The Gift and the Generative Relational Foundations of Diplomacy

A Preliminary Discussion Paper

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Abstract

States perform acts the available accounts of cooperation cannot price: the apology, the state visit, the disaster relief dispatched to a rival. Realism reads these as interest in disguise, rationalist institutionalism as reputational investment, the theory of soft power as influence purchased cheaply. All three are accounts of exchange, and none explains the observation that such acts fail when performed transactionally, and that the parties can tell.

That the gift creates relation beyond exchange is inherited here from Mauss and not claimed. What is claimed is a mechanism. Mauss explains the bond by obligation, and obligation presupposes an order that binds; the received symbolic account explains it by transmission, and transmission presupposes a shared code. The society of states supplies neither, and both accounts fail in the case for which Mauss himself most conspicuously invoked his. The constitutive act lies where neither looks, in the reading of the recipient that precedes the giving and determines its form, so that the wrong gift demonstrates that the relation was never entered. A gift, on the account offered, provides a position at which the recipient's excess can register, and a criterion of four conditions distinguishes the gift that opens a circulation from the gift that installs a hierarchy. Diplomacy is chosen because it is the case in which the gift must operate without a shared code and without a third position from which the parties could be characterized, which is the configuration this programme holds incapable of generating normative structure. Whether the gift generates that position or merely conceals force is left to the archive.

Keywords: gift; diplomacy; anarchy; recognition; generative justice; relational theory of international relations.

Part I. The Anomaly

1 The Transactional Anomaly

Consider a class of diplomatic acts. A head of government kneels at a memorial in a country his own state destroyed. A state dispatches rescue teams to a rival struck by earthquake. Two states exchange collections of manuscripts, or orchestras, or football teams. A foreign minister travels a long distance to be present at a funeral. A state extends recognition to another that has just come into being and can offer nothing in return.

The available accounts have three ways of handling these. Realism treats them as cheap talk, costless signalling that conveys no information and constrains no future conduct, or as interest in disguise, the material return concealed and awaiting discovery. Rationalist institutionalism treats them as investment in reputation, an asset that will be drawn upon in future bargaining. The theory of soft power treats them as influence purchased at low cost, attraction substituting for coercion in the production of preferred outcomes (Nye, 2004).

Each of these is an account of exchange. Each holds that the act is undertaken because a return is expected, and each differs from the others only in the currency of the return.

The anomaly is not that such acts occur, which any of the three accounts can accommodate. The anomaly is that the acts fail when they are performed transactionally, and that the parties can tell. An apology offered in order to secure a trade concession is not received as an apology; it is received as a bid, and it does not do the work an apology does. Relief dispatched with a press delegation attached is read as what it is. The gift that is visibly given for its return produces no relation, and the actors involved, who are not naive, know this and act on it. They conceal the interest where interest exists, and the concealment is not hypocrisy alone. It is a recognition that the mechanism requires the concealment in order to operate at all, which is a fact about the mechanism.

An account of exchange cannot register this. On an account of exchange, a transaction openly conducted is a transaction efficiently conducted, and the visibility of the return should improve the arrangement rather than destroy it.

2 What This Paper Inherits

That the gift creates relation beyond exchange is not the claim of this paper. It is the settled result of a literature, and the paper builds on it.

Mauss established that the gift is a total social fact and not a transfer, that it is governed by three obligations, to give, to receive, and to reciprocate, and that these obligations are not contractual and are enforced by no court (Mauss, 1925). Later work established that the gift must continue to circulate and that value which ceases to move ceases to be a gift (Hyde, 1983),

that reciprocity is a mode of integration distinct from market exchange (Polanyi, 1944), and that the historical record of obligation without enforcement is far larger than the record of contract (Graeber, 2011). The theory of generative justice established the condition on which the present paper's criterion rests. Its definition has three clauses: the universal right to generate unalienated value and to participate directly in its benefits; the right of value generators to create their own conditions of production; and the right of communities of value generation to nurture self-sustaining paths for its circulation (Eglash, 2016). Unalienated value is defined there recursively, as that which makes possible further just and sustainable generation, so that what circulates is not a quantity of value alone and includes the capacity by which value is generated. The recursion, and the requirement that generators be positioned to create their own conditions of production, are Eglash's and are relied upon at several points below.

None of this is original here, and stating so costs the paper nothing. What follows takes these as given and asks a question they leave open.

3 The Question

The question. The gift is not exchange, and the gift is a technology of hierarchy at least as often as it is a foundation of trust. Tribute is a gift. Reparations are a gift. Aid is a gift. What distinguishes the gift that opens a circulation from the gift that installs a hierarchy?

The question is asked in the diplomatic case, and the choice is defended in Part V. It is not asked in order to recommend a foreign policy, and Section 22 gives the structural reason why the criterion developed here could not serve as one.

Part II. What the Received Account Presupposes

4 The Definition, Held Neutral

A definition is required before the criterion, and it must be neutral with respect to the criterion, on pain of settling by stipulation what the paper undertakes to argue.

> **Gift.** An irrecoverable transfer, whose form is determined by a reading of the recipient, and which carries no enforceable claim to return.
>
> The definition covers tribute and the Marshall Plan alike, and it is intended to. A definition that excluded tribute would place the extractive case outside the theory's reach, and the extractive case is what the theory exists to distinguish. The definition names the structure. The criterion of Part IV, stated separately, does the normative work.

