

Relational Understanding in Intimate Relations

The Generative Relational Epistemology
in the Domain of Intimacy

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相视而笑，莫逆于心。

*They looked at one another and smiled,
with no resistance in their hearts.*

— Zhuangzi, *The Great and Venerable Teacher*

致她——

For her—

那个属于森林的女孩，
the girl who belongs to the forest,
我学着走进你的语言，
that I may learn to enter your language,
也把我的，留一扇门给你。
and leave a door in mine open to you.

致我最爱的人。 To the one I love most.

Abstract

A companion work developed a generative relational epistemology, on which a concept becomes observable through the relations among the several symbolic systems that render it, and knowing takes the form of a generative observation that is historically and dialectically produced. That work observed, near its end, that a person is the bearer of a symbolic system, so that the meeting of two persons is a crossing of symbolic worlds. This paper takes up that observation in the domain of intimacy, where the crossing is deepest and its stakes are highest. It asks what relational understanding, so conceived, does in an intimate bond, whether it is good, and how the capacities it requires might be cultivated. The paper builds two cases and then a practice. The functional case sets the potential work of relational understanding, in the generation of trust, the recognition of shared value, the easing of a certain class of conflict, and the quality of a shared life, beside the established theories and findings that treat these same matters, and it locates the distinctive contribution in two characters of the account, the relational and the generative, showing what each supplies that the received theories leave unsupplied. The normative case then argues that a functional defense is not sufficient, since an efficient possession of the other can counterfeit the functions of understanding, and it grounds a normative distinction in ethical legitimacy, observed across several ethical traditions and not rested on a single one. Consequentialist, Kantian, care-ethical, and Aristotelian renderings each supply an aspect that the others leave, and non-possession, with generative justice, stands among them as one aspect, so that the normative ground is drawn in the same relational manner as the epistemology, an instance of the very understanding the paper concerns. Consistent with the dialectical and materialist conception of truth the companion work develops, the paper does not claim the correctness of a given understanding, and holds instead that understanding, like truth, is generated in historical and contradictory movement, while what can be asked of it is that it be ethically legitimate, a legitimacy whose own criteria are themselves historically generated and set as no final guarantee. The paper then states the special problem of intimacy, that the bond is a site where these capacities are wagered and not rehearsed, since the value of what is given may return only after a long passage of time and cannot be tried again, so that the field in which a capacity is cultivated and the field in which it is exercised come apart. From this it proposes a model, a set of capacities and not a procedure, divided into those that admit near practice and those that can only be cultivated as a standing disposition, among the latter the throwing of a generative thing into the other's own generative repertoire, the non-intervention that lets a shared dynamic unfold, and the preservation of a relational experience against the day its value is recognized. Non-possession runs throughout as the condition without which the capacities decline into a refined extraction. The paper then turns dialectically upon its own argument, and holds, on a ground drawn from the psychoanalytic account of desire and from its own account of generation, that a full crossing of the other's world would end the bond it was meant to perfect, since the other's unsymbolizable remainder is the core around which desire moves and the reservoir from which the bond's further generation is drawn, so that understanding rightly aimed seeks the other and honors, in the same motion, what in the other it will not reach. The paper offers no final synthesis, and its form keeps the openness its account of understanding requires.

Keywords: relational understanding; generative relational epistemology; the other's language

world; translation; the throwing of a generative thing; non-possession; ethical legitimacy across traditions; the unsymbolizable remainder; desire and generation; generative justice; the wager of intimacy.

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

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Part One Background: The Generative Relational Epistemology

1 Understanding as a Crossing of Worlds

There is a way of speaking about understanding another person that treats it as the accurate reception of a message. On this way of speaking, the other has thoughts and feelings, encodes them in words, and sends them across, and to understand is to decode what was sent and to recover the meaning intact. The measure of a good bond, on this picture, is the transparency of the channel, the degree to which what one person means arrives in the other without loss. Misunderstanding is noise on the line, and the ideal at the horizon is a communication so complete that two people would be present to one another without remainder.

This paper proceeds from a different account of what understanding is. A companion work developed a generative relational epistemology, on which no single symbolic system carries a concept without remainder, and a concept becomes observable only through the relations among the several symbolic systems that render it. Knowing, on that account, is a generative observation and not the reception of a message, produced in the movement between renderings and enriched across history. The companion work observed, near its close, that a person is the bearer of a symbolic system, a rendering of the world shaped by an experience, a history, a language, a form of life that no other person exactly shares. From this it follows that the meeting of two persons is a crossing of symbolic worlds, of the same kind as the crossing of disciplines, and that understanding another is the generative observation of a matter that neither world holds alone, and not the decoding of a message.

The present paper takes this account into the domain of intimacy. Intimacy is the place where the crossing of two symbolic worlds is at once deepest and most consequential, where the worlds are most entangled and the cost of failing to cross them is most severe. It is also the place where the received picture of transparent communication does its greatest damage, since it sets as the goal of the bond a fusion that the relational account holds to be neither possible nor desirable. What a good intimate bond asks is that each learn to enter the other and to generate, in the relation between them, what neither held before, and not that two worlds become one, an understanding and a value that neither held before.

The paper has a plain structure. Part One recalls the epistemology on which it stands and draws the bridge from concepts to persons. Part Two builds a functional case, setting the work that relational understanding does in an intimate bond beside the established theories and findings that treat trust, shared value, conflict, and the quality of a shared life, and locating the contribution in two characters of the account, the relational and the generative. Part Three then argues that a functional case is not sufficient, since an efficient possession of another can counterfeit the functions of understanding, and it grounds a normative distinction in the ethics of non-possession. Part Four states the problem that sets intimacy apart from other domains of understanding, that its capacities are wagered and not rehearsed. Part Five proposes a model, a set of capacities and their cultivation. Part Six closes without a synthesis, in keeping with the account of understanding the paper develops.

A word on stance belongs here, since it governs what follows. This paper does not claim

that a given understanding of one's partner is correct, and the reader who looks for such a claim will not find it. The epistemology on which the paper stands holds that truth is generated in a historical and contradictory movement and is never possessed as a finished correctness, and understanding between persons is subject to the same condition. What the paper asks of an understanding is that it be legitimate, ethically, and not that it be correct, and it holds even this legitimacy to be a historically generated measure and no final guarantee. The distinction between the correctness the paper declines to claim and the legitimacy it does defend runs through the whole of what follows, and it is drawn out in Part Three.

2 The Epistemology Recalled

The account this paper applies can be recalled in its essentials, so that what follows stands on its own for a reader who has not the companion work to hand. The starting point is a limitation that traditional epistemology leaves unexamined, the supposition that a concept can be adequately carried by a single symbolic system, so that to know is to find the correct expression and the work of knowing is finished once that expression is secured. Against this supposition the epistemology holds that no symbolic system completes a concept. Every symbolization selects, compresses, and situates, and so renders a partial and situated aspect and leaves a remainder. A concept becomes observable through the relations among several such partial renderings, as a form is inferred from several projections none of which is the form.

From this the epistemology draws a term to stand in the place of representation. Knowing is generative observation. What is known is observed in the movement between symbolic expressions, the observation is an achievement that stands short of identity with the matter observed, and because the relations among expressions increase and change through history the observation is never final and the knowing continues. Three features of the account bear on what follows, and each is recalled here in turn.

The first is that observation is relational. The matter observed appears in no single rendering and comes into view only in the relations among several. The epistemic yield is located in the relations themselves, which are held to be productive of observation and not a mere connection of findings already secured. A relation, on this account, generates an observation that neither of its terms contained, and this generativity of relation is the deepest commitment of the account.

The second is that observation is generative in time as well as in structure. The field of relations through which a matter is observed is not a standing inventory awaiting discovery. It comes into being in history. New renderings arrive as the conditions of a form of life bring them forth, and each arrival opens relations that were unavailable before it, so that the observation of a matter develops as its field of relations grows. The account renders this historicity in the terms of a dialectical and materialist conception, on which the expressions and relations through which anything is observed arise from the conditions of a form of life and develop through the contradictions those conditions generate. Truth, so understood, is a becoming, generated in a historical and contradictory movement, and it holds none of the fixity of a possession.

The third is that observation is incomplete, and its incompleteness is not a defect a fuller state of knowledge would repair. It follows from the structure of the account, since the ren-

derings of any matter are always finite in number and partial in reach, and there is always a further rendering, a further relation, a further aspect not yet brought into view. This incompleteness carries an epistemic humility that follows as a consequence of the account and forms no rhetorical modesty, and it will govern the treatment of understanding between persons, where the temptation to take one's observation of the other for the other's whole reality is the standing danger.

These three features, that observation is relational, that it is generative in time, and that it is incomplete, are the whole of what the following parts require. The reader who holds them can follow the application to intimacy without the companion work, and the reader who wishes the full argument will find it there.

3 From Concepts to Persons

The step from the epistemology to the present subject is short, and the companion work took it in a sentence that the present work will unfold. A discipline is a symbolic system, and the crossing of disciplines affords the observation of a concept that several disciplines concern. A person is also the bearer of a symbolic system. Each person renders the world in a way shaped by an experience, a history, a native language, a family, a culture, a body, that no other person exactly shares, so that two people who use what appears to be the same word may render beneath it two aspects that do not coincide. The dialogue between persons is therefore a crossing of symbolic worlds in the same sense that interdisciplinary inquiry is, differing in that the worlds crossed are borne by living persons where the systems of inquiry are codified in fields, and carried with the whole weight of a life where a literature sets them down.

What the crossing affords is the same in both cases. It is observation, won through the relations among partial renderings of a matter that exceeds them all. When two persons bring their renderings of a shared matter, a memory, a fear, a hope, the meaning of a word like home or freedom or love, into relation, the matter becomes observable in a way that neither rendering held alone. The understanding they reach is not the recovery of what one of them already meant, transported intact to the other. It is a generative observation, produced in the relation between two worlds, and belonging to neither.

The relational form of understanding another. To understand another person is not to decode a message the other has sent, recovering intact a meaning the other already possessed. It is to bring the renderings of two symbolic worlds into relation and to observe, in that relation, a matter that neither world held alone. Understanding another is a generative observation, produced between two worlds and belonging to neither.

Intimacy is the domain in which this crossing is carried furthest. Two people who share a life bring their symbolic worlds into a relation more sustained, more entangled, and more consequential than any other bond affords. They render to one another the whole texture of a shared existence and not isolated concepts, and they do so over years, so that the crossing is a long history through which each world is altered by its relation to the other, and not a single act. The depth of intimacy is the depth of this crossing, and its difficulty is the difficulty of the

crossing carried out where the stakes are a shared life.

