

Relational Reality: Rethinking God, Religion, and Divinity

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Abstract

Questions concerning God and religion are frequently organized around ontological alternatives: a divine or transcendent referent either possesses an existence independent of human beings or is treated as a product of human imagination, symbolic practice, social organization, or historical conditions. This paper develops the concept of *relational reality* to introduce a distinct analytical level. Relational reality concerns the mode in which an object, subject, structure, or reference becomes manifest within a generative relational system and acquires sufficient persistence to participate in the subsequent development of that system. Such participation may occur through symbolic, imaginary, normative, axiological, affective, institutional, material, or other relational forms, and may modify desire, interpretation, value, normativity, knowledge, and relational structure.

The distinction separates the ontological status of a possible referent from the historical and relational form through which it becomes accessible and operative. A mathematical structure, a religious deity, a transcendent order, or an ideal value may therefore possess historically variable relational manifestations even where its independent ontological status remains open, invariant, disputed, or unavailable to determination. Conversely, a relationally real form may emerge and acquire generative efficacy without requiring the prior establishment of an independently existing referent. The historical generation of a manifestation consequently leaves the ontology of its possible referent analytically unsettled.

On this basis, the paper proposes that *divinity* be examined as a special relational configuration of relational reality. Divinity concerns the historically generated positioning through which a relationally real form acquires sacred, transcendent, normative, or ultimate-reference significance and persistently participates in the organization of subjects and relations. This formulation permits historical-material analysis of the production and reproduction of religious forms while preserving ontological openness toward transcendence. It likewise permits religious and metaphysical traditions to maintain claims concerning realities exceeding historical manifestation while leaving those manifestations available to relational, historical, and practical analysis. The resulting framework offers a basis for reconsidering religion beyond the opposition between metaphysical affirmation and reduction to social construction.

Keywords: relational reality; divinity; transcendence; religion; Generative Relational theory

Discussion Paper Note

This note defines the analytical scope, conceptual status, and epistemic commitments of the present discussion. It first separates questions concerning an object's possible ontological status from questions concerning its manifestation within a historically situated relational system. It then specifies the sense in which the paper uses the term *relational reality*, clarifies the treatment of divinity as a special relational configuration, and states the methodological position of Generative Relational analysis with respect to competing metaphysical interpretations.

The paper begins from a distinction among three analytical levels. The first concerns the possible ontological status of an object, structure, subject, or referent, represented provisionally by X^* . The second concerns the form through which such an object or reference becomes accessible, intelligible, imaginable, symbolized, valued, institutionalized, embodied, or otherwise operative within a particular relational system. The third concerns the subsequent participation of that manifested form in the continuing generation of the system.

These levels can be represented schematically as

$$X^* \ ; \ X_t^{\text{rel}} \ ; \ Q_{t+1}, \quad (1)$$

where X^* denotes a possible ontological referent, X_t^{rel} denotes a historically and relationally situated manifestation, and Q_{t+1} denotes a later state of the generative relational system. The semicolon is deliberate. The present paper leaves open the metaphysical relation between X^* and X_t^{rel} .

A relational manifestation may be interpreted in several ways under different philosophical commitments. A realist or theological account may regard it as a finite manifestation of a reality whose existence exceeds the relational system in which the manifestation occurs. A historical-material account may analyse its emergence through material, institutional, symbolic, political, and practical conditions. An idealist account may locate the relevant reality within structures of spirit, consciousness, reason, or meaning. Other metaphysical positions may provide additional interpretations. The present analysis requires no prior settlement among these accounts.

The corresponding methodological commitment is therefore one of ontological openness. Generative Relational analysis examines the conditions, forms, persistence, transformation, and effects of relational manifestation while withholding a final determination of what reality ultimately consists in. Relations, entities, subjects, structures, systems, and generation itself function here as revisable analytical vocabularies. Their use does not establish relation as a final substance or Generative Relational theory as an ultimate ontology.

Within this scope, the paper proposes the following working definition:

Relational reality refers to the mode of reality acquired by a form within a generative relational system when that form becomes sufficiently persistent to participate recursively in the modulation and subsequent generation of the system's psychological, symbolic, normative, axiological, epistemic, material, or relational dynamics.

The defining structure is therefore dynamical:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow Q_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow X_{t+1}^{\text{rel}}. \quad (2)$$

The first transition represents the participation of a relationally manifested form in subsequent system dynamics. The second represents the effect of those changed dynamics upon later manifestation, interpretation, reproduction, or transformation of that form. Persistence in this formulation refers to continuity across a relevant temporal interval and does not require immutability.

Relational reality consequently remains analytically distinct from independent substantial existence. A form may acquire substantial relational efficacy while the ontological status of its possible referent remains unresolved. Conversely, a philosophical tradition may affirm an invariant or independently existing reality while recognizing that its human manifestations vary across historical periods, languages, symbolic systems, bodily conditions, institutions, and forms of practice. The historicity of manifestation therefore leaves the ontology of the possible referent open.

This distinction is especially important for the study of religion. A deity, sacred order, transcendent principle, ultimate value, or other religious reference may become relationally real through symbols, images, narratives, rituals, norms, values, institutions, affects, memories, bodily practices, spatial arrangements, or other forms of mediation. These forms can enter the organization of desire, interpretation, obligation, value, knowledge, and social relation and can thereby participate in the subsequent generation of the relational field.

The paper treats *divinity* as a special configuration within this wider domain of relational reality. A relationally real form may acquire a position through which it is experienced or treated as sacred, transcendent, exceeding individual possession, normatively authoritative, or ultimately referential. This transition can be represented schematically as

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \xrightarrow{\mathcal{S}_t} T_t^X, \quad (3)$$

where $\mathcal{S}_t$ denotes a historically situated process of sacralization or transcendent positioning and T_t^X denotes the resulting divine or transcendent relational configuration. The notation describes a relation within the analysed system and carries no independent metaphysical judgment concerning X^* .

This formulation also permits divinity to appear through heterogeneous forms. Person-like deities constitute one configuration. Sacred principles, transcendent orders, ultimate norms, values, forms of reason, and other references may occupy differently structured positions. The paper therefore separates divinity from any single representational form and from any requirement of personhood. The formation of specifically *transcendent subject positions*, including the attribution of agency, addressability, witnessing, will, or response to a transcendent Other, constitutes a further problem and is reserved for subsequent development within Generative Relational Religious Studies.

The distinction between ontological status and relational manifestation creates a common analytical space for philosophical traditions that remain metaphysically incompatible. Historical-material analysis can examine how religious forms are produced, reproduced, institutionalized, contested, and transformed under concrete historical conditions. Religious realism and other metaphysical traditions can preserve claims concerning realities exceeding those manifestations. Each can participate in the analysis of

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}$$

without requiring prior agreement concerning X^* .

The paper consequently seeks analytical coexistence across ontological disagreement. Historical production can explain the conditions and forms through which something becomes relationally manifest. Such an explanation leaves open whether the manifested form refers to an independent reality, arises within the relational system, or results from a relation whose final ontological character remains inaccessible under present epistemic conditions. Likewise, metaphysical affirmation of a transcendent reality leaves its historical manifestations available to analysis of practice, mediation, power, interpretation, and transformation.

The concepts and formal expressions developed in the paper have a philosophical and heuristic status. They specify distinctions, dependencies, and possible dynamical structures. They do

not provide empirical measurements of relational reality, establish the existence or absence of a transcendent referent, or demonstrate equivalence among heterogeneous religious and philosophical traditions. Historical, comparative, ethnographic, psychological, and formal operationalization remains a subsequent research task.

The present discussion therefore has a bounded objective. It develops *relational reality* as an analytical concept, examines divinity as a special relational configuration, and explores the consequences of separating the historical generation of manifestation from final metaphysical determination. The broader construction of Generative Relational Religious Studies, the formation of transcendent subjects, and the epistemology of cross-relational invariance belong to subsequent discussions.

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1 Introduction

This section establishes the analytical problem, conceptual vocabulary, and scope of the discussion. It proceeds from the long-standing tension between metaphysical accounts of religious reality and historical accounts of religious formation, separates ontological status from relational manifestation, introduces *relational reality* as a distinct analytical level, and specifies the different roles assigned to God, religion, and divinity in the argument. The section concludes by stating the paper’s contributions, limits, and order of exposition.

1.1 Ontological Status and Historical Manifestation

Philosophical reflection on religion has repeatedly moved between two questions that can be analytically distinguished. One concerns what exists: whether a deity, transcendent order, sacred principle, or other religious referent possesses a reality that exceeds human perception, representation, and practice. The other concerns how religious forms arise and operate within human life: how gods are named, represented, imagined, ritualized, institutionalized, interpreted, contested, remembered, and transmitted across historical conditions.

Several influential modern critiques of religion place substantial weight on the second question. Feuerbach interprets theological predicates through an anthropological account in which characteristics attributed to God express dimensions of human species-being [6]. Marx subsequently locates religion within the “world of man,” including state and society, and connects religious consciousness to the social conditions through which human life is organized [12]. These approaches established a powerful intellectual route for studying religion through the conditions of its human production.

The historical analysis of religion has since become considerably more complex. The category of “religion” itself can be subjected to historical analysis. Asad, for example, shows that definitions separating religion from politics, discipline, embodiment, and social practice carry particular genealogies and cannot simply be treated as transparent universal classifications [1]. Historical inquiry therefore reaches beyond the genealogy of particular beliefs and practices to the categories through which religious phenomena are rendered intelligible.

The present paper accepts the importance of such historical and relational analysis while separating it from a further inference concerning ontology. Suppose a religious form observed at time t is represented by X_t^{rel} . Its symbols, doctrines, rituals, institutions, and interpretive forms may possess identifiable historical conditions of emergence. This establishes the historicity of X_t^{rel} . It does not, by itself, determine whether there exists some possible referent X^* whose reality exceeds that manifestation.

The distinction can be stated compactly as

$$\text{Hist}(X_t^{\text{rel}}) \not\equiv \text{Ont}(X^*), \quad (4)$$

where the notation expresses a limit of inference rather than a metaphysical claim. Historical knowledge concerning a manifestation and metaphysical judgment concerning its possible referent belong to different analytical tasks.

The reverse distinction is equally important. Affirming a transcendent reality does not establish that any particular historical representation exhausts that reality. If a religious tradition affirms X^* , its doctrinal, symbolic, ritual, and institutional articulations remain situated within particular languages, communities, bodies, practices, and histories. The paper therefore treats the relation between X^* and X_t^{rel} as open.

This separation provides the starting point for the concept developed below.

1.2 Relational Reality and Generative Participation

The analytical object of this paper is the reality acquired by a form once it becomes operative within a generative relational system. Let $\mathcal{Q}_t$ denote a system state containing, among other dimensions, desire, symbolic organization, normativity, value, knowledge, material conditions, and relational structure:

$$\mathcal{Q}_t = (D_t, S_t, N_t, V_t, K_t, M_t, R_t, \dots). \quad (5)$$

The components are descriptive placeholders. They do not imply an exhaustive decomposition of human or social reality. Their purpose is to indicate that a relationally manifested form may participate simultaneously in several dimensions of subsequent generation.

Definition 1.1 (Relational reality). A form X_t^{rel} possesses *relational reality* within a specified generative relational system when it attains sufficient persistence to participate in the subsequent modulation and generation of that system's psychological, symbolic, normative, axiological, epistemic, material, or relational dynamics.

The minimal dynamical structure is

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow X_{t+1}^{\text{rel}}. \quad (6)$$

The first transition describes generative participation. A symbol, imagined subject, norm, value, institution, sacred object, or other form can alter the subsequent organization of desire, interpretation, obligation, action, and relation. The second transition describes recursive formation. Changes in the relational system can alter how the same form is represented, interpreted, authorized, embodied, or reproduced at a later time.

Persistence is therefore temporal and relational. It does not require an unchanging representation. A deity may be represented through different images, names, rituals, theological formulations, and institutional arrangements while continuing to occupy an operative position within a relational field. A value may migrate across vocabularies while continuing to organize judgment and desire. A mathematical structure may receive different notations and conceptual formulations while continuing to organize inquiry and practice.

Relational reality in this sense is stronger than momentary representation. A passing image can occur without becoming consequential for subsequent system dynamics. Relational reality concerns forms that enter an ongoing generative process.

At the same time, relational reality does not function as a substitute ontology. The concept specifies how something becomes real *within the dynamics being analysed*. It leaves open whether the manifested form arises entirely within those dynamics, discloses some reality exceeding them, or participates in a relation whose final ontological character remains beyond available determination.

Accordingly, two logically compatible statements may be maintained:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}, \quad (7)$$

and

$$\text{Ont}(X^*) = ?. \quad (8)$$

The question mark in Equation 8 records an epistemic boundary. It is part of the analytical discipline of the present paper.

1.3 God, Religion, and Divinity as Distinct Analytical Terms

The title of the paper uses *God*, *religion*, and *divinity* as analytically distinct terms. Their separation is necessary because each refers to a different level of the argument.

God refers here to claims concerning a divine or transcendent being, subject, or referent. The term therefore reaches most directly toward the ontological question. The analysis does not require a universal concept of God, and traditions organized around non-personal forms of transcendence cannot be subsumed under a person-like deity without loss of their own conceptual structure.

Religion refers provisionally to historically situated configurations through which sacred or transcendent references become articulated and lived. Such configurations may include symbols, narratives, ritual practices, institutions, communities, bodies, spaces, disciplines, values, norms, memories, and interpretive traditions. This usage is deliberately heuristic. Following the historical caution developed in the study of religion [1], the paper does not treat “religion” as a transhistorical essence with a fixed set of necessary features.

Divinity designates a different analytical problem. It concerns the special relational configuration through which an object, subject, structure, principle, value, or reference acquires sacred or transcendent significance within a relational system.

Let X_t^{rel} denote a relationally real form. A process of sacralization or transcendent positioning can be represented as

$$T_t^X = \mathcal{S}_t \left(X_t^{\text{rel}}; H_t, \Gamma_t \right), \quad (9)$$

where H_t denotes relevant historical configuration and Γ_t denotes the conditions under which the relational process occurs.

Definition 1.2 (Divine relational configuration). A *divine relational configuration* is a special configuration of relational reality in which a form acquires sacred, transcendent, or ultimate-reference significance and thereby participates persistently in the organization of one or more dimensions of a generative relational system.

This definition places divinity within the general category of relational reality while preserving the specificity of the divine configuration. Many relationally real objects possess persistence and generative effects without acquiring sacred or transcendent significance. Divinity therefore requires a further historical and relational determination.

The definition also separates divinity from personhood. A person-like deity can occupy a divine relational position, while a non-personal principle, order, value, truth, or other reference may acquire forms of sacred or transcendent significance through a differently organized configuration. Whether such heterogeneous cases should ultimately be classified together is a comparative question whose answer must remain sensitive to their historical and theological differences.

This distinction will later permit analysis of what may be called the *divinization* of forms that are not conventionally classified as religious deities. Reason, science, mathematics, nation, law, freedom, nature, or other values and structures can become candidates for such analysis when they acquire sufficiently strong sacred, transcendent, or ultimate-reference positions within a relational field. The analytical claim concerns their relational configuration. It does not establish theological equivalence among these forms.

1.4 Historical Analysis and Metaphysical Plurality

The separation developed above creates an unusual point of contact among philosophical traditions that may retain incompatible metaphysical commitments.

A historical-material analysis can investigate

$$H_t, \quad \Gamma_t, \quad X_t^{\text{rel}}, \quad \text{and} \quad Q_{t+1},$$

including the conditions through which religious forms are produced, institutionalized, reproduced, contested, and transformed. Marx’s early critique of religion already directs attention from religious representation toward the social world in which that representation becomes possible and meaningful [12]. Such an approach provides substantial resources for analysing the historical formation of relational reality.

A religious realist account may accept much of the same historical analysis while interpreting X_t^{rel} as a finite manifestation of a reality that exceeds the historical system. An idealist account may locate the relevant reality within structures of consciousness, spirit, reason, or meaning. Other philosophical systems may configure the relation differently.

Generative Relational analysis does not require these positions to converge upon a common metaphysics. It establishes a shared analytical region:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow Q_{t+1}. \tag{10}$$

The disagreement concerning X^* can remain active while inquiry continues into the formation, persistence, interpretation, and generative effects of X_t^{rel} .

