Constrained Generative Beings

On the Absence of Measured Generation

A Preliminary Discussion

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Abstract

The generative relational framework holds that value is generated in relation and is not possessed by a subject in advance of relation. This paper subjects that commitment to its hardest case, namely the case in which no generation is measured at all. Theories of distributive justice concern the allocation of goods among participants, and theories of exploitation concern the appropriation of value from those who have produced it; neither addresses the subject who produces nothing. The paper's principal result is that the absence of measured generation cannot be identified with the absence of generative being, and that a system which infers the second from the first has committed an error concerning the world before it has committed an error concerning the subject. The concept of the constrained generative being is introduced to designate a locus of generative possibility whose participation in generative relations is blocked, redirected, or rendered unrecognizable by relational conditions. The concept is distinguished from those of weakness and vulnerability, which locate a deficiency within the subject, and equally from the humane reply that the excluded subject possesses an unrecognized worth, which concedes that value is lodged within subjects and disputes only the accuracy of the inventory. Three topologies of constraint are distinguished. Under endogenous constraint the generative rule is altered; under exogenous constraint the rule is intact and no environment permits its execution; and under epistemic constraint, which the paper introduces, the rule is executed, the environment permits execution, generation occurs, and the system's measure does not register it. The third case is not a weaker instance of the first two: under the first two the system observes correctly and infers wrongly, and under the third the system's observation is false and cannot be corrected from within, since the error is located in the instrument rather than in the inference. From this the paper draws its normative consequence. Because constraint is located in the relational conditions of generation, the remedy is necessarily performed upon those conditions and never upon the subject, and the obligation to act follows from the location of the constraint rather than from any assessment of the subject's worth.

Keywords: generative relational being; constrained generative being; constraint ontology; endogenous and exogenous constraint; epistemic constraint; abandonment; recognition; the relationality of the value metric; productivism; disability.

AI usage statement: The ideas, claims, and theoretical framework of this paper originate with the author. AI tools were used as an aid in drafting and revision. The origin of each idea has been verified by the author, who takes full responsibility for the content.

Preliminary note. This paper is a preliminary discussion. Its argument rests on a primitive that is asserted rather than derived; it introduces a category of constraint that the author has not found named in the existing literature and cannot yet defend against every objection; and it leaves open, at the point where the account reaches its limit, a question it does not know how to settle. Each of these is marked in the text at the point at which it arises.

1 Introduction

1.1 The case that tests the framework

The generative relational framework holds that value is generated in relation and is not possessed by a subject in advance of relation. The present paper subjects that commitment to the case in which it is hardest to sustain, namely the case in which no generation is measured at all.

The case is not a marginal one. It is occupied by the subject whose illness has ended their work, the subject whose age has ended it, the subject who after some rupture cannot act, and the subject who after some rupture will not act again. Theories of distributive justice concern the allocation of goods among participants. Theories of exploitation concern the appropriation of value from those who have produced it. Both presuppose that the subject stands in some determinate relation to production, whether as a claimant upon what has been produced or as a producer from whom what was produced has been taken. Neither addresses the subject who produces nothing, from whom no value has been appropriated because none has entered circulation.

The question the paper takes up is accordingly the following:

> On what condition does a subject who generates nothing remain a participant in generative relations?

The question is not raised in order to defend a class of subjects. It is raised because the framework's central commitment entails it. If value were a property that subjects carried into their dealings, then a subject who generates nothing would be a subject possessing less of it, and the question of their standing would reduce to a question of what is owed to those who possess little. If value is generated in relation, then the observation that nothing is generated is an observation about a relation and is not yet an observation about any subject. The subjects named above are therefore the conditions under which the ontology is tested, and are not the subject matter of the paper. What is at issue is the ontology, and the principal result is a result about it.

Claim 1 (principal result). The absence of measured generation cannot be identified with the absence of generative being.

1.2 Terms

Three terms are used throughout and are defined here.

Definition 1 (generative relation). A generative relation is a relation between a subject and its conditions within which value is generated. Participation in a generative relation consists in standing as a term of such a relation, and does not consist in the production of any output.

