

Positive No-Ground

The Common and the Locus of
Answerability

Alessio Montaruli

INSTITUTE FOR ETHICAL ONTOLOGY

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Locus of Answerability

ALESSIO MONTARULI

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Positive No-Ground: The Common and the Locus of Answerability

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A Leone



Kition, Larnaca. The excavation, and above it the inhabited common that carries on regardless. What a ground is asked to do, and does not.

Photograph by the author.

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On the Relation to the Trilogy

This book is an autonomous monograph written after the dialogue trilogy **Koinonia**, **No Ground**, and **The Locus**, in which many of its central problems were first explored through figures, scenes, and conversations. **Koinonia: A Phenomenology of Being-With**, the first volume, is publicly available as an independent monograph through KiTalent Research. The present book does not continue that literary sequence as a fourth phenomenological dialogue. Rather, it reconstructs in systematic form the philosophical doctrine that emerged from it: the relation among the common, no-ground, the finite locus, and answerability. It also carries that doctrine further by making explicit its modal movement¹ — from the possibilising necessitation of the common field to the conditional singularising necessarisation of an answerable locus when substitution can go no further.

Selected figures and formulations from all three dialogue volumes are rewritten here in the monograph's systematic register and used as philosophical tests. From **Koinonia**, the withheld and failed greetings give phenomenal access to common possibility and to the internal borders among its determinate articulations. From **No Ground**, a compressed excavation discloses the demanded office of final ground and the positive work of keeping; the diagnostic of same-hours distinguishes recurrent inhabitation from persistence and maintenance; and a guarded eventfulness horizon clarifies giving and withdrawal without installing a hidden Event. From **The Locus**, the lamp clarifies common routing before actual direction, the joining of reaching and non-forwardability clarifies the topology of localisation, and engineered reception names a design-level problem in synthetic address. Local notes identify the original chapters or sections. These adaptations require no familiarity with their dialogical settings, and no prior reading of the trilogy is required. Where the trilogy's vocabulary diverges from this book's — notably in its finer stratification of the shared field and in the earlier use of "fold" — the divergence is translated or marked where it matters rather than imported as a second ontology.

¹ In this volume, modal language concerns possibility and necessity within the alethic-attributive grammar developed below. It does not name a general way in which being obtains. See "Note on Terminology Across Volumes."

Introduction: The Constituted Answerer

1. The puzzle

Nothing in me that answers was made by me. The language in which an accusation reaches me is not mine; I inherited it, as I inherited the practices that make accusation, apology, promise, and debt intelligible in the first place. The roles through which others encounter me — son, colleague, signatory, neighbour, holder of an office — came off a public shelf, and most of them were fastened to me before I could refuse them or after processes I did not control. The history that gives a demand its weight was written by others. Even my name, the handle by which I can be called out of a crowd, is the most second-hand thing I own: worn before me, worn beside me by others, attached to me by another's mouth.

And yet, when the demand arrives — What did you do? Is this your word? Will you repair it? — none of this inheritance can answer in my place. The language cannot apologise. The custom cannot confess. The role cannot own the deed. The institution can answer in its own register, through procedures and records and authorised representatives, but this answering does not produce an additional lived answerer standing behind the procedures. And no other person, however close, however willing, can take over the position of answer. Another can pay my debt; no one can make my acknowledgment have been theirs.

This is the puzzle. A being constituted through and through by what is common is nevertheless, at certain moments, the finite point at which a deed or present duty becomes non-forwardably attributable and an answer comes due. Two recurrent strategies each preserve one half of the phenomenon by weakening the other. A strategy of foundational subjectivity — the self-grounding subject as origin of its deeds — secures the apparent self-sufficiency of the answerer at the cost of the constitution: it must place the answerer somewhere before or beneath the shared world, and no such standpoint has survived inspection. A strategy of social reduction — meaning those theories in which the person is exhaustively identified with the intersection of roles, positions, and discursive locations — secures the constitution at the cost of the answerer: if the person is nothing but the intersection, responsibility is always in principle forwardable to the formation, the structure, the circumstances. The typology is an analytic device, not a history; the space between the two strategies is populated, and several of its occupants — narrative, recognitional, second-personal, responsive — are engaged in detail in the chapters. What the device isolates is the pressure both halves of the phenomenon exert on any account that takes both seriously.

This book proposes an account built to take both seriously. The person is neither the ground of the deed nor a fiction projected onto a bundle of positions. In personal answerability, the person is the finite locus at which a shared-worldly deed or present duty becomes non-forwardably attributable. Institutions may also bear attribution through organised continuity, records, procedures, and authorised organs; that functional possibility does not turn them into additional lived subjects. Personal and institutional loci can share an attributive function without sharing one phenomenological mode of being. A ground bears from beneath; a locus receives from before.

Positive no-ground names the structure that becomes visible once that distinction is held consistently. It does not turn groundlessness into a new ground, nor does it celebrate the absence of support. It names two asymmetrical modal movements. First, externality to the common cannot become a possible position at all: no participant first stands outside language, history, roles, and shared intelligibility in order to choose or originate them. The necessity of the common is therefore possibilising – it necessitates the medium while leaving plural routes open within it. Second, where address, claimant-standing², and attribution or present duty hold, the common's real and necessary substitutive function reaches a limit: it may continue to carry, explain, and mediate the answer, but it can no longer remain its final terminus. Attribution becomes conditionally non-forwardable at a finite locus, while the content of the answer remains open. Positive no-ground is therefore constitution without absolution: the common makes action possible without becoming the final answerer for its situated enactments.

² Where *standing* is used technically in this volume, it means claimant-standing: the position from which a demand may be pressed. It remains distinct from legitimacy, validity, authority, and active response-capacity.

The task of the book is to earn that distinction – phenomenologically, exegetically, and against the strongest available objections – and to show what follows from it for ethics, for the history of philosophy, and for the ordinary alternation between anonymous common life and singular answerability in which finite existence actually runs.

2. The point of departure in Being and Time

The argument begins from a problem internal to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, and it is important to state that problem precisely, because a crude version of it has been refuted many times.

The crude version says that Heidegger ignores other people. He does not. Being-with (*Mitsein*) is established as equiprimordial with being-in-the-world – even Dasein's being-alone is being-with [SZ §26, H117–120]; the shared intelligibility of equipment, the publicness of significance, solicitude (*Fürsorge*) in its two extreme positive modes [H122], the everyday self as the they-self [SZ §27, H128], and the co-historicity of a generation [SZ §74, H384–385] are all analysed. Whatever the existential analytic lacks, it is not the recognition that Dasein's world is a with-world.

The defensible claim is narrower and, I will argue, more consequential. Heidegger establishes being-with, and he establishes forms of existential non-substitutability and singularisation: being-toward-death reveals the non-substitutability of my ownmost possibility [SZ §47, H240; §50, H250]; conscience calls Dasein back from the they, in a silent call whose caller has no name [SZ §§56–57, H273–275]; resoluteness discloses the Situation as the concrete “there” that Dasein takes over to be as its own, essentially closed to the they [SZ §60, H299–300]. This existential singularisation is not yet the answerable singularisation later analysed in this book: it discloses finite ownmostness without yet localising attribution before another. Between Heidegger’s two achievements — constitutive being-with and reflexive singularisation — a relation goes underdescribed. The analytic does not fully articulate how the shared world becomes **this person’s Situation before another**. The other appears in the analytic as co-user of equipment, as member of the public, as the one for whom I leap in or ahead, as the deceased with whom the survivors still dwell [SZ §47, H238]. What the analytic does not develop is the other in the second person: the one before whom something can become mine to answer for. Heidegger himself, in the analysis of *Schuldigsein*, explicitly sets aside guilt as owing-something-to-another — a mere mode of concerned being-with — in order to reach an ontologically prior being-guilty [SZ §58, H281–283]; my contention is that what is thereby set aside is not a mere ontic derivative but a structure the analytic needs and does not derive, within the argument as written, from being-toward-death and conscience alone.

The constructive thesis that fills this gap can be stated in one sentence — in its defended, indexed form. Chapter 4 establishes its local phenomenology; Chapter 11 will gather the full movement into an ethical ontology and a method:

Where something comes due, the Situation is the shared world disclosed under singular address.

Whether every genuine Situation bears an implicit structure of answerability is a further conjecture the book leaves open and the argument does not require. More fully: where something comes due, a Situation is a shared-worldly nexus of inherited meanings, practices, roles, debts, relations, and possibilities that becomes mine to take up because I am reached within it — reached in the second person, from a standing the common makes intelligible — and cannot simply forward the answering elsewhere. Three structural moments cooperate and must not be collapsed into one another. The common supplies the route in: the language in which the demand can be formulated, the practices in which the deed is intelligible, the roles through which the parties encounter one another, the institutions through which claims can be carried. Direction belongs irreducibly to the addressive relation: the second-personal vector without which responsibility collapses into self-relation, into conscience before myself alone. It may arise in a present encounter, survive the speaker's absence, or be carried through persons, institutions, records, and inherited claimant-positions without becoming a property of impersonal form as such. The locus is where the route may end: the determinate home at which attribution becomes non-forwardable when address, standing, and attribution or present duty hold—personal or institutional in the regions examined here. In personal cases, another may perform, represent, or mediate without making this person's answer theirs; in institutional cases, organised continuity may bear attribution without constituting a second lived subject. The common supplies the route in; it supplies no route out.

3. Three contributions

The book makes three connected claims, and it is worth stating at the outset why they are one argument and not three.

First, a systematic contribution. The reconstruction just sketched is offered as a complement to the existential analytic — not a new existential added to the list, but the articulation of the addressive relation connecting being-with, the they, and the Situation. The contribution must be measured honestly, and the measure has four marks. What is inherited is inherited openly: that being-with is constitutive and not an addition; that everyday intelligibility is publicly articulated; that mineness persists within shared existence and is negotiated there; that responsibility outruns the self-grounding subject; that answerability has a first-personal structure — these are established research fields, and this book claims none of them as discoveries. What is anticipated has its predecessors named where each is nearest: Nancy’s radicalisation of the **with**, and Theunissen’s diagnosis of the dialogical gap; McMullin’s grounding of second-personal respect in the other’s temporal self-constitution; Haar’s account of everydayness as a field of indefinite substitution; Crowell’s derivation of answerability from a call that is Dasein’s own; Raffoul’s responsibility without sovereign origin — engaged at length in Chapters 2 through 4, with the practice readings and the modal interpretations acknowledged in their places.

Klaus Held is an especially close predecessor. His phenomenology of the political world distinguishes the shared openness in which political plurality can appear from the finite citizens who act, speak, and render accounts within it, refusing to identify political community with a single willing subject. **Koinonia** carried this structure beneath the already instituted polis and any one determinate articulated common field to the relational possibility disclosed by the withheld and failed greeting. In the broader vocabulary of the present book, that possibility is not outside the common: it names a condition of the historically articulated routes through which address can arrive. The present inquiry takes the further step from addressive possibility to standing, attribution, and the loci—personal and institutional in the cases established here—at which answers become non-forwardable.³

³ Klaus Held, **Phänomenologie der politischen Welt**, Neue Studien zur Phänomenologie 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010); Held, “Towards a Phenomenology of the Political World,” in **The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology**, ed. Dan Zahavi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 442–459. The English chapter is the accessible point of entry; the German monograph is the fuller source. **Koinonia** develops the greeting figures as disclosing a condition of possibility of the already instituted political scene, not as a form of answerability ranked “deeper” or “truer” than Held’s.

What the book argues is a dependency. Every finite taking-up is non-identical as this occurrence, but finite non-identity is not yet answerable singularisation. The shared field of real substitution discloses the worldly limit-function of mineness; singular address, standing, and attribution transform that finite non-identity into a locus of answerability—personal or institutional in the cases developed here—at which an answer becomes non-forwardable. This is a three-stage architecture whose components are inherited and whose ordered relation, so far as the engaged literature shows, has not been joined in this form. What is built beyond the reconstruction is claimed as construction, not discovery: the claimant's standing, deed-relative attribution, the withdrawal of the common from the places it carries, the institutional locus, non-forwardability — the book's own phenomenology of answerability, presented as such. Chapter 11 gathers these components into a grammar of common possibility, finite taking-up, folding, conditional localisation, answer, and return, and formulates their recurrent diagnostic use as a method. The short version of the difference from the nearest neighbours remains what the chapters execute: none of them makes the Situation itself the site of the analysis, and none runs the refusal of ground **symmetrically** — against the subject, the common, and the other alike — while keeping the answerer.⁴

⁴ The systematic neighbourhood spans Nancy and McMullin on constitutive shared existence, Held on political openness and the rendering of an account, Haar on everyday substitution, Crowell on normativity and answerability, Raffoul and Schürmann on responsibility and action without final ground, Darwall and Duff on directed answerability and calling to account, and List and Pettit on institutional agency — engaged at the points marked in the chapters, at depths proportionate to nearness.

Second, a historiographical contribution. The same refusal of ground permits a distinctive inheritance of the history of philosophy. Schürmann showed the metaphysical epochs as installations and destitutions of hegemonic principles, and suggested – programmatically, in the General Introduction of **Broken Hegemonies** – that the civil servants of humanity may have been “the champions of the singular even while they have pleaded for hegemony,” the functionaries of the universal turning into guardians of the singular within their very reasonings [BH, 16–17]. This book wagers that what Schürmann establishes diagnostically can be generalised ontologically, extending his own precept of reading – seek “the initial experience... that, before any other, roused him to think” [BH, 12–13] – into the conjecture that every genuine thinker is a phenomenologist in an elementary sense, and that metaphysics is phenomenological response given archaic form. The destitution of a principle may therefore **release** the phenomenon a thinker preserved in excess of the system, rather than defeat the thinker. The connection to the systematic contribution is internal: releasing the other from the office of ground and releasing the thinker from identification with a principle are the same anti-archaic operation applied at two sites; Part IV performs the argument.

Third, an existential-ethical contribution. If the common cannot answer and the person cannot be dissolved, then finite common life has a necessary rhythm. Common possibilities must be finitely taken up and folded into transmissible forms if embodied, mortal, needy beings are to maintain a world across absence, succession, distraction, and death. Anonymous practices, transferable roles, and replaceable performances are therefore not a lamentable residue but the practical achievement of finitude. Yet where address, standing, and attribution or present duty converge, present attributive relevance can no longer remain indefinitely suspended: an answer must have a determinate home, though nothing in that necessity dictates its content. Chapter 11 will name the common considered as inhabited **ethos**, distinguish personal inhabitation from institutional enactment and technical carriage, and show how a possibility can have a home without acquiring a proprietor. From the larger alternation follows a double liberation, developed in the later chapters: freedom from the fantasy of escaping anonymous common life, and freedom from the anonymous common when it impersonates the authority of a singular other – when an anonymous “one” judges an interchangeable “me” and no one is there.

4. Method

The method of the book is phenomenological in a specific and limited sense: it begins from how demands, addresses, roles, and answers are given, and it defers doctrinal allegiance. Its recurrent questions are: What is given? Who appears, and in what role? Through what common language or practice does the demand arrive? What can be delegated, and what cannot be forwarded? Who has standing to ask, and who could receive the answer?

Chapter 11 gathers these recurrent questions into a substitutive-attributive reduction: a disciplined inquiry into whether common forms remain sufficient under the relation at issue, what attribution their circulation suspends, and whether an answer requires a determinate home—personal or institutional in the regions presently examined. The reduction does not manufacture responsibility. It may disclose failed standing, adequate mediation, institutional repair without individual authorship, responsiveness without answerability, or no attributable locus.

The book proceeds through argument, but it tests its arguments against compressed cases — ordinary situations in which the relevant distinctions become visible through use, conflict, or breakdown. A closed bank branch separates, in a single town and a single man, the address that belongs to an office from the address that belongs to the man. A name called across a crowded seafront — the commonest name in the town — reaches exactly one person, and the publicness of the name is not the enemy of that reaching but what the reaching travels on. These cases derive from a trilogy of philosophical narratives in which the present account was first developed in figural form (see the front-matter note on the trilogy); here they function as cases and tests, presented briefly and interpreted directly. No familiarity with the trilogy is assumed, and nothing in the argument depends on it.

5. What the book does not claim

The limits should be stated as plainly as the claims. The book offers no complete theory of personal identity: it locates the person as an answerer under determinate relations, not as a metaphysical continuant. It offers no complete moral theory: answerability concerns how a demand becomes attributable and non-forwardable, not which demands are valid; the other may accuse falsely, and the person or institution may answer by refusal — answerability is not obedience.

It does not claim that ethical ontology covers all being or that ethics grounds ontology. Encounter, recognition, responsiveness, affective non-replaceability, and technical mediation may all occur without answerability. Ethical ontology names the regional disclosure of structures that appear where address, standing, and attribution or present duty converge.

It does not claim that anonymous norms are illegitimate as such: common practices institute real local norms and real, if defeasible, authority, and traffic law and professional standards may carry the claims of actual and absent persons. The criterion developed here applies where an anonymous imperative demands an account of someone: such an imperative must be traceable to the persons, relations, vulnerabilities, harms, or shared practices whose claims it carries — a criterion of tracing, not a licence for antinomianism.

It does not claim that institutions are unreal or that collective agency is a fiction. Institutional answering is real, and institutions may become loci through organised continuity, records, procedures, and authorised organs. The denial concerns only the inference from functional or legal agency to an additional lived existential bearer. Personal and institutional loci share an attributive function without sharing one phenomenological mode of being.

It does not claim that machines can never become loci. The conclusion defended in the final chapter is that current evidence is insufficient to establish answerable inhabitation or locushood. That is an epistemic verdict, not a metaphysical prohibition; technical responsiveness, novelty, continuity of output, or functional indispensability do not settle the question by themselves.

And it does not claim to restore any metaphysical system: to read the metaphysicians as responders to phenomenality is not to reinstate their principles, and it does not excuse their exclusions, complicities, or harms — if anything, it makes the criticism more exact, because it separates what a thinker saw from the office the thinker gave it.

6. The course of the argument

The argument runs in seven parts and a return. Part I establishes the rule and the event that resists it. Chapter 1 concedes to the common everything that can be conceded — constitution in three registers: intelligibility, position, weight — and ends on the conversion no form can perform: from specification to being-reached. Chapter 2 describes the event that performs it — address, with its direction, arrival, failability, and asymmetry — builds the grid of standing, legitimacy, and validity on the anatomy of the demand, and argues that direction is underivable: not from the common, not from content and force, not from self-relation.

Part II takes the question to **Being and Time**. Chapter 3 reconstructs the analytic's own engines of existential non-substitutability and reflexive singularisation — death, conscience, guilt — and finds each of them worldly but reflexive, so that the shared world becomes mine without yet becoming mine before another. Chapter 4 supplies the complement through two ordinary cases — a name called across a crowd, an office closed out from under its occupant — and states the book's central thesis, setting it within the three-stage architecture the book defends throughout: formal mineness, its worldly disclosure against a field of real substitution, and its addressive transformation into a finite locus of answerability.

Part III runs the refusal of ground symmetrically. Chapter 5 runs it against the common — which carries every route and answers nothing — and develops positive no-ground as the unity of two asymmetrical modal movements: the possibilising necessitation that excludes externality to the common field, and the conditional singularising necessarisation by which substitution withdraws as final terminus where an answer has become attributable. Its reading of late Heidegger's conspicuously unpursued question **Enteignis wohin?** makes explicit why neither movement terminates outside itself: disappropriation has direction, but no external destination, and the positions it withdraws — exterior ground, total spectator, final substitute — are necessitated inaccessibilities rather than missing objects. Chapter 6 subjects that grammar to a canonical metaphysical trial — Leibniz's **Ratio est in natura**, whose striving possibles, compossible series, and hypothetical necessity border the doctrine at every joint — testing whether immanent modal articulation, singular freedom, and conditional necessity can survive the destitution of final ground. Chapter 7 runs it against the other, whose dignity is to be the one who asks, not the office that authorises.

Part IV (Chapter 8) generalises the operation into a way of inheriting the history of philosophy — metaphysical projects read as responses to phenomena before they are read as installations of principles — and returns to the protocol's visible suspension as a case of **tutela**: inheritance that preserves a textual faultline instead of completing it into doctrine.

Part V returns to the everyday. Chapter 9 defends the anonymous common as the practical form of finitude — keeping, folds, the cycle of stored and situated answering — and Chapter 10 names the two boundary pathologies, usurpation and impersonation, and delivers the second liberation with the question **who is asking?**

Part VI gathers the constructive results into an ethical ontology. Chapter 11 defines common possibility as a historically articulated route not enclosed within one bearer; distinguishes the common, ethos, finite taking-up, habitus, and locus; separates answerability-in-principle from its present activation; specifies folding as suspension of present attributive relevance; unifies the necessity of a home for attribution with the non-proprietary character of the possibility; and formulates the substitutive-attributive reduction through which the sufficiency and limits of mediation can be tested.

Part VII tests that ontology and method where they are most likely to break, in ascending order of strain: delegation (Chapter 12), the institution (Chapter 13), the dead (Chapter 14), and the machine (Chapter 15). The Conclusion gathers the whole back into a single movement and ends where the book began, with the sentence it has by then earned.

One sentence can carry the whole in advance, provided the book is allowed to earn it: being-with gives us a world by allowing substitution; address gives us persons by disclosing where substitution ends.

PART I – THE PRIORITY AND EVENT OF THE COMMON

Chapter 1. The Priority of the Common

1.1 An inventory

Begin with an ordinary morning, and take inventory of what a person uses before eight o'clock. He wakes to a name he did not choose, in a language he did not make, under obligations he never signed. The word with which he greets the person beside him is older than both of them; the currency with which he buys bread is a promise maintained by millions of strangers; the road he crosses is a bundle of rights-of-way, conventions, and painted lines that address him only as **pedestrian**; the office he enters addresses him as a role that existed before him and will be readvertised after him. If, at eight o'clock, someone stops him and demands an apology for yesterday, notice what he reaches for: words that are not his, a practice of apologising he did not invent, a standard of what counts as making-amends that he could not alter by private decision, and a history between the two of them whose weight neither of them legislated. Everything in the apology is borrowed — except that he is the one who must say it.

This book is about the exception, but the exception cannot even be stated until the rule is established, and the rule is this chapter's business: the person is constituted through and through by what is common, and the constitution goes deeper than influence, deeper than circumstance, deeper than any list of "social factors." The common is not the environment of an already-formed subject. It is provisionally indicated as the field within which anything like a subject, a demand, a deed, or an answer first becomes intelligible at all; its sense will be transformed by locus, fold, institution, death, and machine rather than exhausted here. The common is singular only as the formal name for shared intelligibility and transmission. Historically, it is encountered through plural and conflicting common fields whose routes overlap, exclude, translate, and contest one another, and whose unequal powers determine which answers become authoritative folds. Stating this rigorously — and demarcating it from three things it is constantly mistaken for — is the first constraint every later chapter must preserve. The reader impatient for the person will find nothing about the person here except the material the person is made of; that is the point. A book about non-forwardable attribution must begin by conceding everything to transferable form, and the concession must be real, not rhetorical. What survives it will be all that was ever going to survive.

1.2 Three registers of constitution

The common constitutes in at least three registers, and keeping them distinct now saves confusion later, because the later chapters load them differently.

First register: intelligibility. Language, practices, and normative forms make it possible for anything to count as anything. A sound counts as an apology, a movement of the hand counts as a signature, a piece of metal counts as payment, taking-without-asking counts as theft — none of these countings is produced by the individuals who rely on them, and every attempt to produce one privately fails in the way a private currency fails: what I alone mint, no one else must honour. This is the register in which the later argument will say that the common **makes the demand intelligible**: there can be a claim against me only in a world where there already are such things as claims — promise, debt, harm, testimony, office, apology — and these forms arrive with the world, not with my consent. The normative vocabulary a person answers in is as inherited as the grammar he answers with.

Second register: position. Roles, offices, kinship terms, and institutional standings assign persons their addresses in the social world — son, neighbour, signatory, colleague, citizen, holder of this or that office. Two features of positions matter for everything to come. They are **conferred**: most were fastened to a person before he could refuse them (son, heir, citizen, bearer of this surname) or through procedures he did not control (appointee, defendant, next of kin). And they are **open in form**: a position is constitutively the kind of thing that another could occupy — this is not a defect of positions but their definition, and Chapter 4's second case will hang the weight of the book on it. The town runs on the occupiability of positions; the flour does not depend on loving the baker.

Third register: weight. Histories, debts, precedents, and accumulated relations give demands their heft. That this field was worked by my family for three generations, that this word was given and relied upon, that this harm happened and was never repaired — the past that makes a present demand heavy was written mostly by others, and it binds without having been undertaken. Here the common shows its temporal depth: it is not only a synchronic web of meanings and positions but a diachronic inheritance, and a person is born into the middle of stories that are already underway and already partly his. And the inheritance is not self-sustaining. The common survives only through renewed finite taking-up: speakers keep the language current, replaceable occupants keep offices staffed, and successive generations keep graves, ledgers, and feast days. The positions are transmissible; the enactments are non-identical as these enactments. The point is entered here in one sentence and developed later, when keeping itself becomes the question.

Across all three registers, one feature is decisive, and the modern theories the Introduction set aside are wrecked on it: **the common precedes consent**. The contractualist picture — obligations bind because undertaken; the social is the sum of agreements — inverts the actual order of constitution, since agreeing, promising, and contracting are themselves practices the common supplies, positions it confers, and histories it weights. One cannot consent one's way into the field within which consent counts as consent. Most of what reaches a person was never undertaken by him and reaches him anyway, through forms older than his signature. Any account of responsibility that begins from the voluntary has begun in the middle and mistaken it for the beginning. Stated modally — and Part III will spend the statement — this priority is the first of two movements the book performs: thrownness excludes exteriority from the space of possible positions. There is no standpoint before or outside the common from which participation might first be elected, because any intelligible standpoint would already belong to the field it purported to exceed. This has the form of a possibilising necessitation: the medium is necessary, while the historically inherited routes within it remain plural and contingent — no absolute exterior to shared intelligibility, and many possible routes within it; departure from, refusal of, or migration between particular inherited forms remains possible. The necessity is of a medium, never of any one inherited content, which is why the priority confers, as §1.4 will insist, no authority on any particular form the medium carries. The distinction will later become technical: the common is the inherited field, while the routes available within it are the possibilities through which speaking, promising, judging, holding office, repairing, and refusing can become intelligible.

1.3 The with-world: Heidegger's establishment

The philosophical establishment of this priority — not as sociological observation but as ontology — is the achievement of §§25–27 of *Sein und Zeit*, and it is worth reconstructing with care, because Chapter 3 will read the analytic's later development against it and Chapter 4 will complement it at a determinate point. This section states what Heidegger secured; nothing in the book's later argument retracts a line of it.

The everyday world, analysed as a workshop of equipment and involvements, refers to others from within. The field along the path, the boat at anchor, the fabric cut to the wearer — the work-world carries references to producers, users, suppliers, wearers; others are encountered not by addition to a private scene but **from the world itself**, as those for whom, by whom, with whom the enviroing world is already articulated [SZ §26, H117–118]. Hence the thesis of equiprimordiality: being-with (**Mitsein**) is not a relation that supervenes when a second subject shows up; it is a constitution of Dasein's own being, so originary that even factual solitude does not touch it — “Das Alleinsein ist ein defizienter Modus des Mitseins; seine Möglichkeit ist der Beweis für dieses” [SZ §26, H120]. Being-alone is a deficient mode of being-with, possible only for a being whose being is with-others; the empty room is as social as the crowded one. And toward these others, Dasein's comportment is not concern (**Besorgen**) but solicitude (**Fürsorge**), whose two extreme positive modes — leaping-in, which takes the other's care away and makes him dependent, and leaping-ahead, which gives his care back to him [SZ §26, H122] — the analytic distinguishes with a precision the later chapters will repeatedly use.