The resulting position can be summarized through two analytical separations:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{historicity of manifestation} &\neq \text{ontology of the possible referent,} \\ \text{relational efficacy} &\neq \text{metaphysical verification.} \end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

These separations are methodological. They permit metaphysical disagreement to coexist with common analysis of historically situated relational processes.

1.5 Contributions and Scope

The paper develops four contributions within this bounded domain.

First, it introduces *relational reality* as an analytical category for forms whose persistence allows them to enter recursively into subsequent generation. The concept provides vocabulary for discussing the reality of symbols, imagined subjects, norms, values, institutions, sacred references, and related forms without requiring prior resolution of their independent ontological status.

Second, the paper separates the historical formation of a manifestation from the ontology of its possible referent. This distinction permits historical and material explanation to proceed without converting genealogy into a final metaphysical judgment.

Third, the paper develops *divinity* as a special relational configuration. This formulation shifts part of the analysis from the classification of entities to the investigation of processes through which particular forms acquire sacred, transcendent, normative, or ultimate-reference positions and subsequently participate in the generation of subjects and relations.

Fourth, the framework establishes a limited analytical interface among historical-material, religious-realist, idealist, and other metaphysical approaches. The interface concerns relational manifestation and generative effect. Metaphysical agreement remains outside the requirements of the model.

The argument is philosophical and conceptual. It does not provide an empirical scale of relational reality, establish the existence or absence of God, identify a universal essence of religion, or claim equivalence among different religious traditions. The development of transcendent subject formation, a broader Generative Relational approach to religious studies, and the epistemology of cross-relational invariance are reserved for subsequent work.

1.6 Organization of the Discussion

The remainder of the paper develops the argument from conceptual genealogy to formal clarification and philosophical implications. Section 2 situates the problem of relational reality in relation to philosophical and social accounts of religion, manifestation, social production, and reality. Section 3 develops the distinction among ontological status, relational manifestation, and generative participation. Section 4 gives the formal definition and principal properties of relational reality. Section 5 develops divinity as a special relational configuration and examines the diversity of forms through which divine positioning can occur. Section 6 considers the compatibility of historical-material explanation with metaphysical and religious interpretations of transcendence. Section 7 addresses conceptual limits, possible objections, and the empirical and comparative obligations generated by the framework. Section 8 concludes by identifying the place of relational reality within the wider Generative Relational research programme.

2 Philosophical Lineages of Reality and Religious Formation

This section situates relational reality within several philosophical and social-theoretical lineages that distinguish, in different ways, between reality, human access to reality, symbolic mediation, social formation, and religious efficacy. The discussion is selective rather than exhaustive. Its purpose is to identify conceptual resources and boundaries relevant to the present argument. The section proceeds through epistemic limits on access to reality, anthropological and historical accounts of religion, collective and symbolic formation, social and institutional reality, psychoanalytic accounts of symbolic authority, and process metaphysics. The final subsection specifies the analytical interval in which the concept of relational reality is located.

2.1 Epistemic Limits on Metaphysical Access

The distinction between a possible reality and the conditions under which that reality becomes available to cognition has an important antecedent in Kant’s critical philosophy. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguishes objects as they appear under the conditions of human cognition from things considered independently of those conditions [8]. The distinction does not provide a model of religious manifestation in the sense developed in the present paper. It nevertheless establishes an important discipline: properties of humanly accessible appearance cannot automatically be transferred to reality considered independently of the conditions of that access.

The relevance of this discipline extends beyond Kant’s own transcendental idealism. Human beings encounter the world through particular forms of sensibility, conceptual organization, language, memory, embodiment, technique, and historically transmitted categories. A different cognitive organization could therefore make available a differently structured field of appearance, even where the underlying object of inquiry were shared.

The present discussion generalizes this problem into a historically situated relational setting. Let

$$\mathcal{A}_t = (B_t, L_t, K_t, H_t, \Gamma_t, \dots)$$

denote a provisional configuration of access, including bodily capacities B_t , linguistic and representational resources L_t , available knowledge K_t , historical conditions H_t , and wider generative conditions Γ_t . A relational manifestation may then be represented schematically as

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} = \mathcal{E}(X^*, \mathcal{A}_t), \tag{12}$$

with the relation between X^* and the manifestation deliberately left open.

Equation 12 expresses dependence of manifestation upon conditions of access. It carries no commitment to a Kantian account of the thing in itself and no commitment to the independent existence of X^* . The notation identifies a place at which different metaphysical interpretations may later enter.

This distinction is especially relevant to religion. A transcendent referent, if affirmed, is encountered through historically specific names, images, narratives, doctrines, ritual practices, affective dispositions, and institutions. The philosophical problem therefore includes both the possible referent and the finite conditions through which a relation toward that referent becomes possible.

2.2 Anthropological and Historical Formation of Religious Forms

Feuerbach provides a major anthropological transformation of the theological problem. In *The Essence of Christianity*, predicates attributed to the divine are interpreted through human capacities and species-being [6]. Divine representation thereby becomes available for analysis through the structure of human self-relation.

Marx relocates the problem further into historically organized social life. His early critique of religion situates religious consciousness within the human world of state and society and connects critique of religion to critique of the conditions under which human beings live [12]. Religious forms can consequently be examined through the social and material relations that contribute to their production and reproduction.

For the present paper, the enduring importance of these approaches lies in their treatment of religious forms as historically intelligible. A deity's name, institutional authority, ritual representation, moral vocabulary, and social significance can possess a genealogy. Their configuration at time t may depend upon

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} = \mathcal{E}_t(H_t, \Gamma_t, S_t, I_t, R_t, \dots), \quad (13)$$

where S_t denotes symbolic resources and I_t denotes relevant interpretive structures.

Equation 13 expresses historical formation at the level of relational manifestation. The further status of a possible X^* remains a separate philosophical question. This separation allows historical-material analysis to retain its explanatory force while leaving the metaphysical scope of that explanation explicitly delimited.

The same discipline also applies to religious traditions themselves. A theological affirmation of transcendence can coexist with recognition that particular doctrines, vocabularies, institutions, and practices possess histories. The distinction between transcendence and its historical articulation therefore provides a point at which genealogical analysis and religious self-understanding can enter the same inquiry without requiring a shared metaphysics.

2.3 Collective Formation of the Sacred

Durkheim moves the analysis from individual projection toward collective organization. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, religious classification is organized around the distinction between sacred and profane, and collective ritual occupies a central place in the production and renewal of shared religious life [5]. Sacred objects thereby acquire significance through forms of collective representation and practice that exceed the mental state of any single participant.

This is relevant to relational reality because persistence and efficacy can be distributed across a social field. A sacred form can be sustained through ritual repetition, shared classification, material objects, collective memory, institutional roles, spatial organization, and reciprocal recognition. Its

operative presence is therefore compatible with substantial variation among the private mental representations of individual participants.

Berger develops a related sociological account in which religion participates in the construction and maintenance of a meaningful social world [2]. The religious order can provide a socially maintained framework through which experience, legitimacy, and ultimate significance are organized. The importance of such an account for the present argument lies in the recursive relation between socially generated meaning and subsequent social action.

A minimal relational representation is

$$\mathcal{Q}_t \longrightarrow X_t^{\text{rel}} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}, \quad (14)$$

where collective conditions participate in the formation of a sacred configuration and that configuration subsequently participates in the organization of later collective states.

The present concept of relational reality extends beyond a sociological theory of religion because the first term in Equation 14 does not exhaust the possible sources or referents of X_t^{rel} . The equation identifies an observable historical recursion while preserving the wider ontological question.

2.4 Symbolic Mediation and Cultural Objectivity

Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms provides another important resource. Language, myth, religion, art, and science are treated as distinct symbolic forms through which human experience receives intelligible organization [3, 4]. Symbolic mediation thereby participates in the constitution of an experienced and culturally articulated world.

This perspective is useful for relational reality because it weakens the assumption that a form must possess the character of a discrete physical substance in order to organize experience with substantial stability. Symbols, myths, classifications, and conceptual systems can acquire forms of objectivity within human cultural life through their recurrent operation.

The present framework broadens the set of possible mediations. A relationally real form may emerge through

$$\mathcal{M}_t = \{S_t, I_t, N_t, V_t, A_t, B_t, M_t, P_t, \dots\}, \quad (15)$$

where the terms denote symbolic, imaginary, normative, axiological, affective, bodily, material, and practical modes of mediation. The list specifies analytical channels rather than mutually exclusive ontological categories.

This wider formulation becomes important for divinity. Sacred or transcendent significance can be carried through words and images, while it can also be embedded in norms, values, prohibitions, bodily disciplines, ritual sequences, spatial arrangements, silence, absence, and forms of practice. The identity of a divine relational configuration therefore cannot be inferred from a single representational medium.

2.5 Institutional Reality and Socially Sustained Entities

Contemporary social ontology provides a further neighboring domain. Searle’s account of social and institutional reality examines how facts concerning money, offices, legal status, institutions, and related entities depend upon collective intentionality, constitutive rules, and status functions while remaining consequential within social life [13]. The wider field of social ontology similarly examines entities and categories whose existence and properties arise through social interaction and social organization.

Such work demonstrates the philosophical importance of entities whose reality cannot be characterized solely through their underlying physical components. A university, corporation,

currency, office, or marriage can have effects that depend upon collectively maintained statuses and practices.

Relational reality overlaps with this domain while extending beyond institutional facts. Its intended range includes forms whose operative persistence may be symbolic, imaginary, affective, normative, religious, epistemic, or otherwise distributed across a relational field. Collective acceptance may support such persistence in some cases. Other cases may be maintained through ritual recurrence, affective attachment, embodied discipline, inherited practice, asymmetrical authority, or combinations of these processes.

The distinction matters especially for religious phenomena. A sacred presence may participate strongly in relational dynamics even when its mode of persistence differs substantially from the status functions characteristic of formal institutions. The concept of relational reality therefore retains a wider generative criterion:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow Q_{t+1}. \quad (16)$$

Participation in subsequent generation supplies the principal analytical criterion developed in later sections.

2.6 Symbolic Otherness and the Organization of Desire

Lacanian psychoanalysis introduces a particularly important configuration for the present discussion because symbolic structures can operate as an Other that exceeds the conscious possession of an individual subject. Lacan's Symbolic includes language, law, norms, kinship structures, and other trans-individual systems through which subjectivity becomes organized [9, 7]. The big Other can occupy a position of authority, knowledge, or guarantee within the subject's symbolic field.

This structure is directly relevant to relational reality. An operative Other can regulate desire, recognition, interpretation, expectation, and action through the position it occupies in the symbolic field. Such efficacy does not require that the Other correspond to a single physical individual. The operative position can be sustained through distributed symbolic and social relations.

Let O_t denote such an operative Other-position. Its participation in subject formation can be represented schematically as

$$D_{t+1} = \Phi_D(D_t, O_t, R_t), \quad (17)$$

where D_t denotes the dynamically organized field of desire and R_t the relevant relational configuration.

The religious significance of this mechanism is substantial. God, divine law, sacred tradition, nature, history, science, or another reference can occupy positions through which a subject encounters an authority or knowledge exceeding an individual standpoint. The present paper does not classify these positions as theologically equivalent. Their structural comparison concerns the capacity of an operative reference to participate in the organization of desire and relation.

Lacan also introduces a limit internal to symbolic guarantee. The symbolic Other does not provide an indefinitely self-grounding final guarantor [9, 7]. This limit becomes especially important for later Generative Relational work on transcendent subject formation. The current paper uses the narrower implication: symbolic efficacy and substantial metaphysical existence belong to analytically separable questions.

2.7 Process Metaphysics and Generative Description

Process philosophy provides a neighboring but importantly different orientation. Whitehead's *Process and Reality* develops an explicit metaphysical scheme in which becoming, actual occasions,

relations, and process occupy fundamental ontological roles [14]. The resulting system also integrates questions of value, novelty, and God within a process metaphysics.

Generative Relational analysis shares an interest in temporality, becoming, interaction, and the inadequacy of treating entities as permanently fixed units. The present paper adopts a weaker metaphysical commitment. Terms such as *relation*, *system*, *entity*, *state*, and *generation* function as revisable instruments of analysis. Their successful use in describing a phenomenon provides no final determination of the ontology through which reality ultimately exists.

This distinction can be represented as a relation between descriptive language and metaphysical commitment:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{GR}} \longrightarrow \text{Describe} \left(X_t^{\text{rel}}, \mathcal{Q}_t, \Phi \right), \quad (18)$$

where $\mathcal{L}_{\text{GR}}$ denotes the current Generative Relational vocabulary. Equation 18 assigns an analytical function to that vocabulary. Its terms remain revisable when other descriptive systems provide greater explanatory adequacy.

This methodological position is central to the present paper. Relational reality is introduced as a mode of analysis within a specified generative description. It is not proposed as the final substance of reality.

2.8 Conceptual Interface for Relational Reality

The lineages reviewed above can now be placed within a common analytical interface. Table 1 summarizes the specific resource taken from each lineage and the boundary retained by the present paper.

The resulting conceptual space can be expressed through three distinct questions of analysis:

$$\begin{array}{ll} X^* & \text{possible ontological reality,} \\ X_t^{\text{rel}} & \text{historically situated relational manifestation,} \\ X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} & \text{generative participation.} \end{array} \quad (19)$$

The first remains metaphysically open. The second is available to historical, symbolic, sociological, phenomenological, psychological, and comparative analysis. The third supplies the dynamical criterion through which the present paper develops the concept of relational reality.

The theoretical interval addressed in the following sections lies between the second and third levels. A form becomes relationally significant through a situated mode of manifestation and subsequently enters the generation of desire, knowledge, value, normativity, material practice, and relational structure. Divinity will later be treated as a special configuration within this general process.

The purpose of relational reality is therefore neither to replace metaphysical reality with social construction nor to secure metaphysical reality through relational efficacy. It provides a distinct analytical register in which the historical emergence and generative operation of a form can be studied while its ultimate ontological status remains open.

Table 1: Philosophical lineages relevant to relational reality

Lineage	Analytical resource	Boundary in the present framework
Kantian critique	Conditions of access can structure appearance and delimit metaphysical inference	GR does not adopt transcendental idealism as its ontology
Feuerbach and Marx	Religious forms can be analysed through anthropological, social, material, and historical formation	Historical genealogy leaves the final ontology of a possible referent open
Durkheim and Berger	Sacred meaning can be collectively produced, maintained, and reproduced through social practice	Collective production forms one possible mechanism of relational manifestation
Cassirer	Symbolic forms organize intelligible cultural experience across heterogeneous domains	Relational mediation includes symbolic and additional non-symbolic or partly symbolic processes
Social ontology	Socially sustained entities can acquire stable status and consequential effects	Relational reality extends beyond institutional status and collective acceptance
Lacanian psychoanalysis	A trans-individual Other can organize desire and symbolic relation through an operative position	Operative symbolic efficacy remains analytically distinct from metaphysical verification
Process philosophy	Becoming and relation can receive systematic philosophical treatment	GR retains process and relation as revisable analytical vocabularies

3 Ontological Status, Relational Manifestation, and Generative Participation

This section develops the analytical architecture required for the concept of relational reality. Its purpose is to separate three problems that frequently travel together in discussions of religion and reality: the possible ontological status of a referent, the historically situated form through which that referent or reference becomes accessible within a relational system, and the subsequent participation of that form in the system’s dynamics. The discussion first specifies the three analytical levels, then examines the conditions and media of relational manifestation, distinguishes relational position from representational carrier, and finally introduces generative participation as the transition through which a manifested form becomes dynamically consequential.

3.1 Three Analytical Levels

Let X denote an object of discourse. Depending upon the domain, X may refer to a deity, mathematical structure, value, norm, institution, imagined subject, sacred principle, or another object toward which a relational system is oriented. The symbol X functions as an analytical placeholder and does not itself establish the independent existence of its referent.

Three levels are distinguished:

$$\mathcal{O}(X), \quad \mathcal{M}_t(X), \quad \mathcal{G}_{t:H}(X), \quad (20)$$

where $\mathcal{O}(X)$ concerns ontological status, $\mathcal{M}_t(X)$ concerns relational manifestation at time t , and

$\mathcal{G}_{t:H}(X)$ concerns participation in subsequent generation over a temporal horizon H .

The first level addresses the possible existence and character of what the discourse concerning X refers to. Where useful, a possible independently existing referent is denoted by

$$X^*.$$

The notation records a metaphysical possibility. It does not imply that such a referent has been established.

