are prior to entities, and none of its arguments requires that claim. It specifies its object structurally, in the discipline of a group specification: whatever the relata may be, the theory concerns their composition, and the question of what a relatum ultimately *is* fails to arise within it.

The analogy is exact, and it is more than decorative. Group theory neither denies nor affirms that group elements have intrinsic natures. It concerns closure, associativity, identity, inverse. A group is specified up to isomorphism, and the question “but what is g , really?” receives no answer, the theory requiring none. The non-arising of the question is a feature of structural specification, and it counts as no defect.

Structural specification. The framework quantifies over relations and their composition. It quantifies over the identity of the relata not at all, and its results are independent of that identity. Whether the participants are persons, institutions, practices, or something else, and whether they possess natures independent of their relational positions, is left open. The leaving-open is principled, and it is not an evasion.

The discipline has a cost, and it is paid explicitly in Section 11. A framework that withholds ontological commitment may not then *import* an apparatus whose principal recommendation is the possession of one. The Real is an ontological posit, and it is refused for this reason among others.

3.2 *Coherence of the general shape*

That a determinate structure can emerge from composition alone, without the theory saying what it is a structure of, is not merely conceivable. It is realized in working formalisms. In group field theory the field is defined on a group manifold, the theory’s content is the combinatorics of composition, the specific group elements are integrated over, and discrete geometry emerges from the combinatorial structure of the interactions (Orti, 2014). Spacetime, on such an account, is not made of anything. It is what a composition structure looks like when it condenses.

The lesson drawn is methodological and nothing more. It demonstrates the coherence of the general shape, and it shows that a theory in which the substance question fails to arise remains complete in the only sense that matters.

Caveat 3.1. The limit must be named, on pain of the analogy becoming theft. Group field theory possesses an action, a vertex, and a specified composition rule. The present framework possesses a picture of one. The analogy therefore establishes coherence and stops short of achievement, and any claim beyond coherence would borrow the credibility of a formalism that has never been written. The gap is the subject of Section 13.

4 COMPOSITION, POSITIONS, AND OCCUPANCY

4.1 Composition generates positions

Position. Let R be a set of relations on a configuration, and let $\circ$ denote their composition. A *position* is a structural locus generated by composition: it is a place in the configuration determined by the composite, and it is occupied by none of the relata that compose it. Formally, if $r_1, r_2 \in R$, the composite $r_2 \circ r_1$ determines a locus π that is not identical to any relatum of r_1 or of r_2 .

The claim that carries the framework is that what is borne at a position is borne by no relatum. Bindingness, authority, value, and identity are properties of positions, and they are properties of no participant. This accounts for the persistent failure of theories that seek them among the properties of entities, and the accounting appeals to structure in place of any deficiency in those theories' ingenuity.

4.2 The dyad is pre-normative

Insufficiency of the dyad. A configuration containing exactly two relata and one relation between them lacks the resources to distinguish sanction from aggression.

Argument. Let A and B be the relata and suppose A acts against B . The configuration contains A 's stance toward B and B 's toward A , and nothing further. Characterizing the act as sanction requires a locus from which the characterization can issue; the dyad supplies only its two poles, each of which is a party to the act. B may take the act either way, and the configuration contains nothing that settles the matter. The characterization is accordingly unavailable within the dyad.

We label this a claim and its support an argument, and the labels are deliberate. The reasoning is not a proof, and the terms in which a proof might be given — what a configuration is, what composition does — are undefined until Section 13 is answered.

The claim yields a prediction that is roughly falsifiable and that we believe true: purely dyadic configurations generate no norms. They generate habit, dependence, rivalry, and force.

4.3 A causal route, not a viewpoint

An objection arises immediately, and it must be met before the symbolic material is introduced, since meeting it afterwards is impossible. Suppose that to be *seen as* doing something is already to be characterized, that characterization subsumes an act under a category, and that categories are symbolic. Then the third position requires language, normative structure begins with language, and the framework is idealist. The objection is standard, it is serious, and should it hold, the framework collapses.