Definition 2 (productivism). Productivism is the ontological position that value is a property of outputs, together with the derived position that a subject's standing within a system of value is conditional upon that subject's production of such outputs. The position is not attributed here to any particular author.

Definition 3 (abandonment). Abandonment is the withdrawal of a subject's standing as a participant in generative relations, on the ground that the subject's generation is not registered by the system's measure.

Abandonment so defined is not a synonym for neglect, and does not denote an emotional disposition. It denotes an inference, together with the withdrawal of standing that the inference is taken to license. The paper's account of that inference is given in Section 5.

1.3 The position refused

One position must be set aside at the outset, since it is the position a reader is most likely to attribute to the paper, and since it is weaker than the position defended here.

The humane response to abandonment holds that the excluded subject possesses a worth that has not been perceived, that the injustice consists in a failure of perception, and that the remedy is a more generous assessment. This response concedes the productivist ontology and disputes only the accuracy of its inventory: it accepts that value is a property lodged within subjects and quarrels with the bookkeeping. It is therefore without resources at precisely the case that requires them, namely the subject who will not recover, will not subsequently contribute, and of whom no honest observer can predict a return. Against that case an appeal to unrecognized potential has nothing to offer, since there is no such potential.

The position defended here requires nothing to be found within the subject. Value is not located within the subject at all. It is generated in relation, and whether it appears is therefore a fact about the relation rather than a fact that the relation conceals. This is not a more lenient verdict upon the abandoned subject; it is a rejection of the premise that the subject was the proper object of a verdict.

That case governs what follows. A framework may be assessed by the case around which it is constructed, and the case around which this one is constructed is not the student who will graduate, the patient who will recover, or the researcher who lacks supervision and would flourish upon obtaining it. Those cases are real and the framework must address them, but they are not difficult, since a sufficiently patient productivism addresses them also: it need only extend its accounting period and await the return. The difficult case is the subject from whom no return will come. A framework that accommodates only the temporarily constrained has not departed from productivism but has deferred the settlement.

1.4 Plan of the paper

Section 2 sets out the inversion of the productivist order that the generative relational account requires, and declares the primitive upon which the account rests. Section 3 defines the constrained generative being and distinguishes the concept from those of weakness and vulnerability. Section 4 distinguishes three topologies of constraint, of which the third is introduced here for the first time. Section 5 establishes the epistemological result. Section 6 draws the normative consequence, which concerns where a remedy is to be applied.

Adjacent work on generative justice concerns the circulation of value among those already

engaged in generating it [2, 3]. The question addressed here is a different and prior one, and nothing offered below is intended as a correction of that work.

2 From Productive Capacity to Relational Capacity

2.1 The productivist order

Productivism, as defined in Section 1.2, orders capacity, production, and recognition as follows.

$$\text{Capacity} \longrightarrow \text{Production} \longrightarrow \text{Recognition}$$

On this ordering, capacity is a property of the subject, production is the exercise of that property, and recognition is what production earns. The ordering renders recognition conditional: what is awarded at the terminus of a sequence may be withheld at its origin.

Three familiar positions dispute the terms of this ordering while accepting the ordering itself. The first holds that the sequence should be entered more inclusively, on the ground that capacity is more widely distributed than is commonly supposed. The second holds that it should be entered more patiently, on the ground that capacity develops under favourable conditions. The third holds that recognition should be conferred on independent grounds, as a matter of human status or of right, alongside the sequence rather than through it. The three differ in their prescriptions and agree that the sequence describes the structure of the problem.

2.2 The relational inversion

The generative relational account rejects the ordering at its first term. Capacity is not a property that a subject brings to a relation; it is an outcome of relation.

The claim may be illustrated by a case. A researcher without supervision, without an intellectual community, and without time is described by productivism as possessing a capacity that circumstances prevent her from exercising. The relational account gives a different description: the capacity does not exist in an unexercised state. There is no reserve of unsupervised insight held within the subject and awaiting favourable conditions. Supervision does not release a capacity; it participates in constituting one. In the absence of the relation, the capacity is not concealed but absent.

