

On Historical Judgment and Manifestation: A Preliminary Generative Relational Perspective

Wanhong HUANG
huangwanhong@serendip.ngo

Abstract

This paper develops a preliminary Generative Relational perspective on historical judgment, political advancement, and praxis. In continuity with historical-materialist and praxis-oriented approaches, it begins from the proposition that political forms and their evaluation cannot be separated from the concrete historical relations through which they become possible, actionable, and intelligible. The paper distinguishes judgment before manifestation from judgment after manifestation. Before a contemplated political form or social order has been historically realized, actors must nevertheless evaluate possible futures and act upon incomplete knowledge. Such prospective judgments are neither dispensable nor merely arbitrary: they orient political praxis, express historically situated normative commitments, and participate in the generation of subsequent relations. Praxis, however, does not merely test a previously formed judgment against an otherwise unchanged world. It may generate new institutions, subjects, dependencies, capacities, conflicts, knowledge, and modes of evaluation. The political order that subsequently manifests may therefore differ relationally from the order previously imagined, while the historical and normative standpoint from which it is judged may itself have changed. Post-manifestation judgment consequently cannot be reduced to verification of an earlier prediction. The paper argues that judgments of political advancement should be understood within this temporally generative structure. It does not deny the possibility of progress, comparative judgment, or committed political action, but treats advancement as historically and relationally attributable rather than as an intrinsic metaphysical property of a political form. A form judged preferable in anticipation may reasonably guide practice, while its actual historical manifestation remains open to renewed evaluation under the relations and trajectories that practice has helped to produce. The inquiry further considers the historicity of aesthetic and normative appearance: what becomes recognizable as rational, harmonious, advanced, just, or desirable may vary with historically generated material, symbolic, epistemic, and relational conditions. Historical classification presents a related problem. Claims that institutions or historical configurations are equivalent, recurrent, or instances of the same historical form depend upon criteria determining which differences are retained and which are quotiented out; recurrence in appearance need not constitute recurrence in relational structure. These considerations motivate two normative commitments for historical praxis: the revisability of belief and the re-recognizability of history. Political actors must be capable of acting upon present judgments without converting them into guarantees about an unfinished future, while institutions of historical knowledge should preserve the possibility that later subjects, equipped with different evidence, concepts, relations, and normative resources, may recognize the past anew. The resulting position is one of committed but revisable praxis: judgment remains necessary precisely because the future is not fully given, and humility remains necessary because practice participates in generating the world by which that judgment will later be reconsidered.

Keywords: historical judgment; manifestation; political praxis; historical materialism; political advancement; normativity; historical recurrence; belief revisability; historical re-recognizability; Generative Relational theory

Discussion Paper Note

This paper is a preliminary philosophical inquiry into historical judgment, manifestation, and political praxis from a Generative Relational perspective. Its purpose is not to present a complete philosophy of history, to establish a new universal sequence of political development, or to replace existing historical and materialist traditions. The inquiry is deliberately narrower. It asks how political actors can form normative judgments about futures that have not yet been historically realized, how such judgments participate in practice, how practice generates relations that were not fully available to prior evaluation, and how the resulting historical manifestation may subsequently require renewed judgment.

The paper is not written as a critique of Marxism, dialectical historical materialism, or praxis-oriented approaches to historical development. On the contrary, several of its basic intuitions are continuous with these traditions. Political and institutional forms are not treated as self-sufficient abstract objects whose meaning or value can be determined independently of concrete historical conditions. Relations of production, productive capacities, material organization, institutional structures, technologies, knowledge, social relations, and historically available forms of political agency all condition what can be generated, sustained, transformed, and recognized at a given historical moment. The paper therefore shares the broader intuition that historical judgment must remain situated within the relations through which a social order becomes materially and politically possible.

The contribution attempted here is consequently one of refinement rather than opposition. In particular, the paper distinguishes more explicitly between normative judgment made before a contemplated historical form has manifested and normative judgment made after practice has contributed to the production of a new historical configuration. This distinction is important because political practice cannot wait until its consequences have already become fully visible. Actors must imagine alternatives, compare possible futures, form commitments, and choose courses of action under conditions of incomplete knowledge. Such prospective judgment is not treated as a defect to be eliminated. It is a necessary condition of political praxis and one way in which human agents participate in the generation of history.

A prospective judgment, however, is not equivalent to a guarantee concerning the future. At a given historical moment, a political form may reasonably appear more desirable, more just, more productive, more liberating, or otherwise preferable under the evidence, values, relations, and conceptual resources then available. Practice undertaken in response to that judgment can nevertheless generate institutions, dependencies, conflicts, capacities, identities, interpretive resources, and unintended consequences that were not fully present at the moment of initial evaluation. The historically realized configuration may therefore differ significantly from the anticipated form, not only in observable outcomes but also in the relations through which the form acquires its actual meaning and effects.

For this reason, the paper treats praxis as more than a procedure for testing a fixed proposition against an otherwise unchanged reality. Praxis can be world-generating. It changes the relational conditions within which subsequent knowledge and judgment become possible. A theory, institutional aspiration, or normative commitment may guide action, while the action undertaken in its name contributes to the production of a new historical standpoint from which the original judgment can itself be reconsidered. The resulting movement may be represented schematically as a recurrent relation among situated judgment, practice, historical generation, manifestation, and renewed judgment rather than as a one-time passage from theory to verification.

The term “manifestation” is used in this paper in this deliberately broad sense. It does not refer only to an observable outcome appearing after a decision. A historical form manifests through the concrete relations, practices, institutions, effects, interpretations, conflicts, and subject positions through which it becomes historically actual. What is manifested may therefore contain features that could not be fully specified in the prior description of the anticipated form. Manifestation supplies not merely additional information about an unchanged object but potentially a newly generated relational object of judgment.

This distinction also bears upon claims of historical advancement. The paper does not deny the possibility of meaningful comparison among political forms, nor does it deny that historical changes can constitute genuine progress. Political actors must make such comparisons if they are to pursue reforms,

transform institutions, resist injustice, or construct alternatives to existing orders. The paper instead asks that judgments of advancement disclose more carefully the historical relations, normative commitments, feasible transitions, and generated consequences within which such comparisons become meaningful.

A political form imagined as historically subsequent can therefore be judged preferable and can legitimately orient practice before it has been realized. Yet this prospective judgment and the judgment available after historical manifestation occupy different epistemic positions. A form that appears desirable in anticipation may require material, institutional, epistemic, or social conditions that are not yet sufficiently developed in a particular context. An attempted transition may also generate a configuration different from the intended one. Conversely, historical manifestation may reveal possibilities that could not previously have been adequately imagined. The paper therefore distinguishes confidence sufficient for political action from claims of certainty about an unfinished historical future.

This position should not be read as an argument for political passivity or historical relativism. The inability to know the future completely does not eliminate the necessity of judgment. Human political agency consists partly in the capacity to imagine alternatives that do not yet exist, to evaluate them, and to act in ways intended to bring a more desirable order into being. Historical openness therefore strengthens rather than removes the practical importance of normative judgment. The corresponding requirement is that such judgment remain capable of revision when the relations produced through practice disclose features that were previously unavailable.

The paper also considers the historical conditions of normative and aesthetic appearance. Political forms do not become intelligible as rational, advanced, harmonious, natural, just, or desirable in an interpretive vacuum. Scientific reason, sacred authority, formal regularity, technical efficiency, participation, relationality, and generativity can acquire different political salience under different historical configurations. This does not imply that normative judgment can be reduced to aesthetic preference. It instead provides a caution concerning the ease with which historically situated forms of appearance can be mistaken for transhistorical necessity. What appears elegant, modern, natural, or progressive to one historical interpretive system may be recognized differently from another historical position.

The same caution applies to descriptions of historical recurrence. Terms such as monarchy, empire, capitalism, socialism, religious politics, bureaucracy, or other historical categories necessarily preserve some differences while abstracting from others. The claim that two historical configurations are instances of the same form therefore depends upon criteria of equivalence. Apparent recurrence need not imply restoration of the same relational state. A political form can reappear symbolically, institutionally, or phenomenologically while operating through substantially different technologies, economic relations, knowledge systems, infrastructures, international conditions, and modes of subject formation.

For this reason, the paper introduces the idea that historical recurrence can be quotient-dependent. This is not intended to reduce historiography to a mathematical construction. The language of equivalence and quotient is used to make explicit a familiar but consequential operation of historical reasoning: in order to identify recurrence, continuity, or sameness, an interpreter must determine which differences are relevant to the comparison and which may be abstracted away. Different purposes of inquiry may legitimately preserve different structures. The resulting classifications should therefore be treated as analytically constructed and historically interpretable rather than as self-evident identities among complete historical states.

Two normative concerns follow from these arguments. The first is the revisability of belief. Political judgment must often become sufficiently committed to support action, yet commitment need not entail immunity from historical correction. A belief capable of guiding practice should remain revisable when practice generates evidence, relations, or consequences that alter the grounds upon which the belief was originally formed.

The second concern is the re-recognizability of history. Later historical subjects may possess evidence, conceptual resources, normative vocabularies, and relational perspectives unavailable to earlier interpreters. Institutions of memory, archives, historiography, and public knowledge should therefore, so far as practicable, preserve the possibility that the past can be recognized again rather than permanently enclosed within a single authorized interpretation. Re-recognizability does not require that every

interpretation be treated as equally adequate. It requires that the conditions for future inquiry, criticism, comparison, and reinterpretation not be unnecessarily destroyed.

These two concerns are mutually connected. Revisability protects present judgment from becoming dogma; re-recognizability protects the historical record from becoming inaccessible to future judgment. Together they support a form of historical praxis in which political actors can maintain substantive normative commitments while acknowledging that neither their knowledge of future manifestation nor their interpretation of the past is complete.

The paper therefore adopts a position of methodological and historical modesty. It does not claim that historical development lacks structure, direction, contradiction, material constraint, or possibilities of genuine progress. Nor does it claim that all historical forms become normatively equivalent once their relational conditions are acknowledged. Its narrower claim is that political judgment occurs from within history: actors must judge before future relations have fully manifested, practice participates in the generation of those relations, and later historical positions can reopen both the original judgment and the history through which it was formed.

The Generative Relational perspective offered here should accordingly be read as a preliminary extension of a broader praxis-oriented conversation rather than as a declaration of a competing philosophy of history. Its principal proposal is to hold together commitment and revisability: to permit historical actors to judge, choose, and act without requiring them to claim complete knowledge of the future, and to preserve enough epistemic and historical openness for the worlds generated through those actions to teach later actors how those judgments should be understood anew.

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1 Introduction

Political action is necessarily directed toward a world that has not yet fully manifested. Reformers, revolutionaries, legislators, planners, and ordinary political actors must judge possible futures before those futures have acquired the concrete relations through which their consequences can be known. They may regard one institutional arrangement as more just, one mode of production as more enabling, one political order as more emancipatory, or one social trajectory as more desirable than another. Such judgments are not optional additions to political practice. Without them, agents could respond to already manifested conditions but could not intentionally participate in producing a different historical future.

This familiar fact contains a difficult temporal asymmetry. A political future must be evaluated before the historical relations constituting that future are available to evaluation. Yet once political practice contributes to the realization of the contemplated order, the conditions of judgment have changed. New institutions, dependencies, capacities, conflicts, identities, knowledge, technologies, and forms of social experience may have appeared. The future that was once judged prospectively has become a historically generated configuration, and it can now be judged from an epistemic and normative position that did not exist when the original decision was made.

This paper develops a preliminary Generative Relational account of this difference between *judgment before manifestation* and *judgment after manifestation*. Its concern is not whether political actors should form normative judgments about unrealized futures. They must. Nor does the paper argue that every prospective judgment is equally uncertain or that later judgment necessarily invalidates earlier judgment. The problem is more specific: the two judgments occupy different historical-relational positions, and a philosophy of political praxis should not silently collapse them into a single timeless comparison.

The inquiry begins from intellectual ground that is substantially shared with historical-materialist and praxis-oriented traditions. Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* places practical activity at the center of the relation between thought and reality and rejects an understanding of human beings as merely passive products of circumstances [23]. His 1859 Preface likewise insists that legal and political forms cannot be understood independently of the material relations of life and argues that new relations do not become historically viable independently of the conditions through which they can be sustained [22]. The present inquiry does not seek to displace these claims. It takes seriously the proposition that political forms are historical and relational achievements rather than abstract designs whose meaning and value can be established independently of the conditions of their production.

The philosophical interpretation of historical materialism is itself contested. Reconstructions of Marx's theory of history differ over the weight assigned to productive forces, relations of production, functional explanation, class struggle, human agency, and historical direction [8]. The present paper therefore does not treat "historical materialism" as a single doctrine against which a Generative Relational alternative must be constructed. Its aim is narrower. It asks what further distinctions become necessary once political judgment is considered from two temporally different positions: before a contemplated order has manifested and after praxis has participated in generating the relations through which that order actually exists.

This question also belongs to the wider philosophy of historical time. Koselleck's distinction between historically accumulated experience and expectation directed toward an open future provides an especially important background. Modern historical consciousness, on his account, increasingly separates the horizon of expectation from the space of experience, making the future available as a domain that cannot simply be inferred from what has already occurred [19]. Bloch's philosophy of the "not-yet" similarly treats anticipation as constitutive of human orientation toward unrealized possibilities rather than as a merely defective form of knowledge [5]. These traditions help make clear why political practice cannot be reduced to retrospective evaluation. Historical agents act toward possibilities whose relational content is only partially available in advance.

The epistemic difficulty is intensified by a familiar problem of inference. Experience provides indispensable grounds for expectation, yet it cannot demonstratively guarantee that the future will reproduce the relevant regularities of the past. Hume's analysis of induction remains a classical statement of this lim-

itation [16]. Political judgment therefore occupies a peculiar position. Agents cannot rationally suspend all commitment until future consequences become observable, since the future may depend precisely upon whether they act. At the same time, the necessity of action does not transform historically situated expectations into certain knowledge of what practice will generate.

The paper describes this situation through the concept of *manifestation*. Manifestation is not used here as a synonym for simple implementation or empirical observation. A contemplated political form manifests when it acquires a concrete historical-relational existence through institutions, practices, technologies, dependencies, conflicts, interpretations, forms of subjectivity, and consequences. What eventually manifests may therefore differ from what was available to prospective judgment not merely in degree, but in relational constitution.

Let R_t denote a historically situated relational configuration at time t . The notation is intentionally broad. Depending on the inquiry, R_t may include productive forces, relations of production, institutional arrangements, political capacities, technologies, ecological conditions, knowledge, cultural practices, power relations, interpretive systems, and other conditions relevant to the generation of a political form. Let Y denote a contemplated future configuration or political form. A prospective judgment can then be represented schematically as

$$J_{t_0}^{\text{pre}}(Y) = \Phi(Y; R_{t_0}, H_{t_0}, I_{t_0}, N_{t_0}),$$

where H_{t_0} denotes historically available experience, I_{t_0} the interpretive and conceptual resources through which the possible future is understood, and N_{t_0} the normative commitments under which it is evaluated.

Nothing in this representation implies that prospective judgment is arbitrary. It may be informed by extensive historical evidence, scientific knowledge, institutional experience, political theory, and practical reasoning. The point is instead that the object Y has not yet acquired the complete relational history through which its actual significance will later become available.

Political praxis intervenes in this configuration:

$$R_{t_0} \xrightarrow{\Gamma} R_{t_1},$$

where Γ denotes a transition composed of political actions, institutional transformations, conflicts, adaptations, and other historically effective processes. The resulting R_{t_1} should not be assumed to equal the previously imagined Y . Praxis may generate relations that were absent from the prospective representation, suppress possibilities that had been anticipated, or create entirely new objects of political evaluation.

This world-generating dimension of praxis is important. Marx's practical materialism already resists treating thought as an activity external to the world it seeks to understand [23]. The present paper develops one implication of this insight. Political practice does not merely test a prediction against an independently evolving reality. Practice can modify the reality relative to which the prediction, aspiration, and normative judgment will later be assessed. The relation between judgment and history is therefore recursive:

$$J_t \longrightarrow \Gamma_t \longrightarrow R_{t+1} \longrightarrow J_{t+1} \longrightarrow \Gamma_{t+1} \longrightarrow \dots$$

The later judgment is formed from a different position:

$$J_{t_1}^{\text{post}}(R_{t_1}) = \Phi(R_{t_1}; H_{t_1}, I_{t_1}, N_{t_1}).$$

Consequently,

$$J_{t_0}^{\text{pre}} \neq J_{t_1}^{\text{post}}$$

should not, by itself, be regarded as evidence that the prospective judgment was irrational. Historical practice may have generated information that did not previously exist, relations that could not previously

be observed, and even normative concepts through which the resulting form can be recognized in a new way.

The distinction is especially relevant to judgments of historical progress. The concept of progress has long oscillated between strong philosophies of historical direction and skeptical reactions against their teleological, Eurocentric, or universalizing implications. Contemporary critical theory has therefore attempted both to criticize inherited narratives of progress and to preserve the possibility of meaningful normative comparison. Allen, for example, questions the role played by developmental conceptions of progress in the normative foundations of critical theory [1]. Jaeggi, by contrast, develops a deliberately non-teleological and materialist account in which progress is understood through processes of social learning and problem solving rather than movement toward a predetermined historical endpoint [17]. These debates show that rejecting a simple metaphysics of inevitable progress does not require abandoning the concept of progress itself.

The present inquiry shares that concern. Political agents must be able to say that some possible futures are preferable to others. They must also be able to judge that some historical transformations have reduced domination, enlarged human capacities, created new possibilities of cooperation, or otherwise constituted genuine progress. A theory that rendered every historical configuration normatively incomparable would be incapable of supporting political praxis.

The difficulty arises when temporal succession, historical possibility, functional improvement, and normative advancement are treated as though they were the same relation. That a form appears later in history does not by itself establish its superiority. That a form represents a plausible future direction does not establish that it can be immediately sustained under every historical configuration. That an institutional arrangement is superior along one dimension does not automatically establish its superiority under every normative criterion. Conversely, recognition that judgments are situated does not entail that they are arbitrary.

A Generative Relational perspective therefore asks not simply whether Y is “more advanced” than X , but through what relations the comparison is meaningful. At minimum, the judgment may depend upon the historically available conditions R_t , the evaluative criteria N_t , and the transition Γ through which the contemplated form could be generated:

$$X \preceq_{R_t, N_t, \Gamma} Y.$$

This notation is not intended as a complete formal theory of historical progress. It serves to make explicit something often hidden by ordinary language: “advanced” is a relational judgment whose content depends upon what is being compared, under which historically available conditions, through which path of transformation, and according to which normative commitments.

This path-sensitive aspect is important even where a broad historical direction is accepted. Suppose a political community judges a future form Y to be preferable to its present configuration X . It does not follow that any attempt to instantiate Y immediately constitutes progress. If the productive, institutional, epistemic, technological, or social conditions necessary for sustaining the contemplated form are absent, the attempted transition may generate Z rather than Y :

$$X \xrightarrow{\Gamma} Z, \quad Z \neq Y.$$

The distinction is compatible with the historical-materialist insight that new social relations depend upon historically developed conditions of possibility. Marx’s 1859 formulation is particularly relevant here, since it links the replacement of older relations with the maturation of material conditions for newer ones [22]. The Generative Relational addition is to emphasize that the transition itself participates in producing the relational object that will later be judged.

This also clarifies the role of prospective commitment. Historical humility does not require passivity. Political actors cannot wait for a future order to manifest before deciding whether to pursue it. The prospective judgment

$$J_{t_0}^{\text{pre}}(Y)$$

may legitimately orient action even though it remains historically situated. One expression of political agency is precisely the capacity to imagine a form that does not yet exist, judge it preferable under present reasons, and act to alter the conditions of the present. The appropriate epistemic attitude is therefore neither certainty nor suspension of judgment, but committed fallibility.

The aesthetic dimension of historical judgment provides one reason for caution. Political forms do not become visible as rational, progressive, harmonious, efficient, natural, or desirable independently of historically developed modes of perception and interpretation. Sacred authority, geometrical order, scientific rationality, bureaucratic regularity, democratic participation, decentralization, relationality, and generativity can each acquire different forms of normative and aesthetic salience under different historical conditions. What one historical configuration experiences as elegant and advanced may later appear rigid, incomplete, or destructive.

The claim is not that normative judgment is reducible to aesthetic preference. Rather, aesthetic appearance can participate in the historical conditions under which a political possibility first becomes recognizable as worthy of pursuit. For that reason, prospective judgments should distinguish, so far as possible, between the fact that a political form appears compelling within a historically situated interpretive regime and the stronger claim that its superiority is independent of the relations under which it appears.

The historicity of judgment also affects retrospective classification. To say that a historical institution has “returned,” that an empire has reappeared, or that a society has reverted to an earlier political form presupposes some criterion of relevant similarity. Marx’s analysis of the political reuse of historical forms and symbols in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* already provides a particularly rich example of how political actors act through inherited historical languages without simply reproducing the earlier relational world from which those languages emerged [21].

The present paper develops this problem through the language of equivalence and quotient. Let $\mathcal{R}$ denote a sufficiently rich space of historical-relational configurations. A criterion C may define an equivalence relation $\sim_C$ according to which some differences are retained and others abstracted away. It can then occur that

$$R(t_1) \neq R(t_2)$$

while

$$[R(t_1)]_C = [R(t_2)]_C.$$

In such a case, history has returned to the same equivalence class under the chosen criterion; it has not necessarily returned to the same relational state. This motivates one of the paper’s central propositions:

Historical recurrence is quotient-dependent.

The proposition is methodological rather than merely mathematical. Every historical taxonomy performs a controlled abstraction. Calling two political configurations instances of the same type requires deciding which differences are irrelevant to the inquiry. Such abstraction can be justified, but it should not be mistaken for an ontological identity between complete historical states.

This concern connects historical judgment to historiography and memory. Ricoeur’s analysis of memory, historical representation, and forgetting emphasizes that the past is not simply present to later observers as an unchanging object but becomes available through traces, testimony, archives, representation, and acts of interpretation [29]. The possibility that future subjects may possess different evidence or conceptual resources therefore matters normatively as well as epistemically.

The paper develops this point through the idea of *historical re-recognizability*. An historical order should not be understood as having exhausted its possible intelligibility once one generation has classified or evaluated it. Later agents may recognize relations that were previously invisible, identify harms for which earlier vocabularies were insufficient, recover suppressed forms of agency, or reinterpret apparent

continuities in light of newly available evidence. The preservation of historical traces therefore supports more than remembrance. It preserves a future capacity for renewed recognition.

Historical re-recognizability has a prospective counterpart: *beliefrevisability*. Political actors require beliefs and normative commitments strong enough to support action. Yet if praxis changes the conditions under which those commitments were initially justified, an historically responsible belief must remain open to reconsideration. A belief that cannot be revised in light of the historical world it has helped produce is no longer merely a commitment to a future; it risks becoming insulated from praxis itself.

The two principles can therefore be stated together:

$$\boxed{\text{revisability of belief} + \text{re-recognizability of history.}}$$

Revisability concerns the relation of present judgment to an unfinished future. Re-recognizability concerns the relation of historical knowledge to future interpreters. The first asks actors not to confuse necessary commitment with prophecy. The second asks institutions not to confuse present interpretation with the exhaustion of historical meaning.

Taken together, these ideas suggest a recursive conception of historical praxis:

projection → judgment → practice → manifestation → re-recognition → revised judgment.

The sequence is analytical rather than mechanically chronological. In actual historical processes, projection, action, interpretation, and reassessment may overlap, conflict, and occur across multiple temporal scales. The purpose of the schema is to distinguish epistemic positions that are easily collapsed when a later observer reconstructs a historical trajectory as though its outcome had been available from the beginning.

The paper's contribution is therefore deliberately modest. It does not reject historical materialism, deny historical progress, or propose a new universal law of historical development. It develops several distinctions within a historically situated and praxis-oriented understanding of political judgment. First, prospective and post-manifestation judgments occupy different historical-relational positions. Second, praxis is generative as well as verificatory. Third, judgments of advancement require attention to the conditions and transitions through which political forms can become actual. Fourth, claims of historical recurrence depend upon criteria of equivalence. Fifth, historical responsibility requires both revisable belief and preservation of the possibility of future re-recognition.

The remainder of the paper develops these propositions in greater detail. It first situates the argument in relation to historical materialism, philosophies of progress, historical temporality, praxis, and historiography. It then examines prospective judgment, political commitment, and practice before turning to manifestation and post-manifestation evaluation. Later sections address historical advancement, transition, equivalence, recurrence, and the historicity of normative and aesthetic appearance. The final sections develop revisability and re-recognizability as complementary requirements for a historical praxis that must act without possessing final knowledge of the world its action will help to generate.

2 Historical Judgment Before Manifestation

This section establishes the epistemic and historical position from which political judgment is made before a contemplated social or political form has become historically manifest. Its role is to distinguish prospective judgment from retrospective evaluation while preserving the practical necessity of commitment to unrealized possibilities. The discussion proceeds through four related problems: the dependence of political possibility upon historically generated conditions, the relation between accumulated experience and future expectation, the epistemic limits of projecting past regularities into an unfinished future, and the interpretive conditions through which an unrealized political form can become intelligible as desirable. The section concludes by formulating prospective judgment within a Generative Relational framework.

2.1 Prospective Judgment as a Condition of Praxis

Political praxis presupposes a capacity to evaluate possibilities whose historical consequences are still unavailable. A legislative reform, a change in property relations, a constitutional transformation, a new planning regime, or a reorganization of public institutions must be assessed before the relevant relations have fully developed under the contemplated arrangement. Political agency therefore includes an anticipatory dimension. Actors form judgments about possible futures and allow those judgments to orient present action.

The practical importance of such judgment becomes clearest when a political community confronts alternatives that cannot all be historically realized for prior comparison. A society considering two institutional trajectories cannot first inhabit both trajectories, observe their complete consequences, and then return to the initial state to select the preferable one. Historical choice therefore differs from the comparison of two simultaneously available finished objects. One alternative may already be historically actual, whereas another exists as a projected configuration whose practical meaning remains partly undetermined.

This temporal asymmetry gives prospective political judgment a distinctive structure. The contemplated political form can be conceptually described, normatively evaluated, and practically pursued before its concrete relational effects have become available. Such judgment can be supported by historical experience, comparative institutions, economic analysis, political theory, scientific evidence, and practical knowledge. Its object nevertheless remains partly prospective because the relations generated through realization have yet to become historical facts.

The Marxian emphasis on practical activity provides an important foundation for treating this prospective orientation as internal to political action. The *Theses on Feuerbach* places human sensuous activity and practice at the center of the relation between thought and social reality and emphasizes that human beings participate in changing the circumstances under which they themselves develop [23]. Political actors therefore occupy a dual position. They are historically conditioned by an inherited world, and their practice contributes to the transformation of that world.

Prospective judgment arises within this dual position. An actor does not choose from outside history. The capacity to imagine a different political form is itself enabled by historically accumulated concepts, conflicts, technologies, institutions, productive capacities, political experiences, and forms of social organization. At the same time, the imagined form may refer to relations that have never previously existed in the contemplated configuration. Political projection therefore combines inherited historical resources with an orientation toward unrealized relational possibilities.

The resulting judgment has practical force because historical actors require reasons for preferring one trajectory to another. Reform and transformation would otherwise lose their normative orientation. A commitment to an unrealized future can therefore be rational and politically necessary even when the future remains incompletely specified. The central issue concerns the epistemic status of that commitment and the conditions under which it should remain open to subsequent revision.

2.2 Historical Conditions of Political Possibility

Prospective judgment operates within a historically structured field of possibility. Political forms differ in their dependence upon productive, institutional, technological, epistemic, cultural, and organizational conditions. A form that can be named or conceptually imagined does not thereby possess the relations required for its practical reproduction.

Marx's 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* provides a particularly important formulation of this problem. Legal and political forms are situated within material conditions of life, and transformations in relations of production are connected to the development of productive forces [22]. The same text emphasizes the historical maturation of the material conditions through which new relations can become possible [22]. This historical-material orientation provides a strong reason to distinguish the conceptual availability of a political form from its historical generability.

A Generative Relational perspective broadens the relevant field of conditions without displacing

the historical-material insight. Productive forces and relations of production remain important components of the historical configuration. Institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, ecological constraints, political organization, accumulated knowledge, interpretive systems, social trust, legal forms, and transnational relations may also affect the manner in which a contemplated arrangement can be generated and sustained. The analytical purpose of this broader representation is to identify the relations through which a political form acquires concrete historical existence.

This distinction has direct consequences for judgments of political advancement. A form may be evaluated positively as an anticipated destination while the conditions necessary for its stable reproduction remain underdeveloped. The prospective evaluation can retain normative significance because it identifies a direction of desired transformation. Practical evaluation must additionally consider the historical relations through which the transition can occur.

The distinction between a political form and its generative conditions also clarifies the status of institutional labels. Terms such as *capitalism*, *socialism*, *democracy*, *monarchy*, or *federalism* identify broad classes of political and economic configurations. A legal declaration, constitutional title, or official classification can establish important formal properties, while the historical-relational configuration may continue to depend upon patterns of production, administration, authority, knowledge, infrastructure, and social practice that differ substantially from the anticipated arrangement. The prospective judgment therefore concerns a future relational configuration rather than a nominal category alone.

The concept of historical possibility also introduces a temporal distinction between availability and maturity. A political possibility can become intelligible before the conditions for its realization have developed to the same degree. Political thought frequently anticipates institutions that later become technically, materially, or socially feasible. The presence of such anticipation gives political imagination an important role in historical transformation. The temporal gap between conceptual anticipation and relational maturity simultaneously creates a source of political risk, since premature implementation may generate relations different from those anticipated by the original judgment.

This problem should be separated from a general preference for gradual change. Historical circumstances can also produce situations in which delayed transformation preserves relations that have already become destructive, dominating, or institutionally exhausted. Generative conditions therefore do not supply a universal argument for waiting. They identify the relations that must be examined when evaluating whether a contemplated transformation can produce and sustain the political goods attributed to it.

The historical-material insight can consequently be expressed in generative terms: a political form acquires practical significance through the historical relations that make its reproduction possible. Prospective political judgment must therefore concern both the anticipated form and the configuration through which that form could emerge.

2.3 Experience, Expectation, and Historical Projection

Historical actors project possible futures from within accumulated experience. The temporal structure of this projection has been examined with particular clarity by Reinhart Koselleck. His distinction between a “space of experience” and a “horizon of expectation” describes two historically related dimensions of temporal orientation: experience contains an accumulated past available in the present, whereas expectation concerns futures that have yet to be experienced [19]. The relation between these dimensions is especially significant under conditions of rapid historical change, where inherited experience becomes an increasingly incomplete guide to future possibilities [19].

This distinction is highly relevant to political judgment before manifestation. Historical experience provides categories, precedents, causal expectations, institutional memories, and practical warnings. Prospective judgment depends upon these resources. Future political configurations, however, can contain combinations of relations for which no complete precedent exists. The horizon of political expectation therefore exceeds the archive of already manifested arrangements.

The difference between experience and expectation also limits simple historical analogy. A past institutional configuration can inform the evaluation of a proposed reform, yet the comparison depends

upon which relations remain sufficiently similar across the two historical contexts. Changes in technology, international structure, production, communication, law, demography, or political subjectivity can alter the relational significance of an apparently similar institutional form. Historical projection requires comparison and abstraction while remaining sensitive to the conditions under which an analogy retains explanatory relevance.

Ernst Bloch's philosophy of the "Not-Yet" provides a complementary account of future orientation. *The Principle of Hope* develops an account of anticipatory consciousness and unrealized possibility in which the future cannot be reduced to repetition of the already actual [5]. Bloch's emphasis on the unfinished character of reality gives anticipatory thought a practical role: human beings can orient themselves toward possibilities whose full content has yet to become actual [5]. This orientation is particularly relevant to political practice because transformative projects often depend upon concepts and aspirations that exceed the institutional forms already available for observation.

Bloch's account also illustrates a tension central to prospective judgment. Anticipation must possess enough determinacy to orient action, while an open future limits the degree to which its realized form can be specified in advance. A political ideal described with excessive abstraction may provide insufficient guidance for institutional practice. A political future described as though every relevant relation were already known risks treating historical generation as implementation of a completed design. Prospective judgment therefore operates between these two difficulties.

A Generative Relational perspective interprets this temporal structure through the distinction between possible relational configurations and manifested relational configurations. A contemplated future can contain proposed institutions, values, and expected relations. Its historical realization may generate additional relations through interaction among actors, technologies, institutions, environments, and interpretive systems. The difference between the anticipated and manifested configurations is therefore structurally significant rather than merely informational.

Historical projection consequently has two objects. The first is the anticipated political form itself. The second is the generative process through which the form may acquire historical existence. A political judgment that evaluates only the first object can overlook the relations produced by the transition. Later sections develop this path-sensitive dimension in greater detail.

2.4 Inductive Limits and Practical Commitment

Prospective historical judgment also encounters a general epistemic difficulty: past regularities cannot provide demonstrative certainty concerning an unobserved future. Hume's analysis of causal inference remains a foundational statement of this problem. Expectations concerning unobserved events depend upon experience of past conjunctions, while experience alone does not provide a deductive guarantee that comparable regularities will continue [16]. The contemporary philosophical literature continues to identify this difficulty as the problem of induction.

The political relevance of the problem extends beyond ordinary forecasting. Political interventions can modify the conditions under which past regularities were observed. A policy can alter incentives, institutions, expectations, classifications, social identities, or channels of interaction. A constitutional reform can create new strategic behavior. A technological intervention can change the informational environment upon which previous political regularities depended. Historical practice can therefore change part of the causal and relational structure from which the initial projection was derived.

Prospective political judgment consequently faces two forms of uncertainty. The first concerns the ordinary extension of existing knowledge toward future events. The second concerns the possibility that political action changes the relations relevant to that extension. The second form is especially important for a generative account because the intervention can participate in producing the object later subjected to evaluation.

This epistemic limitation does not remove the practical requirement for commitment. A political community often incurs consequences through inaction as well as action. Delay can preserve existing domination, permit institutional degradation, deepen ecological damage, or foreclose political possibilities. Historical agents therefore cannot convert uncertainty into an indefinite suspension of judgment.

The practical task is to distinguish uncertainty from arbitrariness. Prospective judgment can be evidence-sensitive, historically informed, normatively articulated, and institutionally reasoned while remaining open to future correction. The appropriate epistemic posture is a form of committed fallibility: political actors can regard a contemplated trajectory as sufficiently justified for action while preserving the possibility that historical manifestation will provide reasons for reassessment.

Committed fallibility also provides an initial connection between political agency and belief revisability. A judgment that remains permanently detached from practical commitment cannot guide transformation. A commitment whose validity is insulated from every consequence of practice loses responsiveness to the historical world in which it operates. Prospective political rationality therefore requires both capacities: commitment sufficient for action and revisability sufficient for learning.

The distinction is particularly relevant to projects presented as historically necessary. A belief that a political form represents a plausible or desirable future can motivate transformative practice. Historical necessity is a stronger claim because it assigns a determinate status to a future that has yet to manifest. The difference between these claims will become central when the paper later examines historical development, political advancement, and teleological interpretation.

2.5 Interpretive Conditions of Prospective Evaluation

A contemplated political future must become intelligible before it can become an object of normative commitment. Prospective judgment therefore depends upon the interpretive resources available to historical actors. Political concepts, scientific models, moral vocabularies, aesthetic forms, institutional categories, and inherited narratives influence which possibilities can be described and which properties of those possibilities acquire evaluative salience.

This interpretive dependence creates a further dimension of historical situatedness. A future political form may appear desirable because it is associated with values such as equality, liberty, rationality, productivity, solidarity, stability, participation, or generativity. The relative importance and conceptual articulation of these values can change historically. Later actors may acquire distinctions that were unavailable when the original prospective judgment was formed.

The history of scientific and political rationality illustrates the general structure. Formal regularity, measurement, calculability, standardized classification, and systematic planning can acquire epistemic authority within historical settings shaped by the development of modern science, administration, and symbolic systems. Participatory, adaptive, relational, or decentralized forms may acquire greater salience in settings where the limits of centralized prediction and fixed classification have become more visible. These shifts concern both political knowledge and the modes through which a political order becomes recognizable as coherent or desirable.

Aesthetic appearance forms one component of this interpretive field. Political forms may appear harmonious, elegant, modern, natural, dynamic, stable, or generative. Such appearances can influence prospective orientation without settling the normative evaluation. The historical variability of aesthetic judgment therefore provides a caution concerning political projections: features that make a contemplated order compelling within one interpretive configuration may acquire a different significance after the relevant relations have developed.

The role of aesthetic appearance is especially important because prospective judgment concerns a partially unrealized object. Actors frequently encounter the future through models, narratives, images, institutional prototypes, political concepts, and symbolic representations. The mediated appearance of a future political form can therefore influence the confidence attached to its anticipated desirability.

The historical character of interpretation also affects the range of available alternatives. A society cannot evaluate a political possibility that it lacks the conceptual resources to formulate. Historical development can therefore expand the space of political judgment by creating new categories through which previously unrecognized possibilities become articulable. The emergence of new normative vocabularies can similarly make previously normalized harms available to criticism.

Prospective evaluation is consequently situated in both material and interpretive history. The relevant question concerns neither material conditions alone nor ideals alone. Political possibilities become ac-

tionable through relations among productive capacities, institutions, technologies, knowledge, concepts, normative commitments, and forms of political agency.

2.6 Generative Relational Formulation

The preceding discussion can be summarized through a preliminary Generative Relational representation of prospective historical judgment. The purpose of the representation is analytical: it identifies the principal conditions that make a pre-manifestation judgment possible while preserving the distinction between an anticipated political form and its later historical manifestation.

Let Y denote a contemplated political configuration, R_t the historically available relational configuration, H_t accumulated historical experience, I_t the interpretive resources available to relevant actors, N_t their articulated normative commitments, and M_t the models or expectations through which consequences are projected. The structure of prospective judgment is shown in Equation 1.

$$J_t^{\text{pre}}(Y) = \Phi_t(Y; R_t, H_t, I_t, N_t, M_t) \quad (1)$$

Equation 1 represents a situated judgment rather than a complete theory of political evaluation. Each component can itself contain heterogeneous structures. The relational configuration R_t may include material, institutional, ecological, technological, cultural, and political relations. Historical experience H_t may include documented events, collective memory, institutional precedent, and accumulated practice. Interpretive resources I_t include the conceptual and symbolic means through which a possible political form becomes intelligible. Normative commitments N_t identify the values under which the contemplated form is evaluated. Models M_t represent causal expectations, analogies, forecasting procedures, and other devices for projecting consequences.

The time index on Φ_t is important. The mode of judgment itself can change historically. New evidence can alter causal expectations. New concepts can change what becomes visible as a political harm or possibility. New institutional experience can modify the interpretation of previously familiar forms. Normative vocabulary can also develop through historical practice. Prospective judgment therefore emerges within a historically changing capacity for judgment.

Three forms of incompleteness follow from this formulation.

The first is *relational incompleteness*. Some relations relevant to the future configuration have yet to be generated. Their absence differs from missing data about an already existing relation.

The second is *trajectory incompleteness*. The transition through which Y might be approached has yet to occur, and interactions during that transition may alter both the destination and the conditions of movement.

The third is *evaluative incompleteness*. Future actors may possess normative and interpretive resources unavailable at t , allowing the manifested configuration to be recognized through distinctions that current actors cannot yet employ.

These forms of incompleteness do not invalidate prospective judgment. They specify the epistemic conditions under which prospective judgment operates. The political actor must evaluate a future whose relational constitution is partly open, whose trajectory is only partially knowable, and whose later evaluation may be conducted through conceptual resources that have not yet emerged.

A historically responsible prospective judgment therefore carries two commitments simultaneously. It commits to a sufficiently determinate practical orientation to support action, and it preserves the possibility that the historically generated world will require revision of the judgment that helped produce it. This combination provides the transition from pre-manifestation judgment to the analysis of projection, commitment, and political praxis developed in the following section.

3 Projection, Commitment, and Political Praxis

This section examines how a historically situated prospective judgment acquires sufficient practical force to orient political action. Section 2 established that political actors evaluate unrealized possibilities from

within historically available relations, experience, interpretive resources, and normative commitments. The present section develops the next analytical step: the movement from projection to commitment and from commitment to praxis. The discussion proceeds through six components. It first treats projection as a practical orientation toward possible futures. It then examines commitment as a provisional stabilization of political direction under uncertainty. The third part analyzes the plurality and generative consequences of action. The fourth part considers the interpretive and aesthetic mediation through which projected futures acquire practical salience. The fifth part develops a conception of practical agency compatible with historical situatedness. The final part integrates these elements into a Generative Relational account of committed and revisable praxis.

3.1 Projection and Practical Orientation

Political projection gives practical form to possibilities that have yet to become historically actual. A projected future can contain institutional arrangements, expected relations, normative aspirations, distributions of resources, anticipated forms of cooperation, and imagined modes of social life. Projection therefore performs more than prediction. It organizes a possible future sufficiently for present actors to orient themselves toward or away from it.

This practical function distinguishes political projection from detached forecasting. A forecast may estimate the probability of an event while leaving present conduct unchanged. A political projection becomes practically significant when it enters deliberation concerning what should be done. It can identify a direction of transformation, specify a condition to be avoided, or provide a provisional representation of a social order toward which collective action may be organized.

John Dewey's account of "ends-in-view" provides a useful philosophical precedent for this understanding of projection. In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey treats ends as foreseen consequences that arise within ongoing activity and influence present deliberation rather than as fixed termini located outside the practical process [9]. Past consequences can be imaginatively recombined into possible future consequences, and these anticipated consequences can guide present conduct [9]. This account places future orientation within the structure of action itself.

The Deweyan formulation is particularly useful for historical judgment because it weakens the assumption that political action requires a completely specified final state. A projected future can orient conduct while remaining subject to revision as action develops. The practical meaning of an end lies partly in the way it organizes present inquiry, choice, and coordination. A constitutional ideal, a vision of economic transformation, or a conception of social justice can therefore guide political action without functioning as an exhaustive description of the social world that will eventually emerge.