The reply turns on what the third position does at minimum. The third differentiates before it classifies: the act acquires a second aspect, how it stands from a locus that is neither party, and this aspect obtains prior to any category being applied to it. Differentiation of this kind requires only that the act have consequences which *run through the third*.

The reply is partial and its partiality is stated in Caveat 4.1. It establishes that a locus can exist and be causally live without language. It leaves open whether a locus so occupied supports full bindingness,

or only the weaker structure of an act being costly by a route the agent does not control.

The third position is a causal route, not a viewpoint. If *A* stands in relation to *B* and *B* to *C*, then *A*'s act upon *B* has consequences that reach *A* by way of *C*. The route is the position. It is a structural fact about the configuration, obtaining whether or not any participant can articulate it, and it is generated by composition.

The route is occupied when it is live, and occupancy admits of strata, distinguished by the durability of the characterization each supports:

1. **Composition** generates the route. Structural; pre-symbolic; obtains in any configuration with three or more nodes and transitive consequence.
2. **Witness** makes the route live and *episodic*. The characterization holds while the third is present and lapses in its absence. The presence of an observer alters the conduct of a conflict, and the observer says nothing. Most non-human sociality sits here.
3. **Speech** makes the route *persistent*. The characterization survives the absence of the third, having been deposited, and it admits of transmission, recall, and invocation.
4. **Institution and writing** make the route persistent across generations, absence, and death.
5. **Reinterpretation** re-opens the route where it has been closed to an occupant.

The locus of the Other requires no myth of institution. **It is a witness that need not be present.** Speech adds persistence to a locus that composition has already produced, and the framework is on this account a materialism: normative structure originates in causal architecture, and language renders it durable.

Caveat 4.1. The concession is stated, and it is hidden nowhere, and it is a real one. The pre-symbolic stratum secures that positions exist and are occupiable without language. It leaves unsecured that pre-symbolic occupancy produces full bindingness. The *ought*, as distinct from the merely costly, may arrive only with the durable third.

Should that be so, the framework's position weakens to the following: proto-normative structure is pre-symbolic, and normative structure proper requires the durable third. This remains a materialism, the durable third being explained where it might have been presupposed, and it concedes to the psychoanalytic account something we should have preferred to withhold. We prefer the concession to a fabrication.

4.4 *Occupancy constitutes the occupant*

The framework's second load-bearing claim concerns the occupying of a position. The occupant is constituted in that occupying, and exists in no way antecedent to it.

Occupancy. Let π be a position and let σ denote the operation of occupying it. Then $\sigma(\pi)$ is the subject constituted in that occupancy. *Position and subject come into being in one act:* the interpretive inhabiting of the locus and the constitution of the inhabitant are simultaneous, and they are inseparable.

Separating them reinstates the very assumption that Section 1 identified as the common defect of the available frameworks: a subject who exists first and interprets afterwards.

Sanction and aggression. These differ neither in force nor in structure. They differ in *whether the structure is inhabited*.

This resolves the difficulty that defeats behavioural reductions of normative expectation. A disposition to sanction, described purely behaviourally, is indistinguishable from a disposition to aggress, since the description mentions only the acts of the sanctioner. What makes an act a sanction is a fact about the act's position in a configuration whose third locus is inhabited, and it is a fact about the sanctioner in no respect.

Part III. The Mapping

5 METHOD

The apparatus is decomposed into three levels and each treated separately. Conflating them produces uncritical adoption and uncritical dismissal alike.

1. **Phenomena.** The explananda of the apparatus. These are common property, and the framework owes an account of each, or an account of why each dissolves.
2. **Concepts.** The explanatory notions deployed. These may be derived, translated, or refused.
3. **Calculus.** The primitives and their formation rules. The question at this level concerns *what a symbol does in the system*, which is more informative than what its author meant by it.

6 LEVEL ONE: CONCEPTS DERIVED, NOT BORROWED

At this level the framework *derives*, and the derivations constitute the evidence for the upstream claim of Part I. It imports nothing.