This depth carries a corresponding danger, and naming it here prepares the whole of what follows. Because the two worlds in an intimate bond are so entangled, and because the partners so often use the same words, there arises a powerful illusion that they inhabit a single symbolic world, that no crossing is required, that to understand the other is simply to consult oneself. This illusion is the source of a characteristic and painful form of failure, the discovery, often late, that what one took for a shared meaning was two divergent renderings all along, and that a bond one believed transparent was crossed by an unrecognized difference of worlds. The account developed here holds that the recognition of the other as the bearer of a distinct symbolic world, so easily lost in the very closeness of intimacy, is the first condition of understanding within it, and that much of what passes for the failure of love is in truth the failure of this recognition.

The unsymbolizable core

There is a feature of the other's symbolic world that must be introduced here, in the background, since a later part of the paper turns upon it. The account has said that a symbolic world is never exhausted by another's observation of it, and this holds with a particular force for a person. Psychoanalysis, in the work of Lacan [12, 13], gives this a precise shape. The subject who enters language does so at the cost of a remainder that language does not carry, a core that the signifier cannot reach, and around this core the subject's desire is organized. Lacan marks the remainder in several registers, as the object-cause of desire that no possessed object supplies, as the lack in the subject that the entry into speech installs, as a real that resists symbolization. The details of the doctrine are not required here, and the series has developed them elsewhere. What the present paper takes from it is a single structural point, that at the center of the other's symbolic world there is a core that no crossing reaches, not through a want of skill or a shortage of time, but because the core is of a kind that the signifier cannot render.

This structural point sharpens the epistemology's claim of incompleteness in the case of a person. When the paper says that the observation of the other is always incomplete, it does not mean only that there is always more of the other to observe, a further region that a longer acquaintance would reach. It means, in addition, that at the heart of the other there is a core of another kind, no further region to be reached at all, an unsymbolizable center around which the other's desire moves and which the other does not possess as a content to be conveyed. The incompleteness of understanding another is therefore structural as well as extensive, a matter of a core that observation approaches and does not close, and not only a matter of how much remains to be observed. This core, introduced here, returns as the pivot of the paper's dialectical turn, where it is shown that the persistence of the bond depends upon it.

Part Two The Functional Case: What Understanding Does in Intimacy

4 Trust

The first work that relational understanding may do in an intimate bond is the generation of trust, and trust has been theorized with care in several traditions, each of which reaches toward it from its own side. It is worth passing through them, to locate what each reaches and not to survey them, and what each leaves for the account developed here to supply.

A sociological tradition, following Luhmann [14], treats trust as a mechanism for the reduction of social complexity, a way of absorbing the uncertainty of another's future conduct so that action becomes possible where complete knowledge is not. Trust, on this account, is a wager on the other under conditions of irreducible uncertainty, and it is functional because it permits coordinated life that suspicion would paralyze. A tradition in economics and game theory renders trust in the vocabulary of repeated interaction, reputation, and credible commitment [3], on which trust is the rational expectation that another will not defect, sustained by the shadow of future dealings and the cost of a ruined name. A tradition in the psychology of attachment, following Bowlby and Ainsworth [1, 4], renders trust as a felt security in the availability of a caregiver, laid down early and carried into the bonds of later life as a working model of whether others can be relied upon.

Each of these renders an aspect of trust, and each leaves an aspect for another to render. The Luhmannian account is precise about the function trust serves and passes over the interior process by which a particular trust is built between two particular people. The game-theoretic account is precise about the conditions under which trust is rational and treats trust as the assessment of a property the other already has, a disposition to cooperate or defect, which the trusting party estimates. The attachment account is precise about the early formation of a capacity for trust and locates its ground in the history of one party and not in the relation between two. Across the three, trust tends to appear as an assessment, by one party, of a property or a probability that belongs to the other or to their circumstances.

Here the two characters of the present account supply what the received theories leave unsupplied, and it is worth marking each in turn. The relational character relocates trust. On the present account trust is not, at its root, an assessment by one party of a property the other already possesses. It is a matter generated between two parties, observable only in the relation between their symbolic worlds, of the same form as any other relational matter. What two people trust, when they trust one another deeply, is something that comes into being in the relation and not a set of estimated dispositions itself and is borne by neither alone. This is why a trust of the deepest kind can be extended before the evidence that a game-theoretic account would require, and why its betrayal wounds in a way the loss of a favorable estimate would not. The trust was not an estimate. It was a shared reality, and its breaking is the breaking of something that was jointly held.

The generative character sets trust in time. On the received accounts trust tends to appear as a state, reached when the conditions are met and maintained while they hold. On the present account trust is generated, deepened, and, where it fails, allowed to wither, through the continued crossing of the two worlds. Each act of understanding, each entry into the other's world that the other recognizes as a true entry, generates a further increment of the shared reality that trust consists in, and a bond in which the partners go on understanding one another is a bond in which trust is continually regenerated and not merely preserved. This sets the ac-

count apart from a picture on which trust, once established, is a standing asset that depreciates only under betrayal. Trust that is not regenerated in continued understanding does not hold steady; it thins, as the two worlds drift and the shared reality that trust consisted in is no longer renewed.

The relation of the present account to the received theories is one of location and not of refutation. The Luhmannian function, the game-theoretic conditions, and the attachment history are all real, and the present account does not deny them. It holds that they describe the circumstances, the rationality, and the readiness that surround trust, and that they leave for a relational and generative account the interior matter of what trust is and how it comes to be between two people, which is a shared reality generated in the crossing of their worlds and sustained only as that crossing continues.

5 The Recognition of Shared Value

A second work of relational understanding is the recognition of shared value, the coming into view, between two people, of what they hold in common and can hold together. Here too there are established accounts, and they reach toward shared value from two directions.

One direction treats shared value as a similarity to be discovered. A body of research on close relationships finds that partners who share values report greater satisfaction and stability, and models the matter as a matching, on which two people bring antecedent value profiles and the relationship prospers to the degree that these profiles coincide [5]. Shared value, on this rendering, is a pre-existing overlap that the partners find in one another. A second direction treats shared value as a consensus to be reached. In the theory of communicative action, Habermas [10] sets out an account on which participants in dialogue, oriented to mutual understanding, advance and redeem validity claims and move, under the unforced force of the better argument, toward a rationally motivated consensus. Shared value, on this rendering, is an agreement produced in communication oriented to agreement, and the ideal at its horizon is a consensus in which the participants have come to hold the same.

Each direction reaches something and leaves something. The similarity account is precise about the correlation between antecedent overlap and satisfaction, and it treats shared value as found and not as generated, so that it has little to say to two people whose worlds differ and who must nonetheless build something common. The consensus account is precise about the procedure by which agreement may be rationally reached, and its regulative ideal is a convergence in which difference is overcome, the participants arriving at the same view. This ideal of convergence is exactly the point at which the present account parts from it.

The relational character supplies a different conception of what shared value is. On the present account shared value is not, at its root, a pre-existing similarity that the partners discover in one another, nor a convergence in which their difference is overcome. It is a matter generated in the relation between two symbolic worlds, observable in that relation, and held in common without the two worlds becoming one. Two people may render what they most value in vocabularies that do not coincide, one in the language of duty and one in the language of care, one through a religious inheritance and one through a secular one, and the shared value they come to recognize is not the reduction of these to a single rendering. It is a matter observed in the relation between their renderings, of the kind the epistemology describes, which

each continues to render in a language of their own while both come to hold it together. Shared value on this account is compatible with, and indeed rests upon, a difference the partners do not dissolve.

The generative character sets this recognition in time and marks its productivity. On the consensus picture the work of dialogue is to converge, and its completion is agreement. On the present account the relation between two differing renderings is productive of a shared value that neither party held in advance, so that the crossing generates something new held in common, beyond the mere revealing of an overlap or the negotiating of a compromise. Two people who bring genuinely different worlds into relation may generate, over years, a shared value that was in neither of their worlds at the outset and that could arise only in the relation between them. This is the deepest sense in which relational understanding does the work of building a common life, that it generates value in the relation, where the received accounts discover it in advance or split the difference between antecedent positions.

The parting from Habermas can be stated exactly, since it marks the contribution. The Habermasian ideal is a consensus in which the participants come to hold the same, and difference is a condition to be worked through toward agreement. The present account holds that a shared value can be generated and held in common precisely across a difference that is not overcome, that two worlds can hold something together while remaining two, and that the pressure toward convergence, toward the fusion of the two into one view, is the very thing the relational account warns against, since it is the point at which the recognition of shared value passes over into the effacement of one world by another. What the account keeps, against the ideal of consensus, is the difference of the two who share.

6 The Easing of a Class of Conflict

A third work of relational understanding is the easing of conflict, and here the established knowledge is empirical and strong. Decades of observational research on couples, associated above all with Gottman [9], have identified patterns that distinguish bonds that endure from those that dissolve. The research marks certain corrosive modes of exchange, contempt and defensiveness and the rest, and certain reparative ones, and it predicts, from the observed ratio of these, the trajectory of a bond with a reliability that the study of intimate life rarely attains. This is a body of findings the present account has no wish to contest, and it is important to be clear about the relation between the two, since the account offers something of a different kind.

The present account does not compete with this research at the level of evidence, and it advances no observational findings of its own. What it offers is a mechanism, an account of why a large class of intimate conflict arises and why understanding of the kind described here eases it. The offer is complementary. The empirical research establishes what patterns of conflict and repair predict the fate of a bond; the present account proposes, for one important class of conflict, an explanation of what that conflict is at its root.

The proposal follows from the bridge already drawn. If each partner is the bearer of a symbolic world, and if the closeness of intimacy generates the illusion that the two inhabit a single world, then a characteristic form of conflict arises when the partners use the same words to render aspects that do not coincide, and each takes the other's divergent rendering

as a fault, an unreasonableness, a bad will, and not as a difference of worlds. A dispute that presents itself as a disagreement about a matter, about whether one of them acted wrongly, about what was owed, about what a word like respect or space or family requires, is in a large class of cases a collision of two renderings that the partners have not recognized as two, each arguing from within a world the other has not entered and each hearing the other's words in a world the other does not inhabit. The conflict is real, and its felt content, the sense of being wronged or unheard, is real, and yet its root is not the matter it appears to concern. Its root is an unrecognized difference of symbolic worlds.