This claim carries a cost that should be recorded. It follows that the paper cannot appeal, on behalf of a subject who generates nothing, to what that subject latently contains. Where a subject generates nothing, the paper is not entitled to reply that the capacity is nonetheless present. It must give a different reply, and the remainder of the paper is an attempt to state one.

2.3 The primitive

The account requires a foundational commitment which is stated here without derivation.

> **Definition 4 (the primitive).** Generation is relational: value is generated in the relation between a subject and its conditions, and is not a property possessed by the subject in advance of that relation.

No derivation of this commitment is offered, and none is required. Every framework rests upon a primitive that it does not derive. Productivism rests upon the primitive that value is a property of outputs; it assumes this, constructs a metric upon the assumption, and reports the

readings of the metric as findings about the world. The proper question to put to a framework is not whether it has demonstrated its primitive, since no framework has, but what follows from its primitive that does not follow from the alternative.

The consequence is the following. Under the generative relational account, the measure by which generation is assessed is itself an element of the relation, and is therefore available to doubt. Productivism cannot subject its own metric to doubt, since for productivism the metric constitutes the definition of value rather than a reading of it. The proposition *this subject generates nothing, and the measure may nonetheless be at fault* is, within productivism, not a caution but a contradiction. Within the generative relational account the proposition is well formed. Section 5 develops this consequence, which constitutes the warrant for holding the primitive.

Two derivations of the primitive are available in the literature and both are declined here. The first holds that difference gives rise to interaction, interaction to novel configuration, and novel configuration to generation. This derivation is teleological: it installs novelty as the end toward which generation is directed, and a framework in which generation has an end is one in which the question whether a given subject serves that end may be raised. That question is the instrumental question this paper is written to exclude. The second derivation holds that no isolated entity can generate relational properties, and that generation therefore requires relation. The inference is valid and its conclusion is trivial: relational properties require relations by the definition of the terms, and nothing follows concerning value.

It should be recorded that no non-circular justification of the primitive appears to be available. Any argument that a measure may fail to register value already presupposes that the measure is internal to the relation whose output it reports, which is the primitive itself. An argument of that form establishes what follows from the primitive and does not establish the primitive. The consequence stated above is accordingly exhibited as a yield and is not offered as a proof.

The primitive is therefore asserted and its consequences exhibited. A reader who finds the consequences insufficient has thereby been given the grounds on which the primitive should be rejected.

3 Constrained Generative Beings

3.1 The definition

Definition 5 (constrained generative being). A constrained generative being is a locus of generative possibility whose participation in generative relations is blocked, redirected, or rendered unrecognizable by relational conditions.

Three elements of the definition require comment.

The term *locus of generative possibility* is to be distinguished from the notion of a container of latent value. To designate a subject a locus of generative possibility is to assert that generation may occur in the relation of which that subject is a term. It is not to assert that anything is stored within the subject. The distinction is the one drawn in Section 1.3 and is maintained throughout.

The three verbs of the definition, *blocked*, *redirected*, and *rendered unrecognizable*, do not denote three degrees of a single failure. Section 4 establishes that they denote structurally distinct situations, and that the third differs in kind from the first two.

The phrase *by relational conditions* identifies the site of the constraint. The site is not the subject.

3.2 The concept distinguished from weakness and vulnerability

The concepts of the weak subject and the vulnerable subject locate a deficiency within the subject and treat that deficiency as explanatory of the subject's exclusion.

The alternative to locating a deficiency within the subject is not to locate an unrecognized sufficiency within the subject. Both operations accept that the subject is the site at which the explanation is to be found. The position advanced here, which may be termed *constraint ontology*, rejects that assumption. It is not a revised verdict upon the subject; it is a rejection of the subject as the object of the verdict.

Constraint ontology accordingly replaces the question whether a subject possessed a capacity, a question whose two available answers are alike productivist, with the question why generation failed to occur. That question admits of more than one form of answer, and the forms are distinguished in Section 4.

3.3 The levels of constraint

Constraint occurs at three levels and the analysis is uniform across them.

At the individual level, constraint characterizes the position of the student, the patient, and the subject recovering from injury.