The second level concerns the historically situated form in which X becomes available within a relational system:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} := \mathcal{M}_t(X). \quad (21)$$

This level includes forms through which X becomes perceptible, representable, imaginable, interpretable, actionable, or otherwise operative.

The third level concerns the subsequent participation of X_t^{rel} in the development of the system:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+\tau}, \quad 0 < \tau \leq H. \quad (22)$$

The distinction among these levels is analytical. A philosophical theory may propose relations among them, while the present framework preserves their separability.

Kant's distinction between the conditions of appearance and metaphysical claims concerning things independently of those conditions provides an important precedent for maintaining such separations [8]. Historical and genealogical approaches add a further dimension by showing that the categories and practices through which an object becomes intelligible can themselves change across time [1]. The present framework combines these disciplines without adopting either as a final ontology.

3.2 Relational Manifestation under Finite Conditions

A manifestation occurs within finite conditions of access. Human access to an object or reference is mediated through bodily capacities, language, available concepts, technologies, institutions, inherited practices, historical memory, and other elements of a situated relational environment.

Let

$$\mathcal{A}_t = (B_t, L_t, K_t, H_t, \Gamma_t) \quad (23)$$

denote an access configuration, where B_t represents bodily and perceptual conditions, L_t linguistic and representational resources, K_t available knowledge, H_t historical configuration, and Γ_t wider generative conditions.

The manifested form can then be written schematically as

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} = \mathcal{M}(X; \mathcal{A}_t). \quad (24)$$

The semicolon in Equation 24 is important. It separates the object of reference from the conditions under which a relational manifestation occurs without specifying the metaphysical relation between them. A realist account may interpret X_t^{rel} as a finite manifestation of X^* . A constructivist or historical-material account may explain the relevant form through processes internal to $\mathcal{A}_t$ and the wider relational field. Other philosophical interpretations remain possible.

Relational manifestation therefore carries an index of situatedness:

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} = X^{\text{rel}}[t, \mathcal{A}_t]. \quad (25)$$

Changes in access conditions can consequently produce changes in manifestation:

$$\mathcal{A}_{t_1} \neq \mathcal{A}_{t_2} \implies X_{t_1}^{\text{rel}} \text{ may differ from } X_{t_2}^{\text{rel}}. \quad (26)$$

Equation 26 expresses a possibility of historical and relational variation. It makes no claim that every alteration of access conditions produces a different manifestation.

This structure permits an invariant ontological claim and a historically variable manifestation to coexist within the same philosophical description. A mathematical realist, for example, may regard mathematical structure as independent of changes in human symbolic practice while also recognizing the historical development of notation, proof, conceptual vocabulary, and mathematical intuition. A religious realist may similarly affirm a transcendent referent while recognizing substantial historical variation in the languages, images, rituals, institutions, and theological concepts through which a relation to that referent is articulated.

The historicity of manifestation therefore concerns

$$X_t^{\text{rel}},$$

while claims concerning invariance or independent existence concern a different analytical level.

3.3 Heterogeneous Media of Manifestation

Relational manifestation can occur through heterogeneous media. Symbolic representation constitutes one important mode, especially for objects organized through language, classification, narrative, doctrine, and formal notation. Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms provides an influential account of the capacity of symbolic organization to shape intelligible experience across language, myth, religion, and science [3, 4].

The present framework allows a wider field of mediation. Let

$$\mathcal{C}_t(X) = \{C_t^S, C_t^I, C_t^N, C_t^V, C_t^A, C_t^B, C_t^M, C_t^P, C_t^J\} \quad (27)$$

denote a provisional carrier profile for X_t^{rel} . The components represent symbolic, imaginary, normative, axiological, affective, bodily, material, practical, and institutional carriers respectively.

The carrier profile is deliberately heterogeneous. A sacred reference may be carried by a name, an image, an architectural space, a prohibition, a ritual sequence, an affective disposition, a moral value, a remembered event, or an institutional role. Several carriers can operate simultaneously, and their relative importance can change historically.

The distinction between carrier and manifested relational position is therefore important:

$$\mathcal{C}_t(X) \longrightarrow \mathcal{P}_t(X), \quad (28)$$

where $\mathcal{P}_t(X)$ denotes the relational position occupied by the manifested form.

Two periods can contain different carrier configurations while retaining substantial continuity in relational position:

$$\mathcal{C}_{t_1}(X) \neq \mathcal{C}_{t_2}(X), \quad \mathcal{P}_{t_1}(X) \simeq \mathcal{P}_{t_2}(X). \quad (29)$$

Conversely, a stable symbol can remain materially unchanged while its relational position changes substantially:

$$\mathcal{C}_{t_1}(X) \simeq \mathcal{C}_{t_2}(X), \quad \mathcal{P}_{t_1}(X) \neq \mathcal{P}_{t_2}(X). \quad (30)$$

These distinctions are especially relevant to religion. Continuity of a divine name or image does not guarantee continuity of its authority, affective significance, normative force, or position within the organization of social life. Historical transformation can therefore occur at the level of relational position even where visible representation remains stable.

3.4 Relational Position and Subjective Organization

A manifested form becomes especially consequential when it enters the organization of subjectivity. Lacanian psychoanalysis provides a useful structural example because an Other can acquire efficacy through its place within the symbolic organization of the subject [9, 7]. The subject's relation to such an Other can influence desire, expectation, recognition, prohibition, and interpretation.

For the present framework, this insight can be generalized without requiring the adoption of Lacanian psychoanalysis as a complete theory of subjectivity. Let

$$\mathbf{U}_t = (D_t, E_t, I_t, A_t) \quad (31)$$

denote a provisional profile of subjective dynamics, including desire D_t , expectation E_t , interpretation I_t , and affect A_t .

A relational position can participate in the subsequent development of this profile:

$$\mathbf{U}_{t+1} = \Phi_U(\mathbf{U}_t, \mathcal{P}_t(X), R_t, \Gamma_t). \quad (32)$$

The significance of Equation 32 lies in the operative position of X_t^{rel} . A represented deity, norm, value, institution, imagined audience, future generation, or symbolic authority can participate in psychological development through the relation that a subject forms toward it.

Such participation can persist beyond the moment of representation. A ritual may end while the position activated through it continues to affect later interpretation. An imagined judgment may remain influential in the absence of an observing person. A normative ideal can orient desire across contexts in which its linguistic expression is absent. Relational manifestation therefore includes temporally distributed effects that cannot be reduced to continuous perceptual presence.

3.5 Participation in Relational Dynamics

Subjective modulation constitutes one domain of a wider generative process. A manifested form can also participate in normative, epistemic, material, institutional, and interpersonal dynamics.

Let the relational system state be represented as

$$\mathcal{Q}_t = (\mathbf{U}_t, S_t, N_t, V_t, K_t, M_t, R_t, \Gamma_t). \quad (33)$$

The transition of the system can be written abstractly as

$$\mathcal{Q}_{t+1} = \Phi_t(\mathcal{Q}_t, \mathcal{P}_t(X)). \quad (34)$$

Equation 34 does not imply that the relational position is the sole determinant of the later state. It identifies the manifested form as one participant within a heterogeneous dynamical configuration.

The relevant effects can extend across multiple dimensions. A religious reference may alter patterns of obligation and institutional practice. A legal fiction may alter ownership and collective action. A mathematical formalism may reorganize scientific inquiry and technological possibility. A value may reshape individual aspiration and institutional evaluation. A socially maintained institution may alter material distributions and future relations. Social ontology provides well-established examples of socially sustained statuses acquiring consequential effects within collective life [13].

The present analysis refers to this broader structure as *generative participation*. Its defining feature is entry into subsequent relational development:

$$\mathcal{P}_t(X) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}. \quad (35)$$

The arrow $\rightsquigarrow$ expresses participation in a generative dependency. It carries less causal specificity than a deterministic mapping and leaves open the empirical mechanism through which the effect is realized.

3.6 Recursive Transformation of Manifestation

Generative participation creates a recursive structure because the transformed relational system becomes part of the conditions under which later manifestations occur.

Combining Equations 24 and 34 yields the sequence

$$\begin{aligned} X_t^{\text{rel}} &\rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \\ &\longrightarrow \mathcal{A}_{t+1} \longrightarrow X_{t+1}^{\text{rel}}. \end{aligned} \tag{36}$$

The manifested form therefore participates in changing the conditions of its own later manifestation.

Religious traditions provide clear illustrations of this recursion at the level of historical structure. Ritual practice can contribute to institutions, institutions can stabilize interpretive authority, interpretive authority can reshape doctrine and ritual, and these changes can alter the position through which the sacred is encountered by later participants. Durkheim's treatment of collective religious practice already emphasizes the capacity of ritual life to renew collective representations and social bonds [5]. Historical approaches further show that the categories through which religion becomes recognizable can themselves be reconfigured over time [1].

The same structure can occur outside conventionally religious domains. A mathematical representation can reorganize scientific practice, generate new instruments and concepts, and thereby alter the conditions under which later mathematical structures become accessible. A political value can generate institutions that subsequently reshape the meaning and practical realization of that value.

The recursion can therefore be stated abstractly as

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightarrow X_{t+1}^{\text{rel}} \rightarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+2} \rightarrow \cdots \tag{37}$$

This recursive participation supplies the dynamical foundation for the definition of relational reality developed in Section 4.

3.7 Ontological Underdetermination

The preceding architecture permits strong claims concerning manifestation and generative participation while preserving weaker claims concerning ultimate ontology.

Suppose two philosophical accounts agree on the historically observable structure

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow X_{t+1}^{\text{rel}}. \tag{38}$$

They may nevertheless assign different metaphysical interpretations to the relation between X^* and X_t^{rel} .

A realist account may posit

$$X^* \neq \emptyset$$

and interpret manifestation as finite access to an independently real referent. A constructivist account may explain the operative form through the internal history and relations of the system. A theological account may understand manifestation through revelation, presence, or participation. An idealist account may place the relevant reality within a wider structure of mind, spirit, reason, or meaning.

The shared relational description does not adjudicate among these possibilities.

Claim 3.1 (Ontological underdetermination). A sufficiently specified account of the historical formation, persistence, and generative effects of X_t^{rel} can remain compatible with more than one account of the ontological status of its possible referent.

The claim establishes a boundary of the present framework. Agreement concerning

$$\mathcal{M}_t(X) \quad \text{and} \quad \mathcal{G}_{t:H}(X)$$

does not require agreement concerning

$$\mathcal{O}(X).$$

This boundary also clarifies the relation between historical-material and religious analysis. A historical-material account can investigate the conditions under which a religious manifestation is generated, reproduced, institutionalized, and transformed. A religious realist can accept such a history while maintaining that the history concerns finite manifestations of a reality exceeding those conditions. Their metaphysical disagreement remains substantive, while the relational history remains available as a common object of inquiry.

3.8 Analytical Transition to Relational Reality

The architecture developed in this section can now be summarized as

$$\boxed{\mathcal{O}(X) \quad ; \quad \mathcal{M}_t(X) \quad \rightsquigarrow \quad \mathcal{G}_{t:H}(X)} \quad (39)$$

where the semicolon preserves ontological openness and the generative arrow identifies the transition examined by the concept of relational reality.

The central object of the next section is therefore the interval

$$\mathcal{M}_t(X) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{G}_{t:H}(X).$$

The task is to specify when a manifestation possesses sufficient persistence, scope, and recursive participation to warrant description as relationally real, how such reality differs from momentary representation or belief, and whether relational reality should be treated as a binary status, a multidimensional profile, or both.

4 Definition and Dynamical Structure of Relational Reality

This section gives the formal definition of relational reality and specifies the dynamical conditions under which the concept applies. The preceding sections separated ontological status, relational manifestation, and generative participation. The present section concentrates on the transition from manifestation to sustained generative participation. It first defines the coupled psychological and relational state in which relational reality operates, then develops persistence, generative participation, and recursive reconditioning as its principal dimensions. It concludes by distinguishing relational reality from representation, belief, metaphysical verification, and normative legitimacy.

4.1 Coupled Psychological and Relational Dynamics

The minimal domain required for the present definition consists of two dynamically coupled structures. Let

$$\mathbf{Z}_t = (D_t, R_t), \quad (40)$$

where D_t denotes the psychological dynamics through which desire, expectation, attachment, aversion, aspiration, interpretation, and related motivational tendencies develop, and R_t denotes the relational structure within which subjects, practices, institutions, symbols, values, norms, and material arrangements interact.

The distinction between D_t and R_t is analytical. Psychological development occurs through relations, while relational structures are continually reproduced and transformed through the actions, interpretations, and desires of participating subjects. Their coupled development can therefore be represented as

$$\mathbf{Z}_{t+1} = \Phi_t(\mathbf{Z}_t, \Xi_t), \quad (41)$$

where Ξ_t collects additional historical, symbolic, normative, epistemic, institutional, bodily, material, and environmental conditions relevant to the transition.

The use of $\mathbf{Z}_t$ avoids assigning ontological priority to either psychological or social structure. It provides a compact description of the coupled dynamics within which a manifested form can acquire relational reality.

Let x_t denote a particular relational manifestation associated with an object, subject, structure, value, norm, deity, sacred reference, or other object of discourse X :

$$x_t = \mathcal{M}_t(X). \quad (42)$$

The lowercase notation emphasizes that x_t is the manifestation available within the specified relational system. It carries no assumption concerning the independent ontological status of X or of a possible referent X^* .

4.2 Persistence of Relational Manifestation

A momentary representation does not by itself constitute relational reality. A form may appear briefly in perception, imagination, language, or memory and leave little subsequent structure through which it continues to operate. The concept of relational reality therefore requires persistence across a relevant temporal interval.

Persistence does not require an unchanged material or symbolic carrier. A religious reference may move among speech, image, ritual, memory, norm, institution, bodily practice, and affective orientation. A value may survive changes in vocabulary. A mathematical relation may persist through changing notation. What matters is continuity of operative relational presence rather than identity of surface representation.

Let

$$\mathcal{P}_H(x_t) \quad (43)$$

denote the persistence of x_t over a horizon H . The notation is intentionally abstract. Persistence may be established through repeated activation, memory, symbolic reproduction, institutional continuity, embodied habit, material inscription, relational expectation, or combinations of these mechanisms.

A manifestation satisfying

$$\mathcal{P}_H(x_t) > 0 \quad (44)$$

retains some operative continuity within the selected horizon. The magnitude of $\mathcal{P}_H$ is not presently treated as an empirically calibrated quantity. Its role is to distinguish temporally extended relational presence from an isolated occurrence.

Persistence also remains scale-dependent. A form may be highly persistent within an individual biography and weakly persistent across generations, or highly persistent within an institution and

transient within a particular subject's psychological life. The relevant horizon must therefore be stated with respect to the phenomenon being analysed.

4.3 Generative Participation

Persistence becomes relational reality when the manifested form participates in the subsequent dynamics of the system. The transition in Equation 41 can therefore be expanded to include x_t :

$$\mathbf{Z}_{t+1} = \Phi_t(\mathbf{Z}_t, x_t, \Xi_t). \quad (45)$$

The inclusion of x_t indicates that the manifested form participates in the generation of later psychological or relational states. Such participation may be direct or mediated. A sacred prohibition may reorganize desire through a normative structure. A remembered deity may alter a decision through an anticipated judgment. A mathematical formalism may restructure inquiry through epistemic practice and subsequently transform institutional and material relations. A collectively maintained status may alter patterns of interaction through institutional recognition.

Relational reality therefore concerns participation in dynamics rather than the mere presence of a representation.

The generative dependence can be expressed schematically as

$$x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{Z}_{t+\tau}, \quad 0 < \tau \leq H. \quad (46)$$

The symbol $\rightsquigarrow$ denotes a generative dependency whose precise causal mechanism remains to be specified for the domain under investigation. The formalism does not assume deterministic causation or independent effects that can already be statistically isolated.

This distinction is especially relevant to religious and symbolic phenomena. A form can participate in the organization of desire and relation through interpretation, expectation, memory, ritual repetition, normative authority, affective attachment, identification, fear, hope, obligation, or collective practice. Lacanian psychoanalysis provides one important account of the capacity of an operative Other to participate in the organization of desire [9, 7]. Sociological approaches to religion likewise show how collectively sustained sacred forms can enter the organization and reproduction of social life [5, 2].

4.4 Recursive Reconditioning of Manifestation

Generative participation becomes especially important when the altered psychological and relational state changes the conditions under which the form is subsequently manifested. The resulting structure is recursive.