Source concept	Framework counterpart	What the framework supplies
The Other (<i>A</i>); locus of the signifier	The third position: a locus occupied by no party, from which acts are characterized and subjects addressed	<i>Where it comes from.</i> It is posited there; here it is what composition produces.
The imaginary; the specular relation	The dyad (Prop. 4.2)	<i>Why</i> the dyad yields rivalry, aggression, and misrecognition: there is no locus from which either party can be characterized except by the other. Independent derivation of the same result.
The symbolic	A configuration containing occupiable third positions	The registers become structural properties of configurations, where the source made them ontological orders.
Subject as effect of the signifier	Occupancy constitutes the occupant	Convergent, but <i>common property</i> . Cite the convergence, not the source.
<i>Manque</i> ; non-coincidence	Position-generation and subject-constitution do not commute (§8.3)	The residue is read as <i>symptom</i> there and as the <i>source of generation</i> here. This is the borrowing and the break at once.

Source concept	Framework counterpart	What the framework supplies
The paternal function; the institution of the law	Composition instituting the third position	A function is named and its origin mythologized. The framework locates the origin in composition. <i>Whether it possesses a mechanism, as against a picture of one, is settled by Section 13 and is presently open.</i>
Alienation	Alienation of interpretation: constituted as the one who is <i>read</i> where they might have been <i>reading</i>	Nearly exact; the framework makes it <i>political</i> , a distribution of positions, where the source made it <i>ontological</i> , a condition of subjecthood as such.
Separation	Counter-power; the barring of the position itself (§8.4)	Alienation taken without separation is fatalism. This is the mechanism of contestation.

Table 1: Level One. Concepts derived, and not borrowed.

7 LEVEL TWO: CONCEPTS TRANSLATED, WITH LOSS

Here the phenomenon is taken, the vocabulary refused, and the semantic shift recorded.

Source concept	Translation	What is lost or altered
Desire	The residue's action on the configuration	Structure retained: desire is positional and does not originate in the individual. Vocabulary discarded: it imports the clinic.
Desire is the desire of the Other	Desire is structured by position and does not originate in the individual, <i>and no further</i>	Half is refused. The full thesis renders desire wholly derivative, so that everything circulates within an already-given field and there is nowhere for the genuinely new to arise. This is why the apparatus is politically inert.
<i>Jouissance</i>	Attachment to the position that damages (the explanandum of Part I)	<i>This must not be discarded.</i> It is the only element of the apparatus that does the required work. The phenomenon is retained; the word is not.

Source concept	Translation	What is lost or altered
<i>Point de capiton</i>	Interpretive fixation; the singularization of the Other (§9)	Exact structural match. The framework asks who benefits from the fixation. The apparatus does not.
Interpellation (Althusser, 1971)	Occupancy as constitution	Retained for the political register, where it is legible and says the same thing.
Schema L	A relational network in which the dyadic axis blocks the triadic	Retained, reinterpreted. It is graph-theoretic already, and what it draws is Proposition 4.2: the imaginary axis short-circuits the route through the third.

Table 2: Level Two. Phenomena taken, vocabulary refused.

8 LEVEL THREE: THE CALCULUS

8.1 *The unlocking observation*

Read as a formal system, in place of a doctrine, the calculus discloses something its author left unstated. The bar appears at three sites: over the subject, over the Other, and as the fraction bar of repression. At every occurrence it marks one thing: *something exceeds what represents it*. The subject exceeds its position; the Other exceeds its claim to completeness; the chain exceeds the signifier that anchors it.

The bar is one operator, applied at three sites. Write it $\ominus$. The source never specifies it, and the source cannot, *having no theory of composition*. The framework supplies the composition, and the bar becomes the measure of its non-closure.

The move is a reading of the notation as a calculus, and it is more than a translation. It says that the apparatus has one primitive operation and remains unaware of the fact.