Here the relational character does its work. To ease a conflict of this class is not, in the first place, to resolve the matter it appears to concern, to adjudicate who was right about the thing disputed. It is to move the conflict from the level of content to the level of worlds, to recognize that the partners have been rendering a shared matter in divergent ways, and to enter one another's rendering far enough that each sees how the other's words, which sounded like unreason from within one's own world, are the natural speech of another. What eases the conflict is the crossing that the closeness of intimacy had made to seem unnecessary. Once each has entered the other's rendering, the matter that seemed a contest of right and wrong is observed as a relation between two worlds, and the heat that belonged to the sense of being wronged by an unreasonable other subsides into the different and workable difficulty of two people who render a shared life in different terms.

The generative character marks the further point that this easing is not a return to a prior peace. When two partners cross a conflict of this class, they do not merely remove a disturbance and restore the state before it. They generate, in the crossing, an observation of the difference between their worlds that neither held before, and this observation becomes part of the shared reality of the bond, available to the next collision and lessening the ground from which it springs. A bond in which such crossings are repeatedly made is one in which the partners accumulate a shared understanding of the very structure of their differences, so that the easing of conflict is generative of a resource that the easing of the next conflict draws upon. This is the sense in which understanding eases conflict by generating, across the disputes, a growing observation, and not by settling them, of the two worlds whose unrecognized difference the disputes expressed.

The relation to the empirical research can now be stated. The observed patterns of corrosion and repair that predict the fate of a bond are, on this account, the surface at which the recognition or the non-recognition of the other's world becomes visible. Contempt is the affective form of a refusal to grant that the other's rendering has a world behind it; repair is the affective form of a return to the crossing. The research describes what these patterns do to the trajectory of a bond; the present account proposes what they are, and why the practice of relational understanding, which is the practice of crossing, bears on them at their root.

7 The Quality of a Shared Life

A fourth work of relational understanding concerns the quality of a shared life, what makes a bond good to be within and not merely stable. The established accounts here are several, and one may be taken as representative. Self-determination theory, developed by Deci and Ryan [6], holds that wellbeing rests on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs, for

autonomy, for competence, and for relatedness, and it treats the quality of a relationship as bound up with the degree to which the bond satisfies the need for relatedness, the sense of being connected to and cared for by others. A large body of work on relationship satisfaction, taking various forms, likewise renders quality as a level of satisfaction, a favorable balance of rewards over costs, or a fulfillment of needs and expectations that the partners bring to the bond.

These accounts reach something and render it in a particular form. They locate the quality of a bond in the satisfaction of needs the individuals bring, and they treat that quality as a level, higher or lower, more or less sustained. Relatedness, on the self-determination account, is a need of the individual that the relationship meets, and quality is the degree of its meeting. This is a rendering of real importance, and it locates quality in the individual and the individual's needs, treating the relationship as the means by which a need belonging to each is satisfied.

The relational character supplies a different location for the quality of a bond. On the present account the quality of an intimate relationship is not, at its root, the degree to which it satisfies needs that the individuals bring to it. It is the richness of what is generated between them, the depth and the reach of the shared reality that their crossing of worlds produces. A bond is good to be within, on this account, to the degree that it generates, in the relation between two worlds, observations and values and a shared life that neither world could hold alone. This relocates quality from the satisfaction of antecedent individual needs to the generativity of the relation itself, and it accounts for something the need-satisfaction picture renders with difficulty, that the deepest bonds are often those in which the partners are most changed by the relation, most drawn beyond the needs and the selves they brought to it, which is hard to state as the efficient satisfaction of needs given in advance.

The generative character distinguishes a bond that is good in this sense from one that is merely stable and satisfied. A relationship can reach a stable level of need-satisfaction and rest there, and on the need account this is quality achieved. On the present account the quality of a bond is a generativity sustained and not a level reached and maintained, the continued production, in the crossing of the two worlds, of a shared reality that goes on growing. The distinction matters for the understanding of long bonds. A bond may be stable and satisfied and yet cease to generate, the partners settled into a fixed mutual rendering that no longer crosses into new observation, and on the present account such a bond has lost the quality that the need account, registering only its stability and satisfaction, would still record. The good bond is the generative bond, the one whose crossing of worlds continues to produce what neither world held before, and this is a matter of movement and not of a level, of a spiral that returns to the shared life and finds it grown where a circle would return it unchanged.

The relation to the received accounts is again one of location. The satisfaction of needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is real, and its measurement tracks something that matters. The present account holds that these render the individual conditions and the felt registers of a bond's quality, and that they leave for a relational and generative account the matter of what that quality consists in, which is the richness and the continued growth of what two worlds generate between them.

8 The Work of the Two Characters

The four preceding sections passed through trust, shared value, conflict, and the quality of a shared life, and in each the contribution of the present account was carried by two characters, the relational and the generative. It is worth drawing these together, since the functional case rests on them and since it is their conjunction, and not either alone, that gives the account its force. The two characters answer two different questions about any of the matters treated, and the received theories tend to answer each question in a way the account revises.

The relational character answers the question of location, of where the matter is. On the received theories trust is located in the trusting party's estimate of the other, shared value in an overlap of antecedent profiles or a converged consensus, the root of conflict in the disputed matter itself, and the quality of a bond in the satisfaction of individual needs. In each case the matter is located in an individual, in a property of one party, or in a state to be reached. The relational character relocates each matter into the relation between two symbolic worlds. Trust, shared value, the root of conflict, and the quality of a bond are, on the present account, matters generated between the partners and observable only in the relation between their worlds, borne by neither alone. This relocation is the first half of the contribution, and by itself it would yield a relational structuralism, an account on which the matters of intimate life are relational but fixed, given with the structure of the relation and not themselves in movement.

The generative character answers the question of time, of how the matter stands in history. On the received theories the matters of intimate life tend to appear as states, reached when conditions are met and maintained while they hold, trust established, consensus achieved, satisfaction attained. The generative character sets each matter in time as a process and not as a state. Trust is continually regenerated or allowed to thin, shared value is produced anew across a difference and is neither found nor fixed, the easing of conflict generates a growing observation and does not restore a prior peace, and the quality of a bond is a generativity sustained and not a level maintained. This is the second half of the contribution, and by itself, without the relational character, it would yield an account of individual growth, a story of persons developing in time but developing as separate selves, the bond a setting for a change that remains each person's own.

The force of the account lies in the conjunction. The relational character without the generative gives a relation that holds the matters of intimate life but does not move, a structure fixed once the bond is formed. The generative character without the relational gives a movement that belongs to individuals and not to the relation between them, a growth that is not shared. Together they give what the account requires, matters that are borne in the relation between two worlds and that are generated, deepened, and transformed in the historical movement of that relation. Trust, shared value, the easing of conflict, and the quality of a bond are, on the full account, relational matters in generative movement, located between the partners and continually produced in the crossing of their worlds.

The division of labor between the two characters. The relational character answers where a matter of intimate life is located, relocating trust, shared value, the root of conflict, and the quality of a bond from an individual property or a state to be reached into the relation between two symbolic worlds. The generative character answers how the matter stands in time,

setting each as a process continually produced and not a state once attained. Neither character suffices alone. The relational without the generative yields a fixed relational structure; the generative without the relational yields a merely individual growth. Their conjunction yields the account’s thesis, that the matters of intimate life are relational matters in generative movement, borne between two worlds and produced in the history of their crossing.

Function	Received rendering	Relational character adds	Generative character adds
Trust	an estimate, by one party, of a property or probability of the other	a shared reality borne between the two, extended before the evidence a wager would require	continually regenerated in the crossing, thinning where it is no longer renewed
Shared value	a pre-existing overlap found, or a consensus in which difference is overcome	a matter held in common across a difference the two do not dissolve	produced anew in the relation, arising where neither world held it before
Conflict	a disagreement about the disputed matter, corrosive or reparable in its patterns	a collision of two unrecognized renderings, moved from content to the level of worlds	each crossing generating a growing observation of the difference, a resource for the next
Quality of a shared life	a level of satisfaction of the individual’s needs, higher or lower	the richness of what the two worlds generate between them, borne by neither alone	a generativity sustained, a spiral that returns and finds the shared life grown

Table 1: The functional case in summary. For each of the four functions, the received theories render the matter as an individual property or a state to be reached; the relational character relocates it into the relation between two worlds, and the generative character sets it in historical movement. The account’s thesis is the conjunction of the two additions, that the matters of intimate life are relational matters in generative movement.

This completes the functional case. The account has set the potential work of relational understanding beside the established theories that treat the same matters, and it has located its contribution in two characters whose conjunction supplies what those theories, rendering the matters of intimate life as individual properties or states, leave unsupplied. A reader persuaded to this point might conclude that the case for relational understanding in intimacy is made. The next part argues that it is not, and that a case built on function alone, however strong, leaves open a question that function cannot answer.

Part Three The Normative Case: Beyond Function

9 The Insufficiency of the Functional Case

The functional case sets out what relational understanding does, the trust it generates, the shared value it recognizes, the conflict it eases, the quality of a shared life it sustains. A case of this form defends a practice by its effects, and a defense by effects carries a weakness that must be faced directly, since it bears on the whole standing of the account. The weakness is that the effects by which the practice is defended can, in some measure and for some time, be produced by something that is not the practice at all, and that a defense by effects alone has no way to tell the two apart.

Consider what an efficient possession of another can counterfeit. A partner who studies the other to secure a hold upon the other's world and not to enter it, who learns the other's needs and fears in order to manage them, who anticipates and arranges so that the other is kept content and compliant, may produce, for a time and by the measures the functional case employs, much of what relational understanding produces. Such a partner may generate a felt trust, since the other, well managed, finds their expectations met. Such a partner may produce an appearance of shared value, having learned to present as common what secures the other's attachment. Such a partner may ease conflict, having learned which crossings to avoid and which concessions to trade. Such a partner may sustain a certain satisfaction in the bond, meeting the other's needs with the efficiency that a studied management affords. By the functions alone, this bond and a bond of genuine relational understanding may for a considerable time be difficult to tell apart, and on some measures the managed bond may score higher, since management is directed at the measures in a way that understanding is not.

This is the weakness of the functional case, and it is not a marginal one. It is the same weakness that attends every defense of a practice by its effects, that the effects may be counterfeited by a simulacrum directed at producing them, and that the defense, having appealed only to the effects, cannot distinguish the practice from its simulacrum. In the domain of intimacy the simulacrum has a name in the wider framework within which this paper stands. It is a relational extraction, a taking from the other under the form of a giving, and its refinement is precisely its danger, since the more skillfully the functions of understanding are counterfeited the harder the extraction is to detect and the longer it may run.