Let

$$\mathcal{E}_{X,t} \quad (47)$$

denote the historically situated mechanism through which a manifestation associated with X emerges within the relational system. Then

$$x_t = \mathcal{E}_{X,t}(\mathbf{Z}_t, \Xi_t). \quad (48)$$

After x_t participates in the transition of the system,

$$\mathbf{Z}_t \longrightarrow \mathbf{Z}_{t+1}, \quad (49)$$

the conditions entering the next manifestation have changed:

$$x_{t+1} = \mathcal{E}_{X,t+1}(\mathbf{Z}_{t+1}, \Xi_{t+1}). \quad (50)$$

The core dynamical structure of relational reality can therefore be written as

$$\boxed{x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{Z}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{E}_{X,t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}.} \quad (51)$$

Equation 51 is the central formal expression of the concept developed in this paper. A manifestation participates in the development of psychological and relational structures; those transformed structures subsequently alter the mechanism through which later manifestations are produced, interpreted, embodied, remembered, or reproduced.

The feedback does not require the possible ontological referent X^* itself to change. A philosophical position may regard X^* as invariant while allowing

$$x_t \neq x_{t+1}.$$

The changing element is the historically situated relation through which X becomes manifest within the system.

This distinction is important for mathematical and religious examples alike. A mathematical realist can affirm an invariant mathematical structure while recognizing historically changing mathematical languages and practices. A religious realist can affirm a transcendent reality while recognizing historically changing forms of revelation, ritual, theology, representation, and religious experience. The present formalism concerns the evolution of the relational manifestation and its operative consequences.

4.5 Formal Definition

The preceding components can now be combined into a more precise definition.

Definition 4.1 (Relational reality). Let x_t be a manifestation associated with an object, subject, structure, value, norm, reference, or possible referent X within a generative relational system. The form x_t possesses *relational reality* over a horizon H when it exhibits temporally extended operative persistence and participates in the subsequent development of the coupled psychological and relational state, while that developing state enters the conditions of later manifestation.

The definition can be summarized through three analytical conditions:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{P}_H(x_t) &> 0, \\ x_t &\rightsquigarrow \mathbf{Z}_{t+\tau}, \\ \mathbf{Z}_{t+\tau} &\rightsquigarrow \mathcal{E}_{X,t+\tau}, \quad 0 < \tau \leq H. \end{aligned} \quad (52)$$

The first line expresses persistence. The second expresses generative participation. The third expresses recursive reconditioning of the manifestation process.

These conditions identify relational reality through a dynamical pattern:

$$\boxed{\text{manifestation} \longrightarrow \text{persistent generative participation} \longrightarrow \text{reconditioned manifestation}.} \quad (53)$$

The definition assigns reality to an operative relational configuration. It does not determine the ultimate metaphysical constitution of that configuration.

4.6 A Multidimensional Relational Reality Profile

Relational reality can vary substantially across cases. A binary distinction between relationally real and relationally absent is useful at the level of definition, while comparative analysis requires a multidimensional profile.

For a specified horizon H , define

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X) = (p_H, d_H, r_H, f_H), \quad (54)$$

where p_H denotes persistence, d_H the degree of participation in psychological and desire dynamics, r_H participation in relational dynamics, and f_H the strength of recursive feedback into later manifestation.

The profile is conceptual rather than metrically established. Its purpose is to prevent several distinct forms of relational efficacy from being collapsed into a single scalar quantity.

For example, a form may display strong psychological persistence

$$p_H, d_H \text{ high}$$

while possessing limited institutional or interpersonal reach. Another form may possess extensive relational effects

$$r_H \text{ high}$$

while entering individual desire only indirectly. A long-standing religious institution may exhibit strong persistence and recursive reproduction, while a newly emerging sacred symbol may display intense psychological effects with limited temporal stability.

Consequently,

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X_1) \quad \text{and} \quad \mathbf{RR}_H(X_2) \quad (55)$$

need not be reducible to a single ordering. Two relational realities can be strong in different dimensions.

The profile also permits historical analysis:

$$\Delta \mathbf{RR}_H = \mathbf{RR}_{H,t_2}(X) - \mathbf{RR}_{H,t_1}(X). \quad (56)$$

A form can gain or lose relational reality through changes in persistence, desire organization, relational reach, or recursive reproduction even where its visible representation remains substantially unchanged.

4.7 Representation, Belief, and Relational Reality

Relational reality remains distinct from representation. Representation concerns the presence of a form within a symbolic, perceptual, or imaginary medium. Relational reality requires that the form enter a temporally extended generative process.

Accordingly,

$$x_t \in \mathcal{M}_t \not\Rightarrow \mathbf{RR}_H(X) > 0 \quad (57)$$

in the substantive sense developed above. A representation can occur without persisting or participating materially in subsequent psychological or relational development.

Relational reality is also distinct from belief. A subject may explicitly deny a proposition while remaining strongly organized by the relational position associated with it. Conversely, a proposition may receive verbal assent while exerting little influence upon desire, action, or relational structure. The analysis therefore concerns operative participation rather than self-reported assent alone.

This distinction is particularly important in the study of religion. The relational reality of a divine reference cannot be inferred solely from whether an individual answers affirmatively to a proposition concerning the existence of God. Ritual practice, moral expectation, fear, hope, inherited norms, collective memory, spatial organization, and institutional structures may preserve an operative divine position across contexts in which explicit belief is weak, ambiguous, or contested.

4.8 Ontological Verification and Relational Reality

Relational reality also remains distinct from metaphysical verification. From

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X) > 0 \quad (58)$$

one cannot infer

$$X^* \neq \emptyset. \quad (59)$$

A socially or psychologically generated form can become relationally real without establishing an independently existing referent.

The converse inference is equally unavailable. If a philosophical or theological account affirms

$$X^* \neq \emptyset,$$

the existence of that referent does not determine the strength, form, or historical stability of

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X).$$

A possible reality can possess weak relational manifestation in one system and strong relational manifestation in another.

The relation between ontological and relational reality is therefore analytically open:

$$\boxed{\text{Ont}(X^*) \ ; \ \mathbf{RR}_H(X).} \quad (60)$$

The semicolon again indicates the absence of a predetermined inferential relation.

4.9 Truth, Legitimacy, and Generative Effect

Relational reality carries no automatic judgment of truth, legitimacy, moral value, or desirability. A false belief, oppressive norm, destructive imagined Other, exploitative institution, or misleading symbolic system can acquire substantial relational reality if it persistently participates in the generation of psychological and relational structures.

Conversely, a proposition that is true under a given epistemic standard may possess little relational reality in a particular system if it remains unknown, inaccessible, or dynamically peripheral.

The analytical separations can be summarized as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{RR}(X) &\not\equiv \text{Truth}(X), \\ \mathbf{RR}(X) &\not\equiv \text{Legitimacy}(X), \\ \mathbf{RR}(X) &\not\equiv \text{Good}(X). \end{aligned} \quad (61)$$

These separations are essential for later analysis of divinity. A form can acquire strong sacred or transcendent authority while generating restrictive, extractive, or destructive relational dynamics. Relational reality describes the operative status of the form; normative evaluation requires an additional framework.

Table 2: Analytical dimensions of relational reality

Dimension	Analytical content	Excluded inference
Manifestation	A form becomes available through symbolic, imaginary, normative, axiological, affective, material, bodily, institutional, or practical mediation	Manifestation alone establishes relational reality
Persistence	The form maintains operative continuity across a relevant temporal horizon, possibly through changing carriers	Persistence requires an unchanged representation
Generative participation	The form participates in the subsequent development of psychological and relational dynamics	Generative efficacy establishes metaphysical existence
Recursive reconditioning	The altered relational system participates in the later manifestation, interpretation, reproduction, or transformation of the form	Feedback requires alteration of a possible ontological referent

4.10 Comparative Criteria

Table 2 summarizes the principal dimensions through which the concept is used in this paper.

The dimensions in Table 2 define the analytical domain of relational reality while preserving the ontological openness established in Sections 1–3.

4.11 Relational Reality and the Transition to Divinity

Relational reality is a general category. Many forms can satisfy the dynamics of Equation 51 without acquiring sacred, transcendent, or ultimate-reference significance. Institutions, currencies, legal statuses, cultural figures, norms, mathematical formalisms, and collective identities may all participate persistently in psychological and relational generation under appropriate conditions. Social ontology provides a neighboring account of several institutionally sustained cases [13].

Divinity therefore requires an additional relational determination. A relationally real form x_t may, under particular historical and relational conditions, acquire a position that exceeds ordinary instrumental or representational significance and becomes sacred, transcendent, normatively authoritative, or ultimately referential.

The transition to be examined in the next section can be represented as

$$x_t \in \mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}} \longrightarrow T_t^X \in \mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}}, \quad (62)$$

where $\mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}}$ denotes the general domain of relationally real configurations and $\mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}}$ denotes the special domain of divine or sacralized relational configurations.

Equation 62 expresses a relation of generality and specificity. Divinity is treated as a historically generated special configuration within the wider domain of relational reality. The next section examines the relational processes through which such special configurations are formed, stabilized, transformed, and reproduced.

5 Political Economy, Marxian Forms, and Relational Reality

The concept of relational reality can be clarified through political-economic forms whose efficacy is difficult to describe through a simple opposition between substantial reality and representation. Money, credit, commodities, legal persons, firms, property claims, and economically situated subjects arise within historically organized relations while subsequently participating in the production and reproduction of those relations.

This section uses selected Marxian problems as a conceptual stress test for relational reality. Its purpose is not to assimilate political economy to religion or to claim that all socially constituted forms possess the same ontology. The comparison concerns a more general dynamical architecture:

$$\boxed{\mathfrak{R}_t \rightsquigarrow X_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}.} \quad (63)$$

A form X_t emerges within a relational configuration, acquires sufficient stability to mediate subsequent action, and thereby becomes one of the conditions through which later relations are produced.

5.1 Political-Economic Forms as Relationally Generated Forms

Political economy contains entities whose social efficacy cannot be inferred from their physical carriers alone.

A banknote has material properties, but its monetary function is not exhausted by paper, ink, polymer, or metal. A bank deposit may have no corresponding physical token in ordinary circulation. Credit can exist as a legally and institutionally recognized claim upon future payment. A corporation can own property, enter contracts, hire workers, borrow, invest, and become insolvent without being a biological organism or a single material object.

These forms are constituted through relations among law, recognition, property, exchange, institutions, expectations, accounting, authority, and practice.

Let

$$X_t^{PE} = \mathcal{E}_{PE}(R_t, I_t, L_t, K_t, E_t, \Gamma_t) \quad (64)$$

denote a political-economic form emerging through relevant relations, institutions, legal structures, knowledge, expectations, and historical conditions.

Its relational constitution does not eliminate its efficacy:

$$X_t^{PE} \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}^{PE}. \quad (65)$$

This combination of relational generation and subsequent efficacy provides a clear instance of relational reality.

5.2 Money and Relational Mediation

Marx's analysis of the commodity and money forms places social relations at the center of forms that subsequently acquire objective significance within economic life [10].

From the perspective developed here, the money-form can be represented as

$$M_t = \mathcal{E}_M(R_t^{\text{exchange}}, I_t, L_t, E_t, \Gamma_t), \quad (66)$$

where its operation depends upon historically organized relations of exchange, recognition, institution, law, expectation, and material practice.

Once established, money enters subsequent production and reproduction:

$$M_t \rightsquigarrow (A_{t+1}, L_{t+1}, K_{t+1}, P_{t+1}), \quad (67)$$

where the variables provisionally denote allocation, labor, productive resources, and production.

The relevant structure is therefore

$$\boxed{\mathfrak{R}_t^{\text{exchange}} \rightsquigarrow M_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}^{\text{production}}.} \quad (68)$$

Money is not itself identical to labor, machinery, raw material, or productive activity. Its relationally stabilized form can nevertheless reorganize which labor is employed, which resources are acquired, which projects become possible, and how produced value subsequently circulates.

The distinction relevant to relational reality is therefore

$$\boxed{\text{productive substance ; productive causal mediation.}} \quad (69)$$

A form may lack the first while possessing substantial efficacy through the second.

5.3 Credit and Temporally Extended Relational Reality

Credit provides an even clearer case because its present efficacy can depend upon relations to a future that has not yet been materially realized.

Let

$$C_t = \mathcal{E}_C \left(Q_t, T_t, L_t, I_t, E_t^F, \Gamma_t \right), \quad (70)$$

where Q_t denotes claims and obligations, T_t trust or recognized credibility, L_t legal structure, I_t institutions, and E_t^F expectations concerning future payment or production.

Credit can subsequently enable present investment:

$$C_t \rightsquigarrow I_{t+1}^{\text{inv}} \rightsquigarrow P_{t+2}. \quad (71)$$

Marx's analysis of the credit system places credit relations within the wider circulation and reproduction of capital and discusses bills of exchange, banking credit, interest-bearing capital, and claims upon future returns [11].

The GR interpretation concerns the temporal structure:

$$\boxed{\text{relation to an anticipated future} \rightsquigarrow \text{present relational form} \rightsquigarrow \text{conditions of future production.}} \quad (72)$$

A present claim concerning possible future value can therefore participate in making particular future productive trajectories materially possible.

This provides a strong example of relational reality as generative mediation.

5.4 Relational Reality and Realized Consequences

Money and credit reveal an important distinction among three analytical levels:

$$\boxed{\text{ontological or intrinsic status ; relational reality ; realized consequence.}} \quad (73)$$

The first concerns what kind of thing X ultimately is.

The second concerns whether a relationally manifested form becomes sufficiently stable to participate in subsequent dynamics.

The third concerns states produced through that participation.

Thus,

$$X_t^{\text{rel}} \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow Y_{t+2}^{\text{realized}}. \quad (74)$$

For example, a credit relation can participate in financing a factory. The credit claim and the factory possess substantially different material and institutional characteristics. The first can nevertheless become part of the causal conditions through which the second is realized.

The resulting principle is:

Proposition 5.1 (Relational generation of actuality). *A relationally constituted form may become a generative condition of subsequent material, institutional, psychological, or social states without being materially identical to the states it helps to generate.*

Relational reality therefore cannot be reduced to symbolic existence. A symbolic, legal, normative, financial, or institutional form may enter causal pathways that culminate in materially realized consequences.

5.5 Commodity Fetishism and the Reification of Relational Efficacy

Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism introduces a further distinction relevant to GR. Social relations among producers can appear in objective form as relations among things, and socially constituted powers can subsequently appear to belong naturally to the forms through which those powers operate [10].

A generalized version of this movement can be represented as

$$\text{Power } (\mathfrak{R}_t) \longmapsto \text{Property } (X_t). \quad (75)$$

Money may appear to possess value as an intrinsic property.

An office may appear to possess authority independently of the institutional relations sustaining it.

A corporation may appear to possess intentions independently of the human, legal, financial, and organizational relations through which corporate action is produced.

A socially situated individual may appear as an entirely self-subsistent source of action while the relations forming available capacities and choices recede from view.

GRR should therefore distinguish relational reality from reification:

$$\boxed{\text{relational formation} \rightarrow \text{relational efficacy ; reification.}} \quad (76)$$

Relational reality concerns the first two terms. Reification introduces an additional interpretive movement through which relationally generated properties are attributed to a form as though they belonged to it independently.

This distinction is methodologically important. The claim that money, institutions, persons, or religious forms are relationally real does not require treating their relational powers as intrinsic substances.

5.6 The Social Person in Production and Reproduction

Political economy also places pressure upon the assumption that the ordinary human subject enters analysis as an already completed and independent entity.

A concrete person occupies multiple historically organized relational positions:

$$\pi_i(t) = \left(\pi_i^{\text{worker}}, \pi_i^{\text{owner}}, \pi_i^{\text{consumer}}, \pi_i^{\text{debtor}}, \pi_i^{\text{creditor}}, \pi_i^{\text{legal}}, \pi_i^{\text{household}}, \dots \right)_t. \quad (77)$$

These positions shape what the person can produce, purchase, claim, owe, inherit, authorize, and reproduce.

The socially legible person can therefore be represented as a provisional stabilization:

$$I_t = \mathcal{E}_I(\pi_i(t), B_t, L_t, M_t, R_t, \Gamma_t). \quad (78)$$

The form I_t subsequently becomes causally consequential. It can enter a contract, sell labor power, acquire property, incur debt, purchase goods, perform care work, reproduce labor power, or participate in collective action.