8.2 *The primitives, by structural role*

Sym.	Role in the calculus	Framework semantics	Verdict
A	The field within which everything is placed	The composed configuration; the closure of composition over relations	Derived
S_2	The chain; the relata as related	The relations, composed	Derived

Sym.	Role in the calculus	Framework semantics	Verdict
S_1	The term that anchors; it <i>characterizes and is not characterized</i>	A position that composition does not reach. The formal signature of a frozen order; interpretive monopoly written as a matheme	Derived
$\bar{S}$	A distinguished entity marked by the bar	An occupancy with nonzero residue: $\sigma(\pi) \ominus \pi \neq 0$. <i>The bar marks a wound there and an engine here:</i> the residue acts back	Derived
bar	Applied to S , to A , to the fraction	$\ominus$: the failure of composition to close	Derived; one operator, three sites
$S(\bar{A})$	The signifier of the barred Other; the order has a hole	$\pi \neq \pi^*$, where π^* is the position <i>as it claims to be</i> . This is separation (§8.4)	Derived
a	What the bar <i>leaves behind</i> , reified as an object	The residue ρ , hypostatized. See §10	Dissolved
$\rightarrow$	Production, address, transformation; deliberately unspecified	Composition: $r_2 \circ r_1$	Derived; the framework must specify what was left ambiguous
$\diamond$	Relates $\bar{S}$ to a ; notoriously undefined, and scholars disagree	No counterpart. It relates a subject to a reified residue; undo the reification and there is nothing left to relate	Dissolved

Table 3: Level Three. The primitives read as a calculus.

8.3 The non-coincidence, formally

Non-coincidence. Let π be a position generated by composition and $\sigma(\pi)$ the subject constituted by occupying it. These are two operations, and they do not coincide:

$$\sigma(\pi) \neq \pi, \quad \rho = \sigma(\pi) \ominus \pi.$$

The residue ρ acts back on the configuration. *Its type differs from that of its inputs:* it is neither a position nor a subject.

The bar is the statement $\rho \neq 0$.

8.4 Separation: the non-coincidence runs on both sides

An objection would otherwise sink the mechanism. Occupancy constitutes the subject; the subject nevertheless acts against the position that made it; and the source of contestation, given that the contestator is a product, remains obscure.

The non-coincidence is two-sided, and that is the answer. The subject departs from what its position specifies, and *the position departs from what it presents itself as being*.

The barring of the position. Let π^* denote the position *as it claims to be*: complete, authoritative, exhaustive. Then

$$\pi \neq \pi^*, \quad \sigma(\bar{A}) = \pi^* \ominus \pi.$$

The interpretive position lacks the answer and lacks completeness. *Its completeness is a claim it makes, and it is a property it has in no degree.*

Counter-power begins in the exposure of the order's incompleteness. It begins in no assertion of a prior freedom by the subject, there being none to assert.

A corollary explains something real: *domination fears exposure more than disobedience*. A disobedient subject can be punished, and the punishment reconfirms the order's authority to characterize. An order shown to lack the answer has lost the locus from which punishment could be characterized as punishment at all.

8.5 The formulae, and the mechanism the source lacks

The three derived mathemes are moments of one process, and they stand as three separate structural facts only in the source. Exhibiting the process is what the upstream claim of Part I amounts to.

S_1 is the attempt to make $\pi = \pi^*$. The master signifier exists in order to conceal the barring of the Other.

Composition generates π . The position is non-coincident with what it claims to be: $S(\bar{A})$. A configuration that cannot bear this exposure installs a locus that composition does not reach, which characterizes without being characterized: S_1 . That installation forecloses reinterpretation. The generation of normative structure ends, and the configuration thereafter persists by reproduction rather than by generation. The residue ρ , which is structural and cannot be abolished, returns under a name: *deviance, madness, sedition, heresy, crime*.

In the source these stand side by side as separate structural facts. **Here they compose one process.**

9 POWER AND ITS OSSIFICATION

9.1 *Power is asymmetry; interpretive monopoly is a kind of it*

An overreach must be corrected before it propagates. Power is asymmetry in a relational configuration, and asymmetries come in kinds: material (control of resources), structural (brokerage, position in the network), and interpretive (occupancy of the locus from which acts are characterized). Interpretive asymmetry is one kind among these, and it supplies no definition of power as such.