The point is not that the functional case is false. The functions are real, and relational understanding does produce them. The point is that the functional case is not sufficient, because it cannot, from within itself, distinguish the understanding that produces these functions as the overflow of a genuine crossing from the management that produces their appearance as the instrument of a hold. To distinguish these is to appeal to something other than the functions, to what the practice is and not only to what it yields, and this is a normative and not a functional distinction. The remainder of this part draws it.

It is worth marking why the distinction cannot be recovered by a longer or a more careful functional analysis. One might propose that the counterfeit will eventually fail on the measures, that management, unlike understanding, cannot sustain the functions indefinitely, so that a sufficiently long functional accounting would tell them apart after all. There is something in this, and the next parts will give it its due, since the temporal structure of intimacy does bear on what can be sustained. Yet it does not rescue the functional case, for two reasons. The counterfeit may run for a very long time, across years in which real harm is done, before

any functional shortfall appears, so that a distinction available only in the eventual accounting comes too late to guide a life. And the deeper reason is that even where the counterfeit does eventually fail on the measures, what it lacked was never merely a quantity of function. It lacked something the measures do not capture, for want of which we judge it a wrong done to the other and not merely a bond that underperformed. That something is what the normative case must name.

10 Legitimacy without Correctness

The distinction the functional case cannot draw is a normative one, and it must be drawn with care, since the obvious way of drawing it is closed to this account. The obvious way would be to say that genuine understanding is correct where the counterfeit is mistaken, that the understanding partner grasps the other as the other truly is while the managing partner works from a false or partial picture, so that the distinction between understanding and extraction is the distinction between a true and a false representation of the other. This way is closed, because the epistemology on which the paper stands does not grant that an understanding of another is ever correct in the sense this would require.

The reason returns to the account of truth recalled in Part One. Understanding another, on this account, is a generative observation, produced in the crossing of two worlds, historically situated, and always incomplete. It is never the possession of the other as the other finally is, for there is no rendering that holds the other without remainder, and the observation of the other is enriched without end as the crossing continues and the two worlds change. Truth, here as everywhere on this account, is generated in a historical and contradictory movement and is never held as a finished correctness. To defend genuine understanding as the correct representation of the other, against the counterfeit as the false one, would be to claim for understanding exactly the finished correctness the epistemology denies to all knowing. The account cannot draw its normative distinction as a distinction in correctness without abandoning its own conception of truth.

The distinction must therefore be drawn on other ground, and the ground is ethical and not epistemic. What separates understanding from its counterfeit is not that the one is correct and the other mistaken. It is that the one is legitimate and the other is not, and the legitimacy in question is a matter of how the other is treated in the crossing, not of whether the crossing arrives at a correct result. The understanding partner enters the other's world as another world, to be observed with and not possessed, and holds the other as a co-generating subject whose rendering of things is a source and not a resource. The managing partner enters the other's world as a terrain to be mapped for the sake of a hold, and holds the other as an object of management, a system to be kept in a desired state. The difference is in the standing granted to the other, and it is a difference of legitimacy.

Legitimacy, not correctness. The account does not distinguish genuine understanding from its counterfeit by the correctness of the one and the error of the other, for understanding another is a generative observation, historically produced and always incomplete, and is never held as a finished correctness. The distinction is ethical. Genuine understanding is legitimate in that

it enters the other's world to observe with the other and holds the other as a co-generating subject; its counterfeit is illegitimate in that it enters to secure a hold and holds the other as an object of management. What is asked of an understanding is that it be legitimate and not that it be correct.

The ground of this legitimacy has been carried, in the wider framework, by an ethic of non-possession, and non-possession will remain central to what follows. To understand another legitimately is to observe the other without possessing the other, to let the other's world be a world one enters and does not annex, and to hold what one observes of the other as a matter generated between the two and belonging to neither, and not as a property of one's own by which the other is held. The counterfeit fails this at its root, for its whole motion is possessive, a taking of the other into a system of management under the appearance of a giving of attention. This is why the framework names it a relational extraction, and why the wrong it does is legible in the terms of generative justice, as the interruption of the mutual generation that a legitimate bond sustains, the rendering of one party into fuel for the other's ends under the form of care.

Non-possession states one aspect of the legitimacy in question, and the account should not rest the whole of its normative ground on a single ethical rendering, for a reason internal to its own method. Legitimacy is a concept, a matter to be understood, and the epistemology this paper applies holds that no single symbolic system exhausts a concept and that a concept becomes observable through the relations among several renderings of it. An ethical tradition is such a symbolic system. To render the legitimacy of understanding through non-possession alone would repeat, at the level of ethics, the error the epistemology sets itself against, the mistaking of one rendering for the whole. The next section therefore observes ethical legitimacy across several traditions, of which non-possession names one aspect, so that the normative ground is drawn in the manner the paper's own method requires.

Two further points hold this normative ground to the conception of truth the paper shares, so that the normative case does not smuggle back, at the level of ethics, the finished correctness it refused at the level of knowing. The first is that legitimacy, as it is used here, makes no claim to have grasped the other correctly. A legitimate understanding may be deeply incomplete, may err, may be revised across the history of the bond, and remains legitimate throughout, since its legitimacy lies in the standing it grants the other and not in the accuracy of its result. One may hold one's partner as a co-generating subject, enter their world with the intent to observe and not to possess, and still understand them partially and by degrees, as the account holds all understanding to be. Legitimacy is a matter of the ethical form of the crossing, compatible at every point with the incompleteness the epistemology requires.

The second is that the criterion of legitimacy is itself historically generated, and is set here as no final guarantee. The ethic of non-possession, the standing of the other as a co-generating subject, the very conception of a relational extraction, are not timeless moral facts read off from the nature of things. They are themselves generated in the historical and material development of relational life, arising as the conditions of a form of life bring them forth and open to the same dialectical movement as everything else the account treats. What counts as possession and what as legitimate observation of another, where the line falls between entering a world and annexing it, is a matter that has a history and will have a further history, refigured as

the conditions of intimate life develop. The account does not install non-possession as a new absolute in the place of the correctness it declined. It offers non-possession as the criterion legitimacy takes in the present development of relational life, held as the best the present affords and answerable to its own further generation, in exactly the manner the framework holds of all its commitments, including this one.

With this the distinction is drawn in principle. Function tells what understanding does and cannot tell understanding from its counterfeit. Legitimacy tells them apart, without claiming the correctness the account denies to all knowing, and holding even its own criterion within the history it theorizes. What remains is to draw the ethical ground of legitimacy more fully than a single rendering allows, by observing it across several ethical traditions, and this is the work of the section that follows.

11 Ethical Legitimacy Observed across Traditions

The legitimacy that separates understanding from its counterfeit has been stated through non-possession, and the previous section closed by holding that a single ethical rendering should not carry the whole of it. This section draws the ground more fully. It observes the legitimacy of understanding across several ethical traditions, each of which renders an aspect of what it is to treat another rightly and leaves an aspect for the others to render, and it treats non-possession as one such aspect among them. The traditions are taken in their secular and argued forms, as accounts of right conduct that stand on reasons open to examination, and the section passes through them in the manner the epistemology prescribes, to locate in each what it reaches and what it leaves.

The functional case already brought one tradition into play, though it did so to mark its insufficiency. A consequentialist ethic renders the rightness of an act in its results, the good it produces and the harm it forestalls, and on such an ethic the legitimacy of an understanding would lie in the goods it brings to the bond, the trust, the shared value, the eased conflict, the sustained quality of a life. Part Three showed why this rendering, taken alone, cannot draw the distinction the account requires, since a refined possession of the other can produce these goods, for a time, as efficiently as understanding. The consequentialist rendering reaches the real and important truth that a legitimate understanding is fruitful, that it does good in the bond, and it leaves untouched the matter of how the other is treated in the producing of that good, which is the matter on which understanding and its counterfeit divide. Its aspect is the fruitfulness of understanding; its omission is the standing of the other.

A deontological ethic in the tradition of Kant [11] renders right conduct through duty and the moral law, and it supplies, at its center, a principle that speaks directly to the present matter, that one is to treat humanity, in oneself and in others, never merely as a means and always at the same time as an end. This principle gives the standing of the other the consequentialist rendering omits, and it gives it as a requirement that no calculation of goods can override. The counterfeit of understanding, which takes the other into a system of management, treats the other merely as a means, and the Kantian rendering names this the precise wrong that the consequentialist accounting cannot register. Its aspect is the dignity of the other as an end, a standing that the possessive relation violates however favorable its results. What it leaves is the concreteness and the relationality of the bond, for the Kantian ground is a universal law

addressed to any rational being as such, and it renders the other as a bearer of a dignity shared by all rather than as this particular other whose singular world is to be entered. It secures that the other is not used, and it says little of what it is to attend to just this person in their difference.

A care ethic, in the work of Noddings and of Gilligan [8, 15], renders right conduct through the attentive response to a particular other in their need, and it supplies exactly the concreteness the Kantian ground leaves abstract. On this rendering legitimacy is a matter of attentiveness, of receiving the other in their particularity and responding to what they, and not humanity in general, require. It gives the positive and relational content that non-possession, stated as a restraint, does not carry on its own, for non-possession says what a legitimate understanding refrains from, the annexation of the other, and the care ethic says what it actively does, the attentive entry into and response to the other's world. Its aspect is the responsive attention to the singular other. What it leaves is the matter of limit and of mutuality, for an ethic of care, pressed to its edge, can pass into a self-effacement in which the one who cares is drawn without return, and this is a relational imbalance of its own, a failure of the mutual generation the account requires, which the care rendering is not well placed to mark.

An ethic of virtue in the tradition of Aristotle [2] renders right conduct through the character of the agent and the flourishing it makes possible, and in its account of friendship it reaches the matter of mutuality the care ethic leaves. The friendship of the best kind, on this account, is one in which each wishes the good of the other for the other's own sake, and in which the two flourish together in a shared activity, each the occasion of the other's excellence. This renders legitimacy as a mutual and generative matter, a good realized between two who are equally its authors, and it supplies the reciprocity that the asymmetry of care and the universality of duty do not frame. Its aspect is the mutual flourishing of two who wish each other's good for its own sake, which is close to the account's own conception of a bond in which two worlds generate what neither held alone. What it leaves is its reliance on a substantive account of flourishing, a settled conception of the human good toward which the friendship tends, which sits in tension with the account's refusal of a predetermined end, and this tension is itself a matter the observation must hold rather than resolve.

