# Rethinking the Gift in Diplomacy

*Generative Relational Knowledge Emergence through Encounter*

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**Abstract**

A gift asserts nothing that could be checked. It carries no proposition whose truth is at issue, and it discloses no procedure by which a content might be substantiated. It nonetheless does something that statements do poorly, and this paper asks what. The account offered is that a gift is composed by a reading of the recipient, that what crosses carries structure and no content, that the receiving party construes it under its own procedures, and that what it produces is deposited in the context against which its later construals are made. On this account a gift reaches the rule by which a party interprets only through what that party has already made of what arrived, so the alteration is mediated and is not an effect of the event. Three consequences are drawn, each with a simple dynamical illustration. A single crossing moves a state and returns, while a sustained practice moves the slower variable, which offers a reason for the repeated character of the practice. The interval before a return is of the order of the time the receiving system takes to relax, since a return offered sooner is composed largely of what the giver has just supplied and tells the giver little. And a gift that has gone wrong is poorly corrected by explaining it, because the explanation is construed against what the first construal deposited. A phase portrait of the slower variables is added and is stated for a class of coupled pairs in place of for any interpretation of them. It shows that whether such a pair admits one resting condition or several turns on the shape of one response, which the account does not determine, and that where two accumulations share one slower variable a given inequality between them rests at a larger value the higher that variable stands. The paper closes on the accountability that a channel asserting nothing cannot support.

**Keywords:** gift; diplomacy; knowledge; interpretation; generative relational theory

**Draft.** This is a preprint draft. It is circulated for comment, and its arguments, formulations, and open questions are subject to revision. Correction and criticism are welcome at huangwanhong@serendip.ngo.

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**Use of generative artificial intelligence.** Generative AI assistants (Anthropic's Claude and OpenAI's ChatGPT) were used extensively in preparing this manuscript: for literature survey, for drafting prose from the author's specifications, for adversarial review of the argument, for the models and code underlying the figures and the phase analysis, for consistency and citation auditing, and for typesetting. Formulations and objections arose in the course of those exchanges as well as from the author. Every claim, argument, and citation was reviewed and decided by the author, who is responsible for the content and for any errors. Bibliographic details are to be verified against published sources before reliance.

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*A note on the standing of this paper*

*This is a short paper and it adds one thing to work already done. A companion paper treats the gift at length and settles most of what is said here about what a gift is; two further companion papers treat knowledge among parties that run different procedures for settling what is so. What is new here is a reading of the sequence by which a gift comes to matter, and in particular of the step at which the receiving party's own determination is laid down and becomes the ground on which it construes what comes next.*

*The figures are illustrations of a model I wrote, and they are not evidence. The model has three variables and a handful of constants that I chose. It was built to see whether the sequence described in the prose can be made to run at all, and it can; whether anything resembling it runs in a diplomatic relation is a question the paper does not address and could not settle with material of this kind. Where a figure is discussed, the text says what the figure shows and stops there.*

*I would be glad to be shown wrong on three points. The alteration of a rule of interpretation may be reached directly by an act, in which case the mediated route described here is one option among others in place of the characteristic one. A single crossing may suffice to move the slower variable, in which case the account of why the practice is repeated falls. And an explanation may in fact repair a gift that has gone wrong, in which case Section 9 is mistaken about the deposit.*

*The vocabulary is largely inherited and Section 2 says from where. Mauss, Bourdieu, Godelier and those who follow them are the ground on which the companion treatment of the gift stands, and this paper stands on that treatment.*

*Corrections and objections are welcome at the address on the title page.*

## 1 Introduction

This paper concerns the sequence by which a gift given between parties comes to matter to what they know of one another. Its objective is to set out that sequence, to identify the step at which the receiving party's own determination is laid down, and to draw three consequences from the position of that step. The method is to state what is carried over from the companion papers, to describe the sequence, and to illustrate each consequence with a model built for the purpose and offered as an illustration.

The subject has been treated at length in a companion paper, and most of what follows about the gift is settled there (Huang, 2026a). That treatment holds that the gift creates a relation beyond exchange, which it inherits from the anthropological literature and does not claim; that the received explanations of the bond, by obligation and by the transmission of a symbolic content, each presuppose something the society of states does not supply; that the constitutive act lies in the reading of the recipient that precedes the giving and determines the form of what is given; and that a gift opens a position at which the recipient may act back. Two further companion papers treat knowledge among parties that run different procedures for settling what is so, representing the passage of a claim as a material event carrying no content together with an operation the receiving party performs on its own current state (Huang, 2026b,c).

What this paper adds is narrow and concerns a step the companion treatments pass over. A gift arrives and is construed. What the receiving party makes of it is a determination of that party's own system, produced under its own procedures from the state it already occupies. That determination does not remain where it was made. It is laid down in the context against which the receiving party will construe what arrives next, and it is through that deposit, and not through the arrival, that the terms of the relation may come to be different.

The distinction is worth stating plainly because it is easy to lose. It would be natural to say that a gift changes how the other party will interpret. On the account offered here it does not, at least not in the way that phrase suggests. A gift enters a system that already has a rule of interpretation, and it is construed under that rule. The rule is reached only through what the construal produced, so the alteration is mediated by the receiving party's own work and is no effect of the event. A party may compose a gift with great care and reach nothing, and a party may compose one carelessly and alter a great deal, because what is altered is settled at the far end.

Three consequences follow, and each occupies a short section below.

The first concerns accumulation. If the terms of a relation are reached through a deposit, and if the deposit is left by a determination that decays, then a single crossing moves a state and the terms return to where they were. A practice sustained over time is a different matter. This offers a reason for something the received accounts of the gift describe and explain other-

wise: that giving is repeated, ritualised, and expected to continue, which the anthropological tradition explains through obligation and which appears here as a condition of reaching the slower variable at all.