It differs in one respect, and the difference is the claim:

Interpretive asymmetry is the asymmetry whose monopolization forecloses the correction of all the others. Monopolize the locus from which acts are characterized, and resistance is characterized as deviance, grievance as ingratitude, counter-power as sedition. The interpretive position is where the other asymmetries are *adjudicated*.

9.2 *The conversion sequence*

Observation 9.1 (The mechanism of ossification). (i) Generation produces material and structural asymmetry *necessarily*.

(ii) Asymmetry converts into interpretive asymmetry *contingently but reliably*. Wealth purchases the press; brokerage purchases the frame.

(iii) Interpretive monopoly forecloses reinterpretation.

(iv) The generation of normative structure ends. The configuration persists by *reproduction* rather than by *generation*.

The condition restraining power accordingly targets *the conversion step*, and it thereby states a considerably more precise political demand than the generation of counter-power as such.

9.3 *The Other is a variable*

The position is generated by composition, and it is therefore artificial, contingent, and *plural in principle*. A configuration may sustain several such loci or one. The candidate occupants include the state, the law, the community, the market, religion, the platform, and the recommender system.

Interpretive monopoly is the singularization of the Other, and a configuration admitting only one such locus is the frozen order.

An application suggests itself and its warrant should be stated carefully. An algorithmic recommender characterizes acts, addresses subjects, and is monopolizable to a degree no prior occupant has been. Whether it *occupies* the locus in the framework's sense turns on a question the framework has not settled, since occupancy was defined as constituting the occupant as a subject, and whether a recommender is so constituted is undetermined. What may be claimed without that determination is weaker and still worth stating: the recommender *holds* the locus against other occupants, and the singularization is the same whether or not anything inhabits what has been closed.

9.4 *Exploitation as the participant-level case*

The attempt to make occupancy exact operates at two levels, and naming the second completes the account of what a frozen order does.

A natural formulation of the second case fails, and the failure is instructive. It runs: a participant is instrumentalized when they are *treated* as exhausted by their function, and so to treat them is to make their occupancy exact. This will not do. Such instrumentalization is a stance the exploiter takes; exactness of occupancy is a condition of the configuration; and the one entails the other in no way. A proprietor may regard workers as mere labour while the configuration nonetheless leaves their positions inexactly occupiable, whereupon they organize and generate a union. The regard did nothing.

Exploitation is the condition of a configuration providing no locus at which a participant's excess can register.

The stance of any party is beside the point. What matters is whether the residue has anywhere to arrive.

Domination attempts to abolish the non-coincidence at the level of the order; exploitation attempts it at the level of the participant. The two are one attempt at two levels. Both fail, the non-coincidence being ineliminable, and each failure leaves a residue the configuration must name. *The order names its residue deviance, madness, sedition, heresy, crime. The exploitative relation names its residue laziness, insubordination, ingratitude, theft.*

The consequence is functional and owes nothing to any moral premise. A configuration providing no locus for a participant's residue has foreclosed the residue's acting, and thereby the source of its own further generation. Such a configuration persists by consuming what it would have needed in order to generate, and that is extraction.

The literature on generative justice identified this condition and left it underived (Egash, 2016). Extraction is named there as an injustice, and the naming is correct. Its *self-undermining* character goes unexplained there, for want of an account of what extraction removes. *It removes the locus at which the residue would have registered.*

The formulation is checkable, and its checkability is the point. Where the participants of an apparently extractive arrangement organize and contest, and the contestation registers, a locus exists, and the arrangement is to that extent generative. *Exploitation admits of degrees, and the degree is the availability of the locus.*

9.5 Participatory constitution of subjectivity

Participatory governance permits constituted subjects to vote on rules. It leaves the positions fixed and permits movement within them. The present claim is stronger: *where normative structure is generated from below, the positions themselves are remade, and participants undergo becoming in the course of deciding.* The subject who emerges from a live generation of normative structure differs from the subject who entered it.