Then the question **who** is this everyday being-with-one-another, and the analytic's most famous answer: not this Dasein, but the they, **das Man**. In everyday concern, one keeps a distance from others, measures against them, is troubled by the gap (**Abständigkeit**); the standards float toward the average (**Durchschnittlichkeit**); the exceptional is smoothed down (**Einebnung**); and the resulting publicness (**Öffentlichkeit**) controls in advance how world and Dasein get interpreted — and is never wrong, because it does not go into the matter [SZ §27, H126–127]. The they disburdens each Dasein of its being, and Dasein accommodates the disburdening [H127–128]. Everyone is the other, and no one is himself: “Jeder ist der Andere und Keiner er selbst” [SZ §27, H128]. The who of everydayness is the neuter, **das Man** — an existential, Heidegger insists, a primordial phenomenon belonging to Dasein's positive constitution, not a regrettable accretion [H129].

Two remarks fix how this book receives the analysis. First, the descriptive content is adopted whole: the anonymity, the averageness, the disburdening, the interpretedness-in-advance are the everyday texture of the common in all three registers, and no later argument disputes them. Second, the analytic's **tone** — the vocabulary of dictatorship, levelling, fleeing — is registered and deferred. Whether the they is a fallenness to be countered or the practical form of finitude to be honoured — whether disburdening is evasion or shelter, or both by turns — is the question of Chapter 9, and it will be answered there against the tone and with the letter: Heidegger himself says the they is not nothing, not a “universal subject” hovering over the many [H128], and not to be escaped. Here the point is only structural: the common has an everyday mode, and in that mode it carries persons anonymously. The first case of Chapter 4 — a man standing unaddressed in a crowd, sweetly interchangeable, until a name lands — will show what the analytic's vocabulary of “levelling” conceals: that being carried anonymously is a state persons also rest in, and that the same publicness which levels is what any address must travel on.

1.4 Three demarcations

Nearly every error the later chapters correct begins as a misidentification of the common. Three demarcations, then, each of which the book will need.

The common is not an aggregate. It cannot be reduced to a plurality of individuals and their attitudes, because it is what individuals are formed in and what their attitudes are about. The language does not belong to its speakers the way a tool belongs to its owners; no census of speakers, however complete, yields the grammar, and the grammar survives the death of every particular speaker it forms. The same holds for practices, offices, and histories. This irreducibility is why the priority claim is ontological and not statistical: the common is not many others added together — it is what makes others **encounterable**, the field from within which anyone appears as someone [SZ §26, H118]. When Chapter 4 says that address travels on common routes, the routes are this field, not the crowd.

The common is not an agent. It decides nothing, answers nothing, intends nothing. A practical test follows: reserve verbs of finite agency — deciding, demanding, forgiving, judging, answering — for persons, collectives, and institutions; whenever the field itself is made to perform such acts, the archic office has begun to leak back into the prose.⁵ It is a field, not a doer — and here a distinction must be drawn now, in advance, because two later parts of the book depend on its being drawn cleanly. From the common as field, distinguish the **collectives** that form within it: the informal groupings — a friendship, a coalition, a mob, a generation’s movement — in which persons act together; and distinguish further the **institutions**: the structured, procedure-bearing entities — a firm, a court, a parish, a state — that occupy positions, own property, and answer through authorised organs. Collectives and institutions form and operate within the common; neither is the common. Whether substitution distributes a deed and whether an institution can remain the same attributable party across changing personnel are the questions of Chapters 12 and 13; whether they can stand in judgment over a person is the question of Chapter 10. All those questions presuppose this one demarcation: the field within which agents of every kind appear is not itself an agent of any kind. The temptation to promote it into one — the super-subject, the community as macro-person, the tradition that “wills” — is the first of the archic temptations this book tracks, and Chapter 5 is its formal refusal. Here the demarcation is only entered in the register.

⁵ This formulation adapts the anti-reification writing test developed in Alessio Montaruli, **Koinonia: A Phenomenology of Being-With** (KiTalent Research, 2026), ch. 2.

The common is not a contract. This was established in §1.2 from the order of constitution, but the demarcation has a normative edge worth setting now. Because the contractualist picture is false — because most binding forms were never undertaken — a question opens that the picture was designed to close: with what right does the unchosen bind? The question is real, and the book does not evade it; but neither does it answer it here, because the answer requires apparatus not yet built (the distinction of standing, legitimacy, and validity in Chapter 2, and the tracing criterion of Chapters 5 and 10, which applies where an anonymous imperative demands an account of someone: such an imperative must be traceable to the persons, relations, vulnerabilities, harms, or shared practices whose claims it carries). What can be said already is deflationary: the discovery that obligations precede consent is not the discovery that they are all in order. Priority in constitution confers no authority. The common makes demands intelligible; whether a given demand is legitimate is always a further question — and keeping it a further question is precisely what will distinguish this account from every romanticism of community.

Objection: this is linguistic idealism — if the common constitutes intelligibility, position, and weight, the person is exhausted by his constitution, and the book’s “exception” is a residue of grammar. The objection assumes that what constitutes must exhaust, and the assumption fails on the commonest cases. The language constitutes everything sayable in the apology and does not thereby say it; the position of debtor is conferred by common forms, and the forms do not pay. Constitution of intelligibility is not production of the act, and still less occupation of the place from which the act is owed. What that place is, if it is neither a private substance beneath the roles nor a knot in the public net, is the question the whole book answers; the present chapter only refuses to let it be closed by definition at the outset. That the common supplies all the material has been conceded in the strongest terms available. Whether the material answers is what the next three chapters test.

Objection: by making the common prior, the account merely relocates the ground — “the common” is this book’s arche. The objection is exactly right as a warning and exactly wrong as a description, and the difference is the book’s method. Priority here is descriptive: constitution runs from the common to the person, and no argument will run it backward. Ground is an office: the instance that would finally bear, justify, and answer. Chapter 5 exists to show that the common cannot hold that office — that it can carry every route and still answer nothing — and the demonstration will use nothing but the demarcations entered in this section. A field is prior to what forms in it; a ground would have to answer for what stands on it. The common is the first; nothing, in this book, is the second.

1.5 Everyone and no one: the form of common address

One last structural feature must be established, because the routing problem — the hinge on which Part II turns — is generated by it.

What reaches persons through the common ordinarily bears the form of the **whoever**. The norm says: one does not do this. The sign says: pedestrians cross here. The advertisement says: applicants must hold the following qualifications. The liturgy, the statute, the custom, the price — common forms reach everyone in general and no one in particular; their grammar is the third person or the impersonal one, **man, on, si**, and even where they borrow the second person — “you are requested” — the you is anybody’s. This is not a weakness of common forms but their mode of operation: a form must be indifferent to its instances in order to be a form; a norm that named its addressee would be an order, a price that varied by person would be an insult or a gift. The interchangeability that Chapter 9 will defend as the practical form of finitude begins here, in the address-form of the common itself: whoever qualifies, whoever applies, whoever is next.

But a concession must be entered before the problem is stated, or the problem will be misstated — and then refuted with a tax notice. The common is not confined to general forms; it can specify an addressee with extraordinary precision. The summons carries a name and a case number; the assessment names the taxpayer down to the digit; the regulation reaches “the registered owner of vehicle X”; the will names its beneficiary; the register, the roll, and the record are themselves common forms whose whole business is specification. Naming, in fact, is one of the common’s oldest instruments — Chapter 4’s first case turns on a name taken from a public calendar. So the line this chapter draws does not run between general forms and named ones; the common carries both.

It runs between **specification** and **being-reached**. However precise, a specification identifies its addressee through publicly available criteria — names, numbers, records, positions — and binds the one answering to them: if the record errs — a misspelling, a dead man on the roll, two bearers of one name — the notice binds the wrong one, or no one, until someone is actually reached and the error can surface. Specification is a gate, and the common can make the gate as narrow as a single name; being-reached is the passage through it, and no narrowness of gate performs a passage. A summons drafted, sealed, and lying unserved in a drawer specifies its person perfectly and has reached no one; the whole legal apparatus of service — the doorstep, the signature, the officer’s attestation that the papers were placed in the named hands — exists because the law itself knows the difference between designating a person and reaching one. What the common cannot do, merely by being a form, is account for that conversion: the event in which **this has reached me and is now mine to answer**.

Now the generative problem of this book can be stated in one step. A person's morning, his language, his positions, his debts — all of it, as this chapter has argued, arrives along common routes; and what travels those routes, as form, either binds anyone or identifies an addressee by criteria. Yet demands land. Somewhere between the norm that binds whoever and the apology that only he can make, between the record that designates him and the reproach that finds him at eight o'clock, a conversion takes place — from **everyone and no one**, or from **whoever answers to the description**, to **this one, reached** — and nothing inventoried in this chapter can perform it. The field has no voice of its own; forms cannot serve themselves; and history weights the field — unevenly, by position, relation, and inheritance — without thereby identifying the one from whom the answer is now due. If the conversion happens — and every ordinary day attests that it does — then something must arrive that the common carries but does not supply: direction. A small practice can make the distinction visible. Above a flight of wet sea-steps, a lamp had been kept burning for boats by successive occupants of one house long before the present occupants arrived. No title deed, municipal schedule, easement, office, or rota assigned the task. When the lamp went dark, no one could identify a breached rule or failed office; yet faces turned toward the house, because people already knew where a word about the steps could go. An intelligible route was already articulated in the shared field, without any common speaker.

Actual direction entered only when one neighbour addressed the new occupants and told them how occupants of the house had long kept the light. Even then, the words did not yet establish an enforceable duty. They disclosed a position at which a concern could be received: a could before any ought. Another occupant could later stand in the same position, and a formal schedule could carry the practice differently without thereby corrupting it. The house was therefore an available destination within the common, not yet a locus at which any occupant's answer had become non-forwardable. The figure separates a route carried by the common from the finite act by which someone is actually reached.⁶

⁶ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, "The Locus: The Address, the Deed, and the One Who Answers" (unpublished manuscript, 2026), "The Lamp."

Later chapters will show how a route supplied by the common can be finitely taken up without becoming the property of the participant, and how such a taking-up can become answerably localised without ceasing to belong to the common field. What arrives in the second person, and what it presupposes, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2. Encounter and the Second Person

2.1 The phenomenon

Chapter 1 ended with a conversion that every ordinary day performs and nothing in the common, as form, can perform: from specification to being-reached. This chapter describes the event in which the conversion occurs. The description must come before any theory of it, because the theories — including the ones this book will endorse — have a long record of redescribing the event into something more tractable and losing it.

Consider the plain cases. A question is put to me across a table. A child calls a parent from another room. A colleague says: you told me it was sent. A stranger taps my shoulder: is this yours? A letter arrives that opens with my name and asks me to account for a decision. What is common to these is not a content and not a feeling but a **vector**: something comes at me. Four features of the vector must be secured, each of which will carry argumentative weight later.

It is directional. The question put to me across the table differs from the same sentence overheard at the next table, and the difference is not in the sentence. Everything semantic can be held constant — words, speaker, volume, my comprehension — while the one variable changes: whether it is **at me**. Direction is therefore not a component of the content; it is the relation in which the content stands to me, and it has its own phenomenology: the coming-at is experienced as preceding explicit parsing, as anyone knows who has heard his name in a noisy room, or thought he did. This phenomenological immediacy does not deny rapid learned recognition, bodily orientation, or other processing; it says that the address is given as an arrival rather than experienced as the conclusion of an inference.

It arrives. Address is an event, not an inference. I do not conclude that I am addressed from evidence, the way I conclude the train is late from the board; being-addressed is given in the mode of arrival — experienced as not initiated and not controlled by the one it reaches, interrupting whatever field of attention it enters. The deliberative order can be reconstructed afterwards (“I heard the name, it is my name, she must mean me”), but the reconstruction falsifies the experience, which is that the turn was underway before any such syllogism could convene. Nothing in this description yet decides where the address comes **from** — whether another, an institution, or, as a famous analysis will claim, from me and yet over me; that question is Chapter 3’s, and it must not be settled here by stipulation. What is secured is only the passivity of the reached: arrival is undergone. **Descriptions fit; address lands.**

It can fail. The vector can miss, be mistaken, be refused delivery. Half the phenomenology of address lies in its misfires: the man who half-turns at a name that was not for him; the letter opened by the wrong recipient; the reproach aimed at me that I demonstrate was owed elsewhere. Failability will do heavy work in §2.4, and within the account itself: an address that could not miss would be a mechanism, and what it landed on would be a target, not an answerer.

It is asymmetric. When you address me, something obtains that does not obtain in reverse until you are addressed in turn. The relation is not commutative and not, in the moment, reversible: the landing has a from and an at. Reply inverts the vector; it does not abolish the fact that each vector, while it stands, points one way. Grammar preserves the asymmetry in the vocative — the form for reaching that cannot be predicated, examined at Chapter 4 §4.2 — and any theory that models address as a symmetric relation of mutual presence has already lost the phenomenon.

2.2 The anatomy of a demand

Address is the genus; the species this book cares about is the demand — address that puts something to me for answer. A question, an accusation, a request, a claim, a summons: in each, the vector carries a content that calls for response. The anatomy has three joints, and the discipline of the later chapters consists in never letting them fuse.

Content: what is asked, claimed, or alleged. Content is the common’s contribution, exactly as Chapter 1 analysed it — there can be an accusation of theft only where taking-without-asking counts as theft; the forms of demand are inherited practices; the language of any demand is borrowed down to its syntax.

Direction: at whom the demand comes. Underivable from content — the same charge can be laid at anyone — and, as §2.3 argues, underivable from anything else in the inventory.

Claimant-standing: from where the demand comes. Its forms are social, legal, relational, and institutional: the creditor's position with respect to payment, the victim's with respect to an account, the court's conferred by procedure, the executor's **carried** from the testator. Standing is the joint that saves the account from two opposite collapses: without it, every address would bind (the tyranny of whoever shouts); made the whole story, address would reduce to institutional role, and the neighbour's courtesies in Chapter 4's second case would be unintelligible. Standing is itself largely a creature of the common — conferred, inherited, procedural — which is why the other's demand, though not derivable from the common, always arrives dressed in it.

From this anatomy, the terminological grid the book relies on. **Addressability** is the persisting relational possibility that a person may be reached as this one. It is not an event, since no address need presently occur; but neither is it an intrinsic faculty stored inside an isolated bearer. Nor is it yet the full locus of address later disclosed through standing and attribution. An address actualises and discloses that possibility without producing the person it reaches. **Address** is the event of being reached. **Claimant-standing** is the position from which a demand may be pressed. It becomes manifest where the claimant is not merely the source of an utterance but is situated within the promise, injury, dependence, office, practice, or undertaking under which an answer is sought. Institutional recognition may articulate and carry that position; it does not exhaust its phenomenological genesis or settle its legitimacy in advance. **Legitimacy** is the normative justification of that standing — whether the position, however well recognised, **ought** to carry the right it claims. **Validity** is the correctness of the content. The three assessments are independent, and the ethics of answerability lives in their gaps: there is legally recognised but morally illegitimate standing (the informer under a wicked statute), morally legitimate but institutionally unrecognised standing (the wronged party no procedure admits), and the legitimate accuser whose accusation is false. In every configuration a person can be genuinely **reached** — which is why being reached must be distinguished from being bound. What lands when an address lands is not yet an obligation but a question; once the address has been received, silence itself enters the field of response, and may be taken as an answer — though whether it is answer, paralysis, incomprehension, or breakdown is a matter for interpretation, not stipulation. That is the minimal normative consequence of receipt — not yet a duty, but a changed field of possible response — and it is enough: refusal and contestation are responses, which is why answerability was never obedience, and why the distinction will bear the weight of the Levinas chapter. One member of the sequence is still to come: **attribution** — whose deed or present duty, under which description, an answer concerns — belongs to the anatomy of answering rather than of address, and receives its apparatus in Chapter 11. The diagnostic sequence through which an answer episode becomes articulable runs addressability, address, standing, attribution; each gate holds independently of the ones before it, and nothing passes a later gate by having passed an earlier one. This is a sequence of analysis, not a claim that address temporally creates the standing, deed, or duty it may activate; Chapter 11 will distinguish answerability-in-principle from actualised answerability. **Responsiveness** is broader: a person, institution, animal, or technical system may register and react to what arrives. **Answerability** is narrower and conditional: in the episodic sense available here, it becomes actual where address, standing, and attribution or present duty converge so that a response

belongs at a determinate locus. Encounter is broader than actualised answerability, and being reached remains necessary without being sufficient for being bound.

Two further pairs complete the grid. **Constitution** versus **disclosure**: whether the address produces what it reaches or reveals it — adjudicated in §2.4 and settled by Chapter 4's cases. **Recognition** versus **answerability**: recognition, in the Hegelian lineage, is a reciprocal, status-conferring relation with a teleology of mutuality [Honneth, **The Struggle for Recognition**]; answerability is event-indexed and constitutively asymmetric — I can be answerable to one who never recognises me, and recognised by all while answerable to none. To this pair belongs Cavell's distinction, which the grid absorbs and depends on: the other is not known but **acknowledged**, and acknowledgment can be withheld — its withholding being not ignorance but avoidance [Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging"; **The Claim of Reason**]. The grid multiplies rather than removes Cavell's ways of failing: I can concede your standing and dodge your address, answer your content and avoid you. Nothing here makes acknowledgment guaranteed; the common makes it possible and articulate, and it remains, at every joint, refusable.

One consequence must be drawn now, because Chapter 4 uses it without pausing. Since standing can be conferred, inherited, represented, and carried, **the claimant need not be physically present to press a demand, nor alive, nor singularly embodied**. The executor carries the testator's standing; the court carries the absent victim's; a future generation's claim can be carried by an advocate none of its members will meet; and the completed directives and unresolved claims of the dead can be carried without the dead thereby presently speaking — a distinction entered here in one clause and held to strictly when Chapter 14 needs it. "Before the other" names a structure — direction plus standing — not a face-to-face scene. What it can never lack is the vector: a demand no one has standing to press, arriving from nowhere at everyone, is not a demand but weather — or, as Chapter 10 will argue, the they impersonating a claimant.

The modal formulation also prevents present competence from becoming the criterion of addressability. A living person may be asleep, preverbal, profoundly dependent, or temporarily unable to answer, while remaining one whose claims, relations, and possible reply must be held open rather than reassigned. Another may answer in a protective or representative capacity, but the doubling analysed later remains: the carrier's words and judgment are the carrier's deeds, while the represented person's place is carried rather than occupied. This is not offered as a complete criterion of personhood; it establishes only that inability to perform an answer now is not, by itself, proof that no answerable place remains.

2.3 The underivability of direction

The claim on which Part II's architecture rests is one of phenomenological primitiveness, not causal isolation: direction cannot be derived from impersonal form, propositional content and force, or reflexive self-relation, although every actual address remains embodied, historical, recognitional, and commonly mediated.

From the common. Chapter 1 §1.5 drew the line: the common carries both general forms and specification of any precision — the named summons, the registered owner of vehicle X — and specification, however narrow, designates whoever satisfies it. Being-reached is the passage through the gate, and no narrowness of gate performs a passage; the law's own apparatus of service exists because designating a person and reaching one are different achievements. The common supplies the gate down to a single name; it cannot walk anyone through it.

From content plus force. The reduction favoured by a certain philosophy of language: the second person is content plus an imperative or interrogative operator, directedness being the pragmatic fact that someone occupies the hearer-role. But hearer-role is occupied by everyone in earshot; the overhearer hears the imperative, parses the force, and is not addressed. Adding an indexical does not help — “you” designates whoever is addressed, so the analysis presupposes the relation it was to construct. The vocative's syntactic isolation (Ch. 4 §4.2) is the linguistic trace of this irreducibility: languages that mark address morphologically mark it **outside** the predicative frame, because it is not part of what is said but the relation of the saying to its target — a first sight of the deictic family Chapter 4 will read there.

From self-relation. The derivation Chapter 3 examines in its strongest, Heideggerian form; the structural point can be given now. Self-address is phenomenologically real, and it is not immune to confusion — one can mistake social shame for conscience, misidentify the source of an inner summons, mishear what one's own demand requires. Nor is it voluntary in its most important case: the summons the analytic will describe is experienced as unbidden — it comes, in Heidegger's own words, from me and yet over me — and no act of will repeals it. The difficulty is therefore neither misfire nor a covert voluntarism. It is that self-relation, even at its most involuntary, does not generate the distinction on which the whole phenomenon turns: between answering **myself** and answering **another whose standing is not mine**. However the reflexive summons arrives, the jurisdiction it summons me before is one I occupy from within; the standing of another is not mine to confer, revise, or withdraw, and there is no one whose repeal I must await. The creditor's claim, the victim's question, the child's call hold by a standing I did not grant, and their interruption of my initiative comes with a **from** that is not a modification of me. A summons that is worldly but reflexive — Chapter 3's exact vocabulary for the call of conscience — may make me answerable **for** my being and my commitments; it does not by itself explain answerability **to** anyone — a distinction that bears directly on the analytic's account of conscience (Ch. 3) and on Crowell (§4.5).

Direction, then, is phenomenologically primitive in this relational sense: not causally isolated from embodied, historical, recognitional, and common mediation, but not compounded from the materials of the first and third persons — which is exactly why a book is needed where a definition would otherwise do.

2.4 The interlocutors

The structure just described has a history of discoverers, and the account owes each a debt and a departure. Four define the nearest terrain and are engaged at length; three are met at their point of contact; one recent study marks the field's current edge. The departures state what, from the present standpoint, each account leaves underdescribed; the debts are everywhere.

The dialogical tradition. Buber made the I-You a philosophical event — the other met as You, not experienced as an object among objects — and the irreducibility of that relation is taken whole [**I and Thou**]. What his dyad leaves underdescribed is the third structural term: between I and You, for Buber, there is presence without medium, and the world of It begins where the meeting ends — whereas §2.2 found the common **inside** the address (content, forms, standing, the very name on the vector), and Chapter 4's first case will show publicness as what the reaching travels on. Without the third term the encounter tends toward the sacramental: rare, unmediated, opposed to office and everyday — while the pensioner addressing a man on the pavement, in a sentence shaped by thirty years of Tuesdays, is as second-personal as anything in Buber and made of the world of It throughout. Løgstrup radicalised the dialogical demand — from our being delivered over to one another springs an unspoken, radical demand to care for what is delivered [**The Ethical Demand**] — and its priority over agreement is taken from him. But a demand rendered sovereign, silent, and total, anchored in interdependence rather than in anyone's standing, risks drifting toward what Chapter 10 diagnoses: the anonymous claimant no one is. On the present account demands are spoken, contested, and jointed; their seriousness comes not from a ground beneath them but from a vector upon me.

Bakhtin is the closest terminological precedent, and the debt is acknowledged in the book's title word. His early ethics turns on *otvetstvennost'* — answerability — and the deed's non-alibi: from my unique place in Being there is no alibi, no substitute performer of my act [**Toward a Philosophy of the Act; Art and Answerability**]. His philosophy of language turns on **addressivity**: the utterance, as opposed to the sentence, is always turned toward someone [**Speech Genres**]. Both discoveries are built into these chapters. The departures: his addressivity is a property of **utterances**, where the present account concerns the routing of **demands** to persons, of which utterance-addressivity is the linguistic shadow; and his answerability is total and continuous, coextensive with existence, where the present account articulates it — jointed by standing, indexed to events of address, capable of the distinctions (answerable to whom, for what, with what right of refusal) that a non-alibi of everything cannot draw. At this level of description the structural point stands: a responsibility for everything, before everyone, risks becoming formally indistinguishable from a responsibility no determinate claimant can call in.

Darwall built the analytic framework: second-personal reasons are irreducible; a claim addressed to me presupposes the authority to address it and my competence to be addressed [**The Second-Person Standpoint**]. The convergence is extensive — irreducibility, authority (his term for standing), the circle of second-personal concepts. The departure is at the foundation and the direction of explanation. Darwall's apparatus is constructivist and Kantian: the presuppositions of address are unpacked into equal dignity and shared normative competence, and the second person becomes the standpoint from which morality's authority is vindicated. The present account runs the other way: it does not derive the normative order from address but locates address **within** an inherited normative order — his second-personal competence is, in Chapter 1's terms, the common — socially inherited, institutionally sustained, presupposed by every claim, and produced by no act of address. And where his question is the validity of moral obligation, this book's is prior: how anything comes to be **at me** at all — a question his framework answers by assuming it.

Waldenfels is the nearest methodological ally. His responsive phenomenology begins where this chapter begins: the **Anspruch** precedes the response; the demand comes from elsewhere and earlier than any initiative of mine; between demand and response stands an irreducible gap, and the respondent is a patient of the address before being an agent of the answer [**Antwortregister; Phänomenologie des Fremden**]. Where this chapter speaks of arrival preceding deliberation, it speaks his language. The departure is at the terminus, and it is entered here as a question his account leaves open rather than a fault it commits. For Waldenfels the respondent remains a perpetually displaced site of reception, and any consolidation of the one who answers looks to him like relapse into the philosophy of the subject. The present account shares the worry and holds that it can be met: what the address reaches is no substance (Chapter 4's onion argument refuses that as firmly as he does), but a reception with no one it was **for** leaves the misfire underdescribed — if nothing was aimed at, nothing was missed. Whether the where of response can become a determinate locus without installing a ground is exactly what Chapters 4 and 5 undertake to settle; Waldenfels secures the priority of the demand and stops, deliberately, one step short of the question this book exists to ask. One gate his rigour fixes for the whole book: responsive reception is not yet attribution — a respondent is not yet an answerer until standing and the tracing of a deed make him one.

Arendt supplied a disclosure vocabulary the book inherits: in action and speech, before others, the agent discloses **who** he is — a who distinct from every what — into a web of relationships his act joins but never controls [**The Human Condition**, ch. V]. Arendt's distinction between who and what anticipates the refusal to reduce the answerer to positions; the web is the common under another name. The departure is the direction of disclosure: her who is disclosed **expressively**, by the agent's initiative; the present account adds the **addressive** disclosure — the crowd case's godson did nothing, initiated nothing, and was disclosed. Deeds disclose the doer; demands disclose the answerer; and the second is prior for responsibility.

Ricoeur built the nearest complete architecture: the self attested rather than posited; ipseity held in promise-keeping; the self constitutively summoned [**Oneself as Another**]. Two departures, both local and both, from the present standpoint, matters of route rather than destination. His route to the who runs through narrative — the self gathers itself in emplotment — where the present route runs through address, and the relation between the two (whether the addressed locus is presupposed by the narratives or constituted in them) is argued, not assumed, at Chapter 4 §4.3. And his solicitude bends the asymmetry of the demand toward mutuality, completing itself in a course of recognition; the present account keeps the vectors asymmetric all the way down — mutuality a frequent grace, not the telos.