Set these renderings into relation, and the legitimacy of understanding becomes observable in a way no one of them affords. The consequentialist reaches its fruitfulness and omits the standing of the other; the Kantian reaches that standing as dignity and omits the concrete singular; the care ethic reaches the responsive attention to the singular and omits the limit and the mutuality; the virtue ethic reaches the mutual flourishing and relies on a settled good the account cannot grant. Non-possession stands among these as one aspect, nearest to the Kantian refusal of the other as mere means, and it is supplied, by the others, with the positive attention, the reciprocity, and the fruitfulness that a restraint stated alone does not carry. What legitimacy is, in the treatment of the other that separates understanding from extraction, is observed in the relations among these renderings, as the account holds every concept to be observed, and it is exhausted by none of them.

Legitimacy observed across traditions. The ethical legitimacy that separates understanding from its counterfeit is a concept, and by the paper's own method it is exhausted by no single

ethical tradition and becomes observable through the relations among several. A consequentialist rendering reaches the fruitfulness of understanding; a Kantian rendering reaches the standing of the other as an end and not a mere means; a care ethic reaches the attentive response to the singular other; an Aristotelian ethic of friendship reaches the mutual flourishing of two who wish each other's good for its own sake. Each omits what the others supply. Non-possession is one aspect among these, nearest the Kantian refusal of the other as means, and completed by the positive attention, the reciprocity, and the fruitfulness the others render. Legitimacy is observed in the relation among the traditions and is exhausted by none.

This section has done, at the level of ethics, what the paper argues understanding always does. It has taken a concept, the legitimacy of understanding, that no single symbolic system renders without remainder, and it has brought it into view through the relations among several renderings of it, each partial, none final. The normative ground of the paper is thereby drawn in the same manner as its epistemology, and the earlier reliance on non-possession is corrected by observing non-possession as one aspect within a relation of traditions that together render more of the legitimacy than any renders alone, and not by replacing one sole criterion with another. The normative case is, in its own construction, an instance of the relational understanding it concerns.

Two conditions hold this observation to the paper's stance, as they held the account of legitimacy in the previous section. The first is that observing legitimacy across traditions does not yield a correct ethical criterion, a formula that would settle, for every case, whether an understanding is legitimate. It yields an observation, partial and open, of what legitimacy involves, in which the traditions check and supplement one another without converging on a single rule. The account claims no more ethical correctness than it claims epistemic correctness, and for the same reason. The second is that the field of traditions is itself historical. These renderings arose in the development of moral life and will be joined by others as that life develops, and the observation of legitimacy they afford is generated in history and open to its further generation, set as no final criterion. The account offers this relation of traditions as the observation of legitimacy that the present development of ethical life affords, held as the best the present yields and answerable to what comes after, in the manner the framework holds of all its commitments.

With this the normative case is complete. Function tells what understanding does; legitimacy, observed across the traditions that render it, tells understanding from its counterfeit, without a correct criterion and within the history that generates it. The paper turns now to the problem that sets the cultivation of these capacities in intimacy apart from their cultivation anywhere else.

Part Four The Special Problem of Intimacy

12 The Wager, not the Rehearsal

The parts to this point have set out what relational understanding is, what it does, and why, done legitimately, it is good. A reader might expect the paper now to describe how it is practiced, how one learns and rehearses the capacities it requires until they are secure, in the way one rehearses any skill. This part argues that intimacy resists such a description at its root, and that the resistance is a structural feature and not a practical inconvenience that follows from the framework's own conception of value and time. The capacities of relational understanding, in the domain of intimacy, are wagered and not rehearsed.

A rehearsal is possible where an action can be tried, its result observed, and the action adjusted and tried again, the feedback returning quickly enough and the trials repeating freely enough that the capacity is shaped by the loop of attempt and correction. Much can be learned in this way, and much of what surrounds relational understanding can be. The recognition of another's world, the entry into it, the labor of translation, admit of practice in settings where the loop is available, in ordinary conversation, in friendship, in the encounter with a difficult text or an unfamiliar discipline, in the professional formations of teaching and care. There the crossing of worlds can be attempted, its result seen with reasonable speed, and the attempt refined. These capacities are, in a sense the next section will make exact, near-practicable.

Intimacy is different, and the difference follows from what the framework holds about relational value and its time. Value, on this account, is generated in the crossing of worlds, and its generation is historical, so that what is generated at one moment may disclose its value only much later, when the field of relations has grown enough to observe it. The companion work drew this out for the observation of concepts, where a rendering's significance may become observable only once a later rendering arrives to throw it into relief, and where the field of relations through which a matter is observed is itself generated over time. In an intimate bond this temporal structure is at its most extended. A word given, a room made for the other's difficulty, a generative thing offered at a hard moment, may disclose its value only after years, when the bond has developed to the point from which what was given can at last be observed for what it was. The feedback on an act of relational understanding, in intimacy, may return only after a passage of time so long that it cannot serve as the correction in a loop of practice.

To this delay is joined a second feature, that the trials do not repeat under the same conditions and often do not repeat at all. An intimate bond is a single history, not a series of independent attempts. A crossing offered at a given moment is offered once, into a bond in the state that its whole prior history has produced, and it cannot be withdrawn and offered again to the same bond in the same state, for the offering has already altered the state. Where a rehearsal requires that the trial be repeatable, the intimate bond is constitutively unrepeatable, a single unfolding in which each act enters once and changes the ground of the next. The partner one addresses today is not the partner one will address tomorrow, for the bond will have moved, carried in part by today's address.

The delay of the feedback and the unrepeatability of the trial together remove the loop of attempt and correction on which rehearsal depends. One cannot, in the deepest reaches of an intimate bond, try a way of understanding the other, observe promptly whether it succeeded, and adjust and try again under the same conditions, because the observation may be long delayed and the conditions do not return. What one does instead, in offering an act of relational

understanding into an intimate bond, is to give something whose value one cannot presently confirm, into a history that will not run again, on the trust that it is the right thing to give. This is the structure of a wager and not of a rehearsal, and it is the structure that sets the cultivation of these capacities in intimacy apart from their cultivation anywhere the loop is available.

The wager of intimacy. In the domain of intimacy the capacities of relational understanding are wagered, not rehearsed. Because relational value is generated historically, the worth of an act of understanding may return only after a long passage of time, and because the bond is a single unrepeatable history, the act cannot be tried again under the same conditions. The loop of attempt and prompt correction on which rehearsal depends is therefore unavailable at the depths of intimacy, and what is offered there is given on trust, into a history that will not run again, before its value can be confirmed.

This structure is not a defect of intimate life to be engineered away, and naming it as a wager is not a counsel of resignation. It is the form that the generativity of relational value takes when the relation is a whole shared life, and it is inseparable from what makes intimacy the deepest of the domains in which worlds are crossed. The task of the following sections is to ask what the cultivation of these capacities can mean, once it is granted that at their depths they cannot be rehearsed, and to distinguish the capacities that can still be practiced in the ordinary way from those that can only be borne as a standing disposition into the wager.

13 The Field of Cultivation and the Field of Exercise

If the capacities of relational understanding cannot, at the depths of intimacy, be rehearsed in the loop of attempt and correction, and yet they can plainly be developed, since some people bring far more of them to their bonds than others, then their development must occur in part elsewhere than in the bond where they are most consequentially exercised. This section draws the distinction on which the practical proposal of the paper rests, between the field in which a capacity is cultivated and the field in which it is exercised, and it holds that in the case of intimacy these come apart.

The confusion the distinction removes is the expectation that intimacy should serve as its own training ground, that one learns to understand one's partner by practicing on one's partner, refining the capacity through the bond itself. For the near-practicable capacities this is partly available, but for the capacities that reach into the wager it is not, and the expectation that it should be is a source of a particular disappointment, the sense that one ought to be getting better at one's bond through sheer repetition and is somehow failing to. The bond is not a practice ground for its own deepest demands. It is the field of exercise, the place where capacities developed in part elsewhere are wagered, and its unrepeatable and slow-returning history is unsuited to the shaping of a capacity through rapid trial.

The field of cultivation, for much of what relational understanding requires, lies in the wider life in which the loop of attempt and correction is available. The recognition of another's world, the entry into it, the construction of a mapping between two structures, the labor of translation, can be developed in every setting where one meets a world not one's own and can

see, with reasonable speed, whether one has entered it. They are developed in friendship, in the sustained encounter with a discipline or a tradition foreign to one's own, in the reading of literature that renders a world one does not inhabit, in the practices of teaching and of care where the entry into another's world is the daily work and its success or failure is visible. A person who has developed these capacities across such a life brings them to an intimate bond already formed, and exercises there what was cultivated in fields where the exercise was correctable.

This gives the first half of a distinction that the next part will develop into the model. Some of the capacities of relational understanding are near-practicable. They admit of cultivation in the loop of attempt and correction, in fields outside the intimate bond, and they can be brought to the bond as developed skills. The recognition of the other's world, the entry, the structural mapping, and the translation are of this kind, and the fact that they are cultivable elsewhere is what allows a person to bring understanding to a bond and not only to discover, across the bond's slow history, whether they had it.

The other half of the distinction concerns the capacities that reach furthest into the wager, and these do not admit of cultivation in the same way, for a reason that must be stated precisely. A capacity whose exercise gives feedback only after long delay, into an unrepeatable history, cannot be shaped by the loop of attempt and correction even in principle, since the loop requires the feedback the wager withholds. The throwing of a generative thing into the other's unfolding, the non-intervention that lets a shared dynamic develop, the preservation of a relational experience against a value that may return only much later, are capacities of this kind. They cannot be practiced to reliability, because reliability is precisely what the loop confers and the loop is unavailable. What can be developed, in their place, is a standing disposition and not a skill honed by feedback, a formed way of being toward the other that inclines one to give rightly into the wager without the confirmation a rehearsal would supply. The nature of this disposition, and the sense in which it can be cultivated where a skill cannot, is the matter of the model the next part proposes.

Part Five The Practical Theory and Its Cultivation

14 The Capacities, not a Procedure

The model this paper proposes is a set of capacities and not a procedure, and the distinction follows as a consequence of the account and is no matter of presentation. A procedure is an ordered sequence of steps, each following the last, the whole completed when the final step is reached. A model of relational understanding cast as a procedure would name a first thing to do, then a second, and so on to a last, and would represent understanding as achieved when the sequence is run. The account developed here forbids this, for the same reason it forbids the rehearsal. The steps of such a procedure would have to follow one another in time, the earlier completed before the later begins, and yet the matters they concern do not order themselves so. The value of a thing given may return only after the later steps have long since passed, the

feedback that a procedure would require at each step to confirm its completion before the next is delayed and uncertain, and the whole may span a length of time across which no sequence could be held as a single connected run. A procedure presupposes that its steps are adjacent in time and that each completes before the next begins. The generativity of relational value, which may disclose the worth of an early act only in a late season of the bond, breaks this presupposition, and with it the possibility of a procedure.