A qualification is required at once, and Section 20 develops it. The strongest diplomatic gifts transfer no object. The apology, the state visit, the extension of recognition to a new state: what is given in these is standing, the irrecoverable surrender of a position from which the giver could have continued to deny, and the definition is stretched by them. Whether standing is a transfer in the sense the definition requires is a question the paper poses and does not settle.

5 The Anomalies of Delay and Inalienability

Two features of the gift are anomalous under any account of exchange, and they are the evidential core of the negative argument.

The first is delay. An immediate counter-gift is an insult, and it converts the gift into a transaction, and every party to the exchange knows this. An account of exchange cannot say why. On such an account the prompt settlement of an obligation is the efficient discharge of it, and the interval between the gift and the return is a cost that both parties would prefer to eliminate. In the practice, the interval is constitutive, and its elimination destroys the thing.

The second is inalienability. What is given carries the giver, and what returns is not fungible with what was given (Godelier, 1999). An account of exchange requires that the good exist independently of the transaction, so that its value may be compared with the value of what is received. In the gift the object is a bearer of the relation, and its value is not separable from who gave it and how it was read.

The transactional objection presents itself here and must be met, since it will otherwise

be made later and with more force. The objection runs: the gift has an expected counter-gift, therefore the gift is exchange with a lag, and the anomalies above are frictions in the mechanism of exchange rather than evidence against it.

Three replies. The first is that substitutability fails. If the gift were exchange, an equivalent return from another source would be a substitute, and it is not; the return that is wanted is the return from this party, which does not exist prior to the relation and cannot be sourced elsewhere. The second is that the sign is wrong on the key variable. If trust in the gift were the discounted expectation of a return, the gift that most securely guarantees its return should produce the most trust. The gift that most securely guarantees its return is a contract, and it produces none. The third is that guaranteeing the return destroys the thing, which is the same observation stated as an intervention: attach an enforceable counter-obligation to a gift and it becomes a contract, and every party knows the difference and behaves differently.

A formal statement of the same point is available and is stated for the record, since it bears on the standing of rationalist accounts more broadly. The construction of a payoff matrix requires that the parties' objective functions be defined prior to the relation whose payoffs are to be entered. Where the objective is itself constituted in the relation, and altered by it, the matrix cannot be written, and the account is ill-posed rather than incomplete. Whether the national interest is antecedent to the relations a state stands in is a question rationalist international relations answers in the affirmative by assumption and does not argue.

6 Obligation Presupposes an Order

Mauss explains the bond by obligation. The gift obliges, the obligation is not contractual, and the failure to reciprocate carries a sanction that is social and not legal.

Obligation of this kind presupposes an order in which the obligation holds. The sanction that enforces it, being social, is administered by a community that recognizes the obligation as one, and the recognition is what gives the sanction its force. Mauss drew his cases from societies in which such an order was intact, and within them the account is sound.

The society of states possesses no such order. This is what the discipline of international relations means by anarchy (Bull, 1977), and it names the absence of a locus from which obligation could be characterized as obligation and its breach as breach, rather than a condition of disorder. Where such a locus is absent, the Maussian sanction has nowhere to issue from, and the account of the bond by obligation does not extend.

The point has a sharp historiographical edge, and the paper states it rather than leaving it to a reviewer. Mauss himself applied his theory to the international case, closing his essay with an argument about the League of Nations and about the gift as an alternative to war. The present paper's objection is therefore an objection to Mauss's own extension of his own theory, and not to an extension made by his followers.

The first presupposition. The Maussian mechanism of obligation presupposes a symbolic order that binds, and the society of states does not supply one. The account fails in the case for which its author most conspicuously invoked it.

Refutation. The claim fails if a durable locus of obligation can be exhibited in the society of states, from which the breach of a gift-obligation is characterized as breach and sanctioned as such. Candidates exist and are not dismissed: the diplomatic corps, the practice of protocol, the historical judgment of an imagined posterity. Whether any of these constitutes such a locus, or merely resembles one, is the question Part V leaves open.

7 Transmission Presupposes a Code

The received account of the gift's symbolic dimension fails in a second way, and the failure has the same structure as the first.

That the gift carries symbolic meaning is not a claim this paper makes, the point being settled and the literature crowded. What the received account supplies is a model of that carriage, and the model is one of transmission: the giver encodes a meaning in an object, the recipient decodes it, and the exchange succeeds where the code is shared and fails where it is not. The gaffe, on this model, is a decoding error.

The model presupposes a shared code. Where the parties inhabit a common symbolic order, the presupposition holds and the model is adequate. The society of states supplies no common symbolic order, and the difficulty of the diplomatic gift is precisely that the parties do not share a code. So the transmission model fails exactly where it is most needed.

The structure of the two presuppositions is identical, and the identity is worth stating, since it locates a single defect. The Maussian account presupposes the order that would bind. The transmission account presupposes the code that would carry. Both presuppose the symbolic order they were invoked to explain, and both are silent where it is absent.

Part III. The Mechanism

8 The Gift Proposes a Grammar

What is proposed in place of transmission is the following. The gift does not carry a meaning within a shared grammar. It proposes a grammar and awaits ratification.

The giver, reading the recipient, hazards a judgment as to what will count as a gift in the recipient's world. The giving is a bid that the judgment is correct. The recipient's response is not the decoding of a message. It is the ratification or the refusal of the grammar the gift proposed. What is at stake in the exchange is neither the object nor even the relation, but the terms in which the two parties will thereafter be able to address one another at all.