Althusser is the indispensable contrast, because his scene is this book's scene with the metaphysics inverted: the policeman hails — “hey, you there!” — the individual turns, and in turning is constituted as subject [**Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses**]. What the scene teaches must be stated carefully, because the crude refutation fails. A defender can say that interpellation is iterative and partial, that the wrong man's turn constitutes **him** within that scene, that the hail recruits rather than creates. Grant all of it. The instructive fact remains the misfire's **structure**: the wrong man can turn, and be found to be the wrong man — which means the address operates against a prior field of differential findability. There must already be a difference between the one meant and the one who turned for the scene of correction (“not you”) to be so much as possible; and that difference is not conferred by the hail, since it is what the hail is corrected **by**. Interpellation, then, may well constitute a subject-position — offices, suspects, and citizens are recruited exactly so — but it cannot wholly constitute the bearer whose turning can be mistaken for another's. The person the hail finds was findable; that is why the police, unlike the ideology, sometimes get the wrong man. What survives of Althusser is important and kept: addresses come dressed in power, offices do hail, and Chapter 10's anonymous judge is interpellation's true home — the they recruiting a whoever.

A field-note, finally, on the present state of this terrain. The second person has become an active research area rather than a neglected one; its most recent systematic extension is to the second-person **plural** — the interlocking reciprocities of an I facing a you-together, irreducible to summed dyads and to a first-person we [Pawlett Jackson, **The Phenomenology of the Second-Person Plural**]. The present account is deliberately singular: its question is how a demand acquires one addressee who cannot forward it. Whether a plural address — “you two explain yourselves” — distributes, shares, or multiplies answerability is genuinely open, touches Chapter 13’s institutional cases, and is flagged there rather than resolved here.

2.5 Objections

If a demand became binding only when another actually addressed me, then an unvoiced wrong would not yet be a wrong, and obligation would wait upon accusation. The distinction between addressability and address blocks that conclusion. A claim may already stand before anyone voices it; actual address does not create its legitimacy or validity. What the event does is give the claim direction and arrival: it makes what was already in force come due here, before this person, from a standing the shared world renders intelligible. The modal possibility supplies no moral verdict of its own. It establishes only that silence is not the absence of possible claim and that speaking is not the creation of the wrong spoken about [cf. Wallace, **The Moral Nexus**; Thompson, “What Is It to Wrong Someone?”].

The chapter describes a regional phenomenon — Western, modern, verbal — and calls it a structure. The materials are unavoidably particular; the claim is structural and defeasible, not an anthropology. Wherever a form of life distinguishes a demand laid at someone from a rule applying generally — an heir from a bystander, a summons from a description — the proposed joints can be identified and tested, and the practices in which such distinctions typically live (kinship, debt, ritual, adjudication) are widespread. The book does not claim in advance that every lifeworld articulates the joints, or articulates them identically; it claims that where the conversion of Chapter 1 occurs at all, this is its anatomy — and it holds that claim open to the counter-case.

By admitting that standing is carried and the other may be absent, the account dissolves the second person back into the institutional third. The worry receives its full development where the carrying is analysed (Ch. 12: answering-for; Ch. 14: the dead). The short reply: carrying preserves the vector it carries. The executor presses **the testator's claim**, and everyone party to the scene knows the difference between that and the executor's own; when the difference is lost — when the carrier forgets whose standing he wears — the demand does not become third-personal, it becomes fraudulent. Representation is parasitic on direction, and parasites attest their hosts.

The phenomenology proves presence, not priority: address may be real but derivative — a late elaboration of general sociality. Derivation claims need a base, and §2.3 examined the candidates — the common, content-plus-force, self-relation — each presupposing what it was to produce. A fourth, general empathic openness, fares no better: empathy delivers the other's state, not the other's **claim on me**; I can grasp your anger perfectly and still ask, sincerely, what it is to me. The step from registered other to addressing other is the step no derivation on offer has crossed; the book takes the primitiveness of direction as a finding, not an axiom, and holds it open to any future reduction that succeeds.

2.6 Threshold

The chapter's yield, in the order the next chapters spend it. There is an event — address — with direction, arrival, failability, and asymmetry; it is the site of the conversion Chapter 1 could not derive from form. A demand has three joints — content from the common, direction from the other, standing that the common largely dresses — and the grid built on them keeps being-reached distinct from being-bound. Direction is underivable: not from specification however precise, not from content and force, not from the self summoning itself. And the structure is neither a dyadic sacrament, nor a groundless total demand, nor a constructivist standpoint, nor a subjectless reception, nor expressive self-disclosure, nor narrative attestation, nor constitutive hailing: it is the reaching of a findable someone along common routes.

This is a phenomenology of encounter and claim, not yet a complete ontology of answerability. Encounter may interrupt without producing a claimant; address may occur without standing; standing may exist while attribution fails; responsiveness may occur without an answer becoming due. The present chapter establishes the directed and assessable structure of the claim. Chapter 11 will ask how this structure can reopen attribution carried and suspended within common forms.

What the chapter has **not** shown is why the one reached cannot indefinitely forward the response — why direction sometimes terminates rather than relays. Nothing in the phenomenology of arrival, by itself, rules out a chain of addressed parties, each passing the matter on. The demonstration that substitution has a determinate limit needs instruments this chapter does not have: the analytic's discovery of where representation fails, and the cases in which an office and its occupant come apart before a whole town. The first is Heidegger's, and the next chapter goes to collect it.

PART II — HEIDEGGER AND THE MISSING RELATION

Chapter 3. Being-Toward-Death and the Limit of the Analytic

3.1 Why singularisation is needed at all

The first two chapters have put the analytic of Dasein under a double debt. Chapter 1 established the priority of the common: the world in which Dasein finds itself is a with-world through and through, its equipment referring to producers and users, its significance public, its possibilities inherited, its everyday who not this Dasein but the they-self [SZ §§26–27, H117–128]. Chapter 2 established the structure that the common alone cannot supply: the second-personal encounter, in which a demand acquires direction and someone's standing is engaged. The present chapter asks how **Being and Time** itself proposes to travel from the first of these to anything like the second — how a being absorbed in the anonymous common is supposed to become, in any rigorous sense, **someone**.

The question is not external to the book. Division Two opens by admitting that the preparatory analysis has grasped Dasein only in its everydayness, and everydayness is precisely existence in the mode of the they: disburdened, levelled, interchangeable. The they, Heidegger says, takes the burden of being from each particular Dasein, and Dasein accommodates the disburdening [SZ §27, H127–128]. If the analytic is to exhibit Dasein as a whole and as capable of being authentically itself, it needs an instrument that can interrupt this accommodation — something that reaches the particular Dasein **as** particular, past every substitute the common so generously provides. The three instruments the analytic produces are death, conscience, and guilt; their joint product is resoluteness, and resoluteness's disclosure is the Situation. This chapter reconstructs the sequence and identifies, at its end, the precise point at which it stops short — not of rigor, but of a phenomenon it does not derive within the argument as written.

Two terms must be fixed in advance, because the chapter's conclusion depends on keeping them apart. The instruments examined below will be called **reflexive**. This does not mean inward, mental, or Cartesian: death, conscience, and guilt are structures of worldly Dasein, enacted amid equipment, others, and history — nothing in the analytic is intrapsychic, and the objection that Heidegger's Dasein has no "inside" to retreat to is granted before it is raised. Reflexive means something narrower and demonstrable: that the singularising operation of each instrument runs from Dasein to Dasein — that no worldly other participates **as addresser** in the disclosure it accomplishes.

The chapter uses **singularisation** first in Heidegger's existential sense: **Vereinzelung**, the disclosure of each-time-mineness and finite non-substitutability. This is not yet **answerable singularisation**, the stronger relation developed in Chapter 4 and gathered in Chapter 11, where address, standing, and attribution or present duty make a finite taking-up non-forwardably relevant at a locus. Worldly through and through, and reflexive in their existential singularising work: the chapter's whole finding lies in the compatibility of those determinations.

3.2 Death: where substitution ends

The analytic's first move is an inventory of substitution, and it deserves more attention than it usually receives, because it is here that Heidegger comes closest to the terrain of this book. In the world of concern, he observes, representability (**Vertretbarkeit**) is not the exception but the constitution: one Dasein can stand in for another wherever what matters is the accomplishing of something, and everyday being-with-one-another maintains itself in such representation — indeed, one **is**, to a large extent, what one does, and therefore what another could do in one's place [SZ §47, H239]. The town runs on this, and Heidegger does not lament it. What he seeks is the limit case, the point at which the circulation of standing-in fails; and he finds exactly one:

"Keiner kann dem Anderen sein Sterben abnehmen." No one can take the other's dying from him. Someone can go to his death **for** another — but this always means: to sacrifice oneself for the other **in a definite cause**. Such dying-for can never mean that the other's death has thereby been taken from him in the least [SZ §47, H240].

The passage repays exactness. Heidegger concedes everything to substitution except one thing: the errand of dying can be run — the soldier can take the bullet, the substitute can mount the scaffold — and what transfers is the deed in the world of concern, the outcome, the cause served. What cannot transfer is the **mineness** of the dying that each still has before him. Death is thereby determined, across §§50–53, as Dasein’s ownmost, non-relational, unsurpassable possibility: **eigenste**, because it reaches me and no deputy; **unbezüglich** — “ist ein unbezügliches” [SZ §50, H250] — formally disclosed as the possibility in which no other can substitute for me and no relational role can perform my dying (how far the non-relationality of anticipation extends into Dasein’s concrete ties is disputed among interpreters, and the argument here takes no side: it needs only what the text undisputedly gives, the failure of substitution); **unüberholbar**, because it cannot be outstripped. And the everyday response confirms the analysis by evading it: the they converts my dying into the anonymous truth that “one dies” — **man stirbt** — a case of an event that occurs, befalling no one in particular, and thereby keeps each Dasein in its interchangeability precisely on the one point where interchange fails [SZ §51, H253].

Anticipation reverses the evasion. Running ahead into this possibility, Dasein is singularised down to itself: “Das Vorlaufen vereinzelt das Dasein auf es selbst” [SZ §53, H263]. Here, and only here in the analytic, does the anonymous carrying of the they lose its grip — not because Dasein exits the common world, but because it holds before itself the one possibility for which the common has no substitute to offer.

Two features of this achievement should be marked before moving on, because everything in this Part turns on them. First, the achievement is genuine, and the book builds on it rather than against it: Heidegger has demonstrated that the circulation of substitution has a stopping point and disclosed Dasein in its finite non-substitutability. This is a necessary formal discovery for the later account of answerability, not yet that account itself: death establishes ownmost non-substitutability without a claimant, standing, attributable deed, or answer. Second, however, the stopping point Heidegger identifies has a peculiar structure: it stops existential substitution without suspending Dasein's concrete relations. The non-relationality at issue is formal and exact — no other can take over my dying — while solicitude, mourning, sacrifice, and being-with remain. Anticipation singularises me by revealing a possibility no relation can transfer, not by demonstrating that relations cease. The instrument brackets the other's substitutive access at this possibility. Whether the analytic itself articulates a singularisation that works **through** the other — a point where substitution ends not because relation is suspended but because a relation has landed — is exactly the question the next chapter answers, and the ordinary cases assembled there will show that everyday life contains such points in abundance, invisible to the analytic because, unlike death, they wear the clothing of concern.

One further passage from §47 must be registered and deferred. Before turning to my death, Heidegger pauses over the death of others: the deceased, he notes, is not merely a thing of concern; those who remain can still **be with** him, in a world from which he has departed — mourning and commemoration are modes of solicitude, not of equipment-handling [SZ §47, H238]. The passage is remarkable both for what it grants — the dead as still within being-with — and for what it is immediately made to serve: Heidegger's point is only that we do not thereby experience the other's dying, so the death of others cannot supply the analytic's theme. What being-with the dead might positively involve — address without reception, standing without answer — is a question the analytic opens and drops in a single page; Chapter 14 takes it up.

3.3 Conscience: a call with no caller

Anticipation supplies the possibility of authentic wholeness; it does not yet supply an attestation that authentic potentiality-for-being is demanded of Dasein itself. The analytic therefore requires a second instrument, and what is philosophically striking — the point on which this book’s complement will pivot — is the **grammar** of the instrument Heidegger reaches for. The attestation is a call (**Ruf**). Conscience is analysed as a mode of discourse, and discourse in the vocative: it does not describe, inform, or narrate; it reaches. The call is an abrupt arousal, from afar unto afar; it gives no information about world-events and has nothing to tell [SZ §56, H273–274]. It summons the they-self: “Auf das Selbst wird das Man-selbst angerufen” [H273]. Its mode is silence — “Der Ruf redet im Modus des Schweigens” [H273] — and its content, strictly, nothing: “Der Ruf sagt: Nichts” [H274].

Everything in this description belongs to the phenomenology of address, and Chapter 2’s apparatus fits it without remainder: a summons that does not describe its target but turns it; a reaching that outruns deliberation; a landing before any checking. Heidegger has built the analytic’s second engine of singularisation out of the second person’s own grammar. And then, at the decisive question — **who calls?** — the second person is shown the door. The caller is indeterminate, remains in the dark, has no name and no properties: “Der Rufer ist unbestimmt... Er hat keinen Namen, keine Eigenschaften” [SZ §57, H274]. This indeterminacy is not a residue of phenomenological modesty; it is structurally enforced. Any interpretation of the call as coming from another — a friend, an ancestor, a God — is dismissed as the they-self’s manoeuvre: an attempt to objectify the caller, to make the call negotiable, to escape the uncanny confrontation with one’s own thrownness [H274–275]. The caller-question is resolved strictly reflexively: the caller is Dasein itself, in its uncanniness — “Der Ruf kommt **aus** mir und doch **über** mich” [SZ §57, H275].

The construction should be stated in its full strangeness. The analytic requires an event with the structure of address, because nothing short of address can cut through the they — description the they can absorb, information it can chat about, but a summons lands on one. Yet the analytic equally requires that no other issue the address, because an other would reintroduce the world of concern, negotiation, and publicness from which the call is supposed to extract Dasein. The result, in the argument as written, is a vocative with the second person subtracted — more exactly, a vocative without a distinct worldly claimant-caller: a call with reaching but no interpersonal reacher. This reflexive determination is textually defended; the next chapter will show what it costs, and will show — against the suspicion that restoring the caller means regressing to a dialogical psychology Heidegger rightly scorned — that the second person can be restored without becoming a ground, because address travels on common routes and grounds nothing.

3.4 Guilt: the owed subtracted

What the call gives Dasein to understand is its being-guilty, and here the analytic performs its third and most explicit subtraction. §58 opens with an inventory of the ordinary senses of guilt, and the first among them is precisely the interpersonal one: “Schuldigsein” as “Schulden haben,” having debts, owing something to another — a mode, Heidegger says, of concerned being-with [SZ §58, H281]. The bracketing is then executed with complete candour: one can be guilty of something without owing anything to another, and owe another without being guilty — the interpersonal and the attributive senses come apart, and both are set aside as founded, ontic, regional [H281–282]. What remains after the subtraction is the existential concept: being-guilty as **Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit**, being-the-ground-of-a-nullity [H283] — thrown, hence never master of its own ground from the ground up; projecting, hence in every choice the nullity of the possibilities not chosen. Existential guilt is Dasein’s finitude turned into a structure: guilty not of anything and not **before** anyone, but guilty in its being.

The philosophical yield is real, and Chapter 4 will keep it: only a being that is not its own ground **answers** — a self-grounding being would justify, from its own resources, and owe nothing; being-guilty is why the answerer never speaks from sovereignty. But the price of the purification must be stated with equal clarity. What the bracketing removes is not a regional detail; it is direction. Owing is the only concept in the inventory that comes with a **to whom**, and it is set aside precisely because it does. The guilt that remains is a relation of Dasein to its own being — before itself, in the forum of its own uncanniness. Whether that purified guilt can be re-connected to the phenomenon of something **coming due to me before another** — or whether, as this book argues, the two concepts presuppose one another in opposite directions and neither can be derived from the other — is the question §4.5 resolves. Here it is enough to record the textual fact: at each station, the analytic’s engine of singularisation is built by removing the second person. Death singularises by suspending relation; the call singularises by erasing the caller; guilt singularises by subtracting the owed.

3.5 Resoluteness and the threshold of the Situation

The three instruments assemble into resoluteness: the reticent, anxiety-ready self-projection upon one's ownmost being-guilty [SZ §60, H296–297]. And resoluteness, at last, discloses the Situation — “das in der Entschlossenheit erschlossene, als welches das existierende Seiende da zu sein übernimmt” [SZ §60, H299]: the concrete there that exists only in and through the resolution, which cannot be calculated in advance or supplied by the public, and which is essentially closed to the they, for which there is only the general lay of circumstances: “Für das Man ist die Situation wesentlich verschlossen. Es kennt nur die ‘Lage’” [SZ §60, H300].

At exactly this point — the summit of Division Two's constructive work — the text makes the assertion on which this entire Part leans. Resoluteness, Heidegger insists, does not detach Dasein from its world or isolate it into a free-floating I. How could it, since resoluteness is authentic **disclosedness**, and disclosedness is disclosedness of a world that is a with-world? On the contrary: resoluteness toward oneself first brings Dasein into the possibility of letting the others who are with it “be” in their ownmost potentiality-for-being, in the solicitude that leaps ahead and liberates; resolute Dasein can become the “conscience” of others [SZ §60, H298]. The Situation of a resolute Dasein is therefore, by the text's own lights, a with-worldly Situation — a concretion of inherited, shared, factual possibility, taken up before and among others.

The assertion is correct, and the book exists to make it good. For consider what the analytic has available to make it good itself. The Situation is disclosed **only** in resoluteness. Resoluteness is projection upon being-guilty. Being-guilty was reached by subtracting the owed. The projection is attested by conscience. Conscience is Dasein calling itself, its caller secured against every worldly other. And the whole movement is set going by anticipation of death, whose singularising force consists in its non-relationality. Every instrument in the chain is a structure of worldly Dasein, and every instrument is reflexive in its singularising operation, in the exact sense fixed at the outset; each was secured against the worldly addresser on principle and by explicit argument. The route from the they to the Situation, as the analytic actually builds it, runs: silent self-call → taken-over nullity → unilateral self-projection → disclosed Situation; and only **then**, from within the Situation already disclosed, does resolute Dasein turn toward others — downstream, as those whom its liberating solicitude may release into their own potentiality, rather than as participants in the disclosure of the Situation itself. The direction of travel is one-way throughout. H298 asserts a with-worldly destination; the vehicle that arrives there is reflexive in every part.

This is the limit of the analytic, and it must be stated with the precision the objections below will test. The claim is not that Heidegger ignores others (Chapter 1 refutes that), nor that resoluteness is solipsistic (the text explicitly denies it, and rightly), nor that the Situation is asserted to be private (it is asserted to be the opposite). The claim is that the analytic asserts the shared character of the Situation while its instruments of disclosure remain reflexive in their singularising operation — that it shows how the shared world can become **mine** without yet showing, within the argument as written, how it becomes mine **before another**; how possibility is existentially taken over, but not how anything comes **due**. Between the *they*, which addresses everyone and no one, and the Situation, which the text itself declares with-worldly, the analytic supplies no addressive bridge — and it is not that no bridge occurred to Heidegger, but that the only bridge with the right grammar, the call, was deliberately rebuilt so that no one stands at its far end.

3.6 Objections

Vereinzelung is not isolation; the limit-claim attacks a strawman. Correct on the first point, and conceded from the start: Heidegger says expressly that singularisation does not detach Dasein from its world, and §60 repeats it for resoluteness. Individualisation is a modification of being-in-the-world, not an exit from it. But the limit-claim does not say the resolute Dasein is worldless; it says the **instruments** of its singularisation are reflexive in their operation — which is compatible with, indeed presupposes, the with-worldly character of what gets singularised. A being can be modified in its whole with-world while every lever of the modification runs from that being to itself. That is precisely the analytic's situation, and precisely the oddity.

The call's indeterminacy is phenomenological honesty — the call really does come from no assignable speaker, and Heidegger simply refuses to over-determine it. If the text left the caller open, this would be decisive, and the complement offered in the next chapter could be read as one permissible determination among others. But the text does not leave it open; it closes it, in two moves. Negatively, every hearing of a worldly other in the call is diagnosed in advance as the they-self's evasion [H274] — a hermeneutic device that renders the interpretation unfalsifiable from within. Positively, the caller is identified: Dasein itself in its uncanniness [H275]. Between an open indeterminacy and a determinate reflexivity guarded by a suspicion-clause, the text chose the second. That was a decision, not an omission — and the lecture course of 1928 confirms it as doctrine. The context of that confirmation matters and does not blunt it: the course's concern is the metaphysical neutrality of Dasein, a methodological neutrality prior to every factual concretion, and its polemical target is the dialogical personalism then current; but precisely because the setting is methodological, the passage shows the I-Thou's derivative status affirmed as a considered position — grounded in the prior egoicity of neutral Dasein — rather than left open [GA 26, 173, 187]. A decision can be complemented at its cost, which is what the next chapter does.

Being-guilty had to bracket owing; otherwise the existential analysis collapses into ethics. The methodological motive is granted: Heidegger seeks the condition of the possibility of any factual guilt, and conditions are not found by cataloguing instances. But notice what the bracketing quietly assumes: that owing-another is **founded** — a regional configuration of a deeper, non-directional guilt — rather than equiprimordial with it. That assumption is asserted, not shown; the inventory at H281–282 distinguishes the senses of guilt, it does not derive one from the other. The book's counter-proposal, developed in full at §4.5, is symmetrical rather than reductive — being-guilty without direction is finitude, not yet responsibility — and the analytic's own gesture of setting the owed **aside** presupposes that there was a directional phenomenon to set aside.

The turn to others in H298 shows the analytic completes itself. It shows the analytic knows where it must arrive. Liberating solicitude and becoming-the-conscience-of-others are effects radiating from a resoluteness already achieved; the other appears downstream of the disclosure, never upstream. A completion would require the reverse current — an other whose address belongs to the disclosing of the Situation itself. The text asserts the destination and withholds the current; supplying it without installing a new ground is the constructive task now due.

3.7 Threshold

The results of the reconstruction can be carried forward in three sentences. Being-toward-death existentially singularises Dasein by revealing the one possibility for which the common has no substitute — and it does so by suspending relation, so that the analytic's paradigm of finite non-substitutability is constitutively other-free. Conscience attests the possibility of authentic selfhood in the grammar of address — and secures its caller against every worldly other, so that the analytic contains a vocative no one speaks. Being-guilty gives the answerer its finitude — and is reached by subtracting the owed, so that the analytic's guilt is guilty before no one. Resoluteness gathers the three and discloses the Situation, which the text itself declares to be with-worldly, authentically shared, the concrete there of a being whose being is being-with.

One scoping remark belongs here, because the next chapter builds on it and the fairness of the whole reconstruction depends on it. What this chapter has found is a limit, not a failure. The analytic's route to singularisation — anticipation, the silent call, taken-over nullity — is genuine and self-standing: thrown projection, non-indifference, and each-time-mineness can be exhibited without making being-with their hermeneutic key, and nothing in this book claims that being-with produces mineness, that anxiety is generated by social relations, or that the call of conscience was, all along, another's moral address. Those claims would be false to the text and useless to the argument. What the reconstruction establishes is narrower and more consequential: that three questions have been compressed into one. What Dasein is formally, the analytic answers, and answers completely. How mineness becomes socially determinate against a field of real substitution — what non-substitutability **means** in a world where positions really are substituted — the analytic touches in its own inventory of representability [SZ §47, H239] and does not develop. And how mineness becomes answerability — before whom, with what standing, for which deed — the analytic sets aside at H281 by its own hand. The first question's answer is complete; the second and third are the bequest.

The analytic thus reaches the Situation carrying instruments that are worldly throughout and reflexive in their existentially singularising operation, and then asserts — correctly, but without deriving it within the argument as written — that the Situation of such a being is a shared one. How the shared world becomes **this** person's Situation — how the common, which addresses everyone and no one, concentrates into a demand under which attribution may become non-forwardable — is the question the analytic bequeaths at its summit. The next chapter supplies the local addressive bridge; Chapter 11 will later gather the complete movement as an ontology of finite taking-up and answerable localisation.

Chapter 4. The Shared-Worldly Situation

4.1 The point of attachment

Chapter 3 ended at a precise point, and this chapter begins from it. Heidegger establishes the non-substitutability of Dasein — death is formally disclosed as the possibility in which no other can substitute for me and no relational role can perform my dying [SZ §47, H240; §50, H250] — and he establishes the with-worldly character of the Situation: resoluteness does not detach Dasein from its world but first brings it into the possibility of letting the others who are with it “be” in their ownmost potentiality-for-being, in the solicitude that leaps ahead and liberates; resolute Dasein can become the “conscience” of others [SZ §60, H298]. But the instruments of existential singularisation the analytic assembles — anticipation, the silent and nameless call, guilt purged of the owed — are worldly and reflexive: their singularising operation runs from Dasein to Dasein, and no worldly other participates as addresser in the disclosure they accomplish [SZ §§56–58, H273–275, H281–283]. They establish finite ownmostness and non-substitutability, not yet answerable singularisation. The analytic therefore shows how the shared world can become mine without yet showing, within the argument as written, how it becomes mine before another. And the Situation itself is textually exact about what is missing: it is the “there” disclosed only in resolution, which the existing entity takes over to be — “das in der Entschlossenheit erschlossene, als welches das existierende Seiende da zu sein übernimmt” [SZ §60, H299] — essentially closed to the they, for which there is only the general lay of circumstances: “Für das Man ist die Situation wesenhaft verschlossen. Es kennt nur die ‘Lage’” [SZ §60, H300].

Call this the routing problem: how does a world that belongs to everyone produce a demand that has my name on it — a Situation that is not merely mine but mine to answer from, before another? Parts of the problem have been seen before, and the neighbours introduced at the outset are nearest exactly here — Theunissen diagnosing the egological limit, McMullin securing second-personal norms within the analytic, Crowell deriving answerability from conscience, Raffoul freeing responsibility from the ground; the departures marked in the Introduction are executed in this chapter and the next two, each at the point where the argument requires it. The present chapter's contribution is a thesis none of them states:

Where something comes due, the Situation is the shared world disclosed under singular address.

The thesis is indexed, and the indexing should be noticed. It concerns the Situation of **answerability** — the case in which the concrete there is a place from which an answer is owed — and that case is the book's entire subject. Whether **every** Heideggerian Situation is addressive — whether solitary danger, illness, or the artist's resolve also disclose under an address carried, deferred, or represented — is a stronger conjecture, registered here and argued nowhere, because nothing in the book requires it. What the book requires, and what Chapters 1–3 have jointly made both urgent and possible, is an account of the case Heidegger's own §58 set aside: the coming-due of something before someone. Two ordinary cases now build that account from the ground up.

4.2 First case: the call across the crowd

Consider a feast day on which a whole town stands packed on its seafront, facing the same sea, a single attention with two thousand shoulders under it. A man stands in that crowd for an hour with nothing in the world to be but crowd — unaddressed, unconsulted, no more picked out than a tile in a roof. Then a voice pitches a name over two hundred heads. It is the commonest name in the town, drawn from the church calendar like everyone's, borne within earshot by half a dozen others — two of whom half-turn and settle, the way one checks a phone that buzzed in someone else's pocket. The man it was for has turned before the second syllable finishes. There was, he reports, no order of events in it: he did not hear the name, recognise it as his, infer that he was meant, and decide to turn. The turn came first and he arrived in it.

The case is small and the structure it exposes is not. Three findings should be extracted in order.