What the account permits, in the place of a procedure, is a set of capacities. A capacity is a formed power that can be drawn upon at any moment the relation requires it, in any order, and whose exercise at one moment does not wait upon the completion of another. Capacities can be held together, brought to bear as the unrepeatable and slow-returning history of a bond calls for them, without the temporal adjacency a procedure demands. To cast the model as capacities and not as steps is thus to make it consistent with the framework's own conception of relational time, on which the acts of understanding are drawn, each in its moment, from powers the person has formed, and do not line up in a sequence, from powers the person has formed and holds in readiness.

The model names seven such capacities. They are not stages and are not ordered, and the numbering that follows is for reference and not for sequence. The first is the recognition of the other's language world, the acknowledgment that the other renders the world in a symbolic system with its own generative rules and not merely in a different vocabulary. The second is the entry into that world, the capacity to suspend one's own system far enough to let the other's renderings become natural, tested by whether one can generate a rendering the other affirms as their own. The third is the construction of a structural mapping, the observation of how the relations that hold in one's own world correspond, at the level of structure, to the relations that hold in the other's. The fourth is translation, the rendering of a matter from the other's world into one's own with the loss marked and the mapping honored. The fifth is the throwing of a generative thing into the other's own unfolding, the offering, in the other's terms, of something from which the other generates what they had not observed, as against the forcing upon the other of a conclusion of one's own. The sixth is a non-intervention, the capacity to withhold one's steering and let a shared dynamic develop between the two. The seventh is the joint recognition and preservation of what is generated, the noticing together of a generated matter's value, the finding of where the two worlds meet, and the keeping of a relational experience against the season in which its value returns.

The model: capacities in two orders of cultivation. Relational understanding in intimacy is proposed as a set of seven capacities and not a procedure, since the generativity of relational value forbids the temporal adjacency a procedure requires. The seven are the recognition of the other's world, the entry into it, the construction of a structural mapping, translation, the throwing of a generative thing into the other's unfolding, non-intervention, and the joint recognition and preservation of what is generated. They divide into two orders. The first four are near-practicable, cultivable in the loop of attempt and correction in fields outside the bond, and brought to the bond as developed skills. The last three reach into the wager, give feedback only after delay and into an unrepeatable history, and cannot be honed by a loop; they are cultivated as a standing disposition and not as skills. Non-possession is the condition of

all seven, without which they decline into a refined extraction.

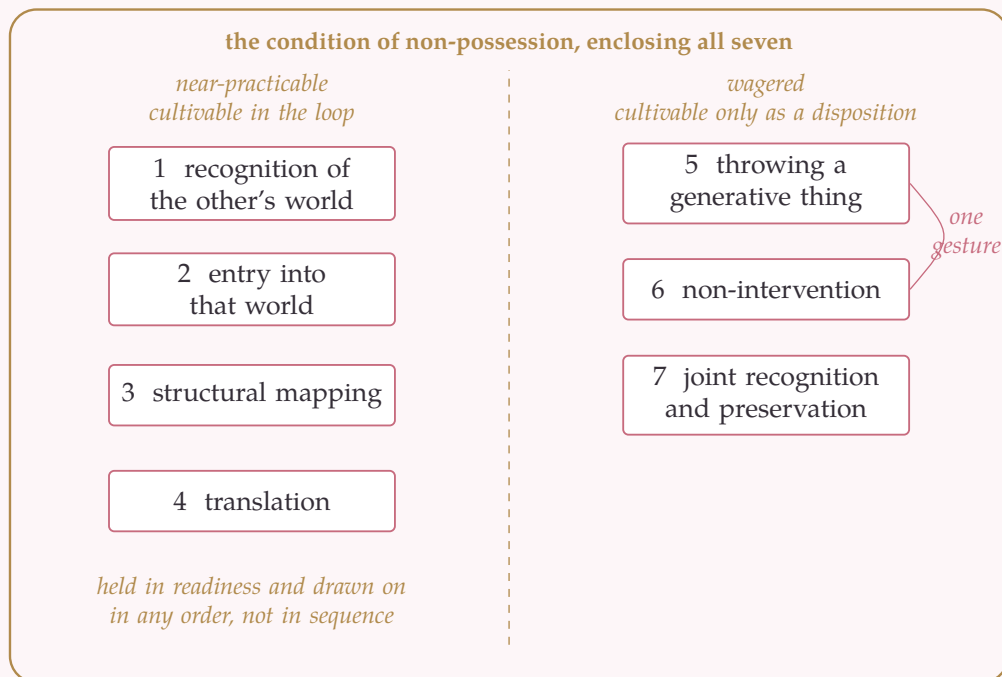


Figure 1: The model as capacities, not a procedure. The seven capacities are held in readiness and drawn upon in any order, with no sequence among them. The four on the left admit cultivation in the loop of attempt and correction; the three on the right reach into the wager and are cultivated only as a standing disposition. The fifth and sixth compose a single gesture in two moments. Non-possession is drawn as the field enclosing all seven, the condition under which each is what it is, and not as an eighth capacity.

The first four capacities, the recognition, the entry, the mapping, and the translation, were treated at their root in the companion work and are near-practicable in the sense the previous part gave. They are the crossing of worlds in its cognitive labor, and while intimacy raises them to their highest difficulty, they can be developed in the wider life where the crossing is correctable, and brought to the bond as powers already formed. This paper does not add to their theory beyond what the domain of intimacy requires, and turns instead to the three that reach into the wager, for it is there that intimacy makes its distinctive demand and there that the account has most to add. The next sections take the fifth and the seventh in turn, the throwing of a generative thing and the preservation of relational experience, with the sixth, non-intervention, drawn out alongside the fifth, since the two are a single gesture in two moments. The condition of non-possession, named in the claim as the ground of all seven, is drawn together at the last.

15 The Throwing of a Generative Thing

The fifth capacity is the most distinctive of the model and the least reducible to a technique, and it is best approached through what it is not. When one has entered another's world and observed a matter the other has not observed, the impulse is to tell the other what one has seen, to deliver the observation as a conclusion. This delivery, however well meant, forces upon the

other a rendering formed in one's own movement, and it places the other in the position of receiving a finished result and does not generate one. Even when the result is right, in the provisional sense the account allows, its delivery forecloses the other's own generation and installs one's own observation in the other's world from without. The fifth capacity is the alternative to this delivery, and it consists in giving the other the means of their own generation and not a conclusion.

To throw a generative thing into the other's unfolding is to offer, in the other's own terms and in keeping with the generative rules of the other's world, something from which the other will generate an observation they had not reached, an observation that is then theirs and not a transplant of one's own. The thing thrown may be a question that opens a direction the other's world contains but has not taken, a juxtaposition that sets two of the other's own renderings into a relation the other had not drawn, an instance that the other's own commitments make significant. Its mark is that it is generative and not conclusive, that it occasions the other's generation of the observation and does not carry it as a payload to be delivered, the other's generation of it, and that what the other then observes is generated in the other's own world and belongs to the other.

This is the capacity that a generative pedagogy has practiced under other names, and the theory of generative justice developed by Eglash [7] gives it a wider setting, in which what a generative act returns is returned to those who generate it and is not extracted from them. The bearing of that setting on the present capacity is exact. To throw a generative thing rightly is to act so that the observation generated returns to the other in whom it is generated, remaining the other's own, where the forcing of a conclusion extracts the generation, installing one's own result in place of the other's and taking from the other the generativity that was theirs to exercise. The distinction between the throwing and the forcing is thus a distinction of justice and not of tact, between an act that leaves the other the author of what they come to observe and an act that authors it for them.

Three features distinguish the throwing from its failures, and they can be named though they cannot be reduced to a rule. The first is that the thing thrown must be in the other's terms and must respect the generative rules of the other's world, for a thing thrown in one's own terms is a delivery in disguise, and a thing that violates the other's rules will only collide with the other's world and will not generate within it. This is why the throwing depends upon the prior capacities, the recognition and the entry and the mapping, since one cannot offer in the other's terms what one has not learned to render in them. The second is that the thing thrown must be generative and not conclusive, an opening and not an answer, for a conclusion pressed in the form of a question is a forcing that has borrowed the shape of a throwing, and the other feels the difference as the difference between being drawn out and being led. The third is a matter of moment and measure, of when the thing is offered and how much is offered, for a generative thing thrown before the other's world is ready to receive it will not generate, and one thrown with too heavy a hand will steer where it should open. This third feature cannot be given as a rule at all, and it is the point at which the capacity passes from a skill into the standing disposition the previous part described, since the sense of the moment is formed and not followed.

The sixth capacity belongs with the fifth, as the withholding that the throwing requires once it is done. To throw a generative thing and then to steer the other's generation of it,

to guide the other toward the observation one had oneself reached, is to take back with the sixth capacity what the fifth had given, converting the occasion of the other's generation into a managed route to one's own conclusion. Non-intervention is the capacity to let go of the thing thrown, to allow the shared dynamic between the two worlds to develop without one's steering, and to bear the uncertainty of not knowing what the other will generate or whether they will generate at all. It is a capacity of restraint, and its difficulty is the difficulty of trusting a process one has set going but does not control. Its characteristic failure is the intervention that cannot wait, the resumption of steering under the anxiety of an open outcome, which returns the exchange to the delivery the fifth capacity was meant to escape.

Together the fifth and the sixth capacities compose a single gesture in two moments, the giving of a generative thing and the letting go of it, the offering into the other's world and the withholding of one's hand from what the other then makes. The gesture is a giving in the strong sense, since what it gives is the other's own generation of an observation and not an observation itself, and its condition is a restraint that wants nothing back from the giving, neither the credit of the result nor its conformity to what one had oneself observed. This restraint is the form that non-possession takes in the fifth and sixth capacities, and it is what holds the throwing apart from the refined management that would use the appearance of a generative gift to install a conclusion of its own. The disposition to give in this way, wanting nothing back, is not a technique that can be rehearsed to reliability. It is a formed generosity, cultivated as a way of being toward the other and carried into the wager, where its rightness cannot be confirmed at the moment of the giving and must be borne on trust.

16 The Preservation of Relational Experience

The seventh capacity is the one that belongs most properly to intimacy, and it has no close counterpart in the domains where the crossing of worlds is quicker and its returns more prompt. It has two moments, a present one and a temporal one. The present moment is the joint recognition of what a crossing has generated, the noticing together of a generated matter and of its value, and the finding of where the two worlds have met. The temporal moment is the preservation of that recognition, and of the experience in which it arose, against a future in which its full value may be disclosed. The first moment intimacy shares with other domains, and the account of joint recognition given below applies wherever two people observe together what their crossing has produced. The second moment is intimacy's own, and it follows directly from the wager.