The corresponding cycle is

$$\boxed{\mathfrak{R}_t^{PE} \rightsquigarrow I_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}^{PE}} \quad (79)$$

The person is historically and relationally conditioned while simultaneously becoming one of the agents through which those conditions are reproduced or transformed.

The GR claim does not reduce persons to economic positions. It identifies a general recursive structure in which a generated form subsequently becomes a condition of further generation.

5.7 Production, Reproduction, and Recursive Historical Materiality

The political-economic examples sharpen the recursive historical materiality developed later in this paper.

A relational form can begin as an outcome of existing historical conditions:

$$\Gamma_t \longrightarrow X_t. \quad (80)$$

Once relationally stabilized, it can participate in later production and reproduction:

$$X_t \rightsquigarrow \Gamma_{t+1}. \quad (81)$$

The complete cycle is

$$\boxed{\Gamma_t \longrightarrow X_t \rightsquigarrow \Gamma_{t+1} \longrightarrow X_{t+1}} \quad (82)$$

Money, credit, institutions, property relations, social identities, and organizational forms can occupy this recursive position.

A historically generated form may therefore become historically conditioning.

This observation gives relational reality a direct connection to production and reproduction:

$$\boxed{\text{historical formation} \rightarrow \text{relational stabilization} \rightarrow \text{productive or reproductive mediation}} \quad (83)$$

The relevant historical-material question is consequently not exhausted by asking where a form originated. Inquiry must also examine how the form enters the subsequent reproduction and transformation of the relational system.

5.8 Relational Forms and Analytical Convenience

The political-economic discussion also clarifies the methodological status of entities within GR.

A complex relational configuration can be compressed into a provisional analytical form:

$$\mathfrak{R}_t \xrightarrow{\mathcal{K}} X_t, \quad (84)$$

where $\mathcal{K}$ denotes a process of identification, stabilization, or coarse-graining.

Terms such as “worker,” “firm,” “money,” “creditor,” “consumer,” or “corporation” can function as such stabilized forms.

Their provisional character does not make them analytically arbitrary. A useful form tracks consequential structures:

$$X_t \rightsquigarrow \Delta \mathfrak{R}_{t:t+H}. \quad (85)$$

One possible criterion for maintaining an analytical entity is therefore its capacity to preserve information relevant to later relational dynamics.

The form is a convenience of analysis and practice, yet the relations organized through that convenience may become causally consequential.

This yields a broader principle:

$$\boxed{\text{conventional stabilization} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{generative efficacy}} \quad (86)$$

can coexist.

5.9 Political Economy as a Stress Test for Relational Reality

The political-economic examples provide a domain in which relationally constituted forms clearly participate in materially consequential processes.

Their general architecture is

$$\boxed{\begin{aligned} \mathfrak{R}_t^{PE} &\rightsquigarrow M_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}^{PE}, \\ \mathfrak{R}_t^{PE} &\rightsquigarrow C_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}^{PE}, \\ \mathfrak{R}_t^{PE} &\rightsquigarrow I_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}^{PE}. \end{aligned}} \quad (87)$$

Money, credit, and the social person remain substantially different phenomena. Their commonality lies at the level of relational dynamics.

They belong to a wider family of possible relationally real forms:

$$\mathfrak{F}_{RR} = \{X : \mathfrak{R}_t \rightsquigarrow X_t \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}\}. \quad (88)$$

Membership in this family makes no claim of common ontology. It identifies a shared generative structure.

This stress test therefore sharpens the working definition of relational reality:

Definition 5.2 (Relational reality through generative mediation). A form is relationally real over a specified system and temporal horizon when it becomes sufficiently stabilized within relational dynamics to participate persistently in the generation, reproduction, or transformation of subsequent relational states, while its intrinsic ontological status remains a separate question.

The minimal architecture is

$$\boxed{\mathfrak{R}_t \rightsquigarrow X_t \overset{\text{med}}{\rightsquigarrow} \mathfrak{R}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow X_{t+1}.} \quad (89)$$

Political economy therefore demonstrates why relational reality should not be treated as a concept introduced specifically to accommodate religious phenomena. Relationally constituted forms already play indispensable roles in the organization of economic production and reproduction.

The next section turns to divinity as one special configuration within this broader domain of relational reality.

6 Divinity as a Special Relational Configuration

This section develops divinity as a special configuration within the wider domain of relational reality. Its purpose is to explain how a relationally real form can acquire sacred, transcendent, or ultimate-reference significance and thereby assume a distinctive role in the organization of desire, value, normativity, interpretation, and relational development. The discussion first clarifies the relation between the general category of relational reality and the special category of divinity, then examines sacralization, transcendent positioning, heterogeneous carriers, historical reproduction, and the distinction between divinity and transcendent subjecthood. The section treats these structures as relational configurations and leaves their possible metaphysical referents open.

6.1 Generality and Special Relational Configuration

Section 4 defined relational reality through persistent generative participation. A form x_t becomes relationally real when it enters a temporally extended recursive process:

$$x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{Z}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{E}_{X,t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}. \quad (90)$$

This structure defines a general analytical domain. Institutions, values, norms, legal statuses, imagined subjects, cultural figures, scientific concepts, mathematical representations, and religious references can all acquire relational reality under appropriate conditions.

Divinity occupies a more specific region of this domain. Let

$$\mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}}$$

denote the domain of relationally real configurations, and let

$$\mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}}$$

denote the domain in which relationally real forms acquire divine or sacred positioning. Their relation can be represented as

$$\mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}} \subseteq \mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}}. \quad (91)$$

Equation 91 expresses logical inclusion only. The philosophically important structure concerns the process through which a general relational reality becomes historically specified as a divine configuration:

$$x_t \xrightarrow{\mathcal{S}_t} T_t^X, \quad (92)$$

where $\mathcal{S}_t$ denotes a historically situated process of sacralization or transcendent positioning and T_t^X denotes the resulting configuration.

The movement in Equation 92 reflects a relation between generality and specificity. Relational reality provides the general condition of operative persistence and generative participation. Divinity arises when that reality acquires a distinctive position through concrete historical, symbolic, affective, normative, institutional, and practical relations.

This relation is dialectical in the limited sense used here. The general category becomes intelligible through its special realizations, while special cases can expose limitations in the formulation of the general category and thereby require its revision. The development of relational reality in this paper itself follows this pattern: religious and metaphysical cases reveal that historically changing manifestation can coexist with an ontologically invariant, indeterminate, or otherwise differently conceived referent.

6.2 General, Special, and Particular in Relational Development

The relation between relational reality and divinity can be developed further through the distinction among the general, the special, and the particular. Relational reality supplies the general analytical category. Divine relational configuration constitutes a special determination within that category. Concrete historical deities, sacred orders, rituals, institutions, and traditions provide particular realizations of such configurations.

This structure can be represented statically as

$$\mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}} \supseteq \mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}} \supseteq T_{t,k}^X, \quad (93)$$

where $T_{t,k}^X$ denotes a particular historically situated realization of a divine relational configuration.

The containment relation alone does not capture the full structure. The general category is itself developed through encounters with its special and particular realizations. A particular configuration may exhibit a structure that the current formulation of the general category does not adequately describe. The resulting discrepancy can motivate revision of the general.

The developmental sequence can therefore be written as

$$\mathfrak{R}_t \longrightarrow \mathfrak{D}_t \longrightarrow T_{t,k}^X \rightsquigarrow \mathfrak{R}_{t+1}. \quad (94)$$

The first transition represents specification of a general relational category into a special domain. The second represents its realization under particular historical conditions. The final transition represents the possibility that analysis of the particular case discloses distinctions, exceptions, or structures that require revision of the general category.

This movement is especially important for the present concept of relational reality. Religious and metaphysical cases reveal that historical variability of manifestation is compatible with several different accounts of the possible referent, including accounts that treat the referent as invariant. The special problem of divinity therefore contributes to the development of the more general concept from which it was initially analysed.

The relation among general, special, and particular is consequently generative in both directions. The general supplies a provisional space in which particular phenomena can be compared, while historically encountered particulars place pressure upon the adequacy of that space.

This structure also expresses the revisability of Generative Relational analysis. A general category is not treated as a completed universal into which later cases are merely inserted. Its content remains open to reconstruction through the cases it encounters:

$$\mathcal{G}_{t+1} = \mathcal{D}(\mathcal{G}_t, \mathcal{S}_t, \mathcal{P}_t), \quad (95)$$

where $\mathcal{G}_t$, $\mathcal{S}_t$, and $\mathcal{P}_t$ denote the current general, special, and particular levels of analysis, and $\mathcal{D}$ denotes their dialectical development.

Equation 95 has methodological rather than metaphysical status. It describes the development of analytical categories through inquiry. It does not claim that reality itself is organized according to a fixed triadic ontology.

6.3 Sacralization and Transcendent Positioning

Durkheim's analysis of the sacred and profane provides a major sociological precedent for treating sacredness as a structured differentiation within collective life [5]. Berger likewise emphasizes the capacity of religion to establish encompassing structures of significance through which a social world receives orientation and legitimacy [2]. The present analysis draws from these traditions while

treating divinity more broadly as a relational configuration whose formation can involve collective, symbolic, psychological, normative, material, and other processes.

Sacralization can be understood as a transformation in relational position. A form that previously occupies an ordinary instrumental, descriptive, or evaluative position may acquire an enhanced status through which it exceeds the standpoint of particular participants.

Let

$$\mathcal{P}_t(X)$$

denote the relational position of X . Sacralization can then be expressed as

$$\mathcal{P}_t(X) \xrightarrow{\mathcal{S}_t} \mathcal{P}_t^{\text{div}}(X). \quad (96)$$

The resulting position may acquire several kinds of significance. It may become a source of orientation, a site of ultimate reference, an object of reverence, a normative authority, a witness to action, a ground of value, or a reference whose significance exceeds the unilateral possession of any individual participant.

These dimensions need not occur with equal intensity. Divinity is therefore treated as a relational configuration rather than as a checklist of necessary and sufficient theological attributes.

For comparative analysis, a provisional profile can nevertheless be useful:

$$\mathbf{D}_t(X) = (s_t, \tau_t, u_t, n_t, d_t, \kappa_t), \quad (97)$$

where s_t denotes sacred differentiation, τ_t transcendent or exceeding position, u_t ultimate-reference significance, n_t normative authority, d_t participation in the organization of desire, and κ_t persistence through reproduction and relational continuity.

The profile in Equation 97 is descriptive. Different traditions and historical configurations can exhibit substantially different profiles while remaining candidates for analysis within the wider problem of divinity.

6.4 Transcendence as Relational Position

The term *transcendence* carries several meanings across theology, metaphysics, phenomenology, and religious studies. The present paper uses a restricted relational sense. A form occupies a transcendent relational position when it is situated, within the operative organization of a system, as exceeding the unilateral standpoint, possession, or authority of its finite participants.

This can be represented schematically as

$$\text{Pos}_{\mathcal{Q}_t}(T) \succ \text{Pos}_{\mathcal{Q}_t}(i), \quad i \in \mathcal{N}_t, \quad (98)$$

where $\mathcal{N}_t$ denotes the relevant set of participating nodes or subjects and $\succ$ denotes a relation of exceeding position within the specified relational configuration.

Equation 98 concerns relational positioning. It does not assert that T possesses metaphysical transcendence independently of the system. A theological interpretation may make that stronger claim. The present analysis records the way in which T operates within the relational field.

This distinction permits several ontological interpretations to coexist. A religious realist may understand the transcendent position as a finite relation toward an independently real transcendence. A historical-material account may reconstruct the conditions through which the position is produced and reproduced. An idealist account may interpret the same position through structures of consciousness, spirit, reason, or meaning. The relational configuration remains available to analysis across these differences.

6.5 Heterogeneous Carriers of Divinity

Divinity does not require a single representational carrier. Cassirer's work on symbolic forms illustrates the plurality of cultural media through which human experience becomes articulated [3, 4]. Religious life extends this plurality across narrative, image, ritual, bodily practice, architecture, normative order, material object, memory, silence, absence, and institutional organization.

Let

$$\mathcal{C}_t(T)$$

denote the carrier configuration through which a divine relational position is manifested. The same broad relational position may persist through a change of carrier:

$$\mathcal{C}_{t_1}(T) \neq \mathcal{C}_{t_2}(T), \quad \mathcal{P}_{t_1}^{\text{div}}(T) \simeq \mathcal{P}_{t_2}^{\text{div}}(T). \quad (99)$$

Conversely, continuity of carrier can accompany a substantial transformation of divine position:

$$\mathcal{C}_{t_1}(T) \simeq \mathcal{C}_{t_2}(T), \quad \mathcal{P}_{t_1}^{\text{div}}(T) \neq \mathcal{P}_{t_2}^{\text{div}}(T). \quad (100)$$

A sacred text can remain materially unchanged while its interpretive authority changes. A divine image can remain visible while its place in collective practice weakens. A value can migrate from explicitly theological language into political, scientific, legal, or cultural vocabulary while retaining some dimensions of ultimate-reference significance.

The identity of a divine relational configuration therefore resides partly in the continuity of its relational function across changing mediations.

This formulation provides a precise version of the intuition that divine significance has no necessary fixed form. The relevant analytical question concerns the position that a carrier sustains and the generative effects associated with that position.

6.6 Divinity beyond Person-Like Deities

The distinction between carrier and relational position also requires a separation between divinity and personhood.

A person-like deity can possess a divine relational configuration through attributes such as addressability, agency, will, witnessing, command, response, judgment, or care. Many religious traditions contain configurations of this kind.

Other forms of sacred or transcendent significance have different structures. An ultimate principle, sacred order, truth, value, law, cosmological regularity, or other reference may organize conduct and interpretation without being represented as a person-like subject.

The present framework therefore distinguishes

$$\text{Div}(X) \quad ; \quad \text{Subj}(X), \quad (101)$$

where $\text{Div}(X)$ concerns divine relational configuration and $\text{Subj}(X)$ concerns subject-position formation.

This distinction is important for comparative religious analysis. It permits the study of sacred and transcendent structures without translating every tradition into the vocabulary of a creator God or person-like divine agent. It also prevents the analytical category of divinity from erasing differences among theological, cosmological, philosophical, and ritual traditions.

A further transformation may occur when a divine or transcendent position acquires subject-like properties:

$$T_t^X \xrightarrow{\mathcal{U}_t} T_t^{\text{subj}}, \quad (102)$$

where $\mathcal{U}_t$ denotes a process of relational subjectivation.

The formation of T_t^{subj} raises additional questions concerning agency attribution, addressability, will, witnessing, response, symbolic authority, and the organization of desire. These questions exceed the definitional scope of the present paper and form part of the subsequent development of Generative Relational Religious Studies.

6.7 Divine Participation in Desire and Normativity

A defining feature of a strong divine relational configuration is its capacity to enter the organization of subsequent psychological and relational development.

Let the system state include desire D_t , value V_t , normativity N_t , epistemic organization K_t , and relational structure R_t . A divine relational configuration T_t^X can participate in their development:

$$\mathcal{Q}_{t+1} = \Phi_t(\mathcal{Q}_t, T_t^X). \quad (103)$$

Its operation may involve several pathways. A divine position can orient what subjects desire, establish limits on legitimate desire, define objects of reverence or aspiration, authorize norms, organize interpretations of suffering and obligation, structure relations among persons, and supply a reference through which truth or legitimacy is assessed.

Lacanian psychoanalysis provides one important model for understanding how an Other-position can participate in the organization of desire and symbolic authority [9, 7]. The present framework generalizes the dynamical structure while preserving the specificity of Lacan's concepts.

The important GR claim concerns generative participation:

$$T_t^X \rightsquigarrow (D_{t+1}, V_{t+1}, N_{t+1}, K_{t+1}, R_{t+1}). \quad (104)$$

A divine position is therefore relationally consequential through its participation in the production of subsequent orientations, interpretations, practices, and relations.

This criterion also permits analysis of forms conventionally located outside religion. A value such as freedom, a concept such as reason, or an authority such as science may acquire unusually strong ultimate-reference or sacralized positions in particular historical systems. Their inclusion as comparative cases would depend upon the configuration demonstrated in that system rather than upon a prior declaration that these forms constitute religion.

Accordingly, the present framework does not claim that science, mathematics, nation, law, or political values are religions. It permits investigation of the conditions under which one of these forms may acquire a divine-like relational configuration.