First: the publicness of the medium is not the enemy of the singularity of the reaching; it is its condition. The name is the most second-hand thing the man owns — taken from a public shelf, fastened to him at a font by another's mouth, worn concurrently by others in the same square. Precisely this common currency is what allows it to be pitched across a crowd at all. A wholly private sign could not carry an address; even the most intimate nickname works only because it is shared between those who use it — a common of two is still a common. And then the shared handle delivers to one door. What is his is not the word. What is his is being the one it lands on. Generalised: the common does not merely coexist with singular address; it is what singular address travels on. This inverts the intuitive picture in which publicness dilutes and privacy concentrates. There is no private route to a person. There are only common routes, and a point at which they end.

Second: the language itself keeps a form for reaching as distinct from describing. In the language of the town the name changes shape when it is used to call: a vocative — a spare form of the name whose one use is turning a man around, not saying anything about him. Many languages preserve grammatical or prosodic resources for address that are not reducible to predication: the vocative form is barred from argument positions — it cannot stand as subject or object of anything said **about** anyone — and linguists distinguish the call that summons from the address that maintains contact [Zwicky, “Hey, Whatsyourname!”; the vocative-morphosyntax literature]. The philosophical point is not decoration. Descriptions fit, and fits can be checked; the man had no time to check anything, and there was, as he puts it, no **me** standing apart to do the checking. Whatever reached him did not reach him by describing him. Address is not a species of reference plus an imperative; it is its own relation, and natural language — unlike most theories of the person — has long kept a distinct room for it.

The room deserves one further look before the third finding, because the vocative is not an isolated curiosity of grammar; it is the most visible member of a family, and the family makes something structural visible. Deictic forms — I and you, here and there, now and then, this and that — are the common's purest instruments. No speaker owns the word "here"; no one privately originates "now"; anyone competent may say "I"; the forms are repeatable from indefinitely many situations, which is exactly what lets them circulate. And yet every actual occurrence of them is situated: said by this one, from here, now. Two speakers may say "here" of the same place, and the reference coincides while the enactments do not — your occurrence cannot become mine without a change of speaker, situation, time, or authorised representation. Deixis, in other words, is a privileged point of emergence of the open dynamic this chapter's cases keep exhibiting: the common and the non-interchangeable are not two opposed domains, and the deictic forms make their co-inherence visible in miniature — a form anyone can take up; a taking-up that is each time someone's. The observation must immediately be given its scope, in both directions. Downward: the **Da** of Heidegger's analytic is more originary than the linguistic "here" and "there" — it is the disclosed situatedness within which any deictic localisation becomes possible at all. *Dasein* does not sit inside its "there" as a subject inhabits a container; it **is** its there, and inhabits a shared world by being it. Read against that ground, **Jemeinigkeit** — the each-time-mineness Chapter 3 reconstructed — names, in one of its articulations and not as an exhaustive definition, the each-time non-substitutable enactment of being-the-**Da**. Nor is the common thereby shrunk to language: disclosedness opens; discourse articulates; language gives the articulation worldly expression and repeatability — the sequence runs in that order, and the field of Chapter 1, with its practices, positions, and weights, is wider than anything said in it. Upward: nothing normative follows from deixis alone. That two enactments of one form cannot be silently exchanged is a fact about situatedness, not yet about obligation. Four layers must be held apart — the numerical non-identity of any two events; the deictic anchoring of an occurrence in speaker, place, and time; the existential taking-up of a possibility as mine to enact; the normative localisation of an answer under standing and attribution. The first three articulate finite non-identity at different levels. **Answerable singularisation** names only the fourth transition: the conditional localisation through which a finite taking-up becomes non-forwardably relevant at a locus. Deictic anchoring helps trace an enactment; standing and attribution decide whether the traced enactment becomes answerable. Deictic singularity does not establish responsibility; direction does not establish standing; and the interval that deixis makes visible — between common articulation and non-interchangeable enactment, between the inherited form and this taking-up — is precisely what the rest of the book equips with its normative architecture.⁷

⁷ The deictic and positional reading is not claimed as original. It belongs to a line of interpretation developed especially by Gaetano Chiurazzi, whose work on modality, positionality, deictic space and time, and Dasein as a zero point of orientation forms part of the intellectual genealogy of the present argument (*Modalità ed esistenza*; *The Experience of Truth*; "Ontology of the Possible," in *Dynamis*; "Orientarsi e agire nel mondo"; "Tempo e giustizia"); Darin Tenev has independently made modality and indexicality in *Being and Time* the explicit subject of a monograph (*Three Lectures on Heidegger*, 2023; cf. Malecka and Mróz on *das Man*'s ontological modality). Bühler's I–here–now *origo* is useful as a linguistic analogue but must not be identified with Heidegger's *Da*; on the linguistics and semantics of indexicality more generally, cf. Benveniste, Jakobson, Kaplan, and Perry. The argument here uses deixis only as a privileged manifestation of the interval between common articulation and situated enactment; standing, attribution, and answerability require further structures.

Third: the call disclosed the person as reached; it did not create the person.

The man was there the whole hour — someone's godson, on two feet, with a history. Nothing was created on the seafront. Nor was he simply "found," as one finds an object lying about separate: for that hour he was carried anonymously — "crowd," as he afterwards put it — and the anonymity was not a privation but one of the sweetest states there is: the suspension of being presently singled out as answerable, as Part V will describe it and Chapter 11 specify as suspension of present attributive relevance, lived from inside. What the call changed is quieter and stranger than creation or discovery: the crowd did not stop containing him; it stopped carrying him anonymously. The call unfolded a place he had been occupying without occupying it explicitly, and he arrived in his own place already answering. I will say that address **discloses** the locus as reached. The contrast case is interpellation, adjudicated at §2.4 and only retested here: the hail does turn its man before deliberation, but misfire — the electrician who half-turned and settled — shows the address operating against a prior field of differential findability; the hail may recruit into a subject-position, but it does not wholly manufacture the bearer whose turning can be mistaken for another's. The person the hail finds was findable. And the analytic has a name for the anonymity from which the call unfolds a person: the *they*. To be carried as crowd is to exist in the mode of the *they* — and the case shows, against the tone though not the letter of Division One, that this mode is also shelter and rest, a point Chapter 9 develops.

The reader will notice that the case delivers, in miniature, the triad announced in the Introduction. The common supplied everything material: the name, the calendar, the crowd, the acoustic and normative possibility of calling. The other supplied the direction: one woman's address, carried on the common handle, traversed six bearers of the name and landed on one — same syllables, different reach, because what reached him came down the handle but was not the handle. And the man supplied nothing as a self-originating ground; what could not be supplied from anywhere else was his being the one reached — and his possible taking-up of that reach, which the call solicits and cannot perform.

4.3 Second case: the office and the landing-place

The first case shows address landing. The second shows what it lands on — by subtraction.

A bank branch closes in a small town after sixty years. Its manager, a man of thirty years' standing, is not transferred; the branch's functions move eleven kilometres east, where, within weeks, they run adequately under a new occupant. The town then performs, without designing it, a perfect experiment: it keeps using the man for a while. A pensioner stops him in the street with her pension book already coming out of her bag, and both of them hear the question **miss** — not miss the man, who hears every word and helps her anyway, there on the pavement, but miss the **counter**, the office the sentence had been shaped for through thirty years of Tuesdays, which no longer stands behind him. Meanwhile a neighbour's small ritual courtesies — gifts that were never for the manager — continue to arrive and miss nothing.

Two kinds of reach come apart before the town's eyes, because until the closure they sat on one man and answered to one word. The account questions were addressed to a **position**: a standing structure of the common with a chair in it, such that whoever occupies, answers; the address belongs to the place and lends itself to the occupant; and it survives its occupants precisely because it never was the occupant. The courtesies reached the man through a sedimented relational history — decades of particular kindnesses, particular days, a friendship with its own archive — and nothing of that history could be transferred with the office, because it was never the office's to transfer.

The decisive test is this. The bank advertised the position within the week — one column, forty words, applications to the capital. Try to write the corresponding advertisement for what the neighbour's courtesies reached. The exercise fails, and it is worth being exact about why, because it does not fail at the length of the list. One could inventory the man to his last habit and hire a patient performer for every listed line — the kindness itself could be learned. What no hiring can accomplish is installing someone into **having been the one addressed**. An advertisement is an open call; its grammar is **whoever** — whoever qualifies, whoever applies — and every office in the world can be advertised because an office is open in form to a qualified whoever, however exacting the qualifications. A singular address is not a stricter job description. It contains no whoever. **Performance transfers; the having-been-addressed does not.**

Three clarifications guard the finding. First, the position side of the split is not the fallen half of the world. That the pensioner can say her sentence to a new face in a fortnight is civilisation; the town runs on offices, and God protect the town where the flour depends on loving the baker. The critique of substitution comes later (Chapter 10) and is a critique of substitution **usurping the place of answer**, not of substitution as such. Second, the finding does not smuggle back a substance. Peel the man's addresses — manager, neighbour, colleague, son, godfather — and every one, held to the light, has a chair in it; the peeling finds no kernel, and **should** find none, since a kernel would only be one more layer, a pearl-sized position, and the question would begin again about who has the pearl. The locus is not a further item possessed alongside the roles: it is the finite **from-which** those roles and histories can be taken up, and at which attribution may become non-forwardable — a having that is not another of the had. Third, the sedimented history and the coming-due must not be fused. The decades of courtesies make the relation singular; they are the weight register of Chapter 1 at the scale of two households. But weight is not yet dueeness: the history **prepared** an address that only an event delivers — the day the neighbour stands at the door with a question that cannot go to the new manager, the history concentrates into a demand, and something comes due from the man that no archive, however singular, had yet made due. The two cases have now fixed the locus's two negative determinations — not constituted privately (only common routes reach it), not occupiable by another (no whoever can be hired into it) — and its positive office: the from-which of taking-up.

4.4 The thesis stated and unfolded

We can now return to the routing problem with the needed instruments. What converts the general lay of circumstances into a Situation of answerability is not an intensification of my self-relation but an **address** — the shared world's concentration, along common routes, onto the one who cannot forward the answering.

Where something comes due, the Situation is the shared world disclosed under singular address: a shared-worldly nexus of inherited meanings, practices, roles, debts, relations, and possibilities that becomes mine to take up because I am reached within it, from a standing the common makes intelligible, and cannot simply pass the answering elsewhere.

Unfolded into its three moments:

The common supplies the world and its routes. The language in which the demand can be formulated; the normative forms — promise, debt, harm, testimony, office, apology — in which the deed is intelligible; the offices, records, registers, and procedures through which an addressee can be specified and a claim carried; and, through its practices and institutions, standing itself in its recognised forms: the creditor's, the court's, the executor's. The common, that is, does more than make intelligible — it institutes, preserves, specifies, and confers, and the conferring is real, local, and defeasible. What it does not thereby become is the archic ground or the existential answerer: it may institute forms, standing, procedures, and local authority while never occupying the office of final authoriser or the place of the one who answers — the demonstration is Chapter 5's, and this chapter only draws on its result. I do not create the normative forms at the moment of answering, any more than the man on the seafront minted his own name; most of what reaches me was never undertaken, and reaches me anyway, through forms older than my consent.

The other gives the demand its second-personal direction. Without the other, the analytic's own instruments show what responsibility collapses into: conscience before myself, resolute self-relation — a relation of Dasein to Dasein. The demand's directedness is not derivable from the common, which as form either binds whoever or designates a satisfier, nor from my self-relation, which cannot confer a standing that is not mine to confer. Direction comes from a claimant-position — occupied by a person, by a plurality, by an institution speaking through its organs, or carried representatively on behalf of absent persons and relations: the testator by the executor, the victim by the court, the future by an advocate. "Before the other" names that structure of direction-with-standing, not a face-to-face scene. But the direction is not optional. A Situation of answerability is not merely mine; it is mine **before**.

The locus is where attribution becomes non-forwardable. In personal answerability, the locus determined by the second case is not a ground bearing the deed from beneath — not origin, substance, kernel, or unconditioned source — but the address at which a deed or present duty comes due; the finite from-which of taking-up and answer. The person receives a language not invented, a history not authored, roles not wholly chosen, and demands not self-generated; the person may still be the one whose answer cannot be replaced by another's. Several persons may participate in one Situation — a family in a dispute, a crew in a failure — and the thesis does not shrink it to a private stage: attribution may be differentiated among several loci. The institutional case will later show that the same attributive function can persist through organised continuity without becoming a second lived subject.

The locus even has a grammar, and the book will use it from here forward: **I — or we — answer to you, here and now, for this, regarding what occurred then, toward what must happen next.** Every coordinate in that sentence is one of the book's joints: the answerer—personal or institutional in the regions examined here; the claimant with standing; the deed or duty under a description that attribution can assess; the Situation as the here of the answering; the now in which response and repair are possible; the then of the act that cannot be made not to have happened; the next of the response projected and owed. One coordinate needs its own gate, to complete the set: the then. That a deed cannot be made not to have happened is irreversibility, and irreversibility by itself neither attributes the deed nor renders its answer non-forwardable — the past's indelibility says what cannot be erased, never who must answer; non-forwardability is fixed by surviving standing and attribution, not by the act's mere permanence. A promise displays the structure with unusual transparency — I undertake now, before you, to do this later — which is why promising recurs in these pages as a transparent case and must not be mistaken for the universal paradigm: negligence, omission, adopted policy, and inherited duty fill the same coordinates without any prior verbal undertaking. And when an institution speaks this grammar, the we is not a larger I: it holds the coordinates as Chapter 13 will show it can — through authorised organs, adopted procedure, and retained record — attributably and diachronically, not existentially. Unique, throughout, means unique relative to this answer: not the metaphysically incomparable, but the party from whom, this once, substitution has run out.

The thesis also explains, rather than merely repeats, the two features Heidegger assigns the Situation. It is closed to the they because the they is the mode of existence in which address is folded — in which one is carried anonymously and every demand is a demand on whoever. And it cannot be given in advance or calculated because address is an event of arrival, not a fit checkable against antecedent criteria. What resoluteness contributes — and here the account is a complement, not a correction — is the **taking up**: address discloses the Situation of answerability; only I can take up my place within it. Resoluteness without address remains indeterminate with respect to answerability before another; address without taking-up remains a demand received but not yet avowed. The compact form of the whole: **the common supplies the world and its routes; address discloses where something comes due; resoluteness is the taking-up of the place from which the answer can no longer be forwarded.**

Where address, standing, and attribution or present duty converge, reaching and non-forwardability are not two unrelated operations. The route by which an attributable party is reached and the limit beyond which its answer cannot be forwarded are the incoming and outgoing faces of one localisation. Viewed from its incoming side, the locus is where the relevant claim arrives; viewed from its outgoing side, it is where substitution of the answerer runs out. One Situation may localise several deed- or duty-indexed answers at differentiated loci, personal or institutional in the cases established here. Each answer remains contestable and revisable, and may be carried by a representative; what substitution cannot preserve is whose answer it is.⁸

⁸ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, *The Locus: The Address, the Deed, and the One Who Answers* (unpublished manuscript, 2026), “The Scholarly Return” and Appendix, “The Identity Thesis.”

The thesis can also be stated as an architecture, and stating it so fixes, once, what is inherited in it, what is reconstruction, and what this book builds. Three stages must be distinguished, because they answer three different questions and stand in a strict dependency. The first is Heidegger’s own, and Chapter 3 reconstructed it without amendment: formal existential mineness — thrown projection, the being for whom its being is at issue, the each-time-mine character of existence. This stage is self-standing; it is exhibited through anxiety, death, conscience, and resoluteness, and it neither requires nor receives derivation from being-with. Thrown mineness is non-indifferently delivered over to possibilities it did not create — that much is text, and the book claims it as text. The second stage is reconstruction, and the office case has just performed it: the worldly meaning of that mineness becomes determinate only against a field in which substitution is real. Only where a position can actually be occupied by another — the advertised office, the relieved shift, the represented claim, the procedure that stands in for the meeting — does the limit of substitution become visible as a limit: performance transfers, and the having-been-addressed does not. Actual substitution is the worldly condition for disclosing non-substitutability as a limit-function; the everyday interchangeability that Division One describes, and that Michel Haar pressed to its extremity, is not merely the concealment of mineness but the contrastive medium in which mineness first means something in the world. This is the scoped claim about being-with on which the chapter rests, and its scope should be exact: *Mitsein* is not the ontological source of mineness — Chapter 3’s instruments owed it nothing — but it is the indispensable hermeneutic field in which the contrast between common possibility and singular enactment becomes legible at all.

The third stage is construction, and it is this chapter's thesis: non-substitutability is not yet answerability. For the limit of substitution to become a place from which an answer is owed, there must be a claimant or claimant-position, direction, standing that survives contest, and a deed or present duty that attribution can reach — the grid of Chapter 2, later gathered into the apparatus of Chapter 11 — none of which any quantity of mineness or non-substitutability supplies by itself. Only in a field of address can finite non-substitutability become answerable singularisation; and each gate on the way holds independently: mineness does not yet answer; substitution does not yet attribute; address does not yet validate. The dependency, compressed: formal mineness does not depend on being-with as its cause; its worldly disclosure as a limit depends on being-with as its contrastive field; its answerable localisation depends on being-with as the field of address, standing, attribution, and response.

The neighbourhood should be credited at the same joint, because each stage has its predecessors and the book's claim lies in none of them singly. That being-with is constitutive and under-developed in Heidegger is Nancy's radicalisation and Theunissen's diagnosis before it is anything of this book's; that mineness is negotiated within a shared, temporally articulated world is McMullin's terrain; that everydayness is a field of indefinite substitutability of roles, gestures, and words is Haar's finding, and the practice readings of Dreyfus and Haugeland secured the public intelligibility that lets a taking-up be operative before it is reflective; that answerability and reason-giving have a Heideggerian root in conscience is Crowell's; that responsibility outruns the sovereign subject is Raffoul's retrieval, and the anti-archic horizon is Schürmann's; and that **Being and Time** invites a modal and indexical reading is a research line with its own prior ground — Tenev's systematic reconstruction, and the modal reading of **das Man** by Małecka and Mróz — which the book concedes without reserve. What the identified literature does not appear to develop is the ordered dependency itself: common possibility, real substitution, the limit of substitution, address, standing, attribution, withdrawal, and the personal and institutional forms of the non-forwardable locus established by this inquiry, joined as one architecture. The claim is deliberately of that form — not that these structures were never seen or never related, but that their dependency has not been joined in this form.⁹

⁹ Nancy, **Being Singular Plural**; McMullin, **Time and the Shared World**; Haar, "The Enigma of Everydayness"; Dreyfus, **Being-in-the-World**; Haugeland, "Heidegger on Being a Person" and "Truth and Finitude"; Crowell, "Being Answerable," in **Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger**; Raffoul, **The Origins of Responsibility**; Schürmann, **Heidegger on Being and Acting**; Tenev on modality and indexicality in **Being and Time**; Małecka and Mróz, "The Heideggerian Concept of Dasein and Its Ontological Modality: **Das Man**."

One further structure should be seeded here, because the later chapters harvest it and Chapter 11 will gather its full rhythm. In everyday common life, most answers are already given before anyone asks: prior answerings have been folded into roles, procedures, words, prices, and expectations, and circulate there — folded¹⁰, to give the term its definition at its first real work: sedimented into reusable common form, with present attribution held in abeyance so that the settlement can travel — the office answers the pensioner's Tuesday question before she asks it, the apology-formula carries a thousand old apologies, the form on the counter is a question someone answered so well that no one need answer it again. This folding is not a failure; it is how a finite world holds its gains (Chapter 9 gives it its due). Address, in the sense this chapter has built, ordinarily travels through these folds — received in a capacity, met through the stored settlement; what interrupts is the folds' boundary: the moment the inherited form no longer carries the claim — the counter is gone, the formula rings false, the record contradicts the face — and a particular person must take up, in the first person, not only the claim but the form's adequacy to it, a place the folds had been holding. Answerability is not the opposite of the folded world. It is the folded world's moment of unfolding onto someone.

¹⁰ The dialogue trilogy uses *fold* principally for the pathological installation by which one appearance covers and rules another. This book uses the unqualified term for the necessary temporal sedimentation and transmissible carriage through which inherited judgments, practices, roles, records, and prior answers remain reusable beyond their first enactment. The operation is one although its realisations are heterogeneous; it becomes pathological only where a carrier is installed as claimant, judge, or final answerer. A later volume reserves *archic fold* for a differently delimited technical use. See "Note on Terminology Across Volumes."

4.5 Answerability and being-guilty

A complement must show where it attaches. The natural objection from within the analytic runs: Heidegger already possesses the concept this chapter claims to add — **Schuldigsein**, being-guilty, disclosed by conscience as the condition of any factual guilt [SZ §58, H281–283]. Is "answerability" anything more than being-guilty renamed?

It is, and the difference is exactly the routing. Heidegger reaches being-guilty by explicit subtraction: ordinary guilt — owing something to another — is set down as a mode of concerned being-with and set aside, in order to expose **Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit**, being-the-ground-of-a-nullity, as its existential condition [SZ §58, H281–283]. The subtraction is methodologically intelligible and substantively costly. What it removes is not an ontic detail but the second-personal direction itself; and what remains — thrownness, the not-being-master of one's own ground — is a structure of finitude, not yet of responsibility. Being-guilty does decisive work in the present account: it prevents the answerer from ever appearing as sovereign origin or complete master of the conditions from which the answer is made; a being that was its own ground through and through would justify, not answer. What being-guilty cannot supply is due-ness, since due-ness is directional and the direction was subtracted at the door. The relation between the two concepts is therefore neither identity nor rivalry but presupposition in opposite directions, and the formula can now be given in full: **being-guilty without direction is finitude, not yet responsibility; direction without being-guilty is command, not answerability**. Neither founds the other. A demand landing on a self-grounding being would meet justification from sovereign resources; a null-grounded being that nothing reached would be finite and never answerable. The Situation of answerability requires both — which is why the analytic's own gesture of setting the owed aside could not be innocent: it presupposed the directional phenomenon it removed.

This is also where the account parts from Crowell, whose vocabulary it shares. For Crowell, answerability names Dasein's constitutive openness to giving reasons — **logon didonai** — as the ontological meaning of discourse, and its source is the call of conscience, through which Dasein takes over its being-guilty and converts factic constraints into reasons [Crowell, "Being Answerable," in *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger*, 214–236]. Everything in that reconstruction is retained here except its sufficiency, and the question between the accounts should be stated as one of explanatory adequacy: does reason-giving answerability derived from conscience adequately explain second-personal standing and directed demand? The call Crowell builds on is, by Heidegger's own construction, a reflexive summons in which caller and called belong to the same Dasein — and a reflexive summons can make me answerable **for** my commitments without yet making me answerable **to** anyone; the interlocutor his account gestures toward remains structurally optional. The second-personal direction cannot be generated from conscience; it must arrive. Where Crowell derives answerability from the structure of authentic self-binding, the present account locates it where a demand with standing lands from elsewhere — which is why the analysis runs through the Situation, and not through conscience alone.

4.6 Objections

The other need not be present. Correct, and the account depends on it. A summons reaches me from an institution; a testator's condition binds me years after the death; an absent victim's claim is carried by a court. If "address" meant a face-to-face scene, the account would shrink to an ethics of proximity and lose law, mediation, the dead, and the future at a stroke. "Before the other" names a claimant-position with standing, not physical presence; how standing is carried, represented, and survives its bearer is tested through delegation and the dead in Chapters 12 and 14. What cannot be deleted is the direction: a configuration in which no one, present or represented, actual or future, holds a claimant-position with standing to receive the answer is not yet a situation of answerability in the sense developed here – whatever else it may disclose.

Address constitutes rather than discloses. The first case was chosen to meet this, and the adjudication of §2.4 carries the weight: interpellation may recruit into subject-positions, and the hail comes dressed in power; but misfire shows the address operating against a prior field of differential findability, and what can be missed was not made by the landing. Disclosure names the third way between manufacture and discovery, and the case's anonymity – genuine, restful, interrupted – is why a third way is needed.

The account makes every demand binding. No. Once an address is received, it enters the field of response; whether acknowledgment, refusal, contestation, repair, or action is due depends on standing, legitimacy, validity, capacity, and circumstance – the grid of §2.2 governs, and refusal is a response. The common can make an illegitimate demand perfectly intelligible; the other can address falsely or without standing. What the account claims is only that where a demand with standing lands, the one it lands on cannot make it not have landed. Answerability is not obedience; the point becomes the centre of the Levinas chapter.

Mitsein is equiprimordial, so every Situation is already social; nothing needs adding. This is the strongest internal rebuttal, and it proves less than it seems to. From equiprimordiality it follows that the Situation of a being-with is social in its **content** – inherited possibilities, shared heritage, a with-world. It does not follow that its disclosure is addressive, and the textual sequence shows the routing the analytic actually provides: a silent, nameless self-call; a guilt purged of the owed; a resolve that unilaterally discloses the Situation and only then turns, in liberating solicitude, toward others [H273–275, H281–283, H298–300]. On that route the other stands downstream of the disclosure, released by it rather than participant in it. A refined variant holds that the caller of conscience is care, and care includes solicitude, so the other is already inside the call. But the text closes this exit itself: the caller has no name and no properties, and every attempt to hear a worldly other in the call is set aside as the they-self’s evasion [H274]. One cannot have it both ways. Either the call is reflexive, and the second person is absent from the analytic’s engine of singularisation; or the other calls in it, and the bracketing passages must be read against their letter.

The Situation was already social in Heidegger – the complement corrects a strawman. The chapter has conceded everything this objection is entitled to: §60’s authentic being-with-others and the conscience of others [H298], the co-historicity of destiny and generation [SZ §74, H384–385 – noting that the transition from **Schicksal** to **Geschick** is asserted structurally, with no communicative account of how heritage is negotiated]. The claim is not omission but underivation: the analytic asserts the with-worldly character of a Situation whose instruments of disclosure remain reflexive in their singularising operation. The complement supplies the missing relation – address – and nothing in the text forbids it; the wonder is only that a book whose account of conscience is built entirely on the grammar of the call never asks who else can call. The caller’s indeterminacy is the precise textual seam: Heidegger secures it **against** the worldly other [H274], and the 1928 course confirms the derivative status of the I–Thou as considered doctrine [GA 26, 173, 187; see Ch. 3 §3.6]. A complement at a decision, not a correction of an oversight – and offered in a form the decision’s own motives permit: address, on the present account, travels on common routes and grounds nothing.

4.7 Transition

The triad is now on the table, and each of its terms is exposed to a characteristic temptation. The common, because it precedes and outlasts every answerer — and because it genuinely institutes standing and local authority — invites promotion into the archic office: final authoriser fused with ultimate bearer, a ground behind the person. The other, because the demand's direction is underivable from anything else, invites promotion into the source of normativity as such — a ground before the person. Part III refuses both promotions in turn, and the refusals are not defensive manoeuvres but the completion of the analysis: only where the archic office stands empty does the locus appear as what it is. The person is not the ground of the deed; in personal answerability, the person is the finite locus at which its attribution comes due. Chapter 11 will later gather this local event into the larger rhythm of common possibility, finite taking-up, folding, address, localisation, answer, and return.

PART III — THE SYMMETRICAL REFUSAL AND MODAL TRIAL

Chapter 5. The Common Is Not a Ground

5.1 The office

Chapter 1 conceded to the common everything a philosophy can concede: priority in constitution across all three registers — intelligibility, position, weight. Chapter 4 then showed the common supplying every route by which a demand reaches a person, and more: instituting offices, conferring standing, specifying addressees, carrying claims. Nothing in the present chapter retracts a word of that. Its business is to prevent a promotion: the slide from **what constitutes and institutes** to **what finally grounds** — from the field everything forms in to the instance everything ultimately rests on. Blocking that slide is not a defensive aside but a load-bearing member of the book's construction, because the locus of Chapter 4 comes into view **only** where the final office stands empty. A person half-visible behind a grounding community is not yet an answerer; he is a delegate.