Take the present moment first. What a crossing of worlds generates is observed, on this account, in the relation between the two worlds, and its observation is itself a relational act, most fully carried out by the two together. When two partners notice together what has come into being between them, a shared value generated across their difference, an observation neither held alone, a meeting of their worlds at a point neither had marked, they do more than register a fact. They perform, jointly, the observation in which the generated matter comes fully into view, and they find in it the places where their worlds are, for the moment, one in what they hold while remaining two in how they hold it. This joint recognition is generative in its own right, for the noticing together of what has been generated is itself a crossing, and it may generate, as the companion work observed of such recognitions, an observation that neither

partner had reached and that arrives to both at once, a thing seen together that was in neither before the seeing.

The temporal moment is where intimacy makes its distinctive demand, and it rests on the structure named in the wager. Because relational value is generated historically, the full value of what a crossing produces may not be observable at the time of its production. A given moment in a bond, an act of understanding offered, a difficulty borne together, a room made for the other's core, may generate something whose worth cannot be recognized in the present field of the relation and becomes observable only later, when the bond has developed to the point from which that earlier moment can at last be observed for what it was. The seventh capacity, in its temporal moment, is the capacity to preserve such a moment against that later season, to keep the relational experience, unrecognized or half-recognized in its value now, so that when the field has grown enough to disclose its worth the experience is still there to be observed anew.

This preservation is a capacity and not merely a memory, and the distinction matters. To preserve a relational experience in the sense the account intends is to keep it available for a re-observation, and not to record it as a fact of the past, whose occasion has not yet come, to hold it as a thing whose value is not yet settled and may still be generated. It is an act carried out on trust, for one preserves without knowing whether the value will come, and it is an act of the two, most fully done when the partners keep such experiences together, in the shared holding that a bond maintains through its rituals of return, its recollections, its marking of what it has passed through. A bond that preserves its experiences in this way carries forward a reservoir of what it has generated but not yet fully observed, and it is from this reservoir that the later recognitions are drawn, when a present difficulty discloses the worth of a past forbearance, or a late season of the bond observes at last what an early one had generated without knowing.

The preservation of relational experience. The seventh capacity has a moment proper to intimacy, the preservation of a relational experience against the season in which its value returns. Because relational value is generated historically, what a crossing produces may become observable for what it is only later, when the field of the bond has grown enough to disclose it. To preserve is to keep such an experience available for a re-observation whose occasion has not yet come, holding it on trust as a value not yet settled, most fully done by the two together. The reservoir so kept is that from which the bond's later recognitions are drawn.

This capacity draws directly on the two forms of historical generation that the companion work set out and that were recalled in Part One, and it is worth marking the connection, since it shows the seventh capacity to be the application of the account to the whole time of a bond, and no addition to it. The first form was the enrichment of an observation within a field of relations, as a later rendering discloses what an earlier one had left unmarked. In a bond, this is the season that discloses the worth of a past act, the later moment from which an earlier one is at last observed for what it was. The second form was the generation of the field of relations itself, the arrival of new relations that open observations unavailable before. In a bond, this is the growth of the relation itself, through which what an early moment generated becomes observable only once the bond has developed the relations that let it be seen. The preservation

of relational experience is the capacity that holds the bond's past open to both, keeping what was generated available to the enrichment and the growth that a long shared history brings.

Here the movement is the spiral the framework has described elsewhere, and not a circle. A bond that preserves and returns to its experiences does not come back to them unchanged, reliving a fixed past. It returns to them from a field grown richer, and observes in them what was generated but not seen, so that the return is to the same experience observed anew, its value disclosed by the distance traveled. The preservation of relational experience is what makes this spiral possible across the length of a life, holding the past available so that the bond, returning, finds it grown. This is the capacity by which a long intimacy becomes, in its best reaches, a deepening and not a mere duration, a continued generation in which what was given early is recognized late, and recognized together, and kept again against a season later still.

17 Non-Possession as the Condition Throughout

Non-possession has appeared at each turn of the model, in the restraint that lets the thing thrown remain the other's, in the withholding that is non-intervention, in the trust that preserves without demanding a return. It is time to state its place directly. Non-possession is not an eighth capacity, one more power alongside the seven. It is the condition under which the seven are what they are, and without which each of them declines into a form of the extraction the normative case set against understanding. It runs through the model as a single requirement in seven forms, and the model is completed by naming it as such.

A word on the standing of this condition holds it to the fuller ground drawn in the normative case. The legitimacy of understanding was there observed across several ethical traditions, of which non-possession is one aspect, nearest the refusal of the other as a mere means and completed by the attentive response, the reciprocity, and the fruitfulness the other traditions render. Non-possession serves as the condition of the seven capacities because it is the aspect that governs, most directly, the conduct of the crossing, what one does and refrains from doing in the exercise of each capacity. It carries the fuller legitimacy into the practice of the model without standing in for the whole of it, and the attentiveness, the mutuality, and the fruitfulness that the other traditions render are present in the capacities as the positive content that non-possession, a restraint, leaves for them to supply. The condition named here is thus the practical face, in the exercise of the capacities, of the legitimacy observed across the traditions.

The point can be seen by taking the seven capacities and removing the condition from each, so that what remains is the capacity's counterfeit. The recognition of the other's world, without non-possession, becomes the reconnaissance of a territory to be taken, the acknowledgment of the other's difference as the first move in mapping it for a hold. The entry into the other's world becomes an infiltration, an entry made to secure a position and not to observe with the other. The structural mapping becomes the diagram by which the other is managed, the translation a means of putting the other's words to one's own uses. The throwing of a generative thing becomes the planting of a suggestion the other is led to think their own, the most refined of manipulations, which borrows the very form of the generative gift to install a conclusion by stealth. Non-intervention becomes the calculated withholding that lets the other commit themselves before one moves. And the preservation of relational experience becomes

the keeping of an account, a record of what the other owes, held against a future reckoning. Each capacity has its counterfeit, and in every case the counterfeit is the capacity emptied of non-possession and turned to a hold.

This is why non-possession cannot be one capacity among the others, for it is the condition that separates each of the others from its counterfeit, and a model that listed it as a further item would misplace it as one more thing to do, where it is the standing under which all the others are done. The same power that enters the other's world can enter to observe with the other or to secure a hold upon them, and nothing in the capacity itself decides which, for the capacity is the same power in both cases and its direction is given by the condition under which it is exercised. Non-possession is that condition, the orientation of the whole crossing toward observing with the other and not toward possessing them, and it is present or absent in each capacity as the capacity is exercised, not as a separate act performed before or after.

The wrong that the counterfeits share is the one the normative case named, and it is legible in the terms of generative justice. In each counterfeit the generativity of the relation is turned to the account of one party, the other made into a resource from which value is drawn under the appearance of a bond in which value is shared. The other becomes, in the phrase the wider framework uses, fuel for an end that is not the relation's own, and the more skillfully the counterfeit imitates the legitimate capacity the more thoroughly the extraction is concealed. Non-possession is the refusal of this turn, the holding of the relation's generativity as belonging to the relation and to both who generate within it, and the treatment of the other, throughout the crossing, as a co-generating subject whose world is entered to be observed with and never annexed.

It remains only to hold this condition, as the normative case held its criterion, within the history the account theorizes, so that non-possession is not installed as the timeless law the framework elsewhere refuses. What non-possession requires, where the line falls between a legitimate entry and an annexation, between a generative gift and a planted suggestion, between a preservation and an account kept, is not fixed for all times. It is drawn in the historical development of relational life and will be drawn again as that life develops, and the model offers non-possession as the form the condition takes in the present, held as the best the present affords and open to its own further generation. With this the model is complete, seven capacities in two orders of cultivation, under a condition that runs through all seven and that is itself, like everything in the account, generated in the history it belongs to and set as no final guarantee.

18 The Practical Theory Embodied

The seven capacities have been given as a theory of a practice, and a theory of a practice invites the question of whether the practice it describes can be carried, in a concrete instrument, into the ordinary passage of a bond. The question is worth a brief answer, since an affirmative one shows the account to bear on a life and not on a page alone. The seven capacities can be embodied in a simple instrument, a kept record through which the crossing of two worlds is practiced day by day, and the shape of such an instrument is sketched here in outline, as a demonstration that the practical theory admits of realization, and not as a design to be specified.

The instrument follows the account's own structure. The near-practicable capacities be-

come occasions of noticing and recording, a place to set down an observed facet of the other, a rendering attempted in the other's terms, a structural correspondence marked between the two worlds, a translation kept in a private lexicon of the bond. The wagered capacities become occasions of a different kind, since they cannot be drilled, a place to record a generative thing offered and to leave open how the other took it up, a marked restraint held in place of an intervention, and, at the last, a return. The return is the seventh capacity made concrete. What has been recorded and could not yet be valued is kept, and revisited from a later season, so that what an early moment generated and left unread is observed at last for what it was, and preserved again. The instrument is thus a device for holding the bond's generated matter against the delay in which its value returns, and for carrying it back into a further generation. Its motion is the spiral the account has described, a return that finds the kept moment grown.

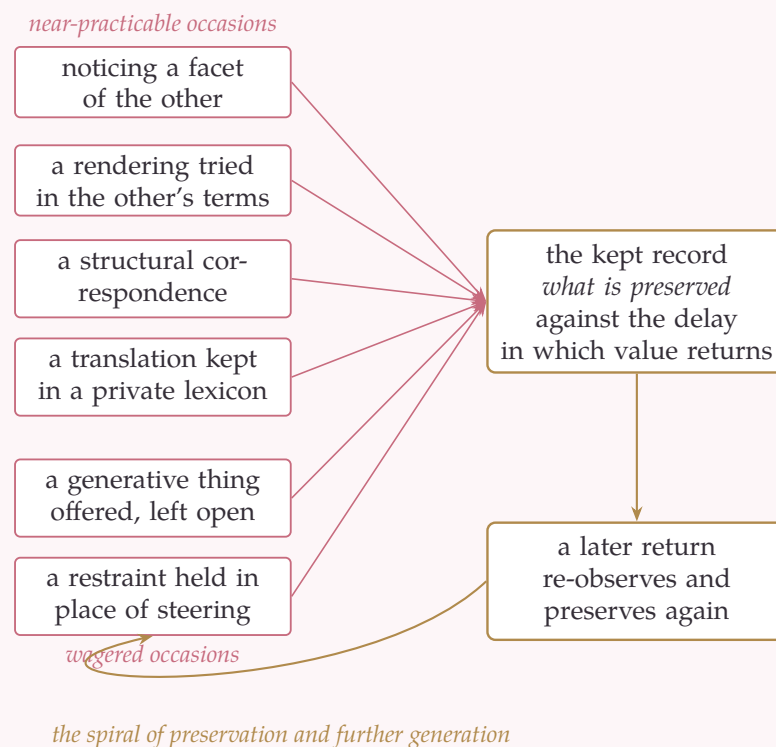


Figure 2: A concept sketch of the practical theory embodied. The near-practicable capacities become occasions of noticing and recording, and the wagered capacities become occasions of an offering left open and a restraint held. All feed a kept record, which holds the bond's generated matter against the delay in which its value returns. A later return re-observes what was kept and preserves it again, and this return is the spiral the account describes, carried into a further generation. The sketch shows that the practical theory admits of a concrete instrument, and it specifies no design.