6.8 Historical Reproduction of Divinity

Divine relational configurations require reproduction across time. Durkheim's analysis of ritual emphasizes the renewal of collective religious life through recurrent practice [5]. Historical and genealogical approaches further demonstrate that religious forms and their institutional conditions undergo substantial transformation [1].

Within the present framework, reproduction can be represented as

$$T_t^X \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{S}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow T_{t+1}^X. \quad (105)$$

The first transition represents the generative effect of the divine position. The second indicates that the transformed system modifies the conditions of subsequent sacralization and reproduction. The third produces a later divine configuration.

Divinity is therefore historically dynamic even where a tradition describes its transcendent referent as invariant. The distinction can be written as

$$T_{t_1}^* = T_{t_2}^* \quad \text{and} \quad T_{t_1}^{\text{rel}} \neq T_{t_2}^{\text{rel}}, \quad (106)$$

for a metaphysical account that affirms an invariant T^* .

Equation 106 illustrates a logical possibility. GR does not require the metaphysical premise expressed by its first term.

Historical transformation may increase, redirect, redistribute, or weaken the dimensions represented in $\mathbf{D}_t(X)$. A previously central sacred reference can lose normative authority while retaining cultural memory. Another can migrate into new institutions or symbolic vocabularies. A form with limited earlier significance can acquire an ultimate-reference position under new historical conditions.

The history of divinity can consequently be examined through changes in relational configuration rather than through a simple sequence of presence and disappearance.

6.9 Sacralization, Desacralization, and Migration

The dynamical framework permits three analytically distinct processes.

Sacralization concerns the acquisition or strengthening of a divine relational position:

$$x_t \xrightarrow{\mathcal{S}_t} T_t^X. \quad (107)$$

Desacralization concerns a reduction or transformation of the dimensions through which the form occupies that position:

$$T_t^X \xrightarrow{\mathcal{D}_t} x_{t+1}^{\text{rel}}. \quad (108)$$

Migration concerns the relocation of sacred or ultimate-reference functions among different carriers or relational positions:

$$T_t^X \xrightarrow{\mathcal{M}_t} T_{t+1}^Y. \quad (109)$$

These processes can coexist. A religious institution may lose authority while a value historically associated with it continues through another symbolic or institutional form. A sacred reference may weaken in one social domain and intensify in another. A transformation in carrier can therefore accompany continuity, redistribution, or reorganization of divine relational functions.

Historical-material analysis is especially relevant to these transitions because the viability of a divine configuration depends upon concrete conditions of reproduction. Symbols require media, rituals require practices, institutions require resources, interpretive authority requires social relations, and transmitted values require mechanisms of reproduction. Historical changes in these conditions can therefore alter the relational configuration through which divinity operates.

6.10 Material Formation and Metaphysical Interpretation

The historical production of a divine relational configuration and the possible metaphysical reality of its referent occupy distinct levels.

Suppose a historical-material analysis establishes

$$T_t^X = \mathcal{S}_t(H_t, \Gamma_t, S_t, I_t, R_t, \dots). \quad (110)$$

Equation 110 can explain the historical conditions through which a divine position becomes relationally operative. It can also support analysis of reproduction, authority, institutionalization, conflict, and transformation.

Table 3: Analytical dimensions of a divine relational configuration

Dimension	Relational structure	Possible variation
Sacred differentiation	The form acquires a differentiated position of reverence, prohibition, special value, or sacred significance	Intensity and mode of sacred differentiation vary across traditions and historical periods
Transcendent positioning	The form is situated as exceeding the unilateral standpoint or possession of finite participants	Transcendence may be personal, impersonal, cosmological, normative, symbolic, or otherwise configured
Ultimate reference	The form participates in judgments concerning final orientation, meaning, truth, legitimacy, or value	Ultimate-reference functions may be distributed across several forms
Normative and affective force	The form participates in obligation, aspiration, reverence, fear, hope, attachment, or other motivational structures	Psychological and normative effects can differ substantially across subjects and institutions
Generative participation	The divine position contributes to subsequent psychological, practical, institutional, or relational development	Effects may expand, redirect, stabilize, constrain, or reorganize later relations
Historical reproduction	The position is renewed, transformed, transmitted, or relocated through symbolic, ritual, institutional, material, and practical processes	Continuity of divine position can coexist with substantial changes in carrier and interpretation

The equation leaves the status of a possible transcendent referent analytically open:

$$\text{Ont}(T^*) = ?. \quad (111)$$

A materialist interpretation may locate the explanatory weight within the historical process represented in Equation 110. A religious realist may interpret that same historical process as the finite conditions through which a transcendent reality becomes manifest. An idealist or other metaphysical account may specify a different relation.

The shared object of inquiry remains

$$T_t^X$$

and its participation in

$$\mathcal{Q}_{t+1}.$$

This distinction allows a rigorous historical account of divinity without requiring historical analysis to function as a complete ontology. It equally allows a metaphysical affirmation of transcendence while preserving the historical manifestation of transcendence as an object of critical analysis.

6.11 Analytical Profile of Divine Configuration

Table 3 summarizes the principal dimensions used to describe divine relational configurations in this paper. The dimensions are comparative coordinates rather than universal theological requirements.

Table 3 provides a vocabulary for comparison while preserving the historical specificity of individual traditions. Structural similarity along one dimension does not establish equivalence in theology, metaphysics, practice, or historical meaning.

6.12 Divinity within the Architecture of Relational Reality

The argument of this section can be summarized through the following dynamical sequence:

$$\begin{aligned} x_t &\in \mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}} \\ \xrightarrow{\mathcal{S}_t} T_t^X &\in \mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}} \\ \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} &\rightsquigarrow \mathcal{S}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow T_{t+1}^X. \end{aligned} \tag{112}$$

The first transition is a movement from general relational reality toward a special divine configuration. The second expresses the participation of that configuration in subsequent generation. The later transitions express the historical reproduction and transformation of divinity.

The sequence provides a relational account of how divinity can be generated, stabilized, transformed, and reproduced without determining whether its possible referent is itself generated, invariant, independently existent, or adequately describable through any of these categories.

Divinity therefore occupies a distinctive position in the present framework: it is historically situated in its manifestation, dynamically real in its generative effects, heterogeneous in its possible carriers, and metaphysically open with respect to its possible referent.

The next section develops the philosophical consequence of this architecture: historical-material, religious-realist, idealist, and other metaphysical accounts can retain substantial disagreement concerning ultimate reality while sharing an analytical domain in the historical formation and generative operation of relationally manifested divinity.

7 Historical Materiality, Metaphysical Plurality, and Ontological Openness

This section examines the relation between historical explanation and metaphysical interpretation within the framework of relational reality. Its purpose is to specify how historical-material, religious-realist, idealist, and other philosophical accounts can analyse a shared relational phenomenon while retaining different accounts of ultimate reality. The section first separates the domains of historical formation and ontological interpretation, then develops historical materiality as an explanation of relational manifestation, considers metaphysical interpretations of the same manifestation, examines the possibility of invariant referents and variable relational forms, and finally states the conditions under which analytical coexistence remains possible.

7.1 Two Domains of Explanation

The framework developed in the preceding sections distinguishes a possible referent X^* from its historically situated relational manifestation x_t . The distinction permits two explanatory domains to be represented without assigning either domain priority in advance.

Let

$$\mathcal{D}_{\text{hist}} = \{H_t, \Gamma_t, \mathcal{C}_t, \mathcal{P}_t, x_t, \mathcal{Q}_t\} \tag{113}$$

denote the historical-relational domain. Its objects include historical conditions, generative conditions, carriers, relational positions, manifestations, and system dynamics.

Let

$$\mathcal{D}_{\text{ont}} = \{X^*, \text{Ont}(X^*), \mathcal{R}(X^*, x_t)\} \tag{114}$$

denote the ontological domain, where $\mathcal{R}(X^*, x_t)$ represents whatever metaphysical relation a particular philosophical account proposes between a possible referent and its relational manifestation.

The two domains can interact conceptually while remaining analytically distinguishable:

$$\mathcal{D}_{\text{ont}} ; \mathcal{D}_{\text{hist}}. \quad (115)$$

The semicolon records ontological openness. Historical analysis can proceed within $\mathcal{D}_{\text{hist}}$ while the interpretation of $\mathcal{D}_{\text{ont}}$ remains contested.

This distinction also prevents explanatory scope from being silently expanded. An account of the historical emergence of a religious symbol, institution, ritual, or divine position establishes claims about $\mathcal{D}_{\text{hist}}$. A judgment concerning the independent reality of its possible referent requires an additional philosophical argument.

7.2 Historical Materiality of Relational Manifestation

Feuerbach and Marx provide major precedents for relocating theological and religious forms within the conditions of human life [6, 12]. Their approaches differ in important respects, while both make religious representation available to anthropological, social, and historical explanation.

A historical-material account of relational manifestation can be expressed schematically as

$$x_t = \mathcal{H}_t(M_t, R_t, I_t, S_t, L_t, P_t, \Gamma_t), \quad (116)$$

where M_t denotes material conditions, R_t social relations, I_t institutions, S_t symbolic configurations, L_t available linguistic resources, P_t practices, and Γ_t wider generative conditions.

Equation 116 expresses historical dependence. A divine name, theological concept, sacred image, ritual structure, or institutional form appears through concrete conditions of production, transmission, interpretation, and reproduction.

The same principle applies to the category of religion itself. Asad's genealogical analysis demonstrates that the modern concept of religion has been shaped through historically specific relations among discipline, authority, embodiment, political organization, and systems of classification [1]. Historical inquiry can therefore address both religious phenomena and the conceptual instruments through which those phenomena are classified.

Within Generative Relational analysis, historical materiality extends into recursive development:

$$\begin{aligned} \Gamma_t &\longrightarrow x_t \\ x_t &\rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \\ \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} &\longrightarrow \Gamma_{t+1}. \end{aligned} \quad (117)$$

The material and relational conditions participate in producing a manifestation; the manifestation enters subsequent psychological, institutional, normative, and relational dynamics; those dynamics contribute to the conditions under which later manifestations emerge.

Historical materiality therefore possesses a generative structure. Religious forms can participate actively in the reproduction and transformation of the conditions from which their later forms emerge.

7.3 Recursive Historical Materiality

Historical formation does not exhaust the historical role of a relational manifestation. Once a religious, symbolic, normative, or institutional form acquires relational reality, it can enter the conditions through which subsequent historical states are generated.

The relevant sequence is

$$\Gamma_t \longrightarrow x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \longrightarrow \Gamma_{t+1}, \quad (118)$$

where Γ_t denotes the historically available material and relational conditions, x_t the manifestation generated within those conditions, and $\mathcal{Q}_{t+1}$ the later state produced through the participation of that manifestation together with other forces.

The final transition is theoretically important. The later relational state contributes to the material, institutional, symbolic, and practical conditions of subsequent history. A religious form may therefore begin as an outcome of historically specific relations and later become one of the conditions through which those relations are reproduced or transformed.

Proposition 7.1 (Recursive historical materiality). *Once a historically conditioned form acquires relational reality, its generative effects can become part of the historical conditions from which subsequent social, material, symbolic, and relational configurations emerge.*

This proposition introduces recursion into historical explanation:

$$\Gamma_t \rightarrow x_t \rightarrow \Gamma_{t+1} \rightarrow x_{t+1} \rightarrow \Gamma_{t+2} \rightarrow \cdots . \quad (119)$$

Religion can therefore participate in history as both historically conditioned and historically conditioning. The same structure can apply to law, ideology, science, institutional categories, values, and other relationally real forms.

This formulation preserves the material analysis of the conditions under which religious forms emerge while giving those forms a dynamically active place in subsequent historical development. Their causal and generative importance remains an empirical and historical question in each case.

Recursive historical materiality also prevents a simple division between material conditions and symbolic or religious forms. Once a symbolic form reorganizes institutions, economic behavior, political organization, bodily practice, education, or patterns of cooperation, it enters the conditions through which later material relations are constituted.

The relevant distinction is therefore temporal:

$$x_t \in \text{Outcome}(\Gamma_t) \quad \text{and} \quad x_t \in \text{Condition}(\Gamma_{t+1}). \quad (120)$$

A form can occupy both positions across successive stages of historical development.

7.4 Historical Formation and Ontological Inference

The explanatory strength of historical analysis can be preserved while its inferential boundary remains explicit.

Suppose an inquiry establishes

$$x_t = \mathcal{H}_t(\Gamma_t). \quad (121)$$

This establishes that the observed manifestation depends upon historically specified conditions. The ontological status of a possible referent remains represented by

$$\text{Ont}(X^*) = ?. \quad (122)$$

The distinction can be stated as

$$\text{Hist}(x_t) \not\equiv \text{Ont}(X^*). \quad (123)$$

The expression identifies a limit of inference. It leaves available several philosophical interpretations of the same historical result.

A metaphysical naturalist may interpret the historically generated manifestation without positing an independently existing transcendent referent. A religious realist may regard the historical process

as the finite set of conditions through which a transcendent reality becomes available to human subjects. An idealist may interpret the relation through structures of mind, spirit, reason, or meaning. Other traditions may formulate the ontological relation through categories that fit none of these descriptions.

The historical result itself remains:

$$x_t = \mathcal{H}_t(\Gamma_t).$$

The metaphysical interpretation concerns how that result is situated within a wider account of reality.

7.5 Metaphysical Interpretations of Relational Manifestation

Let

$$\mathfrak{M} = \{\mu_1, \mu_2, \dots, \mu_n\}$$

denote a set of possible metaphysical interpretations.

Each

$$\mu_k$$

provides an interpretation of the relation among a possible referent, relational manifestation, and the wider structure of reality:

$$\mu_k : (X^*, x_t, \mathcal{Q}_t) \mapsto \mathcal{I}_k. \quad (124)$$

For example, one interpretation may propose

$$X^* \longrightarrow x_t, \quad (125)$$

reading x_t as a finite manifestation of an independently real referent.

Another may place the explanatory emphasis on the relational system:

$$\mathcal{Q}_t \longrightarrow x_t. \quad (126)$$

A further interpretation may understand X^* and $\mathcal{Q}_t$ within a more encompassing metaphysical unity or process.

Generative Relational analysis requires no universal ordering among these maps. Its present object is the structure that remains available before such ordering is settled:

$$x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}. \quad (127)$$

The metaphysical interpretations can disagree concerning the origin and ultimate status of x_t while agreeing that the manifested form possesses historical conditions and generative consequences.

This produces a form of analytical plurality:

$$\mu_i \neq \mu_j, \quad \mathcal{A}(\mu_i) \cap \mathcal{A}(\mu_j) \neq \emptyset, \quad (128)$$

where $\mathcal{A}(\mu_k)$ denotes the domain of claims available for shared analysis under interpretation μ_k .

The intersection represents the region in which inquiry can continue despite metaphysical disagreement.

7.6 Invariant Referents and Variable Manifestations

The distinction between ontological status and relational manifestation becomes especially clear when a philosophical or religious system affirms an invariant reality.

Suppose an account proposes

$$X_{t_1}^* = X_{t_2}^*. \quad (129)$$

Historical variation can nevertheless occur at the level of manifestation:

$$x_{t_1} \neq x_{t_2}. \quad (130)$$

The two propositions are logically compatible:

$$X_{t_1}^* = X_{t_2}^*, \quad x_{t_1} \neq x_{t_2}. \quad (131)$$

The distinction has wide application. A mathematical realist may affirm the independence of mathematical structure while recognizing historical changes in notation, proof, intuition, and formal representation. A religious tradition may affirm an eternal or invariant transcendent reality while recognizing changes in ritual, doctrine, language, institutional authority, and modes of religious experience.

The relational dynamics occur through

$$x_t,$$

so changes in human history can alter the manifestation without requiring a corresponding change in

$$X^*.$$

This point is especially important for traditions in which the ultimate is described through categories of invariance, unconditionedness, permanence, or freedom from ordinary generation and decay. The GR framework can represent such claims without translating the asserted ultimate reality into an object that must itself evolve with the relational system.

The relevant dynamical structure is

$$\begin{aligned} X^* &= \text{metaphysically interpreted according to } \mu_k, \\ x_t &\rightsquigarrow Q_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}. \end{aligned} \quad (132)$$

The first line belongs to metaphysical interpretation. The second belongs to relational analysis.

7.7 Relational Reality without an Established Referent

The architecture also accommodates cases in which no independent referent has been established.