Bloch's account of anticipatory consciousness provides a complementary perspective. The "Not-Yet-Conscious" and the broader philosophy of the "not-yet" in *The Principle of Hope* treat human orientation toward unrealized possibility as a significant dimension of historical existence [5]. The future can become present in imagination, expectation, aspiration, and symbolic representation before it acquires institutional actuality. Political projects frequently depend upon precisely this capacity to make an unrealized configuration practically intelligible.

Projection therefore mediates between present relations and unrealized possibility. It begins from historically available materials while assembling them into configurations that may have no exact precedent. Existing legal concepts can be recombined into a new constitutional proposal. Existing technologies can support forms of coordination that have yet to acquire stable institutional expression. Existing normative commitments can be extended to subjects or relations previously excluded from their scope. Historical projection is consequently reproductive and inventive at the same time.

The inventive dimension deserves emphasis because political futures rarely enter practice as fully formed objects. A projected order contains degrees of indeterminacy. Some of these arise from limited information, while others arise because relevant relations will be generated only through subsequent action. Projection therefore creates a provisional object of practical judgment rather than a complete representation of the future.

This provisionality gives projection a double role. It reduces the openness of the future sufficiently to permit coordinated action, while preserving enough openness for later experience to modify the projected configuration. Political projection becomes productive when it can support direction without claiming exhaustive specification.

3.2 Commitment under Historical Uncertainty

Projection alone does not produce political transformation. Collective action requires some degree of commitment: actors must allocate attention, resources, institutional capacity, credibility, and often personal or collective risk to one trajectory among several available possibilities. Commitment converts a projected future from an object of contemplation into a practical orientation with consequences in the present.

The historical uncertainty identified in Section 2 makes this conversion philosophically significant. Political actors rarely possess evidence capable of settling every relevant dispute before action begins. Deliberation can improve the grounds of judgment, reveal hidden assumptions, identify likely consequences, and compare available alternatives. A residual interval remains between justified projection and historically manifested consequence. Political commitment operates within that interval.

Commitment therefore contains an element of practical closure. Deliberation among alternatives cannot continue indefinitely if coordinated action is to occur. At some point, an institution, movement, government, or community treats one judgment as sufficiently warranted to organize action. This closure has a temporal character: it stabilizes a direction for present practice while the historical process remains open.

Dewey's treatment of ends-in-view helps distinguish such practical closure from attachment to a fixed final state. An end can organize present activity and be reconstructed as the conditions of action change [9]. Commitment can therefore be strong enough to coordinate conduct while remaining responsive to consequences generated during the process.

This distinction is important for political projects that involve substantial institutional transformation. A weak commitment can make sustained collective action impossible. Frequent abandonment of goals in response to ordinary difficulty can prevent any new relational configuration from becoming stable enough to reveal its possibilities. Excessively rigid commitment creates the opposite difficulty: emergent evidence and newly generated relations cease to have meaningful influence upon the course of action.

A Generative Relational account therefore treats commitment as a temporally situated stabilization of judgment. Its practical function lies in maintaining a direction across a sufficiently long interval for coordinated practice to become possible. Its epistemic legitimacy remains connected to the reasons, relations, and consequences relevant to the judgment.

Political commitment also distributes expectations among actors. Once a government adopts a programme, an organization establishes a rule, or a social movement publicly embraces a project, other actors begin to form expectations around that commitment. Investments, alliances, oppositions, identities, and institutional adaptations can subsequently emerge. Commitment therefore changes the relational environment even before the projected political form has been fully realized.

This anticipatory effect gives commitment a generative role. A public commitment to a future institution can create some of the conditions required for that institution to become possible. It can mobilize resources, produce new organizations, stabilize expectations, and alter the perceived feasibility of the project. The distinction between evaluating a future and beginning to generate that future is therefore porous in political practice.

Historical judgment before manifestation consequently contains a reflexive feature. Actors evaluate a projected future partly by estimating whether it can be generated, while their commitment to that projection can itself alter its generability. Political feasibility is therefore sometimes endogenous to political commitment.

This endogeneity introduces an additional reason for modesty in prospective judgment. Evidence available before commitment describes a relational configuration that commitment itself may alter. A political project can become more feasible because actors coordinate around it, or less feasible because

the same commitment generates resistance, strategic adaptation, institutional overload, or new conflicts. Commitment participates in the production of the conditions under which its own judgment will later be assessed.

3.3 Praxis, Plurality, and Generative Consequence

Political praxis unfolds within a plurality of actors whose responses cannot be fully incorporated into the original intention of any single participant. The transition from projected future to manifested order therefore includes a distinctively relational source of indeterminacy. An intervention enters a field in which other actors interpret, resist, appropriate, redirect, combine, and transform its effects.

Hannah Arendt's analysis of action in *The Human Condition* is especially important for this dimension of political praxis. Arendt situates action within a web of human relationships and emphasizes the process character of action, its irreversibility, and its unpredictability [2]. Action initiates processes whose consequences become entangled with the initiatives of others, giving political activity a capacity for beginnings together with a persistent difficulty of control [2].

This plurality sharpens the distinction between political making and political generation. A fabricated object can often be assessed against a prior design because the relevant material is organized toward a comparatively determinate product. Political action operates through subjects who possess their own interpretations, histories, capacities, and projects. The resulting order emerges from interactions among these trajectories.

A policy intended to increase participation can generate new organizations that later reinterpret the policy's purposes. A reform intended to decentralize authority can create new local concentrations of power. A legal right can enable practices that change the social meaning of the right itself. An economic transition can create new classes, dependencies, and political coalitions that were absent from the original projection. Praxis therefore generates consequences through relational interaction rather than through execution of intention alone.

Marx's account of revolutionary practice already provides an important basis for this active conception of history. The *Theses on Feuerbach* emphasizes the coincidence of changing circumstances and human activity, and presents human beings as participants in the transformation of the conditions that shape them [23]. This formulation gives historical practice a recursive structure: agents act from conditions that have formed them, while their action contributes to the transformation of those conditions.

The Generative Relational perspective develops this recursive structure by treating newly generated relations as analytically significant. Practice can change more than the values of variables within a fixed social model. It can change which actors exist, which relations connect them, which distinctions matter, which resources are politically effective, which categories organize perception, and which future actions become available.

Hans Joas's work on the genesis of values provides a related account of the creative dimension of action. Joas associates the emergence of values with processes of self-formation and self-transcendence and emphasizes the creative character of human action in understanding how values arise [18]. This perspective supports a conception of praxis in which action can transform the evaluative resources of the acting subjects themselves.

The consequences are important for historical judgment. A political project may begin with a normative vocabulary formed under one relational configuration. Participation in the project can produce experiences through which actors revise the significance of those values, discover new conflicts among them, or articulate values that were previously unavailable. The evaluation of the manifested political order is then conducted by subjects whose evaluative capacities have partly developed through the process under evaluation.

Praxis consequently generates a double transformation. It changes the object of judgment by transforming social relations, and it can change the subject of judgment by transforming the interpretive and normative capacities of the participants. Historical manifestation therefore cannot be understood solely as the arrival of an anticipated object before an unchanged observer.

This double transformation provides one foundation for the later distinction between pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment. The temporal difference concerns more than information accumulation. The social world and the evaluative standpoint can both undergo historical generation.

3.4 Interpretive and Aesthetic Mediation

Projected political futures become actionable through forms of representation. Programs, theories, slogans, models, institutional prototypes, narratives, images, legal concepts, historical analogies, and aesthetic forms all participate in making a possible future intelligible. Political actors therefore encounter prospective orders through mediated appearances before they encounter their historically manifested relational consequences.

The aesthetic dimension of this mediation deserves careful treatment. Aesthetic judgment in this paper refers to a historically situated mode through which a possible configuration can appear coherent, elegant, harmonious, dynamic, stable, rational, natural, or otherwise attractive. Such appearance can contribute to political orientation because a projected future must become perceptually and conceptually salient before actors can organize commitment around it.

Bloch's account of anticipatory consciousness is useful here because his discussion of the "not-yet" includes the aesthetic and symbolic forms through which unrealized possibilities become available to imagination [5]. Utopian images can carry practical significance before the social relations associated with them have become actual. Aesthetic representation can therefore participate in the anticipatory structure of political judgment.

The political importance of aesthetic mediation extends beyond explicit works of art. Formal simplicity can make an institutional design appear rational. Symmetry can make a constitutional structure appear balanced. Quantification and visual regularity can make administrative systems appear objective. Decentralized networks can appear adaptive and resilient. Participatory forms can appear open and generative. These appearances emerge through historically developed interpretive resources.

Joas's account of the genesis of values further supports attention to the experiential conditions through which values acquire attachment and motivational force [18]. Political values are rarely encountered as disembodied propositions alone. They become meaningful through experiences, identifications, symbols, institutional practices, and forms of collective self-understanding.

Aesthetic mediation therefore occupies an intermediate position between description and normative commitment. A future that becomes visible as coherent or beautiful can acquire motivational force, while normative justification requires additional reasons concerning justice, domination, generativity, welfare, freedom, or other relevant values. Political analysis should preserve this distinction because aesthetic salience can intensify commitment before the relational consequences of a projected order have manifested.

The historical variability of aesthetic judgment provides an additional reason for preserving this distinction. Forms of order that appear compelling within one epistemic and symbolic configuration can acquire different meanings under another. Sacred hierarchy, centralized symmetry, mathematical regularity, scientific administration, participatory openness, and relational generativity have each possessed distinctive forms of historical attraction. Several such regimes of appearance can coexist within the same political order.

Prospective political judgment therefore inherits a temporal vulnerability from aesthetic mediation. The aesthetic resources available at the time of projection can make some dimensions of a future highly visible and leave others weakly articulated. Manifestation can later reveal relations that were absent from the initial appearance. A governance form admired for efficiency may generate dependencies that alter its later evaluation. A form admired for participation may generate new exclusions. A form admired for relational openness may produce coordination burdens that were weakly represented in the original projection.

This observation supports an epistemic warning without reducing aesthetics to error. Aesthetic perception can disclose meaningful qualities of political forms and can motivate valuable transformation. Its historical situatedness requires that political actors maintain a distinction between the appearance of a

possible order under present conditions and the normative status of the relations that will emerge through its realization.

3.5 Practical Agency under Historical Openness

The requirement to act under incomplete historical knowledge raises a question about political agency. The present framework approaches agency at the practical level: historical actors possess varying capacities to imagine alternatives, form commitments, coordinate action, revise projects, and transform relations. This practical conception leaves broader metaphysical disputes concerning free will open while preserving the political significance of choice.

Political agency is historically conditioned. The range of imaginable options, the resources available for action, the institutional channels through which commitment can be expressed, and the consequences actors can reasonably anticipate all depend upon inherited relations. Historical situatedness, however, still permits meaningful differences among available courses of action. Agents can deliberate among alternatives, produce new combinations, refuse inherited expectations, and attempt to generate relations that do not yet exist.

The practical significance of freedom therefore appears in the capacity to participate in the selection and generation of future trajectories. This capacity varies across actors and institutions. Political domination can be understood partly through restrictions on whose projections become actionable, whose commitments receive institutional support, and whose capacity to revise the course of collective action is recognized.

Arendt's conception of action as beginning is relevant to this account of practical agency. Her analysis emphasizes the capacity of action to initiate processes whose development exceeds the control of the initiating actor [2]. Political agency therefore combines the power to begin with exposure to consequences generated through plurality.

This combination provides a useful alternative to two simplified images of historical action. One image treats political actors as executors of a future already determined by historical law. Another treats them as unconstrained designers capable of imposing arbitrary forms upon passive social material. Generative historical praxis occupies a relational position between these images. Agents inherit conditions they did not choose, exercise capacities formed within those conditions, and can nevertheless participate in producing configurations that exceed inherited arrangements.

The degree of historical openness also varies across situations. Some transitions are strongly constrained by material and institutional structures. Others involve multiple viable trajectories. Political agency therefore cannot be represented adequately through a single opposition between determinism and freedom. A more useful inquiry concerns the structure of available possibilities, the distribution of capacities for acting upon them, and the relations through which new possibilities can be generated.

Practical agency also includes the capacity for revision. A political actor who can initiate a transformation yet lacks institutional mechanisms for observing its consequences, reconsidering its assumptions, or altering its trajectory possesses an incomplete form of practical control. The ability to revise a project can therefore be understood as part of agency itself.

This point links historical openness to institutional design. Reversible policies, staged interventions, deliberative procedures, preserved records, feedback institutions, and mechanisms for constitutional amendment can expand the practical capacity of a political community to learn from the relations its actions generate. Such arrangements do not eliminate historical uncertainty. They alter the manner in which a community remains capable of acting within it.

3.6 Generative Relational Structure of Committed Praxis

The preceding analysis permits a more precise formulation of committed historical praxis. Prospective judgment identifies a preferred trajectory from within historically available relations. Projection gives the contemplated future sufficient form for deliberation. Commitment stabilizes a practical orientation and coordinates expectations. Praxis introduces that commitment into a plural relational field. The resulting

interactions generate a historical configuration whose properties can exceed the original projection. Later judgment then occurs from within the altered configuration.

The relevant structure therefore contains several analytically distinct moments: projection, prospective evaluation, commitment, action, relational generation, manifestation, and renewed evaluation. These moments can overlap in historical practice, and large political processes can contain multiple nested cycles operating across different timescales.

A Generative Relational account places particular emphasis on three transitions within this structure.

The first transition concerns the movement from possibility to commitment. Political actors select one projected trajectory as sufficiently desirable and credible to organize action around it. This transition requires normative judgment and practical closure under incomplete knowledge.

The second transition concerns the movement from commitment to relational generation. Once commitment affects institutions and behavior, other actors respond. Resources are reallocated, expectations change, conflicts emerge, alliances form, categories are reinterpreted, and new dependencies can develop. The projected future begins to acquire a historical existence that exceeds the initial representation.

The third transition concerns the movement from manifestation to renewed judgment. The manifested configuration supplies new evidence and new relations, while participation in the transition may also have changed the concepts and values through which the configuration is evaluated. Renewed judgment therefore takes place from a historically transformed position.

These transitions clarify the meaning of committed fallibility. Commitment gives prospective judgment practical force. Fallibility preserves the capacity of historically generated consequences to alter the judgment. The combination supports a mode of praxis capable of sustained action and subsequent learning.

The structure also identifies a temporal source of political responsibility. An actor cannot demand certainty about every future consequence before action, since such certainty is unavailable for many transformative decisions. Responsibility therefore concerns the quality of prospective reasoning, the relations affected by action, the treatment of foreseeable risks, the preservation of capacities for observation and revision, and the willingness to reconsider commitments as historically generated consequences become available.

This conception prepares the analysis of praxis as historical generation in the following section. Section 3 has treated praxis primarily from the standpoint of the actors who project, commit, and initiate action. The next section shifts the analytical center toward the historical process itself: the production of new relations, subjectivities, institutional structures, and evaluative conditions through which a contemplated future becomes a manifested historical configuration.

4 Praxis as Historical Generation

This section develops the generative dimension of political praxis. The preceding section examined projection, commitment, and action from the standpoint of historically situated agents. The present section shifts the analytical focus toward the historical transformations produced through praxis. Its objective is to clarify how political action can alter the relational configuration in which subsequent action, knowledge, and judgment take place. The discussion proceeds through six connected dimensions: the transformation of relational structures, the historical significance of events, the sedimentation of institutional trajectories, the formation of subjects and capacities, the production of new epistemic conditions, and the partial irreversibility of historically generated relations. The section concludes by specifying the sense in which praxis is generative within the present framework.

4.1 Relational Transformation through Praxis

Political praxis enters an already structured historical world. Institutions, productive arrangements, legal categories, technologies, political identities, infrastructures, cultural expectations, and distributions of authority shape the field within which action becomes possible. Practice subsequently affects that field

through the consequences of coordinated and contested action. The historical significance of praxis therefore lies partly in its capacity to modify the relations that conditioned its own emergence.

This recursive structure has a clear precedent in Marx's account of practical activity. The *Theses on Feuerbach* treats the transformation of circumstances and human self-transformation as internally connected within revolutionary practice [23]. The formulation places practical activity inside the historical process through which actors and circumstances change together. Political agency consequently develops within inherited conditions while also participating in their transformation.

A Generative Relational perspective develops this insight by treating changes in relational structure as analytically central. Political practice can alter who is connected to whom, which resources circulate through those connections, which distinctions organize institutions, which capacities become politically effective, and which forms of action become available. The resulting transformation can exceed the initially intended policy outcome.

A property reform, for example, can change the distribution of assets while also producing new creditor–debtor relations, new administrative capacities, new political coalitions, and new forms of dependency. A constitutional reform can redistribute formal authority while also changing expectations concerning legitimate political action. A communication technology can expand access to information while generating new intermediaries, new asymmetries of attention, and new mechanisms of coordination. The historical effect of praxis therefore includes the production of relations through which later events acquire different meanings and consequences.

The analytical object is consequently broader than an isolated intervention and its immediate output. Political praxis contributes to the transformation of a relational configuration. Some effects remain local and temporary. Others become embedded in institutions, infrastructures, expectations, and patterns of interaction. These embedded effects shape subsequent trajectories and thereby become part of the historical conditions inherited by later actors.

The distinction between an intended result and a generated relational configuration is central to the concept of manifestation developed in this paper. A projected political form can specify institutional arrangements and desired outcomes, while the historical configuration through which it becomes actual includes relations produced through implementation, adaptation, resistance, appropriation, and repeated use. The manifested object of later judgment therefore contains a wider historical structure than the original project.

4.2 Eventful Transformation of Historical Structure

The generative consequences of praxis can become especially visible through historical events. An event can reorganize the significance of existing relations and initiate sequences whose later consequences exceed the duration of the event itself. Historical transformation therefore involves both gradual relational change and episodes in which established structures are reconfigured through concentrated sequences of action.

William H. Sewell Jr.'s account of historical events provides a useful framework for this problem. Sewell characterizes historically significant events as sequences of occurrences capable of producing durable transformations of structures [32]. His analysis of the Bastille emphasizes the capacity of events to alter the cultural and structural conditions through which subsequent action becomes intelligible [32]. Historical events acquire significance through their consequences for the structures in which later events unfold.

This account is compatible with a Generative Relational treatment of praxis. An event can modify the relational field by changing expectations, symbolic meanings, institutional authority, available coalitions, and the practical interpretation of future actions. The significance of an event therefore depends partly on the relations generated through the sequence that follows it.

Political actors frequently enter events with heterogeneous intentions. The historical transformation generated through the event emerges from the interaction among those intentions, the inherited relational structure, and subsequent reinterpretation. An event that initially appears as a limited institutional dis-

pute can acquire a broader historical function if later actors treat it as a precedent, symbol, or point of coordination. The relational consequences can thereby expand beyond the initiating action.

This temporal extension is important for historical judgment. The significance of an intervention may remain unsettled at the moment when its immediate outcome becomes observable. A constitutional crisis, social movement, administrative reform, technological introduction, or economic intervention can generate downstream relations that continue to develop after the initiating episode has ended. Historical manifestation therefore possesses a duration that may exceed the administrative or political timescale of the original decision.

Eventful transformation also complicates retrospective causal narratives. Later historical knowledge can make a particular event appear decisive because subsequent developments rendered some of its consequences durable. The same event may have appeared more ambiguous to contemporary actors who lacked access to those later trajectories. The distinction between pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment therefore applies to historical events as well as to institutional forms.

A Generative Relational analysis consequently treats historical significance as partly trajectory-dependent. Events matter through the relational changes they initiate, stabilize, accelerate, or make newly possible. Such significance is historically discoverable through later trajectories while remaining connected to the practical actions through which those trajectories began.

4.3 Institutional Sedimentation and Path Dependence

Generated relations can acquire persistence through institutional sedimentation. Repeated practices, legal codification, organizational routines, infrastructure, investment, professional expertise, and coordinated expectations can stabilize a configuration beyond the moment of its initial creation. Praxis thereby produces conditions that influence the relative cost, feasibility, and intelligibility of later alternatives.

Historical institutionalism has developed this temporal structure through the concept of path dependence. Pierson emphasizes the political importance of timing and sequence and analyzes increasing-return processes through which early developments can shape later possibilities [25]. Such processes can make particular courses of action increasingly difficult to reverse and can amplify consequences originating in relatively small or contingent differences [25].

The Generative Relational framework interprets path dependence as one form of relational sedimentation. A political decision can create organizations that subsequently defend the arrangement, infrastructures that make alternative configurations costly, skills adapted to the existing system, and expectations that coordinate behavior around its continued operation. The persistence of the arrangement then arises from a growing network of relations rather than from the original decision alone.

Institutional sedimentation also affects the interpretation of political possibility. Once a configuration becomes deeply embedded, alternatives may appear increasingly unrealistic because actors evaluate them from within the relations generated by the existing path. Historical feasibility therefore has an endogenous component. A path can alter both the resources available for change and the perceived space of alternatives.

The same process can operate in the opposite direction. Political praxis can generate capacities that enlarge the range of future possibilities. Public education can create skills that later support forms of participation not anticipated by its founders. Administrative institutions can produce informational capacities that permit new forms of social policy. Infrastructure developed for one economic regime can enable activities that transform the regime itself. Historical generation therefore includes both constraint and capacity creation.

This duality is important for judgments of advancement. An institutional form can appear increasingly stable because prior investments make departure costly. Stability under these conditions provides evidence concerning the strength of the generated relational structure. It does not by itself establish normative superiority. Conversely, an institution that requires substantial transition costs may still enable a more desirable configuration once the relevant capacities have been generated. Historical evaluation therefore requires attention to the relations sustaining persistence and to the relations that could support transformation.

Path dependence also reinforces the importance of transition-sensitive judgment. A contemplated political form may be normatively attractive while the existing relational structure imposes severe costs on immediate transition. Political practice must then evaluate how capacities, institutions, and expectations can be transformed across time. The relevant historical object includes the trajectory through which a new configuration becomes viable.

4.4 Subject Formation and Capacity Transformation

Historical praxis can transform the subjects who participate in it. Political action changes institutional roles, collective identities, expectations, skills, dispositions, and forms of self-understanding. These transformations affect the capacities through which later political judgment and action become possible.

The Marxian formulation of self-change through practice provides an important basis for this claim [23]. Historical actors participate in changing circumstances while undergoing transformation within the same process. The resulting subject cannot be treated as entirely external to the historical relations being transformed.

Arendt's account of action adds a complementary dimension. Political action takes place within a web of relationships and discloses actors through speech and action while setting processes in motion whose consequences remain partly unpredictable [2]. The public significance of action therefore emerges through relations among plural actors rather than through the execution of an isolated intention.

Within a Generative Relational framework, subject formation refers to changes in the relational capacities through which actors recognize themselves and others, participate in institutions, interpret available possibilities, and exercise political agency. A social movement can produce identities that were previously weakly articulated. A new legal status can create categories of rights-bearing subjects. An economic transformation can reorganize class positions and patterns of collective interest. A communication infrastructure can create publics whose forms of coordination differ from those supported by earlier media.

These processes matter for historical evaluation because a projected political form is often assessed by subjects formed under the preceding configuration. After transformation, newly constituted subjects may evaluate the manifested order through experiences and capacities unavailable to their predecessors. The evaluative standpoint therefore changes partly because the historical subject has changed.

Joas's account of the genesis of values is relevant to this generative dimension. Joas links the formation of values to experiences of self-formation, self-transcendence, and the creative character of human action [18]. The emergence of values can therefore occur within historical processes that transform the acting subject as well as the external conditions of action.

The political implications are substantial. A future social order can generate forms of agency that were weakly available before the transition, while it can also suppress capacities that earlier actors possessed. Historical judgment after manifestation may consequently involve evaluative criteria shaped by the very process under examination.

This recursive formation of evaluative subjects creates a difficulty for any model that assumes fixed preferences across historical transformation. Preferences, values, identities, and interpretive capacities may themselves belong to the generated outcome. A historically sensitive account of praxis therefore requires attention to transformations in both social structure and the subjects who experience it.

4.5 Epistemic Production through Historical Practice

Praxis also generates knowledge. Political intervention can reveal causal relations, institutional dependencies, forms of resistance, unintended consequences, and social capacities that were weakly observable before action occurred. Historical practice thereby alters the epistemic environment in which subsequent judgment takes place.

The practical orientation of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* is directly relevant to this relationship between knowledge and activity. The text places the question of the reality and power of thought within

practice [23]. For the present inquiry, this practical orientation supports a distinction between knowledge available before action and knowledge generated through participation in historical processes.

Political knowledge can be generated because interventions expose relations that observational analysis could only partially identify in advance. A new institution reveals how actors adapt to its incentives. A redistribution of authority reveals previously hidden dependencies. A public policy can expose administrative capacities or constraints. A social movement can reveal previously underestimated solidarities or conflicts. Praxis therefore creates conditions under which new evidence becomes available.

This epistemic production has a stronger form when the relevant object did not fully exist before intervention. A novel institutional arrangement can generate behaviors, identities, and expectations for which no direct historical evidence was previously available. Knowledge produced through such practice concerns a newly generated relational object.

The distinction is important for the concept of manifestation. Historical manifestation supplies evidence partly because new relations have become observable and partly because those relations have become actual through the process itself. Post-manifestation judgment therefore operates with a different epistemic object from prospective judgment.

Political experimentation provides one practical expression of this structure. Pilot institutions, staged reforms, reversible interventions, and limited jurisdictional trials can generate evidence while reducing the cost of commitment to a poorly understood configuration. Such practices can be interpreted as institutional methods for producing historical knowledge under conditions of incomplete foresight.

The value of experimentation depends upon the reversibility and transferability of the relevant process. Some interventions create effects that cannot be confined to an experimental domain. Others generate path dependence rapidly, alter expectations beyond the test population, or impose costs on subjects who cannot be restored to their prior condition. Historical learning therefore requires attention to the generative consequences of the method through which knowledge is produced.

Praxis-generated knowledge also creates a responsibility of documentation. Later actors can evaluate a historical process more effectively when records of initial expectations, decision criteria, dissenting interpretations, implementation processes, and observed consequences remain available. The preservation of such traces becomes important for the later principle of historical re-recognizability developed in Section 2 and expanded in the later normative sections of this paper.

The epistemic function of praxis consequently extends beyond confirmation or falsification of prior expectations. Practice can disclose relations, create new objects of inquiry, transform evaluative subjects, and expand the conceptual resources available for future judgment.

4.6 Historical Irreversibility and Reconfiguration

The relations generated through praxis frequently possess degrees of irreversibility. Institutions accumulate organizational routines, infrastructures reshape material possibilities, legal changes generate expectations, political violence produces enduring losses, and collective identities can persist after the conditions that initially produced them have changed. Returning a formal variable to an earlier value therefore does not generally restore the earlier historical configuration.

Arendt's treatment of irreversibility identifies this feature as a central problem of action [2]. Actions initiate processes whose consequences enter a web of relationships and cannot simply be withdrawn once performed. Political action therefore creates temporal asymmetry between a condition before action and the historical world that exists after its consequences have propagated.

Path-dependent political processes provide an institutional counterpart to this problem. Pierson's analysis shows how increasing returns can make an established course increasingly difficult to reverse as time passes [25]. Reversal can require dismantling organizations, reallocating investments, changing expectations, and reconstructing capacities that developed under the existing path.

A Generative Relational perspective interprets irreversibility through changes in the relational configuration. Once an intervention has generated new subjects, institutions, memories, dependencies, and knowledge, removal of the formal intervention leaves many of these relations in place. Historical reversal therefore differs from parameter reversal.

This distinction has consequences for political responsibility. A transition whose harmful effects can be readily corrected presents a different normative problem from one that destroys capacities required for future reconsideration. The preservation of reversibility can therefore function as a practical criterion under conditions of uncertain manifestation.

Absolute reversibility is rarely available in historical processes. Political action consumes time, redistributes resources, changes expectations, and generates memory. The relevant objective is consequently to preserve *degrees of revisability*: institutional mechanisms through which trajectories can be altered, harms repaired where possible, and newly generated knowledge incorporated into subsequent decisions.

Irreversibility also clarifies the relation between history and recurrence. The restoration of an earlier constitutional form, political symbol, ownership rule, or institutional title cannot erase the relations generated during the intervening history. Formal return can therefore coexist with relational novelty. This point prepares the later analysis of historical equivalence and quotient-dependent recurrence.

4.7 Generative Structure of Historical Praxis

The preceding dimensions permit a more precise specification of historical generation. Praxis is generative when its operation changes the relational conditions that structure subsequent possibility, action, interpretation, and judgment. Generativity can occur through institutional transformation, eventful reconfiguration, path-dependent sedimentation, subject formation, capacity creation, epistemic production, and irreversible historical effects.

This conception assigns praxis a position between historical inheritance and historical openness. Every act begins within conditions that constrain and enable it. The act subsequently participates in altering those conditions. Later actors inherit the resulting configuration as part of their own historical field.

The resulting structure has several implications.

First, historical consequences extend beyond intended outcomes. Intentions remain important for responsibility and interpretation, while relational generation includes responses and interactions that exceed the initiating actor's control.

Second, historical possibility is endogenous to previous practice. Institutions and capacities generated in one period alter which transformations become feasible in another. Political possibility therefore develops through history rather than existing as a fixed menu of alternatives.

Third, political subjects are historically generated participants in the process. Their identities, values, interpretive capacities, and powers of action can change through the relations produced by praxis.

Fourth, historical practice produces epistemic resources. Later judgments may draw upon evidence and distinctions that became available only because the relevant process occurred.

Fifth, generated relations can constrain future revision. Institutional sedimentation and irreversibility make the preservation of learning and corrective capacity a substantive concern of political design.

These features explain why manifestation constitutes an analytically distinct stage in historical judgment. The world after praxis contains a relational history that was absent from the initial projection. Post-manifestation judgment therefore concerns a historically generated configuration and is conducted by subjects whose epistemic and normative positions may themselves have changed.

The next section develops this difference directly by examining judgment after manifestation. Its task is to distinguish renewed historical evaluation from simple verification of a prior expectation and to identify how newly generated relations alter the grounds upon which political forms can subsequently be judged.

5 Judgment After Manifestation

This section examines historical judgment after a projected political possibility has acquired a concrete relational existence. Its role is to clarify the epistemic advantages and interpretive difficulties created by manifestation. Post-manifestation judgment possesses access to relations, consequences, conflicts, capacities, and forms of experience that were unavailable to prospective judgment. At the same time,

knowledge of historical outcomes can reshape the reconstruction of earlier possibilities and alter the criteria through which the original decision is evaluated. The discussion therefore distinguishes the changed epistemic position of the later evaluator, the relational reconstitution of the object of judgment, hindsight and outcome effects, counterfactual comparison, normative reassessment, and the continuing provisionality of historical evaluation. The section concludes with a Generative Relational formulation of post-manifestation judgment.

5.1 The Changed Epistemic Position

Manifestation changes the epistemic position from which a political form can be evaluated. Before a transition, actors possess projections, historical analogies, theories, models, normative commitments, and evidence concerning related configurations. After a transition has unfolded, evaluators can also observe relations generated through implementation, adaptation, resistance, institutional sedimentation, and subsequent historical development.

The additional knowledge available after manifestation has several forms. First, consequences that were previously projected become partially observable. Second, relations that did not exist before the intervention can enter the field of inquiry. Third, actors can observe how institutions operate under conditions different from those assumed in their original design. Fourth, previously latent conflicts or capacities can become politically salient. Fifth, the transition itself leaves records, memories, organizational structures, and interpretive disputes that provide evidence concerning the historical process.

Post-manifestation judgment therefore concerns a historically enriched object. A constitutional arrangement can be evaluated through the political practices that developed under it. An economic system can be evaluated through the dependencies, productive capacities, inequalities, and organizational forms it generated. A social policy can be evaluated through patterns of use and adaptation that became visible only after implementation. The historical object available to later judgment includes relations that prospective judgment could only incompletely represent.

This epistemic enrichment provides an important basis for learning. Historical practice supplies evidence concerning the adequacy of earlier expectations and the relational consequences of political intervention. The later evaluator can compare projected mechanisms with manifested mechanisms, anticipated beneficiaries with actual distributions of effects, and expected institutional capacities with those that emerged during implementation.

The informational advantage of the later position remains historically situated. Evidence can be incomplete, archives can be uneven, and some consequences may remain latent for long periods. Ricoeur's account of memory, historical representation, and forgetting emphasizes the dependence of historical knowledge upon traces, testimony, archives, and representational practices [29]. Historical manifestation therefore expands the field of possible judgment while leaving the later observer dependent upon the preservation and interpretation of historical traces.

The changed epistemic position also affects the temporal scale of evaluation. Some political effects emerge rapidly, while others become visible across generations. Institutional reforms can alter immediate behavior before their effects on social norms become clear. Productive transformations can create short-term costs and long-term capacities. Political settlements can appear stable during one interval and generate conflicts during another. A post-manifestation judgment therefore remains indexed to the temporal horizon from which the historical configuration is observed.

The epistemic advantage of the later position should consequently be understood as expanded relational access. Later actors can recognize structures that were unavailable to earlier actors, while their own access remains partial, historically mediated, and temporally situated.

5.2 Relational Reconstitution of the Evaluative Object

Manifestation can alter the constitution of the political form being judged. The object anticipated at the beginning of a transition is ordinarily represented through concepts, institutional designs, expected

relations, and normative aspirations. Historical praxis gives that object a concrete relational trajectory. The later object of evaluation therefore contains the history through which it became actual.

This distinction is important for political categories whose names remain stable across changing relational structures. A constitution can preserve the same text while acquiring different meanings through judicial interpretation, administrative practice, political convention, and technological change. A formal property regime can remain legally stable while financial institutions, production networks, and household relations transform its practical significance. A political movement can retain its original vocabulary while developing new organizational forms and constituencies.

Post-manifestation evaluation therefore requires attention to the manifested relational configuration. The analytical task concerns the form as reproduced through concrete relations rather than the form as represented in its original projection alone.

This relational reconstitution also affects responsibility for consequences. Some consequences follow closely from the intended institutional mechanism. Others arise through interactions among the intervention, inherited structures, and responses by other actors. Historical evaluation benefits from distinguishing these pathways because the same observed outcome can emerge through different generative processes.

The distinction also prevents retrospective evaluation from treating every feature of the manifested configuration as though it had been fully contained in the original proposal. Political praxis can generate emergent institutions, informal rules, strategic responses, new technologies, and unanticipated coalitions. These developments become part of the later historical object even when they were weakly represented in the original design.

A Generative Relational analysis therefore evaluates manifestation through the relations that sustain, transform, and reproduce the political form. The question of whether a projected institution was realized becomes a question of relational correspondence across historical positions. Formal resemblance can coexist with substantial relational transformation, while formal modification can coexist with continuity in deeper relations.

This distinction prepares the later analysis of equivalence and historical recurrence. Post-manifestation judgment already requires a criterion for deciding which aspects of the projected and manifested configurations are relevant to comparison. The judgment that a political project “succeeded,” “failed,” or “became something else” depends partly upon the structures preserved by that criterion.

5.3 Temporal Asymmetry and Hindsight

Knowledge of an outcome changes the cognitive position of the later evaluator. This difference creates a systematic difficulty when post-manifestation judgment reconstructs the reasoning available before action.

Fischhoff’s classical experiments on hindsight demonstrated that outcome knowledge can increase the perceived prior likelihood of the outcome and alter the perceived relevance of information available before the outcome was known [12]. Participants also tended to overestimate what they themselves or others could have known without access to the later outcome [12]. The result is directly relevant to historical judgment: later knowledge can make a historical development appear more foreseeable than it was from the earlier epistemic position.

This temporal asymmetry matters especially when a political transition is subsequently narrated as inevitable. Once a sequence of events has produced a stable outcome, earlier contingencies can become less visible. Abandoned alternatives, unresolved conflicts, uncertain expectations, and unrealized possibilities can disappear from the retrospective narrative. The manifested trajectory then appears to contain a degree of necessity that was unavailable to actors situated at the earlier moment.

A careful post-manifestation judgment therefore reconstructs the earlier information set separately from the later one. The evaluator should identify which evidence, concepts, models, alternatives, and constraints were available at the time of prospective judgment. Later evidence can inform assessment of the consequences of the decision while retaining the distinction between what became knowable afterward and what could reasonably have been known before action.

This distinction is especially important for the evaluation of historical mistakes. A prospective judgment can be poorly reasoned relative to the evidence available at the time and later produce a favorable outcome. A carefully reasoned judgment can also produce an unfavorable outcome because of low-probability events, strategic responses, or generated relations that were difficult to anticipate. Historical learning requires the evaluation of both the quality of the original reasoning and the significance of the manifested consequences.

The temporal asymmetry between foresight and hindsight therefore produces two analytically distinct questions. One concerns the adequacy of judgment under the earlier epistemic conditions. The other concerns the normative status of the world that subsequently manifested. The answers can diverge without contradiction.

This distinction supports the broader argument of the paper. Pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgments occupy different relational positions. Historical evaluation gains accuracy when the asymmetry between these positions is preserved rather than retrospectively compressed.

5.4 Decision Quality and Outcome Knowledge

Post-manifestation evaluation can also become sensitive to the valence of the observed outcome. Empirical work on outcome bias provides evidence that knowledge of favorable or unfavorable consequences can influence assessments of the quality of a prior decision even when the information originally available to the decision maker is held constant. Baron and Hershey found that participants evaluated decision processes more favorably when the resulting outcome was favorable and less favorably when it was unfavorable [3].

The distinction between decision quality and outcome quality is important for historical praxis. Prospective political decisions are made under uncertainty. Their rationality depends upon the evidence, alternatives, foreseeable risks, normative commitments, and institutional constraints available at the time. Outcome evaluation concerns the relational consequences that eventually became manifest. The two forms of assessment address different objects.

This distinction also protects historical learning from two symmetrical distortions. Favorable outcomes can conceal serious weaknesses in the reasoning that produced them. Unfavorable outcomes can obscure the fact that a decision was well justified under the information available at the time. A historical practice capable of learning requires access to the original decision process as well as to subsequent consequences.

Documentation therefore acquires special importance. Records of forecasts, dissenting views, uncertainty estimates, normative priorities, anticipated risks, and rejected alternatives make it possible for later evaluators to reconstruct the prospective judgment more accurately. Such records reduce the dependence of historical assessment upon narratives generated after the outcome became known.

The distinction between decision quality and outcome quality also affects political responsibility. Responsibility for foreseeable negligence differs from responsibility for consequences produced by developments outside the reasonable horizon of anticipation. At the same time, severe manifested harms can create obligations of repair even when the original decision was reasonable. Epistemic evaluation of the prior decision and normative response to the manifested world therefore remain analytically distinct.

This separation is particularly important for the paper's later discussion of belief revisability. Revision can be warranted because an earlier belief was poorly justified, because the world changed, because practice generated new relations, or because new normative resources became available. The historical reason for revision should remain visible.

5.5 Counterfactual Baselines and Comparative Evaluation

Post-manifestation judgment requires a baseline of comparison. Observing the historical configuration that emerged after an intervention provides information about one realized trajectory. Evaluating the intervention also requires some account of the alternatives against which that trajectory is compared.

The relevant comparison can take several forms. A manifested configuration may be compared with the preceding order, with the future projected by its advocates, with the future anticipated by its critics, with another historically available institutional alternative, or with a normative standard that was never historically instantiated. These baselines answer different evaluative questions.

Comparison with the preceding configuration can indicate whether particular conditions improved or deteriorated across the transition. Comparison with the original projection can reveal divergence between intended and manifested relations. Comparison with contemporaneously feasible alternatives can assess the quality of the historical choice among available trajectories. Comparison with a normative ideal can identify continuing deficiencies in the manifested order.

The selection of a baseline therefore shapes the meaning of historical progress. A transition can constitute improvement relative to the preceding order while falling far short of its projected aims. It can also generate improvements in some dimensions and regressions in others. Jaeggi's recent account of progress and regression is relevant to this problem because it treats progress through processes of social learning and problem solving while resisting a simple predetermined developmental endpoint [17]. Such an approach supports comparative evaluation without requiring every historical configuration to occupy a single universal sequence.

Counterfactual baselines require particular care because unrealized alternatives lack the same evidentiary richness as the manifested trajectory. The realized configuration contains concrete consequences, while the alternative remains partly modeled. A later evaluator can therefore compare an historically dense actual world with a comparatively simplified counterfactual world. This asymmetry can produce excessive confidence in either the realized order or the imagined alternative.

Historical evaluation benefits from distinguishing feasible counterfactuals from unconstrained idealizations. A feasible counterfactual should be grounded in the institutional capacities, material conditions, political actors, and knowledge available during the relevant period. A normative ideal can serve a different function by identifying values absent from all historically feasible alternatives. The two forms of comparison should retain separate analytical roles.

The choice of baseline is also normatively consequential. A society may appear highly progressive relative to a deeply unjust predecessor and seriously deficient relative to the capacities already available within its own historical conditions. Historical judgment therefore gains precision when the baseline and evaluative purpose are stated explicitly.

5.6 Normative Reassessment under Generated Conditions

Manifestation can change the normative conditions of evaluation as well as the empirical evidence available to evaluators. Historical practice can generate new subjects, new forms of vulnerability, new capacities, new dependencies, and new modes of collective life. These developments can alter the practical meaning of values invoked during the original transition.

A political project oriented toward equality, for example, can create new institutions through which previously unrecognized inequalities become visible. A project oriented toward freedom can generate technological or economic relations that require a revised account of dependence. A system designed to increase participation can create new forms of exclusion that were difficult to formulate within the earlier institutional vocabulary. Normative reassessment therefore concerns the generated content of political values as they operate in historically transformed relations.

The evaluative subject can also change. Section 4 described the formation of identities, capacities, and values through praxis. Post-manifestation judgment is consequently performed by actors whose normative standpoint may have been altered by the process under evaluation. This change can expand the capacity to recognize harms and possibilities that were weakly visible at the earlier historical moment.

Such development creates a difficult relation between historical understanding and current normative evaluation. A later evaluator can recognize an earlier political order as unjust according to concepts that were weakly developed or unevenly available at the time. Historical situatedness gives context to the formation of the earlier judgment, while current normative commitments can still support substantive criticism of the manifested order.

The distinction between contextual understanding and normative endorsement is therefore important. Reconstructing the reasons available to historical actors helps explain their judgments and clarifies the limits of their epistemic position. The reconstruction does not determine the normative evaluation that later actors must adopt. A historically situated account can acknowledge both the intelligibility of an earlier judgment and the seriousness of harms that later historical knowledge makes more visible.