Consider an excavation opened in the middle of an inhabited town. The street is cut away; beneath it appear successive floors, walls rebuilt from earlier stone, rooms superimposed upon rooms, and finally earth at the point where human traces cease to be legible. Each floor was, for those who walked it, the ground. None was the final ground the demand seeks. Each rested on earlier work or earth, and neither term closed the question.

The demand therefore does not really ask for greater depth. It asks for a bearer of a special kind: something that supports without itself requiring support, a rester that does not rest. Whatever a trench reaches, however, it reaches as another finite support. The absence of the final bearer is consequently not like a missing stair in a staircase that should have contained one more. Nothing encountered establishes that such an office was ever occupied. The office is supplied by the demand.

Yet the town has not fallen. Its floors endured because they were relaid, levelled, drained, swept, repaired, rebuilt, and handed from keepers to successors. What appears solid from above is accumulated keeping¹¹. The trench does not prove an ontological thesis by analogy with soil. It makes visible the grammar of the demand: from every finite support the question slides toward a final bearer that would itself require no bearing. Once that slide is refused, the alternative is not unsupported standing. What the excavation discloses positively is renewal, repair, succession, and finite carriage where final grounding had been imagined.¹²

¹¹ In this volume, *keeping* concerns the finite maintenance and carriage of positions, obligations, practices, records, relations, and reference across absence and succession. It names neither a hidden keeper nor a general persistence of living singular occurrence. See “Note on Terminology Across Volumes.”

¹² Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, *No Ground* (unpublished manuscript, 2026), ch. 1, “The Excavation.”

The distinctions that follow state analytically what the excavation makes visible.

First, the target must be defined exactly, since “ground” is said in many ways and most of them are innocent. Four senses come apart:

- (i) **Causal origin** — what brought something about. Not at issue.
- (ii) **Constitutive condition** — what makes something possible and intelligible. Conceded to the common without reserve; this was Chapter 1.
- (iii) **Normative source** — what justifies; the instance to which “by what right?” may be referred.
- (iv) **Answerer** — what can stand in the place of answer for what rests on it.

Now the crucial complication, which an earlier stratum of this argument handled too quickly. Senses (iii) and (iv) each have perfectly legitimate **local** uses, and the common is full of their occupants. A statute genuinely authorises; a promise genuinely binds; a professional body genuinely confers standing and competence; an institution genuinely answers, through authorised organs, for what is done in its name. Local normative sources and local answerers are real, plural, defeasible, and – decisively – themselves open to question: the statute can be challenged, the body reformed, the institution held to account. None of that is this chapter’s target. The target is the office in which the local uses are fused and made final: the instance that would authorise the whole normative field, terminate every justificatory question, and ultimately bear what rests on the whole. Call it, with Schürmann, the **archic office** – the position his history tracks through its epochal occupants as the hegemonic fantasm: the One, Nature, God, Consciousness, each installed as that toward which action and justification finally turn [Schürmann, **Broken Hegemonies**; apparatus in Part IV]. The archic tradition repeatedly joins the two finalities: what ultimately authorises is also invoked as what ultimately bears or explains. This book contests the fused, final office – and only it.

The paralogism this chapter isolates is then exact: the inference from (ii), and even from the local occupancies of (iii) and (iv), to the archic office – **because the common makes everything intelligible, and institutes so much that binds, the common is what everything finally answers to**. Late modernity, having destituted the older occupants, runs the inference daily; its candidate fantasms are named Society, Language, Culture, History, Structure. The names are recent; the promotion is the oldest gesture in metaphysics.

5.2 Four promotions

The promotion has four standard forms, worth distinguishing because each fails at a different joint and each returns, in respectable dress, in a later chapter.

The community as macro-subject. The organicist and communitarian form: the Volk, the substantial *Gemeinschaft*, the nation or tradition figured as a person writ large, with a will, a memory, a destiny, and an authority native to it rather than carried by it. The position deserves an argument, not a diagnosis, and its argument has a stable shape: the community is irreducible to its members (true, and conceded in Chapter 1's first demarcation); therefore the community is a subject in its own right; therefore its authority over members is native, not delegated. Both inferences fail independently. Irreducibility does not yield subjecthood — the grammar is irreducible to its speakers and is no one at all; a field can exceed every element without becoming an agent among them. And subjecthood, where it is genuinely approximated — in the structured, procedure-bearing institution — yields **local** and accountable authority, not native and final authority: the corporation and the parish answer to law, members, and purposes precisely because their agency is instituted. What the macro-subject picture needs is an entity with the institution's agency and the field's unaccountability, and the two properties come from incompatible sources. Chapter 13 meets the position's strongest modern descendant, the group agent, and adjudicates it with care.

Language, or discourse, as constituting agent. The linguistic-idealist form, already met as an objection in §1.4: because nothing counts as anything outside the common's forms, the forms are credited with doing the counting — language “speaks,” discourse “produces” subjects, the symbolic order “assigns” places. The grain of truth is register one entire. The promotion lies in the verbs: rules are enacted only in practices sustained by embodied participants and institutions; the form itself does not become a further speaker or answerer. This much of the rule-following considerations the argument can safely use — a rule does not determine or perform its own application [*Philosophical Investigations* §§198–202] — without pressing them into service for any larger reduction. That a practice may institute what no participant separately intended is granted, and will matter below; what no practice does is step forward as the one who spoke.

History as tribunal. The Hegelian form: *die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*. Here the common's third register, weight, is promoted: the accumulated past becomes not merely what makes demands heavy but the final judge of which demands were right. The form is the most seductive of the four, because history genuinely does something court-like: it reveals consequences, exposes pretensions, outlasts propaganda. But revelation is not adjudication. A tribunal must be addressable — one must be able to enter a plea before it, and it must answer for its verdicts; history hears no pleas and signs nothing. What “the judgment of history” names, when it names anything, is the future **persons** who will judge — carried standing again, the executor writ large — and when it names no one, it is a general form draped in a robe.

Structure as exculpation. The practical form, rarely theorised, constantly pleaded: “society made me,” the forwarding of the answer itself to conditions, formation, system. Unlike the first three, it contains so much truth that refusing its conclusion requires the finest cut in the chapter; §5.6 makes it.

Four forms, one shift: in each, the common is moved from the position of **medium and institutor** — that through which demands become intelligible, weighted, specified, and routable — to the position of final **terminus**. The three arguments that follow show the final position cannot be held.

5.3 Three arguments

The field argument. Entered in Chapter 1 and now spent. The archic office, by its answering half, requires the capacity to stand where a question arrives and return something to its asker. The common as field has no such capacity, not contingently but categorially: a field has no voice, performs no deeds, occupies no position within itself; it is not a shy interlocutor but the wrong **kind** of thing to interrogate, as a grammar cannot be summoned and a currency cannot confess. This is the asymmetry on which the whole chapter stands: **the common can carry every route and answer nothing**. The demarcation of Chapter 1 must be kept exact here, because everything turns on it: **institutions** formed within the common can answer, genuinely, through authorised procedures — that is Chapter 13's subject and this book concedes it in advance — but the common as such, the field beneath every institution, does not thereby become another answerable party. When the plea or the theory reaches past every answerable institution to “society itself,” it has left the last addressee behind.

The specification argument. Chapter 1 §1.5 drew the line this argument spends: common forms carry both generality and specification — the summons carries a name, the register exists to specify — and specification, however precise, is not yet being-reached. Now the normative consequence. Common forms can specify, with any exactness, **from whom** something is due, **what** is due, and **under which conditions**; the tax code and the fiduciary duty are monuments of such specification. What they cannot do, merely as forms, is occupy either end of the vector: they cannot become the party **before whom** the specified something comes due, and they cannot become the bearer **who answers** when it does. A creditor collects; a court receives the account; an heir presses the claim — at both poles of every actual coming-due stand claimant-positions and answerers that the forms specify but do not staff. To locate the final source of obligation in what can never stand at either pole of an obligation is to explain the river by the riverbed: the bed shapes every course and carries no water of its own.

The borrowed-weight argument. The deepest of the three, because it explains the phenomenon that makes the promotion tempting: anonymous imperatives really do bind. Traffic law binds; fiduciary duty binds; the unwritten courtesies of a town bind. If the common holds no final office, whence the bindingness? The answer was promised in Chapter 1 and is now given as a criterion — restricted, first, to its proper domain. Not all normativity is of one kind: the correctness-conditions of grammar and games, the standards of proof, the conventions of a genre, the requirements constitutive of a role bind in the sense that violating them is doing the thing badly or not doing it at all, and nothing in what follows disputes their standing or demands that mathematics produce a claimant. The criterion governs **answerability-generating imperatives**: those anonymous demands that purport to make a person or institution owe an account — that reach, in Chapter 4's sense, toward a determinate locus at which attribution may become non-forwardable.

The tracing criterion. An anonymous imperative can make an account due from a person only insofar as it is traceable — in principle, by a route that could be exhibited — to the persons, relations, vulnerabilities, harms, or shared practices whose claims it carries and mediates.

The criterion has an internal structure, and its three routes should be distinguished, because the promotions of §5.2 each block a different one. **Person-tracing:** the imperative carries the claims of identifiable or identifiable-in-principle persons — repayment, repair, protection from injury; behind every painted line on the road stand the injurable, actual bodies whose claims the rule carries in compressed, anonymised form — anonymised precisely so that it can protect whoever, which is what bodies on roads require. **Relation-tracing:** the imperative sustains a relation whose participants have standing — confidentiality, fiduciary care, the kept promise; the norm's weight is the relation's, and the relation is somebody's with somebody. **Practice-tracing:** the imperative sustains a shared practice on which participants reasonably rely — procedural fairness, the integrity of records, the coordination that lets two thousand vehicles cross a town by lunchtime. Practice-tracing is an irreducible route of assessment alongside the first two — but it must, pressed far enough, return to participants, reliance, and vulnerability: a practice can mediate claims; it cannot become the final claimant merely because it is inherited. Where that return fails — where the imperative, pressed for its principals, yields neither person nor relation nor reliant participant — the norm does not rest on a deeper ground; it hangs.

Hanging norms are recognisable, and the clean cases are humbler than culture wars: the duplicate paper form still required after the digital record became authoritative, filled in daily and read by no one; the monthly report a reorganisation left without a receiving office, still compiled; the approval step whose supposed beneficiary was abolished two org charts ago. Each binds by sheer circulation — “it is submitted,” “one signs here” — and each is felt, accurately, as weightless the moment anyone asks whom it serves. Such norms are not this chapter's business but Chapter 10's, for they are the native currency of the they, and the second liberation consists in learning to ask them, politely and relentlessly, **who is asking**. What matters here is the shape of the whole: where anonymous imperatives generate genuine answerability, their weight is carried weight — persons, relations, practices-with-participants, compressed and made whoever-proof for circulation. The awe such compression can accumulate is real; what it is made of is everyone it carries. The mistake of crediting it to the common as such is understandable, the way it is understandable to credit the strength of a bridge to the paint.

5.4 What the refusal is not

Three misreadings must be closed, and a fourth, subtler than the others, closed most carefully.

Not antinomianism. The tracing criterion is a criterion of tracing, not a licence. Most of the anonymous order traces successfully — that is what it means to say, with Chapter 1, that the town runs on it — and a traced norm binds with the full weight of the claims it carries, no less binding for being anonymous in form. The criterion changes where the weight comes **from**, not how much there is.

Not individualism. The refusal concerns the archic office, not the priority and not the instituting. Constitution still runs from the common to the person; local authority is still genuinely conferred by common forms; no self-made subject is smuggled back. What is denied is only that the constituting and instituting instance is also the final justifying and answering instance. Atomism and organicism, it should now be visible, share the paralogism and merely staff the office differently: the one grounds the common in individuals, the other grounds individuals in the common. Both need the office. The book needs the vacancy.

Not a re-staffing. The vacancy is not held open for a better candidate. The next chapter refuses the archic office to the other — a far more delicate operation, since the other, unlike the common, **can** address and answer. And the person never takes it: the locus of Chapter 4 was defined as what receives from before, against the ground that bears from beneath; a person promoted to self-ground would be the oldest occupant of all, restored. The office is shown to be, in Schürmann's sense, a fantasmic office — one whose every occupancy was an installation, and whose destitution is not a crisis to be repaired but the condition under which what the occupants always covered can finally appear [Part IV].

Nor is the vacancy itself the ground. The subtlest relapse, and the one a certain reading of this book's own tradition invites: groundlessness promoted into a new arche — the Abyss, the Nothing, the tragic condition itself installed where God stood, so that persons now answer **to the absence**, keep faith **with the void**, derive an ethics **from exposure to nullity**. Schürmann himself flagged the paradox as the test of any anarchy worth the name: an anarchy that functions as a principle has changed nothing but the letterhead [**Broken Hegemonies**]. The present account passes that test here or fails it everywhere. The shared exposure to nullity that Chapter 3 recovered from the analytic explains why answerers never answer from sovereignty; it grounds nothing, demands nothing, and is owed nothing. Nothing in this book answers to the vacancy. Persons answer to persons, along routes the common carries; the vacancy is simply the fact that the routes end where they end, and that nothing stands behind the last address collecting the debts. To mourn the vacancy, or to worship it, is to have understood it as a departed occupant — which is exactly the promotion, executed in the past tense.

Objection: on the best accounts we have, normativity is instituted by social practice — statuses conferred, commitments tracked, authority a standing within a practice; the common, under analysis, is the source. The account is largely right, and the right response is concession before distinction. A practice may genuinely institute norms that did not exist before it: the offside rule, the statute of limitations, the fiduciary standard were not lying in wait among the claims of persons, and no reduction of them to antecedent individual entitlements should be attempted or is needed. What the concession leaves untouched is the difference between two achievements that the objection's vocabulary runs together: the social institution of normative statuses, which practices perform, and the concrete bearing of answerability, which they do not. Scorekeeping, commitment, entitlement, sanction — every working part of the practice-theoretic apparatus is a relation **among participants**, kept and contested by them [cf. Brandom, **Making It Explicit**]; the practice institutes the game and does not become one of its players, still less the one to whom all play is finally referred. The common may institute local normativity, in exactly the objection's sense, without becoming its archic ground or its existential bearer — which is all this chapter denies it.

Objection: the authority of the social is a datum — entire traditions have knelt to it, and the experience of the sacred, on a venerable analysis, is the experience of society itself exceeding its members [Durkheim]. The datum is granted; the analysis of the datum is the question, and the borrowed-weight argument predicts the datum exactly: the aggregate of carried claims — generations of them, compressed, ritually condensed — will always exceed any individual, and the phenomenology of that excess is awe. That communal life exceeds its members is not in dispute; it clearly does. The issue is the form of the excess: whether it remains mediated, traceable, and contestable, or presents itself as self-authorising and immune. Society becomes ground-like precisely when its sacred authority is insulated from tracing and contestation — when the ritual forbids the question “whose claims does this carry?” rather than opening, as living ritual does, onto the dead it keeps and the relations it renews. The promotion, in other words, is not an illusion about what the social is; it is a specific closure imposed on what the social carries — and Chapter 10 will show in whose interest the closure typically operates.

Objection: the later Heidegger seems to teach the contrary — intelligibility arrives epochally, as sending (*Geschick*), and the sending grounds each age's understanding of Being. The full engagement belongs to Part IV; the structural reply is available now. Donation is clause (ii) writ historically — that intelligibility is received, in configurations no one chose, is thrownness at the scale of ages, and the book affirms it. The archic office is another matter, and a sending holds neither of its halves: the *Geschick* justifies nothing (that an understanding was sent is no argument for it — a point the later Heidegger himself makes against every appeal from thinking to fate) and answers for nothing (epochs cannot be served papers either). Whoever converts the sending into a tribunal — reading “the destiny of Being” as a verdict on persons, or worse, as their alibi — has re-staffed the office with the most anonymous occupant yet. The book's Heidegger is the one Schürmann read: the thinker of the office's closing time, not the doorman of its newest tenant.

Grounding and keeping must therefore be distinguished by their temporal grammars. A ground would bear what rests on it by occupying a final position beneath or behind the field; keeping is the finite renewal through which a form continues without any such position. A language stands because speakers take it up, an office because successive occupants perform and revise it, a relation because its parties return to it, a record because someone preserves, reads, and transmits it. None of these acts terminates dependence, and none needs to. The refusal of the archic office discloses not an unsupported world but a world that never stood in that manner: its continuance has always been temporal, plural, revisable, and exposed to lapse. Keeping is not a reduced ground; it is what becomes visible when the demand for a ground is withdrawn. Chapter 9 develops the finite arrangements by which such keeping becomes possible.

5.5 The modal grammar of positive no-ground

The refusal can now be given its constructive statement. The office is empty, the tracing criterion is in force, and keeping has replaced grounding. Taken together, these do not subtract support from the world; they describe the modal order in which a finite common world already runs. Positive no-ground names a single movement that must be read from two sides: from the side of the common as historically singular givenness, and from the side of the participant as the emergence of an answerable locus. The first moment is a possibilising necessitation. Its positive result is the common's internal possibilisation of singularity. The answering movement is a conditional singularising necessarisation.

The first movement does not remove an imagined exterior. It excludes externality from the space of possible positions. No participant can first stand outside the common gathering and then choose a language, history, role-field, or world of significance, because any position from which such a choice could become intelligible would already belong to the field it purported to exceed.¹³ The movement has a Parmenidean form without repeating Parmenides as social ontology: what would stand outside the gathering cannot become a thinkable route by which the gathering might be originated or surveyed. In a later Heideggerian vocabulary, there is no externality to the *es gibt* from which the giving could be appropriated as one's own production. This is the first disappropriation. The participant receives possibilities it did not create and cannot possess as their ground.

¹³ Hölderlin gives the temporal register of this non-exteriority in the second version of "An die Deutschen": "Unserer Jahre Zahl sehen und zählen wir, / Doch die Jahre der Völker, / Sah ein sterbliches Auge sie?" Heidegger quotes the stanza at the close of "The Age of the World Picture," after placing the human being in an in-between — belonging to Being while remaining a stranger among beings [GA 5, 96; *Off the Beaten Track*, 72]. Here the verse is not invoked to confer subjecthood or destiny upon a people. It names the excess of inherited common time over any mortal standpoint capable of surveying and possessing it as a whole.

A failed greeting gives the claim phenomenal shape. A traveller offers a plain *buongiorno* to a stranger who does not share the language in which it is spoken. The word is well formed and clearly heard, yet it does not arrive as the greeting intended: sound reaches the ear, but greeting fails. The failure cannot be located simply in the speaker's mouth, which has said what it meant to say, or in the hearer's body, since the same hearer can receive a greeting without difficulty from one who shares the relevant language. It belongs to whether speaker and hearer inhabit a determinate articulation in which this sound can count for both as this address.

Even before the word is ventured, the stranger's approach makes conspicuous a question less visible on the familiar path: whether an address from here will arrive there at all. The question of reach is found before it is posed. Yet the failure does not place either party outside the common. Each already inhabits a language and a world in which greeting is possible; what they do not yet share is the determinate articulation adequate to this greeting. The border is therefore neither a bodily defect nor a wall around intelligibility. It lies between articulated routes within the common.

Nor can the border be crossed by decision alone. The traveller may decide to learn, but no act of will can make the foreign word a greeting in the mouth at once. Entry requires exposure, correction, failed attempts, repetition, and time: a formation undergone through which the participant becomes able to speak from within the articulation rather than merely reproduce its sounds. The articulation precedes this participant's entry because it is already sustained through speakers and practices, not because it stands as a self-subsisting agent. Its present exclusion and its possible entry are two sides of the same bordered availability: there is something to enter because the route is not privately remade at the threshold.¹⁴

¹⁴ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, **Koinonia: A Phenomenology of Being-With** (KiTalent Research, 2026), ch. 4, "The Stranger and the Failed Greeting."

The border is thus internal to shared intelligibility: an edge between determinate articulations, never a position outside the common from which articulation as such could first be elected. The scene gives phenomenal shape to the entry point of the first movement — no outside to the common, many routes within it. It does not by itself establish the complete doctrine of exterior ground, total spectatorship, and final substitution; those inaccessibilities remain to be argued.

The necessity is possibilising because it determines no single route. It necessitates the medium and thereby opens plural possibilities within it. The common appropriates the participant into a shared field by disappropriating it of sovereign exteriority, private origin, and exclusive ownership of what it may become. A role, word, practice, or office becomes commonly available precisely because its position is not the private property of any one bearer. This does not mean that finite enactments are retrospectively interchangeable. The common position is replaceable; every actual taking-up is non-identical as this taking-up, even when that non-identity remains disattended. The first movement therefore yields a precise law: no outside to the common, many possible routes within it.

The same necessitation must be read from the side of the common itself. It excludes not only an individual standpoint outside the shared field, but the external availability of another complete historical givenness as a co-present alternative. The Greek world, for example, can be reconstructed, translated, excavated, staged, and inherited; it cannot be given now as it was given then, precisely because its present givenness includes ruin, transmission, interpretation, and historical distance. This is not merely a deficit of knowledge that a perfect reconstruction might overcome. The mode of givenness has changed irreversibly. What is given now cannot simultaneously be given in the mode in which it was then present, because its being-given-now includes its no-longer-being-now.

A former common therefore does not stand externally beside the present one as a complete world available to an impartial eye. It persists internally – as fragment, word, transformed institution, ruin, loss, unresolved question, and reopened possibility. The exclusion of exteriority does not abolish uniqueness. It relocates uniqueness within the gathering. What cannot return as an external present may remain operative as an internal singularity. The fold preserves the past not by restoring its former presence, but by making its singular absence available within the present common.

This is the decisive positive sense of no-ground. The common does not derive its uniqueness from an external archetype, a transcendent source, or contrast with a co-present world. It is historically singular as this unrepeatable configuration of givenness, internally composed of inheritances, absences, traces, differences, and unrealised possibilities. These internal singularities are not contents placed inside a neutral container; they compose the common's configuration itself. The common is therefore unique without becoming a person, collective subject, or self-contained totality. It has no single eye, sovereign will, or complete possession of its own history. Its singularity is configurational and historical.

Necessitation excludes externally grounded uniqueness; possibilisation includes and generates singularity internally. The first necessity gives the common no outside from which to receive its identity. Its possibilising effect gives the common an inside that is not homogeneous. No exterior to the gathering; no exhaustion of singularity within it. This is why the no-ground is positive: the absence of an external source does not leave the common empty or indeterminate. It makes possible this historically singular arrangement of differences and the emergence within it of finite, situated singularities.

Historical singularity alone does not make the common addressable as one. Nor does the mutual formation of recurrent ways of inhabiting and their historical field establish, without further argument, one reciprocally defining configuration. Nothing in the present analysis confers agency, claimant-standing, or locushood upon the common. Whether some historically inhabited commons acquire a stronger unity of this kind is not decided here.

The fold is the temporal operator of this possibilisation. When an answer good enough to keep is sedimented into a formula, office, price, precedent, or procedure, the taking-up's present singular relevance is suspended so that the settlement can travel beyond its occasion. The suspension is an achievement, not a loss. The form circulates as available to whoever is appropriately positioned, and finite life is relieved of having to reopen every question or reproduce every original claimant. Yet a rule does not apply itself, a role does not perform itself, and an office answers no letter that no occupant opens. Every circulation still requires a finite enactment. In that non-identity between replaceable position and situated taking-up lies finite non-identity: every concrete enactment is this enactment even where its attribution remains practically suspended. Chapter 9 will establish why such folding is necessary; Chapter 11 will determine more exactly what it suspends as present attributive relevance.

The second movement begins from the positive reality of substitution. The common genuinely occupies the places of persons in ordinary traffic: offices carry absent claimants, formulas carry prior answers, records carry the dead, and procedures stand where no renewed face-to-face encounter is possible. What occurs under singular address is therefore not the exposure of an illusion. It is withdrawal from a place legitimately and necessarily occupied. Where address has arrived, standing survives its test, and a deed or present duty is attributable, the common's substitution can no longer remain sufficient as final terminus. It continues to mediate the answer — through language, history, role, record, and procedure — but it cannot answer finally in the place of the finite party whose taking-up has become due.

What withdraws deserves its own name, because it is the exact event the archic promotions of §5.2 arrest. Call it, with the tradition this book inherits, withdrawal — **Entzug**. The occupation just described is representational, never sovereign — a place of appearance and carriage, not of originating will — and it is necessary: Chapter 9's argument from finitude is nothing but the demonstration of its necessity. Withdrawal is what happens to this occupation when a singular address arrives that the form cannot exhaust: the claimant appears through the category but is not identical with it; the one reached appears through the office but is not exhausted by it; and the form's provisional occupation of, or overlap with, the parties' places recedes. What withdraws is exact: the form's sufficiency to stand as claimant, and its sufficiency to stand as answerer. What remains is everything else: the language, the role, the history, the procedure, the institutional weight — the medium entire. The common occupies the other's place so that finite common life may continue; it withdraws from that place when address must become singular. The common remains the medium after it ceases to suffice as the party. And no one performs this withdrawal: there is no sovereign withdrawer behind it, any more than there was a speaker behind the grammar — it is the phenomenological de-overlapping produced when a carrier proves unable to exhaust the singular positions it carries. To personify it would be to re-staff the office at the very moment of its vacancy.

This is the conditional singularising necessarisation. The position remains repeatable, but this taking-up cannot be reassigned without changing whose taking-up it was. Where address, standing, and attribution or present duty hold, the common is disappropriated of final answerership and the taking-up becomes answerably localised at a finite locus. Yet this localisation remains disappropriative. The locus bears attribution without owning either the common possibility or the conditions that made its taking-up possible; it receives the answer without becoming the sovereign author of the field. Chapter 11 will state the distinction in its final form: attribution requires a home, but the possibility has no proprietor.

Enteignis wohin?

A late Heideggerian question makes the no-ground character of this double disappropriation visible at its most difficult point. In “Time and Being,” after thinking the giving of being and time from **Ereignis**, Heidegger turns to what belongs to appropriation as its own withdrawal: **“Zum Ereignis als solchem gehört die Enteignis. Durch sie gibt das Ereignis sich nicht auf, sondern bewahrt sein Eigentum”** — disappropriation belongs to Ereignis as such; through it Ereignis does not abandon itself but preserves what is its own [GA 14, 28; **On Time and Being**, 22–23]. The formulation already refuses the simple opposition its vocabulary appears to invite. **Enteignis** is not the defeat of **Ereignis**, as though appropriation first succeeded and were then cancelled by a contrary force. Nor is what is disappropriated simply lost. The withdrawal belongs to appropriation itself, and what it withdraws it thereby keeps from the unrestricted exposure that would make it available as an object, possession, or ground. Disappropriation is not abandonment. It is how appropriation does not congeal into possession.

The protocol of the seminar on the lecture records a question that presses exactly where this formulation becomes hardest to hold: **“Enteignis wohin? Richtung und Sinn dieser Frage wurden nicht mehr besprochen”** — disappropriation toward where? The direction and sense of this question were not discussed further [GA 14, 52; **On Time and Being**, 43].¹⁵ For the present inheritance, the record is remarkable not because seminars leave questions unanswered; every seminar does, but because this particular non-answer is written into the protocol. The question is raised, its directional form is preserved, and the fact that its direction and sense were not pursued is itself reported. The text demonstrably records a cessation; the reading developed here receives that record as opening the place in which an answer would ordinarily stand and leaving it conspicuously unoccupied.