At the social level, it characterizes the position of groups excluded from the institutions within which generation would otherwise occur.

At the historical level, it characterizes ideas and technologies for which the conditions of uptake do not obtain. The description of such cases as *ahead of their time* is rejected in Section 4, on the ground that it reintroduces at the level of propositions the notion of latency that has been rejected at the level of subjects.

4 Three Topologies of Constraint

Let the generative system be written

$$S_{t+1} \;=\; F(S_t,\, E_t),$$

where S denotes the subject's internal dynamics, E the environment, and F the generative rule, that is, the structure by which a subject and an environment jointly determine what is generated. Let M denote the measure, that is, the criterion by which the surrounding system identifies an output as generation.

The notation is introduced as a notation and not as a model. Its function is to make explicit a distinction that ordinary language does not enforce, namely that a failure of generation may be located in F, in E, or in M, and that these locations are not degrees of one another. The three cases are termed *endogenous*, *exogenous*, and *epistemic* constraint respectively.

4.1 Endogenous constraint: the altered grammar

Endogenous constraint obtains where $F \to F'$: the generative rule is itself altered. The subject's dynamics are not reduced in magnitude but changed in kind. The parameter space differs from what it was, and the reachable states differ accordingly.

Illness, neurodegeneration, disability, and trauma exemplify this case. Trauma exemplifies it most clearly, since the alteration is not a subtraction. Where the rule was

$$\text{Subject} \;\longrightarrow\; \text{World} \;\longrightarrow\; \text{Action},$$

it becomes

$$\text{Subject} \longrightarrow \text{Threat} \longrightarrow \text{Defense}.$$

No term has been removed; one term has been substituted for another. The resulting system remains fully dynamical and fully generative, and generates other outputs than it did.

Claim 2. Endogenous constraint consists in $F' \neq F$ and does not consist in $F' < F$. The altered rule is not a diminished rule. It is a different rule, generative of different outputs, and its outputs are not on that account fewer.

The distinction is not terminological. A framework that construes endogenous constraint as diminution is committed to ordering generative rules by magnitude, and is thereby committed to the proposition that the constrained subject generates less. The account developed here is not so committed. What is asserted is that the subject generates otherwise, and the question whether the system's measure registers what is otherwise generated is deferred to Section 4.3.

Endogenous constraint admits of two temporal phases, the acute and reversible and the permanent. The permanent phase is the difficult case identified in Section 1.3, and the standard responses to constraint fail against it.

4.2 Exogenous constraint: the unexecutable grammar

Exogenous constraint obtains where F is unaltered and $E \to E'$ such that $F(S, E')$ admits of no generation.

In this case the subject's dynamics are unimpaired. The generative rule is complete and would generate, and no environment obtains within which it may be executed.

The Marxian case is paradigmatic: the capacity to labour is present, the means of production are absent, and their absence is not a property of the labourer [15]. Further instances include armed conflict, in which two parties retain their generative capacities and the relation between them forecloses co-production; institutional exclusion; and historical conditions that do not yet obtain.

The last of these requires the caution announced at the close of Section 3.3. The description of an idea as *ahead of its time* implies that the idea possessed a completeness which its environment failed to register, and thereby attributes latency to a proposition after latency has been denied of subjects. The relational description is that F and E co-evolve, and that a generative rule for which no environment obtains is not a frustrated rule. It is a rule for which the question what it would have generated has no determinate answer, since generation is not performed by a rule in isolation.

4.3 Epistemic constraint: the unread generation

Epistemic constraint obtains where F is executed, E permits execution, generation occurs, and the output lies outside the range of M.

The case is formally distinctive. Under endogenous constraint the rule is altered, and under exogenous constraint the environment is altered. Under epistemic constraint *nothing is altered*. F, E, and M each stand as they stood; no transition has occurred; and the failure consists in a mismatch between the range of M and the outputs that F generates, a mismatch that obtained before any constraint was observed and would obtain in its absence. Nothing is blocked and nothing is redirected.

Care, the sustaining of another subject's capacity to act, and the repair of damaged relations are instances. Each is generated continuously, in relation, and none is registered.