This temporal structure also applies to claims of political advancement. A political form can reasonably appear progressive relative to the conditions from which it emerged and later become an obstacle to further development. Historical advancement can therefore possess a time-indexed character. The same configuration can occupy different normative positions as productive, institutional, cultural, ecological, and epistemic relations change.

The time-indexed character of judgment preserves a distinction between historical progress and permanent superiority. A transition can be evaluated as a genuine improvement within a historical configuration while remaining open to later criticism and transformation. This possibility is central to the paper's account of revisable historical judgment.

5.7 Provisional Closure in Historical Evaluation

Post-manifestation judgment still occurs within an unfinished history. The availability of manifested consequences creates a stronger evidentiary basis for evaluation, while later developments can continue to alter the meaning and effects of the political configuration.

This continuing temporality prevents manifestation from functioning as a single final moment. Political forms sediment, adapt, diffuse, combine with new institutions, and acquire new interpretations. Consequences that appear secondary during one period can become central during another. A legal category can remain dormant before acquiring major political significance. An infrastructure can outlive the regime that created it and support forms of social organization that its designers never anticipated.

Historical evaluation therefore requires provisional closure. Scholars, citizens, institutions, and political actors must reach judgments using the evidence currently available. Such closure permits responsibility, learning, repair, institutional revision, and public memory. Its provisional character preserves the capacity for later evidence and later relations to reopen the evaluation.

Ricoeur's treatment of the relation among memory, history, representation, and forgetting is important for understanding this continuing openness [29]. Historical knowledge depends upon preserved traces and representational practices, while the selection and organization of those traces influence the histories that later actors can construct. A judgment can therefore become practically settled within one period while remaining available to historical reconsideration.

This temporal openness creates an important distinction between revision and indefinite suspension. Political communities require judgments concerning responsibility, institutional legitimacy, historical harm, and public memory. The possibility of later reinterpretation does not remove the need for such judgments. It creates an obligation to preserve the epistemic conditions under which later reconsideration remains possible.

The concept of re-recognizability developed later in this paper grows directly from this requirement. A historical order capable of learning preserves traces, competing interpretations, contextual information, and records of uncertainty that allow future subjects to encounter the past through more than a single authorized representation.

Provisional closure therefore describes the temporal status of responsible post-manifestation judgment. The judgment can be substantively committed and institutionally consequential while retaining an explicit relation to its historical conditions of knowledge.

5.8 Generative Relational Formulation of Post-Manifestation Judgment

The preceding discussion permits a preliminary formal representation of post-manifestation judgment. The representation extends the prospective structure developed in Section 2 by including the manifested

relational configuration, the historical trajectory through which it was generated, and the later epistemic and normative position of the evaluator.

The structure of post-manifestation judgment is shown in Equation 2.

$$J_{t_1}^{\text{post}} = \Psi_{t_1}(R_{t_1}, \Gamma_{t_0:t_1}, H_{t_1}, I_{t_1}, N_{t_1}, B_{t_1}) \quad (2)$$

In Equation 2, R_{t_1} denotes the manifested relational configuration, $\Gamma_{t_0:t_1}$ the historical trajectory through which it emerged, H_{t_1} the historical evidence available at the later position, I_{t_1} the interpretive resources through which the configuration is recognized, N_{t_1} the normative commitments used in evaluation, and B_{t_1} the comparative baseline selected for the judgment.

The inclusion of the trajectory is important because identical or similar institutional outcomes can acquire different normative significance through different processes of generation. A political settlement produced through voluntary negotiation and one produced through severe coercion may converge in some formal properties while retaining different histories of agency, harm, and responsibility. Post-manifestation judgment therefore evaluates the generated configuration together with the process through which it became actual.

The baseline term makes explicit the comparative structure of historical evaluation. A claim of improvement, regression, success, or failure depends upon the configuration against which the manifested order is compared. The baseline can refer to the preceding order, an ex ante projection, a feasible historical alternative, or an articulated normative ideal. Different baselines support different evaluative claims.

The time indices on the interpretive and normative terms preserve the historicity of the later standpoint. Post-manifestation judgment possesses additional evidence while also operating through concepts and values that may have changed during the historical process. The later position therefore contains both epistemic gain and historical distance from the standpoint of the original decision.

The formulation also clarifies the relationship between prospective and post-manifestation evaluation. The later judgment can assess the adequacy of the earlier projection, the quality of the earlier decision process, the justice of the transition, the properties of the manifested configuration, and the continuing viability of the political form. These evaluative tasks should remain analytically distinguishable because favorable performance in one dimension does not determine the others.

Post-manifestation judgment consequently performs a reconstructive and prospective function at the same time. It reconstructs the relation among earlier expectations, generated trajectories, and manifested consequences. It also becomes part of the historical configuration from which subsequent political projections will be formed.

The recursive structure of historical judgment can therefore continue beyond the first cycle. A post-manifestation judgment at t_1 becomes part of the historical and interpretive resources available for a new prospective judgment oriented toward t_2 . Historical learning occurs when the consequences of praxis are incorporated into later projection while the difference between the earlier and later epistemic positions remains visible.

This recursive relation prepares the next section's analysis of the historicity of normative and aesthetic appearance. Once the object of judgment, the evaluative subject, and the interpretive resources through which political forms become intelligible can all change through historical generation, the appearance of a political form as advanced, rational, harmonious, or desirable must itself be situated within a historical-relational configuration.

6 The Historicity of Normative and Aesthetic Appearance

This section examines the historical conditions through which political forms become intelligible as desirable, rational, progressive, harmonious, natural, or otherwise worthy of commitment. Its role is to extend the temporal account of judgment developed in the preceding sections into the domain of political appearance. Prospective judgment requires a contemplated future to become recognizable before its

full relational consequences have manifested, and this recognition occurs through historically available concepts, symbols, perceptual categories, social imaginaries, and aesthetic dispositions. The discussion therefore distinguishes political appearance from normative justification while analyzing their interaction. The section proceeds through the historical conditioning of political intelligibility, aesthetic mediation, social imaginaries, symbolic and scientific forms of rationality, contemporary relational modes of appearance, spatial and temporal variability in judgment, and the implications of these processes for historically responsible political evaluation.

6.1 Historical Conditions of Political Appearance

Political forms become objects of judgment through historically available modes of recognition. A contemplated institution, social relation, or political order must first become intelligible as a possible form of collective life before it can be evaluated, pursued, resisted, or revised. The relevant conditions of intelligibility include concepts, symbolic systems, narratives, institutional vocabularies, scientific knowledge, religious traditions, historical memories, aesthetic conventions, and established forms of social experience.

The dependence of judgment upon such resources gives political appearance a historical structure. A political possibility can remain difficult to formulate within one historical configuration and become readily intelligible within another. Concepts such as popular sovereignty, universal suffrage, social rights, ecological responsibility, or epistemic injustice required historical conditions through which the relevant relations could be named and organized as objects of political judgment. The emergence of a concept can therefore expand the range of relations that become politically recognizable.

Charles Taylor's account of the social imaginary provides a useful framework for this process. Taylor describes the social imaginary as the broader manner in which people imagine their collective social existence, including expectations concerning how people relate, the norms governing those relations, and the deeper images underlying those expectations [33]. His analysis of modern social imaginaries traces the historical development of forms such as the economy, the public sphere, and the self-governing people, showing how modes of collective understanding become constitutive of modern social life [33].

The concept of a social imaginary is relevant to prospective political judgment because political actors evaluate futures through representations of collective life that already possess social intelligibility. A proposal can appear realistic, emancipatory, orderly, or dangerous partly because it is interpreted through historically available understandings of authority, freedom, equality, property, community, and agency. Political projection therefore occurs within a field of socially generated intelligibility.

Historical intelligibility also affects the visibility of political problems. Relations that one period experiences as ordinary can later become objects of criticism when new concepts or experiences reorganize their significance. Later political subjects can recognize domination, exclusion, dependency, or environmental harm through distinctions that possessed weaker institutional or conceptual articulation in an earlier period. The history of normative judgment therefore includes a history of what can become visible as normatively significant.

This historical dependence has implications for judgments of advancement. A political form may acquire the appearance of progress because it resolves problems that are especially salient within a given historical configuration. The same form can later reveal limitations as newly generated relations make different problems visible. Such changes in appearance can accompany genuine changes in normative evaluation while remaining distinct from the proposition that every later judgment is superior by virtue of its temporal position.

Political appearance is therefore neither an incidental surface feature nor a complete normative criterion. It belongs to the historical conditions through which an object becomes available for political evaluation.

6.2 Aesthetic Mediation of Political Intelligibility

Aesthetic mediation concerns the perceptual and symbolic forms through which political arrangements acquire coherence and salience. The term *aesthetic* is used here in a broad sense that includes judgments of harmony, symmetry, elegance, grandeur, simplicity, vitality, adaptability, openness, and related modes of appearance. Political orders can become compelling partly through the manner in which their structure is perceived and represented.

The relation between aesthetics and politics has an extensive theoretical history. Rancière's account is especially relevant because it situates both aesthetics and politics within a "distribution of the sensible" that organizes what can be seen, heard, said, thought, and recognized as possible [27]. This formulation directs attention toward the conditions of perceptibility through which political subjects, activities, and claims acquire a place within a shared world.

The present inquiry draws a narrower implication from this broader literature. Prospective political judgment is partly conditioned by the forms in which a future becomes sensible and intelligible to historical actors. Political possibilities circulate through institutional diagrams, constitutions, architectural forms, statistical representations, speeches, rituals, models, maps, slogans, narratives, and imagined scenes of social life. Such representations can organize attention before the projected relations have become historically actual.

Aesthetic mediation has practical significance because political commitment requires selective attention. A projected form whose coherence is difficult to perceive may struggle to organize collective action even when some of its normative properties are attractive. A form capable of condensing complex political aspirations into a compelling symbolic structure can acquire considerable motivational force. Political movements therefore frequently develop images of unity, liberation, order, prosperity, solidarity, or renewal that make an unrealized future available to collective imagination.

The aesthetic dimension of political appearance also extends to institutional form. Symmetry can communicate balance. Simplicity can communicate rationality. Monumentality can communicate permanence. Quantification can communicate objectivity. Participation can communicate openness. Distributed structure can communicate adaptability. These associations acquire their force within historically and culturally situated interpretive systems.

Aesthetic coherence can consequently precede full knowledge of relational consequences. Political actors may encounter an institution first through the form in which it is projected and only later through the relations produced by its operation. This temporal difference gives aesthetic mediation particular importance to pre-manifestation judgment.

The distinction between aesthetic salience and normative justification remains essential. An arrangement can possess compelling symbolic or formal coherence while generating relations that conflict with the values through which it was initially defended. A fragmented or visually irregular arrangement can, in turn, sustain valuable forms of autonomy, adaptation, or participation. The aesthetic mediation of political judgment therefore supplies an object of analysis and a source of practical orientation whose normative significance requires further evaluation.

6.3 Social Position and the Formation of Taste

The historicity of aesthetic appearance includes variation across social positions within the same historical period. A political order rarely possesses a single aesthetic meaning shared uniformly by all participants. Different groups encounter institutions through different relations of work, education, authority, culture, material security, and political participation. These relations can shape the dispositions through which forms of order acquire aesthetic significance.

Bourdieu's *Distinction* provides a major sociological account of this social conditioning of taste. His analysis connects aesthetic preferences with social position, cultural capital, and classificatory struggles, treating taste as embedded within a social world that functions simultaneously through power relations and symbolic distinctions [6]. Aesthetic judgment thereby becomes relevant to social reproduction as well as individual preference.

The present argument does not require reducing political judgment to class taste. Bourdieu's analysis provides a more limited methodological caution: judgments that appear immediate or self-evident to a social group can reflect historically accumulated dispositions and social positions. Political aesthetics should therefore be examined relationally.

The same institutional form can consequently appear differently across social positions. Administrative regularity may appear as security to actors who depend upon reliable public institutions and as intrusive surveillance to actors disproportionately subjected to administrative scrutiny. Urban redevelopment may appear as order and improvement from one spatial position and as displacement from another. Market flexibility may appear as freedom to actors possessing substantial mobility and as insecurity to actors whose survival depends upon predictable employment.

These differences contain both aesthetic and normative dimensions. The terms through which actors describe political arrangements often combine assessments of appearance and value: orderly, chaotic, modern, backward, efficient, bureaucratic, vibrant, sterile, open, fragmented, disciplined, or resilient. The political significance of these descriptions depends upon the relations from which the arrangement is encountered.

Spatial variation therefore accompanies historical variation. A political form can manifest through different relational environments within the same legal territory. National institutions can have heterogeneous effects across regions, classes, communities, professions, and generations. Aesthetic judgment formed from one relational position can acquire political dominance through institutional authority while remaining only one situated mode of appearance.

This relational variability provides an additional reason for caution when a political form is described as naturally harmonious or self-evidently progressive. Such descriptions can contain genuine insights into institutional performance while also reflecting a restricted experiential position. Historically responsible evaluation benefits from comparison across positions that encounter the political form through materially different relations.

6.4 Symbolic Rationality and Political Appearance

Historical developments in symbolic systems can alter the forms through which political rationality becomes visible. Writing, accounting, legal codification, cartography, statistics, standardized measurement, formal modeling, and computational representation expand the capacity to describe and coordinate complex social relations. These developments also produce distinctive modes of political appearance.

A highly formalized arrangement can appear rational because its variables, procedures, and outcomes are represented in a consistent symbolic system. Standardized categories can create comparability across populations and territories. Quantitative indicators can make social processes available to administrative attention. Formal legal rules can render expectations more predictable. Models can condense heterogeneous evidence into structures suitable for collective decision.

Such capacities possess practical epistemic value. Their development has enabled forms of coordination that would be difficult to sustain through localized or tacit knowledge alone. The historical emergence of scientific and symbolic rationality therefore changes both governance capacity and the appearance of good governance.

Taylor's analysis of modern social imaginaries is relevant here because modern forms of collective life become intelligible through historically specific conceptions of the economy, public sphere, and self-governing society [33]. These forms involve modes of abstraction through which large populations can imagine themselves as participating in common systems extending beyond direct interpersonal relations.

Symbolic rationality can acquire an aesthetic dimension through clarity, economy, regularity, and formal elegance. A policy framework whose categories fit together coherently can appear intellectually attractive. A mathematical model capable of explaining diverse observations with a small number of relations can produce a similar response. Political actors trained within scientific and bureaucratic institutions can therefore encounter formal consistency as both an epistemic virtue and a mode of aesthetic satisfaction.

The historical importance of this convergence deserves attention because the appearance of rationality can influence prospective commitment. A political design represented through precise categories and quantitative models can appear more determinate than the relational future it will generate. Formalization can illuminate important structures while leaving interactions, interpretations, and emergent relations outside the representational frame.

The relevant caution concerns the relation between symbolic closure and historical openness. A model can be internally coherent while its object continues to evolve. A legal classification can be administratively effective while the subjects classified through it develop new practices. A statistical category can support valuable comparison while obscuring relations that cross its boundaries. The political value of symbolic rationality therefore depends partly upon its capacity to remain responsive to the historical object it represents.

This issue connects directly to belief revisability. Scientific rationality contains resources for self-correction through criticism, empirical testing, measurement, and model revision. A political use of scientific representation that preserves these capacities can support historically responsive governance. A symbolic system whose classifications become institutionally insulated from newly generated relations can transform a useful abstraction into a constraint upon recognition.

6.5 Sacred and Transcendent Modes of Political Appearance

Scientific and formal rationality represents one historically important mode of political appearance among several. Political legitimacy has also been organized through sacred, cosmological, dynastic, traditional, and transcendent forms. Such forms can make authority intelligible by situating political institutions within a symbolic order extending beyond ordinary individual action.

Sacred political appearance can connect authority with permanence, continuity, hierarchy, ritual, ancestry, divine sanction, or cosmic order. The resulting political structure can acquire aesthetic force through architecture, ceremony, spatial organization, dress, language, music, and symbolic representation. Political authority thereby becomes experienced through a sensory and interpretive environment as well as through explicit propositions concerning legitimacy.

The historical effectiveness of these forms demonstrates that political appearance cannot be reduced to a progression from symbolic or sacred irrationality toward scientific rationality. Sacred and scientific forms can coexist, overlap, and become recombined within modern institutions. States that depend extensively upon statistics, law, and technical administration can also employ ritual, monumental architecture, national mythology, and symbols of transcendence.

Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* provides an important analysis of the political reuse of inherited symbols and historical forms. Marx describes political actors as drawing upon the names, costumes, slogans, and traditions of earlier periods when confronting new historical situations [21]. The resulting historical repetition involves the reactivation of inherited symbolic resources within a transformed social configuration.

This analysis is especially relevant to the distinction between appearance and relational structure. A political form can reactivate symbols associated with an earlier regime while operating through substantially different productive, technological, institutional, and geopolitical relations. Historical appearance can recur through symbols even as the relational system generating their meaning has changed.

The persistence and recombination of sacred, scientific, national, and other symbolic forms also cautions against sequential accounts of political aesthetics. Historical change can alter the relative salience of different modes of appearance while preserving several within the same political field. The analytical problem concerns their changing relations, functions, and conditions of intelligibility.

6.6 Relational Generativity as a Contemporary Mode of Appearance

The growing visibility of complex systems, networks, ecological relations, distributed coordination, and emergent social processes has expanded the conceptual resources through which political order can

be imagined. Within some contemporary intellectual and institutional settings, adaptability, participation, distributed organization, resilience, and generativity can acquire positive aesthetic and normative salience.

A decentralized system can appear elegant because coordination emerges through multiple local interactions. An adaptive institution can appear sophisticated because it incorporates feedback and revision. A participatory process can appear legitimate because affected actors contribute to the generation of collective outcomes. An urban space can appear successful because its form accommodates patterns of use that were incompletely specified at the design stage.

These modes of appearance are relevant to a Generative Relational framework because relationality and generativity themselves can become objects of aesthetic appreciation. A pattern generated through repeated interaction can be experienced as more fitting than a formally symmetrical design imposed in advance. A system capable of changing while preserving important relations can appear more attractive than one whose order depends upon fixed configuration.

The historical situatedness of this attraction requires explicit recognition. The positive salience of emergence, networks, flexibility, and relationality develops within intellectual and technological conditions that make these structures especially visible. Computational modeling, network analysis, ecology, systems theory, and digital infrastructures contribute to the contemporary capacity to recognize distributed processes as forms of order.

Generative Relational theory participates in this historical configuration. Its preference for relations, emergence, revisability, and generative capacity should therefore remain subject to the same reflexive analysis applied to earlier forms of political appearance. A framework committed to historical generativity acquires consistency by acknowledging the historical conditions of its own intelligibility.

This reflexive requirement has direct normative significance. Generativity can serve as a defensible political value where it protects capacities for future action, learning, recognition, and transformation. Its contemporary aesthetic appeal supplies neither a complete justification nor an exemption from future revision. Historical manifestation can reveal costs, exclusions, or coordination problems that alter the evaluation of a generative arrangement.

The distinction between value and appearance therefore applies internally to the Generative Relational perspective. Relationality can be normatively supported through arguments concerning agency, non-domination, plural possibility, or revisability. Its appearance as elegant, organic, or adaptive belongs to a related historical-aesthetic layer whose influence should remain visible to the analysis.

6.7 Temporal and Spatial Variability of Political Judgment

The preceding discussion identifies two forms of variability in political appearance. Temporal variability concerns changes in the interpretive, epistemic, and normative resources available across historical periods. Spatial and relational variability concerns differences among actors and communities occupying different positions within the same period.

These forms frequently interact. A political institution can appear progressive to one population and coercive to another at the same historical moment. A later period can reinterpret both perspectives through concepts that were weakly available to the original participants. Historical judgment therefore takes place within a multidimensional field of temporal and relational positions.

The implications extend beyond explicit aesthetic preference. Political categories such as rationality, efficiency, stability, freedom, equality, and modernity acquire practical meaning through historically and relationally situated forms of life. An institution judged efficient from the perspective of central administration can impose substantial coordination costs upon local communities. A system judged stable at the national level can produce persistent insecurity for particular groups. A policy judged modernizing within one historical narrative can appear destructive within another account of social continuity.

The variability of appearance consequently affects the formation of evidence. Actors attend to different properties of a political form partly because their relations expose them to different consequences. The resulting judgments can therefore contain information about heterogeneous parts of the system.

Treating one position as the complete appearance of the political order can discard relationally distributed knowledge.

A Generative Relational account accordingly treats political appearance as indexed to a historical-relational position. The structure is represented in Equation 3.

$$A_t(P \mid r) = \Phi_t(P; R_t, I_t, S_r, E_r) \quad (3)$$

Equation 3 represents the appearance A_t of a political form P from a relational position r . The term R_t represents the wider historical-relational configuration, I_t the interpretive resources available at the time, S_r the social and institutional position of the evaluator, and E_r the relevant field of experience through which the political form is encountered.

The representation does not assign appearance a deterministic relation to social position. Actors occupying similar structural positions can interpret political forms differently, and political reflection can transform inherited dispositions. The formulation identifies situatedness as a condition of appearance whose influence requires analysis.

Temporal change affects every term in Equation 3. Historical relations change, interpretive vocabularies develop, social positions are reorganized, and accumulated experience expands. A political form that retains a stable name can therefore generate different appearances across historical positions.

This variability supplies an important caution for the interpretation of historical advancement. A judgment that a political form is progressive can be well grounded within a particular historical position while remaining open to reassessment from later positions possessing different evidence and interpretive resources. The possibility of later reassessment provides a reason for revisability, while the situated adequacy of earlier judgment provides a reason for historical understanding.

6.8 Appearance and Normative Justification

The historical conditioning of political appearance creates a challenge for normative judgment. Political actors require situated forms of recognition in order to identify and evaluate possible futures. Historical situatedness therefore forms part of the enabling conditions of normativity. At the same time, normative reasoning seeks grounds capable of supporting judgments beyond the immediate attraction of a historically specific appearance.

The distinction between appearance and justification helps preserve both claims. Appearance concerns the manner in which a political form becomes intelligible and salient within a historical-relational configuration. Justification concerns the reasons offered for accepting, rejecting, or transforming that form. The two interact because reasons themselves require conceptual articulation and because political salience influences which reasons receive attention.

Aesthetic judgment can contribute to normative inquiry by drawing attention to properties such as coherence, fit, fragmentation, rigidity, plurality, or adaptability. These perceptions can identify phenomena requiring further analysis. Their normative significance depends upon the relations through which those properties affect subjects and collective possibilities.

A symmetrical institution can therefore be evaluated for the forms of equality, predictability, or exclusion generated through its symmetry. A decentralized institution can be evaluated for the autonomy, coordination burdens, or power concentrations produced through decentralization. A scientifically modeled policy can be evaluated for evidentiary quality, distributional effects, uncertainty, and the consequences of its classifications. Normative judgment develops through examination of the relations underlying the appearance.

This approach avoids treating historical variability as a reason for normative indifference. Situated judgments can be criticized through evidence, internal inconsistency, ignored relations, distributive consequences, failures of recognition, domination, or other substantive normative considerations. Historicity changes the epistemic conditions of evaluation while leaving room for rigorous disagreement.

The same approach supports judgments of historical progress. A later political form can be evaluated as an improvement where it expands capacities, reduces forms of domination, repairs prior harms, or

enables more adequate responses to historically generated problems. The judgment acquires specificity through the criteria and relations under which the comparison is made.

Historical humility enters at a different point. A current evaluator possesses no guarantee that present criteria exhaust the dimensions through which future subjects will evaluate the same political form. New relations can produce new harms, capacities, and normative vocabularies. A justified present judgment can therefore coexist with openness toward future re-evaluation.

6.9 Aesthetic Salience in Prospective and Manifested Judgment

The distinction between pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment allows the role of aesthetic appearance to be specified more precisely. Prospective judgment encounters a political future principally through representation, analogy, imagination, and projected relations. Aesthetic salience can therefore exert substantial influence upon the initial orientation toward a possible order.

Post-manifestation judgment encounters an historically denser object. The political form has acquired institutions, practices, consequences, conflicts, and patterns of reproduction. The manifested configuration can preserve the aesthetic qualities that supported the original commitment, transform their meaning, or expose tensions weakly visible in the earlier projection.

A political form projected as simple can manifest through extensive hidden administrative complexity. A form projected as decentralized can generate informal centers of coordination. A form projected as scientifically rational can generate classifications whose social consequences become visible only through implementation. A form projected as participatory can reveal unequal capacities for participation. Manifestation therefore changes the evidentiary basis upon which aesthetic and normative claims can be assessed.

The difference between the two positions supports a specific form of historical caution. Political actors can acknowledge that a contemplated future appears compelling under current aesthetic and interpretive conditions while still treating the appearance as provisional evidence concerning a world whose relations remain partly ungenerated.

This caution has practical implications for institutional design. Political projects can preserve opportunities for later observation, criticism, and revision when the manifested order diverges from its projected appearance. Plural representation can expose differences among relational positions. Documentation can preserve the initial reasons and expectations underlying a transition. Staged implementation can allow generated relations to enter evaluation before commitment becomes difficult to revise.

The historical variability of appearance therefore strengthens the case for revisable praxis. Actors require historically situated judgments to act. Responsible practice preserves the institutional capacity for those judgments to encounter the relations generated through their own realization.

6.10 Generative Relational Account of Historical Appearance

The analysis developed in this section situates political appearance within the same recursive historical structure as judgment and praxis. Political forms become intelligible through historically generated interpretive and aesthetic conditions. These appearances contribute to prospective normative judgment. Judgment supports political action. Praxis generates new relations and historical experiences. The resulting configuration can then alter the modes through which the political form is perceived and evaluated.

Several propositions follow from this account.

First, political intelligibility possesses a history. The capacity to recognize a political relation as a problem, possibility, harm, achievement, or object of collective action depends partly upon concepts and experiences generated through prior history.

Second, aesthetic appearance participates in political orientation. Modes of order can acquire motivational and symbolic force before their full relational consequences have manifested.

Third, aesthetic salience varies across relational positions. Political forms can produce heterogeneous appearances because actors encounter them through different social, spatial, institutional, and material relations.

Fourth, historical change can transform both the political object and the criteria through which it appears intelligible. A political form can therefore acquire different meanings without requiring complete discontinuity in its formal structure.

Fifth, normative justification remains distinct from aesthetic attraction. Historically situated appearance supplies conditions for judgment and possible sources of insight, while substantive evaluation requires analysis of the relations, consequences, rights, capacities, harms, and values relevant to the political form.

Sixth, Generative Relational theory belongs to the same historical field it analyzes. Its concepts of relationality, generativity, revisability, and emergence are intelligible within particular intellectual and historical conditions. Their present explanatory and normative value can be defended without assigning them immunity from future historical reassessment.

The final proposition is especially important for the paper's conception of historical humility. A theory that emphasizes the historicity of political judgment should preserve the possibility that its own categories will later be reinterpreted. Reflexivity therefore belongs to the substance of the account rather than to a general methodological disclaimer.

This historically situated understanding of appearance prepares the analysis of political advancement in the following section. Once judgments of rationality, desirability, modernity, and progress are recognized as occurring through historically generated conditions of intelligibility, the concept of advancement requires a more precise account of the relations under which one political configuration can be evaluated as preferable to another.

7 On Historical Advancement

This section develops the paper's account of historical advancement. Its role is to preserve the possibility of meaningful claims about progress while distinguishing several relations that are frequently compressed into the language of being historically "advanced." The discussion proceeds through the dimensions of historical comparison, the relation between material conditions and generative viability, the difference between prospective and manifested advancement, the possibility of partial rather than globally complete ordering, the relation between temporal succession and normative evaluation, the interpretation of historical direction, and the public justification of criteria of advancement. The section concludes with a Generative Relational formulation in which advancement is treated as a historically situated comparative judgment whose validity depends upon both the political form under consideration and the relations through which that form can be generated and sustained.

7.1 Dimensions of Historical Comparison

Political language frequently describes institutions, societies, technologies, economic formations, and political arrangements as more advanced, progressive, developed, modern, or mature than others. Such descriptions can express substantive historical judgments. The difficulty arises from the number of different comparisons that can be carried by the same vocabulary.

A political form can be later in chronological sequence. It can depend upon productive capacities unavailable to an earlier form. It can solve a practical problem more effectively. It can expand a population's capabilities. It can reduce a form of domination. It can support a broader field of political participation. It can also create relations that later actors regard as more just according to normative criteria developed through subsequent historical experience. These comparisons concern different dimensions of historical evaluation.

The distinction among these dimensions is analytically important because a political form can perform differently across them. An institutional transformation may increase productive capacity while creating new forms of dependency. A centralized administrative system may improve large-scale coordination while reducing local discretion. A legal reform may extend formal rights while leaving substantial

inequalities in the capacity to exercise those rights. The language of advancement becomes clearer when the relevant dimension of comparison is specified.

This multidimensional structure also applies to historical transitions whose progressive significance is widely recognized. Sen's comparative approach to justice provides a useful analogy. His account emphasizes the possibility of making strong comparative judgments concerning reductions of manifest injustice without requiring a complete ranking of every possible social arrangement [31]. The abolition of slavery can, for example, be recognized as an enhancement of justice without requiring agreement on the complete ordering of all institutional alternatives [31]. Comparative judgment can therefore possess substantive force while leaving some pairs of alternatives incompletely ordered.

Historical advancement can be treated similarly. Recognition that one transition constitutes genuine progress along important dimensions does not require the construction of a single scalar measure capable of ranking every historical configuration. Political judgment can be decisive in some comparisons and underdetermined in others.

The multidimensional character of advancement also places a burden on historical explanation. A claim that a political form was progressive should identify the relation in which progress occurred, the subjects affected by the change, the capacities or harms altered by the transition, and the historical conditions under which the comparison is made. Such specification strengthens the judgment by replacing a compressed historical label with an articulated comparative structure.

7.2 Historical Material Conditions and Generative Viability

Historical advancement concerns forms that must exist through concrete social relations. The practical evaluation of a political form therefore includes the conditions under which it can be generated, reproduced, and transformed. Historical-materialist traditions provide an important foundation for this requirement.

Marx's 1859 Preface situates social relations of production within the development of material productive forces and connects major transformations of social structure with historically developed conditions [22]. Whatever interpretive disagreements surround the broader theory of historical development, this relation between social form and historical-material possibility remains central to the present inquiry. A political arrangement cannot acquire stable historical existence through its normative desirability alone.

The Generative Relational perspective extends the field of relevant conditions to include the wider relations required for institutional reproduction. Productive capacity, administrative competence, legal infrastructure, technological systems, knowledge, political organization, ecological conditions, trust, cultural interpretation, international relations, and existing distributions of power can all affect the viability of a contemplated form. The relative importance of these conditions varies across historical contexts.

Generative viability therefore concerns the capacity of a political form to produce and reproduce the relations necessary for the goods attributed to it. A system can be normatively attractive at the level of projected principles while lacking the institutional or material relations through which those principles could become effective. The resulting historical manifestation may then diverge from the projected form.

This distinction is especially important when a political arrangement is identified as a plausible successor to an existing order. A judgment that a future system could realize valuable forms of equality, freedom, cooperation, or productive organization can reasonably orient political practice. The historical status of that judgment does not imply that immediate implementation under every relational configuration would realize the anticipated goods.

A transition undertaken before relevant capacities have developed can produce a configuration different from the one anticipated. Administrative breakdown, productive contraction, institutional coercion, severe coordination failure, or loss of corrective capacity can transform the relational meaning of the projected form. The practical evaluation of advancement therefore includes the trajectory through which the form is to become viable.

The same principle applies in the opposite temporal direction. Existing institutions can continue to reproduce themselves after their historical advantages have weakened. Relations that once expanded productive or political capacities can later constrain possibilities generated by subsequent development.

Historical viability therefore concerns the relation between a form and an evolving field of conditions rather than the permanent status of the form itself.

A historically situated judgment of advancement can consequently recognize that a form had progressive significance within one configuration and became a constraint within another. Such evaluation preserves historical specificity while permitting substantive normative judgment.

7.3 Prospective and Manifested Advancement

The distinction between pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment developed in Sections 2 and 5 applies directly to claims of advancement. Political actors can judge an unrealized form to be more advanced than an existing arrangement, and this judgment can legitimately guide practice. The historical manifestation of the projected form subsequently provides a new object and a new position of evaluation.

Prospective advancement concerns a future configuration as represented through the knowledge, normative commitments, historical experience, and models available at the time of decision. Its practical role lies in giving direction to transformation. A political movement that seeks expanded suffrage, new property relations, institutional democratization, social protection, or another structural change must be capable of regarding an unrealized configuration as preferable before it has been historically instantiated.

Manifested advancement concerns the relational configuration that emerges through the transition. The later evaluator can examine institutions, dependencies, capacities, distributions of harm and benefit, forms of agency, and consequences that were incompletely available during prospective judgment. The realized configuration may confirm significant parts of the initial evaluation while altering others.

The difference between these judgments does not create a contradiction. Prospective and manifested advancement refer to historically different objects of evaluation. The first concerns a projected configuration and its expected trajectory. The second concerns a generated relational structure and the history through which it became actual.

This distinction also clarifies the meaning of historical correction. A projected future can be judged preferable on strong grounds at one historical moment, while later manifestation reveals costs that require institutional revision. The later correction does not erase the historical rationality of the earlier aspiration. It modifies the judgment using relations and evidence that became available through the process.

The temporal structure can also operate in the opposite direction. A transformation initially regarded with uncertainty can generate capacities and forms of cooperation whose value becomes clearer after manifestation. Historical practice can therefore strengthen as well as weaken a prior judgment of advancement.

The concept of advancement is consequently dynamic. A prospective ranking orients practice, while manifested history supplies grounds for renewed comparison. Historical actors remain capable of pursuing progress without assigning permanent authority to the judgment from which the transition began.

7.4 Comparative Progress and Partial Ordering

Historical comparison does not require every political configuration to occupy a single complete ordering. The possibility of incomplete comparison is especially important where political forms distribute advantages and burdens across multiple normative dimensions.

Sen's account of comparative justice explicitly permits incomplete rankings while preserving determinate comparisons in cases where sufficient reasons converge [31]. A social evaluation can therefore establish that one arrangement is more just than another in some cases while leaving other pairs unresolved. This structure provides a useful model for historical advancement.

Let $\mathcal{H}$ denote a set of historical-relational configurations and let N_t denote a historically articulated set of normative considerations. A situated relation of advancement is represented in Equation 4.

$$X \preceq_{R_t, N_t, \Gamma}^{\text{adv}} Y \quad (4)$$

Equation 4 states that the comparison between configurations X and Y is indexed to the historical-relational conditions R_t , the normative criteria N_t , and the relevant transition structure Γ . The notation expresses a comparative relation rather than a scalar degree of advancement.

The relation can remain incomplete. Some pairs of historical configurations may be clearly comparable because the transition reduces severe domination, expands widely valued capacities, or resolves an established social problem without creating comparably serious losses along other relevant dimensions. Other pairs can involve genuine normative trade-offs or insufficient grounds for a decisive ordering.

Incomplete ordering has two advantages for historical analysis. First, it avoids forcing heterogeneous political goods into a single numerical or conceptual scale. Second, it permits strong normative conclusions where the available reasons support them. Historical humility therefore remains compatible with decisive judgments concerning major reductions of injustice or expansions of human capacity.

The partial character of an ordering also helps distinguish plural values from indifference. Two configurations can remain incompletely ordered because freedom, equality, productive capacity, ecological sustainability, cultural continuity, and other relevant considerations generate competing reasons. Such incompleteness signals the need for further political judgment and public reasoning. It does not assign equal value to every alternative.

A historical theory of advancement can consequently support locally strong comparisons within a wider field whose ordering remains partially open. This structure is especially appropriate for an unfinished history because future experience can supply reasons that refine existing comparisons or introduce dimensions of evaluation that were previously weakly articulated.

7.5 Temporal Succession, Development, and Normative Evaluation

Historical narratives frequently connect chronological succession with developmental interpretation. Later institutions often depend upon capacities generated through earlier forms, and historical sequences can therefore possess real developmental structure. The normative meaning of that structure requires a distinct act of evaluation.

Chronological succession concerns the ordering of events in time. Causal development concerns relations through which earlier configurations contribute to the possibility of later ones. Functional development concerns changes in the capacity of a system to perform particular tasks. Normative advancement concerns reasons for regarding a transition as an improvement. These relations can coincide, while their analytical distinction remains important.

A later political form can inherit productive capacities, administrative techniques, legal institutions, and knowledge created under an earlier form. The historical dependence of the later form gives the sequence explanatory structure. The same dependence does not determine the normative evaluation of every relation inherited from the earlier configuration.

Conversely, a historically earlier institution can possess progressive significance relative to the arrangement from which it emerged. The later availability of more desirable alternatives does not erase the historical difference produced by the earlier transition. Historical advancement can therefore be indexed to the field of relations and possibilities available during the relevant period.

This time-indexed conception helps clarify apparently paradoxical judgments. An institution can constitute progress relative to its predecessor and later become a target of justified transformation. A political form can make possible capacities through which its own limitations become recognizable. Historical development can therefore generate the normative resources required for its subsequent criticism.

The structure is dialectical in a broad sense because generated capacities can alter the conditions under which the generating form is evaluated. The present paper uses this structure without assigning a predetermined sequence to the specific institutional forms through which it must occur.

Such an account preserves both historical continuity and normative revision. Earlier institutions can be evaluated through their role in expanding or constraining historically available possibilities, while later actors remain free to criticize relations whose historical function no longer provides adequate justification.

7.6 Historical Direction and Open Trajectories

The possibility of historical advancement raises a further issue concerning direction. Historical processes can display directional tendencies without providing a complete specification of their future outcomes. Productive development, demographic change, ecological constraint, technological innovation, institutional conflict, and political mobilization can alter the relative viability of social arrangements and create pressure for transformation.

Historical-materialist theories have offered especially influential accounts of such directional structure. Cohen's reconstruction of Marx's theory of history provides one systematic interpretation centered on the development of productive forces and their relation to production relations [8]. The extensive debate surrounding this reconstruction demonstrates that historical direction, causal explanation, and teleology remain distinct theoretical questions even within interpretations of Marxian historical development.

The present framework permits historical direction while preserving openness concerning the exact configuration through which a tension will be resolved. A relational structure can generate pressures that make its continuation increasingly costly or unstable. Several successor configurations may remain historically possible. Their relative feasibility can change through political action, technological development, institutional innovation, and contingent events.

This distinction is important for political praxis. Actors can identify structural tendencies and orient action toward a preferred resolution without possessing complete knowledge of the future. Political intervention can also alter the path by changing the conditions under which different trajectories become viable.

Retrospective explanation should therefore preserve the alternatives that were historically available at earlier points. A manifested trajectory can become highly intelligible after the fact without having been uniquely determined in advance. Hindsight can otherwise transform a contingent or multiply determined development into an apparently inevitable sequence.

The distinction between direction and predetermined destination also aligns with contemporary attempts to preserve a concept of progress while avoiding a single developmental endpoint. Jaeggi's account of progress and regression develops a materialist and non-teleological approach centered on social learning and problem solving [17]. Allen, from a different critical-theoretical position, challenges progressive readings of history while preserving progress as a political imperative [1]. Their disagreement illustrates the possibility of separating normative commitment to progress from a complete progressive interpretation of historical development.

A Generative Relational account treats historical direction as an emergent property of evolving relations. The trajectory remains structured by inherited conditions and generated constraints while retaining openness to political agency and relational novelty.

7.7 Relational Criteria and Public Justification

Historically situated advancement requires criteria of evaluation. The historicity of those criteria creates a demand for justification rather than a reason to abandon normative comparison. Political actors should articulate the grounds on which one historical configuration is judged preferable to another.

Relevant criteria can include reductions in domination, expansion of political agency, increased productive or organizational capacity, greater material security, protection of basic rights, ecological viability, improved recognition, enhanced possibilities of learning, and preservation of generativity. The relative significance of these criteria depends partly upon the political problem under consideration.

Public justification is important because situated evaluation can otherwise remain implicit in the language of historical necessity. A claim that a political form is more advanced can conceal substantive judgments concerning which capacities matter, whose interests are weighted, which harms are tolerated, and what temporal horizon is used for comparison. Making these criteria explicit turns a compressed historical claim into an arguable normative proposition.

Sen's comparative account of justice again provides a useful orientation. Public reasoning can support determinate judgments in some cases despite plurality in the reasons through which justice is assessed [31]. Historical advancement can similarly be justified through convergent reasons without requiring a total ordering of all political forms.

Historical context remains relevant to such justification because the meaning of a criterion can change with relational conditions. Political participation has different practical content under different communication infrastructures. Material security changes meaning with productive capacity and ecological conditions. Formal equality can acquire different significance where social relations generate large asymmetries in the ability to exercise formally equal rights.

A relational criterion therefore concerns both a value and the historical relations through which the value becomes effective. The evaluation of freedom, for example, includes attention to the capacities and dependencies through which available choices can actually be exercised. The evaluation of equality includes the social relations through which formally equal statuses produce different practical positions.

Public justification also creates conditions for later revision. When the criteria supporting a judgment of advancement are documented, later actors can identify which assumptions remain persuasive, which consequences altered the comparison, and which newly recognized values require reconsideration. Explicit criteria therefore strengthen historical re-recognizability.

7.8 Advancement across Historical Positions

The historical character of advancement becomes especially visible when the same political form is evaluated from multiple temporal positions. A form can possess a progressive relation to its predecessor at t_1 , contribute to the generation of new capacities during the interval that follows, and be judged inadequate relative to those new capacities at t_2 .

Such a sequence does not require the earlier judgment to be treated as an error. The object of comparison and the field of available possibilities have changed. A political arrangement can be historically enabling while remaining open to later transformation.

This structure also explains how apparently outdated forms can retain local functional value. Historical development rarely replaces every component of an earlier configuration simultaneously. Institutions, legal forms, cultural practices, and organizational techniques can persist because they continue to perform useful functions within a transformed relational system. Historical advancement therefore often involves recombination rather than complete substitution.

The same consideration applies to apparent regression. The reappearance of an older institutional form or symbolic vocabulary does not establish a return to the earlier relational state. The form enters a new historical configuration and can acquire a different function, meaning, and normative significance. The later sections on historical equivalence and quotient-dependent recurrence develop this point formally.