This explains the delay, and it explains it as a structural requirement and not as a rule of etiquette. An immediate counter-gift ratifies nothing, since it forecloses the interval in which the recipient's own reading is hazarded. The counter-gift must be a second bid, offered in the grammar the first proposed and not identical with it, or the grammar never becomes joint. Simultaneity destroys the gift because it collapses two bids into one transaction.

It also explains the wrong gift, and it explains it structurally rather than culturally. The wrong gift is not a misencoding. It is a proposal the recipient cannot ratify, because it was made in a grammar the recipient has no place in. Grain that the recipient's agriculture cannot use, a hospital the recipient has no staff to run, an artefact whose significance is legible only in the giver's own history: these are not translation errors. They are bids made unilaterally, in the giver's grammar, and they therefore reveal that no grammar was proposed at all and only a transfer was made.

8.1 The relation to Bourdieu

Bourdieu also made the interval constitutive, and the point of contact must be stated before it is discovered. On his account the gift's efficacy depends on the temporal gap, because the gap permits the misrecognition of an exchange as a gift, and the immediate return exposes the exchange for what it is (Bourdieu, 1977). The gap is thus a device of concealment, and the gift is exchange that does not know itself.

The present account gives the same interval a different function. The interval is not the time in which the exchange is concealed. It is the time in which the recipient generates a bid of their own, and its function is productive rather than concealing. Two consequences separate the accounts and could be tested against one another. On Bourdieu's account a gift whose interested character is fully visible to both parties should still operate, provided the social misrecognition is collectively maintained; on the present account it should fail, since nothing was proposed for the recipient to ratify. And on Bourdieu's account the recipient's contribution during the interval is nil, the interval being the giver's device; on the present

account it is the whole of the mechanism.

9 Closure by Stake

The gift closes by stake. What is given is irrecoverable, no third thing stands beneath the transfer, and no enforceable claim to return attends it.

The structure is the one that makes an unenforceable instrument more informative than an enforceable one. Where performance is secured by a sanction, performance is overdetermined, and the party who performed cannot be distinguished from the party who feared. The information that would tell the parties what they need to know about one another is destroyed by the very provision that secures their position. The gift purchases that information at the price of security, and it is available only to a party prepared to be wrong.

The choice of the weaker instrument is therefore not a concession and not a want of legal imagination. It is the instrument's purpose.

10 The Gift Is Born in the Relation

The constitutive act of the gift lies where neither the Maussian account nor the transmission account looks.

A gift, unlike a transfer, cannot be chosen unilaterally. To give well the giver must read the recipient: what is needed there, what will be legible there as a gift rather than as an insult, what the recipient's history has made of the object proposed. The gift is an act of translation before it is an act of transfer, and it cannot be produced from within the giver alone.

Mauss's three obligations all sit on the receiving side of the act. To give, to receive, to reciprocate: each concerns what is owed once the gift is in motion. What precedes the giving, the reading of the other that determines what the gift will be, is unanalysed in the literature, and it is the constitutive part.

The wrong gift. The wrong gift is not a gift that failed. It is a demonstration that the relation was never entered. Its wrongness is evidence about the giver, and it is evidence of a determinate kind: that the giver composed the gift within his own grammar and did not read.

The archive of aid is largely an archive of this. The surplus commodity dispatched because the giver held a surplus, the infrastructure built to the giver's specification, the technical assistance designed around the giver's expertise: each is a transfer whose form was determined by the giver's condition rather than by a reading of the recipient's, and the failure to translate is not incidental to the extraction. It is the form the extraction takes.

11 The Locus and the Residue

The mechanism may now be stated in the terms the framework requires, and the statement corrects a formulation the framework has elsewhere refused.

It is tempting to say that the gift is an object offered into the recipient's lack. The framework does not permit this. The object-cause of desire, on the account developed in a companion paper, is the residue of an operation, hypostatized by a theory that had nowhere to put it, and the residue is what a participant exceeds their position by, rather than what they lack. The two have the same shape and the opposite sign, and to conflate them is to reinstate the very reification the framework dissolved.

The correct statement inverts the picture.

> **The gift opens a locus.** A gift is an offering that provides a position at which the recipient's excess can register. It does not give the recipient something they wanted. It gives them somewhere to act back from.
>
> Extraction is the converse, and it has been derived elsewhere in this form: a configuration that provides no locus at which a participant's excess can register has foreclosed the source of its own further generation, and persists by consuming what it would have needed in order to generate.

Tribute is now specifiable. Tribute provides no position from which the tributary can act back. The tributary may comply, and compliance is all the configuration will register. This is why tribute must be repeated without end and generates nothing: the arrangement has consumed the capacity by which it would have gone on generating, and the repetition is the consumption.

The gift is the converse operation. The recipient's excess arrives, the configuration absorbs it, and positions are generated that neither party occupied before.

12 Foreseeability

A criterion follows from the preceding section, and it is the least familiar of those the paper offers.

The residue differs in type from the inputs that produced it, and what a configuration composes from it is not derivable from what was given. It follows that a gift which opened a locus produces a return that could not have been forecast, and that a gift whose return was forecast opened no locus.

Foreseeability is the signature of a closed configuration. A gift whose return could have been predicted by the giver is a gift from which the recipient had nowhere to exceed. What returned was what the giver had already composed.