The visibility matters. **Wohin?** asks after movement under the ordinary grammar of destination: away from somewhere, toward somewhere, arriving at a terminus distinguishable from the departure. Once the question has been asked, thought expects a place, term, or condition into which disappropriation passes. The protocol frustrates the expectation without erasing it. It could have omitted the question; instead it preserves both question and cessation. Whatever the historical contingencies of the discussion, the recorded result invites a philosophical inheritance rather than compelling one. **In the reading pursued here, the question opens the place of a destination and its recorded non-pursuit keeps that place open.** What the philosophical memory of the passage retains is therefore not merely a topic postponed. It retains the failure of the ordinary directional schema at the point where that schema would turn **Ereignis** into the object waiting at the end of **Enteignis**.

The most tempting answer would be: disappropriation proceeds toward Ereignis. But taken in the ordinary grammar of destination, that answer would destroy the relation Heidegger has just named. It would place **Ereignis** beyond the movement as a destination into which something enters, or as a higher proprietor to whom what was taken from one owner is finally transferred. **Enteignis** would become an interval between two possessions: first mine, then no longer mine, finally Ereignis's. The whole metaphysics of destination would return inside the word meant to unsettle it. Ereignis would occupy the office that this chapter has emptied: the encompassing term that receives what every finite bearer relinquishes and finally owns what none of them can.

The sentence from the lecture says the opposite. Through **Enteignis**, Ereignis does not give itself up; it preserves its own. This does not license an arrow — **Enteignis** → **Ereignis** — as though two terms stood apart and the first delivered its cargo to the second. It says that in disappropriation appropriation occurs without becoming possessive. Ereignis is not the missing destination that fills the protocol's blank. The answer can be given only in crossed form: **the toward-where of Enteignis is Ereignis, but only insofar as Ereignis is not another where**. It is not the terminal region outside the movement, but the belonging that becomes thinkable when no exterior terminus can be installed. **Positive no-ground does not provide the missing destination. It shows why no destination is missing.**

This is the no-ground of disappropriation. No-ground is not the absence of all direction. The two movements already reconstructed have unmistakable direction. The first deprives the participant of sovereign origin, exclusive ownership, and the fantasy of an intelligible position before the common. The second deprives the common of final answerership and the participant of the absolution promised by indefinite substitution. But neither movement transports something from one completed region into another. The participant is not carried from an original exterior into the common, because there was no exterior position from which the journey could begin. And when the common withdraws as final answerer, the taking-up is not delivered to a sovereign subject waiting beneath the roles, because no such subject has survived the book's first five chapters. The movement has an away-from without an outside-to-which. **The disappropriative character of disappropriation is its lack of an external Wohin.**

The book's existing term **Entzug** must be distinguished here from **Enteignis**. **Entzug** names the determinate withdrawal analysed above: the common form's sufficiency to occupy the places of claimant and final answerer recedes when a singular address exposes what the form cannot exhaust. **Enteignis** names the broader disappropriative structure within which that withdrawal has no external recipient, proprietor, or terminus. The two belong together, but they are not synonyms: **Entzug** specifies what withdraws in the phenomenology of answerability; **Enteignis** clarifies why the withdrawal cannot be completed by transfer elsewhere.

The absence of that external **Wohin** can now be stated as a doctrine of **necessitated inaccessibilities**. These are not empirical gaps that more information might close, nor imperfections of finite cognition measured against an ideal survey. They are positions that cannot become accessible without abolishing the structure they claim to disclose. An exterior participant would no longer be a participant; a common present to itself as a completed object would no longer be the historical field whose givenness consists in inheritance, loss, trace, and unfinished transmission; an answer transferred away from the one whose attributable taking-up it concerns would no longer be the same answer. The impossibility is constitutive. What cannot be accessed is not hidden behind the phenomenon. Its inaccessibility is part of the phenomenon's positive articulation.

The first family is the **inaccessibility of exteriority**. No participant can occupy a position outside the common from which participation might first be chosen, because choosing, positioning, identifying, and understanding already draw on the field they would supposedly precede. The common, in turn, cannot step outside itself to receive its historical singularity from another common, a divine catalogue, or a neutral space of alternatives. This does not make every inherited content necessary. It makes necessary only the absence of a vestibule in which the whole field might be surveyed and selected before one belongs to it. The first disappropriation is therefore exact: the participant is appropriated into shared possibility by being disappropriated of exteriority and sovereign origin. But the common does not become the new proprietor. It supplies the routes while remaining unable to own their finite enactments as its deeds.

The second family is the **inaccessibility of totality**. A finite participant cannot possess the common as a simultaneous whole; it inherits from somewhere, under descriptions already in use, through records whose survival is uneven, and toward futures whose compossibilities are altered by every enactment. Nor can the common become present to itself as a collective spectator surveying its beginning, its losses, and every route its future may take. The past cannot return in its original mode of givenness; it returns as this present's ruin, record, translation, debt, and reopenable question. The participant cannot become completely transparent to itself; the meanings and consequences of its taking-up exceed every present account. And the future cannot be held as a finished map without ceasing to be the field in which finite action makes a difference. The total spectator is not merely absent. Its standpoint is inaccessible because installing it would convert historical singularity into the object of a completed view and possibility into the unfolding of a programme.

The third family is the **inaccessibility of substitution at the limit**. The common may carry the claimant's standing, identify the role, preserve the record, supply the words, and explain the route by which the deed became possible. Another may perform the same task, occupy the same office, pay the same sum, or repair the same material damage. But where standing and attribution or present duty hold, neither the common nor another participant can make this taking-up have been theirs. The other's locus cannot be occupied as one's own; the original attribution cannot be transferred without changing what is attributed; the whole cannot answer finally by redescribing the deed as the product of its conditions. This is not the inaccessibility of a private interior. It is the worldly limit of substitution inside a genuinely substitutive field. The common reaches the attributable taking-up from every side and cannot become its final answerer.

The three families yield the negative triad of positive no-ground:

| **No exterior ground; no total spectator; no final substitution.**

Their positive form is not isolation but articulation:

| **Historically singular common; finitely situated perspective; answerably singular locus.**

Each positive term is articulated by the inaccessibility that prevents it from being absorbed into a higher one. The common is historically singular because there is no external catalogue from which it could be selected or copied. The perspective is finite because no view from nowhere can complete it. The locus is answerably singular because substitution, real everywhere else, reaches a limit at the attributable taking-up. The inaccessibilities therefore do not impoverish the field. They are what allow belonging, history, and answerability to differ without requiring three separate grounds.

Seen from this structure, the two disappropriations are neither parallel losses nor transfers of title. In the first, the participant is deprived of the impossible status of having originated the possibility. Its language, role, practice, and field of action remain common; even after enactment, their content does not become private property. In the second, the common loses the impossible claim to own the finite taking-up finally. The procedure remains common, the office remains repeatable, the history remains explanatory; but the common cannot convert these forms into an answer that would make the one who enacted or presently holds the duty dispensable. **The participant is appropriated into the common by being disappropriated of origin. Attribution is localised at the locus when the common is disappropriated of final answerership.** Neither appropriation installs a proprietor. The common owns no sovereign participant; the locus owns no sovereign world. **Disappropriation without abandonment; appropriation without proprietor.**

A nearby formulation in “The Thing” shows why disappropriation need not mean simple deprivation. In the mirror-play of the fourfold, Heidegger writes that none of the four hardens into its separate particularity; each is, within their mutual *Vereignung*, disappropriated into what is its own, and this “*enteignende Vereignen*” is the mirror-play itself [GA 7, 181]. The present doctrine neither adopts the fourfold nor maps its terms onto common, other, and locus. The relevance is narrower. What is one’s own is not secured by separation from relation. Each is released into its own through a belonging that prevents separate self-possession. Disappropriation is positive because it removes the hardening by which the own would be mistaken for an isolated property. It releases difference within relation.

The same grammar governs the common and the locus. The common becomes itself not by encompassing its participants as parts of a macro-subject but by releasing repeatable possibilities it cannot finally enact or answer for in their place. The locus becomes itself not by recovering a substance beneath its roles but by receiving an attributable taking-up whose conditions and language remain common. The relation does not dissolve the terms; it is how their difference is maintained. The common can carry the route precisely because the route is not privately originated. The locus can answer precisely because the taking-up is not finally owned by the route. Neither stands first; neither receives the other as an object; neither completes itself outside the relation.

This also clarifies the direction that remains after every external destination has been refused. From the participant's side, the movement is away from sovereign origin and toward situated participation — but not toward the common as a collective owner, since the participant has never stood outside it and the common has no deed of appropriation to perform. From the side of answerability, the movement is away from anonymous termination and toward finite localisation — but not toward the locus as a newly founded subject, since the locus is not a subject apart from the deed- or duty-indexed attribution disclosed under address, claimant-standing, and attribution. From the side of historical continuation, the answer moves into refolding — but not into an unchanged repository, since the answer may revise the very common through which later possibilities become available. These are directions internal to belonging: differentiations, localisations, and transformations within a field that has no exterior terminus.

No-ground is not the absence of every direction; it is the impossibility of an external terminus. Direction without external destination is therefore not a defective movement awaiting completion. It is the modal form in which appropriation can occur without proprietorship. In *Enteignis*, Ereignis occurs: not as the point reached after disappropriation, but as the belonging in which disappropriation does not abandon what it withdraws. That sentence must remain guarded. The book is not claiming that Heidegger secretly supplied its social ontology, nor that the common-locus architecture is an exposition of Ereignis. It is claiming that Heidegger's conjunction of appropriation and disappropriation discloses the structure that prevents this book's two movements from being misunderstood as transfers between grounds. The constructive articulation belongs here: common possibility, finite taking-up, addressive localisation, refolding. The no-external-*Wohin* that makes the articulation possible is what the Heideggerian text lets us see.

The protocol's non-answer can now be heard with the force this inheritance gives it. The reading proposed here does not treat "**Enteignis wohin?**" as an undiscovered destination awaiting a more resourceful philosopher; it reads **Enteignis** as withdrawing the very structure in which a destination could stand outside the event as its terminus. The ordinary grammar of **wohin** demands a place beyond the movement; the recorded non-pursuit leaves that demand unsatisfied. **The absence of further address is not the disappearance of the question but its most forceful mode of address.** The question becomes memorable because it is preserved exactly where its expected answer must be withdrawn.

This is not an invitation to glorify silence. Nothing would be easier than to convert a missing answer into profundity merely because it is missing. The claim rests on the relation among the lecture's positive sentence, the protocol's directional question, and the structure already established here. The lecture says that disappropriation belongs to appropriation and preserves rather than abandons its own. The protocol asks where such disappropriation goes and records the cessation. The doctrine of positive no-ground shows why every external answer would reinstall the office the movement empties. The visible blank is therefore not a proposition in code and not evidence of privileged access to Heidegger's intention. It is a textual faultline whose philosophical function can be stated: the demand for a destination is preserved where destination must cease to mean an exterior term.

The point can be compressed. The participant cannot step outside the common; the common cannot step outside itself; neither can possess the historical whole; and the common cannot remain the final substitute where an attributable answer has become due. These are not accidental failures of access. They are necessitated inaccessibilities through which historical belonging and answerability become possible. The conspicuous non-pursuit of "**Enteignis wohin?**" can therefore be inherited, without claim about private intention, as preserving the withdrawal of destination itself: disappropriation without abandonment, appropriation without proprietor, direction without external ground. **The question remains because its answer cannot be a destination; its visible suspension is the form in which the withdrawal of destination is remembered.**

For the present argument the result is exact and limited. The common's withdrawal from final answerership does not send the answer outside the common, upward to a ground, inward to a sovereign subject, or onward to an encompassing Ereignis. It leaves the entire medium in place and removes only its sufficiency as final terminus. The locus that becomes non-forwardable is not what receives the movement from outside; it is the finite differentiation within the common at which this taking-up has become attributable. The no-external-**Wohin** does not create that localisation, establish standing, or prove attribution. It prevents a valid localisation, once those gates hold, from being escaped through another transfer. The argument must therefore return from the Heideggerian structure to the conditions under which the second necessity arises.

¹⁵ The German *wohin* carries the ordinary force of "toward where?" or "where to?" Joan Stambaugh renders the protocol's question as "Expropriation in what direction?" The German is retained in the body because the ordinary expectation of a destination is precisely what the argument tests. The interpretation concerns the philosophical function of the recorded non-pursuit and makes no claim to reconstruct the private intention of Heidegger or the seminar participants.

The second necessity is conditional through and through. It holds only where direction, standing, and attribution or present remedial duty hold, and given nothing less. Positive no-ground does not create a claimant, validate a demand, identify a culprit, or manufacture an answerer where tracing fails. It closes an invalid destination; it generates nothing. The answer remains open in content: the locus may acknowledge, contest, refuse, justify, revise, or repair. What becomes necessary is localisation, not obedience. Between them the two movements yield the double law: **the common is necessary as medium and impossible as final terminus** – the law the Conclusion will name constitution without absolution.

The common's historical singularity and the locus's answerable singularisation now come into view as different but internally related structures. The common cannot be repeated as the same historical world; the locus cannot be substituted as the same attributable taking-up. The historically singular common possibilises the answerably singular locus. The answer of the locus, once given and refolded as revised clause, repaired procedure, transformed practice, or new precedent, alters the historical configuration through which later participants will receive their possibilities. Positive no-ground is therefore circular without being foundational: externality is excluded, singularity is generated internally, finite taking-up becomes answerably localised, and the answer returns to transform the common that made it possible.

The movements can now be stated together. From the side of the common: exterior-excluding necessitation, historically singular configuration, internal possibilisation of traces and possibilities, finite enactments, refolding, transformed common. From the side of the participant: possibilising necessitation, common possibility, real substitution, finite taking-up, latent singularising pulse, address, standing, attribution or present duty, withdrawal, conditional singularising necessarisation, finite locus, open answer, and possible refolding. Folding possibilises by suspending the present relevance of a finite taking-up and carrying what cannot remain present. Unfolding necessarises by lifting that suspension for this case.

An older constellation can illuminate this sequence without grounding it. The following comparison does not claim that Anaximander formulated an ontology of answerability, and **logos** does not occur in the surviving saying. It belongs to Heidegger's connected readings of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. In that reconstruction, **logos** names a gathering that clears and shelters; **to chreōn** hands what is present into the bounded portion of its while; **dikē** names jointure, the letting-belong through which what lingers gives the due to one another; and **adikia** names the tendency to harden into sheer persistence outside the jointure of the finite while. The resonance with the present doctrine is exact only if its limits are preserved. The common is logos-like as possibilising gathering. **To chreōn** illuminates the handing of a repeatable possibility into the finitude of this taking-up, although the necessity defended here is specifically conditional upon address, standing, and attribution or present duty. Answerable singularisation discloses the locus; **dikē** resonates with the answerable jointure among loci. And the boundary pathologies analysed later — withdrawal arrested, the carrier persisting in the claimant's or answerer's place — can be read as forms of persistence beyond jointure, without being reduced to the ancient word.

The positive sense of no-ground can therefore be gathered in one movement. The common is historically singular without deriving its singularity from an exterior. It gathers and carries finite enactments through folds that make absences operative and suspend present attributive relevance so that finite life may continue. Address interrupts; where standing and attribution or present duty hold, the carrying withdraws from the parties' places and the answer becomes conditionally, locally, non-forwardably due. The answer, given, may be refolded and alter the common's future configuration. Nothing in this movement mourns a ground, because nothing in it ever stood by grounding. Responsibility required no final support beneath it. It required a historically singular common capable of possibilising finite loci, and a finite attributable locus at which substitution could no longer answer. No exterior to the gathering; no exhaustion of singularity within it; no indefinite substitution at the limit of answer.

5.6 The exculpation test

The chapter ends at its practical edge, where the fourth promotion lives — because the refusal of the archic office is finally cashed in the first person, on the day a person is asked to answer and reaches for the field instead.

The plea has a true premise and an invalid step, and both must be honoured. The true premise: the common really did constitute the pleader — language, formation, position, weight; the deed's conditions were inherited down to the desires that moved it. Everything Chapter 1 established stands behind the plea, and any account of responsibility that dismisses it as excuse-making has chosen the foundational subject and will lose the argument of the Introduction. Explanation by the common is real explanation; it mitigates, contextualises, redistributes precisely as far as it traces — and often it traces far, into schools that taught cruelty as order, offices that rewarded blindness, histories that starved the alternatives. Frequently the tracing does better still: it identifies **co-answerers** — the institution whose procedures normalised the harm, the office that set the incentives, the authority that looked away — and Chapters 12 and 13 give delegated and institutional answerers their full reality and their own accounts to render.

The invalid step is the last one: forwarding not the explanation but the **answer** — offering the field itself as the terminus where the demand may finally rest. The step fails for the accumulated reasons of §5.3, now felt at their sharpest: the forwarding has no addressee. The demand, arriving at the pleader, is directional; redirected to “society,” it does not arrive anywhere — past the last answerable institution there is no voice, no deed, no locus; papers cannot be served on the language. What the plea proposes as a transfer of answering is, structurally, the **dissolution** of answering: the vector, passed to what cannot receive it, is not relayed but dropped. And everyone party to such scenes knows it, which is why the plea, exactly where its explanatory content is strongest, still leaves the question standing in the room. **One can indict the age; the age will never take the stand.** But persons and institutions formed by the age can take the stand, and several may owe different whole accounts of the same harm — the clerk his, the office its, the ministry its own — without any of those accounts absorbing the others. The person who answers **from within** the explanation — this formed me, and it is mine to answer for what it formed — has grasped the whole structure of Part I in a single act: constituted through and through, and the terminus notwithstanding.

5.7 The three levels

The chapter’s result is a hierarchy, and stating it as one both fixes what has been shown and arms the next refusal.

Constitutive commonality. The field: language, practices, positions, weight. It makes normative life possible, carries every route, specifies any addressee — and answers nothing, claims nothing, holds no office. Priority without authority.

Local normative institution. The occupants of the field: statutes, promises, offices, professions, courts, firms, rituals. They genuinely create, specify, confer, and carry authority; some of them genuinely answer, through organs and procedures; all of them are plural, defeasible, contestable, and traceable — authority with accountability, which is what “local” means.

The archic office. The purported final authoriser fused with the ultimate bearer: the instance at which every “by what right?” would terminate and onto which every answer could be forwarded. This the chapter refuses — not because the candidate was unworthy, but because the office itself is a fantasm whose every occupancy has been an installation, and because everything real that the candidate does is already accounted for on the first two levels.

The common, then, is not the source beneath every claim; it is the maintained field through which claims become intelligible, institutionally structured, traceable, and answerable. That formulation completes the first refusal and measures the difficulty of the second. The other — unlike the common — has a voice, a face, and standing; the other really can call, accuse, and receive; everything this book has said about direction seems to point at the other as its origin. The refusal there cannot proceed by showing incapacity at either pole of the vector. It must proceed by showing that the other's true dignity — the one Chapter 2 secured — is **diminished**, not honoured, by installation in the archic office; and it must conduct that argument against its greatest advocate. Before that argument is joined, however, the doctrine just built owes itself a trial. Chapter 6 carries positive no-ground into the strongest classical workshop that borders it — Leibniz's fragment **Ratio est in natura**, where possibility strives, incompatibility selects, existence is configurational, and a necessary being closes the whole — and asks whether the modal grammar of §5.5 can inherit those discoveries without their ground. Chapter 7 then reads Levinas.

Chapter 6. Ratio est in natura: Leibniz and the Modal Trial of Positive No-Ground

Navigational note. This chapter is the book's modal trial, not an appendix. Readers following only the constructive sequence may move from Chapter 5 to Chapter 7 and return here before Chapter 11. Its argument remains at full length because undergoing the trial — not merely receiving its result — tests whether positive no-ground can keep reason, modality, contingency, and explanation without installing a final ground.

6.1 The altered hearing

The book has spent five chapters refusing grounds while keeping reasons — tracing deeds, testing standing, demanding accounts — and the refusal now owes a debt it has so far deferred. The vocabulary of reason has a sovereign formulation, and the doctrine of positive no-ground cannot be considered secure until it has been carried into the workshop where that formulation was forged. **Nihil est sine ratione**: nothing is without reason. The principle sounds like a rule for explanations, a methodological maximalism — keep asking why until the whys run out. Heidegger's lectures on the principle taught a different hearing. Change the pitch, he proposed, and the same words stop legislating about explanations and start saying something about what is: not **nothing** is without **reason**, but nothing **is** without **ground** — being and ground sounding together, so that the principle turns out to be a saying about Being itself, its reign over the modern age an epochal destiny rather than a discovery [Heidegger, **The Principle of Reason**]. Keep or refuse the epochal framing; what the altered hearing makes audible is enough for the present trial: in the principle of reason, **is** and **ground** claim each other, and a book that says **is** while refusing **ground** must show that it has not simply stopped its ears.

It happens that Heidegger, in the second volume of his *Nietzsche*, reprinted a small Leibniz fragment that carries the claim in its very title — a working sheet of four manuscript pages, provisionally dated after September 1698, printed by Gerhardt and Couturat and known by its opening words: **Ratio est in natura**. The title is not the familiar principle. It does not say that nothing is without reason; it says that reason is, and is **in nature**: “**Ratio est in Natura, cur aliquid potius existat quam nihil**” — there is a reason in nature why something rather than nothing exists — and this, Leibniz adds at once, follows from the great principle that nothing comes about without reason, just as there must also be a reason “why this exists rather than another” [**Ratio est in natura**, §1]. Everything the present chapter needs is already sounding in that sentence. What sounds in **est**? A reason that **exists** — not a rule of method but something granted ontological reality. What sounds in **in**? A reason lodged **within** nature — in the field itself, not behind or beneath it. And what sounds in **potius** — the “rather” on which the whole question turns? A comparative: something rather than nothing, this rather than another. Reason, in this title, is the wherewithal of a difference. The question the chapter will put to the fragment, and through the fragment to the book’s own doctrine, is whether **ratio** can remain what the title says — in nature, articulating the rather — without becoming what the fragment will shortly make it: a ground outside the field, existentiating the whole.

The fragment first appears to answer by installing an ultimate reason. Yet before it completes that ascent, it has already set in motion a field of possibilities whose internal behaviour will prove more difficult to contain. Reading it will therefore require the discipline this book applies wherever it reads — phenomenon, response, promotion, strain, release — a discipline earned in full only in Chapter 8, and used here in advance, in the measure the trial requires. What follows is Schürmann-like in its shape; it is not a reading Schürmann gave, and nothing in it should be charged to his account.

6.2 The existentiating office

Leibniz must first be read fairly, because the office he installs answers a genuine question, and a caricature would spoil the trial. The reason named in the title, he argues, must be **real**: “that reason must be in some real being, or cause. For a cause is nothing other than a real reason; and the truths of possibilities and necessities... would effect nothing unless the possibilities were founded in a thing that actually exists” [§2]. The argument deserves its full weight. Modal truths, taken alone, are inert: they legislate nothing, produce nothing, select nothing. If possibility is to bear on existence at all, something must give it efficacy — modal truths require an actually efficacious ontological foundation. And the being that founds them cannot itself be one more contingent thing, “otherwise a cause would in turn have to be sought outside it, for why it exists rather than does not exist — against the hypothesis”. It must be necessary, “the ultimate reason of things, and it is customarily called by one word, God” [§3]. Then the conclusion, in the sentence that gives the office its technical name: “*Est ergo causa cur Existentia praevaleat non-Existentiae, seu Ens necessarium est Existenticans*” — there is therefore a cause why existence prevails over non-existence; or, the necessary being is **existentifying** [§4].

The book’s earlier vocabulary can now name what has happened, and naming is not yet objecting. This is the archic office in its purest modal form. The functions Chapter 5 identified are all present: the necessary being **commands** the passage from possibility to act; it **authorises** the whole modal order; it **organises the field toward itself**; and it stands ready to **receive what is forwarded** — the fragment’s closing paragraphs will send it the sufferings of finite minds, to be absorbed in the perfection of the whole. Nor is the installation gratuitous. Leibniz has seen, exactly, that a field of inert possibles cannot lift itself into actuality; that “possible” cannot mean “waiting, with a visa, at the border of being”; that the modal order needs efficacy from somewhere. The office is a response to a real phenomenon — the non-inertness of possibility — and it does for possibility what, in Chapter 5’s terms, every archic promotion does for its phenomenon: it secures the discovery by assigning it a sovereign source.

The question is not whether Leibniz invokes the office. He does. It is whether the movement the office is meant to secure has already acquired an immanent articulation of its own.

6.3 The striving possible

The next two paragraphs of the fragment make the discovery whose containment will strain the rest of it. Whatever causes anything to exist — whatever makes possibility **demand** existence — “also makes every possible have a striving toward existence [**conatum ad Existentiam**], since a reason for restricting the tendency to certain possibles cannot be found in general” [§5]. The argument is remarkable and easily missed: universality by default. No universal reason restricts the striving to some possibles rather than others; therefore **every** possible strives. To be a possible at all — a determinate essence, thinkable without contradiction — is already to be non-indifferent to existence. And then the sentence for which the fragment is remembered, containing a word that exists nowhere in Latin before Leibniz coins it: “**Itaque dici potest Omne possibile Existiturire**” — accordingly it can be said that every possible **existiturit** — “insofar, namely, as it is founded in a necessary being actually existing, without which there is no way by which a possible would come to actuality” [§6].

The word deserves the pause the fragment’s editors give it. **Existiturire** is a desiderative verb built on the future participle: as **esurire**, to hunger, is built on **edere**, to eat, so **existiturire** is built on **existiturus**, about-to-exist — a hungering toward being-about-to-be. The critical apparatus records that Leibniz first wrote the hastier **existurire** and corrected it in the act of writing to the more exact form; the same record notes that he used the coinage in only one other piece in the entire corpus. This is not a flourish, then, but a considered technical act: Latin is being forced to name a modal state for which no word existed. And the state is precise. **Existiturire** is not existence — the possible that strives has not arrived. It is not inert logical possibility — the strife is exactly what inertness lacks. It is not conscious desire — essences do not want; the fragment’s subject is **omne possibile**, the roses and the rocks of unactualised worlds as much as their minds. And it is not yet actualisation — between the vector and the arrival stands everything the next sections will supply. The safest translations keep the tension: striving, pressing, tending toward existence; and the safest definitions are structural. **Existiturire is the non-indifference of a determinate possibility to existence.** Or, anticipating what compossibility will add: **existiturire is the vector of the possible within the relational field of compossibility.**

The fragment did not invent the doctrine from nothing. A year earlier, in *De rerum originatione radicali*, Leibniz had stated it in a form if anything stronger: essence of itself tends toward existence; in the very possibility or essence of things there is an exigency of existence, essences striving in proportion to their degree of reality [*De rerum originatione radicali*, GP VII, 302–308]. Set the two texts side by side and the tension appears that a Schürmann-like reading must neither resolve nor suppress. In the 1697 essay, the tendency is spoken of as belonging to essence **itself**. In the fragment, the same tendency is asserted universally — and then hedged, in the same breath, by the founding clause: every possible strives **prout fundatur**, insofar as it is founded in the actually existing necessary being. The strife is intrinsic; the strife is on loan. Both statements stand in the text, and the manuscript itself records the hesitation between them with a precision no interpreter could invent: the critical apparatus shows that in §5 Leibniz first wrote the founding clause — “**possibile (prout fundatur in Ente necessario actu existente)**” — and then struck it out, letting the universal striving stand alone; one paragraph later, in §6, the clause returns and stays. The hand wavers over exactly where the external foundation must be inserted into a sentence about intrinsic tendency — deletes it where the striving is announced, restores it where the striving is named. If the preserved tremble of a text is the legible mark of a strain between what was seen and the office built to hold it, here the tremble is preserved in the ink.