Advancement across historical positions is therefore trajectory-sensitive. Judgment concerns the relation among a political form, its predecessor, the conditions under which it emerged, the capacities it generated, and the possibilities available from the later position. A form's historical significance cannot be exhausted by its location in a chronological sequence.

7.9 Generative Relational Account of Historical Advancement

The preceding discussion supports a preliminary Generative Relational account of historical advancement. The account preserves the possibility of genuine progress, treats political evaluation as historically situated, incorporates the generative conditions of institutional viability, and allows the ordering of historical configurations to remain partial.

Historical advancement can be analyzed through four components.

The first component is comparative. Advancement concerns a relation among configurations rather than an isolated property of a single political form. Statements of progress therefore require an articulated baseline.

The second component is historical. The relevant configurations are situated within material, institutional, technological, cultural, epistemic, and political relations. These relations affect both the meaning of the political form and the possibilities available for transformation.

The third component is generative. The transition between configurations produces relations that contribute to the viability and later evaluation of the manifested order. The path of transformation belongs to the historical object of judgment.

The fourth component is normative. Advancement requires criteria concerning the goods, harms, capacities, rights, freedoms, or forms of social relation at stake. These criteria can be defended through political and philosophical reasoning while remaining historically available forms of judgment.

Together, these components support a conception of advancement that is strong enough to orient praxis and modest enough to remain revisable. A political community can judge a contemplated future preferable, organize action toward its realization, and subsequently reassess the manifested configuration using evidence and normative resources generated through the transition.

The framework therefore places progress within an unfinished historical process. Present actors remain responsible for making comparative judgments. Historical manifestation remains capable of changing the grounds of those judgments. Later actors inherit both the relations generated through earlier practice and the records through which the reasoning behind that practice can be reconstructed.

The next section develops the problem of generative conditions and premature transition in greater detail. Its focus is the relation between the normative attraction of a contemplated political form and the historical conditions required for its viable realization.

8 Generative Conditions and Premature Transition

This section examines the relation between the normative attractiveness of a political form and the historical conditions required for its viable manifestation. Section 7 argued that political advancement can be meaningfully assessed while remaining historically situated and sensitive to the trajectory through which a contemplated form becomes actual. The present section develops the transition component of that argument. Its objectives are to specify the meaning of generative viability, distinguish institutional form from relational fit, analyze differences in the temporal rates of institutional change, clarify the role of sequencing and transitional configurations, and distinguish premature transformation from delayed transformation. The final part formulates a transition-sensitive Generative Relational account centered on the preservation and production of capacities required for continued political learning and revision.

8.1 Generative Viability of Political Forms

A political form can be normatively attractive before the relations required for its stable reproduction have developed. This possibility follows directly from the distinction between prospective judgment and manifestation developed in Sections 2 and 5. Political actors can formulate an institutional possibility, assign value to its anticipated consequences, and organize practice toward its realization while important components of its future relational environment remain incompletely generated.

The concept of *generative viability* refers to the capacity of a political form to produce, reproduce, and adapt the relations through which its principal institutional and normative functions can be sustained. The relevant conditions vary with the form under consideration. They may include productive capacity, administrative competence, legal institutions, informational infrastructure, technological systems, organizational knowledge, social trust, political coalitions, educational resources, cultural interpretation, ecological conditions, and international relations.

Generative viability concerns the relation between these conditions and the political goods attributed to the contemplated form. A system designed around extensive decentralized decision-making, for example, can depend upon information channels, legal protections, organizational capacities, and distributed resources that allow local actors to exercise meaningful agency. A system designed around universal social provision can depend upon fiscal, administrative, informational, and productive capacities sufficient

to support reliable distribution. A constitutional arrangement can depend upon judicial, administrative, political, and cultural practices through which formal rules acquire practical effect.

The historical-materialist tradition provides an important foundation for this attention to conditions. Marx's 1859 Preface links transformations in social relations to historically developed material conditions and emphasizes the relation between productive forces and relations of production [22]. The present framework retains this historical conditioning while broadening the analytical field to include additional relations that can affect institutional reproduction.

The resulting concept of viability has both material and relational dimensions. A political form can possess sufficient material resources while lacking institutions capable of coordinating them. It can possess formal institutions while lacking the social or epistemic relations through which those institutions become practically intelligible. It can possess administrative capacity while generating patterns of dependency that undermine the normative goods attributed to the arrangement.

Generative viability therefore differs from mere institutional existence. A political form can be legally declared, constitutionally enacted, or administratively installed and still fail to reproduce the relations through which its intended functions become effective. The difference between formal installation and relational reproduction becomes particularly important in periods of accelerated institutional transformation.

The concept also differs from a requirement that every supporting relation be fully mature before change begins. Some conditions are produced through the transition itself. Political participation can generate civic competence. Institutional experimentation can produce administrative knowledge. New legal rights can generate organizations capable of defending and elaborating those rights. A transition can therefore create part of its own conditions of viability.

This endogeneity requires a more precise distinction among three kinds of conditions. Some relations operate as substantial preconditions whose severe absence can make the projected form difficult to sustain. Other relations can be co-generated through the transition. A third group can be institutionally substituted through alternative mechanisms. Transition analysis should therefore examine the structure of dependence among conditions instead of treating historical readiness as a single scalar threshold.

A Generative Relational account consequently interprets viability as a configuration problem. The relevant issue concerns whether the available and generable relations can jointly sustain the principal capacities attributed to the contemplated political form.

8.2 Institutional Transplantation and Relational Fit

Institutional transplantation provides a particularly clear illustration of the difference between formal political form and relational viability. Rules, constitutions, legal codes, administrative procedures, and organizational models can be transferred across jurisdictions more rapidly than the wider relations through which they function in their original setting.

Berkowitz, Pistor, and Richard's study of legal transplantation demonstrates the importance of this distinction. Their analysis of forty-nine countries finds that the manner in which law was transplanted and received is strongly associated with the effectiveness of legal institutions. Legal orders that were adapted to local conditions, developed internally, or entered contexts in which relevant legal principles were already familiar displayed stronger legality than transplanted systems with weaker forms of receptivity [4]. The study therefore directs attention toward the relation between formal legal rules and the social, professional, and institutional environment through which those rules acquire practical meaning.

The result is relevant beyond legal transplantation. Institutional form does not carry its complete generative context with it. A rule that coordinates behavior effectively in one configuration can interact differently with professional practices, informal norms, economic structures, administrative capacities, and existing power relations in another configuration.

Comparative institutional analysis provides a related perspective. Djankov, Glaeser, La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, and Shleifer emphasize the diversity of institutional arrangements across capitalist economies and the importance of institutional context for political and economic outcomes [10]. Their analysis also

treats institutional choice through trade-offs among alternative mechanisms of social control rather than through a single universally efficient institutional form [10].

A Generative Relational interpretation describes this issue as one of *relational fit*. Relational fit concerns the compatibility among a formal institutional arrangement, the practices through which actors interpret it, the capacities required for its operation, and the surrounding relations through which its effects propagate. The same formal arrangement can therefore generate different historical configurations in different relational fields.

Relational fit should remain distinct from cultural essentialism. A claim that an institution interacts poorly with existing relations does not establish that those relations are permanent or that institutional transplantation should be avoided. Political practice can intentionally transform the surrounding field. Education, organizational development, legal reform, technological infrastructure, fiscal capacity, and new forms of participation can change the relations through which an institution operates.

The analytical value of relational fit lies in directing attention toward the transition process. A transplanted or newly designed institution can require complementary changes that occur at different temporal rates. Its viability may depend upon whether those changes can be generated through the transition without imposing costs that undermine the political goods motivating the reform.

Relational fit also affects interpretation after manifestation. A formal institution may initially appear ineffective because complementary relations remain underdeveloped and later become more effective as those relations emerge. Another arrangement may perform effectively during an early phase and later reveal dependencies that reduce its normative attractiveness. Evaluation therefore benefits from observing the trajectory through which institutional fit develops.

8.3 Temporal Heterogeneity of Institutional Change

Political transformation frequently involves institutional processes operating at different temporal rates. Legal rules can sometimes change within days. Administrative routines can require years to develop. Infrastructure can require decades. Professional knowledge can depend upon extended training. Cultural expectations and informal norms can persist across generations. Political transition therefore takes place within a temporally heterogeneous relational field.

Roland's distinction between fast-moving and slow-moving institutions provides an influential framework for analyzing this heterogeneity [30]. He identifies culture, including values, beliefs, and social norms, as an important example of relatively slow-moving institutions, while political institutions can sometimes change rapidly [30]. The interaction among institutions operating at different rates helps explain both patterns of institutional change and difficulties associated with transplantation across contexts [30].

The distinction has direct implications for the concept of premature transition. A formal political transformation can occur more rapidly than the relations that support its operation. The resulting temporal mismatch can generate coordination difficulties, institutional ambiguity, strategic adaptation, or reliance upon informal structures inherited from the previous configuration.

The same mismatch can also operate constructively. Fast-moving formal institutions can create incentives and opportunities through which slower relations begin to change. A legal reform can alter expectations before social norms fully adjust. A new political right can precede widespread cultural acceptance and contribute to the later development of that acceptance. Temporal heterogeneity therefore creates both transition risk and generative possibility.

This duality prevents temporal alignment from becoming a universal requirement. Political transformation rarely waits for every relevant relation to evolve at the same rate. The practical problem concerns the degree of mismatch that the transition can absorb while preserving the capacities required for further adaptation.

The concept of synchronization is useful when treated in this limited sense. Institutional synchronization does not require identical rates of change. It concerns sufficient coordination among processes operating at different rates so that one transformation does not systematically destroy the conditions required for another.

For example, rapid decentralization can transfer formal authority before local administrative capacity becomes sufficient to exercise it. Rapid market liberalization can alter economic incentives before regulatory institutions develop adequate monitoring capacity. Expansion of political participation can proceed faster than organizational structures capable of aggregating new demands. Each case involves a different temporal relation among institutional components.

A transition-sensitive analysis therefore asks which components can change rapidly, which require longer development, which can be co-generated, and which mismatches create significant risk. Prematurity emerges from the configuration of these relations rather than from a fixed chronological schedule.

8.4 Sequencing and Transitional Configurations

Political transformation rarely moves directly from a complete configuration X to a complete configuration Y . Historical transitions contain intermediate arrangements that possess their own institutions, incentives, conflicts, and distributions of power. The normative and generative properties of these transitional configurations can influence whether the projected destination remains reachable.

Sequencing therefore belongs to the substantive evaluation of political transition. A sequence can generate capacities required for later reforms, reduce risks associated with institutional mismatch, and preserve social coordination while relations change. Another sequence can create veto points, entrenched interests, or institutional dependencies that make the projected destination increasingly difficult to realize.

North, Wallis, and Weingast's analysis of transitions from limited-access to open-access orders illustrates the importance of historically generated transition conditions. Their framework identifies institutional "doorstep conditions" associated with the transition toward open-access arrangements, including developments in organizational and institutional structure [24]. The framework treats transition as a process through which conditions supporting a different social order emerge over time.

The present paper does not adopt that specific historical typology as a general model of political development. Its relevance lies in demonstrating that institutional orders can depend upon configurations of supporting conditions whose development affects the path of transition.

Sequencing also interacts with political legitimacy. A transitional institution can be normatively imperfect while preserving capacities required for a later configuration. Another transitional institution can pursue an attractive short-term objective while weakening the organizational, epistemic, or legal conditions required for subsequent reform. Historical judgment therefore needs to distinguish evaluation of a transitional form from evaluation of the role that form plays within a broader trajectory.

This distinction does not grant transitional harms automatic justification. Claims that present injustice is necessary for future progress require substantive evidence concerning the causal relation between the burden and the projected future. Historical narratives have frequently used anticipated future goods to legitimate severe present costs. A transition-sensitive framework therefore places a high burden of justification on claims that a harmful intermediate arrangement is indispensable.

The distribution of transitional costs also matters. A sequence can preserve aggregate productive capacity while imposing severe losses upon a politically weak group. A reform can create institutions beneficial to later generations while concentrating immediate burdens on subjects who possess limited capacity to influence the trajectory. Evaluation of sequencing therefore includes procedural and distributive considerations alongside long-term viability.

The normative significance of transitional configurations supports a broader principle developed throughout this paper: the path belongs to the object of historical judgment. A desirable destination does not exhaust the evaluation of the transformation through which it is pursued.

8.5 Capacity Formation and Institutional Load

Institutional transitions create demands upon political, administrative, economic, and epistemic capacities. A projected arrangement can require monitoring, adjudication, taxation, coordination, information

processing, professional expertise, enforcement, public communication, or conflict resolution at levels substantially different from those required by the preceding order.

The concept of *institutional load* refers to the demands that a political form places upon the capacities needed for its operation. A transition becomes especially vulnerable when institutional load expands more rapidly than the capacity of the relevant systems to respond.

Capacity should be understood broadly. Administrative personnel and fiscal resources represent important components, while political capacity also includes organizational knowledge, legitimacy, institutional trust, professional competence, public information, legal interpretation, and the ability of affected actors to coordinate their own responses.

The relation between institutional load and capacity is dynamic. New institutions can generate capacity through use. Administrative agencies learn through implementation. Citizens acquire participatory competence through participation. Courts develop doctrine through adjudication. Organizations build routines through repeated coordination. Transition can therefore serve as a mechanism of capacity formation.

A transition can also deplete capacity. Rapid institutional replacement can destroy professional knowledge associated with the preceding system before alternative expertise has developed. Organizational instability can reduce institutional memory. Severe economic disruption can weaken the fiscal base required to sustain reform. Political conflict can consume administrative resources and reduce trust.

The generative evaluation of transition should therefore consider both capacity requirements and capacity trajectories. The relevant issue concerns whether practice is likely to reproduce, expand, or erode the capacities required for continued transformation.

This distinction also affects the interpretation of early failure. Initial difficulty can indicate a structural mismatch between institutional load and available capacity. It can also represent a temporary learning phase through which the relevant capacities are being generated. Historical judgment requires evidence concerning the direction of the capacity trajectory rather than an automatic inference from short-term performance.

The capacity perspective adds another dimension to the distinction between formal and relational change. A constitution can redistribute authority instantaneously in legal terms, while the practical capacity to exercise the new authority develops over a longer period. A social right can be legally recognized before institutions acquire the capacity to provide the relevant services. A new economic mechanism can be permitted before actors develop the knowledge required to participate effectively.

These temporal differences are integral to manifestation. The political form becomes historically actual through the gradual production of the capacities that allow its formal commitments to acquire practical effect.

8.6 Prematurity and Historical Timing

The concept of premature transition requires careful definition because chronological language can easily become a vehicle for conservatism. Prematurity in the present framework refers to a relational condition rather than an abstract position on a universal developmental calendar.

A transition is premature where the relations required to generate and sustain its principal political goods are sufficiently absent, incompatible, or desynchronized that implementation is likely to produce a materially different configuration with serious losses of the capacities motivating the transition. The judgment therefore concerns a relation among the projected form, the available conditions, and the transition process.

This definition places a substantial evidentiary burden on claims of prematurity. Political incumbents can invoke institutional unreadiness to preserve arrangements that protect existing power. Historical analysis should therefore identify the specific capacities alleged to be absent, the mechanism through which their absence threatens the transition, the possibility of generating those capacities through action, and the distribution of costs associated with waiting.

The corresponding concept of delayed transition is equally important. A political order can become increasingly incompatible with capacities and normative demands that have already developed. Institu-

tions can suppress political agency, restrict productive possibilities, block new forms of social organization, or preserve dependencies whose historical basis has weakened. Delay under these conditions can itself destroy generative capacity.

The relation between prematurity and delay therefore creates a timing problem. Political actors must decide under uncertainty whether existing conditions can support transformation, whether transformation can generate its own conditions, and whether postponement will preserve or erode the capacities required for future action.

Historical timing is consequently endogenous to praxis. Preparatory reforms can alter the conditions under which a larger transformation becomes viable. Collective organization can create capacities absent at the beginning of a political movement. Institutional experiments can reveal constraints and generate knowledge. The time of transition is therefore partly produced through political action.

This endogeneity provides another reason to avoid treating historical conditions as fixed prerequisites. A generative strategy can deliberately develop the relations required for a contemplated political form. Political education, administrative development, coalition formation, infrastructure, legal reform, and institutional experimentation can all modify the field of viability.

At the same time, the belief that every missing condition can be rapidly generated through political will can underestimate material and organizational constraints. Historical humility requires attention to both capacities for transformation and limits on the speed and direction through which those capacities can develop.

A transition-sensitive account therefore replaces a single judgment of historical readiness with a structured inquiry into generability, timing, capacity, and reversible learning.

8.7 Transition Judgment and Corrective Capacity

Uncertainty concerning manifestation creates a practical need for corrective capacity. A transition whose consequences cannot be fully known in advance benefits from institutions capable of observing generated relations, incorporating new knowledge, revising implementation, and responding to harms.

Corrective capacity is broader than formal policy reversal. Some historical transformations cannot be undone. Political violence, ecological damage, institutional destruction, lost knowledge, and changes in subject formation can produce enduring effects. Corrective capacity concerns the ability to alter the trajectory before such effects eliminate meaningful alternatives.

Several institutional properties can support corrective capacity. Transparent documentation preserves the grounds of the initial judgment. Independent evaluation can reveal discrepancies between projected and manifested relations. Distributed feedback can expose consequences experienced from different social positions. Staged implementation can allow capacity formation and institutional learning to occur before commitments become difficult to modify. Constitutional and administrative procedures can preserve mechanisms for revision.

Corrective capacity also requires epistemic openness. A transition organized around a highly determinate historical doctrine can interpret emerging contradictions as temporary deviations from an already known destination. Evidence then loses its capacity to revise the underlying judgment. A Generative Relational approach treats emergent discrepancies as potential information concerning the structure being generated.

The requirement for correction applies equally to conservative and transformative strategies. A decision to delay institutional change should remain revisable when waiting generates new harms or forecloses future possibilities. A decision to accelerate transformation should remain revisable when institutional load exceeds emerging capacities. Historical responsibility therefore concerns the preservation of learning across competing trajectories.

Corrective capacity also links transition judgment with the later principle of historical re-recognizability. Records of decisions, disagreements, uncertainty, intermediate arrangements, and generated consequences allow future subjects to reconstruct the transition and reconsider judgments made during it. A transition that destroys such traces reduces the capacity of later history to learn from the process.

The normative value of revisability therefore extends from individual belief to institutional architecture. Political systems can be designed to maintain degrees of freedom for subsequent correction even while pursuing substantial transformation.

8.8 Generative Relational Account of Transition Conditions

The preceding analysis supports a transition-sensitive interpretation of historical advancement. A contemplated political form acquires normative significance through prospective judgment. Its viable manifestation depends upon relations that may be inherited, absent, partially developed, or generated through the transition itself. Historical evaluation must therefore attend to the relation among projected goods, supporting conditions, transitional processes, capacity formation, and corrective possibilities.

Several distinctions organize this account.

The first distinction concerns formal availability and generative viability. A political form can be conceptually available and legally installable while the relations required for its effective reproduction remain underdeveloped.

The second distinction concerns inherited conditions and co-generated conditions. Some capacities must possess a substantial degree of prior development, while others can emerge through participation in the new institutional arrangement. Transition analysis should identify the dependence structure among these conditions.

The third distinction concerns transition speed and relational synchronization. Different components of political order change at different rates. Viability depends upon the capacity of the transition to coordinate these differences without requiring complete temporal uniformity.

The fourth distinction concerns destination and trajectory. Transitional configurations possess their own normative and generative properties. Evaluation of a future political form therefore includes the process through which it is pursued.

The fifth distinction concerns institutional load and capacity formation. Political transformation creates new demands while simultaneously altering the capacities available to meet those demands. The direction of this capacity trajectory is central to assessing viability.

The sixth distinction concerns prematurity and delay. Prematurity arises when the relational conditions of transition are insufficiently developed or coordinated for the projected goods to become sustainably manifest. Delay arises when preservation of an existing order suppresses capacities or possibilities that have become historically available.

The seventh distinction concerns commitment and corrective capacity. Transformative action requires sufficient commitment to generate new relations, while historical uncertainty gives practical value to mechanisms that preserve observation, revision, and institutional learning.

Taken together, these distinctions support a concept of transition in which historical conditions operate as dynamic components of political practice. Conditions constrain political action, political action generates conditions, and the resulting configuration becomes the object of renewed judgment.

The framework therefore preserves a central insight of historical-materialist thought while adding a more explicit account of relational generation. Social and political forms acquire their historical significance through the conditions of their possibility and reproduction. Political praxis can also participate in producing those conditions, altering the relation between what is currently viable and what can become viable through transformation.

Prematurity consequently has no universal chronological measure. Its meaning depends upon the structure of the contemplated political form, the capacities available within the historical configuration, the conditions that can be generated through action, and the risks created by the transition path. Historical timing becomes a matter of relational judgment under uncertainty.

The next section turns from transition conditions to the relation between historical development and historical necessity. The analysis examines how retrospective intelligibility can arise from manifested trajectories and how claims concerning developmental direction can be separated from stronger claims of predetermined historical sequence.

9 Historical Development and Historical Necessity

This section examines the relation between historical development and claims of historical necessity. Its role is to clarify how a historical process can possess structure, direction, constraint, and retrospective intelligibility without requiring every manifested outcome to have been uniquely determined in advance. The discussion proceeds through the distinction between developmental structure and retrospective intelligibility, several senses of historical necessity, the difference between historical tendencies and predictive laws, the roles of contingency and agency in path formation, the relation between historical materialism and open development, the retrospective compression of historical alternatives, and the practical use of necessity claims in political praxis. The section concludes with a Generative Relational account in which necessity is indexed to historically generated conditions, constraints, and ranges of feasible trajectories.

9.1 Developmental Structure and Retrospective Intelligibility

Historical development can possess intelligible structure. Earlier configurations create institutions, productive capacities, technologies, knowledge, conflicts, organizations, and forms of political agency that alter the possibilities available to later actors. A later historical state can therefore depend systematically upon relations generated in an earlier one. Recognition of such dependence is central to historical explanation.

Developmental intelligibility becomes especially strong when a later configuration resolves tensions, exploits capacities, or reorganizes relations that had become increasingly significant under the preceding order. A transition can then appear historically comprehensible because the conditions that made it possible can be reconstructed from the earlier configuration.

This retrospective intelligibility should be distinguished from prospective uniqueness. Once a particular trajectory has manifested, later observers can trace the relations through which it became possible. Such explanation establishes that the outcome arose through identifiable historical processes. It does not by itself establish that the same initial configuration admitted only one possible continuation.

Marx's analysis in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* offers an important example of historically structured agency. Political actors make history within circumstances inherited from the past, and inherited political languages and symbols shape the forms through which new struggles become intelligible [21]. The resulting history contains both constraint and practical activity. Actors enter relations they did not create while contributing to developments that cannot be reduced to passive execution of those inherited conditions.

Historical explanation therefore benefits from preserving two analytical directions. The first moves backward from a manifested configuration to the conditions and processes through which it emerged. The second reconstructs the field of possibilities available before manifestation. The first direction supports causal intelligibility. The second preserves contingency, agency, and the epistemic position of actors who had to act before the later outcome was known.

A Generative Relational account treats both directions as necessary. The manifested configuration is intelligible through its generative history, while the generative history can contain branching possibilities whose significance was only partially available before the branch was taken. Historical intelligibility therefore concerns the structure of a realized trajectory within a wider field of historically conditioned possibilities.

This distinction is particularly important where later institutions appear to solve problems generated by earlier arrangements. The relation can be developmental without making the later form an inevitable endpoint. Earlier conditions can create pressure for transformation, increase the relative viability of some alternatives, and reduce the viability of others while leaving several historically possible responses.

The strength of developmental explanation therefore depends upon the relations identified. Some historical transitions exhibit strong material and institutional constraints. Others depend more heavily upon political coalition, organizational innovation, interpretation, leadership, conflict, or contingent events.

Historical development can contain both regularity and openness in different proportions across different periods and domains.

9.2 Modal Forms of Historical Necessity

The term *historical necessity* can refer to several distinct modal claims. Analytical precision requires these claims to remain separate because their evidentiary requirements and political implications differ substantially.

A first form is logical necessity. A conclusion is logically necessary when its denial contradicts the relevant premises. Historical transitions rarely possess this form because empirical conditions enter every substantive claim concerning social development.

A second form is nomological necessity. An event can be described as necessary relative to a set of laws and sufficiently specified initial conditions. The applicability of this form to large-scale social history depends upon the availability and stability of the relevant social laws, the adequacy of the initial description, and the interaction between knowledge and action within the system.

A third form is structural or conditional necessity. Under a historically specified relational configuration, some outcomes can become extremely difficult to avoid because institutional, material, ecological, technological, or political constraints sharply restrict the feasible range of trajectories. The necessity is indexed to those conditions rather than attributed to the historical event independently of them.

A fourth form is practical necessity. Political actors can confront a situation in which some response becomes necessary relative to a set of adopted goals or constraints. A government facing institutional collapse may need to reorganize administrative capacity if it intends to preserve basic coordination. Such a claim concerns the relation between means, conditions, and objectives rather than a universal law of historical development.

A fifth form is retrospective necessity. Once an outcome has occurred, later historical narratives can describe it as the necessary culmination of earlier developments. Such descriptions can summarize powerful causal constraints, but they can also compress alternatives whose historical availability has become less visible after manifestation.

The distinctions among these modalities matter because a claim can be strong in one sense and weak in another. A transition can become practically necessary for preserving a valued political capacity while remaining historically contingent in the wider sense that several institutional responses were available. A structural contradiction can make continuation of an existing arrangement increasingly costly while leaving the form of its transformation open.

The present paper gives particular importance to conditional necessity. Historical configurations create ranges of feasible action. The structure of those ranges can become highly restrictive without producing a single predetermined successor. This allows historical analysis to take constraint seriously while preserving the generative role of praxis.

Let $\Omega(R_t)$ denote the set of trajectories that remain historically feasible from relational configuration R_t under a specified analytical horizon. Conditional necessity can be represented as shown in Equation 5.

$$E \text{ is conditionally necessary relative to } R_t \iff E \in \gamma \text{ for every } \gamma \in \Omega(R_t). \quad (5)$$

Equation 5 defines a strong form of conditional necessity. Its use requires explicit specification of the relational configuration, the analytical horizon, and the criteria determining historical feasibility. In most large-scale political analysis, the complete set $\Omega(R_t)$ is unavailable. Claims of necessity should therefore be treated as substantive historical propositions whose scope requires justification.

A weaker and often more realistic claim concerns directional pressure. A historical configuration can make some trajectories increasingly costly, unstable, or difficult to reproduce without making one alternative uniquely necessary. Such pressure belongs to historical development while retaining an open field of possible transformation.

9.3 Historical Tendencies and Predictive Scope

Historical tendencies describe patterned changes in the relative viability, frequency, or pressure associated with particular relations. They can be analytically powerful without functioning as unconditional predictions of a specific future state.

The distinction between trend and law is central to Popper's critique of historicism. *The Poverty of Historicism* challenges attempts to derive large-scale historical prophecy from supposed laws of historical development and distinguishes historical trends from universal laws [26]. Popper's argument is substantially broader and more polemical than the present paper's purpose, and its interpretation of Marxism has generated longstanding disagreement. Its methodological caution remains useful here: observation of a historical tendency does not by itself establish an invariant law sufficient for unconditional long-term prediction.

Hume's analysis of induction provides a more general epistemic background. Observed regularities inform expectations while providing no deductive guarantee that the relevant regularity will persist unchanged into an unobserved future [16]. Historical projection encounters an additional difficulty because political action can modify the relations from which the observed regularity was inferred.

A tendency can therefore possess substantial explanatory and practical importance. Increasing productive interdependence can create pressure for new coordination institutions. Changes in technology can weaken institutional forms that depend upon older communication structures. Demographic transformation can alter the sustainability of welfare arrangements. Ecological constraints can progressively narrow feasible policy choices. Each tendency changes the historical field without uniquely determining the political response.

Predictive scope should consequently be indexed to the stability of the relations underlying the projection. Short-horizon predictions within a stable institutional regime can possess stronger evidentiary support than predictions across a transition expected to modify the regime itself. A theory can therefore be highly useful for identifying pressures and conditional consequences while remaining limited as a device for specifying the complete successor order.

This distinction is compatible with historically oriented political practice. Actors can identify structural tendencies, estimate their consequences, and intervene before the tendency reaches a crisis point. The absence of certainty concerning the complete future does not eliminate the practical value of directional knowledge.

A Generative Relational perspective therefore interprets historical tendencies as changes in the relational field that modify the distribution of feasible trajectories. Their political significance lies in how they reshape possibility, constraint, and the costs of continued reproduction of existing relations.

9.4 Contingency, Agency, and Path Formation

Historical openness includes contingency and agency within structured conditions. These concepts identify different sources of variation and should remain analytically distinct.

Contingency concerns developments whose occurrence depends upon conjunctures, sequences, local events, or interactions that were possible within the historical configuration without being uniquely implied by its broad structural features. A strike, election, technological breakthrough, diplomatic crisis, natural disaster, organizational split, or individual decision can redirect a trajectory by changing relations among actors and institutions.

Agency concerns the capacity of historically situated actors to interpret conditions, formulate projects, organize collective action, and intervene in the field of possibilities. Agency itself is relationally distributed. Institutions, resources, organizational forms, legal rights, knowledge, and social position shape whose projects can acquire historical effect.

Path formation results from interaction between inherited structure, contingency, and agency. Once a trajectory begins to generate institutions and expectations, the range and costs of subsequent alternatives can change. Section 4 examined this process through institutional sedimentation and path dependence.

The resulting historical path should therefore be distinguished from a freely chosen sequence and from an externally predetermined sequence. Actors make choices within structured conditions, and those choices can transform the conditions inherited by subsequent actors.

Marx's formulation in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* remains particularly useful because it combines historical constraint with practical agency [21]. The inherited past shapes the circumstances and languages of political action, while the actors participate in producing a new historical configuration.

This interaction also explains why similar structural pressures can produce different political outcomes across contexts. The relevant configurations can differ in organizational capacity, political coalition, institutional memory, international relations, ideology, timing, and accumulated prior choices. Structural analysis therefore gains explanatory power when combined with attention to the pathways through which actors respond to structural pressures.

Contingency should not be equated with causal absence. A contingent event can have identifiable causes and substantial structural consequences. The term indicates that the event's occurrence or timing was not fully determined by the high-level developmental structure used in the explanation.

Agency likewise does not require an unconditioned subject standing outside history. The practical conception developed in Section 3 treats agency as the capacity to form projections, commit to trajectories, organize action, and revise practice within historically generated relations.

Historical development therefore emerges through structured path formation. Constraints influence the field of possibility; agency selects and generates trajectories within that field; contingent interactions alter the path; and the resulting history changes the structure inherited by later actors.

9.5 Historical Materialism and Open Development

The distinction between developmental structure and predetermined outcome is especially important for the present paper's relation to historical materialism. The Generative Relational perspective developed here proceeds from several intuitions continuous with historical-materialist thought: political forms arise within historically specific material and social relations, productive capacities shape institutional possibility, contradictions can generate pressures for transformation, and praxis participates in changing the conditions inherited from the past.

Cohen's reconstruction of Marx's theory of history provides one influential attempt to formulate the developmental structure of historical materialism with analytical precision [8]. His account gives a central role to the development of productive forces and to functional explanations of relations of production. Cohen's later reservations and the wider debates surrounding analytical Marxism also demonstrate the difficulty of specifying historical direction with sufficient precision while preserving the complexity of political agency and social transformation [8].

The present account adopts neither a simple rejection nor a complete reconstruction of that theory. Its contribution concerns the temporality of judgment and manifestation. Historical actors can identify contradictions and developmental pressures, formulate successor arrangements, and judge them preferable under current conditions. The resulting praxis can then generate relations that alter both the successor configuration and the standpoint from which it is later evaluated.

This temporal structure permits a materialist account of development whose future remains historically open. Productive and institutional conditions can make some arrangements increasingly viable and others increasingly difficult to reproduce. Such developments can create directionality. The precise institutional form through which the pressure is resolved can remain dependent upon political organization, conflict, interpretation, international conditions, technological alternatives, and other historically generated relations.

The concept of open development is therefore compatible with strong structural analysis. Openness concerns the range of historically possible realizations, while structure concerns the unequal constraints and capacities distributed across that range.

This distinction also helps clarify the paper's treatment of political advancement. A projected successor form can possess genuine historical and normative advantages without being guaranteed to manifest

successfully under every relational configuration. The transition can require conditions that must first develop or be generated through practice. Once manifestation occurs, the resulting configuration becomes available for renewed historical judgment.

Historical materialism thereby remains an important background to the present account. The Generative Relational refinement places additional emphasis on the plurality of generative conditions, the temporal distinction between projection and manifestation, the path-sensitive production of successor relations, and the revisability of judgments made during historical transition.

9.6 Retrospective Compression of Historical Alternatives

Historical narratives are constructed from a position in which one trajectory has already manifested. This position creates a tendency to compress the field of alternatives that existed before the outcome became known.

The phenomenon is related to the hindsight effects discussed in Section 5. Outcome knowledge can increase the perceived predictability of what occurred and reshape the perceived relevance of information available beforehand [12]. Historical narrative can amplify this effect by organizing earlier events around the trajectory that later became significant.

Retrospective compression can occur at several levels. Political alternatives that failed to gain power can disappear from the main narrative. Institutional experiments that ended quickly can be treated as historical curiosities. Uncertainty among contemporary actors can be replaced by a later account in which the outcome appears structurally obvious. Contingent events can be reinterpreted as symptoms of a development whose conclusion is already known to the historian.

Such compression is partly unavoidable because historical explanation requires selection. A narrative cannot preserve every contemporaneous possibility with equal detail. The methodological requirement is to distinguish explanatory selection from retrospective necessity.

One useful practice is reconstruction of the historically available possibility field. The evaluator can identify alternatives discussed by contemporary actors, institutional capacities present at the time, major unresolved conflicts, uncertainty in forecasts, and events that materially shifted the trajectory. Such reconstruction makes it possible to compare the manifested path with alternatives that possessed historical rather than merely abstract availability.

This practice also improves normative judgment. A policy or political transition should not be evaluated solely against alternatives invented with the benefit of later knowledge. Reconstructing contemporaneously feasible options provides a more appropriate baseline for assessing the quality of the original decision.

Retrospective compression also affects claims of historical advancement. A manifested successor can appear naturally superior when the costs, possibilities, and unresolved problems associated with competing trajectories have disappeared from view. Historical comparison therefore benefits from preserving records of alternative projections and dissenting judgments.

The preservation of alternatives contributes directly to historical re-recognizability. Future subjects can reconsider a transition more adequately when the archive contains evidence of the possibilities, uncertainties, and arguments that existed before one path became dominant.

9.7 Necessity Claims in Political Praxis

Claims of historical necessity have practical political consequences. A movement, state, or institution that presents a projected transformation as historically necessary can strengthen coordination by reducing uncertainty and providing a shared interpretation of present conflict. The same claim can also weaken responsiveness to evidence when alternative trajectories are dismissed in advance as historically impossible or illegitimate.

The practical use of necessity claims therefore requires attention to their modal content. A statement that an existing order faces unsustainable contradictions differs from a statement that one particular suc-

cessor must follow. A claim that some transformation is required to preserve a political capacity differs from a claim that the institutional design of that transformation has already been historically settled.

Political rhetoric often compresses these distinctions because certainty can have mobilizing value. Collective action sometimes depends upon confidence that a transformation is possible and worth pursuing. The epistemic problem arises when strategic confidence becomes insulated from the relations generated through practice.

A Generative Relational account therefore distinguishes commitment from modal overstatement. Actors can commit strongly to a projected future because they judge it preferable and historically viable. The commitment can remain open to evidence that changes the understanding of the path, the supporting conditions, or the manifested form.

This distinction gives historical humility a practical structure. Humility does not require political actors to describe every possibility as equally likely or every future as equally valuable. It requires the strength of a necessity claim to remain proportionate to the historical relations that support it.

Claims of necessity also create a special responsibility concerning coercion. The stronger the political burden imposed in the name of an allegedly inevitable future, the stronger the required justification for both the necessity of the transition and the necessity of the specific means employed. A projected future cannot acquire unlimited justificatory force merely through its placement within a developmental narrative.

This principle is consistent with the paper's earlier treatment of transition conditions. A future political form can be normatively attractive and historically plausible while the actual path remains subject to procedural, distributive, and generative evaluation.

9.8 Historical Direction without Final Closure

Historical openness does not require the abandonment of directional analysis. Some social relations generate recurrent pressures whose cumulative effects are visible over long periods. Productive development, changes in communication, ecological constraint, demographic transformation, and institutional learning can alter the relative viability of political forms in identifiable directions.

A directional account becomes problematic when the direction is converted into a complete ordering of historical forms and a uniquely specified destination. Contemporary debates concerning progress illustrate attempts to preserve the first while qualifying the second.

Allen criticizes progressive conceptions of history that underwrite normative claims through assumptions of civilizational or developmental superiority [1]. Jaeggi develops a different strategy, defending a materialist and dialectical account of progress organized around learning, problem solving, and the possibility of regression while explicitly avoiding a predetermined endpoint [17]. The contrast demonstrates that skepticism toward a closed historical teleology can coexist with serious commitment to political progress.

The Generative Relational account developed here adopts a similar openness at the level of historical manifestation. A historical process can possess direction because existing relations generate problems, capacities, and constraints that make some transformations increasingly salient. The successor configuration remains subject to generative interaction during the transition.

The future therefore possesses structured openness. Historical conditions make some trajectories more plausible than others, eliminate some possibilities, and create new ones. Political actors intervene within this changing field. Their interventions can modify the structure whose tendencies they are attempting to understand.

This conception also changes the meaning of historical prediction. The purpose of historical analysis can include identification of constraints, tendencies, risk regions, transition conditions, and generative possibilities without requiring a unique prediction of the final institutional form.

The absence of final closure preserves the role of later judgment. A political form that resolves one historically generated problem can generate another. Institutions that expand capacities in one period can become constraints in a later configuration. Progress therefore remains compatible with subsequent revision.

9.9 Generative Relational Account of Developmental Necessity

The preceding analysis supports a Generative Relational account in which historical necessity is indexed to relations, conditions, and analytical horizons. Historical development can exhibit strong structure while the resulting trajectory remains open to interaction, agency, and contingency.

Let R_t denote the historically manifested relational configuration at time t , let C_t denote relevant constraints generated or inherited within that configuration, and let Ω_t denote the historically feasible set of trajectories under the specified analytical horizon. The development of the feasible field is represented in Equation 6.

$$\Omega_{t+\Delta} = \mathcal{G}(\Omega_t, R_t, C_t, \Gamma_t), \quad (6)$$

where Γ_t represents historically effective praxis during the interval. Equation 6 emphasizes that the future possibility field is itself historically generated. Existing relations and constraints shape the available trajectories, while praxis can alter the relations and constraints inherited by the subsequent period.

Several implications follow from this formulation.

First, historical constraint can be substantive without being absolute. Material and institutional relations can sharply narrow the feasible set and create strong directional pressures.

Second, historical agency operates within the feasible field while participating in its transformation. Praxis selects among available possibilities and can generate new capacities that modify later possibilities.

Third, contingency enters through events and interactions whose occurrence is compatible with the existing structure while remaining underdetermined by the level of description used in the developmental account.

Fourth, a necessity claim must identify its modal scope. Conditional necessity, practical necessity, and claims about developmental tendency require different forms of justification.

Fifth, retrospective intelligibility and prospective predictability remain distinct. A later observer can reconstruct the generative relations of a manifested trajectory more completely than an earlier actor could predict the trajectory before manifestation.

Sixth, historical direction can coexist with multiple possible institutional realizations. Structural pressure for transformation does not uniquely specify the political form through which that transformation will occur.

Seventh, judgments of historical advancement remain normatively significant. Open development does not imply equivalence among trajectories. Political actors can compare alternatives, identify unjust or destructive relations, commit to preferable futures, and organize practice toward them.

The resulting historical picture is therefore neither an unstructured sequence of contingent events nor a fully predetermined succession of political forms. It is a process of constrained generation in which inherited relations shape the field of possibility, praxis participates in selecting and transforming that field, and manifested outcomes create the conditions of subsequent historical judgment.

This account prepares the paper's shift toward historical classification and equivalence. Once multiple trajectories can produce formally similar political appearances, and once historical return can occur at some levels of description without restoration of the complete relational configuration, the criteria by which historical states are classified as the same become analytically central. The following section therefore examines historical categories and the problem of equivalence.

10 Historical Categories and the Problem of Equivalence

This section develops the conceptual and formal apparatus required for historical comparison across distinct relational configurations. Its role is to clarify the operations through which historians and political theorists identify different historical instances as belonging to the same institutional, economic, or political category. The analysis distinguishes identity, equivalence, and similarity; treats classification as

a selective preservation of structure; introduces quotient-based representation for historically specified equivalence relations; examines the normative and political consequences of classification; and considers the possibility that historical categories themselves change through interaction with the realities they classify. The section concludes by specifying a Generative Relational approach to historical categorization that preserves analytical usefulness together with explicit awareness of information loss.

10.1 Identity, Equivalence, and Similarity

Historical comparison frequently relies upon expressions such as “the same institution,” “the same political form,” “a similar regime,” or “another instance of capitalism.” These expressions perform different analytical operations and therefore require separate treatment.

Identity is the strongest relation. If two descriptions refer to the same historical-relational configuration, the claim concerns one object represented in two ways. Historical comparison more commonly concerns distinct configurations that share selected structures while differing in others. Equivalence provides a formal language for this second case.

Let $\mathcal{R}$ denote a space of historical-relational configurations. A criterion C specifies the structures relevant to a given inquiry. The corresponding relation is defined in Equation 7.

$$R_a \sim_C R_b \iff \Pi_C(R_a) = \Pi_C(R_b) \quad (7)$$

In Equation 7, Π_C denotes an analytical projection that retains the features specified by C . Two configurations can therefore be equivalent relative to one criterion while remaining different as complete historical configurations.

For $\sim_C$ to function as an equivalence relation, it must satisfy reflexivity, symmetry, and transitivity. These requirements are standard in the mathematical definition of equivalence and permit the partition of a domain into equivalence classes. Their methodological significance for historical analysis is substantial. A historical classification based upon equivalence claims more than loose resemblance. It asserts that the selected criterion supports a consistent grouping across the domain being analyzed.