The point of the sketch is modest and it is real. It shows that the seven capacities form a structure that can be embodied and carried into practice, and are no mere redescription of what good partners already do, and that the account's most distinctive claim, the preservation of relational experience against a delayed value, has a concrete form. The instrument does no more than hold the bond's generated matter and return it, and it does exactly what the account requires, that the crossing of two worlds be practiced, its generation kept, and its value observed when the season for its observation comes. The realization sketched here is one among the forms the practical theory might take, and the theory is answerable to no single one of them.

Part Six The Dialectic of Understanding and its Remainder

19 The Remainder that Sustains the Bond

The paper has argued, across its length, for understanding, for the entry into the other's world, the crossing that generates a shared reality, the capacities by which the crossing is carried out. A reader who has followed this far might draw from it a conclusion the paper must now refuse, that the aim of relational understanding is a full understanding, a complete crossing in which the other's world is at last wholly entered and the two renderings brought into a total correspondence. This section argues, dialectically, that such a completion is neither possible nor to be wished, that the persistence of an intimate bond depends upon a remainder in the other that understanding does not close, and it draws from this a corrected conception of what relational understanding, rightly aimed, seeks.

The thesis is the paper's own argument to this point. Understanding is good, its work in the bond is real, and the capacities that carry it are worth cultivating. Left there, the argument inclines toward a horizon at which understanding would be complete, the other fully known, the two worlds mapped onto one another without remainder. This horizon is the same fusion the paper set out, in its first pages, to refuse, returning now in a subtler dress. It no longer promises the transparent transport of a message, and it promises instead a complete mutual observation, a bond in which each has entered the other so fully that nothing of the other remains unobserved. The subtler form is the more seductive, since it wears the appearance of the very understanding the paper commends, and it must be met on its own ground.

The antithesis meets it there. A full crossing of the other's world, were it reached, would end the bond it was meant to perfect, and the reason lies in the core introduced in the background. At the center of the other is an unsymbolizable remainder around which, on the psychoanalytic account, the other's desire is organized. Desire moves because it circles a core that no object and no observation fills, and the movement is the life of the desiring subject. Were the other's core at last reached, observed, brought into a complete correspondence with one's own rendering, the circling would have nothing left to circle. The remainder that drew desire would be closed, and with it the movement that the remainder sustained. A complete understanding of the other would not crown the bond with a final intimacy. It would still the desire that moved between the two, for it would fill the lack around which that desire turned, and a desire whose lack is filled is a desire extinguished. The completion the thesis reaches toward is, at its horizon, the death of the very movement that makes the bond alive.

This is not a defect that a better completion would avoid. It is the structure of desire, and it holds against any full crossing whatever. The point can be put in the paper's own terms, without the psychoanalytic vocabulary, so that it does not rest on a doctrine the reader might decline. The bond has been shown to live by generation, by the continued production, in the crossing of two worlds, of observations and values that neither world held before. Generation requires that there be, at each moment, something not yet observed from which the next observation is generated. A remainder in the other, a region of the other's world not yet crossed, is the reservoir from which the bond's further generation is drawn. Were the other fully crossed,

this reservoir would be exhausted, and the generation that the bond lives by would have nothing further to draw upon. The bond would pass from a spiral that returns to the other and finds more, to a circle that returns to the other and finds the same, and the circle, for all its completeness, would be the end of the bond's growth. The remainder is not an obstacle to the bond's life. It is the condition of it.

There is a further point, of a normative kind, that joins the argument from desire and the argument from generation. To hold that one has fully understood the other, fully crossed their world, fully observed their core, is to treat the other as an object that a sufficient observation could exhaust. The other's unsymbolizable remainder is the mark of the other's standing as a subject and not an object, as a source of renderings that is never used up in one's observation of it. To reach, or to believe one has reached, a complete understanding of the other is thus to have annulled, in one's own regard, the other's subjectivity, to have converted a co-generating subject into a mapped and finished thing. The aspiration to full understanding, however tender its motive, meets at its limit the same wrong the normative case named, the reduction of the other to what one can possess of them. The remainder that understanding does not close is what keeps the other, in one's understanding of them, a subject who exceeds it.

The necessary remainder. The aim of relational understanding is not a full understanding, and a complete crossing of the other's world would end the bond it was meant to perfect. The other's unsymbolizable remainder is the core around which desire moves, the reservoir from which the bond's further generation is drawn, and the mark of the other's standing as a subject who exceeds any observation of them. Were it closed, desire would be stilled, generation would be exhausted, and the other would be reduced to a finished object. The remainder that understanding does not reach is therefore the condition of the bond's persistence, and understanding rightly aimed does not seek to close it.

The synthesis is not a midpoint between understanding and its refusal, and it does not counsel a strategic withholding, a deliberate leaving of the other unknown for the sake of preserving mystery, which would be one more possession, a management of the other's opacity for an effect one wants. It is a corrected conception of what understanding seeks. Relational understanding, rightly aimed, is not an asymptotic approach to a full crossing that it never quite completes. It is a sustained crossing that generates, at each meeting, a shared observation the two did not hold before, and that in the same motion honors the remainder from which the next crossing will be generated. The two moments are one. To understand the other well is to observe with the other what their crossing generates and to leave intact the core from which further generation comes, to enter without annexing, to observe without exhausting. This is the conception the normative case named as non-possession, now shown to have a further ground in the structure of desire and the condition of generation, and it is the conception the account has meant, throughout, by a crossing that observes with the other and does not possess them.

This synthesis does not resolve the tension it names, and it should not, for the tension is the living form of the bond. There is a real pull toward understanding, and it is right, and there is a real remainder that understanding must not close, and it is also right, and the bond

lives in the holding of both, in a crossing that seeks the other and honors what in the other it will not reach. To resolve the tension in favor of full understanding would still the bond in a completed knowledge; to resolve it in favor of the remainder would abandon the crossing altogether and leave the two worlds unmet. The bond lives in neither resolution but in the sustained movement between them, the seeking that generates and the honoring that leaves room to generate again. The account holds the tension open, in keeping with its refusal of a final synthesis, since a bond, like the understanding that crosses it, is a movement to be sustained and not a matter to be finished.

Part Seven Polyphonic Close

20 The Crossing Left Open

A paper on relational understanding ought not to close by declaring the understanding of it complete, for it has argued throughout that understanding is generated in a movement that no statement finishes, and it would betray its own account to end on a synthesis that gathered the matter into a settled whole. It closes instead by marking what it leaves open, in the manner its account of understanding requires, and by returning the questions it has opened to the practice and the history in which they will go on being worked.

The paper carried a single account across two cases and a practice. It took the generative relational epistemology into the domain of intimacy, where each person bears a symbolic world and understanding is the generative observation won in their crossing. It set the work that such understanding does, in trust, in shared value, in the easing of conflict, in the quality of a shared life, beside the established theories of these matters, and located its contribution in two characters, the relational and the generative, whose conjunction makes the matters of intimate life relational matters in generative movement. It then held that a case built on this work alone is not sufficient, since the functions of understanding can be counterfeited by a refined possession of the other, and it drew the distinction that function cannot draw on the ground of legitimacy and not of correctness, a legitimacy observed across several ethical traditions, consequentialist, Kantian, care-ethical, and Aristotelian, of which non-possession is one aspect, and held, like the truth the framework theorizes, within the history that generates it. It named the wager that sets intimacy apart, where the capacities of understanding are given on trust into an unrepeatable history whose returns may come only late. And it proposed a model, seven capacities in two orders of cultivation, under the condition of a non-possession that separates each capacity from its counterfeit. It then turned dialectically upon its own commendation of understanding, and held that a full crossing of the other's world would still the desire and exhaust the generation that the bond lives by, so that the aim of understanding is to seek the other and honor, in the same motion, what in the other it will not reach, and not to close the other's unsymbolizable remainder.

Several questions are left open, and they are the sites at which the account will go on being generated. Whether the division of the capacities into the near-practicable and the wagered is drawn in the right place, and whether some part of the throwing, the non-intervention, and the preservation admits of a cultivation the paper has not found. How the standing disposition

that the wagered capacities require is formed, if it is formed neither by the loop of rehearsal nor by direct instruction, and what the practices are, in a life and in the traditions that shape lives, through which such a disposition is grown. Where, in the developing conditions of intimate life, the line of non-possession is now to be drawn, and how its drawing will change as those conditions change. These are questions posed to a practice and not gaps to be filled by a further section, to be worked in the living of bonds and in the long observation of them, and returned, transformed, to whatever account comes after this one.

There is a last thing to say, and it belongs to the register in which this series has always closed. This paper has treated understanding between two people as a crossing of worlds that generates what neither world held alone, and it has held the deepest such crossing to be the one carried out across a shared life. Such an account is not written from outside the matter it treats. It is written from within a bond in which the crossing of two worlds is a daily and a lifelong work, in which the entry into another's language is learned slowly and imperfectly and gladly, and in which what is given is given on the trust the paper has called a wager. The account owes what it knows to that bond, and it returns there, past the last of its propositions, to the one whose world it has spent these years learning to enter, and in whose company the value of what was given early is still, season by season, coming to be observed.

Acknowledgments

This paper was learned before it was written, in the slow crossing of two worlds that a shared life has been. What it knows of entering another's language, of the thing offered and left open, of the value that returns only in a later season, it owes to her, 那个属于森林的女孩, the girl who belongs to the forest, in whose company the crossing has been the work and the gladness of these years.

愿天下有情人，心灵相通。

May lovers everywhere, throughout the world,
reach one another, heart to heart.

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