This is the condition that defeats the objection which the other conditions cannot defeat. The objection runs: attunement to the recipient, the reading that Section 10 makes constitutive, is also the technology of the most effective manipulation. The manipulator reads flawlessly. Advertising reads its subject with a precision no diplomat achieves.

The reply is that the manipulator's reading is directed at finding where a want can be installed, and the installed want is one whose satisfaction closes it. That is what makes it repeatable and what makes it profitable. The manipulated party is satisfied and nothing is generated, because the return was composed in advance by the party who installed the want. It is not a defect of the manipulator's attunement. It is the direction of it.

The formulation is compact and it is the paper's own:

The formulation is compact and it is offered as a conjecture: extraction closes a lack it installed, and the gift answers a lack it did not make and leaves it open.

Refutation. The conjecture fails if arrangements can be exhibited which install a lack, close it, and nonetheless leave the participant with an enlarged capacity to originate arrangements of their own. It fails if the origin of a lack proves undecidable in the cases where the criterion would need to be applied, in which case the condition is unusable whatever its truth.

The structure of the operation may be stated without adjudicating any particular case. Where an arrangement produces the condition that it thereafter relieves, and where the relief is the arrangement's own product, the cycle answers a lack of its own making. A criterion that inspects the path alone will not register this, since value moves, it returns to the participants, and the cycle is recurrent and self-sustaining. The corruption lies at the opening and is invisible from the path.

Whether particular instruments of international finance and assistance exhibit this structure is a contested empirical question, and the critical literature has argued that some do (Ferguson, 1994; Escobar, 1995). The present paper does not adjudicate the dispute. It supplies a criterion by which the question could be posed, and observes that the criterion is not one the disputing parties have used.

13 What Follows the Opening

The account to this point establishes that the gift opens a position and that a foreseeable return is the mark of its failure to do so. It says nothing of what occurs once the position is opened, and the omission is material, since an opening that led nowhere would be of no interest and the paper would have described a gesture.

The passage from the opening to a sustained circulation may be set out, and it is set out as a sequence of conditions rather than as a procedure, since the moments do not order themselves in time and the value of an early one may be disclosed only by a late one.

The gift is composed in the recipient's terms, which requires that the giver have entered the recipient's world sufficiently to render in it. This is the labour of translation and it precedes the giving. The recipient, receiving, is not decoding: the recipient is ratifying or refusing a grammar, and where the grammar is ratified the two parties hold, for the first time, a term in common that neither held alone. What the recipient then composes in response is composed in that common term, and it is composed from the recipient's own world, so that what returns is of a kind the giver could not have specified. The two then observe together what has been produced, and the observation is itself a crossing, since neither party's rendering of the new term is the other's. What they observe is a value that was in neither world at the outset and that has come into being in the relation between them. That value, once observed, becomes the ground from which the next crossing is made.

> The chain from the opening to the cycle runs through translation, ratification, composition in the common term, joint observation of what was produced, and the reinvestment of what was observed. Each moment is a condition of the next, and the failure of any one of them arrests the cycle at that point.

The characteristic arrests may be named, and each corresponds to a familiar diplomatic pathology. A gift composed without translation proposes a grammar the recipient has no place in, and the cycle does not begin. A gift the recipient cannot refuse is not ratified, and what follows is compliance rather than composition. A response the giver steers is a response the giver composed, and the common term remains the giver's own. A value produced and not jointly observed is a value that enters no ledger and cannot be drawn upon, and the relation retains nothing. And a value observed and not reinvested is a value that has stopped moving, which is the condition the gift exists to prevent.

The Marshall Plan can be read through the chain, and the reading is offered to show what the chain would look like when instantiated, and not to establish that it was. On such a reading, what was given was composed with some regard to the recipients' condition, was accepted under an arrangement in which refusal was exercised by at least one state, was answered by

forms of European coordination the giver had not specified, and was reinvested in an institutional order that came in time to constrain the giver. Each of these propositions is contested in the historiography, and Section 21 records the principal contest. The chain is presented as a structure that a case could exhibit. Whether this case exhibits it is not settled here.

Part IV. The Criterion

14 Four Conditions

The criterion has four conditions. They are stated together because each is necessary and none is derivable from the others, and because a cycle may satisfy any three and fail the fourth.

Condition	Question	Failure
The opening	Does the cycle answer a lack it did not create, and does it open the recipient's capacity to open in turn?	manufactured demand
The path	Does value return to those who produce it?	extraction
The boundary	Who bears the cost and is not counted?	tribute, the closed order
Foreseeability	Could the return have been forecast?	the manipulative gift

The condition on the path is Eglash's and is not the paper's, and the recursive reading of the opening developed in the section that follows is likewise anticipated in his account. The condition on the opening is developed in the section that follows, where it is shown to be recursive and where the binary reading of it is abandoned. The condition on the boundary is developed thereafter. The condition on foreseeability is developed in Section 12 above.

15 The Quality of the Opening

The condition on the opening has been stated as though the opening were a binary matter, so that a cycle either answers a lack it did not create or does not. This is inadequate, and the inadequacy is exposed by the case the condition was introduced to handle.

Manufactured demand opens something. The consumer responds, and composes, and participates, and the response is not compelled. There is a position from which the consumer acts, and the consumer occupies it. An account which held that the extractive cycle simply fails to open would be an account that could not see the case at all.

What distinguishes the two is therefore not the presence of an opening and is a property of what the opening opens.