Let

$$\text{Ont}(X^*) = ? \quad (133)$$

while

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X) > 0. \quad (134)$$

The form associated with X can remain dynamically consequential through its effects upon desire, normativity, value, knowledge, institutions, and relations.

This situation occurs across domains extending beyond religion. Legal persons, currencies, imagined communities, institutional roles, collective memories, idealized audiences, and symbolic authorities can participate substantially in social development through relationally sustained forms. Social ontology provides established examples of several such mechanisms [13].

Religious phenomena add a distinctive difficulty because their own self-understandings may include claims concerning a reality exceeding the historical conditions through which they are manifested. Relational reality allows the efficacy of these forms to be analysed while the metaphysical claim remains available for separate philosophical evaluation.

7.8 Analytical Coexistence across Ontological Difference

The preceding distinctions permit a precise account of what coexistence among different philosophical traditions means in this paper.

Analytical coexistence requires a shared object of inquiry:

$$\mathcal{A}_{\text{shared}} = \{x_t, \mathcal{P}_t(X), \mathbf{RR}_H(X), \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}\}. \quad (135)$$

Within this domain, competing traditions can investigate questions such as:

How did the manifestation arise?

Through which carriers is it sustained?

Which relational position does it occupy?

How does it participate in desire, value, normativity, and practice?

How is it reproduced or transformed over time?

Their answers can converge or diverge independently of their positions concerning

$$X^*.$$

Proposition 7.2 (Analytical coexistence). *Metaphysically incompatible accounts can participate in a common analysis of relational manifestation when their disagreement concerning ultimate ontology does not eliminate the shared historical and relational object under investigation.*

The proposition describes compatibility of inquiry. It does not establish compatibility of metaphysical conclusions.

A historical materialist and a religious realist may therefore agree on the historical conditions through which a divine form acquired institutional authority while interpreting the ontological significance of that history differently. An idealist and a naturalist may agree on the transformation of a symbolic configuration while disagreeing about the metaphysical status of mind, meaning, or value.

The GR framework provides a common analytical space while preserving the substantive character of these disagreements.

7.9 Boundaries of Analytical Coexistence

Analytical coexistence has limits. Metaphysical claims can generate historical or empirical commitments, and historical findings can place pressure upon those commitments.

Suppose an interpretation μ_k entails a claim

$$C_k \tag{136}$$

concerning an observable relational manifestation. If the historical or empirical record supports

$$\neg C_k, \tag{137}$$

then the metaphysical interpretation cannot appeal to ontological openness as a general protection from criticism.

Ontological suspension therefore concerns claims for which the available relational evidence underdetermines metaphysical adjudication. It does not remove historically testable consequences from examination.

The boundary can be expressed as

$$\text{Underdet}(\mathcal{D}_{\text{hist}}, \mathcal{D}_{\text{ont}}) \tag{138}$$

only where multiple ontological interpretations remain compatible with the relevant historical and relational evidence.

This limitation is important for both religious and reductive accounts. A religious interpretation that makes concrete historical claims remains answerable to historical evidence. A materialist analysis that moves from the historical production of a manifestation to a complete denial of every possible transcendent referent has introduced an additional ontological premise. Both moves can be philosophically legitimate when argued for explicitly. Their metaphysical content should remain visible.

7.10 Historical Materialism within Generative Relational Analysis

Historical materialism receives a distinctive place within this architecture. Its major analytical strength lies in the study of concrete conditions through which forms of consciousness, institutions, practices, and relations become historically possible and subsequently participate in social reproduction [12].

Generative Relational analysis extends this concern through recursive coupling:

$$\Gamma_t \longrightarrow x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \longrightarrow \Gamma_{t+1}. \tag{139}$$

The sequence permits religious and divine forms to be analysed as historically conditioned and historically productive at once. A religious configuration can emerge under concrete material and social conditions and subsequently modify institutions, desires, norms, economic practices, political relations, and the conditions of its own reproduction.

Historical formation therefore coexists with generative efficacy.

This structure also avoids treating religion as a passive reflection of material conditions. Once a religious form becomes relationally real, its position within the system can become one of the conditions through which later material and relational states develop:

$$x_t \in \Gamma_{t+1}. \tag{140}$$

The relation between material conditions and religious forms is consequently recursive rather than unidirectional.

Table 4: Metaphysical difference and the shared analysis of relational manifestation

Interpretive position	Possible account of the referent	Shared relational questions
Historical materialism	Religious forms are interpreted through historically organized material and social relations	Formation, reproduction, institutionalization, power, practice, and generative effects
Religious realism	A transcendent referent is affirmed beyond its finite historical manifestations	Forms of manifestation, mediation, practice, transmission, interpretation, and relational effects
Idealist interpretation	Reality is interpreted through mind, spirit, reason, consciousness, or meaning	Historical articulation, symbolic form, subject formation, and transformation of relational structures
Metaphysical naturalism	The explanatory domain is situated within natural and historically emergent processes	Psychological, social, material, institutional, and symbolic dynamics
Ontologically suspended inquiry	The status of the possible referent remains unresolved	Manifestation, persistence, generative participation, recursive reproduction, and comparative structure

7.11 Metaphysical Difference and Shared Inquiry

Table 4 summarizes several possible interpretive positions and the common relational domain available to them.

The rows in Table 4 remain intentionally schematic. Historical materialisms, religious realisms, idealisms, and naturalisms each contain substantial internal diversity. The table identifies possible analytical orientations rather than fixed philosophical camps.

7.12 Ontological Openness as Methodological Discipline

Ontological openness can now be stated more precisely. It consists in preserving the distinction between what the relational analysis establishes and what remains metaphysically underdetermined.

For a given phenomenon X , the paper may establish claims of the form

$$\mathcal{K}_{\text{rel}}(X) = \{x_t, \mathcal{C}_t(X), \mathcal{P}_t(X), \mathbf{RR}_H(X), \Delta\mathcal{Q}\}, \quad (141)$$

where the set contains knowledge concerning manifestation, mediation, relational position, relational reality, and subsequent system change.

The corresponding ontological judgment may remain

$$\mathcal{K}_{\text{ont}}(X) = ?. \quad (142)$$

This asymmetry expresses epistemic humility under finite conditions of inquiry. It permits substantial knowledge concerning the relational life of a phenomenon without converting that knowledge into a complete account of what reality ultimately is.

The methodological principle can therefore be stated as follows.

Proposition 7.3 (Ontological openness). *Generative Relational analysis permits the strongest relational and historical claims warranted by available inquiry while retaining the ontological status of a possible referent as open wherever those claims do not determine it.*

Ontological openness in this sense is compatible with metaphysical commitment by particular researchers or traditions. It defines the inferential discipline of the shared GR analysis rather than a prohibition against metaphysical inquiry.

7.13 Implications for the Study of Religion

The resulting architecture changes the structure of several familiar disputes in the study of religion.

The historical genealogy of a deity, ritual, doctrine, sacred institution, or religious category can be investigated with full attention to material conditions, symbolic systems, power, embodiment, and institutional history. Its relational effects can likewise be studied through changes in desire, normativity, value, knowledge, collective practice, and social structure.

The metaphysical question concerning the possible referent occupies an additional analytical level:

$$\boxed{\begin{array}{l} \Gamma_t \longrightarrow x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}, \\ X^* \quad ? \end{array}} \quad (143)$$

The first line can become increasingly rich through historical, sociological, psychological, ethnographic, and formal inquiry. The second remains available to metaphysics, theology, philosophy of religion, and further epistemological analysis.

This architecture allows the study of religion to proceed without requiring a preliminary victory by one ontology over all others. Historical materiality, relational manifestation, and generative efficacy become common objects of inquiry, while disagreement concerning transcendence remains philosophically substantive.

The next section examines the limits of this proposal. It considers the risks of excessive conceptual extension, circular definitions of relational reality, anthropocentrism, reduction of theological difference, difficulties of operationalization, and the conditions under which the framework could be revised or rejected.

8 Conceptual Boundaries, Objections, and Research Obligations

This section specifies the boundaries of the proposed framework and the conditions under which its concepts require revision. Relational reality is intended to provide a common analytical register across heterogeneous phenomena while preserving distinctions among ontology, manifestation, generative participation, and normative evaluation. That breadth creates corresponding risks. The section therefore examines conceptual overextension, circularity, anthropocentrism, reduction of religious difference, operationalization, causal attribution, ontological suspension, formal representation, and normative neutrality. It concludes by stating conditions of revision and possible rejection.

8.1 Conceptual Extension

The concept of relational reality has deliberately broad scope. A deity, institution, value, imagined subject, mathematical representation, legal status, sacred object, or other form may become relationally real when it persists and participates recursively in subsequent psychological and relational dynamics.

Such breadth creates a risk of conceptual dilution. If every persistent and consequential form qualifies equally as relationally real, the category may cease to discriminate among importantly different phenomena.

The multidimensional profile introduced in Equation 54 provides one response:

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X) = (p_H, d_H, r_H, f_H). \quad (144)$$

Two phenomena can satisfy the general definition while occupying substantially different regions of the relational-reality space.

The distinction between the general category and its special configurations is therefore essential:

$$\mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}} \subseteq \mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}}, \quad (145)$$

while other special configurations may require their own additional dimensions and criteria.

Research Obligation 8.1 (Domain differentiation). Applications of relational reality should specify the additional relational configuration relevant to the domain under investigation. Membership in $\mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}}$ alone should carry only the general claim of persistent generative participation.

This obligation preserves the usefulness of a general concept while allowing religious, legal, political, epistemic, psychological, and institutional phenomena to retain domain-specific structures.

8.2 Circularity of the Generative Criterion

A second difficulty concerns the relation between manifestation and generative participation. The definition states that a form becomes relationally real when it persistently participates in subsequent system dynamics. Yet the system state itself includes symbolic, psychological, normative, and relational dimensions through which the form is identified.

Without further discipline, the analysis could become circular:

$$x_t \in \mathcal{Q}_t \implies x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1}. \quad (146)$$

Membership in the system at time t supplies no sufficient evidence of consequential participation at a later time.

The relevant distinction is between presence and transition:

$$\text{Present}(x_t) ; \Delta \mathcal{Q}_{t:t+H}(x_t). \quad (147)$$

A relational-reality claim therefore requires an account of how the presence or position of x_t participates in the transition toward later states.

Research Obligation 8.2 (Transition specification). A substantive claim of relational reality should identify at least one plausible pathway through which x_t participates in a subsequent change of psychological, normative, epistemic, material, institutional, or relational structure.

The pathway may initially remain qualitative. Mature applications should provide historical, comparative, ethnographic, experimental, computational, or other evidence appropriate to the domain.

8.3 Persistence and Temporal Scale

Persistence is another scale-sensitive concept. The same form may be persistent over minutes, years, generations, or centuries. Its relational reality can therefore vary according to the horizon selected:

$$\mathbf{RR}_{H_1}(X) \neq \mathbf{RR}_{H_2}(X), \quad H_1 \neq H_2. \quad (148)$$

A religious image may have strong short-term affective efficacy and limited intergenerational reproduction. An institution may persist across centuries while exerting weak influence upon a particular individual. A mathematical representation may disappear locally while remaining highly persistent within a disciplinary tradition.

Temporal scale must consequently be treated as part of the specification of the phenomenon.

Research Obligation 8.3 (Temporal specification). Claims concerning relational reality should state the temporal horizon and the level of persistence relevant to the analysis.

This requirement also prevents persistence from being confused with permanence. Relational reality can arise, intensify, weaken, migrate, and disappear.

8.4 Anthropocentrism and the Scope of the Relational System

The present paper is written primarily through examples drawn from human religion, symbolic practice, institutions, psychological dynamics, and historical life. Its formal vocabulary therefore carries an anthropocentric risk.

If relational reality is defined exclusively through effects upon human desire, language, or social organization, the concept would become dependent upon a particular species-specific form of access. Such a restriction would be especially problematic where the framework simultaneously preserves the possibility of realities whose existence exceeds human manifestation.

The coupled state

$$\mathbf{Z}_t = (D_t, R_t)$$

should therefore be read as a minimal human-oriented realization of a wider structure. More generally, one may write

$$\mathbf{Z}_t^{(a)} = (C_t^{(a)}, R_t^{(a)}), \quad (149)$$

where a denotes a class of relational agents and $C_t^{(a)}$ their relevant capacities for perception, interpretation, valuation, action, or other forms of coupling.

Different relational systems may then produce different manifestations:

$$x_t^{(a)} = \mathcal{M}^{(a)}(X; \mathcal{A}_t^{(a)}). \quad (150)$$

The present paper does not develop comparison across radically different cognitive systems. Such comparison belongs to later work on cross-relational invariance and the epistemology of reality.

Research Obligation 8.4 (Species and observer scope). Applications should state the class of agents and relational capacities with respect to which relational reality is being described.

8.5 Religious Difference and Comparative Reduction

The concept of divinity creates a further comparative danger. By placing person-like deities, sacred principles, transcendent orders, ultimate values, and other forms within a common relational framework, the analysis may impose similarity where traditions themselves maintain substantial differences.

The distinction developed in Section 6 therefore operates at the level of selected relational dimensions:

$$\mathbf{D}_t(X) = (s_t, \tau_t, u_t, n_t, d_t, \kappa_t). \quad (151)$$

Similarity in this profile establishes similarity only with respect to the dimensions represented. It supplies no inference of theological, metaphysical, historical, ritual, or experiential equivalence.

Thus

$$\mathbf{D}_t(X) \simeq \mathbf{D}_t(Y) \quad (152)$$

may coexist with

$$\mathcal{T}(X) \neq \mathcal{T}(Y), \quad (153)$$

where $\mathcal{T}$ denotes the wider theological and historical configuration.

Research Obligation 8.5 (Comparative specificity). Comparative applications should identify the dimensions under comparison and preserve the theological, historical, linguistic, ritual, and institutional differences that remain outside those dimensions.

This requirement is especially important when categories developed in Abrahamic philosophical traditions are applied to Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu, Indigenous, or other religious and philosophical configurations.

8.6 Divinity and the Boundary of Religion

A related issue concerns forms such as nation, law, science, mathematics, reason, freedom, nature, or political ideology. These forms can acquire relational positions characterized by reverence, ultimate reference, normative authority, or substantial organization of desire.

The framework permits such configurations to be compared with dimensions of divinity. It does not classify them automatically as religions.

The distinction can be expressed as

$$\text{DivRel}(X) > 0 \not\Rightarrow \text{Religion}(X). \quad (154)$$

Here $\text{DivRel}(X)$ denotes the presence of selected divine-like relational dimensions. Classification as religion requires additional historical and disciplinary criteria.

This boundary preserves the distinction between a relational analysis of sacralization and the taxonomic problem of defining religion.

8.7 Operationalization and Measurement

The formal quantities introduced in the paper remain conceptual. Persistence, desire participation, relational participation, recursive feedback, sacred differentiation, transcendent positioning, and ultimate-reference significance have not been assigned validated empirical measures.

Accordingly,

$$p_H, d_H, r_H, f_H, s_t, \tau_t, u_t, \dots \quad (155)$$

should presently be interpreted as coordinates of analysis rather than observed numerical variables.

Several forms of operationalization may eventually be possible. Historical analysis can trace continuity of symbols, institutions, practices, and interpretive structures. Ethnographic research can examine lived relations toward sacred references. Psychological methods can investigate the organization of desire, expectation, affect, and perceived authority. Network analysis can study propagation and reproduction across relational structures. Longitudinal data can examine changes in persistence and generative effects.

No single method is expected to exhaust the concept.

Research Obligation 8.6 (Operational validity). Any empirical operationalization of relational reality should demonstrate that its indicators correspond to the specific dimension being measured and should avoid treating one observable proxy as the whole relational configuration.

This obligation is particularly important for self-reported belief. Belief surveys may measure one aspect of explicit assent while leaving ritual, affective, normative, practical, and institutional dimensions largely unobserved.

8.8 Causation and Generative Participation

The notation

$$x_t \rightsquigarrow Q_{t+1}$$

expresses generative participation. It deliberately carries less causal specificity than

$$x_t \rightarrow Q_{t+1}$$

would carry in a fully specified causal model.

Observed association between a sacred form and a later relational state may reflect confounding, common historical causes, selection, reciprocal influence, institutional mediation, or other mechanisms.

A stronger causal claim therefore requires additional structure. Let

$$\mathcal{G}_c$$

denote a domain-appropriate causal model. A causal interpretation would require evidence supporting the relevant pathway within $\mathcal{G}_c$, including its assumptions and competing explanations.