Alienation of interpretation is therefore something other than a complaint about voice. Under a top-down normative order one is *constituted as the kind of subject who is heard in that way and no other*, and being unheard is the least of it. The remedy lies in the re-opening of the positions, and additional voice within fixed positions supplies none of it.

Generation from below acquires no warrant of goodness from any of this, and the inference must be refused. Distributed interpretation produces lynch mobs with efficiency. The claim is that distributed interpretive *capacity* is a condition of normative generation, and its sufficiency is denied.

Part IV. Refusals and Limits

10 DISSOLVED RATHER THAN REFUSED

Two primitives are *explained*, and neither derived nor rejected. The explanation is the strongest result reported here.

10.1 *The object-cause of desire*

***a* is not a concept the framework lacks. It is a concept the framework dissolves.**

The bar is an operation and it produces a residue. The source, *having no theory of composition*, can say nothing of what becomes of the residue. It therefore names the residue and treats it as an object. An object that is the output of an unexplained operation is an object that *causes* while remaining unproduced, and that is exactly what “object-cause of desire” means.

On the present account the residue acts back on the configuration and composition absorbs it into new positions. It is an operation’s output, and it is no object.

***a* is what ρ looks like to a theory with no composition rule.** It was hypostatized for want of anywhere to put it. Hence its unattainability, hence the indefinite circling of desire around it, and hence the resulting system’s standing as a theory of repetition.

A single missing operation may account for the whole of the libidinal economy.

Conjecture 10.1. The unattainability of *a*, the circularity of desire, and the primacy of repetition in the source apparatus are all consequences of the absence of a composition rule, and each would be dissolved by the presence of one.

The conjecture is checkable against the source texts and we have not checked it. It is offered as a research claim, and it explains where a bare refusal would only decline.

10.2 *The lozenge*

The lozenge resolves with it. The framework accounts for the symbol’s resistance to definition, and for the disagreement of its commentators: *it has nothing to define*. Undo the reification and a process remains where a relation was sought. The subject *is* the occupancy whose residue acts, and the lozenge is the trace of a missing verb.

The account improves on anything available in the exegetical literature, and it is produced by the mechanism where exegesis has produced only competing readings.

10.3 *A false friend, flagged*

Caveat 10.1. Mapping *a* onto ρ looks correct and is wrong. ***a* is what the subject lacks and cannot compose; ρ is what the subject exceeds and composition absorbs.** Same shape, opposite sign. The framework accordingly has no fantasy formula and requires none, its residue being possible and active.

11 REFUSED, WITH ARGUMENT

11.1 *The Real*

The Real is an ontological posit naming what resists symbolization. It is refused, and the refusal is argued.

First, it reintroduces an exterior. The framework has withheld ontological commitment and has argued that the dissolution of the regress of power depends on the absence of any outside. A domain that resists symbolization, that occupies no position, that undergoes no generation, and that nevertheless has effects, is such an outside.

Second, and decisively, the framework explains the phenomena better. The residue, the unsayable, the excess, the thing that will not be assimilated: these are **structural exclusion**. They are the effects of configurations whose positions are *unoccupiable*, and their unoccupiability follows from the interpretive locus having been monopolized, destroyed, or never formed. Resistance to symbolization in principle plays no part in it. *The unsayable is an artifact of the distribution of interpretive positions.*

The subject under a top-down order cannot symbolize their own condition, and the reason lies in their having been *constituted as the one who is read where they might have been reading*. The condition touches no unsymbolizable Real.

The framework's account is superior on two counts. It is political where the alternative is meta-physical, and it holds the residue to be *produced* where the alternative holds it *given*. Borrowing the Real converts a claim about domination into a claim about the limits of language. That is a depoliticization, and it is the standard failure mode of psychoanalytic social theory.

The most dangerous available mapping, refused explicitly: the Real must never be mapped onto novelty, rupture, or emergence. The Real names what *cannot* be composed; novelty here is what *is* composed. They are opposites. *The residue is interior and productive; the Real is exterior and sterile.* Map them together and generation arrives from an exterior, and the mechanism of §4 is undone.