An opening is generative when what it opens is the recipient's capacity to open in turn.

The extractive opening produces a response and forecloses the recipient's own generativity: the consumer composes a purchase and is thereby returned to the condition of wanting, from which the next purchase is composed. The cycle turns, and the capacity of the participant to originate a cycle of their own is what it consumes.

The generative opening reproduces the condition of its own possibility. What the recipient receives is the capacity to give, and the mark of it is that the recipient becomes a giver.

The criterion is thus recursive, and the recursion is not this paper's invention. Generative justice defines unalienated value recursively, as that which makes possible further just and sustainable generation, and it requires of a generative arrangement that its participants be positioned to create their own conditions of production (Eglash, 2016). What is offered here is the transposition of that requirement into the diplomatic register and the observation that it discriminates where the condition on the path alone does not.

The question is accordingly not whether the recipient could respond. It is whether the recipient, having responded, can now open a position for a third party who was no part of the original transaction.

The test the criterion yields is observable in principle, and it requires no access to intentions and no judgment of sincerity.

Where the recipients of an arrangement come in time to occupy the position of givers, the openings of that arrangement were generative in the sense defined, and the transition is a matter of record. Where recipients remain in the position of recipients across a long period, the criterion directs attention to whether the capacity to give was among the things given, and it does not by itself settle the matter, since a persistent asymmetry may have causes the arrangement neither created nor could have removed. What the criterion supplies is the question. The answer requires the case.

This restates the condition of return in the form Eglash's own recursion gives it, and it shows that condition and the condition on the opening to be aspects of one requirement. What must return to the participants is not value alone. It is the capacity by which value is generated, since a participant to whom value returns and capacity does not is a participant who must return for more.

16 The Boundary of the Counted

A difficulty attends the condition of return, and it concerns a matter the account does not address rather than one it addresses inadequately.

Every clause of the definition quantifies over value generators and over communities of value generation, and none of them settles who these are. The determination of the set is presupposed. A closed order operates in the presupposition: it satisfies every clause with respect to the parties it recognizes, and it is sustained by parties it does not.

Tributary arrangements returned value to their participants, permitted those participants to create their own conditions of production within the order, and sustained the circulation across generations. Every clause was satisfied with respect to the set the order recognized. What sustained the order was the position of those who bore its cost and were counted among its participants not at all.

Extraction, so understood, does not violate the return. It draws the boundary of those to whom return is owed so as to exclude those whose cost sustains it. The observation is offered as a supplement to the account, and it is available to a defender of generative justice as readily as to a critic, since the natural reply is that the uncounted party is a value generator on any reasonable reading of the definition, and the reply is correct. What it does not supply is a criterion by which the order's own accounting could be shown mistaken, the accounting being conducted in a grammar from which the uncounted party is absent.

> **The boundary condition.** The set of those to whom value must return is constituted by those who bear the cost of the cycle, and not by those whom the cycle recognizes as its participants.
>
> No criterion internal to the cycle can detect the falsification, since the cycle's own accounting is conducted in a grammar from which the uncounted are absent.

What determines whether the uncounted can be counted is whether the grammar of the arrangement admits their address. Those excluded are not exhausted by those who receive nothing. They are those for whom no position exists within the arrangement from which their cost could be stated. Translation is therefore not a precondition of the gift and it is the labour by which the boundary of the counted is enlarged, and its refusal is the mechanism by which extraction becomes invisible to those who benefit from it.

17 The Refused Gift

A test follows from the criterion and it is the most operational the paper offers.

To refuse a gift is to refuse the grammar it proposed. Under the account of Section 9 this

is not the gift's failure. It is the recipient exercising precisely the capacity for which the gift opened a position, and a gift that could be refused and was not is a gift whose grammar was ratified rather than imposed.

A gift that cannot be refused is tribute. The impossibility of refusal is the hierarchy, and it is auditable from outside the arrangement by a party to neither side of it.

The archive supports the test in its negative form, and the paper claims no more. Aid whose refusal would carry consequences the recipient cannot bear is not refusable, and the fact that it is accepted is therefore no evidence of ratification. The conditionality attached to a loan is the removal of the refusal. What distinguishes the Marshall Plan from the reparations regime that preceded it, on this criterion, is not the magnitude of the transfer and is the availability of the refusal, and the historiography of the point is contested in a way Section 18 does not conceal.

Part V. Why Diplomacy

18 Difference Is Available Elsewhere

Diplomacy is not chosen because it is the domain of radical difference. Difference is available elsewhere. The gift across a cultural boundary, the gift between religious communities, the gift in the ethnography from which the theory was originally drawn: each involves parties whose symbolic worlds do not coincide, and none of them is diplomacy.

What distinguishes the diplomatic case is the conjunction of two absences, and the conjunction is what makes the case a test rather than an illustration.

19 Two Axes

The first axis is whether a shared code is available. Where the parties inhabit a common symbolic order, the giver need not read the recipient and need only conform: what counts as a gift is settled in advance, and the giver's task is competence rather than translation. Where no such code exists, the reading of Section 10 is required and the gift may fail at the level of the proposal.