Similarity is weaker and often less structured. Goodman provides an important philosophical warning concerning appeals to similarity. His analysis shows that similarity does not by itself determine which objects count as repetitions, instances of the same type, or performances of the same work; relevant respects of comparison depend upon prior classificatory and theoretical commitments [13]. Historical claims of resemblance therefore require an explicit account of the features in which the configurations are being compared.

Similarity also need not be transitive. A configuration R_a can resemble R_b , and R_b can resemble R_c , while the relation between R_a and R_c remains weak. Such a structure is unsuitable for quotient construction unless additional criteria transform the similarity relation into an equivalence relation.

This distinction matters for historical language. Describing two regimes as “similar” can indicate family resemblance, shared symbolism, analogous institutional functions, or comparable patterns of power. Describing them as equivalent under criterion C makes a stronger analytical commitment: differences excluded by C are treated as irrelevant to the purpose of that classification.

Historical analysis benefits from keeping these levels separate. Identity concerns one configuration. Equivalence concerns distinct configurations whose selected structures coincide. Similarity concerns graded or context-dependent resemblance whose formal properties may remain weaker.

10.2 Historical Categories as Selective Abstraction

Historical categories compress relational complexity. Terms such as *empire*, *monarchy*, *capitalism*, *socialism*, *bureaucracy*, *colonial order*, or *constitutional democracy* allow large numbers of heterogeneous cases to become objects of comparison. Their analytical usefulness depends upon selective abstraction.

Every category preserves some differences and suppresses others. A category of monarchy can preserve the presence of a monarch and selected constitutional relations while abstracting from differences in

production, religion, communication technology, international structure, and administrative capacity. A category of capitalism can preserve certain property and production relations while allowing substantial variation in welfare institutions, corporate organization, political regime, financial structure, and labor law.

The resulting abstraction can be analytically legitimate because research questions differ in the structures they require. A study of succession rules can ignore relations that remain central to a study of class structure. A study of political symbolism can group configurations differently from a study of administrative capacity. Historical classification therefore depends upon the purpose and scale of inquiry.

Bowker and Star’s analysis of classification systems is particularly relevant to this process. Their study treats categories and standards as components of information infrastructure and emphasizes that classifications shape both worldviews and social interaction [7]. Their cases also show that classificatory decisions can distribute visibility, advantage, and burden across populations [7]. Classification is therefore analytically selective and socially consequential.

A Generative Relational account describes categorization as controlled loss of relational information. The category retains those relations judged relevant to the analytical task and permits other distinctions to disappear from the resulting representation. The loss can be useful because complete relational description would make general comparison difficult. The same loss can become problematic when relations discarded by the category are normatively, causally, or historically significant.

The analytical quality of a historical category therefore depends partly upon its declared purpose. A category designed for one task should not be assumed to preserve the structures required for another. Institutional comparison, normative evaluation, causal explanation, and historical genealogy can require different projections of the same relational configuration.

This point also applies to broad historical periods. Labels such as *feudal*, *industrial*, *modern*, or *post-colonial* compress heterogeneous processes into manageable temporal categories. Such periodization can illuminate major transformations while also obscuring asynchronous developments and regional variation. Historical categories should therefore be treated as analytical constructions whose retained structures require justification.

10.3 Quotient Representation of Historical Categories

The mathematical language of quotient provides a precise representation of selective historical categorization. Once an equivalence relation $\sim_C$ has been defined on $\mathcal{R}$, every configuration belongs to an equivalence class containing the configurations treated as identical with respect to criterion C .

The equivalence class of R is defined in Equation 8.

$$[R]_C = \{R' \in \mathcal{R} \mid R' \sim_C R\} \quad (8)$$

Equation 8 preserves the distinction between the complete configuration R and the class to which it belongs under the chosen criterion. This distinction is central to the historical use of quotients.

The corresponding quotient space is defined in Equation 9.

$$\mathcal{Q}_C = \mathcal{R} / \sim_C = \{[R]_C \mid R \in \mathcal{R}\} \quad (9)$$

Equation 9 represents the historical domain at the level of equivalence classes selected by criterion C . Analysis conducted in $\mathcal{Q}_C$ concerns categories of configurations rather than complete historical states.

The quotient map is represented in Equation 10.

$$q_C : \mathcal{R} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Q}_C, \quad q_C(R) = [R]_C \quad (10)$$

Equation 10 makes the information-reducing operation explicit. Distinct configurations in $\mathcal{R}$ can map to the same point in $\mathcal{Q}_C$. The quotient therefore preserves the structures selected by C and removes distinctions treated as irrelevant to the current analysis.

The quotient language is valuable because it separates two claims that ordinary historical language often merges. The first claim states that two configurations belong to the same category under a specified criterion. The second claim states that the configurations are historically identical. The first can hold while the second fails.

The distinction becomes especially important when political forms are reinstantiated under changed historical conditions. Two constitutions can belong to the same formal institutional category while operating through different economic and technological relations. Two empires can share territorial and administrative properties while differing in communication infrastructure, legal status, symbolic order, and international environment. Quotient representation permits categorical continuity without requiring relational identity.

The formalism also provides a basis for comparing alternative historical taxonomies. Distinct criteria C_1 and C_2 generate distinct quotient spaces Q_{C_1} and Q_{C_2} . A configuration pair grouped together under one criterion can be separated under another. Historical disagreement can therefore arise from differences in classificatory criteria as well as from disagreement concerning the underlying evidence.

10.4 Structure Preservation and Analytical Purpose

A useful historical quotient should specify the structure preserved by the classification. The criterion C therefore requires a substantive interpretation rather than functioning as an arbitrary label.

For institutional analysis, the preserved structure may include formal authority relations, procedures of office selection, or legal competences. For political economy, the preserved structure may include ownership relations, labor organization, resource flows, and mechanisms of accumulation. For historical sociology, the relevant structure may include class relations, organizational forms, or patterns of state capacity. For intellectual history, the preserved structure may concern conceptual vocabularies and interpretive practices.

The adequacy of an equivalence relation depends upon its analytical purpose. A criterion that successfully identifies similarities relevant to constitutional form may discard precisely the relations needed to evaluate economic domination. A criterion suitable for classifying economic systems may suppress differences in political participation that are central to normative analysis.

Goodman's critique of unrestricted similarity is relevant here because the relevant respect of comparison requires specification [13]. Historical categories gain analytical content by identifying the respects in which configurations are to count as equivalent.

The notion of invariance provides one way to characterize preserved structure. A classification can treat transformations within an equivalence class as irrelevant when those transformations leave the structure of interest unchanged. Historical analysis can then ask which properties remain invariant under the transformations permitted by the classificatory criterion.

This language should be used cautiously because historical transformations are rarely generated by a mathematically well-defined symmetry group. Institutional change can be irreversible, path-dependent, and context-sensitive. The invariance concept is therefore methodological: it identifies the features that the analyst chooses to preserve across historical variation.

The preserved structure also determines the explanatory reach of the category. A category that preserves too little can group configurations whose causal dynamics differ substantially. A category that preserves too much can become so specific that comparative analysis loses generality. Historical classification therefore involves a balance between abstraction and relational fidelity.

The Generative Relational perspective places special importance on preserving relations that materially affect the generation and reproduction of the political form. Formal properties can remain important, while a purely formal classification can become insufficient where identical institutional names or rules participate in substantially different generative systems.

10.5 Multilevel Equivalence in Historical Analysis

Historical configurations can be equivalent at one descriptive level and distinct at another. This multilevel structure is especially important for the three-layer distinction among appearance, relational structure, and suspended ontological claims used in the broader Generative Relational framework.

At the level of political appearance, two configurations can share symbols, institutional names, constitutional forms, ceremonial practices, or observable patterns. Such resemblance can support a phenomenal classification. At the relational level, the same configurations can differ in the networks of production, authority, knowledge, technology, and social interaction through which the visible form is generated.

The distinction can be represented by separate criteria C_{phen} and C_{rel} . A pair can satisfy $R_a \sim_{C_{\text{phen}}} R_b$ while failing to satisfy $R_a \sim_{C_{\text{rel}}} R_b$. Historical sameness therefore depends upon the descriptive level at which the comparison is conducted.

This multilevel structure has direct relevance to claims of institutional restoration. A restored monarchy can reproduce titles, ceremonies, and formal constitutional relations associated with an earlier monarchy while operating within a different international system, technological infrastructure, economic structure, and public sphere. The restored form can therefore be phenomenally equivalent under one criterion and relationally distinct under another.

The same logic applies to ideological and symbolic recurrence. A political movement can reactivate religious, nationalist, revolutionary, or imperial symbols whose earlier historical functions differed substantially. Marx’s analysis of inherited political costumes and languages in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* provides a particularly important illustration of the reactivation of historical forms within changed political relations [21].

Multilevel equivalence also prevents a premature choice between continuity and discontinuity. Historical configurations can display continuity in some structures and transformation in others. A precise analysis identifies the level and criterion under which each claim is made.

The ontological level remains suspended in the present framework. The analysis does not require a claim concerning whether two historical configurations are ultimately the same kind of entity in a meta-physical sense. Historical inquiry can proceed through specified phenomenal and relational equivalence relations without resolving that stronger question.

10.6 Dynamic Classification and Historical Reflexivity

Historical categories can affect the social realities they classify. This interaction becomes especially important when categories enter law, administration, statistics, political mobilization, or public identity. Classification then participates in the relational process under study.

Hacking’s work on historical ontology emphasizes the historical emergence of concepts, objects, and styles of reasoning [15]. His analysis of “making up people” develops the idea that classifications of human beings can interact with the people classified, producing a dynamic relation between categories and their objects [15]. Categories in the human sciences can therefore participate in changing the field they describe.

This dynamic relation has clear political relevance. Administrative categories can influence access to resources. Legal categories can create recognized statuses and corresponding forms of action. Statistical categories can alter what becomes visible to government. Political labels can support organization, stigmatization, coalition formation, or resistance. A category can therefore move from representation into historical generation.

Bowker and Star similarly show that classification systems operate as infrastructures whose consequences extend into social interaction [7]. Their analysis emphasizes that categories can privilege some viewpoints, suppress others, and distribute practical consequences [7]. Historical classification therefore can participate in the production of the relations later available for historical analysis.

The reflexivity of classification has two implications for the quotient framework. First, the map q_C can affect the domain $\mathcal{R}$ when classification becomes institutionally effective. Second, the criterion C

can itself change as actors respond to the category and as new social relations emerge.

A historical taxonomy should therefore distinguish analytical categories used for retrospective inquiry from operative categories that entered the historical process itself. The same term can occupy both roles. “Class,” “race,” “citizen,” “worker,” “refugee,” or “criminal” can function as analytical concepts and as historically effective classifications embedded in institutions.

The Generative Relational framework consequently treats classification as a potentially generative relation. The classification can change trajectories, while changed trajectories can later motivate revision of the classification.

10.7 Normative Consequences of Historical Classification

Historical classification carries normative consequences because abstraction determines which differences remain visible. A criterion that suppresses a relation of domination, exclusion, dispossession, or differential vulnerability can make normatively significant distinctions disappear from the analytical representation.

This effect can occur without intentional manipulation. Every classification reduces complexity. The normative issue concerns whether the information lost through the reduction is material to the judgment being made.

A category of political regime centered exclusively on formal constitutional properties can obscure differences in practical access to political participation. A category of economic development centered exclusively on aggregate output can suppress distributional differences. A category of citizenship can conceal heterogeneous legal and social capacities among people who possess formally identical status.

Bowker and Star’s analysis is especially valuable because it connects classification directly with moral and political consequences [7]. Standards and categories organize visibility and can generate advantage or suffering through the infrastructures in which they are embedded.

The quotient interpretation makes the underlying operation explicit. When several configurations are mapped to the same equivalence class, distinctions outside criterion C become unavailable at the quotient level. A normative evaluation performed entirely in Q_C can therefore remain blind to relations that were removed by the quotient.

Historical judgment should consequently distinguish between analytical irrelevance and normative irrelevance. A difference can be safely ignored for one explanatory purpose while remaining important for another evaluative purpose.

This distinction supports a principle of quotient transparency. Historical analysis should state, as far as practicable, which structures are preserved, which distinctions are abstracted away, and which judgments are intended to be made on the resulting category space. Transparency concerning the quotient allows readers to evaluate whether discarded information is relevant to the argument.

Normative transparency is especially important when a historical taxonomy is used to support claims of progress, regression, recurrence, or institutional superiority. These judgments operate upon categories whose construction can already embody assumptions concerning relevant differences.

10.8 Equivalence Criteria and Historical Evidence

Equivalence relations require evidentiary support. The criterion C specifies the structure to be preserved, while historical evidence determines whether particular configurations satisfy the criterion.

The relevant evidence can include legal documents, institutional records, economic data, administrative archives, material infrastructure, testimony, political discourse, and reconstructed patterns of social interaction. The quality of the classification therefore depends upon both conceptual clarity and empirical adequacy.

Historical evidence is frequently incomplete. Some relations leave extensive archives, while others remain weakly documented. Formal institutions can be easier to reconstruct than informal practices. Elite political discourse can survive more reliably than everyday experience. Classification under such conditions can reflect asymmetries in the historical record.

Ricoeur's analysis of archives, traces, memory, and historical representation provides an important background to this evidentiary problem [29]. Historical objects become available through preserved traces whose survival and organization shape later representation.

An equivalence criterion can therefore be theoretically appropriate while remaining empirically difficult to apply. A historian may wish to compare two configurations according to informal power relations while possessing reliable evidence for only one of them. The resulting uncertainty belongs to the classification and should remain visible.

Evidence can also change the appropriate criterion. Newly available archives can reveal relations previously absent from the historical representation. Conceptual development can make neglected forms of evidence newly relevant. Historical categorization therefore remains revisable as both evidence and interpretive resources develop.

This revisability links classification directly to the later principle of historical re-recognizability. Preserving traces makes it possible for future subjects to reconstruct different criteria of equivalence and generate new historical classifications.

10.9 Plural Quotients and Comparative Historical Analysis

A complex historical configuration can support multiple legitimate quotient spaces. This plurality follows from the diversity of research questions rather than from unrestricted classificatory arbitrariness.

One inquiry can classify states according to constitutional organization, another according to fiscal capacity, another according to relations of production, and another according to colonial structure. Each criterion preserves different relations and therefore produces a different partition of the historical domain.

Let $C_1, \dots, C_n$ denote analytically distinct criteria. The corresponding family of quotient spaces is represented in Equation 11.

$$\Omega = \{\mathcal{R}/\sim_{C_1}, \dots, \mathcal{R}/\sim_{C_n}\} \quad (11)$$

Equation 11 represents multiple classification spaces constructed from the same underlying relational domain. The existence of several quotients permits comparison across analytical perspectives while retaining a common reference to the richer historical configuration $\mathcal{R}$.

Plural quotients can reveal where historical conclusions depend strongly upon classification choice. Two periods can appear continuous under one quotient and discontinuous under another. A political reform can appear transformative under a legal quotient and comparatively limited under a political-economic quotient.

Such disagreement can be analytically productive. It identifies the structures responsible for different interpretations and allows scholars to ask which criterion is appropriate to the substantive claim under consideration.

Plural quotient analysis also encourages cross-level comparison. A phenomenal quotient can be compared with a relational quotient to identify cases in which visible institutional continuity coexists with deep relational transformation. Conversely, relational continuity can coexist with substantial symbolic or formal change.

The approach therefore treats classification plurality as structured perspectival analysis. Criteria remain open to criticism concerning relevance, consistency, empirical support, and normative consequence.

10.10 Generative Relational Account of Historical Categorization

The preceding analysis supports a Generative Relational account of historical categorization organized around explicit equivalence, selective abstraction, and revisable classification.

Historical configurations are treated as relationally rich objects in $\mathcal{R}$. Analytical inquiry selects a criterion C that identifies the structures relevant to a specified problem. The criterion induces an

equivalence relation where its formal requirements are satisfied and produces a quotient representation through q_C .

The resulting category is analytically useful because it reduces complexity. Its validity depends upon the adequacy of the preserved structure for the research purpose. Its limitations arise from the relations discarded through the quotient.

Five principles follow from this account.

The first is criterion explicitness. Claims of historical sameness or equivalence should specify the respect in which configurations are treated as equivalent.

The second is level sensitivity. Phenomenal, institutional, economic, relational, and other levels of description can support different equivalence relations.

The third is information-loss awareness. Classification necessarily suppresses some distinctions, and the significance of those losses depends upon the explanatory and normative task.

The fourth is reflexivity. Categories can enter the historical process and alter the objects they classify, especially when classifications are embedded in legal, administrative, statistical, or political institutions.

The fifth is revisability. New evidence, new concepts, and new historical relations can justify modification of the equivalence criterion and reclassification of earlier configurations.

These principles permit strong historical comparison while preserving relational complexity. A category can remain useful without being treated as a self-evident natural kind. An equivalence relation can support rigorous comparison without implying complete historical identity. Multiple quotient spaces can coexist when they preserve structures relevant to different questions.

This framework prepares the analysis of historical recurrence in the following section. Once historical states are represented through quotient spaces, a trajectory can revisit the same equivalence class even while the underlying relational configurations remain distinct. The concept of recurrence can therefore be formulated with greater precision by specifying the quotient in which the apparent return occurs.

11 Historical Recurrence and Quotient Representation

This section develops the concept of historical recurrence using the classification and quotient framework established in Section 10. Its role is to distinguish several forms of historical return that can appear similar in ordinary historical language while preserving different structures. The analysis proceeds through exact recurrence, quotient-relative recurrence, approximate recurrence, symbolic reactivation, institutional restoration, relational persistence, and narrative reconstruction. It then examines the consequences of these distinctions for historical analogy and political judgment. The section concludes by formulating recurrence as a level-sensitive relation whose meaning depends upon the structure retained by the historical comparison.

11.1 Exact Recurrence in Historical State Space

The strongest possible meaning of historical recurrence concerns return to the same relational configuration. Let a historical trajectory be represented by $\gamma(t) \in \mathcal{R}$, where $\mathcal{R}$ denotes a sufficiently rich space of historical-relational configurations. Exact recurrence between two times t_1 and t_2 is defined in Equation 12.

$$\gamma(t_1) = \gamma(t_2) \tag{12}$$

Equation 12 expresses an exceptionally strong condition. A sufficiently rich historical state includes institutions, productive relations, technologies, infrastructures, political organizations, knowledge, collective memories, demographic structures, symbolic systems, international relations, ecological conditions, and historically accumulated capacities. Return to the same state would therefore require considerably more than restoration of a constitutional form, political title, ideology, or symbolic vocabulary.

The difficulty of exact recurrence arises from historical generation itself. Praxis leaves traces. Institutions accumulate routines. Infrastructure changes material possibilities. Political conflicts generate

memories and identities. Knowledge produced during an intervening period remains available to later actors. Even where a formal arrangement is restored, the restored arrangement enters a historical configuration containing the intervening trajectory.

Path dependence reinforces this asymmetry. Increasing-return processes can produce organizations, expectations, investments, and institutional complementarities that persist after the initiating condition has changed [25]. Removal of a formal rule therefore need not remove the relations generated during its operation.

Historical return should consequently be analyzed at several descriptive levels. Exact recurrence provides a limiting case against which weaker forms of return can be distinguished. Most claims that a political order, ideology, or historical period has “returned” concern recurrence under a reduced description rather than recurrence of the complete relational state.

11.2 Recurrence under Historical Equivalence

The quotient framework provides a more flexible representation of recurrence. Let $q_C : \mathcal{R} \rightarrow \mathcal{Q}_C$ denote the quotient map induced by historical equivalence criterion C . Recurrence under criterion C occurs when distinct positions on the historical trajectory map to the same equivalence class. The relation is shown in Equation 13.

$$q_C(\gamma(t_1)) = q_C(\gamma(t_2)) \quad \text{with} \quad \gamma(t_1) \neq \gamma(t_2) \quad (13)$$

Equation 13 captures a common structure of historical recurrence. Two relationally distinct configurations can count as instances of the same political form because the criterion C preserves selected structures and abstracts from others.

A historical observer may, for example, classify two configurations as monarchies because both preserve hereditary sovereign office under the selected criterion. Another inquiry can distinguish the same configurations because their relations of production, administrative capacity, constitutional constraints, public sphere, technological infrastructure, and international environment differ substantially.

The statement that monarchy has returned can therefore be correct in $\mathcal{Q}_{C_1}$ and uninformative in $\mathcal{Q}_{C_2}$. The two descriptions answer different historical questions because they preserve different structures.

The same reasoning applies to categories such as empire, nationalism, socialism, capitalism, religious politics, bureaucracy, constitutionalism, or authoritarian rule. Recurrence at one classificatory level can coexist with novelty at another.

Historical recurrence therefore acquires a relational index. A rigorous claim of return specifies the criterion under which the later configuration belongs to the same class as the earlier one. This specification transforms a general statement about historical repetition into an analyzable proposition concerning preserved structure.

11.3 Approximate Recurrence and Historical Resemblance

Many historically meaningful comparisons involve resemblance that falls short of equivalence. The relation can remain analytically useful where the compared configurations preserve similar patterns without satisfying a strict equivalence criterion.

Let d_C denote a comparison-sensitive dissimilarity measure on a representation space selected by criterion C . Approximate recurrence within tolerance ε is represented in Equation 14.

$$d_C(\Pi_C(\gamma(t_1)), \Pi_C(\gamma(t_2))) \leq \varepsilon \quad (14)$$

Equation 14 represents graded resemblance rather than equivalence. The measure d_C , the retained representation Π_C , and the tolerance ε all require substantive justification.

This formulation is especially useful for political structures whose properties vary continuously. Two periods can display comparable degrees of executive concentration, elite polarization, social fragmentation, or institutional instability while remaining distinct in formal regime type.

Goodman's critique of unrestricted similarity remains important here. Similarity becomes analytically meaningful through specified respects of comparison [13]. Historical resemblance therefore requires an account of the variables, relations, or structures that make the comparison relevant.

Approximate recurrence also permits historical analogy without forcing distinct configurations into a common category. An earlier crisis can provide useful comparative information for a later one because some causal or institutional patterns resemble one another sufficiently for a limited purpose. The analogy retains value within its specified domain.

The tolerance structure also makes disagreement more transparent. Historians can agree on the relevant features while disagreeing on whether the degree of similarity supports a claim of recurrence. Other disagreements can concern the features selected by *C*. The framework separates these sources of dispute.

11.4 Phenomenal and Symbolic Recurrence

Historical recurrence often appears first at the level of political phenomenology and symbolism. Names, rituals, constitutional forms, architectural styles, slogans, religious references, ceremonial practices, or political languages can reappear after long periods of absence. Such recurrence can be socially powerful even where the underlying relational configuration has changed substantially.

Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* provides an especially important analysis of this structure. Marx describes revolutionary actors as drawing upon inherited names, costumes, slogans, and languages when attempting to create new historical arrangements [21]. The invocation of an earlier form therefore participates in a new historical process rather than simply restoring the relations associated with the earlier appearance.

The distinction between phenomenal and relational recurrence can be expressed through the multilevel criteria introduced in Section 10.5. A later configuration can fall within the same phenomenal equivalence class as an earlier configuration while occupying a different relational equivalence class.

This structure explains why political restoration can produce genuine continuity and genuine novelty simultaneously. A restored symbol can reconnect a community with inherited memory, authority, or identity. Its practical meaning can nevertheless change because the actors, institutions, technologies, and conflicts surrounding the symbol have changed.

Symbolic recurrence can also become generative. Political actors can employ an older vocabulary to coordinate present action, construct collective identity, or legitimate institutional transformation. The earlier historical form then functions as a resource within a new relational configuration.

The concept of recurrence therefore includes more than passive resemblance. Actors can intentionally produce recurrence at the level of appearance because historical symbols possess accumulated interpretive force. This intentional reactivation can influence the trajectory through which a new political order develops.

Phenomenal recurrence consequently deserves analysis on its own terms. Differences in relational structure do not render symbolic return politically irrelevant. The analytical requirement is to preserve the distinction between the return of a form of appearance and the return of the relations through which that appearance previously acquired its historical function.

11.5 Institutional Restoration and Relational Reconfiguration

Institutional restoration occupies an intermediate position between symbolic recurrence and complete relational recurrence. A legal or political institution can be formally re-established after an intervening period, producing substantial continuity in rules and offices while entering a transformed historical environment.

Restoration can concern constitutions, monarchies, parliamentary bodies, religious institutions, property rules, administrative organizations, local governments, or other durable political forms. The restored institution can inherit documentary continuity, procedural memory, organizational traditions, and symbolic authority from its predecessor.

The relational field surrounding the restored institution may nevertheless have changed. New technologies can alter the practical meaning of administrative authority. New economic relations can change the groups represented by an institution. International law can modify the external constraints under which a restored constitutional form operates. New political identities can alter the social constituencies that support or resist the institution.

The historical object produced through restoration is therefore relationally composite. It contains structures inherited from the earlier form and structures generated during the intervening period.

This composite character can be represented through several quotient spaces. Under a formal institutional criterion, the restored configuration can occupy the same class as its predecessor. Under a political-economic criterion, it can belong to a different class. Under a symbolic criterion, the degree of continuity may be especially strong.

A Generative Relational account consequently treats restoration as reinstantiation under changed conditions. The restored institution participates in a new network of relations whose development can alter the meaning of the inherited form.

This perspective also improves normative evaluation. Political debate over restoration frequently relies upon claims concerning an earlier institution's historical success or failure. Such arguments gain precision when the relations responsible for the earlier performance are identified and compared with the relations present in the later configuration.

Institutional restoration thereby becomes a test case for quotient-sensitive historical reasoning. Formal continuity supports some claims of return, while relational transformation qualifies the scope of those claims.

11.6 Relational Persistence beneath Formal Change

Historical recurrence can also occur in the opposite direction. Formal and symbolic structures can change substantially while important relational structures persist.

A political transition can introduce a new constitution while preserving established distributions of economic power. A revolution can replace titles and institutions while retaining administrative routines. Decolonization can produce formal sovereignty while inherited economic and legal relations remain influential. Institutional reform can alter organizational charts while informal authority networks continue to shape practical decisions.

In such cases, phenomenal discontinuity can coexist with relational continuity. A classification centered on visible political form can describe a major historical break, while a relational classification can identify persistent structures connecting the earlier and later configurations.

This possibility demonstrates the importance of multilevel analysis. Historical change can be substantial in one quotient space and limited in another. Statements concerning revolution, restoration, continuity, and recurrence should therefore specify the level of comparison.

Path dependence provides one mechanism of relational persistence. Organizations, investments, professional knowledge, and coordinated expectations can survive formal institutional transformation [25]. Earlier relational structures can thereby continue to influence later trajectories even after their original formal expression has changed.

Relational persistence also affects judgments of historical advancement. A formal transition can appear highly progressive when evaluated through legal or symbolic change and comparatively limited when evaluated through relations of power, material capacity, or access to political agency.

The converse can also occur. Incremental formal reform can generate substantial relational transformation over time. Historical evaluation therefore benefits from tracking the relations through which change is reproduced rather than using formal magnitude as a proxy for historical significance.

This dual structure creates a symmetry in the analysis of recurrence. Phenomenal recurrence can conceal relational novelty, while phenomenal novelty can conceal relational persistence. Quotient-sensitive comparison makes both possibilities visible.

11.7 Trajectory Memory and the Historical Difference of Return

A recurrent configuration carries the history through which it was reached. Even when two states share selected structural properties, the trajectories leading to them can differ in ways relevant to political meaning and normative evaluation.

Historical trajectory affects collective memory, institutional capacity, distribution of responsibility, expectations, and identity. A political form restored after conflict possesses a different historical significance from the same form maintained continuously. A constitutional arrangement produced through negotiated transition can differ normatively from an arrangement with similar formal properties produced through severe coercion.

The relational state at a given moment therefore may require supplementation by trajectory information. Two configurations can appear equivalent under a state-based criterion while remaining distinguishable through the paths by which they were generated.

This path-sensitive structure follows from the analysis of praxis developed in Section 4. Practice generates memory, institutions, knowledge, and subject positions. These generated relations persist into later configurations and influence how recurrence is experienced.

Koselleck's analysis of historical time is relevant to this temporal accumulation. Experience carried into the present shapes the horizon from which future possibilities are interpreted [19]. A restored institution therefore enters a society whose accumulated historical experience includes both the earlier institution and the intervening period.

The concept of trajectory memory also clarifies why historical recurrence is rarely equivalent to temporal reversal. Return to a previous formal arrangement occurs from a position transformed by the intervening history. The later configuration contains knowledge of the earlier form that the earlier configuration could not contain about itself.

This temporal asymmetry can affect political practice directly. Actors seeking restoration can reinterpret an earlier institution in response to its known historical failures. Opponents can mobilize memories of those failures. Inherited symbols can acquire new meanings because the historical community has already experienced their previous manifestation.

Recurrence therefore generates a reflexive difference: a form appearing for a second time enters a world containing the memory of its first appearance. Historical return can consequently modify the very form being returned to.

11.8 Narrative Configuration and Perceived Recurrence

Historical recurrence is also shaped by narrative representation. Historians, political actors, and communities organize temporally dispersed events into narrative structures that create relations of continuity, repetition, difference, culmination, and return.

Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* analyzes the relation between temporal experience and narrative configuration and treats narrative as a central mode through which historical time becomes intelligible [28]. Narrative organization therefore contributes to the manner in which dispersed historical events are recognized as forming a recurrent pattern.

Narrative recurrence can arise through selection of beginning and endpoint, identification of analogous actors, assignment of causal significance, and construction of thematic continuity. The historical record supplies material constraints on these narratives, while different configurations of the same record can emphasize different forms of recurrence.

This narrative dimension complements the quotient framework. A historical narrative implicitly selects structures to preserve across time. Events can be configured as repetitions because the narrative treats selected relations as central and others as contextual variation.

The interaction between narrative and classification can become politically significant. A society that narrates a present crisis as repetition of an earlier catastrophe can mobilize urgency, identity, and policy analogies. A narrative of restored greatness can organize political action around perceived continuity

with an earlier period. A narrative of recurring oppression can connect distinct historical experiences through a shared interpretive structure.

Historical narrative therefore participates in the production of recurrence as a socially effective relation. The recurrence can remain evidentially grounded while depending upon the structures through which historical material is configured.

Narrative analysis also provides a safeguard against treating the quotient as a purely technical construction. The criterion *C* is historically and interpretively embedded. Historians and political communities identify relevant structures through conceptual and narrative practices that themselves possess a history.

11.9 Historical Analogy in Political Judgment

Political actors frequently use historical recurrence as a basis for present decision-making. A contemporary event is interpreted through analogy with an earlier war, economic crisis, constitutional breakdown, revolution, technological transformation, or institutional reform. Historical analogy can provide valuable compressed experience where the relevant structural correspondence is adequately specified.

The quotient framework clarifies the epistemic conditions of such reasoning. An analogy transfers insight from an earlier configuration to a later one because selected structures are judged sufficiently similar for the intended purpose. The validity of the transfer depends upon whether the relations responsible for the earlier outcome belong to the preserved structure.

A superficial analogy can preserve visible form while discarding the relations that generated the earlier outcome. Similar political rhetoric can arise within different institutional structures. Similar economic indicators can have different meanings under different monetary systems. Similar constitutional conflicts can unfold differently where administrative capacity, public communication, or international constraints have changed.

A useful historical analogy therefore requires a correspondence between the mechanism inferred from the earlier case and the structure preserved in the later comparison. Phenomenal resemblance can initiate inquiry, while relational analysis determines the scope of transferable inference.

Historical analogy also benefits from attention to differences. A comparison becomes more informative when it identifies both preserved structures and relations whose transformation limits transfer. The purpose is to determine the domain within which earlier experience remains relevant.

This approach aligns historical analogy with the paper's broader account of prospective judgment. Political actors must project under incomplete knowledge, and historical comparison is one important resource for doing so. Quotient transparency improves such projection by making explicit the structures upon which the analogy depends.

The same framework guards against deterministic uses of historical recurrence. A later configuration can belong to the same historical category as an earlier one while generating a different trajectory because relations excluded from the category alter the outcome. Recurrence in classification therefore provides evidence for comparison rather than a guarantee of repeated consequence.

11.10 Normative Evaluation of Historical Return

Historical recurrence also raises normative questions. Political movements can seek restoration, revival, recovery, or return because an earlier form is remembered as legitimate, prosperous, just, sacred, stable, or culturally meaningful. The normative evaluation of such projects requires attention to the criterion under which the earlier form is being recovered.

A restored appearance can preserve valuable cultural continuity. A restored institution can recover capacities lost during an intervening period. A return to earlier legal principles can correct harms generated by a later arrangement. Historical return can therefore possess genuine normative value.

The same operation can reactivate relations whose earlier consequences were harmful. A political project can preserve the symbols of an attractive earlier order while overlooking the social relations that

made those symbols possible. Another project can reproduce a relational hierarchy while presenting it through new institutional language.

Normative evaluation should therefore distinguish the object intended for recovery from the wider historical configuration in which that object previously existed. The value of an earlier institutional feature need not extend to every relation historically associated with it.

The quotient framework makes this selectivity explicit. Political restoration already implies a criterion determining what from the past is to be preserved. The normative problem concerns whether that criterion preserves the valuable structures while excluding relations whose restoration would undermine the goods motivating the project.

The evaluative direction can also run from present to past. Current normative concepts can reveal harms in an earlier arrangement while preserving recognition of capacities the arrangement generated relative to its predecessor. Such historical judgment requires multiple comparison relations rather than a single classification of the earlier form as wholly progressive or wholly regressive.

Historical return therefore becomes an object of prospective judgment. Actors select which structures from an earlier configuration should enter a future one. Their project is generative because reactivation occurs within changed relations and can produce a configuration absent from both the earlier and current orders.

11.11 Recurrence across Plural Historical Quotients

The plurality of quotient spaces introduced in Section 10.9 allows recurrence to be represented across several analytical domains at once. A historical trajectory can recur in one domain, persist continuously in another, and undergo substantial transformation in a third.

Consider criteria for political form, economic relations, symbolic order, and administrative capacity. A later configuration can return to the earlier political-form class, remain outside the earlier economic class, reactivate elements of the earlier symbolic class, and preserve administrative structures continuously across the entire transition.

The resulting historical description is more informative than a binary judgment between repetition and novelty. The configuration can be represented as a profile of continuity and recurrence across multiple quotient spaces.

Let $C_1, \dots, C_n$ denote the relevant criteria. The recurrence profile between times t_1 and t_2 is represented in Equation 15.

$$\mathcal{P}(t_1, t_2) = \left(\mathbf{1}_{q_{C_1}(\gamma(t_1))=q_{C_1}(\gamma(t_2))}, \dots, \mathbf{1}_{q_{C_n}(\gamma(t_1))=q_{C_n}(\gamma(t_2))} \right) \quad (15)$$

Equation 15 provides a simple formal device for indicating the domains in which recurrence is present under strict equivalence. The representation can be extended with graded similarity measures where approximate recurrence is more appropriate.

The recurrence profile also helps explain disagreement among historical interpretations. One scholar can emphasize institutional recurrence, another economic transformation, and another symbolic continuity. Their accounts can be simultaneously well grounded because they operate in different quotient spaces.

The analytical task then becomes integration rather than selection of one description as the complete historical truth. A relational account can identify how continuity in one domain interacts with transformation in another.

This multidomain approach is especially useful for long historical trajectories in which institutions, technologies, cultural forms, and economic relations change at different temporal rates. Historical recurrence can then be analyzed as a patterned relation among asynchronous subsystems.

11.12 Generative Relational Account of Historical Recurrence

The preceding analysis supports a Generative Relational account in which historical recurrence is indexed to a criterion of comparison, a descriptive level, and a historical trajectory. The framework preserves the practical value of identifying recurrent forms while avoiding the compression of recurrence into complete historical return.

Several principles organize this account.

The first is state-space distinction. Exact recurrence concerns return to the same relational configuration, while most historical claims of repetition operate through reduced representations.

The second is quotient specification. A claim of recurrence should identify the equivalence relation or retained structure under which earlier and later configurations count as the same historical type.

The third is similarity discipline. Approximate recurrence requires explicit criteria concerning the dimensions and degree of resemblance relevant to the comparison.

The fourth is level sensitivity. Phenomenal, symbolic, institutional, political-economic, and broader relational recurrence can diverge.

The fifth is trajectory sensitivity. Configurations sharing selected state properties can differ through the historical paths that generated them. Intervening history can alter memory, capacity, responsibility, and the meaning of restored forms.

The sixth is reflexivity. Historical actors can intentionally invoke earlier forms, and the interpretation of recurrence can itself influence the later trajectory.

The seventh is narrative awareness. Historical recurrence becomes intelligible through classificatory and narrative practices that organize temporal experience and select structures of continuity.

The eighth is normative transparency. Projects of restoration or revival require specification of the historical structures intended for preservation and the values attributed to those structures.

The ninth is analogical restraint. Historical recurrence can support prospective learning where the relations responsible for earlier outcomes are preserved sufficiently for the intended inference.

The tenth is revisability. New evidence and new criteria of comparison can alter the quotient through which recurrence is recognized.

These principles support a precise interpretation of a familiar intuition: history can exhibit recurrence without returning to an earlier complete state. A historical trajectory can revisit an equivalence class, reactivate a symbolic form, restore an institution, or reproduce a relational pattern while carrying forward the effects of the intervening history.

The resulting conception replaces a binary opposition between linear and cyclical history with a richer structure. Historical trajectories can display direction, recurrence, persistence, branching, restoration, and novelty at different levels simultaneously. Whether a return has occurred depends upon the structure under comparison.

This framework also clarifies the paper's relation to historical materialism. Marx's analysis in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* already illustrates how historical actors can reactivate inherited political forms while producing a historically distinct social content [21]. The present quotient formulation provides a formal vocabulary for distinguishing the level at which repetition occurs from the relational configuration through which the new historical episode is generated.

The analysis of recurrence prepares the next stage of the paper. Historical classification and recurrence depend upon interpretive criteria, while the broader framework developed in earlier sections remains indebted to praxis-oriented and historical-materialist traditions. The following section therefore situates the Generative Relational proposal more explicitly within that intellectual relationship and identifies the limited refinements intended by the present account.

12 Marxist Praxis and a Generative Relational Extension

This section situates the preceding argument within Marxist and praxis-oriented traditions and clarifies the limited scope of the proposed Generative Relational extension. Its purpose is comparative and con-

structive. The section first identifies the historical-materialist commitments already shared by the present framework, then examines praxis as a relation among knowledge, activity, and social transformation. It subsequently develops the role of historically conditioned agency, broadens the analysis of generative conditions, distinguishes the verificatory and world-generating functions of practice, and locates the pre-manifestation/post-manifestation distinction within this praxis-oriented lineage. The final parts specify the contribution claimed by the Generative Relational framework and the questions that remain internal to Marxist debates rather than resolved by the present paper.

12.1 Historical-Materialist Ground

The present argument begins from a historical-materialist intuition: political and social forms acquire their practical meaning within concrete historical relations. Institutions, normative concepts, legal structures, political capacities, and forms of consciousness develop within material and social conditions whose history matters for both explanation and evaluation.

Marx's 1859 Preface provides one of the canonical formulations of this orientation. Relations of production are connected to historically developed productive forces, and legal, political, and ideological forms arise within a social structure whose transformations are connected to changes in material life [22]. The same text emphasizes that new relations become historically viable through conditions that develop within preceding social formations [22]. This historical conditioning already provides a strong basis for rejecting evaluations of political forms as self-contained abstractions.

The Generative Relational account developed in this paper remains continuous with that premise. A political form has no practically meaningful existence apart from relations through which it can be generated, reproduced, contested, and transformed. The evaluation of a projected order therefore concerns both its articulated principles and the historical configuration through which those principles can acquire social effect.

This continuity is especially important for the paper's treatment of advancement. A historically situated account does not require every political form to be normatively equivalent. Historical conditions can support substantive judgments that one configuration expands productive capacity, reduces domination, enlarges political participation, or enables social relations unavailable under a preceding order. Historical situatedness specifies the conditions of the comparison rather than eliminating comparison.

The present paper therefore adopts historical materialism as an important background rather than an object positioned outside the argument. Its contribution lies in further differentiating several temporal and relational moments that can remain compressed within broad descriptions of historical practice: projection, prospective judgment, commitment, praxis, relational generation, manifestation, and renewed judgment.

Such differentiation is compatible with the diversity already present within Marxist philosophy of history. Interpretations differ substantially concerning productive-force development, class struggle, political agency, functional explanation, historical direction, and the modal strength of developmental claims [8]. The Generative Relational framework does not adjudicate these wider disputes. It addresses a narrower problem concerning the epistemic and normative positions occupied by historical actors before and after practice contributes to the generation of a new configuration.

12.2 Praxis and the Unity of Knowledge and Transformation

Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* supplies the clearest starting point for the present conception of praxis. Human activity is treated as practical and world-directed, and the relation between thinking and reality is situated within practice [23]. The same text connects the transformation of circumstances with human self-transformation, giving praxis a recursive historical structure [23].

This orientation places knowledge inside historical activity. Political actors form concepts and judgments from within a world that has already shaped their capacities, while their practical activity contributes to the transformation of that world. Knowledge and action therefore participate in one historical process.

Later Marxist traditions developed this unity in different directions. Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis" emphasizes the historical and practical character of Marxist thought and resists a mechanical conception of historical materialism as an external science that merely observes fixed laws of social evolution [14]. His treatment of philosophy, politics, culture, and common sense places theoretical activity within struggles through which a different intellectual and moral order can be formed [14]. The historical subject of knowledge thereby participates in the transformation of the field it seeks to understand.

Mao's *On Practice* develops another explicit formulation of the knowledge–practice relation. Knowledge develops through social practice, returns to practice, and is further developed through the consequences of that practice [20]. The resulting sequence gives practical activity both epistemic and transformative significance: practice supplies grounds for knowledge while knowledge re-enters activity and contributes to further historical change.

These formulations differ in political context, theoretical vocabulary, and philosophical emphasis. They nevertheless support an important common orientation for the present paper. Historical knowledge is generated within activity, and practical intervention changes the conditions under which later knowledge becomes possible.