The second concerns the interval. That an immediate return destroys a gift is recorded in the literature and has two explanations already, one holding the interval to be a device by which an exchange conceals itself, the other holding it to be the time in which the recipient composes a bid of its own (Bourdieu, 1977; Huang, 2026a). A third is available on the present account and is compatible with the second. A return offered before the receiving system has relaxed is composed largely of what the giver has just supplied, so the giver can forecast it and learns little from it. The interval that matters is therefore of the order of the time the receiving system takes to relax.

The third concerns repair. A gift that has gone wrong produces a determination at the receiving end, and the ordinary remedy is to explain. The explanation arrives as a later event and is construed against a context in which the first determination has already been laid down. Explaining a gift that has gone wrong is accordingly an operation performed under conditions the gift itself established, and the account gives a reason to expect it to fail.

Two smaller observations support these and are treated in one section. A gift asserts nothing that could be substantiated, so it conveys at no cost to the capacity that a party must draw upon in order to be checked, and what it can convey is accordingly what no evidence would establish. And a gift given and received is a mutual admission requiring no instrument, which is recognition in a form that precedes the institutions ordinarily carrying it.

Three limits are declared at the outset. The model used for the illustrations has three variables and constants the author chose, and it shows that the sequence described can be made to run, establishing nothing about any relation. The account concerns a sequence and not a criterion; the criterion for distinguishing the gift that opens a circulation from the gift that installs a hierarchy belongs to the companion treatment and is not restated here. And the closing section records what a channel asserting nothing cannot support, which is the possibility of being shown to have been wrong.

The exposition proceeds as follows. Section 2 states what is carried from the companion papers and what this paper claims. Sections 3 through 6 set out the sequence, from the composition of a gift to the deposit it leaves. Section 7 treats accumulation and the interval, Section 9 the two ways a rule of interpretation may come to be altered, and Section 10 the gift that has gone wrong. Sections 11 and 12 treat foreseeability and the costs a gift does not incur. Section 13 states the boundaries and Section 14 the questions the account opens.

## 2 Scope and the Results Carried from the Companion Papers

This section fixes what the paper undertakes. Its objective is to record what is carried from the companion papers and argued nowhere here, to state the narrow ground the paper occupies, and to say what the illustrations are and are not.

### *2.1 The Results Carried from the Treatment of the Gift*

Four results are used and not re-derived. That the gift creates a relation beyond exchange is inherited there from the anthropological literature and is not claimed. That the received explanations of the bond presuppose what the society of states does not supply, an order in which an obligation could be characterised as one and a code in which a content could be carried, is established there. That the constitutive act is the reading of the recipient which precedes the giving and determines the form of what is given belongs there. And that a gift opens a position at which the recipient may act back, together with the criterion by which the gift that opens a circulation is distinguished from the gift that installs a hierarchy, is developed there at length (Huang, 2026a).

Nothing in the present paper bears on that criterion. A reader looking for the grounds on which a particular arrangement may be assessed should read the companion treatment; what is offered here concerns the sequence by which any gift comes to matter, whether or not it satisfies the criterion.

### *2.2 The Results Carried from the Papers on Knowledge*

Three results are used from the companion papers on knowledge among parties running different procedures for settling what is so. That what crosses between two parties is a material event carrying structure and no content, and that what the receiving party arrives at is produced by an operation on the state it already occupies, is established there. That the terms of a coupling move on a slower scale than the states, driven by the states and by nothing acting on them directly, is established there. And that a party's construal may depart from what the sending party held while both parties have proceeded correctly, so that no error term is available, is established there (Huang, 2026b,c).

### *2.3 The Ground This Paper Occupies*

What the paper claims is one step and its consequences. The step is the deposit: what the receiving party makes of a gift is laid down in the context against which it construes what comes next, and the terms of the relation are reached through the deposit in place of through the arrival.

Three things follow from confining the claim in this way. The paper takes no position on whether a given gift was well or badly composed, since that is the companion treatment's question. It takes no position on what any party intended, since the deposit is left by the receiving party's own work. And it supplies no procedure for making a gift that will reach the terms of a relation, since Section 9 gives the reason such a procedure is unavailable.

### *2.4 The Standing of the Illustrations*

The figures below are produced by a model written for this paper. It has a fast variable standing for the state of a receiving system, a slower variable standing for the context in which that system's determinations are laid down, and a slower one still standing for the terms of the coupling, together with constants the author chose. A crossing enters as an impulse on the fast variable and nothing in the model acts on the slowest variable directly.

The model was built to see whether the sequence described in the prose can be made to run, and what the figures show is that it can. They establish nothing about any relation between any parties, no quantity in them was estimated from any record, and the shapes of the curves are properties of the constants chosen. Each caption states what its figure displays and the accompanying computation is reported with the paper.

## 3 The Composition of a Gift and the Reading It Requires

This section treats what a giving party does before anything crosses. Its objective is to state the operation, to record where the account of it comes from, and to mark the property of it that the rest of the paper uses.

### *3.1 The Judgment About What Will Be Legible at the Far End*

A party proposing to give must settle what to give, and the settling requires a judgment about what will count as a gift where it arrives. The judgment concerns the recipient: what is needed there, what the recipient's history has made of the object proposed, what would be received as an insult. It is made in advance of any response and it cannot be checked before the giving.

The companion treatment establishes that this judgment is the constitutive part of the act, and that it is the part the received accounts of the gift leave unanalysed, since the obligations they describe all attach to what follows the giving (Huang, 2026a). The present paper takes that as settled.

### *3.2 The Reading That Precedes the Giving*

The judgment rests on a reading of the recipient, and the reading is performed under the giving party's own procedures. A ministry reads through its apparatus: its posts, its archives, its

analysts, its accumulated dealings with the party in question. What it produces is a determination of its own system about a system it does not run.

Two properties of the reading matter below. It is fallible in a way that no care removes, since the reading is of a system whose operations are not available to the reader. And it is prior, so that a gift composed without it is a transfer whose form was fixed by the giver's condition, which the companion treatment identifies as evidence about the giver (Huang, 2026a).