The second axis is whether a third position is available, meaning a locus, occupied by neither party, from which the acts of each may be characterized. This is a stronger requirement than it appears, and the framework's argument for its necessity is stated in a companion paper: a configuration containing two parties and the relation between them contains nothing that could distinguish a sanction from an aggression, since each of the two loci is a party to the act. Whether an act is a wrong is settled from a position that the dyad does not supply.

	shared code	no shared code
third position available	the gift within a culture	the migrant gift; interfaith exchange
no third position	the closed association	**diplomacy**

Diplomacy is the cell in which both are absent, and it is the only such cell in which the parties nonetheless sustain relations over centuries.

20 The Stake

Every other cell permits the gift to lean on something. The gift within a culture leans on the code, and the giver who does not read may still give correctly. The gift across cultures within a common jurisdiction leans on the third, and where the exchange sours there is a law, an institution, a norm from which the souring can be named.

The diplomatic gift leans on nothing.

The stake. Diplomacy is the configuration in which the gift must operate without a shared code and without a third position, which is the configuration the framework's own argument holds to be incapable of generating normative structure.

Either the gift generates the third position rather than presupposing it, in which case the framework's dyadic argument requires revision. Or it does not, in which case what appears in the archive as order produced by gift is order produced by force, and the realist reading is correct.

The paper does not settle this. The archive settles it, and the archive has not been read for the purpose.

The discipline has a name for the configuration and has not known what to do with it. That anarchy is what states make of it (Wendt, 1992) is a claim about the mutability of the condition and supplies no mechanism by which the making occurs. The society of states sustains institutions without an enforcer (Bull, 1977), and the observation is correct and is a description. What the present paper offers is a candidate mechanism, and what it asks of the discipline is a verdict on whether the mechanism is real.

21 Strategy, Trusteeship, and Structure

An objection arises here which, left unanswered, would remove diplomacy from the paper's reach altogether. The criterion appears to disqualify the gift that is composed for an end. Every diplomatic gift is composed for an end. A ministry does not give without a reason, and a gift given without one would not be given at all.

The objection is sound against a formulation the paper must therefore abandon, and the abandonment improves the account.

21.1 Strategy is obligatory

The giver in the diplomatic case gives what is not his. A minister disposes of what belongs to a population that did not choose the gift and will bear its consequences, and he disposes of it under an obligation to that population which he cannot discharge by consulting them.

It follows that the absence of strategic composition in a diplomatic gift is a breach of duty. A minister who gave without regard to the interests he holds in trust would be giving away what was not his to give, and the generosity would be theft. Strategy is not a contamination of the diplomatic gift. It is a fiduciary requirement of it.

This has a structural consequence the paper takes seriously. The giver in the intimate case stakes himself, and the removal of the exit path is the removal of his own. The giver in the diplomatic case stakes others, and the exit path removed belongs to a nation that did not consent to

the removal. The mechanism therefore runs, at this scale, through a relation of representation that the intimate case does not contain.

And the boundary condition of Section 15 arrives inside the giver. The uncounted are not exhausted by those on the recipient's side of the transaction. They include the citizens of the giving state, whose resources were given and whose grammar was not consulted.

	who is staked	who may go uncounted
the intimate gift	the giver himself	the weaker partner
the diplomatic gift, outward	the giving nation	the recipient's excluded
the diplomatic gift, inward	the giving nation's citizens	those who bore its cost unconsulted

Two failure modes are thereby distinguished, and they are independent. The strategy may leave the recipient nothing to compose in return. Or the trusteeship may fail in its own terms, which occurs where the interest invoked in the composition of the gift is not the interest of those who bear its cost. Whether any given act of state exhibits the second failure is a question of fact, and the paper's contribution is to identify it as a distinct failure and not to allege it of any party.

21.2 Strategy is imposed by the structure

Strategy is permitted at this scale, and it is required by the medium through which the gift must pass.

Coordination at scale proceeds through structure, and structure is congealed prior relation: protocol, treaty, precedent, ministry, budget. The structure constrains the present act, since an act that the structure cannot execute is an act that cannot be performed at all. A ministry cannot give affectively even where it would wish to, there being no channel through which an affect could be transmitted. The relational intention must be rendered into a form the structure will carry, and the rendering is what is called strategy.

> Strategy is not a translation the giver elects. It is the form a relational intention must take in order to be alignable with a structure the giver did not choose and cannot bypass.

The rendering has a cost, and the cost is where the danger lies. The structure cannot carry the full complexity of a relation, and it therefore compresses: friendship, partnership, strategic competition, adversary. These labels are what the structure can hold, and the compression is a coarse-graining performed on the relation in order that the relation may be acted upon at all.

The question is what the coarse-graining destroys. A relation compressed to a label produces returns that the label already anticipates, and Section 12 has established what an anticipated return signifies. The generativity of the gift survives the compression to the extent that the coarse-graining leaves something the structure cannot specify in advance.

21.3 Strategy is fatal only when it is complete

> **The gift is not destroyed by the entry of strategy. It is destroyed when the strategy is total**, which is to say when the structure has specified the gift so completely that every consequence of the giving is already contained in the plan.
>
> What disqualifies is therefore not that a gift was strategically composed. It is that the strategy left the recipient nothing to compose in return.

The two poles of the diplomatic archive are separated by this and by nothing else. A programme of conditional assistance specifies its outcomes as deliverables, and the specification is the point of the instrument. Nothing exceeds the coarse-graining, because the coarse-graining was made total, and the recipient's compliance is all that the arrangement will register.

The Marshall Plan was maximally strategic. It was composed for containment, for the construction of markets, and for passage through a legislature, and its authors were explicit about all three. What followed it was a European integration that the plan did not specify, that its authors did not foresee, and that came in time to constrain the state that had given it. The strategy was necessary and the residue was what mattered.