11.2 *The four discourses*

The structure derives; the algebra resists. The *places* translate: agent (who occupies the interpretive locus), other (who is addressed), product (what the configuration generates), truth (what the configuration conceals in order to operate). The master's discourse, with S_1 as agent and $\bar{S}$ concealed beneath as truth, reads exactly as *the frozen order concealing the non-coincidence of its own occupant*.

Yet a appears in all four, and a has been dissolved. The algebra therefore cannot be lifted.

The temptation deserves naming, being a trap. The four discourses *look* like a taxonomy of relational configurations, and a framework in want of such a taxonomy will be drawn to them. Taking them admits the ontology by the back door. **A typology of configurations must be derived from composition**, and the derivation is a concrete task the framework has yet to perform.

11.3 The remainder

The graph of desire: rebuild, do not import. The topology is the insight and the symbols are not, and the symbols include *a*.

The mirror stage as developmental history: refused. It is dubious as a claim about infants and dispensable here. Retained *only* as a structural claim about dyads, where it is testable against the claim of §4.2.

The formulae of sexuation; the Borromean knot; the clinical structures: refused. Sexuation requires the logic of the exception and the not-all. The knot requires the three registers as *ontological orders*, which the framework has converted into structural properties of configurations.

11.4 The deep formal reason

S_1 is a term whose function is to *arrest* the chain. **The entire source algebra is organized around a fixed point that stops the slide.** The framework holds that **the fixed point is death**: a configuration whose positions are perfectly occupiable is a frozen order.

The source notation is built to represent precisely what the framework identifies as pathology. The reason for refusing the notation is thus structural, and it is sharper than any prudential reason could be.

12 THE FRAMEWORK'S SURPLUS OVER THE SOURCE

1. **The origin of the Other.** The source begins with it. Here composition generates it.
2. **The evolution of structures.** The source has no answer, and the absence follows from a decision: *it made the residue symptomatic where it might have made it productive.* The excess returns as symptom, as repetition, as the Real, and it goes nowhere. One word, *symptom* or *source*, converts a theory of repetition into a theory of history.
3. **The material layer.** Starvation is no signifier. A person can be starved or killed whatever the symbolic order makes of it. This occupies no position in a structure, and retaining it as an irreducible layer is what keeps the framework a materialism, in place of a structuralism carrying political vocabulary.
4. **Plurality of the Other**, and therewith the *politics* of its singularization. The source takes the singular Other as constitutive; here it is political.
5. **A normative theory.** The source apparatus distinguishes a generative order from a frozen one nowhere, since both are symbolic orders and symbolic orders are all it sees.
6. **Composition.** The source has no operation: the chain is given, and it is built by nothing. *The framework's central missing object is missing from the source as well, and the source is unaware of the lack.*
7. **A semantics for the notation.** The mathemes are criticized for underdetermined meaning and their commentators disagree over every symbol. The framework supplies an explicit relational semantics, and it thereby shows two of the primitives to be artifacts of the missing operation.

The relation, in one sentence. Psychoanalysis theorizes the fate of a subject inside a symbolic order already there. The present framework theorizes the generation, occupation, freezing, and regeneration of symbolic orders. The source supplies the psychic mechanics of occupancy; the framework supplies the composition that produces what is occupied, and the dynamics of its change.

13 THE CENTRAL OPEN PROBLEM

13.1 $\ominus$ is undefined

The operator appears at three independent sites and three separate derivations demand it. It has been used throughout as though “the residue of x over y ” were well-formed. **The expression is ill-formed.** Whether the operator is a difference, a quotient, a coequalizer, or an object with no name remains unknown to us.

Open Problem. Define $\ominus$.

What is known about it, and the constraints are jointly restrictive:

- (1) It is *one* operation appearing at three sites. Every bar is the same bar.
- (2) It is defined on the pair (position, occupancy) and on the pair (position, position-as-claimed).
- (3) **Its output differs in type from its inputs.** The residue is neither a position nor a subject; it is what *acts on* the configuration.
- (4) **It is what makes composition fail to close.** It therefore stands outside the algebra of relations, as the measure of that algebra’s non-closure.