### *3.3 The Gift Composed Within the Giver's Own Terms*

Where the reading is not performed, or is performed and is wrong, the gift is composed within the giver's own terms. The object may be valuable, the occasion may be correct, and the recipient may have no use for either.

The point to carry forward is that this failure requires no ill will and no carelessness. A party may read attentively and read wrongly, and what it then composes may be indistinguishable, at the moment of giving, from what it would have composed had it read well. The difference appears at the far end, and Section 10 treats what happens there.

## 4 The Crossing and the Absence of Content

This section treats what passes between the parties. Its objective is to state what a gift carries, to place the gift among events of its kind, and to record the property that the later sections on cost depend upon.

### *4.1 The Structure That Crosses*

What crosses is an occurrence: an object handed over, a visit paid, a delegation sent, an artefact returned. It has structure, and it carries no content that could be extracted from it by inspection. A gift examined on its own tells its examiner about its material, its provenance and its cost, and little that would settle what the giver meant by it.

The claim that what passes between parties carries structure and no content is established in the companion papers and is not argued here (Huang, 2026b,c). What the gift adds is a case in which the claim needs no argument at all.

### *4.2 The Gift Among Events That Assert Nothing*

A statement invites the reading that its content travels with it, and the companion papers have to work to dislodge that reading. A gift invites it less. Little about a delivered object looks like a proposition, and the supposition that a gift contains its meaning is not one the practice encourages.

The gift is therefore the limiting case for a claim the companion papers make about events in general, and it is worth stating in that form: what is unobvious for a statement is evident for a gift, and the two are events of the same kind.

### *4.3 The Absence of a Process Whose Disclosure Would Substantiate It*

A claim advanced in a statement may be substantiated, and substantiating it requires disclosing the procedure that produced it. A gift advances no such claim. There is no method behind it, no source, and nothing a party could be asked to exhibit in support of it.

Two consequences are drawn later and are noted here. A gift cannot be checked, so a party is not exposed by giving one in the way it is exposed by asserting something (Section 12). And a gift cannot be shown to be false, so no party can be held to have been wrong in giving it (Section 13).

## 5 The Construal at the Receiving End

This section treats what the receiving party does with what has arrived. Its objective is to state the operation, to say where what results belongs, and to record that a divergence here implicates no one in an error.

### *5.1 The Operation Performed on the State the Receiver Occupies*

The arriving occurrence is acted upon by the receiving party's own procedures, working on the state that party already occupies. Its history with the giver, its present circumstances, the categories through which it recognises an occasion, and what it has recently been given by others all enter. The same object arriving at two parties, or at one party in two conditions, is not the same event for them.

The formal statement belongs to the companion papers: construal is an operation on the receiving party's current state parameterised by the occurrence, so the occurrence does not determine the outcome (Huang, 2026b).

### *5.2 The Knowledge That Emerges There and Belongs to the Receiver*

What the receiving party arrives at is a determination of its own system. It may be a judgment about the giver's regard, about the giver's understanding of it, about what the giver expects, or about how the relation now stands. It is knowledge in the ordinary sense that the party will act on it and will treat it as settled, and it belongs to the party that produced it.

The consequence for the vocabulary is worth marking. It is inexact to say that a gift conveys regard, and more exact to say that a gift is an occasion upon which the receiving party may produce a determination about regard. The difference is not a nicety, and Section 9 rests on it.

### 5.3 *The Divergence That Involves No Error*

The determination reached may differ from what the giving party held. Both parties may have proceeded well: the giver read as carefully as it could and composed accordingly, and the receiver ran its own procedures faithfully.

No error term is available in such a case, since each party's determination is answerable to its own procedures and neither ran the other's (Huang, 2026c). A reader looking for a party at fault will find none, and the account offers none.

## 6 The Deposit and the Interpretive Context

This section treats the step the paper is written for. Its objective is to state what becomes of the determination the receiving party produced, to distinguish the deposit from the occurrence that occasioned it, and to record that the gift also enters something the two parties hold between them.

### 6.1 *The Determination Produced and Its Entry into the Context*

The determination does not remain where it was made. It is laid down, and what it is laid down in is the context against which the receiving party will construe what arrives next. That a party once judged its counterpart to have read it well, or to have failed to, is part of the condition in which the next occurrence is received.

> **Claim 6.1. (The deposit).** *What a gift leaves behind is not itself and is what the receiving party made of it. The occurrence is over; the determination remains, and it remains in the position from which later occurrences are construed.*

Two properties of the deposit are used below. It decays, since a determination not renewed loses its place in the context as later material accumulates. And it is not addressed to anyone, since the receiving party did not produce it in order to inform the giver and the giver has no access to it.

### 6.2 *The Context Against Which Later Events Are Construed*

The context so composed is what the receiving party's procedures work with. It is not a record of what the parties agreed and it is not available to inspection from outside, and Section 13 records what follows for anyone hoping to observe it.

What matters here is the order of operations. An occurrence is construed under the rule and the context obtaining when it arrives. What it may alter is the context, through the determination it occasioned, and what the altered context may in turn alter is the rule. The occurrence never reaches the rule directly.

### *6.3 The Mediation That Separates the Event from the Rule*

It would be natural to say that a gift changes how a party interprets. The account here declines that formulation.

> **Claim 6.2. (Mediation).** *A gift is construed under the rule in force when it arrives. Whether the rule comes to be different is settled by what the receiving party made of the gift and by what its own dynamics then do with that deposit. The alteration is mediated by the receiving party's work and is no effect of the giving.*

Three things follow and are taken up separately. A giving party cannot aim at the alteration, since the operation that produces it is not the giving (Section 9). A single occurrence is unlikely to reach the rule, since the deposit decays (Section 7). And a gift that has gone wrong is not undone by explaining it, since the explanation is construed against a context that already holds the first determination (Section 10).

### *6.4 The Structure the Two Parties Now Hold Between Them*

A gift is also on the record. It was given publicly or it was noted, both parties know that it occurred, and each may refer to it. In this respect it differs from a private construal and enters something neither party holds alone.