The Generative Relational framework develops this orientation by assigning greater analytical visibility to the relations generated between successive moments of judgment. Practice can reveal whether an expectation adequately described an existing relation. It can also create institutions, subjects, dependencies, capacities, conflicts, and interpretive resources whose later evaluation was unavailable before the practice occurred.

Praxis therefore connects knowledge and transformation through a historically recursive process. The later standpoint includes evidence produced through action and a world partly transformed by that action. This recursive structure provides the conceptual basis for distinguishing judgment before manifestation from judgment after manifestation.

12.3 Historical Conditioning and Practical Agency

Historical materialism combines inherited conditions with human activity. Marx's formulation in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* places political agency within circumstances transmitted from the past while preserving the role of historical actors in producing new configurations [21]. The resulting conception avoids both an unconditioned political subject and a passive historical subject.

Engels later emphasized the same reciprocal structure in his correspondence. In his 1894 letter to W. Borgius, economic relations retain a determining role in historical development, while political, legal, philosophical, religious, and other forms also interact within the historical process [11]. His formulation explicitly presents history as the activity of people acting within prevailing conditions rather than as an automatic effect detached from human action [11].

The Generative Relational framework adopts this conditioned conception of agency. Political actors inherit a field containing material resources, institutional structures, technologies, forms of organization, collective memories, symbolic vocabularies, and distributions of power. These relations shape what can be imagined, coordinated, and implemented.

Agency operates through the capacity to interpret this field, formulate possible alternatives, organize collective commitments, alter relations, and respond to consequences generated through action. Historical freedom therefore appears practically as participation in the generation and revision of trajectories within structured conditions.

This account supports the paper's treatment of prospective judgment. An actor can regard an unrealized political form as preferable without possessing complete knowledge of its future manifestation. Such judgment expresses the capacity to project beyond the currently actual configuration using resources already generated through history.

The same historical conditioning limits the scope of the projection. Alternatives that appear conceptually available can depend upon capacities whose practical existence remains weak. Other alternatives can remain difficult to formulate because the necessary conceptual or organizational resources have yet to develop. Political agency therefore operates within an historically structured possibility field.

The distinction between constraint and agency remains relational. Some constraints can be transformed through organization and collective action. Some capacities emerge only through participation in new institutions. Political actors can therefore modify the possibility field while acting within it.

This reciprocal process is central to the Generative Relational conception of history. Conditions shape praxis, praxis transforms conditions, and transformed conditions alter both future possibilities and the subjects capable of recognizing them.

12.4 Plural Generative Conditions in Historical Analysis

The present framework extends the analysis of historical conditions by treating the generative environment of a political form as relationally plural. This extension should be interpreted as an enlargement of analytical resolution rather than as a displacement of material production from historical analysis.

Productive forces and relations of production can occupy a highly consequential position within a historical configuration. They shape resource availability, class relations, institutional capacity, and the practical feasibility of political arrangements. A Generative Relational analysis retains these relations wherever they carry causal and explanatory importance.

The framework additionally permits attention to relations whose significance can vary across historical problems. Administrative capacity, communication infrastructure, scientific knowledge, ecological conditions, cultural interpretation, legal institutions, transnational dependence, political trust, organizational forms, and technologies can influence how a political form becomes manifest.

The analytical expansion has two purposes. The first is to represent historically specific transitions whose viability depends upon relations that cannot be adequately summarized by one institutional label. The second is to avoid determining the causal hierarchy among all relevant relations before the historical inquiry has specified its object.

This approach does not require all relations to possess equal explanatory weight. Historical analysis can identify productive relations as dominant in one process and communication infrastructure, geopolitical constraint, or administrative capacity as decisive in another. The relative importance of a relation is itself an empirical and theoretical question.

The relational extension also accommodates interactions among levels. A change in productive organization can generate new political interests. A legal reform can alter property relations. Scientific and technical change can transform productive capacity. International relations can affect domestic institutional possibilities. Culture can shape the interpretation through which actors respond to material conditions.

Engels's later correspondence already cautions against reducing historical development to a mechanically isolated economic cause, while preserving the importance assigned to economic conditions [11]. The Generative Relational framework develops this reciprocal sensibility by representing historical conditions as interacting structures whose relative importance can change across trajectories.

Plural generative conditions also clarify the paper's treatment of manifestation. A projected institution can acquire a practical meaning different from its anticipated meaning because the surrounding relational configuration changes the way the institution operates. The manifested form therefore contains both the projected design and the relations through which the design is historically reproduced.

12.5 Praxis as Verification and Historical Generation

Praxis has an epistemic function because practical activity can test claims about the world. Marx's second thesis on Feuerbach connects questions of truth with practice [23]. Mao's *On Practice* similarly gives practice a central role in the development and verification of knowledge [20]. These formulations provide a strong foundation for treating political knowledge as responsive to historical activity.

The present paper adds a distinction within this practical epistemology. Practice can operate in a verificatory mode when it supplies evidence concerning relations that already existed before the intervention. It can also operate in a generative mode when the intervention contributes to producing the relations that later become objects of knowledge.

An administrative reform can test an expectation concerning an existing bureaucratic capacity. The same reform can create new routines and professional roles whose effects could not have been directly observed beforehand. A new political right can test assumptions concerning participation while simultaneously generating organizations, expectations, and identities through which later participation acquires a different structure.

The difference matters because post-practice knowledge can concern a transformed object. Historical learning therefore exceeds comparison between an unchanged world and a prior proposition. Practice can alter the causal and relational structure relevant to the judgment.

This distinction gives manifestation a specific role in the theory of praxis. Manifestation marks the historical development through which projected relations become concretely instantiated, modified, combined with inherited relations, and exposed to interactions that generate further consequences.

A post-manifestation judgment can therefore revise an earlier belief for several reasons. The original model may have been inaccurate. New evidence may have become available. Practice may have changed the underlying relations. The transition may have generated an object different from the one projected. Actors may also have developed new normative or interpretive resources.

Separating these reasons improves historical learning. A theory revised because its prediction failed occupies a different epistemic position from a theory revised because political practice created a new relation outside the original model. Both revisions can be rational while reflecting different historical processes.

The Generative Relational extension therefore treats praxis simultaneously as a site of testing and a site of world-generation. This dual function strengthens the need for revisability because the conditions relevant to judgment can change through the very activity guided by that judgment.

12.6 Temporal Differentiation of Normative Judgment

The distinction between prospective and post-manifestation judgment constitutes the principal temporal refinement proposed by this paper. Both forms of judgment are historically situated, normatively meaningful, and practically important. They differ in the relations available to evaluation.

Prospective judgment evaluates a projected political form using evidence, concepts, normative commitments, and historical experience available before the relevant trajectory has fully unfolded. Its function is practical orientation. Political action requires this form of judgment because transformative projects cannot wait for their own historical completion before acquiring justification.

Post-manifestation judgment evaluates a relational configuration after praxis has contributed to its historical production. The later position possesses access to consequences, conflicts, institutional adaptations, and forms of experience that were unavailable to the earlier evaluator. It can also possess different normative concepts and interpretive resources.

The temporal distinction supplements rather than replaces the praxis-oriented structure already present in Marxist traditions. A praxis theory explains the unity of thought and action and the transformation of social conditions through human activity. The present refinement asks how the normative status of the same political project may be evaluated from positions located on different sides of its historical manifestation.

This distinction permits commitment to a political future while preserving the possibility of later correction. A projected order can reasonably be judged preferable under the relations available at one historical moment. The manifested order can later require revision because its generated relations alter the grounds of evaluation.

The distinction also clarifies debates concerning historical advancement. Historical actors can pursue an arrangement because it appears to resolve contradictions or expand capacities under existing conditions. Its later evaluation can identify achievements and limitations that were inaccessible before the transformation.

The two judgments therefore form parts of one historical process. Prospective judgment guides praxis; praxis contributes to manifestation; manifestation expands the grounds of judgment; renewed judgment guides subsequent praxis.

This temporal differentiation provides a conceptual basis for the paper's later normative principles. Belief revisability concerns the capacity to move from an earlier judgment to a later one without treating revision as abandonment of political commitment. Historical re-recognizability concerns the preservation of evidence and interpretive possibility required for later subjects to perform that renewed judgment.

12.7 Historical Direction and Revisable Projection

Marxist theories of history frequently combine analysis of historical conditions with accounts of developmental direction. Productive forces, relations of production, class conflict, and contradictions within social formations can create pressures for transformation. The interpretation of the modal strength and destination of such development has generated substantial debate within Marxism itself [8].

The Generative Relational framework does not require the resolution of those debates. Its narrower concern is the epistemic status of political projections formed within a developing historical process.

Actors can identify structural tensions and formulate a projected resolution. The projection can be strongly supported by historical analysis and can legitimately organize political commitment. Its epistemic status remains connected to the historical relations from which it was derived.

Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is especially relevant to this position. Gramsci criticizes mechanical approaches to historical materialism and places thought, political activity, and historical transformation within an immanent historical process [14]. Prediction within such a framework acquires a practical relation to collective will and political organization rather than functioning exclusively as detached forecast.

The distinction between projection and prophecy is useful in this context. Projection identifies a historically grounded future whose realization is judged possible or desirable. Prophetic certainty assigns a stronger modal status to that future and reduces the epistemic significance of alternatives and generated consequences.

Revisable projection preserves political direction while allowing practice to inform the content of the projected order. An organization can remain committed to equality while revising institutional means. A movement can preserve a commitment to social ownership while reconsidering administrative forms. A political community can retain a commitment to democratization while learning that some institutional arrangements produce exclusions absent from the original design.

Historical revision therefore need not imply loss of direction. Normative commitments can possess continuity while their institutional and theoretical expressions change through praxis.

This structure is also compatible with the dialectical possibility that a political form can generate capacities through which its own limitations become visible. Historical development can therefore produce the conceptual and material resources required for subsequent criticism.

12.8 Revisability within Praxis-Oriented Marxist Traditions

The principle of revisability developed in this paper has substantial affinities with praxis-oriented currents within Marxist thought. The relevant affinity concerns the recursive relation among theory, practice, historical conditions, and renewed knowledge.

Marx's practical materialism already places the validity and power of thought within worldly activity [23]. Gramsci's philosophy of praxis situates theoretical work within historical struggles and emphasizes the historicity of intellectual and political forms [14]. Mao's *On Practice* presents knowledge and practice as a recurrent developmental process in which practice generates knowledge that subsequently returns to guide further practice [20].

These traditions provide resources for a historically modest conception of political knowledge. Theory can guide decisive action while remaining connected to the practical process through which its adequacy becomes visible and its content develops.

The Generative Relational contribution is to differentiate several reasons for revision within this recursive process. Beliefs can require revision because evidence was previously incomplete, because causal expectations were inaccurate, because practice generated relations absent from the earlier config-

uration, because the projected form acquired a different relational constitution, or because later actors developed new normative resources.

This differentiation matters for the interpretation of theoretical change. A revision caused by newly generated social relations carries a different historical meaning from a correction of a factual error. A revision of institutional means can coexist with continuity in normative ends. A new normative judgment can also arise because historical practice created forms of experience through which previously unrecognized harms became visible.

Revisability therefore describes a capacity internal to historical praxis. Its function is to preserve responsiveness to the world generated through action. Political commitment remains compatible with such responsiveness where the grounds of the commitment and the institutional means through which it is pursued remain available to critical reconsideration.

12.9 Historical Re-Recognition within a Praxis Framework

Praxis changes the future while also changing the position from which the past can be understood. New historical relations can make earlier events, institutions, and conflicts intelligible in ways unavailable to their participants. A praxis-oriented philosophy of history therefore has reason to preserve the possibility of renewed historical recognition.

Historical re-recognition concerns the capacity of later subjects to return to the traces of earlier praxis with new evidence, concepts, and normative resources. This capacity depends upon archives, institutional memory, historiography, testimony, preserved disagreement, and records of the reasons that guided earlier decisions.

The principle complements belief revisability. Revisability preserves the openness of present judgment toward future manifestation. Re-recognizability preserves the openness of past history toward future interpretation.

This relationship has a practical dimension. Political organizations that preserve records of internal disagreement enable later reconstruction of the alternatives available during a transition. Institutions that document expectations and uncertainty allow future evaluators to distinguish prospective reasoning from hindsight. Archives preserving marginalized testimony can allow later subjects to recognize relations that dominant contemporaneous categories failed to capture.

Historical re-recognition therefore extends the praxis cycle across generations. Later actors inherit both the material results of earlier action and the traces through which that action can be reconsidered.

The principle also strengthens historical materialism as a living mode of inquiry. A historical-materialist analysis itself depends upon access to the relations, conflicts, institutions, and material conditions of earlier periods. Preservation of those traces supports future capacity to revise historical explanation as new conceptual resources develop.

12.10 Scope of the Generative Relational Extension

The Generative Relational perspective proposed in this paper should be understood as a limited analytical extension within a wider praxis-oriented conversation. Its contribution is concentrated in distinctions developed throughout the preceding sections.

The first contribution is temporal differentiation. Prospective judgment and post-manifestation judgment are treated as distinct epistemic and normative positions within one historical process.

The second contribution is the concept of manifestation. A projected political form becomes historically evaluable through the concrete relations generated during its realization. Manifestation therefore concerns relational constitution as well as formal implementation.

The third contribution is the distinction between verificatory and generative praxis. Practice can test claims concerning an existing world and can simultaneously participate in producing the world later subjected to judgment.

The fourth contribution is plural specification of generative conditions. Productive relations remain central where historically explanatory, while institutional, technological, epistemic, ecological, cultural,

and transnational relations can be represented where they materially affect the trajectory.

The fifth contribution is path-sensitive evaluation. The transition through which a political form is generated belongs to the object of historical judgment alongside the manifested configuration.

The sixth contribution is quotient-sensitive historical classification. Historical categories preserve selected structures, and recurrence depends upon the equivalence relations through which historical states are compared.

The seventh contribution is the pairing of belief revisability with historical re-recognizability. The first concerns the capacity of present actors to revise judgment after manifestation. The second concerns the capacity of future actors to reconsider the historical record through new evidence and interpretive resources.

These additions do not constitute a complete alternative theory of historical development. They leave open major questions concerning the relative causal importance of productive forces, class relations, political organization, ideology, technology, ecology, international structure, and other components of historical change.

The framework also leaves open the stronger modal questions associated with historical direction. A Generative Relational analysis can be combined with different positions concerning the degree of necessity present in historical development, provided that the distinction between projected judgment and manifested evaluation remains visible.

The resulting relationship with Marxist praxis is therefore developmental rather than adversarial. Historical materialism supplies central resources for understanding the conditioning of political forms and the unity of thought and practice. Praxis-oriented Marxist traditions already contain substantial resources for resisting mechanical historical explanation and for treating knowledge as historically active. The Generative Relational proposal adds a more explicit account of manifestation, relational generation, temporal evaluation, and the preservation of future corrective capacity.

This positioning also imposes a reflexive requirement upon Generative Relational theory itself. Its concepts arise within a particular historical and intellectual configuration and remain subject to the same principles of praxis, manifestation, and revision applied to other frameworks. Later theoretical and political developments may expose relations insufficiently represented by the present account.

The appropriate aspiration of the framework is therefore analytical usefulness within an unfinished historical process. It seeks to improve the distinctions through which political actors and historians understand projection, transformation, manifestation, and revision while preserving the capacity of later practice to modify those distinctions.

The next section develops belief revisability as a substantive normative principle. Having situated revisability within a praxis-oriented historical tradition, the analysis turns to the conditions under which political commitments can remain sufficiently stable to support action while retaining responsiveness to evidence and relations generated through their own practical consequences.

13 Revisability of Belief

This section develops belief revisability as a normative requirement of historical praxis. The preceding sections established that political actors must form judgments before future relations have fully manifested, that praxis participates in generating those relations, and that later judgment occurs from a historically transformed epistemic position. The present section examines the disposition required for this recursive structure to remain capable of learning. Its objectives are to distinguish revisability from weak commitment, identify the principal sources and levels of legitimate revision, analyze the relation between commitment and epistemic stability, examine the institutional conditions that enable collective revision, and clarify the normative significance of preserving corrective capacity. The section concludes with a Generative Relational formulation in which belief revision is treated as a historically situated update of practical orientation under changed relational conditions.

13.1 Revisability as a Norm of Historical Praxis

Political action requires beliefs sufficiently stable to orient conduct across time. Governments allocate resources on the basis of expectations concerning future conditions. Political movements sustain collective projects through shared interpretations of injustice and possibility. Institutions coordinate behavior by maintaining rules whose practical value depends partly upon their continuity. A conception of political rationality centered exclusively on continuous revision would therefore provide inadequate support for sustained praxis.

Historical praxis nevertheless creates conditions under which prior judgments can lose part of their justificatory basis. A policy can generate consequences absent from the original model. An institution can produce new dependencies. A transition can create political subjects with interests and capacities that were weakly represented at the beginning of the process. A projected configuration can acquire a relational structure substantially different from the one anticipated. Historical commitment therefore requires a complementary capacity for revision.

The principle of revisability addresses this tension. A revisable political belief is one whose practical force remains responsive to relevant changes in evidence, relational structure, generated consequences, and normative understanding. Revisability concerns the conditions under which continued commitment remains justified.

This principle follows directly from the distinction between pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment. A prospective belief is formed within one historical position. The world generated through praxis creates another. Treating the later position as incapable of altering the earlier judgment would sever political belief from the very historical process through which its consequences become knowable.

The principle is also continuous with praxis-oriented traditions discussed in Section 12. Marx's practical materialism places theoretical claims within worldly activity [23]. Mao's account of the relation between knowledge and practice treats cognition as developing recurrently through practical experience [20]. Gramsci's philosophy of praxis likewise situates intellectual activity within historically changing relations [14]. These traditions support an understanding of political knowledge whose authority remains connected to historical practice.

Belief revisability therefore concerns the continuing relation between judgment and manifestation. It gives practical form to historical humility by allowing political actors to commit to a future while preserving the capacity to learn from the future that their commitment helps to produce.

13.2 Sources of Legitimate Revision

Belief revision can be warranted by several historically distinct developments. Separating these sources improves the interpretation of theoretical and political change.

The first source is evidentiary expansion. New observations, archival materials, statistical evidence, testimony, or institutional records can alter the empirical basis of an earlier judgment. The relevant relations may have already existed while remaining unavailable to the earlier evaluator.

The second source is correction of causal expectation. An actor can possess substantial information while misunderstanding the mechanism through which a political intervention produces consequences. Historical manifestation can reveal that the causal model guiding prospective judgment was incomplete or mis-specified.

The third source is relational generation. Praxis can create institutions, dependencies, capacities, identities, or conflicts that were absent from the earlier configuration. Revision in this case responds to a world that has changed through the activity guided by the original belief.

The fourth source is trajectory divergence. A projected political form can manifest through a path substantially different from the one anticipated. Even where the destination retains some of its intended properties, the transition can generate harms, asymmetries, or irreversible effects that alter its normative evaluation.

The fifth source is conceptual development. New distinctions can make previously weakly articulated relations available to political recognition. Later actors may develop concepts for forms of domi-

nation, vulnerability, exclusion, ecological loss, or epistemic harm that earlier evaluators lacked.

The sixth source is normative development. Historical experience can alter the relative weight assigned to political values or generate new commitments. Normative revision can therefore arise from transformed forms of social experience as well as from factual correction.

The seventh source is positional expansion. A political institution can be evaluated differently when evidence from actors occupying previously neglected social positions becomes available. Such revision reflects an enlargement of the relational standpoint from which the political form is assessed.

These sources can occur together. A policy can generate new relations, expose previously hidden harms, produce new political subjects, and motivate new normative concepts through which those harms become intelligible. Historical revision is therefore frequently multidimensional.

The identification of revision sources also improves responsibility. Revision prompted by an avoidable factual error differs from revision prompted by genuinely novel relations generated through practice. Both require learning, while the historical interpretation of the earlier judgment differs in each case.

13.3 Levels of Political Belief Revision

Political beliefs operate at several levels. Revisability becomes more precise when the object of revision is identified.

A first level concerns empirical beliefs. These include expectations about economic behavior, institutional capacity, demographic change, political participation, technological effects, or other observable relations. Revision at this level changes the factual representation of the political environment.

A second level concerns causal models. Political actors can preserve their normative goals while revising their understanding of the mechanisms through which those goals can be realized. A policy expected to reduce inequality through one mechanism can be redesigned when practice reveals a different causal structure.

A third level concerns institutional means. Actors can maintain a commitment to a political objective while changing the organizational, legal, or economic arrangements through which they pursue it. This form of revision is especially important for long historical projects whose institutional requirements become clearer through practice.

A fourth level concerns strategic sequencing. The projected destination and principal normative commitments can remain stable while the order and timing of transitional steps are revised in response to capacity, resistance, or newly generated conditions.

A fifth level concerns the interpretation of the political objective itself. Historical manifestation can reveal tensions internal to a goal whose earlier formulation appeared coherent. Equality, freedom, participation, development, or social ownership can acquire more differentiated meanings as practical relations develop.

A sixth level concerns normative commitments. Political experience can produce reasons to reconsider the values used to evaluate the project. Such revision is more demanding because it alters the standards by which earlier judgments were made.

A seventh level concerns the architecture of historical understanding. Actors can revise the categories through which they classify political forms, identify historical recurrence, or describe developmental trajectories. Sections 10 and 11 showed that such classifications depend upon equivalence criteria whose adequacy can itself become an object of revision.

These levels permit continuity within change. A political project can preserve its normative orientation while revising empirical assumptions, causal models, or institutional means. More extensive historical transformation can eventually require revision of the normative orientation itself.

The distinction also prevents every practical adjustment from being interpreted as abandonment of principle. Revision possesses degrees of depth. Historical learning can occur within a continuing political commitment, while some manifestations can eventually justify reconsideration of the commitment at a more fundamental level.

13.4 Commitment and Epistemic Stability

Revisability requires a conception of epistemic stability. Political beliefs that change with every short-term fluctuation cannot sustain institutions or collective projects. Historical praxis therefore depends upon a degree of resistance to revision as well as a capacity for revision.

Dewey's account of ends-in-view is useful for understanding this balance. Projected ends orient activity while remaining subject to reconstruction as conditions of action change [9]. Their practical value depends upon continuity sufficient to organize conduct and flexibility sufficient to incorporate experience.

Political commitment possesses a similar temporal structure. A collective project requires enough stability for actors to coordinate expectations, develop institutions, acquire expertise, and allow generated relations to become observable. Premature revision can prevent the project from reaching a stage at which meaningful evaluation becomes possible.

The requirement of stability creates an epistemic problem concerning thresholds of revision. Evidence that contradicts an expectation can indicate a temporary implementation difficulty, a local anomaly, a weakly developed supporting condition, or a deeper failure in the political model. Historical judgment must distinguish among these possibilities.

A revisable system therefore requires procedures for accumulating and interpreting discrepant evidence. Single outcomes rarely determine the status of a complex political project. Patterns across time, relational positions, and institutional domains can provide stronger grounds for revision.

Commitment also possesses distributive effects. Some actors bear larger costs while a political project is given time to demonstrate its viability. Arguments for epistemic patience therefore require attention to the distribution of transitional burdens. Stability in political belief cannot be purchased through indefinite exposure of vulnerable subjects to serious preventable harm.

The relation between commitment and revisability is consequently normative as well as epistemic. A belief can deserve continued practical support because evidence remains incomplete and long-term learning requires persistence. The same belief can require earlier revision where continued commitment produces severe harms, destroys corrective capacities, or suppresses evidence capable of challenging the project.

Epistemic stability therefore concerns justified persistence rather than simple duration. Its legitimacy depends upon the relation among available evidence, the maturity of the process, the distribution of risks, and the continued capacity for correction.

13.5 Revision and Political Identity

Political beliefs frequently become embedded in collective identity. A movement, party, state, profession, or intellectual tradition can organize its self-understanding around interpretations of history and commitments to particular futures. Revision then acquires consequences beyond the proposition being revised.

Identity investment can increase the cost of acknowledging error. A policy failure can be interpreted as a threat to the legitimacy of the political project. A theoretical anomaly can be treated as an attack on the community organized around the theory. Institutional actors can therefore develop incentives to reinterpret contradictory evidence in ways that preserve continuity of identity.

This problem is particularly significant for historically ambitious political projects. The stronger the connection between a theory and an account of historical direction, the easier it becomes for empirical difficulties to be treated as temporary deviations from an already established trajectory. Historical manifestation then loses part of its corrective force.

A praxis-oriented theory has resources for addressing this problem. If theory derives part of its authority from its relation to practice, then responsiveness to practice should become a component of intellectual fidelity. Revision can be interpreted as continuation of the praxis relation rather than betrayal of a tradition.

The same principle applies to the Generative Relational framework. If GR treats historical knowledge and political judgment as generated and revisable, then GR's own concepts must remain available for modification where later practice reveals inadequate distinctions or neglected relations.

Political traditions can therefore distinguish continuity of commitment from identity of formulation. A tradition can preserve concern for emancipation, equality, justice, or generativity while revising causal theories, institutional designs, or historical classifications.

Such a distinction lowers the symbolic cost of learning. Revision becomes a mode of maintaining the practical seriousness of a political commitment under changed historical conditions.

13.6 Institutional Conditions for Collective Revisability

Belief revisability is not solely an individual intellectual virtue. Political judgment is produced and maintained through institutions. The capacity of a collective order to revise its beliefs therefore depends upon organizational, legal, epistemic, and archival structures.

Several institutional conditions contribute to revisability.

The first is evidentiary access. Political actors require mechanisms for collecting information about generated consequences across different social positions. Statistical systems, public reporting, independent research, administrative records, and protected channels for testimony can expand the evidentiary field.

The second is interpretive plurality. Competing analytical perspectives can identify relations invisible within a dominant framework. Institutional plurality therefore increases the probability that discrepant consequences become objects of political attention.

The third is protected criticism. Revisability requires spaces in which actors can challenge prevailing beliefs without prohibitive political or professional cost. Suppression of dissent reduces the capacity of manifestation to correct prospective judgment.

The fourth is institutional memory. Revision requires comparison between prior expectations and later consequences. Records of forecasts, assumptions, decision criteria, disagreement, and implementation preserve the evidentiary basis for such comparison.

The fifth is procedural reopening. Constitutions, policies, organizational rules, and long-term plans can include procedures through which accumulated evidence triggers review. Such procedures convert abstract openness to revision into institutional capacity.

The sixth is distributed feedback. A political project can generate different effects across regions, classes, organizations, and communities. Centralized evaluation can therefore overlook relationally localized consequences. Mechanisms capable of transmitting heterogeneous feedback strengthen collective learning.

The seventh is preservation of alternatives. Political systems often narrow the space of feasible options after a commitment has been made. Maintaining some institutional, technical, or organizational alternatives can preserve corrective capacity where later manifestation reveals substantial problems.

These conditions give revisability a material and institutional basis. A political order can proclaim intellectual openness while structuring information, incentives, and authority in ways that make meaningful correction difficult. The normative principle therefore concerns the architecture through which revision becomes practically possible.

13.7 Asymmetric Costs of Revision

Revision itself has costs. Institutional change can disrupt expectations, invalidate investments, weaken organizational continuity, and impose burdens on subjects who organized their lives around prior commitments. A theory of revisability should therefore include the distribution and asymmetry of these costs.

Some beliefs can be revised with limited social consequence. Others are deeply embedded in law, infrastructure, professional expertise, and collective identity. The cost of revision increases when the belief has generated a large relational structure.

This dependence creates a temporal asymmetry. Early revision can be relatively inexpensive while later revision becomes difficult because the political project has produced institutions and expectations that rely upon continued commitment. Path dependence, discussed in Section 4.3, therefore affects the practical value of early feedback.

The cost structure also creates incentives for delayed acknowledgment of error. Institutional actors can resist revision because accumulated investments make correction politically expensive. Such resistance can increase the eventual cost where the underlying problem continues to generate harm.

A revisable political architecture consequently benefits from staged commitment where uncertainty is substantial and irreversible costs are high. Staging can allow evidence to accumulate before the most difficult-to-reverse relations have become fully sedimented.

The distribution of revision costs requires separate attention. Correction of an earlier policy can benefit the population as a whole while imposing losses on groups that adapted successfully to the previous arrangement. Conversely, preserving the arrangement can continue imposing losses on groups harmed by it. Revision therefore remains a political allocation problem.

Historical responsibility includes awareness of these asymmetric costs during prospective judgment. Institutional designers can reduce future revision costs through modularity, sunset mechanisms, reversible pilots, preserved alternatives, and documentation of transition dependencies.

The goal is not maximal ease of reversal in every domain. Long-term infrastructure, constitutional commitments, and social rights often require stability. The relevant objective is to align the degree of institutional commitment with the uncertainty, reversibility, and normative stakes of the decision.

13.8 Belief Revision and Normative Continuity

Historical revision raises a difficult issue concerning continuity of normative commitment. If values themselves are historically situated, a later political position can revise the standards through which the earlier project was evaluated. The possibility of such change creates tension between historical openness and continuity of moral judgment.

The present framework treats normative development as possible without making every normative commitment equally unstable. Some values can retain strong historical continuity because repeated experience, public reasoning, and institutional development provide durable grounds for their defense. Protection from severe domination, recognition of basic agency, and avoidance of unnecessary suffering can acquire strong normative standing even while their institutional interpretation changes.

Normative continuity can therefore coexist with historical reinterpretation. The meaning of freedom can develop as new forms of technological or economic dependency appear. The meaning of equality can change as previously invisible structural differences become politically recognizable. The commitment persists while its relational content becomes more differentiated.

This structure is especially important for the paper's treatment of progress. Historical situatedness does not require every later generation to suspend judgment concerning earlier injustice. Later actors can possess stronger conceptual resources for identifying harms that earlier institutions normalized.

The same historical development can produce reasons for humility. Present normative vocabularies may contain blind spots that future subjects will identify. A strong present commitment can therefore be paired with preservation of conditions through which later criticism remains possible.

Belief revisability consequently operates at the boundary between normative continuity and normative development. Its role is to maintain responsiveness to historical manifestation without reducing political commitment to momentary preference.

13.9 Revision across Historical Positions

A belief revised at a later historical position should be interpreted through the relation between the two positions. The later evaluator possesses access to manifested consequences and historically generated concepts that the earlier actor may have lacked. The earlier actor possessed practical proximity to conditions that later historical narratives can compress or forget.

Responsible revision therefore requires a bidirectional historical comparison. The later standpoint can criticize the earlier judgment using expanded evidence and normative resources. It should also reconstruct the evidence, concepts, constraints, and alternatives available when the earlier judgment was formed.

This structure preserves the difference between historical understanding and present endorsement. An earlier belief can be intelligible within its historical configuration and still be rejected under a later normative evaluation. A later judgment can be normatively stronger while remaining historically situated and therefore open to future revision.

The comparison also permits recognition of historically reasonable error. Political actors can make a judgment supported by the best evidence available at the time and later discover that the manifested world diverged substantially from their projection. Such error differs from negligence, suppression of evidence, or refusal to revise after contrary evidence became available.

The distinction is important for historical responsibility. Evaluation of an earlier actor should consider the quality of prospective judgment under the available conditions and the actor's responsiveness to evidence generated through subsequent praxis.

Revision across historical positions therefore has a temporal ethics. Earlier actors have responsibilities concerning the quality and openness of their judgments. Later actors have responsibilities concerning reconstruction, criticism, and preservation of the historical record.

These responsibilities connect belief revisability with historical re-recognizability. The ability to revise present beliefs depends partly upon the possibility of reconstructing how previous beliefs were formed and what relations their implementation generated.

13.10 Generative Relational Formulation of Belief Revisability

The preceding analysis supports a Generative Relational representation of belief revision as a historically situated update of practical orientation. Let B_t denote a politically relevant belief or structured set of beliefs at time t , R_{t+1} the relational configuration generated after subsequent praxis, E_{t+1} newly available evidence, I_{t+1} the interpretive resources available at the later position, and N_{t+1} the normative commitments through which the generated configuration is evaluated.

The revision structure is represented in Equation 16.

$$B_{t+1} = \mathcal{U}(B_t, R_{t+1}, E_{t+1}, I_{t+1}, N_{t+1}) \quad (16)$$

Equation 16 represents revision as an update conditioned by a changed historical position. The update operator $\mathcal{U}$ is left deliberately unspecified because different political beliefs require different standards of evidence, normative reasoning, and institutional procedure.

The formulation has several implications.

First, revision preserves historical continuity because B_t remains an input to later judgment. A revised belief develops from an earlier practical orientation rather than appearing independently of the preceding history.

Second, relational manifestation enters the update directly through R_{t+1} . Revision can therefore respond to newly generated social relations as well as to new observations about pre-existing relations.

Third, evidence and interpretation remain distinct. A historical fact can acquire new significance when interpretive resources change. The revision process can therefore involve both factual learning and conceptual reorganization.

Fourth, normative commitments enter explicitly. Belief revision in political praxis includes judgments concerning what matters and how competing political goods should be evaluated.

Fifth, the later judgment remains historically situated. Equation 16 contains no final standpoint from which all future revisions are precluded. The updated belief B_{t+1} becomes part of the historical configuration available to subsequent praxis and can itself enter a later revision cycle.

The recursive structure can therefore be described as a continuing relation among belief, praxis, manifestation, and renewed judgment. Political rationality lies partly in maintaining the integrity of this

relation across time.

The normative principle of revisability can now be stated more precisely. Political actors should form beliefs strong enough to orient responsible action, preserve the evidentiary and institutional conditions through which generated consequences can become visible, and remain capable of revising the level of belief affected by those consequences.

This principle provides one half of the paper's concluding normative structure. Revisability preserves the openness of present judgment toward an unfinished future. The following section develops the complementary principle of historical re-recognizability, which preserves the openness of the historical record toward future subjects whose evidence, concepts, and normative perspectives have yet to emerge.

14 The Re-Recognizability of History

This section develops historical re-recognizability as the complementary normative principle to belief revisability. Section 13 addressed the capacity of present political actors to reconsider judgments as praxis generates new relations and evidence. The present section turns toward the past and asks what epistemic conditions allow future subjects to reconsider historical configurations from positions that do not yet exist. Its objective is to specify re-recognizability as a property of historical knowledge infrastructures rather than as a general preference for preservation. The discussion proceeds through the persistence of historical traces, archival asymmetry and silence, plural testimony, classificatory preservation, contextual recoverability, interpretive reopening, institutional memory, destructive closure, and the relation between preservation and political responsibility. The section concludes with a Generative Relational formulation of re-recognizability as the preservation of sufficient traces and relational context for future historical recognition.

14.1 Historical Traces and Future Recognition

Historical judgment depends upon traces that persist beyond the events and relations from which they originated. Documents, testimony, administrative records, material artifacts, statistical series, correspondence, legal texts, images, institutional routines, oral histories, and preserved environments can all contribute to the later reconstruction of a historical configuration. Their persistence creates the material basis upon which future historical recognition becomes possible.

Ricoeur's analysis of memory, history, and forgetting places the trace at the center of the relation between the past and historical knowledge. Historical representation depends upon surviving traces, testimony, archives, and the interpretive work through which they become evidence [29]. The past does not remain directly available to later subjects. It becomes accessible through historically preserved mediations.

The concept of *re-recognizability* develops a normative implication from this dependence. A historical configuration can remain available for future recognition where enough evidence survives to permit later actors to reconstruct relations, reassess classifications, and apply concepts unavailable to earlier interpreters. Re-recognizability therefore concerns the future epistemic potential of the historical record.

The relevant standard exceeds simple physical preservation. A collection of documents can survive while remaining difficult to interpret because its context has disappeared. A statistical series can persist while the categories through which it was produced become opaque. An administrative archive can record decisions while omitting the experiences of subjects affected by those decisions. Historical preservation and historical recognizability therefore depend upon different, though related, conditions.

Future recognition requires sufficient connection among traces. A legal rule becomes more historically intelligible when later researchers can recover its implementation, institutional context, contested interpretations, and practical effects. A political decision becomes more intelligible when its supporting evidence, rejected alternatives, internal disagreement, and subsequent consequences remain reconstructable.

Re-recognizability can therefore be understood as preservation of relational recoverability. The aim is to maintain enough structure around historical traces for future interpreters to reconstruct the relations through which those traces acquired meaning.

This principle acquires special significance within the framework developed in the preceding sections. If future normative and interpretive resources can differ from those available at the time of action, then the historical record should preserve more than evidence already judged relevant by contemporary categories. Otherwise, present classification can determine in advance what future subjects will be able to recognize.

14.2 Archival Selection and Historical Silence

Historical traces are generated and preserved unevenly. Political institutions, administrative systems, economic power, literacy, technology, conflict, and social status influence whose actions become documented and which records survive. The archive therefore contains historical structure as well as historical information.

Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* provides a particularly important account of this problem. His analysis treats historical production as a process in which power operates at multiple moments, including the making of sources, the assembly of archives, the construction of narratives, and the attribution of retrospective significance [34]. Historical silence therefore arises throughout the production of history rather than exclusively at the stage of later interpretation.

This insight is directly relevant to re-recognizability. Future subjects can only reconsider relations for which some recoverable trace remains. Where particular actors lacked the resources required to create records, where their records were not collected, or where institutions systematically destroyed or excluded their testimony, later historical interpretation begins from an asymmetrically structured evidentiary field.

Archival asymmetry can reproduce political asymmetry across time. Powerful institutions often generate extensive documentary records through taxation, law, bureaucracy, property registration, policing, military administration, and formal communication. Subjects acting outside those institutions can leave fewer traces, and their practices may enter the archive primarily through the categories imposed by governing institutions.

A later historian can therefore possess a large archive while facing severe relational incompleteness. The quantity of surviving evidence does not guarantee balanced recoverability of the historical configuration.

Re-recognizability requires attention to these asymmetries before they become irreversible. Institutions responsible for record creation can preserve testimony from multiple positions, document dissent, retain explanations of classificatory decisions, and maintain metadata concerning the conditions under which records were produced.

The normative point concerns future possibility. Preserving heterogeneous traces does not predetermine how future subjects should interpret the past. It preserves the evidentiary conditions under which interpretations other than the dominant contemporary account can remain possible.

Historical silence therefore represents more than absence. It can constitute a loss of future relational recoverability. Where a trace has been permanently destroyed, later conceptual development cannot recover the historical relation through direct evidence. The range of possible future recognition has been narrowed.

14.3 Plural Testimony and Relational Coverage

Historical configurations are experienced from heterogeneous relational positions. Administrative actors, political elites, workers, local communities, minority groups, professional organizations, families, migrants, and other participants can encounter the same institution through substantially different relations. Preservation of only one position therefore restricts later capacity to reconstruct the manifested system.

Plural testimony contributes to re-recognizability by increasing relational coverage. The objective is broader than representational balance. Testimony from different positions can reveal distinct causal relations, burdens, interpretations, informal practices, and forms of agency.

An institution may appear efficient within central administrative records while local testimony reveals substantial informal labor required to make the system function. A legal reform may appear complete in statutory documents while testimony reveals unequal access to enforcement. An economic transition may appear successful in aggregate statistics while household records reveal distributional burdens hidden by the aggregate representation.

The evidentiary contribution of plural testimony therefore derives partly from relational position. Different actors possess access to different parts of the historical system. No single testimony supplies a complete representation, and differences among testimonies can themselves constitute evidence concerning the structure of the historical configuration.

Ricoeur's treatment of testimony emphasizes its foundational role in historical knowledge while also attending to the problem of trust and verification [29]. Re-recognizability does not require treating every testimony as equally reliable. It requires preservation sufficient for future critical comparison.

Plural preservation also matters when later normative concepts differ from those available during the original period. Experiences that contemporaneous institutions regarded as irrelevant can become central to later historical judgment. Testimony concerning informal exclusion, environmental degradation, domestic labor, cultural loss, or administrative humiliation may acquire new significance under later evaluative vocabularies.

The future relevance of a trace therefore cannot be completely determined at the time of preservation. A record-management system optimized exclusively for present administrative relevance can discard evidence whose future historical significance has yet to become recognizable.

The principle of relational coverage supports a preservation strategy that retains heterogeneous perspectives where the cost is proportionate and the relations affected are historically significant. The aim is to preserve a sufficiently rich evidentiary field for future subjects to reconstruct historical configurations through criteria different from those used by the original institutions.

14.4 Classification and Recoverability

Historical traces are rarely preserved without classification. Archives, databases, administrative systems, libraries, museums, and research infrastructures organize evidence through categories that determine retrieval, comparison, and visibility. Classification therefore affects the future recognizability of the preserved material.

Section 10 treated classification as selective abstraction and emphasized that categories preserve some relations while suppressing others. Bowker and Star show that standards and classification systems become components of information infrastructure whose consequences extend into social interaction and institutional visibility [7]. The same principle applies across historical time: classificatory infrastructures shape what later researchers can find and how evidence can be recombined.

A record can survive physically while becoming epistemically difficult to recover because the categories used to index it encode assumptions no longer shared by later interpreters. Historical subjects can also disappear within categories whose boundaries obscure relations that later analysis seeks to recover.

Re-recognizability therefore benefits from preservation at more than one classificatory level. Original categories should be retained because they are historical evidence concerning the interpretive system that produced the record. Additional metadata can preserve contextual information about how the classification was constructed. Where feasible, rawer or less aggregated traces can also be retained to permit later reclassification.

This structure can be represented through the distinction between a historical configuration R , its preserved traces T , and a contemporary classification map q_C . If only the quotient-level representation is preserved, future interpreters inherit the abstractions selected by C . Where traces closer to the richer relational domain survive, later actors can construct a different criterion C' and recover a different quotient.

The relation is represented in Equation 17.

$$R \longrightarrow T \longrightarrow q_C(T), \quad T \text{ preserved} \implies q_{C'}(T) \text{ remains constructible} \quad (17)$$

Equation 17 expresses the epistemic value of preserving traces below the level of a single classificatory reduction. The equation does not imply that an archive can preserve an unmediated historical reality. Every trace is produced through material and institutional conditions. The point concerns degrees of future classificatory freedom.

Classification transparency strengthens this freedom. Documentation of category definitions, revisions, exclusions, uncertainty, and institutional purpose allows later subjects to understand both the record and the historical interpretive system through which it was produced.