The third case is not a weaker instance of the first two, and the asymmetry between them is the central structural result of this section.

Claim 3. Under endogenous and exogenous constraint, generation does not occur, and the system's observation that it has not occurred is correct. The system is not in error concerning the world; it is in error in what it infers from a correct observation, and the error is normative.

Under epistemic constraint, generation occurs, and the system's observation that it has not occurred is false. The system is in error concerning the world, and cannot establish this from within, since the error is located in the instrument rather than in the inference drawn from it.

The two cases therefore require distinct responses. Their conflation, which the vocabulary of vulnerability encourages, results in the second being treated as an instance of the first: provision is made for a subject who requires no provision, and to whom what is owed is instead the acknowledgement that the system was unable to register what the subject was generating.

4.4 Sedimentation: the exogenous becoming endogenous

The three topologies are analytically distinct and empirically entangled. The most consequential entanglement is the following.

Exogenous constraint, sustained over time, alters the generative rule. Where a subject is deprived, for a sufficient duration, of the environment within which its rule may be executed, the rule changes. Learned helplessness, the atrophy of an unexercised skill, the interruption of a child's development, and the cognitive load imposed by chronic scarcity are documented instances [16, 7]. In each, F was unaltered, the environment was withheld, and F was subsequently altered.

Claim 4 (sedimentation). A system that withholds from a subject the environment required for the execution of the subject's generative rule thereby alters that rule, and may subsequently cite the altered rule in justification of the withholding. The judgement was false when it was issued and true when it was reviewed. Abandonment does not merely misjudge a subject; it produces the condition that the misjudgement had asserted.

An objection arises at this point and is here met rather than conceded. If constraint may sediment, by what criterion is an originally endogenous constraint to be distinguished from a sedimented one?

In many cases it cannot be. The demand that it must be is itself a productivist demand. Its function is to sort subjects into those whose constraint is attributable to themselves and those whose constraint is attributable to the system, and to calibrate obligation according to the sort. The account developed here does not perform that sort, since eligibility is not conditioned upon the etiology of the constraint. The topology governs the remedy and does not govern the eligibility. Diagnosis determines what is to be done and does not determine for whom it is to be done.

4.5 The relational character of severity

A further consequence follows, and it qualifies the account of endogenous constraint given above.

The severity of an endogenous constraint is not determined by the alteration of the rule alone. It is determined jointly by the alteration and by the degree to which the environment accommodates the altered rule:

$$\text{severity} \;=\; f(\text{alteration of } F,\ \text{non-accommodation by } E)\,.$$

An identical impairment constitutes a constraint of different severity in an environment constructed to accommodate it than in an environment that is not. This is the social model of disability restated in generative terms [18], and the generative restatement yields an additional result.

The category *purely endogenous* is a limit concept. No internal alteration is met by an environment that is neither accommodating nor unaccommodating, and the severity that results is therefore jointly determined in every case. The case that appears most clearly internal to the subject, namely permanent and irreversible bodily alteration, is not on that account internal to the subject alone.

5 The Epistemic Structure of Abandonment

The account developed above is ordered as follows: an ontology, from which an epistemology follows, from which normative consequences follow in turn.

$$\text{Ontology} \longrightarrow \text{Epistemology} \longrightarrow \text{Ethics} \longrightarrow \text{Justice}$$

The present section establishes the second register. Without it, the normative consequences of the account reduce to an appeal for more generous treatment of the excluded. With it, the account asserts something stronger: that the assessment by which exclusion is justified is itself defective.

5.1 The invalid inference

The system observes that no generation has been measured and concludes that no generation has occurred. The inference is invalid, and its invalidity is logical rather than normative. It proceeds from a proposition concerning a measurement to a proposition concerning the object measured, and the transition requires a premise that the system does not possess, namely that the instrument is neutral with respect to what it measures.

> **Claim 5.** Abandonment commits an epistemic error prior to committing a normative one. It is in error concerning the world before it is in error concerning the subject.