> **Claim 6.3. (The common structure and the divided deposits).** *A gift enters the structure the parties hold between them, so that both stand in relation to the same occurrence. What each party lays down about it is produced by its own procedures, so the deposits differ. The parties thereafter couple through a structure they share and construe through contexts they do not.*

Claim 6.3 is what makes the sequence a coupling and not a transmission. Each party's later conduct is composed against its own context and is received by the other against a different one, and the two continue in this way. What that gives over a long interval is the subject of Section 7, and the illustration there displays the divergence of the deposits under a shared coupling.

## 7 The Slow Variation of the Relation

This section treats what happens over an interval longer than a single crossing. Its objective is to state why one gift is unlikely to reach the terms of a relation, to give the interval before a return its reading on this account, and to display both in a model built for the purpose.

### *7.1 The Terms of a Coupling and the Scale on Which They Move*

The terms on which two parties construe one another move, and they move slowly. The companion papers represent this by a variable of the coupling that relaxes toward a function of the parties' states, on a scale long compared with the states themselves, and driven by them (Huang, 2026b). Nothing in that representation acts on the coupling directly, which is the formal counterpart of Claim 6.2.

Two consequences follow before any illustration. What reaches the coupling is not an occurrence and is an accumulated condition. And since the deposit decays, a condition that is not renewed does not accumulate.

### *7.2 The Accumulation a Single Crossing Cannot Supply*

> **Claim 7.1. (Accumulation).** *A single crossing moves the receiving party's state and leaves a deposit that decays, so the terms of the coupling move and return. A practice sustained over an interval long enough for the deposits to accumulate is a different case, and it is the case in which the terms may come to be different.*

Claim 7.1 offers a reason for something the literature on the gift records and explains otherwise. Giving is repeated, ritualised, and expected to continue, and the anthropological tradition, in its classical statement, explains the expectation through obligation (Mauss, 1925). On the present account the repetition is also a condition of reaching the slower variable at all, and the two explanations are compatible.

Figure 1 displays the contrast in the model described at Section 2.4.

One feature of the practice run is worth stating, since it is a property of the model that the prose did not anticipate. The state reached by later crossings is higher than that reached by the first, at $1.105$ against $0.500$, because the risen coupling variable amplifies what arrives. A relation that has been giving for some time is, in the model, more strongly affected by each further gift. Whether that is a feature worth having in an account of gifts, or an artefact of the way the coupling was allowed to enter the state equation, is left open at Section 14.

### *7.3 The Interval and the Relaxation of the Receiving System*

That an immediate counter-gift destroys a gift is recorded in the literature. Two explanations are already available: that the interval is a device by which an exchange conceals its own character (Bourdieu, 1977), and that the interval is the time in which the recipient composes a bid of its own (Huang, 2026a).

A third is available here and is compatible with the second. A return offered before the receiving system has relaxed is composed largely of what the giver has just supplied, so the giver

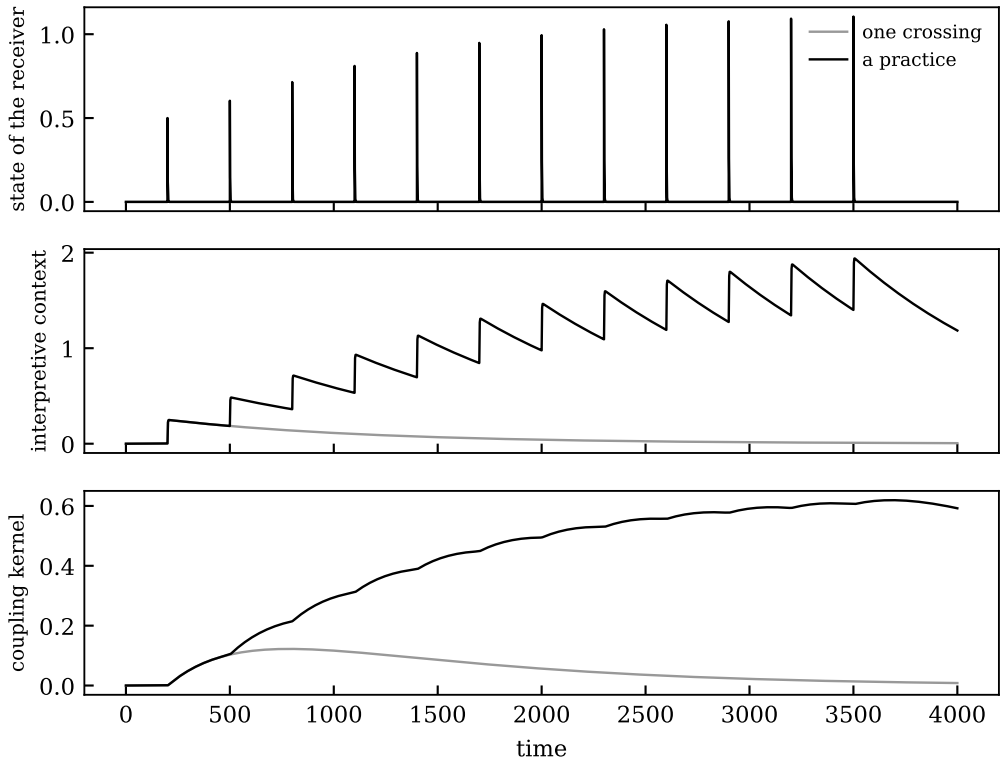


**Figure 1:** One crossing against a sustained practice in the model of Section 2.4. In the single case the state reaches $0.500$, the context reaches $0.248$, and the coupling variable rises to $0.122$ and returns to $0.008$. In the practice of twelve crossings the context reaches $1.941$ and the coupling variable reaches $0.592$ and remains there. The figure displays the behaviour of the model and reports nothing about any relation.

can forecast it. A return offered later is composed from the receiving party's own condition, and what the giver cannot forecast is what the giver learns from.