21.4 The consequence for gift theory

A dichotomy in the theory of the gift is dissolved by this, and the dissolution runs from the diplomatic case back to the theory rather than the other way.

It has been asked whether a gift that knows itself remains a gift, on the ground that a gift recognized as such by its giver has already entered the economy of exchange (Derrida, 1992). A state cannot fail to know itself. It must deliberate, minute, budget, and justify, and the record of its deliberation is public. On the terms of the dichotomy, no gift by a state is possible.

The dichotomy presupposes a giver who owns what he gives, and who may therefore give it freely or withhold it. A trustee owns nothing he gives, and his giving is neither free in the sense the dichotomy requires nor an exchange in the sense it opposes. The trustee's gift is a third thing, and the dichotomy has no place for it.

22 Four Further Specificities

Four further features distinguish the diplomatic gift, and each bears on the argument.

The parties are composite. A state has no subject, and the reading of Section 10 is performed by an apparatus: a ministry, an embassy, an intelligence service. Whether such an apparatus can be said to read, and whether a residue can be said to register in it, is the point at which the transposition from the intimate case might fail, and the paper does not conceal the difficulty. It notes only that the framework is specified structurally and withholds commitment as to what a participant is, so that the transposition is available to it where it would be unavailable to an account built on persons.

The gift is public. The diplomatic gift is performed before audiences: domestic publics, third states, the historical record. The intimate gift is not. The publicity is consequential, since the position opened may be occupied by the audience rather than by the recipient, and the gift is then a bid in a wider field that the recipient is made to witness. Whether the audience constitutes the third position whose absence Section 17 identified, or whether the audience is instead the party for whom the gift was really performed, is left open, and the two are not always distinguishable from outside.

Asymmetry is the normal case. In the intimate relation, radical inequality is pathological. In the society of states it is the baseline condition. The condition of return cannot therefore mean equal return, and the capacity to give back must be theorized under structural inequality, which the literature of the gift, drawn from small-scale societies and from the peasant economy, has never had to do.

The counterfeit is institutionalized. There exists a profession whose object is the production of the appearance of the gift for the sake of a strategic return, and it has a doctrine, a budget, and a literature. Public diplomacy, aid conditionality, and the theory of soft power are its instruments. Nowhere else is the manipulative gift a codified function of state.

23 The Antagonist

The position this paper exists to deny may be stated exactly, and it is not realism.

The theory of soft power holds that attraction produces preferred outcomes at lower cost than coercion, and that a state's culture, values, and policies are resources to be deployed to that end (Nye, 2004). On this account the gift that opens a circulation and the gift that installs a hierarchy are the same instrument, and their difference is a difference in the skill of its deployment. The theory is not obliged to distinguish them, since its object is the production of preferred outcomes and both may produce them. The present paper's disagreement is therefore a disagreement about what is to be explained, and it is not an objection to the theory on its own ground.

The four conditions of Part IV exist to deny this. On the account offered here, the gift performed for a foreseeable return is not a gift performed well. It is not a gift at all, and it will fail to do the work the theory of soft power supposes it does, in a manner the theory has no

vocabulary for.

Part VI. Cases and Limits

24 The Cases and Their Contestation

Three comparisons bear on the criterion, and each is stated with its historiographical difficulty rather than without.

The Marshall Plan against the reparations settlement. The comparison is the paper's central case, and the reading the criterion invites is the following. The reparations settlement transferred value away from a party whose capacity to generate was thereby reduced, and it is a long-standing contention, contested in the historiography, that the reduction contributed to the conditions of the subsequent conflict. The Marshall Plan, on the reading offered here, returned capacity to its recipients and left them positioned to give in turn, which some of them subsequently did in forms the giver had not specified.

The reading is a reading. It is what the criterion of Part IV would say of the two arrangements, and it is offered as an illustration of the criterion's operation rather than as a contribution to the historiography of either.

The reading is contested and the contestation is material. It has been argued that European recovery was underway before the Plan and would have proceeded without it, and that the Plan's effect was political rather than economic (Milward, 1984). If this is correct, the case does not show what the criterion requires it to show, and the paper's central comparison is weaker than it appears. The point is conceded here rather than left for a reviewer, and the paper's response is that the criterion concerns the opening of a relation rather than the magnitude of a transfer, so that a Plan whose economic effect was small and whose relational effect was large is not an embarrassment to the account. Whether that response is adequate is not for the author to determine.

Tributary orders. Historical tributary arrangements returned value to their participants, and a reading of them as unrelieved extraction is not well supported by the record. What the criterion directs attention to is the boundary: whether parties bore the cost of such an arrangement without being counted among its participants. The test of Section 16 is also available, since the availability of refusal varied across such arrangements and the variation is documented. The paper offers the criterion and does not offer a verdict on any particular order.

Conditional assistance. A literature critical of development practice has argued that certain arrangements produce the dependency they subsequently address, and that the conditions attached to assistance can remove from the recipient the capacity to decline it (Ferguson, 1994; Escobar, 1995). The claims are contested and the present paper does not endorse them.

What the paper contributes is the location of the alleged defect. If the critical account is correct in a given case, the defect lies at the opening of the cycle rather than in its terms, since the terms of such arrangements are frequently defensible on their face and the criticism is not

a criticism of the terms. This is a claim about where to look, and it is available to a defender of such arrangements as readily as to a critic.