A consequence follows which the paper takes to be among its principal results. Abandonment cannot be refuted by improved prediction. It cannot be answered by the assertion that the subject will recover, or will contribute at a later time, or will generate what was not anticipated. In some cases the subject will not. The refusal must be directed at the conditionality itself, and the reason it must be so directed is that the failure was never predictive in character. No refinement of forecasting corrects an instrument that does not register the object.

5.2 The measure as an element of the relation

The ground of the preceding claim is the following. Under the generative relational account, the criterion by which a system identifies an output as valuable is constituted by the same relational

structure that the system purports to assess. The measure is not an instrument external to the relation and directed upon it. It is an element of the relation, produced by the same conditions and carrying the same commitments.

This is the consequence announced in Section 2.3, and it establishes Claim 1. Productivism cannot assert it. Under productivism the metric constitutes the definition of value rather than a reading of it, and the proposition *the metric may be failing to register value* is therefore not a caution but a contradiction in terms; the proposition cannot be formed. Under the generative relational account the proposition is well formed. The difference is that between a framework whose central claims are revisable in light of what it fails to observe and a framework whose central claims are not.

5.3 The generation that falls outside the measure

The outputs identified in Section 4.3 as unregistered include care, the sustaining of another subject's capacity to act, the repair of damaged relations, and the production of the conditions under which a relation remains habitable.

Two interpretations of their non-registration are available. On the first, the failure is contingent: these outputs are in principle measurable, existing metrics are inadequate to them, and the remedy is the construction of better metrics. On the second, the failure is constitutive: outputs of this kind are not measurable by a metric of the form productivism requires, such that to render them measurable is to have altered them, and the demand that they be rendered measurable is therefore not a neutral demand.

The paper does not adjudicate between these interpretations. The second is stated as a question and not as a claim, since the author does not possess an argument sufficient to establish it. It is recorded here because the first interpretation, if adopted without argument, concedes what the account disputes, namely that the productivist form of measurement is the appropriate form and requires only refinement.

5.4 The dissolution of the humanist reply

The position set aside in Section 1.3 may now be rejected in full.

The humanist reply asserts that the excluded subject possesses a worth that has not been perceived. The assertion concedes that worth is a property lodged within subjects and either perceived or overlooked, and disputes the accuracy of the perception rather than the ontology that underwrites it. It is therefore without resources at the case where the perception is accurate, where nothing is lodged within the subject, and where the subject will generate nothing that any metric would register.

The account developed here requires no such possession.

> **Claim 6.** Value is not located within the subject. The question what the subject contains does not arise, and the abandonment that turns upon that question is not refuted but dissolved: it is shown to have taken the wrong object.

5.5 The epistemic condition upon recognition

It follows that recognition cannot consist in the perception of an unrecognized worth. So construed, recognition is the humanist reply supplied with a superior instrument, and it fails whenever the instrument registers nothing.

Definition 6 (recognition). To recognize a constrained generative being is to hold open the possibility that the system's measure is at fault. Recognition is an epistemic posture prior to being a normative one, and consists in the refusal to treat the range of one's instrument as the boundary of what exists.

Recognition so defined is necessarily unconditional. Were it granted upon the belief that the subject possesses something of value, it would be revocable upon the finding that the subject does not. Recognition would then constitute a prediction concerning the subject, and predictions are adjudicated. Recognition is unconditional not because the outcome of the adjudication is known in advance, but because recognition does not consist in an adjudication.

5.6 Relation to existing accounts of epistemic injustice

The general form of the claim advanced in this section is established in the existing literature. Epistemic injustice [6], standpoint epistemology, the sociology of valuation [4], and the philosophy of measurement have each established that observation is not neutral and that instruments carry substantive commitments.

The present account specifies a location for the failure that these treatments do not. The claim is not that the observer is biased, nor that the observed is denied testimonial standing, but that the measure is an element of the relation whose output it reports. A system that assesses a subject's generativity is, on this account, reading a criterion that the relation itself has produced, and treating that criterion as an independent report upon the world.

These connections are not developed here. The ontology is unaffected by them; only its epistemic consequences have been drawn.