Research Obligation 8.7 (Causal restraint). The symbol $\rightsquigarrow$ should be read as generative participation until a domain-specific causal model warrants a stronger interpretation.

This distinction permits conceptual development before causal identification while keeping the inferential boundary explicit.

8.9 Ontological Openness and Epistemic Evasion

Ontological openness can itself be misused. A framework that permanently places every difficult claim beyond adjudication would lose critical force.

The present position therefore distinguishes genuine underdetermination from avoidance of available evidence.

Let

$$E$$

denote the available historical, empirical, logical, and phenomenological evidence relevant to a metaphysical interpretation μ_k . Ontological openness applies where

$$E \vdash \{\mu_1, \mu_2, \dots, \mu_m\}, \quad m > 1, \tag{156}$$

in the limited sense that multiple interpretations remain compatible with the evidential domain.

Where an interpretation entails an empirically or historically accessible claim C_k , evidence concerning C_k remains fully relevant.

Research Obligation 8.8 (Evidential accountability). Ontological openness should be invoked only for the portion of a claim that remains underdetermined by the available inquiry. Empirical, historical, and logical commitments generated by a metaphysical position remain open to criticism.

Ontological humility thereby remains compatible with rigorous disagreement.

8.10 Relational Vocabulary and Ontological Reification

A further danger concerns the framework's own vocabulary. Terms such as *relation*, *system*, *state*, *generation*, *subject*, and *manifestation* can gradually acquire the appearance of ontological primitives simply through repeated formal use.

This would contradict the methodological position established earlier in the paper.

Let

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{GR}}^{(t)}$$

denote the Generative Relational descriptive vocabulary available at a given stage of inquiry. Its status is explicitly revisable:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{GR}}^{(t)} \longrightarrow \mathcal{L}_{\text{GR}}^{(t+1)} \quad (157)$$

whenever a revised vocabulary produces greater explanatory adequacy, comparative sensitivity, or conceptual economy.

The same principle applies to the concept of relational reality itself.

Research Obligation 8.9 (Vocabulary revisability). Relational terminology should remain revisable when alternative conceptual languages describe the relevant phenomena with greater adequacy or reveal distinctions obscured by the current GR formulation.

Relation therefore functions as an instrument of access within the present framework. Its analytical usefulness supplies the warrant for its use.

8.11 Formalism and Explanatory Excess

The equations in this paper serve to distinguish analytical levels and make dependencies explicit. Their mathematical appearance can create an unwarranted impression of measurement, precision, or predictive capacity.

For example,

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X) = (p_H, d_H, r_H, f_H) \quad (158)$$

defines conceptual dimensions. It presently provides neither a validated metric nor a probability model.

Likewise,

$$\mathcal{Q}_{t+1} = \Phi_t(\mathcal{Q}_t, x_t, \Xi_t) \quad (159)$$

identifies a dependency structure. The function Φ_t has not been estimated or uniquely specified.

The formal expressions therefore have heuristic and structural status.

Research Obligation 8.10 (Formal proportionality). Formal complexity should increase only when the added structure distinguishes claims that prose alone would leave ambiguous or supports an operational, comparative, or computational development.

This principle places formal notation under the same revisability requirement as the wider GR vocabulary.

8.12 Normativity and the Reality of Harmful Configurations

Relational reality describes operative participation. It supplies no automatic positive evaluation.

A harmful ideology can become highly relationally real. An oppressive divine configuration can organize desire and institutions with great persistence. A destructive imagined Other can reshape

behavior across generations. Strong relational reality can therefore coexist with severe constraints upon the generativity of participating subjects.

Formally,

$$\mathbf{RR}_H(X) \text{ high is compatible with } \mathcal{J}(X) \text{ low,} \quad (160)$$

where $\mathcal{J}$ denotes a future normative or justice evaluation.

The evaluation of whether a relational configuration supports revisability, subject-preserving participation, value circulation, or other dimensions of generative justice belongs to a further normative layer.

This distinction is particularly important for divinity. Sacred authority can support care, solidarity, continuity, restraint, and generative possibility. It can also support domination, exclusion, closure, or violence. The relational reality of the sacred configuration describes its operative presence across either possibility.

8.13 Power and Unequal Conditions of Manifestation

Relational manifestations arise within fields structured by unequal access to resources, institutions, media, authority, education, and coercive capacity. The persistence of a manifestation may therefore reflect asymmetrical conditions of reproduction.

Let

$$\Pi_t$$

denote a distribution of capacities to produce, circulate, authorize, suppress, or preserve relational manifestations. Then

$$x_{t+1} = \mathcal{E}_{X,t+1}(\mathcal{Q}_{t+1}, \Xi_{t+1}, \Pi_{t+1}). \quad (161)$$

A highly persistent divine configuration may therefore owe part of its persistence to institutional concentration, political authority, control over education, material resources, or exclusion of competing forms.

The inclusion of Π_t prevents relational persistence from being read as evidence of free collective endorsement.

Research Obligation 8.11 (Power-sensitive analysis). Historical and comparative applications should examine the distribution of capacities through which manifestations are produced, authorized, circulated, contested, preserved, and suppressed.

This obligation also preserves compatibility between GR analysis and critical historical approaches to religion.

8.14 Conditions of Revision

The present framework should be revised when its distinctions cease to improve analysis.

Several outcomes would place direct pressure upon the proposal.

First, if persistence and generative participation cannot be distinguished from already established concepts such as social influence, institutional reality, collective representation, or symbolic efficacy, the independent value of *relational reality* would be substantially reduced.

Second, if the distinction among

$$X^*, \quad x_t, \quad \mathbf{RR}_H(X)$$

systematically fails to clarify disputes concerning religious and non-religious phenomena, the three-level architecture would lose its stated purpose.

Third, if comparative applications require incompatible definitions of relational reality across domains, the proposed general category may need to be partitioned into narrower concepts.

Fourth, if empirical work shows that the dimensions grouped under $\mathbf{RR}_H$ vary independently in ways that make the general category analytically misleading, the profile should replace the umbrella concept in those domains.

Fifth, if ontological openness consistently prevents meaningful engagement with metaphysical claims whose consequences are otherwise available to inquiry, the boundary between relational and ontological analysis requires revision.

These conditions can be summarized as

$$\mathcal{F} = \{F_{\text{redundancy}}, F_{\text{distinction}}, F_{\text{comparability}}, F_{\text{coherence}}, F_{\text{openness}}\}, \quad (162)$$

where each element identifies a class of possible failure.

Claim 8.12 (Revisability of relational reality). Relational reality should be retained only to the extent that it produces distinctions, comparisons, or explanations unavailable with equal clarity through existing conceptual vocabularies.

This claim applies the methodological revisability of Generative Relational analysis to one of its own proposed concepts.

8.15 Research Obligations

The preceding limitations generate a set of obligations for subsequent work. They can be summarized as

$$\mathfrak{D}_{\mathbf{RR}} = \{O_D, O_T, O_A, O_C, O_E, O_P, O_F, O_R\}, \quad (163)$$

where the terms denote domain differentiation, temporal specification, agent-scope specification, comparative specificity, empirical operationalization, power-sensitive analysis, formal proportionality, and revisability.

These obligations determine the research programme generated by the paper. Historical case studies can test whether the distinction between carrier and relational position clarifies changes in divine authority. Comparative religious studies can examine whether the dimensions of $\mathbf{D}_t(X)$ remain meaningful across substantially different traditions. Psychological and ethnographic studies can investigate the relation between explicit belief and operative divine positioning. Longitudinal work can examine persistence and recursive reproduction. Historical-material research can reconstruct the power and material conditions through which sacred configurations are sustained or transformed.

A further epistemological programme concerns the possibility that different relational systems generate substantially different manifestations of a possible shared reality. Questions of cross-relational invariance, symmetry, and the epistemic significance of structures preserved across heterogeneous manifestations are therefore reserved for subsequent work.

The wider study of transcendent subject formation constitutes another separate programme. The distinction established in Equation 101 allows later inquiry to ask how a transcendent relational position acquires agency, addressability, witnessing, will, response, or other properties associated with subjecthood.

8.16 Boundary of the Present Contribution

The paper can now state its contribution with a deliberately limited scope.

It proposes that a historically situated manifestation may acquire a form of reality through persistent participation in psychological and relational generation:

$$x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}. \quad (164)$$

It calls this mode of operation *relational reality*.

It further proposes that divinity can be analysed as a special relational configuration within this domain:

$$x_t \xrightarrow{S_t} T_t^X. \quad (165)$$

The paper preserves a separate ontological variable:

$$\text{Ont}(X^*) = ?. \quad (166)$$

The resulting architecture permits historical, material, symbolic, psychological, institutional, and religious inquiry to proceed within a common relational domain while metaphysical disagreement remains available for further argument.

The framework remains provisional. Its value depends upon whether the distinctions developed here improve actual historical, comparative, and philosophical analysis. Section 9 therefore concludes with the conceptual consequences that can presently be retained and the questions that remain open.

9 Conclusion

This paper developed the concept of *relational reality* as an analytical register for examining forms that become historically manifest within a generative relational system, acquire sufficient persistence to participate in subsequent psychological and relational development, and enter recursively into the conditions of their own later manifestation. The concept was introduced in order to separate three questions that frequently become conflated in philosophical discussions of religion: the possible ontological status of a referent, the historically situated form through which it becomes manifest, and the generative effects of that manifestation.

The resulting architecture can be summarized as

$$\boxed{\text{Ont}(X^*) ; x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}.} \quad (167)$$

The semicolon preserves the distinction between metaphysical interpretation and relational analysis. The recursive sequence identifies the domain in which the concept of relational reality operates. A manifested form can become dynamically consequential while the ontological status of its possible referent remains affirmed, denied, disputed, or unresolved under different philosophical interpretations.

This distinction permits a historically situated manifestation to possess substantial reality within the development of a relational system without requiring relational efficacy to function as metaphysical proof. It also permits a philosophical or religious tradition to affirm an independently real or invariant referent while recognizing that the forms through which human beings encounter, represent, interpret, and respond to that referent remain historically variable.

The central dynamical structure of relational reality was expressed as

$$x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{Z}_{t+1} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{E}_{X,t+1} \rightsquigarrow x_{t+1}. \quad (168)$$

Within this sequence, the manifestation enters the development of desire, interpretation, normativity, value, knowledge, institutions, material practice, and relational structure. The transformed

relational field then participates in the conditions through which the form is subsequently reproduced, reinterpreted, embodied, weakened, strengthened, or transformed. Relational reality therefore describes a recursive mode of historical and generative participation.

The paper further distinguished relational reality from several neighboring concepts and judgments. Relational reality exceeds momentary representation through persistence and subsequent participation. It exceeds explicit belief through its concern with operative relational position. It remains distinct from metaphysical verification, since efficacy does not establish an independently existing referent. It also remains distinct from truth, legitimacy, justice, and moral value. Harmful, false, oppressive, or extractive configurations may acquire substantial relational reality.

Within this general domain, the paper developed *divinity* as a special relational configuration:

$$\mathfrak{D}_{\text{rel}} \subseteq \mathfrak{R}_{\text{rel}}, \quad x_t \xrightarrow{S_t} T_t^X. \quad (169)$$

Divinity was therefore analysed through the historically situated process by which a relationally real form acquires sacred, transcendent, ultimate-reference, normative, affective, or related significance. The configuration can participate in the organization of desire, obligation, meaning, value, knowledge, and social relation while remaining heterogeneous in its possible carriers.

This formulation also separates divinity from any necessary representational form. A divine configuration can be carried through a person-like deity, sacred principle, ritual structure, norm, value, material object, institution, cosmological order, symbolic absence, or other historically situated medium. Changes in carrier can coexist with continuity of relational position, while continuity of visible representation can coexist with substantial changes in sacred or transcendent significance.

The distinction between divinity and transcendent subjecthood remains equally important:

$$\text{Div}(X) ; \text{Subj}(X). \quad (170)$$

A divine configuration may possess limited person-like structure, while a transcendent subject position involves additional processes through which agency, addressability, witnessing, will, response, or related properties become organized. The relational formation of such transcendent subjects belongs to a subsequent development of Generative Relational Religious Studies.

The title's three terms can therefore be situated at different levels of the analysis. *God* points toward claims concerning a divine or transcendent referent and therefore reaches most directly toward the ontological problem. *Religion* concerns historically situated configurations of symbols, rituals, practices, institutions, values, bodies, memories, and relations through which sacred or transcendent references become articulated and lived. *Divinity* concerns the special relational configuration through which a form acquires sacred, transcendent, or ultimate-reference significance.

Their relation can be summarized as

<p style="margin: 0;">God $\longrightarrow$ possible transcendent referent, religion $\longrightarrow$ historical relational configurations, divinity $\longrightarrow$ special configuration of relational reality.</p>	(171)
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The arrows in Equation 171 indicate the principal analytical emphasis assigned to each term in this paper. They do not constitute universal definitions of the terms across religious traditions.

A further consequence concerns the relation between historical materiality and metaphysical plurality. Historical-material analysis can reconstruct the conditions through which a religious manifestation becomes possible, reproducible, authoritative, contested, or transformed:

$$\Gamma_t \longrightarrow x_t \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{Q}_{t+1} \longrightarrow \Gamma_{t+1}. \quad (172)$$

Religious realism, idealism, naturalism, and other metaphysical positions can interpret the possible referent differently while continuing to analyse the historical dynamics represented in Equation 172. The contribution of the GR framework lies in preserving this shared analytical domain while leaving metaphysical disagreement explicit.

The paper consequently proposes a form of methodological coexistence:

$$\mu_i \neq \mu_j, \quad \mathcal{A}(\mu_i) \cap \mathcal{A}(\mu_j) \neq \emptyset. \quad (173)$$

Different ontological interpretations may remain incompatible while sharing a substantial domain of historical, relational, and generative inquiry. This coexistence requires no metaphysical synthesis. It depends upon maintaining the distinction between the claims supported by relational analysis and the additional commitments introduced by particular ontological interpretations.

Ontological openness therefore functions as an inferential discipline. The framework permits increasingly rich knowledge concerning

$$x_t, \quad \mathcal{C}_t(X), \quad \mathcal{P}_t(X), \quad \mathbf{RR}_H(X), \quad \Delta \mathcal{Q},$$

while allowing

$$\text{Ont}(X^*)$$

to remain open where the available inquiry does not determine it. Such openness does not protect empirical or historical claims from criticism. Metaphysical interpretations remain answerable to every observable, historical, logical, or practical commitment they generate.

The same discipline applies reflexively to Generative Relational theory. Relation, system, entity, manifestation, state, and generation are used in this paper as revisable analytical instruments. Their usefulness does not establish them as the final constituents of reality. The concept of relational reality itself should therefore remain subject to revision, partition, or abandonment if subsequent inquiry reveals that existing conceptual vocabularies perform its work with equal or greater adequacy.

Three research directions follow directly from the present discussion.

The first concerns Generative Relational Religious Studies. The distinction between divinity and transcendent subjecthood creates a basis for analysing how sacred or transcendent relational positions acquire agency, addressability, witnessing, will, response, and other properties associated with subject formation.

The second concerns historical and comparative operationalization. The dimensions of persistence, generative participation, sacralization, transcendent positioning, and recursive reproduction require examination across concrete religious traditions, institutions, rituals, and historical transformations. Such work must retain sensitivity to power, differences in religious self-understanding, and the limits of cross-traditional comparison.

The third concerns the epistemology of reality across heterogeneous relational systems. If different historical, cultural, bodily, or cognitive systems produce different manifestations of a possible shared reality, a further question concerns what structures, if any, remain invariant across those manifestations. The analysis of cross-relational invariance and possible symmetry belongs to a separate epistemological investigation.

The contribution of the present paper remains prior to these developments. It provides a conceptual separation through which ontological reality, relational manifestation, relational reality, and divinity can be studied without collapsing one into another:

ontological status ; relational manifestation $\longrightarrow$ relational reality $\longrightarrow$ divine relational configuration.

(174)

Within this architecture, historical generation does not exhaust the question of reality, meta-physical affirmation does not exhaust the study of manifestation, and relational efficacy does not settle either truth or value. The resulting analytical space permits the reality through which human beings live, desire, interpret, worship, judge, and act to be studied with substantial historical and relational precision while preserving humility toward the question of what reality ultimately is.

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