25 The Gift of Nothing

The definition of Section 4 requires an irrecoverable transfer, and the strongest diplomatic gifts transfer no object.

An apology surrenders, irrecoverably and before an audience, the position from which the giver could have continued to deny. A state visit surrenders the position from which the giver could have continued to treat the recipient as beneath notice. Recognition surrenders the position from which the giver could have continued to hold that the recipient does not exist. In each the stake is standing, and the surrender is not recoverable, and no enforceable claim to return attends it.

Whether standing is a transfer in the sense the definition requires is not settled here. What may be said is that the structure is the same in the relevant respect: something is given up that cannot be taken back, no third thing stands beneath the giving, and the recipient is given a position from which to respond that did not exist before. If the definition must be widened to admit these, they are the cases for which it should be widened, since they are the cases in which the mechanism is least contaminated by the value of the object.

26 Time

The wager of the gift is under greater strain in the diplomatic case than anywhere the theory has previously considered.

The value of a gift may return only after a long interval, and the interval in an intimate relation is measured in years and is bounded by a life. The interval in the society of states is measured in generations. A gift may return after the giver is dead, to a state whose government did not give it, from a state whose population was not alive when it was given. Reparations are paid by parties who did not incur the debt to parties who did not suffer the injury.

This is not a footnote to the theory. It is the point at which the diplomatic case is harder than the intimate one, since the wager is made by a party who cannot receive the return and the return is received by a party who did not make the wager. That such gifts are nonetheless made, and that the returns nonetheless arrive, is a fact the paper records and does not explain.

27 The Criterion Is Available to the Audit

No foreign policy is recommended here, and the reason is structural.

The criterion does not forbid intent. It forbids closure. A giver may give for reasons, and must, and may still open a position from which the recipient can exceed him. What he cannot do is specify in advance what will return, since a return specified in advance is one the recipient had no room to compose.

The criterion is accordingly usable by a third party assessing an arrangement, by the recipient, and by the historian. It is not usable as a specification of the gift to be given, since a gift whose form is determined by the requirements of the criterion is a gift determined by the giver's requirements, and Section 10 holds a gift so determined to be a transfer.

The asymmetry parallels a result obtained elsewhere in this programme, that the condition of justice on a generative cycle is not computable from within the cycle. The parallel is exact and it is not a coincidence, the two being the same structural fact seen from the position of the agent and from the position of the audit.

28 The Gift as a Governance Mechanism

A claim larger than the paper's own is visible from the position the argument has reached, and it is stated here in order to be handed on rather than argued.

Coordination at scale proceeds through mechanisms that coordinate by specifying: hierarchy through the directive, price through the signal, norm through the expectation, network through the negotiated interdependence. Each is a coarse-graining, and each, in the ordinary course, ossifies. A position is installed which characterizes without being characterized, reinterpretation is foreclosed, and the configuration thereafter persists by reproduction where it once persisted by generation. This is the standing pathology of governed orders, and it has been documented in this programme elsewhere.

The question such an order cannot answer from within itself is where a new position is to come from. A structure that executes only its own specifications produces only what it has specified. It cannot generate, and it runs down.

The gift is the act that a structure permits and does not specify. Protocol requires that a gift be given and cannot say what will return. The gift is therefore the aperture in the coarse-graining: the one move within a governed order whose consequence the order did not compose.

On this reading a coordination structure requires an unspecified act in order to remain generative, and the gift is the institutional form that requirement takes.

The relation between the structure and the gift is thus one of dependency and not of com-

promise. It is inadequate to say that structure exacts a cost in generativity which the gift partially offsets. The structure cannot generate at all, and the gift is how a structure obtains what it is constitutively unable to produce.

This accounts for an observation the received theories leave unexplained. Diplomacy is the most protocol-bound field of state action, and it retains at its center a practice that is unenforceable, non-reciprocable on any schedule, and strategically opaque by design. Realism cannot say why the practice survives, and institutionalism cannot say why it is not replaced by an instrument with clearer terms. On the present reading the practice is no residue of courtly ritual. It is the structure's generative organ, and its removal would leave the order able to execute and unable to grow.

The claim is a claim about governance and not about diplomacy, and it exceeds what the diplomatic case can establish. It is recorded here as the direction in which this argument, if it holds, would next be taken.

29 What Remains Open

Whether the payoff matrix of rationalist international relations can be written at all, given that the objective it requires may be constituted in the relations whose payoffs it would enter.

Whether a state can be said to read another, or whether the reading is performed by persons within an apparatus and the transposition to the state is illicit. The framework's structural specification makes the transposition available and does not make it correct.

Whether the audience before which the diplomatic gift is performed constitutes the third position whose absence makes the diplomatic case a test, in which case the framework's dyadic argument is preserved and the test is dissolved, or whether the audience is the party for whom the gift was performed, in which case the gift was never given to the recipient at all.

Whether the criterion of Section 16, the availability of refusal, can be operationalized in the archive, and by what measure a refusal is judged to have been available to a party who did not exercise it.

Whether the claim of Section 23 survives its generalization, which is to say whether the four coordination mechanisms of a governed order each require an unspecified act of the kind the gift supplies, and whether the practices that supply it elsewhere can be identified.

The mechanism has been proposed and the criterion stated. Whether the gift generates a third position where none was given is the question on which the account stands, and the archive has not been read for the purpose.

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