The preservation of classificatory history therefore belongs to re-recognizability. Future historians may need to recognize how earlier actors made the world legible before they can reinterpret the relations represented through those categories.

14.5 Contextual Preservation and Relational Metadata

Historical evidence acquires meaning through context. A document records a statement, while interpretation can depend upon who produced it, for which institution, under which incentives, using which categories, in response to which event, and with what practical consequences. Loss of contextual relations can leave a preserved trace semantically underdetermined.

Re-recognizability therefore requires attention to relational metadata. The term refers broadly to information that preserves relevant connections among a trace, its producer, institutional environment, classificatory system, temporal position, intended purpose, and related records.

An administrative decision, for example, becomes more useful for future historical analysis when the archive preserves the evidence considered, the legal authority invoked, the actors involved, alternative proposals, and later implementation records. Preservation of the final decision alone narrows the range of historical questions that can subsequently be asked.

The same principle applies to quantitative evidence. A dataset is more historically recoverable when variable definitions, sampling procedures, missing-data practices, institutional incentives, category revisions, and changes in measurement remain documented. Numerical continuity without methodological context can create an appearance of comparability across periods whose underlying observational practices changed.

Contextual preservation also assists analysis of historical equivalence. Later researchers evaluating whether two configurations belong to the same relational category require evidence concerning structures that may have been secondary to the original record-keeping purpose. Rich contextual metadata expands the set of equivalence criteria that future analysis can responsibly apply.

The value of contextual preservation should remain proportionate to practical constraints. Complete preservation of every relation is impossible. Archives have material, financial, legal, privacy, and organizational limits. The principle of re-recognizability therefore requires selective preservation guided by the anticipated significance and irreversibility of information loss.

This limitation reinforces the need for plural preservation strategies. Different institutions, communities, and archival practices can preserve different parts of the historical configuration. Distributed memory can thereby increase relational coverage where no single archive can represent the entire system.

14.6 Interpretive Reopening across Historical Positions

Re-recognizability concerns the possibility that a historical configuration can become intelligible in new ways from a later position. This interpretive reopening occurs when later subjects combine preserved traces with conceptual, normative, and analytical resources unavailable to earlier interpreters.

Hacking's work on historical ontology is relevant because it emphasizes the historical emergence of concepts, objects, and styles of reasoning [15]. Historical categories can arise, change, and interact with

the subjects classified through them. Later historical inquiry therefore approaches earlier configurations with conceptual resources that have their own subsequent history.

Interpretive reopening can take several forms.

A later conceptual vocabulary can reveal a relation that earlier institutions did not name. New analytical methods can identify patterns across records that were previously treated separately. Newly recovered testimony can alter the interpretation of official documents. Changes in normative commitments can make previously normalized practices objects of explicit criticism.

Re-recognition therefore differs from simple recollection. The later subject is not merely reproducing an earlier interpretation. The historical object becomes available through a new relation among surviving traces, present concepts, and the later historical position.

This process can revise judgments of advancement, recurrence, and responsibility. An institution previously classified as progressive can retain that historical significance while later evidence reveals harms previously excluded from the comparison. A political form previously described as a recurrence can be reclassified once relational differences become visible. A historical event previously attributed to one causal mechanism can acquire a more complex explanation through newly available records.

Interpretive reopening is therefore central to an unfinished philosophy of history. The historical past remains fixed in the sense that events that occurred are not recreated by later interpretation. The field of historically justified recognition can nevertheless change as evidence, concepts, and comparative structures develop.

The distinction preserves both realism and historical openness. Later interpretation remains accountable to surviving evidence, while the range of questions that evidence can support remains historically generative.

14.7 Institutional Memory and Corrective Continuity

Political institutions require memory in order to learn across time. Personnel change, governments alternate, organizations restructure, and generations replace one another. Without preserved institutional memory, each later actor faces a reduced capacity to reconstruct the reasons, uncertainties, and consequences associated with earlier decisions.

Institutional memory serves at least four functions relevant to re-recognizability.

The first function is decision reconstruction. Records of assumptions, evidence, dissent, risk assessments, and alternatives allow later actors to distinguish the reasoning available at the time from the outcome knowledge available afterward.

The second function is trajectory reconstruction. Implementation records and subsequent evaluations allow later actors to identify how a projected institution became a manifested relational configuration.

The third function is responsibility tracing. Historical records can clarify which actors possessed authority, which warnings were available, and how burdens were distributed during a transition.

The fourth function is conceptual comparison. Preserved classifications and institutional vocabularies allow later subjects to reconstruct how earlier actors understood the problem they were addressing.

Institutional memory thereby supports the temporal relation between belief revisability and historical re-recognizability. Present actors can revise more responsibly where the grounds of earlier commitments remain reconstructable. Future actors can evaluate current practice more responsibly where institutions preserve the traces of present uncertainty.

Corrective continuity describes this intergenerational function. A political order can change substantially while maintaining enough epistemic continuity for later institutions to learn from earlier practice. The preservation of records therefore supports adaptation across changes in personnel and institutional form.

Institutional memory can itself become selective and politically contested. Organizations can preserve evidence favorable to their own legitimacy, destroy records associated with failure, or classify information in ways that limit future access. Re-recognizability therefore requires institutional safeguards whose design reflects the distribution of incentives surrounding memory.

Independent archives, statutory record-retention duties, preservation of dissent, transparent declassification procedures, and plural repositories can all contribute to corrective continuity where appropriate to the domain.

14.8 Destructive Closure of Historical Possibility

Historical re-recognizability can be impaired through actions that destroy evidence, suppress testimony, erase contextual information, or stabilize one interpretation by eliminating competing traces. These processes create *destructive closure*: a reduction in the range of historically grounded interpretations available to future subjects.

Trouillot's account of historical silencing demonstrates how power enters the production of sources, archives, and narratives [34]. Destructive closure extends this insight into a normative concern for future historical agency. Decisions concerning preservation can shape what later subjects will be capable of recognizing.

Destructive closure can occur through deliberate destruction. Political actors can remove records, censor testimony, destroy archives, manipulate databases, or erase material sites associated with contested histories. It can also occur through institutional neglect where records important to politically weak groups receive little preservation support.

A further form arises through irreversible aggregation. Detailed records can be collapsed into summary categories while the underlying data are destroyed. The aggregate may remain useful for its original administrative purpose while eliminating the possibility of later classification under a different criterion.

Destructive closure can also arise through semantic loss. Records survive, yet future interpretation becomes difficult because metadata, category definitions, institutional context, or linguistic competence disappear.

The normative severity of closure depends upon the historical significance of the lost relations, the uniqueness of the traces, the availability of alternative evidence, and the degree to which later reconstruction becomes impossible. Some information loss is ordinary and unavoidable. Other losses substantially constrain the epistemic agency of future subjects.

This distinction suggests an irreversibility-sensitive preservation principle. The more unique and historically consequential a trace is, and the more difficult its informational content would be to reconstruct from independent sources, the stronger the reason for preserving it where competing ethical, legal, and privacy considerations permit.

Destructive closure also affects present political accountability. Actors who control historical evidence can influence the range of future judgments concerning their actions. Preservation therefore belongs to the institutional architecture of political responsibility as well as to historiography.

14.9 Re-Recognizability and Historiographical Justice

Re-recognizability has a distributive dimension because historical subjects possess unequal probabilities of leaving recoverable traces. Power affects source production, preservation, institutional recognition, and later interpretive attention. A historical archive can therefore reproduce social asymmetry through uneven survival of evidence.

The concept of historiographical justice addresses this distribution of future recognizability. Its concern is the relation between historical participation and the probability that later subjects will possess adequate evidence to recognize that participation.

The objective is broader than proportional archival representation. Different historical actors generate different quantities and types of records, and some relations require more extensive preservation than others. The normative issue concerns systematic conditions that make particular experiences, harms, contributions, or forms of agency structurally difficult to recover.

Plural testimony, contextual preservation, and transparency concerning classification can mitigate some of these asymmetries. Community archives, oral histories, preservation of informal records, and documentation of institutional interactions can expand the relational coverage of the historical record.

Historiographical justice also concerns interpretive authority. Preservation of a trace does not guarantee that the subject represented by the trace can influence its interpretation. Institutional arrangements governing access, description, provenance, and contextualization can affect the manner in which historical subjects are recognized.

Bowker and Star's analysis of classification provides a useful warning because every classificatory infrastructure makes some distinctions easier to see than others [7]. Historiographical justice therefore requires attention to the architecture through which archived traces become searchable and comparable.

The concept remains compatible with evidentiary criticism. Greater inclusion of traces expands the field of inquiry while leaving questions of reliability, corroboration, interpretation, and causal significance open to historical analysis.

The normative objective is future recognitional capacity: later subjects should possess sufficient evidence to reconsider relations whose significance may not have been fully recognized by the institutions that produced the archive.

14.10 Privacy, Forgetting, and Preservation Limits

Re-recognizability cannot require unlimited preservation. Historical traces can contain sensitive personal information, expose vulnerable subjects, reproduce harm, compromise legitimate security interests, or prevent individuals from escaping indefinitely from earlier classifications. Preservation therefore interacts with privacy, forgetting, forgiveness, and proportionality.

Ricoeur's analysis gives forgetting a complex place within the relation among memory, history, and political life [29]. Forgetting can arise through disappearance of traces, blocked recollection, manipulation, or institutionally commanded forms such as amnesty. These forms have different epistemic and normative meanings.

The Generative Relational principle of re-recognizability therefore concerns preservation of future historical possibility under competing normative constraints. It does not establish archival maximalism.

Several distinctions are relevant.

The first concerns public historical significance and private exposure. Information necessary for reconstructing an institution can sometimes be preserved through restricted access, anonymization, delayed release, or aggregate representation while reducing avoidable harm to individuals.

The second concerns preservation and immediate availability. A trace can remain preserved for future historical inquiry while access is temporarily limited under justified conditions.

The third concerns individual forgetting and structural memory. Some personal records can lose practical relevance to present administration while remaining historically meaningful in forms that protect individual identity.

The fourth concerns evidence destruction and interpretive restraint. Institutions can preserve records while adopting ethical rules governing their use.

The balance among these concerns depends upon context. Re-recognizability provides a reason in favor of preserving historically consequential traces, while privacy, dignity, security, and other rights provide reasons shaping the form and timing of preservation.

The resulting framework treats preservation as an institutional design problem. Its objective is to maintain future epistemic possibility while respecting the rights and vulnerabilities of subjects whose lives become historical evidence.

14.11 Future Subjects and Intergenerational Epistemic Responsibility

Historical preservation creates a relation between present institutions and future subjects. Future historians, citizens, communities, and political actors cannot participate in current decisions concerning which traces survive. Present actors therefore exercise asymmetric control over part of the future epistemic environment.

This asymmetry generates an intergenerational responsibility. Current institutions cannot know which questions future subjects will ask, which concepts they will develop, or which present relations

they will regard as historically significant. Preservation policy should therefore avoid making future inquiry unnecessarily dependent upon present interpretive priorities.

The responsibility is especially strong where information loss would be irreversible. A destroyed archive cannot ordinarily be regenerated by a future historian. Testimony from a deceased witness cannot be recollected later. Context lost during institutional transition can become permanently unrecoverable.

Re-recognizability therefore has an option-preserving structure. Present preservation keeps open a set of future interpretive possibilities without requiring present actors to endorse any particular future interpretation.

Let $\mathcal{I}_{t+\Delta}(T_t)$ denote the set of historically defensible interpretations that a future subject at $t + \Delta$ could construct from traces T_t preserved at time t . The preservation objective is represented in Equation 18.

$$\mathfrak{R}_{t \rightarrow t+\Delta} = \mathcal{I}_{t+\Delta}(T_t) \quad (18)$$

Equation 18 treats historical re-recognizability $\mathfrak{R}_{t \rightarrow t+\Delta}$ as the future field of defensible recognition enabled by preserved traces. The formulation is conceptual rather than quantitative. Its purpose is to emphasize that preservation affects the set of historically grounded interpretations available to later subjects.

A preservation decision that destroys unique evidence can reduce this field. A decision that preserves plural and contextualized traces can expand it. Future interpretive freedom remains constrained by the past that actually occurred and by evidentiary standards governing historical inquiry.

This option-preserving structure connects re-recognizability to generativity. The historical record becomes a condition for future epistemic generation. Preservation allows future actors to produce interpretations and normative judgments that cannot be specified in advance.

14.12 Generative Relational Formulation of Historical Re-Recognizability

The preceding analysis supports a Generative Relational account of historical re-recognizability as preservation of sufficient relational traces for future historical judgment. The principle concerns the epistemic conditions inherited by subjects whose concepts, values, and research questions have yet to emerge.

Several components organize the account.

The first component is trace preservation. Material evidence, testimony, records, artifacts, and institutional documentation provide the basic historical substrate for later recognition.

The second component is relational context. Traces become more historically useful when the relations through which they were generated remain reconstructable.

The third component is plural coverage. Heterogeneous historical positions produce different evidence concerning the same relational configuration. Preserving multiple positions expands future reconstructive capacity.

The fourth component is classificatory transparency. Historical categories, metadata, and information systems should preserve enough information for later subjects to understand how records were organized and, where possible, to reclassify them under new analytical criteria.

The fifth component is archival reflexivity. Archives are historically generated institutions whose selection procedures and silences form part of the history they preserve.

The sixth component is interpretive openness. Preservation should maintain the possibility that later conceptual and normative resources will support historically grounded interpretations unavailable to current actors.

The seventh component is proportionality. Re-recognizability operates together with privacy, dignity, security, material constraints, and other legitimate claims that shape preservation.

The eighth component is resistance to destructive closure. Unique and historically consequential traces deserve heightened protection where their loss would permanently narrow future capacity for historical inquiry.

The ninth component is intergenerational responsibility. Present institutions shape the evidentiary environment inherited by future subjects and therefore bear responsibility for avoidable destruction of future recognitional possibility.

The tenth component is revisability of archival practice itself. Preservation criteria should remain open to modification as technologies, historical questions, ethical standards, and understandings of archival asymmetry develop.

Historical re-recognizability can therefore be stated as a normative principle: political and epistemic institutions should, within proportionate ethical and practical limits, preserve sufficient traces, contextual relations, and classificatory transparency for future subjects to reconsider historically significant configurations through evidence and concepts unavailable to the present.

This principle complements the revisability of belief developed in Section 13. Revisability concerns the relation from present judgment toward future manifestation. Re-recognizability concerns the relation from present preservation toward future interpretation. The first keeps political belief responsive to the history it helps produce. The second keeps historical knowledge responsive to subjects whose modes of recognition have yet to emerge.

Together, the two principles support a recursive conception of historical praxis. Political actors project possible futures, commit to action, generate new relations, evaluate manifested consequences, preserve the traces of that process, and enable later subjects to reopen both the judgment and the history through which it was formed.

The next section places these two principles within the wider problem of historical judgment in an unfinished future. Its focus is the practical stance required when political actors must commit under uncertainty while preserving the conditions through which their commitments can later be revised and historically re-recognized.

15 Historical Judgment in an Unfinished Future

This section integrates the preceding analysis into a practical conception of historical judgment under conditions of an unfinished future. Its role is to bring together prospective judgment, political commitment, praxis, manifestation, belief revisability, and historical re-recognizability within one normative structure. The discussion proceeds through the practical necessity of judgment, the provisional closure required for action, the recursive revision of normative commitments, the preservation of future recognitional capacity, the distribution of historical responsibility across generations, and the institutional conditions appropriate to political action whose consequences cannot be fully known in advance. The section concludes by formulating a Generative Relational conception of historically responsible praxis centered on commitment, revisability, and openness to future recognition.

15.1 Historical Agency under Incomplete Foresight

Political actors act from within history while directing action toward futures that have not yet become fully available to experience. This temporal position creates a permanent asymmetry between practical necessity and epistemic completeness. Reform cannot wait until the consequences of reform have already manifested. Institutional design cannot begin from direct observation of the complete social relations that the institution itself may later generate. Political judgment therefore operates under conditions in which action precedes full historical knowledge.

Koselleck's distinction between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation provides an important conceptual background for this structure [19]. Historical actors inherit accumulated experience while orienting themselves toward futures whose content cannot be exhausted by that experience. Bloch's account of the "not-yet" similarly gives unrealized possibility a constitutive role in human orientation and political imagination [5]. These approaches support a conception of historical agency in which practical orientation exceeds already manifested reality.

The inability to know the future completely therefore creates a condition of political agency rather than merely a deficiency in political knowledge. Agents exercise historical agency by selecting among projected possibilities, organizing commitments, and participating in the generation of relations that do not yet exist.

This practical condition gives political judgment a prospective character. Present actors can possess strong reasons for preferring one trajectory while remaining unable to specify the complete configuration that will later emerge. The normative legitimacy of prospective judgment therefore depends upon the quality of the reasons available at the time, the treatment of foreseeable risks, the openness of the transition to correction, and the preservation of capacities required for later learning.

Historical agency also remains relationally distributed. Individuals and groups differ in their ability to project futures, mobilize resources, institutionalize commitments, and shape the conditions under which collective action occurs. Judgment in an unfinished future therefore raises questions concerning whose projections acquire practical force and whose anticipated harms remain weakly represented.

A Generative Relational account treats this distribution as part of the historical field rather than as an external constraint upon otherwise free choice. Political agency concerns both the capacity to select trajectories and the relational conditions that determine whose selections can become historically effective.

15.2 Provisional Closure and Practical Commitment

Political action requires moments of provisional closure. Deliberation can expand the evidentiary basis of judgment, clarify normative commitments, and identify alternative trajectories, while a practical decision eventually requires one orientation to acquire priority over competing possibilities. Institutions, movements, and political communities cannot maintain coordinated action where every commitment remains permanently suspended.

Provisional closure gives a judgment sufficient practical stability to guide action without assigning it final historical authority. Dewey's account of ends-in-view offers a useful model for this relation. Ends organize conduct within an ongoing practical process and remain capable of reconstruction as conditions change [9]. Political commitment can operate similarly: a projected future acquires enough stability to coordinate action while remaining connected to subsequent experience.

The distinction between provisional closure and final closure is central to the paper's account of historical humility. A government can adopt a policy, a movement can pursue a transformative programme, and a political community can commit to a constitutional direction while preserving procedures through which later evidence can alter implementation or interpretation.

The practical value of closure depends partly upon duration. Some political projects require sustained commitment before their effects can be meaningfully evaluated. Institutional learning, capacity formation, and cultural adaptation can unfold across extended periods. Frequent reversal can prevent a political form from generating the relations necessary for its own evaluation.

The same temporal requirement creates a risk. A commitment maintained for too long after serious contradictory evidence has accumulated can convert practical stability into dogmatic persistence. The appropriate duration of closure therefore depends upon the maturity of the process, the reversibility of its effects, the distribution of burdens, and the quality of the feedback available to decision makers.

Provisional closure is consequently a temporally structured political practice. It permits action while maintaining a defined relation to future reopening.

15.3 Recursive Normativity and Historical Learning

Historical praxis can alter the normative environment in which earlier judgments were formed. New relations can reveal harms previously difficult to recognize, generate political capacities that change the meaning of freedom or equality, and produce experiences through which existing values acquire new interpretations. Normative judgment therefore develops recursively through history.

The paper's distinction between pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment is especially important at this level. Prospective judgment evaluates an unrealized form under the normative resources available at an earlier historical position. Post-manifestation judgment evaluates a relational configuration generated through practice and can therefore draw upon experiences, concepts, and values that emerged during the transition.

This recursive structure gives normativity a historical dimension while preserving the possibility of strong judgment. A later actor can condemn relations that earlier institutions normalized. A later political community can retain commitments to equality or freedom while revising the institutional meaning of those commitments. Historical development can therefore generate both new objects of evaluation and new capacities for evaluation.

Jaeggi's account of progress as a process of social learning provides one important contemporary framework for understanding this structure [17]. Progress can be associated with the capacity of social formations to respond to historically generated problems and learn through failures of existing practices. The present framework adds an explicit temporal distinction between the judgment that guides a transition and the judgment available after the transition has generated new relations.

Recursive normativity should therefore be interpreted through continuity and revision together. Political commitments can persist across time while their relational content develops. A commitment to non-domination can acquire new applications when technological systems generate forms of dependency absent from earlier political theory. A commitment to equality can acquire new meaning when social relations reveal systematic disparities hidden by formal status.

Historical learning occurs where generated experience can alter the content, scope, or implementation of normative commitments. A political order becomes epistemically rigid where its own consequences lose the capacity to influence the standards and interpretations through which it is evaluated.

15.4 Preservation of Future Recognitional Capacity

Historical learning depends upon future access to the traces of present judgment and action. Political actors therefore shape the epistemic environment of later generations through decisions concerning archives, records, classification, testimony, preservation, and institutional memory.

Section 14 developed this relation through the principle of re-recognizability. The principle acquires particular importance in an unfinished future because present actors cannot know which relations later subjects will regard as historically significant.

A political decision can appear well documented under current administrative categories while leaving future interpreters unable to reconstruct assumptions, dissent, informal practices, or localized harms. A preservation system designed exclusively around present relevance can therefore narrow future historical judgment before future concepts and questions have emerged.

The preservation of future recognitional capacity requires a degree of epistemic option value. Records of initial expectations, alternative proposals, dissenting assessments, implementation processes, and distributed consequences expand the range of historically grounded questions that later subjects can ask.

Ricoeur's analysis of memory, archives, representation, and forgetting provides an important background to this responsibility [29]. The past becomes historically available through traces whose survival and organization condition later interpretation. Re-recognizability therefore depends upon both preservation and the relational context necessary for interpretation.

The future-oriented significance of preservation also creates a limit on present classificatory confidence. Current actors may possess compelling reasons for organizing records through one taxonomy while recognizing that future analysis can require different equivalence relations. Preservation of context and lower-level traces can maintain the possibility of later reclassification.

An unfinished future therefore gives archival practice a generative function. The historical record becomes part of the infrastructure through which future normative and political judgment can develop.

15.5 Intergenerational Distribution of Historical Responsibility

Political praxis distributes responsibility across time. Present actors inherit institutions, harms, capacities, and records generated by earlier decisions. Their own actions create conditions that later actors will inherit. Historical responsibility therefore extends beyond the immediate relation between a decision maker and a contemporaneous outcome.

This intergenerational structure contains several forms of responsibility.

Present actors bear responsibility for the quality of prospective judgment under the evidence and concepts available to them. They also bear responsibility for foreseeable consequences of implementation and for maintaining reasonable corrective capacity where uncertainty is substantial.

Actors participating in a transition bear responsibility for the relations generated through the process, including harms imposed upon subjects whose capacity to influence the transition may be limited. The normative evaluation of a future political form therefore includes the justice of the path through which it is produced.

Institutions bear responsibility for preserving records that allow later subjects to reconstruct the grounds and consequences of present action. This responsibility becomes stronger where information loss is irreversible and the relevant decisions have substantial historical effects.

Future actors inherit a different responsibility. Their expanded epistemic position can support criticism of earlier judgments, while responsible historical evaluation also requires reconstruction of the evidence, concepts, constraints, and alternatives available to earlier actors. Hindsight should inform judgment without erasing the temporal asymmetry between earlier and later positions.

Intergenerational historical responsibility therefore combines accountability with interpretive charity. Earlier harms remain available to criticism, and earlier judgments remain situated within the historical conditions from which they were formed.

This relation is especially important for political traditions that understand themselves as continuing projects across generations. A later generation can remain committed to an inherited normative orientation while revising its institutional forms and historical interpretation.

15.6 Institutional Architecture for an Unfinished Future

A political order that acknowledges the unfinished character of history requires institutional capacities suited to action under uncertainty. The principles developed in this paper therefore have implications for institutional architecture.

The first capacity is anticipatory reasoning. Institutions require mechanisms for projecting possible consequences, comparing alternatives, and identifying the assumptions underlying prospective judgment. Foresight does not eliminate uncertainty, while it improves the quality of commitments formed before manifestation.

The second capacity is distributed observation. Political consequences emerge across heterogeneous relational positions. Institutions therefore require channels through which locally experienced effects can enter collective evaluation.

The third capacity is staged commitment. Where uncertainty and irreversibility are high, transitional design can preserve opportunities for learning before the most consequential relations become difficult to alter.

The fourth capacity is procedural reopening. Policies, constitutional arrangements, and institutional programmes can contain review mechanisms that permit accumulated evidence to trigger reconsideration.

The fifth capacity is archival continuity. Records of expectations, classifications, dissent, implementation, and consequences preserve the historical basis for later reassessment.

The sixth capacity is classificatory transparency. Institutions should document the categories through which populations, outcomes, and political problems are represented, allowing later actors to reconstruct and revise those categories.

The seventh capacity is preservation of plural testimony. Heterogeneous experience provides relationally distributed evidence concerning the manifested order.

The eighth capacity is corrective capability. Political systems require means for altering trajectories where generated relations substantially diverge from the goods that originally justified the project.

These capacities do not prescribe a single institutional form. Their relevance varies across constitutional systems, administrative domains, political cultures, and levels of governance. They identify functions required by a political order that seeks to combine commitment with historical learning.

The resulting institutional orientation differs from governance organized around permanent provisionality. Durable commitments can remain necessary for rights, constitutional stability, public infrastructure, and long-term social coordination. The objective is to preserve historically appropriate channels through which such commitments can be interpreted, criticized, and revised.

15.7 Practical Humility and Political Courage

Historical uncertainty can support two contrasting political errors. One error assigns excessive certainty to a projected future and treats subsequent manifestation as confirmation of an already known historical direction. Another error allows uncertainty to weaken political commitment to the point that transformative action becomes impossible.

The framework developed in this paper seeks a practical relation between these positions. Historical humility concerns recognition of the limits attached to present knowledge, classification, and projection. Political courage concerns the willingness to act upon sufficiently justified commitments despite those limits.

These dispositions are complementary. Humility without practical commitment can leave entrenched injustice undisturbed. Commitment without humility can insulate political projects from the consequences they generate.

The practical relation between the two can be expressed as a discipline of responsible commitment. Actors form judgments through the strongest reasons and evidence available, identify uncertainty and irreversible risks, choose a trajectory, preserve mechanisms for observation and correction, and remain prepared to revise the relevant level of commitment when manifestation changes the grounds of judgment.

This disposition is compatible with strong political conviction. A movement can regard severe domination as unacceptable, organize substantial transformation, and maintain firm normative commitments while remaining open to revision concerning institutional means, sequencing, causal assumptions, and newly generated relations.

The same discipline applies to Generative Relational theory. The framework can defend generativity, revisability, relational analysis, and future recognizability as valuable principles while acknowledging that later historical experience may reveal limitations in their present formulation.

Practical humility therefore concerns the form of confidence appropriate to an unfinished history. It permits judgment and action while preserving the historical conditions through which judgment can later learn from what action has generated.

15.8 Continuity without Finality

Historical openness does not require every generation to begin its normative and institutional life anew. Political orders depend upon continuity in rights, institutions, infrastructure, knowledge, language, memory, and social expectations. The challenge is to preserve continuity without converting inherited arrangements into final forms.

Continuity can operate through normative commitments whose institutional expression changes. A society can preserve a commitment to political equality while revising electoral institutions. It can preserve a commitment to social security while altering the mechanisms through which security is provided. It can preserve historical memory while revising the categories through which that memory is interpreted.

This structure gives tradition a generative role. Inherited forms provide resources for future action, while later actors can reinterpret and recombine them within changed relational configurations. Historical continuity therefore contains both preservation and transformation.

Marx's analysis in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* illustrates the political power of inherited historical languages and forms within new circumstances [21]. The same inheritance can constrain action and provide resources through which new action becomes intelligible.

Continuity without finality also applies to political theory. Historical materialism, liberalism, republicanism, feminism, ecological political thought, and other traditions persist partly because later actors reinterpret their concepts in response to new historical relations. Intellectual continuity therefore need not require identical formulations across generations.

A Generative Relational account treats such continuity as trajectory-dependent persistence. A tradition remains identifiable because selected commitments, questions, methods, or relations continue to organize inquiry, while the manifested form of the tradition changes through historical practice.

This understanding supports a historically modest conception of inheritance. Present actors receive political and intellectual resources whose significance was generated through earlier history. Their responsibility includes both critical evaluation and preservation of the conditions through which later subjects can continue the same process.

15.9 Generative Relational Synthesis of Unfinished Historical Judgment

The arguments developed throughout this paper can now be integrated into a Generative Relational conception of historical judgment. Historical actors inherit a relational configuration shaped by earlier praxis. They use historically available evidence, concepts, normative commitments, and aesthetic forms to project possible futures. Prospective judgment identifies trajectories judged worthy of pursuit. Political commitment converts these judgments into practice. Praxis generates new relations. The manifested configuration then provides new evidence and new normative experiences. Beliefs become available for revision, while preserved historical traces make the process available for future re-recognition.

This structure contains several forms of openness.

The first is prospective openness. The future contains multiple relational possibilities whose complete configuration is unavailable to present actors.

The second is generative openness. Political practice can create institutions, subjects, dependencies, capacities, and evaluative resources absent from the earlier historical state.

The third is epistemic openness. Manifested consequences can revise causal models and political expectations.

The fourth is normative openness. Historical experience can transform the meaning, scope, and relative importance of political values.

The fifth is historiographical openness. Future subjects can reinterpret the past through evidence and concepts unavailable to present actors.

Historical responsibility consists partly in maintaining these forms of openness while making decisions that necessarily reduce the field of immediate possibilities. Political action always selects, commits, and constrains. Responsible praxis preserves sufficient corrective and recognitional capacity for those selections to remain historically answerable.

The resulting position can be described as committed historical fallibilism within a Generative Relational framework. The phrase indicates a political stance whose commitments are substantive, whose actions are consequential, and whose claims remain responsive to the history generated through those actions.

The framework therefore treats the unfinished character of history as a condition of political judgment. Human beings must project because future relations are not fully given. They must commit because historical action requires direction. They must remain revisable because praxis generates consequences and relations unavailable to prior judgment. They must preserve historical traces because later subjects will possess capacities of recognition that current actors cannot fully anticipate.

The two normative principles developed in Sections 13 and 14 can therefore be understood as temporal complements. Belief revisability preserves the openness of judgment toward a future that has yet to manifest. Historical re-recognizability preserves the openness of the past toward subjects who have yet to interpret it.

Together they support a practical orientation in which political actors can pursue a better future without claiming final knowledge of the form that future will take. Historical judgment remains necessary because action cannot be postponed until history is complete. Historical humility remains necessary because every manifested order becomes part of a continuing process of generation, recognition, and renewed judgment.

The following section examines the limitations of this account. It addresses the scope of the Generative Relational vocabulary, the operational difficulty of identifying relational configurations, the normative status of revisability, the limits of quotient-based representation, and the risks associated with extending a preliminary philosophical framework beyond the domains in which its distinctions can be adequately supported.

16 Analytical Scope and Methodological Limitations

This section specifies the boundaries of the preliminary Generative Relational account developed in the preceding sections. Its role is to distinguish the paper's conceptual contribution from stronger claims that the present framework does not establish. The discussion proceeds through the scope of the relational representation, the operational difficulty of historical configurations, the limits of transition comparison, the dependence of quotient construction upon analytical criteria, the incompleteness of normative ordering, the reflexivity of historical interpretation, the evidentiary limits of re-recognizability, and the risks associated with political use of the framework. The section concludes by clarifying the provisional status of the proposed concepts and the kinds of further work required before stronger explanatory or prescriptive claims can be made.

16.1 Scope of the Relational Representation

The framework represents historical situations through relational configurations such as R_t . This notation provides a compact way to indicate that political forms exist through historically generated relations rather than as isolated institutional objects. Its analytical convenience should not be interpreted as a claim that a complete historical configuration can be specified exhaustively.

Historical relations are heterogeneous. Productive structures, legal institutions, technologies, ecological conditions, political organizations, forms of knowledge, cultural interpretation, social identities, and transnational dependencies possess different temporalities and modes of causation. A single notation can indicate their joint relevance while leaving their internal structure unresolved.

The abstraction therefore has limited explanatory content until the relevant relations are specified for a concrete inquiry. A study of constitutional change may require detailed legal and institutional variables. A study of economic transition may place productive relations, property structures, and fiscal capacity at the center. A study of historical memory may require different objects altogether.

The framework consequently does not provide a universal state vector for history. It provides a relational orientation that requires domain-specific elaboration.

This limitation also constrains cross-case comparison. Two historical cases can be represented through the same general vocabulary while differing substantially in the relations that are causally or normatively important. Generative Relational terminology therefore cannot substitute for historical and empirical analysis of the case under study.

16.2 Operationalization of Historical Configurations

The concept of a historical-relational configuration raises substantial operational difficulties. Many relevant relations cannot be directly observed, and some become visible only through indirect evidence,

archival reconstruction, or retrospective interpretation.

The problem is especially significant where informal institutions, cultural expectations, social trust, tacit knowledge, or power relations are central to the analysis. Formal institutional records can provide a misleading appearance of completeness when the practical operation of an institution depends heavily upon relations that were weakly documented.

The temporal boundary of a configuration also requires judgment. Historical processes rarely begin and end at clearly defined moments. A reform enacted on a particular date can depend upon capacities developed over decades and can generate consequences long after its formal implementation.

Selection of the relevant scale creates an additional difficulty. A national transition can contain divergent regional trajectories. A legal reform can produce different relations across social groups. A political form that appears stable at one level of aggregation can contain substantial instability at another.

Operationalization therefore requires explicit choices concerning temporal window, spatial scale, unit of analysis, and relational variables. These choices can affect the resulting historical interpretation.

The framework does not eliminate this dependence. Its contribution is to make the dependence visible and to encourage analysts to identify the relations whose inclusion is necessary for the claim being made.

16.3 Limits of Transition Comparison

The paper places substantial weight on the trajectory Γ through which one configuration becomes another. Historical trajectories, however, are difficult to compare because only one realized sequence is directly available for a given historical transition.

Counterfactual alternatives remain model-dependent. A later evaluator can compare the manifested path with options discussed by contemporary actors or with historically plausible alternatives, while the consequences of those unrealized paths remain partly inferential.

This asymmetry limits strong causal claims concerning transition quality. Historical evidence can identify mechanisms, constraints, and missed opportunities without providing complete access to the outcomes associated with every alternative sequence.

The problem becomes more severe where transitions interact with rare events, international shocks, technological changes, or political decisions whose timing materially alters the trajectory. The same institutional proposal can generate different consequences under different conjunctures.

Path-sensitive evaluation should therefore be interpreted as a requirement to include transition processes in political judgment, rather than as a claim that all relevant counterfactual trajectories can be reconstructed with high confidence.

This limitation also affects judgments of premature and delayed transition. The framework can identify relational mismatch, capacity constraints, and destructive delay. It cannot provide a general algorithm for determining the optimal historical moment of transformation.

16.4 Dependence of Historical Equivalence on Analytical Criteria

The quotient framework introduced in Sections 10 and 11 depends upon the specification of an equivalence criterion. This dependence is analytically productive because it forces claims of historical sameness to disclose the structure they preserve. It also creates a substantive limitation.

Historical configurations rarely arrive with a uniquely privileged equivalence relation. A constitutional historian, political economist, sociologist, historian of ideas, and legal theorist can construct different categories from the same historical material. Each classification can be well justified for its own purpose.

The quotient therefore cannot determine its own criterion. The selection of the criterion requires substantive theoretical and empirical reasoning.

Goodman's analysis of similarity provides a related caution: resemblance becomes meaningful through specified respects of comparison rather than through an unrestricted notion of likeness [13]. The same problem appears in historical equivalence. A formal partition can be rigorous once the criterion is established, while the choice of criterion remains part of the historical argument.

Classification can also acquire normative consequences. A criterion that suppresses relations of domination, exclusion, or differential vulnerability can produce an analytically coherent quotient that remains inadequate for the normative question under consideration.

The framework therefore cannot eliminate disagreement about historical categories. It can improve the structure of that disagreement by making preserved and discarded relations explicit.

16.5 Incomplete Normative Ordering

The paper rejects both indiscriminate historical relativism and the assumption that every political form can be placed on one complete scale of advancement. This intermediate position creates an unavoidable limitation: some historical comparisons remain normatively underdetermined.

Political configurations can distribute gains and losses across several dimensions. A transition can increase productive capacity while reducing ecological stability. It can expand formal political participation while creating new economic dependencies. It can strengthen collective provision while reducing some forms of local autonomy.

The framework permits strong comparative judgments where relevant reasons converge. Sen's account of comparative justice demonstrates that meaningful comparisons can remain possible even where a complete ordering is unavailable [31]. The present paper adopts a similar openness to incomplete ranking.

Incomplete ordering, however, leaves some political conflicts unresolved at the level of formal theory. Where several values remain genuinely in tension, the framework does not generate a unique normative solution.

Such cases require additional political and philosophical reasoning concerning the relative importance of the values at stake, the distribution of burdens, the legitimacy of decision procedures, and the identities of affected subjects.

The historical situatedness of normative criteria adds another layer of complexity. Present evaluators can defend strong normative commitments while recognizing that later historical positions may articulate dimensions of value that remain weakly visible today.

The framework therefore provides a structure for comparison and revision while leaving substantive normative theory indispensable.

16.6 Reflexivity of the Evaluative Framework

The paper treats historical judgment as historically situated. The same condition applies to the Generative Relational framework itself.

Concepts such as relationality, generativity, revisability, emergence, re-recognizability, and path sensitivity possess particular contemporary intellectual conditions of intelligibility. Systems theory, network analysis, historical sociology, complexity research, ecological thought, digital infrastructure, and contemporary political experience contribute to the environment in which such concepts appear analytically attractive.

Recognition of this situatedness creates a reflexive requirement. The framework cannot treat its own vocabulary as occupying a final position outside history.

This reflexivity does not reduce the framework to an arbitrary product of its period. Historically situated concepts can possess explanatory and normative value. The point concerns their claim to completeness.

Future historical experience can reveal relations insufficiently represented by the present framework. Concepts currently treated as analytically central can require revision. New normative vocabularies can identify harms or capacities that the current account does not adequately describe.

The principle of belief revisability therefore applies to the framework that proposes it. Internal consistency requires that Generative Relational theory remain available for modification in response to later practice and evidence.

This reflexive limitation is especially important because theories of historical openness can themselves become closed doctrines if their own categories are treated as historically privileged.

16.7 Evidentiary Limits of Historical Re-Recognizability

Historical re-recognizability depends upon surviving traces, while preservation can never be complete. Records are lost through material decay, conflict, institutional neglect, privacy protection, technological obsolescence, selection, and ordinary limitations of archival capacity.

Trouillot's analysis of silence in historical production demonstrates that power and selection operate throughout the creation and preservation of historical evidence [34]. Ricoeur likewise emphasizes the mediated relation among memory, archives, representation, and forgetting [29].

The principle of re-recognizability therefore cannot guarantee future access to a complete historical configuration. It can only support preservation practices that reduce avoidable destruction of historically significant traces and retain sufficient context for later reinterpretation.

Future interpretive possibility also depends upon technological and linguistic continuity. Digital preservation can fail despite physical retention where file formats, metadata, encryption systems, or software environments become unusable. Written records can remain materially intact while the conceptual world required for their interpretation becomes difficult to reconstruct.

Privacy and dignity constrain preservation as well. A system designed to maximize future historical access can impose serious contemporary harms through indefinite retention of sensitive personal information.

Re-recognizability must therefore remain a proportional principle. It provides a reason to preserve future epistemic possibility while operating together with rights, security, privacy, material constraints, and the legitimate interests of historical subjects.

The principle is strongest where evidence is unique, historically consequential, and irrecoverable once destroyed. Even in such cases, the appropriate form of preservation can involve restricted access, delayed disclosure, anonymization, or other protective mechanisms.

16.8 Normative Risks of Revisability

Revisability can itself be used in politically problematic ways. A government can invoke uncertainty to postpone commitments to basic rights. Institutions can reopen settled protections repeatedly in response to short-term political pressure. Political actors can describe enduring normative commitments as provisional in ways that create insecurity for vulnerable populations.

The principle therefore requires boundaries. Revisability concerns the capacity of political judgment to respond to historically relevant evidence and generated relations. It does not imply equal instability across every type of commitment.

Some political commitments require substantial durability in order to perform their protective function. Constitutional rights, legal status, social security, and protections against severe domination can lose much of their practical value if subjects cannot reasonably rely upon them across time.

The relevant problem concerns which component of a political arrangement should remain revisable and at which level. A society can maintain a strong commitment to equal political standing while revising electoral institutions. It can maintain a commitment to protection from poverty while revising the mechanisms through which social provision is organized.

Revision can therefore operate at the level of empirical belief, causal model, institutional means, sequencing, interpretation, or normative commitment, as distinguished in Section 13.3.

The framework does not provide a universal rule determining which level should be reopened in every case. Political judgment must assess the strength of the evidence, the depth of the generated contradiction, the rights at stake, and the costs of institutional instability.

Revisability should consequently be understood as a capacity for justified correction rather than as a preference for permanent institutional fluidity.

16.9 Risks of Conservative and Accelerative Appropriation

The language of historical conditions can support opposing forms of political misuse.

A conservative appropriation can invoke missing generative conditions to argue that a society is never ready for political transformation. Claims concerning institutional immaturity, cultural unreadiness, or insufficient capacity can become instruments for preserving relations that benefit incumbent actors.

An accelerative appropriation can treat political will as sufficient to generate every missing condition rapidly. Material constraints, organizational limits, institutional load, and the temporal development of supporting capacities can then be underestimated.

The framework developed in Section 8 attempts to resist both uses by treating prematurity and delay as relational problems. A claim of prematurity requires specification of the missing conditions, the mechanisms through which their absence affects the transition, and the possibility that those conditions can be generated through practice.

A claim favoring rapid transformation requires comparable attention to institutional load, transition costs, corrective capacity, and the distribution of risk.

Historical context therefore supplies grounds for analysis rather than an automatic conclusion concerning political speed.

The same safeguard applies to claims of historical necessity. A developmental narrative can be used to justify coercive acceleration by presenting one successor form as inevitable. It can also justify passive preservation by claiming that transformation must wait for history to produce the appropriate conditions automatically.

A praxis-oriented account places responsibility upon political actors to evaluate and transform those conditions rather than treating them as either irrelevant or self-correcting.

16.10 Limits of Formal Representation

The paper uses mathematical notation to clarify distinctions among historical states, equivalence classes, trajectories, judgments, and update relations. These representations are conceptual devices. They do not constitute a validated quantitative model of historical development.