> **Claim 7.2.** (**The interval**). *The interval that matters before a return is of the order of the time the receiving system takes to relax. Shorter than that, the return is largely the giver's own contribution arriving back, and the giver learns little from it.*

### *7.4 The Divergence of the Deposits Under a Shared Coupling*

Claim 6.3 holds that the parties couple through a structure they share and construe through contexts they do not. Over a long interval the two may come apart, and the model displays a case in which they do.

Figure 3 shows a practice in which the returns are offered at half the amplitude of the gifts. The coupling variable is common to the parties and rises; the two contexts diverge, the

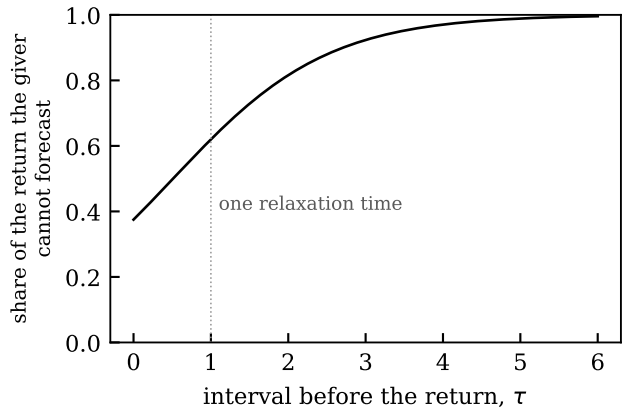


**Figure 2:** The share of a return that the giver cannot forecast, plotted against the interval before it is offered, in a model where the return is composed of a part still driven by what was received and a part generated by the receiver. The share rises from $0.375$ at no delay to $0.996$ at six relaxation times and reaches half its range at $1.29$. The figure displays the behaviour of the model and reports nothing about any relation.

receiving side's standing at $1.821$ against the giving side's $0.783$. What the figure displays is that a shared coupling is consistent with unequal deposits, which is what Claim 6.3 would lead one to expect.

## 8 The Slow Subsystem Considered on Its Own Plane

This section looks at what remains when the fast variable is averaged away. Its objective is to state the result at the level of a class of systems in place of at the level of any interpretation of the variables, to show that the number of resting conditions turns on the shape of one response, to treat the case of two accumulating variables sharing one slower one, and to record both what the account does not determine and what the axes may not be taken to mean.

### *8.1 The Reduction and the Names the Variables Are Not Given*

Under a practice sustained at a steady rate the fast variable fluctuates about a mean and two slower ones remain. Write $u$ for the variable that accumulates what the fast one delivers and decays, and $v$ for the slower variable that relaxes toward a function of $u$ and that sets the rate at which $u$ is driven.

The letters are used deliberately. It is natural to read $u$ as a party's interpretive context and $v$ as the terms of the coupling, and the prose of Sections 6 and 7 invites that reading. The reading is an interpretation laid over the variables and is no part of what follows. Every statement below is a statement about a pair of coupled quantities, and a reader who declines the interpretation loses none of it.

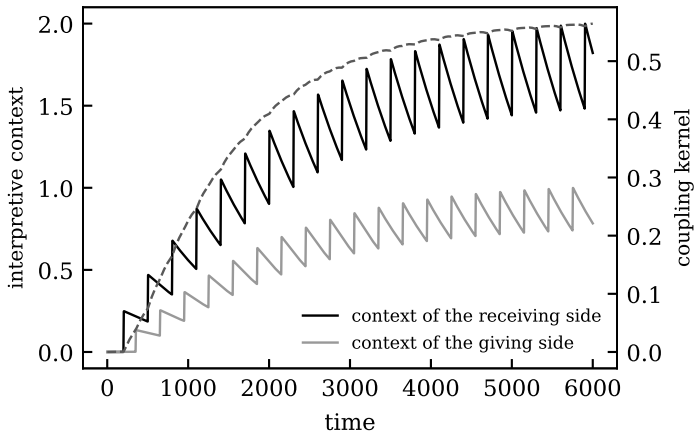


**Figure 3:** A practice in which returns are offered at half the amplitude of the gifts. The coupling variable, shown dashed against the right axis, rises to $0.564$ and is common to the parties. The contexts diverge, reaching $1.821$ on the receiving side and $0.783$ on the giving side. The figure displays the behaviour of the model and reports nothing about any relation.

### *8.2 The Class of Systems the Result Concerns*

The results hold of any pair in which $u$ accumulates a driven input whose rate rises with $v$ and decays otherwise, and $v$ relaxes toward a monotone increasing function of $u$ bounded above. The resting conditions of such a pair are the points at which the two curves meet: the curve on which $v$ is at rest, which is that increasing function, and the curve on which $u$ is at rest, which rises with $v$ because the drive does.

Nothing in the class fixes the shape of the increasing function, and the number of meetings turns on it.

### *8.3 The Number of Resting Conditions and the Shape That Fixes It*

Where the function rises steeply at small $u$ and then saturates, it lies above the other curve at small values and below at large ones, and the two meet once. In the model of Figure 4 the meeting is at $u = 1.660$ and $v = 0.624$, and it is stable.

Where the function rises weakly at small $u$ and steeply past some magnitude, it begins below the other curve, rises above it, and falls below again, and the two meet three times. In the model the meetings are at $(0.100, 0.000)$, at $(1.131, 0.413)$ and at $(2.575, 0.990)$, of which the first and third are stable and the second is not.