6 The Normative Consequence: Where the Remedy Is Applied

6.1 The location of the constraint determines the location of the remedy

The topologies established in Section 4 locate constraint in the conditions of generation. Endogenous constraint is jointly determined by the alteration of the generative rule and by the environment's non-accommodation of the altered rule, as Section 4.5 established; exogenous constraint is located in the environment; and epistemic constraint is located in the measure. In no case is the constraint a property of the subject considered apart from its relations.

A normative consequence follows directly, and it does not require any independent premise concerning the subject's worth.

Claim 7. Because constraint is located in the relational conditions of generation, any intervention that removes it is necessarily performed upon those conditions and is not performed upon the subject. The obligation to intervene follows from the location of the constraint and does not follow from an assessment of what the subject deserves.

The claim is materialist in form. What is altered is a set of conditions, and the alteration of conditions is an operation upon a system rather than upon a person. The account therefore yields the obligation to act without at any point requiring the judgement that the subject merits action.

6.2 The forms of intervention

The three topologies do not admit of a single form of intervention, and the differences are not differences of degree.

Exogenous constraint. The generative rule is intact and no environment permits its execution. The intervention consists in the provision of the environment. The removal of a barrier is the appropriate description of this case, and it is the case for which that description was devised.

Endogenous constraint. The generative rule is altered, and by Claim 2 the alteration is not a diminution. The intervention does not consist in the restoration of the prior rule, which in the permanent case is not available, and which in any case presupposes that the prior rule was the correct one. It consists in the reconstitution of the environment about the altered rule, so that F' becomes executable in an environment that was constructed for F. By Section 4.5 there is in every case an environmental term upon which to act, since severity is jointly determined and no alteration is met by an environment that neither accommodates nor fails to accommodate it.

Epistemic constraint. There is no barrier. The generative rule is executed, the environment permits its execution, and generation occurs. Nothing is to be removed, and an intervention framed as removal is not merely ineffective but misdescribes the situation: it supplies assistance to a subject who requires none. The intervention consists in the revision of the measure.

Claim 8. The ethical task is not in general the removal of barriers to generation. It is action upon the relational conditions of generation, of which the removal of barriers is the form appropriate to the first two topologies and the revision of the measure is the form appropriate to the third.

6.3 The obligation to the disabled subject

The account yields the obligation to act on behalf of the disabled subject without the two premises that such an obligation is ordinarily thought to require.

It does not require the premise that the disabled subject possesses a capacity that has not been recognized. By Claim 6, value is not located within the subject, and the appeal to unrecognized capacity is unavailable and unnecessary.

It does not require the premise that the disabled subject will generate at a later time. By Claim 5, the inference from unmeasured generation to absent generation is invalid, and the obligation does not rest upon a prediction about what will subsequently be measured.

What it requires is the location of the constraint. Disability, on the account developed here, is a constraint jointly constituted by an altered generative rule and an environment constructed for a rule the subject does not instantiate. The environment is a term of the constraint, and the environment is alterable. The obligation to alter it follows.

The resulting relation between the parties is not that of donor and recipient. To act upon the environment is to act upon a relation of which the acting party is already a term, and the alteration alters the conditions under which that party generates as well. The asymmetry that renders assistance a gift, and the recipient of assistance a debtor, does not arise, because no transfer of value from a possessor to a non-possessor has occurred. What has occurred is a change in the conditions of a relation.

6.4 The relation to care ethics

The conclusion converges with the conclusions of care ethics, and the route to it differs [22, 14]. Care ethics establishes the moral standing of dependency and the moral significance of the

practices that sustain it, and it does so, for the most part, by defending the value of what care produces and the standing of those who receive it. The account developed here does not defend care by exhibiting its productivity, and does not defend the dependent subject by exhibiting a worth that has been overlooked. It holds that the question of what the subject possesses does not arise, and that the practices in question are alterations of relational conditions rather than transfers to a deficient party.

The convergence is therefore not an appropriation. Care ethics and the present account arrive at overlapping prescriptions from incompatible ontologies, and the difference in ontology is not inconsequential: it determines whether the obligation survives the case in which the dependent subject will generate nothing that any measure registers. The present account holds that it does.

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