The notation suppresses substantial internal complexity. A symbol such as R_t can represent a historically rich relational configuration whose components do not share common units of measurement. A judgment operator can represent heterogeneous forms of political reasoning that cannot be reduced to one calculable function.

The quotient formalism is exact only after an equivalence relation has been adequately specified. Many historical comparisons involve graded resemblance, contested categories, or relations whose boundaries remain uncertain.

The feasible-trajectory representation developed in Section 9 also faces substantial operational limits. Complete specification of all historically feasible trajectories is generally impossible. The concept is useful for distinguishing conditional necessity from realized history, while empirical application would require domain-specific approximations.

The belief-revision formulation likewise leaves the update operator unspecified. Political belief revision cannot be represented adequately by one universal rule because empirical, causal, strategic, and normative revisions operate through different standards.

Formal notation therefore serves three limited functions in this paper: distinguishing concepts, exposing hidden assumptions, and identifying possible directions for later formalization.

Stronger mathematical claims would require specification of variables, measurement procedures, model assumptions, and empirical domains whose validity extends beyond the present philosophical inquiry.

16.11 Empirical and Comparative Boundaries

The argument developed in this paper remains primarily philosophical and conceptual. Historical examples and institutional literatures illustrate the framework, while the paper does not conduct systematic empirical tests of the proposed distinctions.

Several claims are therefore best treated as hypotheses for later comparative research. These include the practical usefulness of distinguishing pre-manifestation and post-manifestation judgment, the explanatory value of generative viability, the institutional effects of corrective capacity, and the analytical usefulness of quotient-sensitive recurrence.

Comparative application would require carefully selected cases. Political transitions with extensive archival documentation could permit reconstruction of prospective judgment, transition trajectory, manifested relations, and later reassessment. Institutional restorations could provide cases for studying phenomenal recurrence and relational novelty. Policy experiments could provide cases for examining decision-generated evidence.

Cross-cultural comparison would also test the portability of the framework. Concepts of history, progress, political agency, memory, and institutional continuity differ across intellectual and political traditions. A framework developed substantially through European philosophy and Marxist praxis requires careful engagement with additional historical traditions before broader claims can be justified.

The paper therefore provides an analytical vocabulary and a set of distinctions whose empirical productivity remains to be demonstrated through subsequent historical and comparative work.

16.12 Preliminary Status of the Generative Relational Account

The present account is intentionally preliminary. It proposes a way to organize several problems of historical judgment whose full treatment would require substantially broader engagement with philosophy of history, Marxist theory, historiography, political epistemology, institutional theory, archival studies, and normative political philosophy.

Its principal contribution lies in the conjunction of several distinctions: judgment before and after manifestation, praxis as verification and generation, historical advancement as situated comparison, transition as a generative trajectory, recurrence as quotient-dependent, belief as revisable, and history as re-recognizable.

Each distinction remains open to refinement.

Manifestation requires clearer criteria concerning when a political form has become sufficiently actual for post-manifestation evaluation.

Generative viability requires empirical methods for identifying necessary, co-generable, and substitutable conditions.

Quotient-sensitive recurrence requires domain-specific equivalence relations and measures of similarity.

Belief revisability requires a more developed account of evidentiary thresholds and normative stability.

Historical re-recognizability requires deeper integration with archival ethics, privacy, memory politics, and digital preservation.

The framework should therefore be understood as a preliminary research programme rather than a completed philosophy of history. Its value depends upon whether the distinctions developed here improve historical explanation, political judgment, and the design of institutions capable of learning through practice.

The following section develops open questions arising from these limitations. Its purpose is to identify the theoretical, formal, empirical, and normative problems that require further investigation before the proposed framework can support stronger claims concerning historical judgment and political praxis.

17 Open Questions and Research Directions

This section develops the research agenda implied by the limitations identified in Section 16. Its role is to distinguish problems that remain conceptually unresolved from problems requiring formal, empirical, institutional, or comparative development. The discussion proceeds through the specification of manifestation, the structure of historical relational configurations, the measurement of generative viability, the formalization of historical advancement, the temporal organization of revisability, the design of re-recognizable archives, the analysis of historical equivalence, the reconstruction of feasible historical alternatives, the comparison of intellectual traditions, and the empirical evaluation of the framework. These directions define a programme of inquiry rather than a set of claims already established by the present paper.

17.1 Criteria of Historical Manifestation

The concept of manifestation performs a central role throughout this paper, yet its boundaries remain only partially specified. A political form can become legally effective at one moment, institutionally operational at another, socially reproduced at a later stage, and culturally normalized over a still longer period. Historical manifestation therefore appears to possess several temporal and relational dimensions.

Further work should distinguish among formal, institutional, behavioral, relational, and normative manifestation. A constitution can manifest formally when enacted, institutionally when offices and procedures operate through it, behaviorally when political actors organize expectations around it, relationally when it produces stable patterns of interaction, and normatively when the form acquires a recognizable place within the evaluative practices of the society.

These dimensions may develop asynchronously. A legal reform can become formally effective while social practices continue to reproduce the preceding order. Conversely, social practices can transform substantially before formal law changes. A more precise theory of manifestation therefore requires a model of partial and heterogeneous realization.

The temporal boundary between prospective and post-manifestation judgment also depends upon this specification. Early evaluation can occur after formal implementation while important relational consequences remain weakly developed. Later evaluation can reveal structures that were already present but previously difficult to observe. A future account should therefore treat manifestation as a process with identifiable stages rather than as a single date.

The resulting analysis could clarify which kinds of evidence become available at each stage and which normative judgments are appropriate to the degree of manifestation already achieved.

17.2 Structure of Historical Relational Configurations

The notation R_t represents a historically situated relational configuration, while the internal architecture of that configuration remains deliberately broad in the present paper. Further theoretical work should identify how relational configurations can be represented without collapsing heterogeneous historical processes into one undifferentiated state.

One direction is to distinguish several interacting relational domains, such as productive relations, political authority, legal institutions, technological infrastructure, epistemic systems, cultural interpretation, ecological conditions, and transnational relations. Each domain could possess its own state variables, temporal scale, and internal mechanisms while remaining coupled to the others.

A second direction concerns relational hierarchy. Some relations can function as background conditions for many others, while some operate locally or transiently. Historical analysis requires methods for distinguishing high-leverage relations from peripheral relations without assigning a fixed causal hierarchy across every case.

A third direction concerns relational granularity. The relevant historical configuration changes with the scale of inquiry. National political order, regional institutions, organizations, households, and indi-

vidual subjects can all participate in the same historical process. A multilevel representation would need to preserve cross-scale interactions while remaining analytically tractable.

A fourth direction concerns relation formation and dissolution. Historical change includes creation of new relations, weakening of existing relations, and recomposition of earlier structures. A static network representation would be insufficient where the categories of nodes and relations themselves change over time.

These problems suggest that a fuller Generative Relational formalization should treat historical configurations as dynamically structured relational systems whose components, scales, and categories can themselves evolve.

17.3 Measurement of Generative Viability

Generative viability remains one of the most important concepts requiring empirical development. Section 8 defined viability through the relations necessary to generate and reproduce the principal goods attributed to a political form. A practical theory requires methods for identifying those relations before or during a transition.

Future work should distinguish at least three classes of conditions: substantial preconditions, co-generable conditions, and substitutable conditions. The distinction can reduce the tendency to treat institutional readiness as one aggregate quantity.

Substantial preconditions are relations whose severe absence makes a projected form difficult to sustain during the relevant transition horizon. Co-generable conditions can develop through participation in the new arrangement. Substitutable conditions allow alternative mechanisms to perform comparable functions.

Empirical analysis could identify these classes through comparative cases, historical process tracing, institutional experiments, and analysis of failed and successful transitions. Such research could also examine the degree to which a condition can move from one class to another as technology, institutional design, or political organization changes.

The concept of institutional load introduced in Section 8.5 requires similar development. Measurement could compare the demands created by a projected institution with the administrative, fiscal, epistemic, and organizational capacities available to meet them.

A mature account of generative viability would improve the analysis of prematurity and delay by replacing broad judgments of historical readiness with specific claims concerning relational dependence and capacity formation.

17.4 Formalization of Historical Advancement

The situated advancement relation introduced in Equation 4 remains schematic. Further work should clarify its formal properties and the conditions under which it functions as a partial order, preorder, family of local orders, or another comparative structure.

The relation may fail antisymmetry when distinct historical configurations are normatively equivalent under a given criterion. It may fail completeness where plural values produce unresolved trade-offs. Transitivity can also become problematic when the historical conditions under which separate comparisons are made differ substantially.

A single fixed ordering may therefore be inappropriate. One possible direction is to study a family of context-indexed relations $\{\preceq_\chi\}_{\chi \in \mathcal{C}}$, where each context χ specifies the historical relations, normative criteria, and transition conditions relevant to the comparison.

Such a formulation could distinguish stable comparative judgments from comparisons whose ordering changes with the historical context. It could also support analysis of robust advancement: cases where one configuration is judged preferable across a wide range of admissible criteria and contextual specifications.

Formal development should remain subordinate to normative interpretation. Mathematical consistency alone cannot determine which dimensions of political life deserve inclusion in the ordering. For-

malization can clarify the structure of the judgment while leaving substantive justification to political and moral reasoning.

17.5 Temporal Architecture of Belief Revisability

The principle of belief revisability requires a more detailed account of revision timing. Political systems face risks from both excessively rapid revision and excessively persistent commitment. Future work should identify the conditions governing appropriate temporal stability at different levels of belief.

Empirical expectations can often be revised more quickly than constitutional commitments. Institutional means can be adjusted more frequently than basic normative protections. Strategic sequencing can change while long-term political aims remain stable. A theory of revisability therefore requires differentiation among revision horizons.

One possible research direction is to define review intervals according to the expected maturation time of relevant consequences. Policies whose effects manifest quickly can support short feedback cycles. Institutional transformations whose relevant consequences unfold across decades require longer observational windows together with intermediate indicators of relational development.

Revision thresholds also require specification. A single discrepant outcome can provide weak evidence concerning a complex institutional model, while repeated patterns across relational positions can justify stronger revision. Future work could examine evidence aggregation, burden-sensitive thresholds, and the treatment of low-probability high-severity harms.

The temporal architecture of revisability should also include emergency conditions. Severe irreversible harm can justify rapid reopening even where the ordinary evaluation horizon has not elapsed. Conversely, some institutional experiments require protection from short-term political volatility in order to generate meaningful evidence.

These problems suggest a theory of differentiated revision rhythms rather than one general principle of institutional flexibility.

17.6 Institutional Design for Historical Re-Recognizability

Historical re-recognizability requires translation from a philosophical principle into archival and institutional design. Future research should identify which preservation practices most effectively maintain future interpretive possibility under practical constraints.

A first problem concerns informational granularity. Preservation of raw or low-level records can support future reclassification, while such preservation can impose substantial storage, privacy, and governance costs. Research should identify when aggregation destroys historically significant future option value.

A second problem concerns contextual metadata. Future interpretability depends upon information concerning provenance, category definitions, institutional purpose, measurement practices, and relations among records. Archival standards could therefore be evaluated according to the relational context they preserve.

A third problem concerns plural repositories. Central archives can achieve consistency and scale, while distributed archives can preserve perspectives weakly represented within official record systems. Comparative research could examine how combinations of institutional, community, and independent archives affect future relational coverage.

A fourth problem concerns technological continuity. Digital records depend upon formats, software, cryptographic systems, metadata schemas, and storage infrastructure whose obsolescence can reduce future recognizability even when the underlying files survive.

A fifth problem concerns access governance. Preservation and accessibility should be distinguished where privacy, security, or dignity require delayed or restricted disclosure.

These questions connect historical philosophy directly with archival studies, digital preservation, information governance, and public administration.

17.7 Historical Equivalence and Multiscale Quotients

The quotient framework developed in Sections 10 and 11 requires further work on the relations among multiple classification levels.

Historical inquiry often moves between phenomenal, institutional, economic, cultural, and relational descriptions. A later configuration can belong to the same class as an earlier one at one level and to a different class at another. A systematic theory should therefore describe how quotient spaces at different levels relate to one another.

One possibility is to construct mappings among quotient spaces where one classification refines another. A fine-grained classification can preserve distinctions that disappear under a coarser quotient. Historical analysis could then track which claims remain invariant under changes in classificatory resolution.

Another direction concerns partially overlapping criteria. Political categories often cut across one another without forming a simple hierarchy. A state can be classified simultaneously by regime type, production relations, imperial structure, welfare arrangements, and legal tradition. Multidimensional classification may therefore require products, lattices, or other structures rather than one nested sequence of quotients.

Historical equivalence also requires integration with approximate similarity. Some cases remain analytically important despite failing exact equivalence. Future work could develop principled distance measures or similarity structures for historical relations while retaining the caution that similarity is criterion-dependent.

The development of multiscale quotient analysis could make historical claims of continuity, recurrence, and transformation substantially more precise.

17.8 Reconstruction of Historical Possibility Fields

The framework repeatedly refers to historically available alternatives and feasible trajectories. Reconstructing such possibility fields is methodologically difficult because the analyst observes one realized history together with incomplete traces of unrealized alternatives.

Future work should develop methods for distinguishing historically articulated alternatives from possibilities invented retrospectively. Sources can include political programmes, administrative plans, correspondence, parliamentary debate, social movements, technical proposals, economic models, and records of institutional disagreement.

Historical feasibility also requires evaluation. An alternative can have been publicly proposed while lacking the material or organizational conditions required for implementation. Another possibility can have remained weakly articulated while possessing substantial practical feasibility.

A rigorous possibility-field reconstruction should therefore combine evidence of contemporary imagination with evidence concerning productive, institutional, political, and technological capacity.

Counterfactual methods from history, political science, and causal inference could contribute to this task, although their assumptions require careful adaptation to generative historical processes where interventions can change the structure of later possibilities.

Such reconstruction would improve the evaluation of historical necessity, political responsibility, and decision quality by making the range of contemporaneously available trajectories more explicit.

17.9 Comparative Traditions of Historical Praxis

The present paper develops largely through Marxist, pragmatist, critical theoretical, and European philosophy-of-history traditions. A broader account of historical judgment requires engagement with additional intellectual and political traditions.

Comparative work could examine traditions that conceptualize historical change, cyclicity, impermanence, mandate, moral cultivation, political decline, restoration, and collective memory through different conceptual structures. Chinese political thought, Buddhist and Daoist philosophies of change,

Islamic historiography, postcolonial traditions, Indigenous temporalities, and other intellectual histories may provide distinct resources for thinking about manifestation, recurrence, agency, and historical responsibility.

The objective of comparative inquiry should exceed the collection of analogies. Different traditions may organize the relation among time, agency, normativity, and political order through different primitives. Such differences can expose assumptions embedded in the current framework.

Comparative traditions can also alter the interpretation of progress. Developmental direction, cyclical transformation, moral decline, restoration, and plural temporality can receive different normative significance across historical contexts.

A Generative Relational approach should therefore treat comparative philosophy as a potential source of conceptual revision rather than as an external illustration of an already completed framework.

17.10 Empirical Domains for Framework Evaluation

The conceptual distinctions proposed in this paper require empirical evaluation. Several historical and institutional domains appear especially suitable for testing their analytical usefulness.

Political revolutions provide cases in which strong prospective commitments are followed by rapid generation of institutions, identities, and unintended relations. Such cases can test the distinction between projected and manifested political forms.

Post-conflict constitutional transitions provide cases for studying generative conditions, institutional load, sequencing, and corrective capacity.

Economic transitions provide opportunities to examine the relation between historical-material conditions and the viability of projected institutional forms.

Restorations of monarchies, constitutions, religious institutions, or local political structures provide cases for quotient-dependent recurrence and the distinction between formal restoration and relational novelty.

Decolonization provides especially rich cases for comparing formal political change with persistence or transformation in economic, legal, administrative, and cultural relations.

Long-term social policy provides cases in which prospective judgment, institutional learning, and normative reassessment occur across several generations.

Archival controversies provide empirical domains for historical re-recognizability, classification, silence, privacy, and the politics of future recognition.

Comparative case selection should include both transitions regarded as successful and transitions associated with severe failure. The objective is to test whether the proposed distinctions improve explanation and evaluation across divergent outcomes.

17.11 Normative Thresholds for Irreversible Action

Historical praxis often involves decisions whose consequences become difficult to reverse before their full relational significance can be known. The present paper identifies reversibility and corrective capacity as important considerations, while a fuller normative theory of irreversible action remains undeveloped.

Future work should examine how evidentiary thresholds should vary with the severity and irreversibility of potential consequences. A highly reversible institutional experiment can justify action under greater uncertainty than a transition capable of destroying essential productive, ecological, archival, or political capacities.

The distribution of irreversible risk also matters. A transition can preserve aggregate corrective capacity while imposing irreversible losses upon a specific population. A theory centered exclusively on system-level reversibility would therefore remain insufficient.

Normative analysis should also consider the relation between irreversible action and irreversible inaction. Delay can permit ecological degradation, institutional decay, political domination, or knowledge

loss to become more difficult to repair. The relevant comparison therefore concerns competing trajectories of irreversibility.

This problem links historical judgment with broader work in precaution, intergenerational justice, transition ethics, and decision-making under deep uncertainty.

17.12 Conditions of Normative Re-Recognition

Historical re-recognizability concerns the preservation of evidence and interpretive possibility, while future normative judgment also depends upon the development of concepts capable of recognizing previously invisible relations.

Further inquiry should examine how new normative categories emerge. Some arise through social movements, some through philosophical argument, some through scientific discovery, and some through experiences generated by new technologies or institutions.

The relation between experiential novelty and normative conceptualization is especially important. A historical subject can experience a harm before a widely available concept exists for naming it. Later conceptual development can reorganize the significance of preserved testimony and records.

Future work should therefore distinguish evidentiary re-recognizability from normative re-recognizability. The first concerns whether historical relations can be reconstructed. The second concerns whether available interpretive resources allow their normative significance to become intelligible.

The two forms interact. Preservation of evidence can support later conceptual innovation, while new concepts can make previously neglected evidence newly important.

This distinction may provide a bridge between historical re-recognizability and the broader Generative Relational concern with the preservation of capacities for future recognition.

17.13 Historical Learning across Collective Scales

The paper has treated political actors, institutions, and historical communities at several levels without providing a systematic account of how learning moves across those scales.

Individuals can revise beliefs while organizations remain rigid. Organizations can adapt while constitutional structures remain stable. States can change policy while international institutions preserve older rules. Historical learning therefore possesses a multilevel structure.

Future research should examine how revision at one level propagates to another. Institutional design can amplify or suppress local learning. Political organizations can aggregate dispersed experience into national policy. International systems can impose constraints that limit domestic adaptation.

The same issue applies to historical re-recognition. Community archives can preserve experiences absent from national archives. International institutions can preserve records that domestic political change later destroys. Cross-scale memory can therefore create redundancy and resilience in historical recognizability.

A multilevel theory of learning would strengthen the paper's treatment of generative praxis by specifying how local experience becomes collective knowledge and how collective commitments become responsive to distributed historical evidence.

17.14 Reflexive Evaluation of Generative Relational Theory

The final research direction concerns the framework itself. A theory centered on historically situated judgment should define conditions under which its own concepts deserve revision.

Future evaluation of Generative Relational theory should therefore ask whether the distinctions among projection, manifestation, relational generation, revisability, and re-recognizability improve explanation in concrete cases. Concepts that fail to produce analytical gains should be modified or removed.

The framework should also be examined for historical and cultural bias. Concepts that appear intuitive within contemporary systems and complexity vocabularies may impose inappropriate structures upon historical traditions organized through different ontologies or temporalities.

Normative commitments associated with generativity require independent justification. The contemporary attractiveness of adaptability, openness, and relationality should not substitute for analysis of their consequences for justice, stability, vulnerability, and collective capacity.

The quotient framework likewise requires empirical discipline. Mathematical language can clarify classification, while its precision can create a misleading appearance of formal completeness where historical categories remain contested.

Reflexive evaluation should therefore reproduce the same recursive structure proposed for political praxis: formulation, application, manifestation of analytical consequences, criticism, and revision.

17.15 Research Programme for Generative Historical Judgment

The open questions developed in this section indicate a research programme with four mutually dependent dimensions.

The conceptual dimension concerns manifestation, relational configuration, advancement, recurrence, and the structure of historical judgment.

The formal dimension concerns context-indexed orderings, multiscale quotients, similarity structures, feasible trajectory spaces, and models of belief revision.

The empirical dimension concerns comparative study of political transitions, restorations, revolutions, institutional reforms, and archival practices.

The normative dimension concerns revisability, irreversible action, re-recognizability, historiographical justice, and the preservation of future corrective capacity.

Progress in one dimension can reshape the others. Empirical cases can reveal conceptual distinctions absent from the present framework. Formal analysis can expose ambiguities in historical categories. Normative theory can identify relations requiring preservation in empirical study. Comparative philosophy can reorganize the conceptual vocabulary through which the entire research programme is framed.

The research programme therefore remains generative in the same sense as its object. Its categories should develop through interaction with historical cases, alternative intellectual traditions, practical governance problems, and criticism.

The following section returns from these open directions to the broader interpretive significance of the paper. The discussion situates the proposed framework within philosophy of history, political theory, and praxis-oriented thought and considers the contribution that the distinctions developed here can make without assigning them the status of a completed historical theory.

18 Implications for Historical Judgment and Praxis

This section synthesizes the implications of the framework developed throughout the paper. Its role is to clarify what the proposed distinctions add to philosophy of history, praxis-oriented political theory, and the practical evaluation of political transformation. The discussion proceeds through five themes: the temporal structure of historical judgment, the relation between historical materialism and Generative Relational analysis, the evaluation of progress within an unfinished history, the role of equivalence and recurrence in historical interpretation, and the institutional significance of revisability and re-recognizability. The section concludes by identifying the general stance toward historical knowledge and political action that follows from the combined argument.

18.1 Temporal Structure of Historical Judgment

The central contribution of the paper is a temporal differentiation of historical judgment. Political actors judge projected futures before those futures have acquired a complete historical-relational manifestation. Later actors evaluate configurations that have already accumulated institutions, consequences, conflicts, knowledge, and forms of experience generated through the transition itself. These two positions belong to one historical process while possessing different epistemic conditions.

The distinction clarifies a recurring ambiguity in political evaluation. Prospective judgment concerns a possibility represented through the evidence, concepts, normative commitments, and expectations available at an earlier historical position. Post-manifestation judgment concerns a configuration that has become relationally denser through practice. The later evaluator can therefore possess evidence concerning relations that did not yet exist at the time of the earlier decision.

This temporal structure changes the meaning of political error and political learning. An earlier judgment can be reasonable under its available conditions and later require revision after manifestation. A later revision can therefore represent historical learning without retroactively rendering every earlier commitment irrational.

The distinction also clarifies the relation between political aspiration and historical verification. Political actors cannot wait until a contemplated future has already occurred before deciding whether to pursue it. Prospective judgment is therefore constitutive of praxis. Post-manifestation judgment becomes necessary because praxis can generate relations whose consequences exceed the original projection.

Historical judgment consequently has a recursive structure. Projection informs practice; practice contributes to manifestation; manifestation creates new grounds of judgment; renewed judgment informs subsequent projection. This recursive relation provides a more precise account of historical learning than a model in which theory is formulated once and history subsequently supplies a single final verdict.

18.2 Historical Materialism and Relational Refinement

The framework developed in this paper remains substantially continuous with historical-materialist and praxis-oriented traditions. Marx's emphasis on the historical conditioning of social forms and the practical relation between human activity and changing circumstances provides an important foundation for the argument [23, 22]. Gramsci's philosophy of praxis and Mao's iterative account of knowledge and practice further demonstrate that historically situated, self-corrective interpretations of praxis are internal to major Marxist traditions [14, 20].

The Generative Relational contribution is therefore one of analytical differentiation. The framework gives greater visibility to the temporal positions occupied before and after manifestation, the relations generated during transition, the plurality of conditions required for institutional viability, and the later reinterpretation of both political forms and the historical record.

This relational refinement also broadens the field of conditions that can be relevant to a particular transition. Productive forces and relations of production remain central where they possess explanatory significance. Administrative capacity, technological infrastructure, knowledge, ecological conditions, legal institutions, symbolic systems, and international relations can also become constitutive of the trajectory under analysis.

The framework assigns these relations no universal hierarchy in advance. Their relative significance should be established through the historical problem under investigation. This approach preserves the materialist requirement that political forms be understood through concrete conditions while permitting historically specific combinations of causal and institutional structure.

The same refinement applies to praxis. Practice verifies some claims about an existing world and generates new relations through which later claims become possible. The distinction between verificatory and generative praxis makes explicit a feature that becomes especially important in periods of substantial institutional transformation.

The resulting relationship with historical materialism is therefore developmental rather than oppositional. The present account builds upon the historical conditioning of political forms and the centrality of praxis while adding a temporal-relational vocabulary for projection, manifestation, revision, and recognition.

18.3 Progress within an Unfinished History

The framework also provides a specific interpretation of historical progress. Political advancement remains a meaningful object of judgment, while its evaluation is situated within concrete relations, norma-

tive criteria, and transition paths.

This position preserves the practical importance of normative comparison. Political actors can judge one configuration preferable to another, identify forms of domination as unacceptable, and pursue institutions expected to expand human capacities or reduce injustice. Comparative judgment does not require a complete ordering of every possible historical form. Sen's comparative account of justice provides a useful parallel in this respect [31].

The historical dimension enters through the conditions of generability and manifestation. A political form can possess genuine normative attraction while remaining difficult to sustain under a particular relational configuration. The transition through which the form is pursued can also alter its meaning and consequences.

Historical progress should therefore be evaluated through both destination and trajectory. The normative quality of an anticipated order cannot fully absorb the justice of the process through which it is generated. This path-sensitive orientation places transition, capacity formation, institutional load, and corrective possibility within the object of political judgment.

The framework also accommodates the possibility that an institution can possess progressive significance within one historical configuration and later become a constraint upon capacities generated through its own development. Historical advancement can therefore be time-indexed without becoming normatively empty.

This interpretation aligns with contemporary attempts to preserve progress while avoiding a predetermined historical endpoint. Jaeggi's account of progress as social learning and problem solving provides one important example [17]. The present framework adds an explicit distinction between prospective evaluation and later judgment after the relevant political form has entered historical manifestation.

The concept of an unfinished history is therefore central. Political actors must judge possible futures while recognizing that the normative and relational significance of those futures will continue to develop through practice.

18.4 Historical Recurrence and Interpretive Scale

The quotient-based analysis of historical categories produces a second major implication. Historical recurrence should be treated as a level-sensitive relation rather than as a binary opposition between repetition and novelty.

A later configuration can reproduce the symbolic or formal features of an earlier political order while differing substantially in its productive, technological, institutional, and geopolitical relations. Conversely, a political transition can display dramatic formal novelty while preserving important relational structures.

The language of equivalence and quotient clarifies these possibilities. Historical recurrence occurs relative to a criterion that determines which differences are preserved and which are abstracted. The same pair of configurations can therefore count as recurrent under one criterion and historically distinct under another.

This interpretation strengthens rather than weakens historical comparison. It requires claims of sameness and return to specify the structure in which the comparison is made. Historical analogy becomes more informative when it identifies both the relations preserved across cases and the relations whose transformation limits inference.

The quotient framework also has normative implications. Classification can remove differences that matter for justice, power, or historical responsibility. Bowker and Star's analysis of classification systems shows how categories can become socially consequential infrastructures [7]. Historical analysis should therefore remain attentive to the information excluded by the categories through which recurrence, progress, and institutional type are described.

The resulting historical picture accommodates continuity, return, novelty, and transformation simultaneously. A historical trajectory can revisit an equivalence class while continuing to move through a different relational state. This interpretation gives greater precision to intuitions concerning historical repetition without requiring a cyclical theory of history.

18.5 Revisability and Re-Recognizability as Paired Norms

The normative culmination of the paper lies in the pairing of belief revisability and historical re-recognizability. The two principles address opposite temporal directions of the same historical problem.

Belief revisability concerns the relation between present judgment and future manifestation. Political actors require beliefs sufficiently stable to support action while preserving the capacity to revise empirical assumptions, causal models, institutional means, sequencing, or normative commitments where later history alters the grounds of judgment.

Historical re-recognizability concerns the relation between present preservation and future interpretation. Later subjects can possess concepts, evidence, and normative resources unavailable to current actors. Institutions therefore have reason to preserve sufficient traces and relational context for future historical inquiry.

The two principles support each other. Revisability becomes difficult when the grounds of earlier decisions cannot be reconstructed. Re-recognizability loses part of its practical significance when later actors lack institutions capable of revising inherited beliefs.

Together they define a temporal architecture of historical learning. Present actors judge, commit, and act. Institutions preserve the traces of these judgments and actions. Manifested consequences become available to later evaluation. Later subjects revise inherited beliefs and can reinterpret the historical process through newly developed categories.

Ricoeur's analysis of archives, memory, and historical representation supports the importance of preserved traces for later historical judgment [29]. Trouillot's analysis of historical silence adds a critical dimension by showing how power enters the production of sources and archives [34]. Re-recognizability therefore requires attention to both preservation and the asymmetries through which preservation occurs.

The paired principles also provide a practical safeguard against historical dogmatism. A political theory that protects belief from revision can become insulated from the world generated through its own praxis. A political order that controls or destroys the historical record can limit the ability of later subjects to reopen its judgments.

Historical humility consequently has an institutional form. It concerns both the revisability of present commitments and the preservation of future recognitional capacity.

18.6 Institutional Implications for Political Practice

The framework has practical implications for institutions operating under conditions of historical uncertainty. These implications concern functions rather than one preferred constitutional form.

Political systems require mechanisms for anticipatory reasoning because transformative decisions must be made before their consequences have fully manifested. They also require distributed observation because generated effects can differ across relational positions.

Institutions benefit from staged commitment where uncertainty and irreversibility are substantial. Staging can generate evidence and capacity before the most consequential relations become difficult to alter.

Procedural reopening provides a further function. Policies and institutions can contain mechanisms through which accumulated evidence becomes capable of triggering review. The appropriate degree of reopening varies with the need for stability and the severity of potential error.

Historical documentation supports both revisability and re-recognizability. Records of assumptions, alternatives, dissent, uncertainty, implementation, and consequences allow later actors to distinguish prospective reasoning from retrospective knowledge.

Classification transparency also becomes important. Institutions should, where practicable, preserve information concerning the categories through which political problems and populations were represented. Later actors can then reconstruct the assumptions embedded in those categories and, where necessary, reclassify the historical material.

These implications do not produce a universal preference for flexibility. Rights, constitutional commitments, long-term infrastructure, and social protections often require substantial stability. The relevant

design problem concerns differentiated revisability: which components require durability, which require experimental openness, and which mechanisms preserve the capacity for correction without undermining institutional reliability.

18.7 Historical Humility and Political Responsibility

The combined argument supports a conception of historical humility that remains compatible with substantive political commitment. Historical actors possess reasons, evidence, values, and experience sufficient to support judgment. Historical situatedness limits the claim that such judgment exhausts the possible significance of the future being judged.

Humility therefore concerns the scope assigned to present knowledge rather than the strength of every political conviction. A political community can maintain firm commitments against severe domination or injustice while acknowledging uncertainty concerning institutional means, causal mechanisms, transition sequencing, and long-term consequences.

Historical responsibility follows from this combination. Actors should use the best available evidence, make normative commitments explicit, examine the conditions required for transition, and preserve the capacity to learn from manifestation.

Responsibility also concerns the treatment of subjects exposed to transitional risk. A political project cannot rely solely upon the attractiveness of its anticipated destination when the transition imposes severe burdens upon populations with limited influence over the process.

The same principle applies to delay. Preservation of an existing order can generate harms and foreclose possibilities. Historical humility therefore provides no general argument for political caution in the sense of institutional inactivity. It requires caution concerning the confidence attached to both action and inaction.

The resulting orientation combines political courage with epistemic modesty. Actors must participate in history without possessing final knowledge of the world their actions will help to generate.

18.8 Integrated Contribution of the Framework

The paper's individual concepts acquire their strongest significance when considered together.

Judgment before manifestation explains how political actors evaluate futures whose relational constitution is incomplete.

Projection and commitment explain how those judgments acquire practical force.

Praxis as historical generation explains how action produces new relations and new conditions of evaluation.

Judgment after manifestation explains why later evaluation occupies a different epistemic position.

Historical appearance explains how political forms become intelligible through historically generated aesthetic, symbolic, and normative conditions.

Historical advancement provides a comparative vocabulary that preserves progress while situating its criteria and transition paths.

Generative viability explains the relation between a desirable political form and the conditions required for its reproduction.

Historical necessity distinguishes developmental structure from stronger modal claims concerning uniquely determined futures.

Historical equivalence and quotient representation clarify the analytical operations through which different configurations become comparable.

Quotient-dependent recurrence explains how historical forms can return at one level while remaining relationally novel at another.

Belief revisability preserves the capacity of present commitments to learn from future manifestation.

Historical re-recognizability preserves the capacity of future subjects to reopen the past through new evidence and concepts.

Taken together, these distinctions describe historical judgment as a recursive practice carried out within an evolving relational world. Political actors inherit history, project alternatives, transform relations, experience manifested consequences, revise their judgments, and preserve traces through which later subjects can continue the same process.

The framework therefore offers neither a final ranking of political forms nor a theory in which every historical development is equally open. Historical relations can impose strong constraints, generate directional tendencies, and support substantive judgments of progress. The central claim concerns the epistemic and normative position from which such judgments are made.

A historically responsible political theory should be capable of commitment before complete manifestation, learning after manifestation, and preserving the conditions through which later history can recognize both the achievement and the limitation of present judgment.

The concluding section consolidates this position and restates the paper's principal contribution in its most concise form: political judgment belongs to history, praxis participates in generating the object of later judgment, and historical responsibility therefore requires both revisable commitment and the preservation of future re-recognizability.

19 Conclusion: Acting without Final Knowledge

This section consolidates the paper's argument and identifies the practical historical stance that follows from it. The analysis has treated political judgment as an activity conducted within an unfinished history: actors inherit relations generated by earlier praxis, evaluate possibilities that have yet to manifest, commit to trajectories under incomplete knowledge, and later confront a world partly produced through those commitments. The conclusion therefore returns to four central themes: the temporal differentiation of judgment, the generative character of praxis, the historical situatedness of advancement and recurrence, and the paired requirements of belief revisability and historical re-recognizability.

The paper began from a simple practical condition. Political actors must judge futures before those futures have become historically actual. Reform, institutional reconstruction, economic transformation, constitutional change, and other forms of political praxis require prospective comparison among possible trajectories. Such comparison draws upon accumulated historical experience, material conditions, interpretive resources, normative commitments, and expectations concerning future relations. Prospective judgment is therefore historically situated while remaining indispensable to political agency.

The distinction between judgment before manifestation and judgment after manifestation provided the organizing structure for the inquiry. A projected political form can be evaluated before implementation through the relations and knowledge available at the time. Praxis subsequently contributes to the generation of institutions, dependencies, capacities, conflicts, identities, forms of knowledge, and interpretive resources. The manifested configuration therefore contains a relational history that was unavailable to the earlier judgment. Later evaluation occurs from a different epistemic and normative position.

This temporal difference gives political praxis a generative character. Practice can test expectations concerning an existing world, and it can also participate in producing the relations that later become objects of knowledge and judgment. Historical learning therefore involves more than comparison between an unchanged world and a prior prediction. Praxis changes the field in which subsequent judgment occurs.

The analysis of historical advancement followed from this structure. Political progress remains a meaningful object of judgment. Historical actors can identify some transformations as enlarging capacities, reducing domination, repairing severe injustice, or creating valuable forms of social cooperation. Such judgments acquire greater precision when the relevant comparison, historical conditions, normative criteria, and transition path are made explicit.

Advancement therefore appears as a relational and historically situated judgment. A political form can reasonably be regarded as preferable before its manifestation and can orient transformative practice. Its later historical evaluation can change when the transition generates relations absent from the original

projection. This temporal revisability gives progress a practical history without depriving political actors of the capacity to pursue better futures.

The same historical sensitivity applies to transition. Political forms depend upon conditions through which their principal functions and normative goods can be reproduced. Some conditions precede transformation, some can be generated through transformation, and some can be supplied through alternative institutional mechanisms. Political timing therefore concerns the relation among projected form, generative conditions, institutional load, capacity formation, and corrective possibility.

The concepts of prematurity and delay were developed within this relational framework. Prematurity describes a significant misfit between a projected political form and the relations through which its intended goods can become sustainable. Delay describes situations in which continued preservation of an existing configuration suppresses capacities and possibilities that have become historically available. Both judgments require substantive analysis of the relations involved.

The paper also distinguished historical development from stronger claims of historical necessity. Historical configurations can generate directional pressures, constrain feasible trajectories, and make some transformations more likely or more urgent. Retrospective explanation can reveal how a manifested trajectory emerged through these conditions. Such intelligibility remains compatible with a field of historically available alternatives whose structure can be altered through political agency, contingency, and subsequent praxis.

Historical classification introduced a further layer of interpretation. Categories such as empire, monarchy, capitalism, socialism, constitutionalism, or bureaucracy preserve selected structures while abstracting from others. Historical equivalence therefore depends upon the criterion through which configurations are compared. The quotient framework developed in this paper was intended to make this operation explicit.

This framework also clarified historical recurrence. A later configuration can return to the same phenomenal, symbolic, institutional, or analytical class while remaining relationally distinct from the earlier configuration. The intervening history leaves changes in technology, institutions, memory, knowledge, political subjects, and material relations. Historical recurrence can therefore occur in one quotient space while the richer relational trajectory continues elsewhere.

This distinction provides a more precise interpretation of claims that history repeats itself. Historical forms can recur in appearance, political language, institutional organization, or selected relational structures. Such recurrence does not exhaust the historical difference carried by the intervening trajectory. Claims of return acquire analytical force when the preserved structure and the excluded differences are specified.

The paper's relation to Marxist and praxis-oriented traditions has remained constructive throughout. Historical materialism supplies important resources for understanding political forms through historically developed material and social relations. Marx's conception of praxis, later Marxist developments of the relation between knowledge and practice, and debates concerning historical direction all provide substantial background for the present inquiry. The Generative Relational contribution has been to differentiate more explicitly the temporal positions of projection, manifestation, reassessment, and historical re-recognition.

The resulting framework does not require political actors to suspend commitment until history supplies complete knowledge. Political agency includes the capacity to project alternatives, judge them, and participate in their generation. Historical humility enters through the status assigned to those judgments. A prospective judgment can be sufficiently justified for action while remaining responsive to the world generated through that action.

This requirement produced the first normative principle of the paper: *belief revisability*. Political commitments require enough stability to organize sustained practice. Their historical legitimacy also depends upon the capacity to respond to evidence, relations, and normative insights generated through manifestation. Revision can concern empirical expectations, causal models, institutional means, transitional sequencing, conceptual interpretation, or normative commitment. The appropriate level depends upon the historical discrepancy revealed through practice.

The second principle, *historical re-recognizability*, extends this responsibility across generations. Future subjects can possess evidence, concepts, analytical methods, and normative vocabularies unavailable to present actors. Their capacity to reconsider earlier history depends upon the traces, contexts, testimonies, classifications, and institutional memories that survive into their own historical position.

Re-recognizability therefore concerns preservation of future epistemic possibility. Archives, records, metadata, plural testimony, and classificatory transparency contribute to this possibility. Preservation remains subject to privacy, dignity, security, material limits, and other legitimate claims. The normative objective is sufficient historical recoverability for future subjects to reopen significant judgments through evidence and concepts that present actors cannot fully anticipate.

Belief revisability and historical re-recognizability express one historical responsibility in opposite temporal directions. Revisability concerns the openness of present judgment toward a future that remains incompletely manifested. Re-recognizability concerns the openness of the preserved past toward future subjects whose interpretive capacities have yet to develop.

Together, these principles support a recursive conception of historical praxis. Political actors inherit a historical configuration, project possible futures, judge among them, commit to action, generate new relations, evaluate manifested consequences, preserve traces of the process, and enable later subjects to reconsider both the action and the judgment that guided it. Each cycle becomes part of the historical conditions inherited by the next.

The recursive structure also gives practical meaning to historical humility. Humility concerns the recognition that present political judgment occurs from within a finite historical position. It remains compatible with substantive normative commitments and decisive action. Political actors can defend freedom, equality, justice, generativity, or other values while acknowledging uncertainty concerning institutional design, causal mechanisms, transitional sequencing, and consequences extending beyond their present horizon.

Historical humility therefore places an additional responsibility upon political theory itself. A framework that emphasizes relationality, generativity, revisability, and historical openness belongs to the same history it analyzes. Generative Relational theory should remain available for later revision where empirical application, comparative philosophy, or future political experience reveals inadequate distinctions.

The preliminary character of the present account follows from this reflexive commitment. The paper has proposed a vocabulary for distinguishing historical positions and relational processes rather than a completed theory of historical development. Manifestation requires more precise operational criteria. Generative viability requires comparative empirical research. Historical advancement requires further development of context-sensitive ordering. Quotient-based recurrence requires case-specific equivalence relations. Revisability and re-recognizability require institutional and normative elaboration.

These open problems do not weaken the practical conclusion of the inquiry. Historical actors always face a world whose future relations are partly absent from present evidence. Political judgment remains necessary because action cannot be deferred until those relations have already manifested. Practice remains consequential because it participates in producing the world that later subjects will inherit. Historical learning remains possible where political beliefs and institutions preserve the capacity to respond to what that world reveals.

A Generative Relational perspective therefore approaches historical judgment as a practice of responsible commitment under conditions of unfinished knowledge. Its orientation can be summarized through a recurrent discipline: project with the best available historical understanding, judge with explicit normative commitments, act with attention to generative conditions and transition paths, observe the relations produced through praxis, revise beliefs where manifestation changes their grounds, preserve the traces required for future recognition, and leave later history sufficient epistemic space to judge again.

The future remains unavailable as a completed object of knowledge. Political praxis nevertheless requires action toward it. Historical responsibility lies in sustaining both capacities: the capacity to commit to a future worth pursuing and the capacity to let the history generated through that commitment teach subsequent actors how the judgment should be understood anew.

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