### *8.4 The Reading This Gives Accumulation*

Claim 7.1 holds that a single crossing moves the fast variable and returns, while a sustained practice may move the slower one. Under the second shape that claim acquires a sharper form:

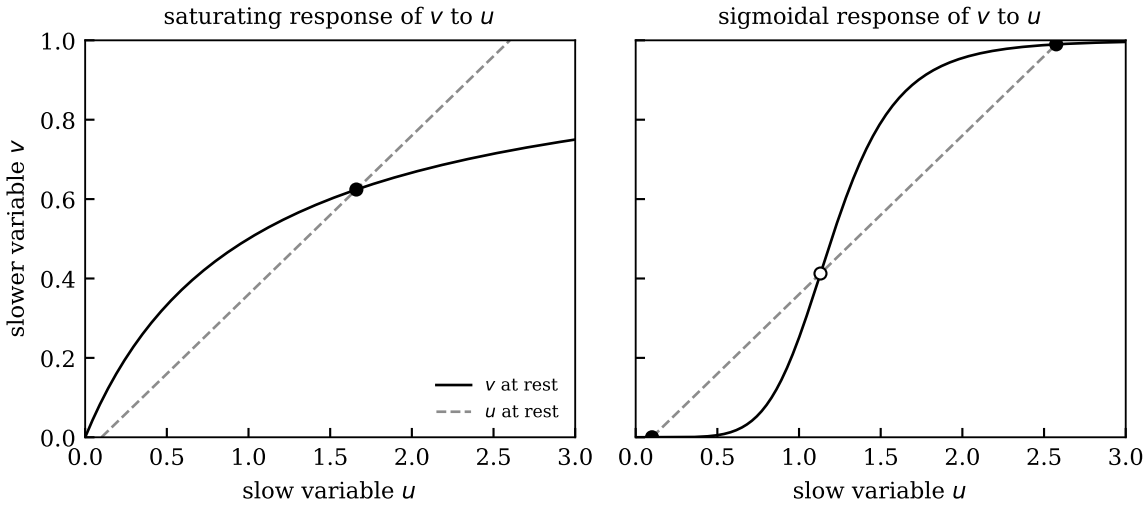


**Figure 4:** The slow pair on its own plane, under two shapes of the response of $v$ to $u$. The solid curve marks where $v$ is at rest and the dashed line where $u$ is at rest; filled circles mark stable meetings and the open circle an unstable one; the thin curves are trajectories. On the left there is one meeting, at $(1.660, 0.624)$. On the right there are three, at $(0.100, 0.000)$, $(1.131, 0.413)$ and $(2.575, 0.990)$. The axes carry no interpretation and the figure displays the behaviour of the model.

what a practice must do is carry $u$ past the middle meeting, and a practice that stops short of it returns the pair to where it began. The difference between a relation whose terms moved and one whose terms did not would then be a difference of basin in place of a difference of degree.

Two cautions belong here. The two illustrations in this paper use different constants and their numbers are not comparable with one another; what carries between them is the shape of the argument. And the middle meeting exists only under the second shape, which the next subsections treat.

### *8.5 The Separate Accumulations of the Two Parties*

The pair above collapses the two parties into one accumulating variable. Where each party accumulates its own, the natural coordinates are the sum and the difference, and the difference has dynamics of its own.

Writing $u_A$ and $u_B$ for the two, each driven at its own rate and each sharing the same $v$, the difference $d = u_A - u_B$ decays at the same rate as each and is driven by the difference of the two rates, amplified by the same factor $v$ enters the drive through. Its resting value is therefore proportional to $(\beta + v)$, where $\beta$ is the drive present when $v$ vanishes.

> **Claim 8.1. (The amplification of a difference).** *In a pair of accumulating variables sharing one slower variable, the resting difference between them is proportional to the drive, and the drive rises with the slower variable. A given inequality in what the two receive*

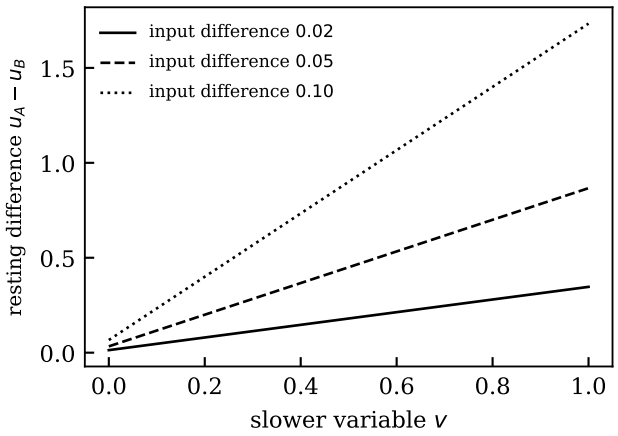


**Figure 5:** The resting difference between two accumulating variables, plotted against the slower variable they share, for three magnitudes of the difference in what they receive. The relation is linear in each case. In this model the resting difference at $v = 1$ exceeds that at $v = 0$ by a factor of $26$, which is the ratio $(\beta + 1)/\beta$ for the baseline $\beta = 0.04$ chosen here; the factor is a property of that choice and the linear rise is not.

*therefore produces a larger resting difference when the slower variable stands high than when it stands low.*

The consequence for the reading offered in this paper is worth stating and is offered as a reading. If $v$ is taken as the terms of a coupling and $u_A$ and $u_B$ as what each party has laid down, then a closer relation does not even out an inequality in giving and enlarges what that inequality leaves behind. Figure 3 displayed a case of that divergence and this subsection gives its source.

### *8.6 The Features the Account Does Not Determine*

**Claim 8.2. (What is left open).** *Whether the pair admits one resting condition or several turns on the shape of one response, and the account supplies no ground for settling that shape. The magnitude by which a difference is amplified turns on a baseline, and the account supplies no ground for settling that either.*

Three cautions follow and each is directed at a way the section might be misread. The threshold in Figure 4 is not a finding, since the second shape was chosen to produce it and the first was chosen to produce its absence. The factor of $26$ in Figure 5 is not a finding, since it follows from a baseline the author chose, while the linear rise follows from the form of the equations and does not. And the letters $u$ and $v$ carry no meaning that the equations do not supply, so a reader who has been reading them as a context and a coupling should treat the results as holding of the equations and the interpretation as a separate matter.

What the two shapes differ in predicting is nonetheless worth recording, since the difference is one a record might settle. Under the first, relations differ in degree and every sustained practice arrives at the same terms. Under the second they fall into kinds, and a practice that stops short leaves nothing behind. Section 14 states what would distinguish them.