So the Schürmann-like question can be put exactly. If essence tends toward existence in itself — if the tendency comes with positive determinacy as such, and no universal reason restricts it — what indispensable work remains for the external existentiifier? Leibniz has an answer, and it must be recorded rather than deleted: without the necessary being there is “no way” from possibility to act; the ontological route itself is what the foundation supplies; intrinsic tendency without founded efficacy would be a pressing against a door that opens onto nothing. The text preserves both lines — the striving that belongs to the possible, the efficacy that belongs to the founder — and it is not the historian’s business to make Leibniz an immanentist. It is the inheritor’s business to say what the discovery makes available once the office no longer holds. The constructive inheritance, marked as such: **a possibility strives because, once articulated within the common, it is not inert: it opens consequences, solicits enactment, conflicts with other routes, and alters the topology of what can occur.** A legal category that has been formulated presses on cases it has not yet reached; a move that has become possible in a practice changes the practice before anyone makes it — players defend against attacks no one has launched. This is not psychology and involves no wanting; it is modal efficacy — the way an articulated difference already does work in the field that articulates it. What Leibniz referred to the existentiifier, the release reads as the life of articulation itself.

One further witness belongs in this section, because it prevents the coinage from standing alone. Leibniz's own vocabulary elsewhere confirms that this non-indifference is not foreign to his system. Ideas, principles, dispositions, and predicates may be **virtually** present: internally real and operative without being explicitly actual — a vocabulary the next section must examine in its own right. **Existituri** is not identical with virtual containment, and neither is identical with potentiality, appetite, or compossibility; the terms must not collapse into one another. But the coinage and the older vocabulary belong to one larger discovery — that the non-actual need not be inert. The striving possible presses toward existence; the virtual predicate or disposition already operates within the subject or structure to which it belongs.

6.4 Potential and virtual

Before the fragment's relational turn can be read, the chapter's terms must be sorted, because several registers of the non-actual are now in play and their conflation would cost every distinction that follows. The book needs the differences; it will use each term in one sense only.

The **possible** is the Leibnizian unit: a determinate essence, conceptually complete in its own order, containing no contradiction, non-actual, and — the fragment's addition — non-indifferent to existence. A possible is not an indeterminate capacity: possible Sextus is **this** Sextus, down to the garden he cultivates in Corinth, lacking nothing but existence; nor is it a mental image of the actual — the possible is prior, not derivative, determinate through and through.

Potentiality names something else, and the Aristotelian doctrine that Agamben has made newly audible holds the difference open. A potentiality, in Book Theta of the **Metaphysics**, is a capacity to be or to do that is always also a capacity **not** to be or do — “all potentiality is, of the same and with respect to the same, impotentiality” [**Metaphysics**, Θ, 1046a32; Agamben, “Bartleby, or On Contingency,” in **Potentialities**]. The architect retains the potential to build in not building; the kithara player is a player because she can also not play; and thought itself, in the famous image from **De anima** that Agamben places at the head of Bartleby’s genealogy, is a writing tablet on which nothing is written — pure potentiality, which can pass into the act of intelligence only because it can also withhold. Potentiality, so understood, is the polarity of actualisation and non-actualisation held together in one capacity; its cardinal secret is the potential-not-to; and its point, against the Megarians ancient and modern, is that actualisation does not exhaust it. The Leibnizian possible and the Aristotelian potential answer different questions: the possible answers **what** could exist (a determinate essence); potentiality answers **how** a capacity relates to its own exercise (with a constitutive not).

The third register has a name, and the name is Leibniz’s own: the **virtual**. The word is his, and it is technical — an earlier economy of this chapter must not be allowed to obscure it. In the Preface to the **New Essays**, the mind’s innate materials are described not as actual, explicit contents but as inclinations, dispositions, habits, or natural virtualities — **virtualités naturelles** — and the famous veined marble carries the image: the figure of Hercules is traced in advance by the veins, real, internal, and shaping, though labour is needed to expose and polish it [**New Essays**, Preface]. In the **Discourse on Metaphysics**, the same word bears the doctrine of truth and of the complete concept: in every true proposition the predicate is contained in the subject — expressly in identities, **virtually** where the connection is implicit — and what happens to an individual substance is contained, virtually, in its individual notion [**Discourse**, §§8, 13; “Primary Truths,” in **Philosophical Essays**]. Principles and maxims, likewise, may operate tacitly, employed without being explicitly attended to [**New Essays**, IV, vii, §19]. Across these uses, Leibnizian virtuality names an implicit but real and efficacious internal belonging — an answer to the question of how something can be internally real and operative without being explicitly actual [Parmentier, “Leibniz et le virtuel”]. It is not mere logical possibility: the virtual predicate is **in** its subject, not merely thinkable of it. And it is not hidden explicit content, a note folded small: it awaits explication, not discovery.

Nor is Leibnizian virtuality merely latent efficacy in general. In the doctrine of complete concepts it is singularly indexed. To take the standard Leibnizian example: crossing the Rubicon is not virtually present in an anonymous modal field; it is virtually contained as a predicate of Caesar [Discourse, §13]. The virtual therefore joins latency to belonging: what is not yet explicit is nevertheless internally Caesar's. Actualisation will not merely add an event to the world; it will explicate a predicate of this individual. **The virtual predicate joins latency to singular belonging** – and here virtuality already borders singularisation, a proximity §6.8 will measure exactly.

Deleuze, then, does not invent the virtual ex nihilo and retroactively impose it on Leibniz. He takes up genuine Leibnizian structures – implicit containment, infinitesimal determination, the small perceptions, compossibility, differential relations – and transforms them into a systematic ontology of the virtual as a differential field of relations and singular points, “real without being actual”, actualised by differentiation rather than realised as the copy of a preformed model [Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; *The Fold*]. The transformation is as real as the inheritance, and neither may be minimised: Deleuzian actualisation is not the unfolding of a complete concept already readable by God; it is a genesis without model, built against precisely the precontainment that Leibniz's virtual predicate asserts [Tissandier, *Affirming Divergence*]. **Leibniz possesses an indigenous concept of virtuality; Deleuze transforms rather than invents it.** Leibnizian virtuality is implicit internal belonging; Deleuzian virtuality is a differential field of actualisation. The chapter needs both, for different work, and will say which is in play whenever the word appears – including the fragment's own case, where possibles converge, diverge, and exclude one another in a relational weave that the fragment displays without naming: to call that weave virtual in the Deleuzian sense remains a constructive reconstruction, not the fragment's category.

Positive no-ground inherits from both, and differs from both. It inherits Leibniz's insight that the non-explicit may be internally real and operative, and Deleuze's refusal to reduce actualisation to the realisation of a ready-made possible. But it refuses complete precontainment and total readability alike. The common is virtual insofar as unrealised routes, inherited absences, latent incompatibilities, and capacities for transformation already operate within it – although no complete concept and no total spectator possesses their finished map. **The common is virtually more than its actuality without its future being virtually finished.** Real without being actual; efficacious without being sovereign; internal without being precontained as a completed future.

One statement can now hold the registers apart, and the chapter will not let them blur again: **potentiality names the capacity to act and not act; Leibnizian virtuality names an implicit but efficacious internal presence; the Deleuzian virtual names the differential field of actualisation; existituri names the vector by which a determinate possibility presses toward existence within a topology of compossibility.** The vocabulary is mixed by design — Aristotelian, Leibnizian, Deleuzian — because the phenomenon is jointed. What must never be said is that these are one thing.

A further distinction will matter when Chapter 11 gathers the book's constructive ontology. A **common possibility** is not merely a possible content awaiting realisation or a capacity enclosed within one bearer. It is a historically articulated route carried through language, practice, records, standing, and institutions, available for non-identical finite taking-ups. The present chapter supplies the modal contrasts needed to see why such a route cannot be reduced to potentiality, virtual containment, or striving possibility.

6.5 Compossibility: the topology of existence

“But from this it does not follow that all possibles exist” — the fragment turns on its own universality — “it would indeed follow, if all possibles were compossible” [§7]. The word that does the work, **compossibilia**, concedes everything to the striving and takes back everything from its sufficiency. Every possible presses toward existence; and yet the pressing settles nothing, because “some are incompatible with others” — and incompatible, Leibniz immediately adds, in a stronger sense than the momentary: “they are incompatible with one another not only with respect to the same time, but altogether [**in universum**], because in present things future things are involved” [§8]. Incompatibility runs the length of the series. A possible does not merely elbow its contemporaries; it drags a future, and its future may collide with another's three generations out. What must cohere, if anything is to exist, is not a snapshot but a world — sequences whole, with their consequences.

Two determinations follow, and each must be kept exact. First: impossibility is not impossibility. A possible excluded from this world is not thereby contradictory in itself; possible Sextus, happy in Corinth, is flawlessly thinkable — he is merely unco-actualisable with the Rome this series contains. Impossibility is relational exclusion: not “this cannot be”, but “these cannot be **together**”. Second: existence is therefore decided at the level of configuration, not of item. “Meanwhile, from the conflict of all possibles demanding existence [*ex conflictu omnium possibilium existentiam exigentium*] this at least follows: that there exists that series of things through which the most exists, or the maximal series of all possibles” [§9]. What wins the conflict is not a possible but a **series**; the unit of actualisation is the world. The fragment then gives the result its exactness: this series alone is **determinate**, as among lines the straight, among angles the right, among figures the most capacious — “and as we see liquids by the spontaneity of nature gather into spherical drops, so in the nature of the universe the most capacious series exists” [§10].

The canonical definitions the chapter has been preparing can now be stated. **Compossibility is the topology of existiturity: the relational order determining which vectors can converge into one actual series.** And: **existence is configurational actualisation** — what exists is never an isolated realised essence but a series, internally related, temporally extended, plural in perspectives. The two formulas complete the third: the possible strives individually, but exists only configurationally. Deleuze’s commentary sharpened exactly this: what makes a world one world is the convergence of its series; impossibility is not logical contradiction but **divergence** — the point at which series cease to be continuable into one another [*The Fold*]. The striving of §§5–6 without the topology of §§7–8 would actualise everything and hence nothing; the topology without the striving would have nothing to order.

But the two paragraphs of determination — §§9 and 10 — must now be read with care, because they contain the fragment's second strain. Read phenomenologically, the image of liquids gathering *sponte naturae* allows determination to appear as immanent to the field: no local selector intervenes between the liquid and the spherical form, and the maximisation, at the level of the process the image describes, is intelligible without the representation of an external act of choice. This does not cancel Leibniz's explicit doctrine, and must not be inflated into it: read with the surrounding paragraphs and the whole corpus, the maximal series is **chosen** — the possibles and their combinations are weighed in the divine intellect, the comparison is performed before any world exists, and the best is admitted by a wise decree: the catalogue, the spectator, the optimum. The explicit doctrine of divine selection and the phenomenological pressure of the image coexist in the text. The drop of water, as described, calls for no local selector; the Palace of Destinies, which §6.11 will visit, calls for the divine comparer. A fragment that argues for the office in §§2–4 and then illustrates determination by the spontaneous physics of droplets in §10 has preserved, once more, exactly the strain a Schürmann-like reading listens for — a strain, not a doctrinal inconsistency: the response — relational determination within the field — exceeds the office — external comparison of complete worlds — erected to secure it.

6.6 Historical compossibilisation

The doctrine of the preceding chapter can now say what it inherits, and the saying must keep two borders distinct, because the deepest confusion available here would collapse them.

The first border concerns the field itself. Positive no-ground's first movement — the possibilising necessitation of §5.5 — excludes exteriority from the space of possible positions: no participant, and no complete historical world, can be given outside the common as an alternative co-present standpoint. Leibniz's fragment borders this claim from its own side: possibility and necessity, it argues, cannot operate as inert truths without a real ontological order; there is no modal traffic in a void. The two claims should be neither identified nor held apart as strangers. Both refuse the picture of a neutral modal antechamber — a place before or outside the field where options wait for an occupant-less choice. But the book's claim is **unconditional and positional**: externality cannot become an intelligible position at all. It is not the claim that this world was necessary; it is the claim that there is no standpoint outside the given field from which the field could first be selected or originated. Leibniz secures the analogous result with an office — the antechamber exists, but only God occupies it. The book closes the antechamber.

The second border concerns the inside. Compossibility teaches that not everything inside a field can be actualised together — that internal exclusion, running along whole series, is what makes a configuration determinate. This borders, at every point, the historical singularity of the common established in §5.5: the common is **this** configuration because its internal routes could not all be actualised together; its shape is cut by exclusions as much as by inheritances. The two borders together yield the compressed law: **no outside to the field; not everything inside the field can become actual together**. The first exclusion is unconditional; the second is configurational. Confusing them would either make the world's particular shape necessary or make the field's necessity contingent — and the doctrine needs exactly the asymmetry.

But the inheritance cannot stop at the parallel, because one Leibnizian fixture must be refused, and its refusal transforms the concept. For Leibniz the topology is eternally complete: all possible worlds, with all their compossibility relations, are contained in the divine intellect from everlasting; nothing ever becomes compossible or ceases to be. Remove the catalogue and the total spectator — as positive no-ground must, having closed the antechamber — and compossibility does not disappear; it becomes historical. Call it **historical compossibilisation**: an analogical formal indication for the ongoing determination of what can be borne together within a common, through enactment, conflict, exclusion, repair, and institutional refolding. The analogy borrows Leibniz's question of what can coexist while refusing any claim that historical worlds are complete possible worlds or that their incompatibilities form an exhaustive catalogue. What a common can hold together is settled nowhere in advance and re-settled continually in fact: a legal settlement makes two colliding practices co-tenable; a war, a migration, a lost language forecloses routes that were open and opens routes that were unthinkable; a repaired institution bears what its unrepaired predecessor could not. The determination is real at every moment — this is not relativism, and the point must be said with force. Material constraints bind; prior acts bind; logical exclusions do not blink; roles, records, and accumulated consequences shape what any enactment can now combine with. At any given time, the topology of the common is as hard as Leibniz's — try actualising two of its impossibles together and the field will teach the difference between openness and wish. What is refused is only the eternally completed map: **compossibility becomes historical compossibilisation once no external catalogue of complete worlds is admitted**.

The refusal also returns the virtual to its place inside the common. The common is actual as inherited language, institutions, practices, roles, records, established folds; and it is virtual as its unrealised routes, its standing tensions, its latent incompatibilities, its inherited absences and reopenable questions — the excluded that persists as trace, pressing on the actual the way the formulated category presses on unreached cases. **The virtual is not outside the actual common. It is the common's internal non-exhaustion.** In this respect positive no-ground extends a genuinely Leibnizian insight — the non-explicit may be internally real and operative — while refusing Leibnizian complete precontainment: the common's unrealised routes are internal without being prospectively finished, efficacious without being exhaustively readable, and singularising without being assigned in advance to a complete individual concept. That sentence closes the circuit with §5.5: what cannot return as an external present persists internally as possibility — and possibility, this chapter has learned from the fragment, is never inert.

6.7 Order as distinguishing relation

The fragment's middle paragraphs, on their surface, serve the optimum: they say what the maximal series maximises. Perfection is “nothing other than quantity of reality” [§11]; and perfection “is not to be located in matter alone... but in form or variety” [§12] — matter everywhere similar would yield less variety than possible, and, as Leibniz notes with a citation of his own recent essay on nature, without forms rendering matter dissimilar there would be no distinct phenomena at all [§13]. The prevailing series is accordingly the one “through which the most distinct thinkability arises” [§14]. Reality, variety, distinct thinkability: the criteria of the best.

Then, in the middle of this optimising sequence, the fragment pauses to define — and what it formally defines is not **ratio** but **order**; the definition is more radical than the use it is put to. “Distinct thinkability gives order to the thing and beauty to the thinker. For **order is nothing other than a relation that distinguishes a plurality** [*ordo nihil aliud quam relatio plurium distinctiva*]. And confusion is when many are present but there is no **ratio** for distinguishing anything from anything” [§15]. Read the definition slowly, because everything the chapter’s title promises is in it. Order is defined **horizontally**: a relation among the many, doing one work — distinguishing. Nothing in the definition points downward to a ground or upward to a purpose; no existentiifier appears in it; the whole vertical apparatus of §§2–4 is absent from the sentence that says what order **is**. And note where **ratio** stands in the companion definition: confusion obtains where there is no **ratio** for telling anything from anything — reason functioning as the wherewithal of distinction, reason in its distinguishing use. The exegetical point must be kept exact: §15 provides no second formal definition of reason as relation; what it defines is order. What it **displays** is **ratio** functioning locally and immanently, as the articulation of differences within the many. The consequences follow at once in the text: atoms are abolished — bodies with internally indistinguishable parts have no order in them [§16] — and the world is a **kosmos**, “full of adornment”, made as if to satisfy an intelligence to the utmost [§17].

Here, then, is the fragment's third preserved strain, and it is the one the chapter is named for. The same text that installs **ratio** as vertical ground — real reason, necessary being, ultimate reason of things — **displays** it, when order is finally defined, working horizontally: as the wherewithal of relation, differentiation, the distinguishability of a plurality [cf. Rutherford, **Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature**]. Neither use cancels the other, and the reading must not pretend that §15 is “the real Leibniz”: the final sufficient reason stands in the fragment, Leibniz himself nowhere reduces reason to horizontal articulation, and he would have seen no conflict — for him the distinguishing relation is what the grounding reason produces and certifies. But the definition does its work without the certificate. Order as distinguishing relation can be found, traced, contested, and repaired by finite participants inside the field; nothing in it must be underwritten from outside to function. This is the released concept the doctrine inherits: **ratio** as relation, differentiation, articulation; traceable constraint; intelligibility of differences; grounds offered locally and defeasibly, never Ground — a constructive release, not exegesis: the claim is that the fragment displays a local differentiating operation of reason that can be released from final grounding, not that Leibniz performed the release. **Ratio can distinguish without grounding, order without totalising, and articulate without absolving.** The removal of final ground does not produce reasonlessness; it releases reason into finite relations. And for the common, the release has a precise sense: **the common's ratio is not why the whole deserves to exist. It is how its internal differences hang together, conflict, and become transformable.** The title of the fragment can accordingly be heard twice, and the trial turns on the hearing. Leibniz's explicit route: there is reason in nature because nature is ultimately grounded in necessary being. The constructive release, marked as release and not as exegesis: ratio is in nature as the immanent articulation of the common, even where no final reason stands beneath or beyond it.

6.8 The free perspective inside the series

The trial now reaches the structure that matters most to this book, because it borders the locus. A world, for Leibniz, is not a mechanism plus inhabitants; it is a series internally pluralised into substances, each of which carries the whole in its own way — and among them, the free. The fragment gestures at this in its late paragraphs, where minds are called “the primary unities of the world, and the nearest likenesses of the first being” [§22]; the doctrine behind the gesture is developed in the **Discourse on Metaphysics** and defended in the correspondence with Arnauld, and the trial must take it from there.

Every individual substance has a complete notion: a concept so determinate that it contains everything that will ever be truly predicable of it — every deed, every encounter, every Tuesday [*Discourse on Metaphysics*, §8]. And every substance expresses the entire universe from its own point of view, as one town differently viewed from different sides is multiplied in perspective without being multiplied in fact [§9]. Arnauld saw immediately what the complete notion seemed to cost: if Adam's concept contains everything that will happen to him, God, in creating Adam, has settled the whole of human history, and freedom is a courtesy title [*Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence*]. Leibniz's reply is the heart of his compatibilism, and the chapter needs its structure rather than its success. The complete notion is complete **of this Adam in this world**: it is the concept of the-one-who-freely-does-all-this, and God does not choose the acts independently and one by one; the choice falls upon the complete world in which these individuals act in these ways — the whole series in which this Adam, freely acting, exists [Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld*]. The series does not push its individuals from outside, because the individuals are not outside the series and the series is nothing over them: **the series includes this individual freely acting in this manner**. Freedom, on this architecture, has three marks. It is **spontaneity**: the action's principle is internal to the agent. It is **contingency**: the opposite of the act implies no contradiction, and a world containing a faithful counterpart of Judas is thinkable without absurdity [*Discourse*, §13; §30 for Judas; “De libertate, contingentia et serie causarum, providentia,” A VI,4, N. 326] — though whether such a possible individual would be **the same** Judas is exactly what the complete-concept doctrine renders problematic, and the caution must stand throughout: on Leibniz's own terms, “the same Judas otherwise”, like “the same Caesar not crossing”, strains the identity the complete concept defines [Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld*; Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*]. And it is **inclination without necessitation**: reasons weigh, tilt, and prevail, but do not necessitate as a demonstration necessitates.

The virtual predicate now shows its systematic force, for it supplies the modal joint between complete concept and spontaneous act. Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon is not one event externally attached to him; it is virtually contained as **his predicate** [*Discourse*, §13]. The deed is singularly indexed before it becomes explicit in time. Actualisation does not realise an anonymous possibility; it explicates what is already virtually this individual's — **in Leibniz, actualisation explicates what is already virtually this individual's** — and in Leibniz's own design this is precisely what preserves spontaneity: because the predicate is contained in the agent's own notion, the act proceeds from the agent's internal principle, imposed by no external cause [Jorati, *Leibniz on Causation and Agency*].

This structure approaches the locus more closely than a comparison between complete individual and finite answerer alone would suggest. In both cases singularity arises internally, within a world or a common, rather than by exemption from it; in both, a deed can belong irreducibly to this agent without arriving from outside the series. **A singular deed need not originate outside the series in order to belong internally to this agent.** The proximity lies in internal singular attribution, and it is the closest Leibniz comes to this book.

But Leibniz assigns the singularity virtually in advance. The complete concept already contains whose deed it will be, and the divine intellect already reads the relation among subject, predicate, and world. Positive no-ground does not pre-localise the common possibility in this manner. Before taking-up, the route remains common — whoever may; actualisation itself singularises the deed. **Leibniz resolves the singularising pulse virtually within the complete concept; positive no-ground keeps it open within the common until finite taking-up resolves it historically.**

Two further results in this architecture must be carried forward, and one gulf must be left uncrossed.

The first result concerns **how uniqueness arises**. The Leibnizian individual is not unique by exemption — not by standing partly outside the series, holding some reserve the world cannot reach. It is unique by expression: its relations compose an irreducible perspective, and the perspective, not a kernel, is the individuality. **The individual is not unique despite belonging to the series; it is unique through its irreducible way of belonging to the series.** Uniqueness is a mode of belonging, not a leftover from it. Compressed: one series, internally pluralised into irreducible perspectives — and the border with the book's doctrine is audible at once: one historically singular common, internally possibilising unique loci. In both architectures the singular arises through internal constitution, not against it.

The second result is the replacement test. For Leibniz, replacement costs everything: exchange Sextus for a better Sextus and you have not improved this world but named a different one — “if Jupiter had placed here a Sextus happy at Corinth or King in Thrace, it would be no longer this world” [Theodicy, §§414–417]. The individual is non-substitutable because the series is configurational and the individual is one of its internal differences. The book's version is narrower and will be stated in the next section; but the family resemblance is real, and it is the reason Leibniz belongs in this book at all.

The gulf is this. The Leibnizian individual is **conceptually complete**: eternally legible to the divine intellect, all predicates in, nothing pending. The answerer disclosed at the locus is none of that. It is finite, historically open, and partially opaque — above all to itself; its future acts are not contained in advance, and no perspective, including its own, can read it whole. It is disclosed not by an intellect that contains it but by an address that reaches it — its singularity comes to light under a claim, through claimant-standing and attribution, not in a concept. The locus names not that party as a hidden substance but the indexed home at which address, claimant-standing, and attribution make an answer non-forwardable. To equate the complete concept with that answerer would be to reinstall the office in its subtlest form: a little divine idea, complete somewhere, legible to someone. The chapter borrows the structure of internal uniqueness and refuses the completeness that Leibniz's version presupposes. What survives the refusal is exactly what the book needs: that singularity can be a way of belonging — and therefore that no exteriority is required for there to be someone it is, each time, unexchangeably.

6.9 From free agent to answerable locus

The chapter's most rigorous distinction can now be drawn, and everything before it was preparation. It concerns two conditional necessities that resemble each other closely enough to be mistaken for one — and whose difference is the difference between Leibniz's problem and this book's.

Leibniz's problem: how can a free act be certain without being absolutely necessary? His instrument is hypothetical necessity. Given this complete individual, in this complete world, under this divine selection, the act follows with certainty — **ex hypothesi**, it cannot fail to occur. But the necessity never becomes absolute: the hypothesis itself (this world) is contingent; the act's opposite is contradiction-free; another series contains its alternative. Necessity is confined to the conditional as a whole and never penetrates the consequent alone. The act is certain-in-the-series and free-in-itself, and the entire construction exists to reconcile foreknown order with genuine contingency [Discourse, §13].

The book's problem is the inverse: how can an act that was **not** necessary — not certain, not contained in any concept, genuinely capable of not having occurred within this historically given common, without requiring appeal to another complete world — nevertheless make an answer conditionally non-forwardable? Positive no-ground's conditional necessity attaches to a different relatum. Given an act or a present duty; given a directed claim; given standing; given attribution — the answer cannot be indefinitely forwarded: its locus is fixed, this one and no other, for as long as the conditions hold. But nothing upstream of the conditions is necessitated. The act did not have to occur; the claimant may be mistaken; standing may fail; attribution may fail — and where they fail, no necessity arises, for no-ground closes an invalid destination and generates nothing. Nor is anything downstream necessitated: the answer may acknowledge, contest, refuse, justify, revise, or repair; its content is as open after localisation as before. **The necessity concerns where the answer terminates, not what the answer must say.**

The difference can now be stated as a difference in the timing of localisation. Leibniz locates the deed virtually before its occurrence: the complete concept already contains whose predicate it will be. Positive no-ground does not. The possibility remains common until it is taken up; the taking-up makes the deed finitely non-identical and attributable to the participant or institution at issue in the regions examined here — where attributable belonging means neither property, sovereign ownership, nor self-grounding. Address, standing, and attribution then conditionally localise its answer at a non-forwardable locus. **Actualisation makes the deed finitely non-identical; address, standing, and attribution singularise the answer.** And the modal instruments differ accordingly: **Leibniz's conditional necessity governs the unfolding of a virtually assigned predicate; positive no-ground's conditional necessity arises only after contingent actualisation and governs not whether the deed occurs but where its answer can terminate** [cf. Griffin, Leibniz, God and Necessity].