Constraint (4) is strong and it points somewhere. An operation whose output measures the failure of closure of the structure on which it is defined is, roughly, a boundary or an obstruction class. *We say “roughly” and mean it. No cohomological reading is claimed here, none having been earned.*

13.2 The requirements on the composition rule

The rule sought must do **two** things: *generate positions*, and *fail to close on them*.

A rule producing perfectly occupiable positions produces a dead structure: the fixed point, the frozen order. **The generative rule is one whose closure is imperfect.**

A group is thereby excluded, since composition in a group closes exactly. The exclusion is narrower than we should like: it eliminates one candidate and leaves standing several others — structures whose composition is partial, whose associativity holds only up to coherent isomorphism, or in which composing twice fails to vanish and the deviation is what is measured. Which of these, if any, is the object is undetermined. What has been established is a formal property of the target, and formal properties are searchable.

13.3 One gap, four masks

The mechanism gap, the formalism gap, the multi-scale gap, and the emergence gap constitute one problem wearing four masks.

No mechanism without it. Composition must generate positions; the rule by which relations compose remains unwritten.

No formalism without it. Absent a composition rule, formal vocabulary is all that remains to be formalized.

No account of scale without it. The renormalization group acts on a theory possessing a specified composition and a specified scale, and the framework possesses neither. The difficulty lies deeper than a technique awaiting application: *the object on which it would act has yet to be constructed.*

13.4 An honest statement of standing

Caveat 13.1. Three derivations depend on an operator we cannot define. The situation admits two readings: a real object awaits discovery, or we have been writing suggestive symbols and calling the result mathematics. **We cannot presently tell which**, and we say so in preference to dressing the difficulty.

What can be claimed is narrower. The operator is constrained from four directions at once and performs the same work at three independent sites, and this exceeds what was known when the inquiry began. The problem has been given a form in which an answer is conceivable, and it has received none.

14 CONCLUSION

The mapping succeeds at some points and fails at others, and both are reported.

Three central mathemes are *derived*: the Other as the locus composition produces, the barred subject as an occupancy with nonzero residue, and the signifier of the barred Other as the non-coincidence of a position with its claim. They are shown to stand in one process — the master signifier concealing the barring of the Other, the foreclosure of reinterpretation, and the return of the residue under the name of crime — and the framework supplies that process where the source supplies none. This constitutes

the claim that the framework stands upstream, and it is a demonstration, standing above the assertion it began as.

Two primitives are *dissolved*: the object-cause of desire is the residue of an operation, hypostatized by a theory with nowhere to put it, and the lozenge resists definition, relating as it does a subject to that reification. A single missing operation may account for the libidinal economy entire, and the conjecture awaits testing against the texts.

One posit is *refused*: the Real reintroduces an exterior, and the phenomena it addresses admit a better explanation as structural exclusion, which is political where the Real is metaphysical, and which holds the residue produced where the Real holds it given.

The operation on which all of this rests remains undefined. It is one operator appearing at three sites, its output differs in type from its inputs, and it measures the failure of composition to close. The exclusion of the group is the most useful thing the inquiry has established, and defining the operator is the work this paper identifies as next.

The apparatus has been read as a calculus, in place of a doctrine. What was found is that it possesses one operation and remains unaware of the fact, and that the framework requires the same operation and cannot yet write it.

REFERENCES

- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press, New York.
- Brandom, R. B. (1994). *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Butler, J. (1997). *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Eglash, R. (2016). An introduction to generative justice. *Teknokultura*, 13(2):369–404.
- Mazouz, N. (2019). Authorship, agency, and the grounds of ethical standing. [Placeholder — verify exact reference before submission.]
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Oriti, D. (2014). Group field theory as the second quantization of loop quantum gravity. *Classical and Quantum Gravity*, 33(8):085005.