## 9 The Routes by Which a Rule May Be Altered

This section distinguishes two ways in which the rule under which a party construes may come to be different. Its objective is to place the gift on one of them, to say what occupies the other, and to record what follows for a party that would like to arrange the alteration.

### *9.1 The Instrument Acting on a Coefficient Directly*

A party's conditions of admission may be altered by agreement. A treaty may redefine what shall be treated as sufficient evidence, a standard may specify which bodies are competent to certify, an amendment may declare a question settled. In each the alteration is the content of the act and takes effect because the act was performed.

The companion papers represent this as an entry into another system that acts upon a coefficient of its dynamics in place of upon its state (Huang, 2026b). Two features distinguish it. It is available to design, since the parties may compose the instrument to produce the alteration they intend. And it is recorded, since the instrument exists and its terms are published.

### *9.2 The Gift Acting Through What the Receiver Makes of It*

A gift takes the other route. It enters as an occurrence, it is construed under the rule in force, and what it may alter is the context, through Claim 6.1, and the rule only through the context, through Claim 6.2.

> **Claim 9.1.** (**The two routes**). *A rule of construal may be altered directly by an instrument whose content is the alteration, or indirectly through what a party made of what it received. The first takes effect because an act was performed; the second takes effect because a party's own procedures produced something and its own dynamics carried the result.*

### *9.3 The Route That Is Unavailable to Design*

The second route cannot be aimed at, and the reason is in Claim 9.1 rather than in any difficulty of execution. What produces the alteration is an operation the giving party does not perform and cannot inspect. A party may compose with care, and what its counterpart makes of the composition is settled elsewhere.

Two things follow and are worth separating. A party may reasonably compose a gift in the hope that something is deposited, and nothing here holds that hope to be irrational; what it may not do is specify what will be. And the asymmetry between what may be audited and what may be specified, established in the companion treatment for the criterion of a good gift (Huang, 2026a), recurs here for the mechanism: an examiner may find, after the fact, that a relation's terms moved, and no party could have arranged that they would.

## 10 The Wrong Gift and the Limits of Explanation

This section treats the case in which a gift is received badly and the giving party attempts to repair it. Its objective is to say what the receiving party laid down, why the ordinary remedy is poorly placed to remove it, and what would be required in its place.

### *10.1 The Determination That the Reading Was Not Performed*

A gift composed within the giver's own terms arrives and is construed. What the receiving party is likely to produce is not a judgment about the object and is a judgment about the giver: that the giver did not know what would be wanted here, or did not trouble to find out, or knew and disregarded it.

The companion treatment holds that the wrong gift is evidence about the giver and demonstrates that the reading was not performed (Huang, 2026a). The present account adds where that evidence goes. It is laid down in the receiving party's context under Claim 6.1, and it is thereafter part of the condition in which later occurrences are received.

### *10.2 The Explanation Construed Against the Deposit*

The ordinary remedy is to explain: to say what was intended, to describe the care that was taken, to name the constraint under which the composition was made.

An explanation is a later occurrence, and it is construed under the rule and the context obtaining when it arrives. That context now holds a determination about the giver's reading. An account of the giver's intentions is exactly the kind of material that determination bears upon, so the explanation is received by a party already holding a view about how much weight to give the giver's account of itself.

> **Claim 10.1. (The limits of explanation).** *An explanation offered after a gift has gone wrong is construed against the deposit the gift occasioned. Where that deposit concerns the giver's reading of the recipient, the explanation is material of precisely the kind the deposit qualifies, so it is poorly placed to remove it.*

The claim is about placement and not about impossibility. An explanation may be received well, particularly where the deposit was slight or where much else in the context tells against it. What the account holds is that the remedy operates under conditions the thing it would remedy established, which is a reason to expect it to work less often than a party offering it would suppose.

### *10.3 The Correction That Would Have to Be Another Gift*

If the deposit is what stands in the way, then what would displace it is another determination, produced by the receiving party's own procedures and laid down beside the first. Occasions for such determinations are occurrences, and an occurrence composed for that purpose is another gift.

Two qualifications belong with this. It is not offered as advice, since Section 9 holds that what a further occurrence will occasion cannot be specified, and a gift composed in order to repair a gift is exposed to the same uncertainty as the first. And a party that has misread once has given some reason to doubt that it will read better a second time, so the composition is made under a handicap the first was not.

## 11 Foreseeability and the Return That Informs Nobody

This section treats a criterion already established in the companion treatment and gives it a second reading. Its objective is to state the criterion, to state the informational condition beside it, and to say why the two coincide on the present account.

### *11.1 The Return Already Composed by the Giver*

The companion treatment holds that a gift whose return could have been forecast by the giver opened no position from which the recipient might exceed it, and that foreseeability is accordingly the signature of a closed arrangement (Huang, 2026a). What returned in such a case was composed in advance by the party who gave.

### *11.2 The Generativity Condition and the Informational Condition*

An informational condition may be stated beside it. A return that the giver could have forecast tells the giver nothing it did not already hold, and a return the giver could not have forecast is the only kind from which the giver learns.

> **Claim 11.1. (The coincidence).** *On the present account the two conditions are satisfied together. A return composed from the receiving party's own condition is both the return that could not have been forecast and the return from which the giver learns; a return composed*

*of what the giver supplied is neither. The gift that generates nothing is the gift that informs nobody.*

The coincidence is not a definition and is a consequence of the sequence. What the giver learns from is what the receiving party contributed, and what the receiving party contributed is what the giver did not supply. The two conditions therefore track one quantity, which is the share of a return that did not come from the giver, and Figure 2 displays that share as a function of the interval.

### *11.3 The Reading This Gives the Interval*

Section 7 treats the interval as the time the receiving system takes to relax. The present section states what the interval buys. A return offered too soon is not merely premature in a matter of etiquette; it is a return the giver could have written, and a party that receives one has learned nothing about the party that sent it.

## 12 The Budget a Gift Leaves Untouched and the Standing It Confers

This section treats two properties of the gift that follow from Section 4 and support the account without being results of it. Its objective is to state each, to mark what each is inherited from, and to keep both subordinate to the sequence.

### *12.1 The Claim That Cannot Be Substantiated*

Substantiating a claim requires disclosing the procedure that produced it, and the companion papers represent the disclosure as a draw upon a capacity that does not renew, so that a party's ability to be checked is spent as it is used (Huang, 2026b). A gift advances no claim of that kind, so giving one draws on nothing of that capacity.

Two observations follow and are offered as observations. A gift is available to a party that cannot afford to substantiate, which is a condition common in the setting the companion papers treat. And what a gift may occasion a determination about is largely what no procedure would establish in any case: regard, attention, the willingness to continue. The channel and the content are suited to one another, and the suiting is a consequence of the same property.

### *12.2 The Record Entered Beside a Description It Does Not Refine*

A gift is noted. Protocol records it, the press reports it, and both parties may refer to it afterwards. What it does not do is add any distinction to whatever description the parties hold in common, since it states nothing that a shared description could hold.

The companion papers identify a device with that structure, in which a party places something on a record without the shared description being made finer, and treat it as the one device that escapes a trade-off those papers establish (Huang, 2026b,c). A gift has the same structure in a form that predates the documentary instruments, and the resemblance is recorded here and not developed.

### *12.3 The Mutual Admission That Requires No Instrument*

A gift offered and received is an act of each party toward the other that neither would ordinarily perform toward a party it did not acknowledge. The acknowledgement is mutual, it is public, and it rests on no instrument.

The companion papers treat the admission of another party's outputs as a relation granted for classes of output and administered, where it is administered at all, by instruments (Huang, 2026b). What a gift supplies is thinner and earlier: not the admission of a party's procedures, and the acknowledgement that there is a party there to be addressed.

## 13 The Boundaries of the Undertaking

This section states the boundaries within which the account holds. Each is given as a property of the undertaking together with what would have to be established for it to be moved.

### *13.1 The Party Who Cannot Be Shown to Have Been Wrong*

A gift advances no claim, so no claim of its can be false. What the receiving party produces is a determination of its own system, answerable to its own procedures, so it cannot be checked against what the giver held. The consequence, on the account offered here, is that a gift is a channel on which a party can seldom be shown to have been wrong.

The consequence cuts against the account's own subject and is stated here for that reason. The same property that makes the gift cheap in the sense of Section 12 makes it unaccountable, and the cheapness and the unaccountability have one source. A party that wished to convey something for which it could not be held answerable would choose exactly this channel, and nothing in the account distinguishes such a party from any other.

### *13.2 The Standing of the Illustrations*

The model has three variables and constants the author chose. It shows that the sequence described in the prose can be made to run, and it shows nothing else. No quantity in it was estimated from any record, the shapes of the curves are properties of the constants, and a reader who chose other constants would obtain other shapes.

Moving this boundary requires observations of a kind the account itself says are unavailable. What would have to be observed is a party's interpretive context, which Section 6 holds to be internal to that party and not addressed to anyone.

### *13.3 The Individuation of a Party and the Apparatus That Reads*

The account speaks of a party reading, construing, and laying down a determination. A state does none of these in its own person, and what performs them is an apparatus of posts, archives, analysts and offices, staffed by people who are replaced.

Whether the transposition from a person to such an apparatus is legitimate is a question the companion treatment of the gift raises and leaves open (Huang, 2026a), and it is left open here on the same terms. What may be said is that the sequence described requires of a party only that it have procedures, a state those procedures work on, and something in which a determination may be laid down, and that an apparatus of the kind described appears to have all three.

### *13.4 The Questions Lying Outside the Account*

Three questions are outside it. Whether a given gift was well or badly composed belongs to the criterion in the companion treatment and is not touched here. Whether the terms of a relation ought to move is a normative question and the account supplies no answer, since it describes a sequence and recommends nothing. And what a party owes another in the composing of a gift is likewise outside, though Section 14 records it as worth asking.

## 14 Questions Opened by the Account

This account identifies a step that the treatments of the gift it builds on pass over: the determination the receiving party produces is laid down in the context against which it construes what comes next, and the terms of a relation are reached through that deposit. If the step is real, the following questions arise, and the account answers none of them.

**Q0.** Claim 8.2 holds that the number of resting conditions turns on the shape of one response and that the account cannot settle it. What in a record would distinguish a relation whose terms move by degrees from one whose terms move only past a threshold?

**Q1.** Claim 6.2 holds that a gift reaches the rule of construal only through the deposit. Are there acts that reach it directly without being instruments in the sense of Section 9, and what would distinguish them?

**Q2.** Claim 7.1 holds that a single crossing moves a state and returns. Are there crossings that move the terms of a relation at once, and if so what distinguishes them from the rest?

**Q3.** In the model of Section 2.4 the state reached by later crossings exceeds that reached by the first, since the risen coupling amplifies what arrives. Is a relation that has been giving for some time in fact more strongly affected by each further gift, or is the feature an artefact of letting the coupling enter the state equation?

**Q4.** Claim 10.1 holds that an explanation is construed against the deposit a wrong gift occasioned. Under what conditions is an explanation nonetheless received well, and can those conditions be identified before it is offered?

**Q5.** Claim 11.1 holds that the generativity condition and the informational condition are satisfied together. Does the coincidence survive where the receiving party's contribution is itself predictable to the giver for reasons unconnected with the gift?

**Q6.** Claim 6.3 holds that the parties couple through a structure they share and construe through contexts they do not. What accumulates in the shared structure over a long practice, and is it available to either party in a form the other could contest?

**Q7.** Section 13 holds that a gift is a channel on which no party can be shown to have been wrong. Are there practices by which parties hold one another to account for gifts, and what do they operate on if not on a claim?

**Q8.** Section 3 holds that a party may read attentively and read wrongly, and that the two compositions are indistinguishable at the moment of giving. Is the difference recoverable afterwards from anything but the reception?

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