Set the two necessities side by side and every joint differs. Leibniz's necessity concerns the **occurrence** of the act within the complete series; the book's concerns the **localisation** of the answer within the common. Leibniz's event is certain **ex hypothesi**; the book's locus is non-forwardable under conditions. Leibniz preassigns singular attribution within the complete concept, eternally legible; positive no-ground localises the answer at a finite locus disclosed through address. Leibniz preserves contingency by lodging the alternative in **another world**; the book preserves it within the historically given common itself — the act could have been otherwise here, without appeal to another complete world, and the answerability holds anyway. Leibniz reconciles freedom with a foreknown and completed order; the book reconciles answerability with a historical common that is not finished and never will be surveyed. The two constructions share a form — conditional necessity protecting contingency — and apply it at different places; and the difference of place is the whole doctrine. **Leibniz singularises the agent within the series; positive no-ground conditionally singularises the answer within the common.**

Two protections must be entered before the comparison is banked, because the resemblance tempts two errors. First: conditional necessarisation is not retroactive necessitation. When an answer becomes non-forwardable, no modality is added to the deed; it remains, eternally, a deed that need not have been done. The old principle of conditioned necessity — what is, is necessary while it is — will be met in Agamben's company below; here it suffices to say that the book's necessity does not even attach to the deed's being, only to the answer's address. **The deed need not have occurred; but once it has occurred and become attributable, the answer cannot therefore be nowhere.** Contingency of action does not leave the answer without a determinate terminus: **Leibniz virtually secures whose deed it will be; positive no-ground leaves that attribution open, but once the deed has become attributable, refuses the indefinite forwarding of its answer.** Second: the localisation does not validate the claim. Every condition remains testable — direction, standing, attribution were each given whole chapters — and a failed condition dissolves the necessity without residue. The book has not smuggled a tribunal into its modality; it has said only that where the conditions hold, the common's carrying, real and honourable as it is, can no longer stand as the final terminus. That was §5.5's second movement; the trial has now shown it can survive translation into the strongest modal vocabulary the tradition possesses, and come back distinct.

6.10 Bartleby's rather

There is a reading of Leibniz's principle that performs a release of its own, and the chapter owes it a full hearing — both because its instrument is a single word of the sentence this chapter began from, and because its hero has haunted this book's subject from the start: a copyist in an office, addressed by a superior, who answers.

Agamben's essay on *Bartleby* reconstructs, first, the doctrine of potentiality this chapter took from him above: the capacity that includes its own not-to; the writing tablet on which nothing is written; the scribe who does not write as the extreme figure of a potentiality no act exhausts. Then it reads Melville's formula as that doctrine made speech. "I would prefer not to" neither affirms nor negates; it does not refuse (which would actualise a not-to) and does not consent (which would actualise a to); like the Sceptics' *ou mallon*, "no more than", it suspends — holding the potential and the impotential together in an utterance that predicates nothing [Agamben, "*Bartleby*," in *Potentialities*]. The categories of the man of the law — "Edwards on the Will" and "Priestley on Necessity" — have no purchase, because potentiality is not will and impotentiality is not necessity: the formula breaks the instrument that would translate capacity into decision. And at the essay's centre, Agamben brings this suspension to bear on the very sentence of Leibniz's this chapter has been reading. The principle — *ratio est cur aliquid sit potius quam non sit*, there is a reason for which something is rather than is not — contains, in its "rather", the word *potius*, cognate of *potis*, of power and potentiality. *Bartleby*'s formula, Agamben writes, forcibly tears the *potius* from its context and "emancipates potentiality from both its connection to a 'reason' (*ratio*) and its subordination to Being": a "rather" fully freed of all *ratio*, a preference that no longer functions to secure the supremacy of Being over Nothing but hovers, with the Sceptics, in the indifference between them. On the same page the existentiifier falls: Agamben quotes the fragment's own conclusion — the necessary being is *existentificans* — precisely to refuse it, denying that the possible must borrow from outside any *puissance pour se faire exister*. Where Leibniz subordinated the possible to the founded route into being, *Bartleby*'s formula keeps possibility in its own element — capable, in pure potentiality, of bearing the "no more than" beyond Being and Nothing.

The chapter accepts more of this than politeness requires, and the acceptances are load-bearing elsewhere in the book. Potentiality is not will. Potentiality includes impotentiality, and actualisation does not exhaust it. The actual world casts a shadow of unrealised alternatives, and an honest ontology keeps the shadow visible. Total harmony cannot answer finite suffering, and the divine maximiser cannot absolve the actual — the essay's fury at the theodical demiurge is this book's fury, and §6.12 will spend it. On all of this, Agamben is an ally the book could not replace.

The divergence begins exactly where the emancipation succeeds, and it must be stated fairly. Agamben does not eliminate relation from Bartleby's world: the formula remains linguistic, juridical, spatial, and addressive, and the essay never pretends otherwise — its whole drama is staged in an office, before a superior, in the history of theology and law. What the essay does not develop is an equivalent of compossibility: a positive account of how a plurality of possibilities converges, diverges, and becomes jointly worldly. The fragment's deepest discovery, this chapter has argued, was never the vertical **ratio** that Agamben rightly refuses; it was the relational one — compossibility, the topology through which strivings converge into a world; order as the relation that distinguishes a plurality. Free the **potius** of all **ratio** and that articulation is not denied; it is left without an heir: no account remains of convergence and divergence, of series, of configurational existence — of how possibility becomes a **world** rather than a polarity held open. The release risks the possible's worldliness as the price of its freedom, and the risk is visible in the essay's own destination, the deepest level of the Palace where nothing is compossible with anything. Hence the chapter's formula, which is not a slogan but the sum of two demonstrations now complete. **Agamben frees potius from grounding ratio; positive no-ground asks whether a finite differentiating ratio can survive that liberation** — and answers that it must. Sharper: **Agamben frees potius from ratio; positive no-ground frees ratio from ground**. The first release rescues potentiality from the principle; the second dismisses the existentiifier and the spectator while keeping the relational ratio — distinguishing, ordering, articulating — through which a common is a common. Not possibility without reason; reason without Ground.

Leibnizian virtuality sharpens the point from an unexpected side. It already shows that the non-actual need not be external to articulation: a predicate, principle, or disposition may be internally real and operative before becoming explicit. The disagreement between Agamben and this book is therefore not between relation and non-relation absolutely, but between competing accounts of how non-actuality belongs to a world — as pure potentiality guarding its not-to, or as articulated virtuality pressing within a topology.

And Bartleby himself, read again, testifies for the second release as much as the first. Nothing about him is exterior. He answers in inherited English, with a formula whose grammar is impeccable; he answers **to** an address, each time, from his place in an office whose spatial order Melville lays out like a jurist; he occupies a position within a practice; and his formula, far from leaving the field, reorganises it — the clerks begin to say “prefer” despite themselves, the lawyer’s categories crack, the office reshapes itself around the one who prefers not to. His impotentiality is exercised entirely within, and upon, the common. **Impotentiality is not an exterior to the common. It is one of the common’s internally borne possibilities** — the whoever-form includes, among the routes it keeps open, the route of preferring-not-to, and Bartleby’s genius is to take it up. Taking it up: that is the point the pure-potentiality reading passes over. **Bartleby suspends compliance, not the localisation of his reply.** The content of his response suspends yes and no; the response remains his. Asked, he answers — at his desk, in his voice, each time — and the office’s whole subsequent history turns on the fact that **this** clerk, non-interchangeably, is the one whose taking-up it was. Another clerk could repeat the formula tomorrow; the words are common property, which is what lets them circulate. What no other clerk could do is make Bartleby’s taking-up theirs. That finite non-identity is not yet answerability by itself. Here, however, the formula is uttered in response to a determinate address, by the clerk to whom the request is directed, and its attribution is not in doubt. The lawyer’s standing to command is another matter: Bartleby’s refusal may contest the office’s authority, the scope of employment, or the claim implicit in the request, and localisation supplies no verdict on that dispute. He is not answerable because he complies — he never complies — but because this located reply is his to own, contest, repeat, or withhold. The content remains suspended while the attribution becomes non-forwardable. Agamben’s reading, faithful to potentiality, does not articulate this answerable singularisation; the book’s vocabulary exists to.

6.11 Decreation or refolding?

The confrontation has a second act, and it concerns time — what a doctrine of possibility owes to the past. Here Leibniz’s most notorious image, Agamben’s most radical proposal, and this book’s oldest operator meet, and the three must be held apart with care.

The image first. In the **Theodicy**, Theodorus is granted a vision of the Palace of Destinies: the infinite pyramid of possible worlds, an apartment for every Sextus — happy in Corinth, a king in Thrace, mediocre and painless — rising to the apex where the best world contains the actual Sextus, ravisher and exile, whose crime belongs to the order that surpasses all alternatives [**Theodicy**, §§414–417]. The unrealised is not annihilated, then; Leibniz builds it a mausoleum in the divine intellect, and God, in Agamben's bitter paraphrase, sometimes visits it “to enjoy the pleasure of recapitulating things and of renewing his own choice”. Agamben's verdict — that it is difficult to imagine anything more pharisaic than this demiurge, deaf to the lament rising from everything that could have been but was not — states the ethical intolerability the chapter will inherit whole. The Palace preserves the possible as the eternally outbid, kept on display to certify the actual: the shadow of the best world, sinking level below level toward the hall where nothing is compossible with anything.

Against the Palace, Agamben mobilises the past itself. Two old principles guard actuality: the irrevocability of the past — even God, in Agathon's line, cannot undo what has been done — and conditioned necessity: what is, is necessary while it is [Aristotle, **De interpretatione**, 19a22–23; Agamben, “Bartleby”]. Together they strip the past of potentiality. Agamben's Bartleby conducts his experiment exactly here, inaugurating the **quaestio** of past contingents: remembrance — Benjamin's theological experience of it — restores possibility to the past, making the incomplete complete and the complete incomplete; and the formula becomes the **restitutio in integrum** of possibility, holding it suspended between occurrence and nonoccurrence. The destination is decreation: a second creation “in which what happened and what did not happen are returned to their originary unity in the mind of God, while what could have not been but was becomes indistinguishable from what could have been but was not” [Agamben, “Bartleby”]. Sextus the tyrant and Sextus the happy peasant blend and can no longer be told apart; the creature is saved in being irredeemable. The proposal must not be caricatured: Agamben does not claim that nothing happened, and decreation is not erasure — it is a return of what happened and what did not happen toward the indistinction of an originary potentiality. The criticism that follows concerns not historical nihilism but the ontological asymmetry that inheritance, attribution, answerability, and repair require.

The book's operator answers to the same injustice and refuses the remedy, and the refusal can be stated as a single asymmetry. Decreation heals the wound of the unrealised by **indistinction** — actual and non-actual returned to a unity in which their difference lapses. Refolding — the operator this book built long before this chapter — carries the wound forward **as a difference**. What happened; what did not happen; what was lost; what remains unrealised; what may yet be reopened: refolding preserves these in their distinct modes and transmits all of them, operatively, into the common's next configuration. The sedimented answer carries the deed; the record carries the loss; the inherited absence carries the unrealised; and contestation and revision remain possible precisely because the differences remain legible. **Decreation returns the actual and the unrealised to indistinction; refolding preserves their difference while allowing both to remain operative.**

The controlled test is the one §5.5 built, and it decides between the operators cleanly. Ancient Greece happened. It cannot now be given as it was then given — the first necessitation, read from the common's side, closed that route: its present givenness includes ruin, translation, distance. But neither is it returned to a potentiality of having-happened-or-not: the fragments are fragments of **something actual**; the translations answer to originals that were; the absences are the absences of what existed and is lost, not of what hovers between occurrence and nonoccurrence. And alongside the actual-transmitted run the unrealised routes — the democracy that did not extend, the science that stopped, the manuscripts unwritten — inherited **as** unrealised, distinct both from what was and from what merely never could have been. Inheritance holds this entire differentiated structure open, and its ethical presupposition is exactly the differences decreation would dissolve. **Inheritance does not decreate the past. It carries the actual, the lost, and the unrealised forward in distinct modes.**

The ethical consequence, last, because Chapter 11 and the trials will need it. A harmful deed must remain visible under both of its aspects at once: contingent — it could have been otherwise, and the alternative's reality is part of the wrong's measure; and actual — it happened, and may be attributable. Nietzsche's eternal return, as Agamben himself observes, threatens to abolish the first aspect, eternally reaffirming what occurred; decreation does not erase actuality, but it threatens to suspend the asymmetry on which the second aspect stands. Refolding is built to hold both: the deed carried as done, the otherwise carried as real, and the answer — where address, standing, and attribution hold — carried to its locus. What was not necessary can still be acknowledged as one's deed; such acknowledgment does not make the deed necessary. Bartleby's situated reply already showed the structure in miniature, and the book's whole jurisprudence stands on it.

6.12 Justice without the whole

The fragment does not end with modality. Its last paragraphs draw the consequence the whole construction was for, and they must be quoted, because the closure they perform is the one this book exists to refuse — and because the refusal's deepest warrant is a sentence of the fragment's own.

Pleasure, Leibniz writes, is the perception of beauty, order, perfection; “and every pain contains something disordered — but relative to the perceiver, since absolutely all things are ordered” [§18]. Therefore, “when some things in the series displease us, that arises from a defect of understanding [**ex defectu intellectionis**]. For it is not possible that every mind should understand all things distinctly; and to those who observe only some parts rather than others, the harmony in the whole cannot appear [**non potest apparere Harmonia in toto**]” [§19]. Justice enters as order's face toward the minded: “justice is nothing other than order or perfection with respect to minds”; minds receive the greatest consideration, being “the primary unities of the world, and the nearest likenesses of the first being” [§§20–22]. And the final paragraph completes the ascent: the first cause is of the highest goodness, producing the maximum of perfection and pleasure; “so much so that evils themselves serve the greater good, and that pains are found in minds must necessarily conduce to greater pleasures” [§§23–24].

Name the structure with the book's names, since every element has appeared before. The claimant — a finite mind, in pain — presents a disharmony. The system's answer runs: your pain is real, but its disorder is **respective**, an artefact of partial perception; absolutely, all is ordered; your suffering serves a good you cannot see; the account is settled at a level you cannot audit, by a spectator you cannot be. This is the common installed as final answerer — the whole taking the stand so that no one need take it — the exculpating structure of Chapter 5 raised to the scale of creation. Theodicy is absolution through totality. The book's first law — constitution without absolution — was built against precisely this, and the trial ends with the two doctrines facing each other without remainder.

But the refusal need not be imported, and this is the fragment's last and finest tremble: its own §19 supplies the premise. **No finite mind can perceive the harmony of the whole.** Leibniz states it as consolation's mechanism — the harmony is there, only your seeing falls short. Read as epistemology of the finite, it is the whole objection: if the harmony in the whole **cannot appear** to any finite perspective, then no finite being can ever **offer** the whole as an answer — every theodicy uttered by a human mouth exceeds what its speaker can perceive, and the whole, as answerer, is a chair that only the installed office could fill. The restraint must be entered at once, because the argument is easily overclaimed: the finitude premise does not internally refute Leibniz's claim that God perceives and guarantees the harmony of the whole — within the system, the divine standpoint stands, and no epistemology of finite minds dislodges it. What the premise prevents is something else, and it is all the book needs: it prevents any finite person, institution, or historical narrative from legitimately speaking as though it occupied that divine standpoint in answering another's suffering. The fragment's honesty about finitude does not refute its theology; it disarms its consolation in every finite mouth. What remains, once the spectator's chair is left empty of every finite claimant, is the book's alternative, and it can now be stated as the trial's ethical result: **because no finite spectator may answer from the whole, disharmony cannot be absolved by appeal to an invisible maximum. It must be traced toward finite parties capable of answering at determinate loci through acknowledgment, contestation, revision, or repair.** Nothing in this denies that configurations explain: the series — historical, material, institutional — explains how the route to a wrong was open, what carried it; explanation of that kind is owed. What the configuration cannot do is answer. **The series explains the route; it does not take the stand.** And contingency, far from softening the demand, sharpens it: that the wrong could have been otherwise is what makes it a deed rather than a fate — explanation without absolution, the exact space in which answerability lives.

The trial can be closed, and its yield counted against the three propositions it was to test. A common can be historically singular without receiving its singularity from an external ground: the fragment's own configurational determination — the conflict of strivings settling into a determinate series, the drop gathering **sponte naturae** — showed the structure, and historical compossibilisation freed it from the catalogue and the optimum. A free act can become singularly attributable at a locus without its answerer occupying a position outside the common: Leibniz's own account of freedom — spontaneity, contingency, inclination without necessitation, uniqueness as an irreducible way of belonging — offers a classical resource for showing that singularity needs no exteriority; the book removed only the complete concept and the divine legibility. And an act can remain contingent while its answer becomes conditionally non-forwardable: the modal grammar survived translation into hypothetical necessity's own vocabulary and returned distinct — necessity of localisation, not of occurrence; openness of content; contingency intact. In **Ratio est in natura**, Leibniz discovered that possibility is internally striving, that plurality is constitutive, that incompatibility is selective, that existence is configurational, and that finite intelligence cannot possess the whole — and he grounded these discoveries in a necessary existentiating being and closed them in the maximal harmony of a selected series, before a spectator whose vision no finite being shares. Nor were the striving possibles and the compossible series his only discovery: Leibniz possessed a native vocabulary for what is internally real and efficacious without being explicitly actual — the virtual — though in his hands that virtuality remained prospectively complete and divinely readable, sealed inside the complete concept and the selected world. Deleuze transformed it into a differential field of actualisation; positive no-ground historicises it further — the common internally non-exhausted without being pre-written, singular deeds arising through finite taking-up before address localises their answer. Agamben released the **potius** from **ratio** at the risk of the world's articulation. Positive no-ground performs the other release: it frees **ratio** from ground — reading it as the immanent articulation of a historically singular common that possibilises unique loci from within, loci whose answers, refolded, transform what can later be borne together. **Leibniz guarded the vector and topology of singular existence, then installed a final spectator to certify their harmony. Positive no-ground keeps the striving, the relation, and the free answerer, but leaves the spectator's chair empty.** Vector without external mover; topology without total spectator; singular locus without exteriority; answer without absolution.

One office remains standing, and it is the one the trial could not reach — for the existentifier and the spectator never had a face, and the whole, when it absolves, at least pretends to no eyes of its own. The strongest remaining test is not the field or the whole but the other, who really calls, accuses, and receives — and whose claim the most powerful ethical philosophy of the last century made irreducible to ontological mediation. The refusal of ground has passed its modal trial; it must now pass its ethical one. The next chapter reads Levinas.

Chapter 7. The Other Is Not a Ground

7.1 The difficulty

Chapter 5 refused the archic office to a candidate that could not, in any case, have discharged it: the common has no voice and stands at neither pole of a demand. The present refusal has no such shelter. The other **can** occupy both poles of the vector — can call, accuse, receive, forgive; everything this book has said about direction seems to point at the other as its origin; and the greatest ethical philosophy of the twentieth century locates the source of normativity — or, in its later vocabulary, its pre-original authorisation — in the relation to alterity. Emmanuel Levinas does not announce a principle; his mature work expressly refuses the vocabulary of principle, origin, and ground. The chapter's claim is therefore not that Levinas installed an archē — he would deny it, and the denial is the deepest thing in his late work — but that the relation to alterity, as his texts construct it, **performs the archic function** despite its anti-archic self-description: it authorises the whole normative field, terminates the question of right, and stands immune to the interrogation it licenses against everything else. That is a functional charge, and it must be demonstrated, not attributed; the demonstration is the chapter.

The debt must be stated before the argument, because it is enormous and because the argument depends on it. From Levinas this book takes, and could not have assembled elsewhere: the priority of the demand over my initiative; the asymmetry of the ethical relation, held against every philosophy that dissolves it into reciprocity; the insight that the other reaches me otherwise than as an object of knowledge; and the critique of a sociality of the side-by-side — his complaint that being-with-one-another remains an association around a shared term, a marching-together, in which the face-to-face never happens [**Time and the Other**]. That complaint and Chapter 3's finding are the same finding, reached from opposite directions: the analytic's other stands beside me at the world; no one in it stands **before** me. Levinas saw the missing vector before anyone, and named its phenomenon — the face — with a precision the present account presupposes on every page.

The quarrel, then, is not over the phenomenon but over a function the phenomenon is made to carry. And the argument to come must clear a bar Chapter 5 set for it: to show not merely that the archic function fails, but that it fails **against** what it was meant to protect — that the other's dignity is diminished, not honoured, when the one who asks is made to double as that in virtue of which all asking binds.

7.2 One face, two functions

The chapter's target must be framed with care, because the easy framing refutes a Levinas who does not exist. It would be false to say that the face is an empirical person in one paragraph and a transcendental condition in another, as though two separable doctrines had been accidentally conflated; Levinas deliberately resists that separation. The face is meant to be the event in which transcendence occurs in the concrete encounter — the infinite in the finite, signification in sensibility, the condition present in the conditioned. The right description of the situation is therefore not two doctrines but one structure under double load: **Levinas requires the face to function simultaneously as the singular event of address and as the condition under which ethical signification is possible at all.** The chapter's question is whether the two functions can coexist without the first being subordinated to the second — whether the claimant survives being also the authoriser.

Both functions are textually dense. As claimant, the face is the singular interlocutor: the one who speaks, teaches, contests my possession of the world; the stranger, the widow, the orphan whose destitution and height address me; the interlocutor of a discourse no thematisation exhausts [TI, the sections on discourse and teaching]. Here Levinas describes what Chapter 2 called the vector, and describes it better than anyone. As authoriser, the same face is the origin of signification and of the ethical order as such: expression founds language; the face is the condition of meaning rather than an event within it; ethics precedes ontology as first philosophy [TI]. **Otherwise than Being** radicalises the second function while renouncing its form: responsibility is pre-original, an-archic — prior to commitment, contract, or freedom, I am accused, obsessed, hostage, the-one-for-the-other in substitution, responsible even for the persecutor [OB, ch. IV, "Substitution"]; the word I means "me voici," here I am, answerable before any question [OB]; and the source recedes into the trace of illeity, which never appears and has always already ordered me to the neighbour. Whether that recession vacates the authorising function or preserves it in a subtler form is the question of §7.4; that the function is present, in both registers, the texts themselves insist — it is what "first philosophy" means.

The thesis of the chapter: the claimant-function is phenomenologically earned, and this book keeps it entire; the authoriser-function is the archic promotion, performed on the dearest candidate; nothing in the first requires the second; and the second, far from securing the first, subordinates it – the singular event of address is made to serve as the manifestation of an identical authorising structure, and what is singular in it becomes, normatively, secondary. Three arguments carry the thesis.

7.3 Three arguments for separation

The routing argument. Its correct form requires a concession that its first drafts, in every philosophy that has attempted it, tend to skip. Levinas may well have described something real that precedes all constituted language and shared form: exposure – proximity, the being-affected by the other's approach before any content, the disturbance that no grammar owns. Nothing in this book's apparatus refutes that description, and Chapter 2's own phenomenology of arrival – the landing that precedes parsing – is its cousin. The argument therefore does not say that a face outside all commonality is nothing; it distinguishes three levels that Levinas's architecture holds too close together: **exposure** – the pre-articulate being-reached; **the articulated demand** – an accusation of something, a claim to something, a question about something, in forms neither party invented; and **answerability** – the coming-due of an answer from someone, before someone with standing, such that the answer can be adequate or inadequate, owed or discharged. Grant Levinas the first level without reserve. The claim is about the second and third: **proximity may precede articulation; answerability does not.** For a claim to become one for which an answer can be demanded, it must acquire content, direction, and standing within a shared world – what may be demanded, of whom, by whom, with what right, and what would count as answering. Exposure determines none of this; it is exactly as open to the swindler's approach as to the widow's. The common is indispensable not because it creates exposure – it does not – but because it makes exposure **answerable in determinate form**; and an ethics that stops at exposure has an origin without a jurisprudence, an infinite disturbance from which no particular obligation can be read off without borrowing, silently, everything the shared world supplies. Levinas borrows it – the widow, the orphan, and the stranger are juridical categories of a tradition; “you shall not kill” is a commandment with a history – and the borrowing is not a fault but a demonstration: even in the texts that make the face the origin of signification, the demand signifies through the common or not at all.

The internality argument. This is the centre, and its correct form is comparative, because the crude form fails. The crude form says Levinas makes every empirical demand unquestionable, and that is false: the third party is present, justice compares, the empirical other can be wrong, responsibility for one may require resisting another — Levinas says all of it. The real difference lies in **where assessment lives**. In Levinas's architecture, infinite responsibility is original and unquestionable; judgment, comparison, and limitation arrive with the third, as the tragic necessity of measuring what is in itself beyond measure; warranted resistance is a secondary correction imposed on a primordially unconditional obligation — assessment enters late, and from outside the ethical structure proper. In the present account, assessability belongs **inside** answerability from the first: the grid of §2.2 — standing, legitimacy, validity — is not a limitation subsequently forced on the demand but part of what a demand is, such that being reached and being bound are distinct at the origin and not only after the third arrives. The issue is not whether Levinas eventually permits judgment; he does. The issue is whether judgment belongs internally to the structure of answerability or enters only as the necessary limitation of an originally unquestionable responsibility. The difference does work everywhere the two accounts touch practice. On the internal model, the false accusation is answered **as** false — contestation is a mode of answering the claimant, owed to her as the answer her claim earned; on the derivative model, contestation is never owed to the claimant at all — it is owed to the others whom my unlimited obligation to her would wrong. The claimant, in the second picture, is never the one before whom assessment happens; she is only the one on whose behalf, or against whose infinity, it happens. Direction fused with unconditional authorisation leaves, at the origin, only compliance and its guilt; and Chapter 4's formula extends exactly: direction without internal assessability is command, not answerability. What answers a command is obedience or its failure. What answers an address is an answer.

It must be said what this argument does not claim. It does not claim that responsibility waits on consent — Part I buried the voluntarist picture. It does not claim symmetry — the vector points at me, and no reciprocity is required for its landing; everything pre-original in Levinas's phenomenon is preserved at the level of **arrival**. It claims only that being reached is not being bound, and that the space between them — where standing can be contested, legitimacy questioned, validity denied, and the answer still owed **as answer** — belongs to the phenomenon and not to its later policing. Assessability keeps judgment open; it does not supply the judgment or guarantee that any finite answer will be adequate. Levinas closes that space from above, by unconditional authorisation; the they, Chapter 10 will show, closes it from below, by unfindable authorisation. The two closures are enemies of the same thing.

The dignity argument. Now the bar Chapter 5 set — stated, this time, as the risk it is rather than the reduction it would overstate. Levinas would deny, with textual right, that the universality of the ethical makes faces interchangeable: each face singularises responsibility infinitely; the command is not a classification under which persons fall. Grant the denial. The risk remains, and it is structural: if the infinite command is identical in every face, complete before any determination, and indifferent in its bindingness to everything the claimant concretely is — then the concrete history of the claimant is rendered **normatively secondary** to the structure of alterity she manifests. Responsibility is for **le premier venu**, the first one to come along [OB] — a formula whose generosity should not conceal its grammar: what binds me in her binds me in whoever comes, and binds me completely before her wound, her standing, her thirty years of Tuesdays add anything at all. The decisive question, which the texts do not answer because their architecture cannot ask it: **what does this person's specific history, relation, wound, and standing add, if the infinite ethical command is already complete before those determinations?** On the present account, everything: the sedimented history is not an occasion for a structure to manifest but part of what is owed and to whom; the neighbour's courtesies, in Chapter 4's case, reached the man through decades that no other claimant's approach could carry, and what came due from him was due to **her**, in that history's terms, not to alterity through her. The office metaphor from Chapter 4's second case names the risk exactly, and is held here as diagnosis, not verdict: an authority identical in every bearer and indifferent to each bearer's determinations has the **form** of an office — occupied by whoever comes — and to protect the other from becoming one, the authorising function must be surrendered, since it is the authorising function that makes the bearers equivalent. The other is honoured as the one who asks, not as the office that authorises.

7.4 Three exchanges

The strongest Levinasian replies deserve their full strength, and each receives it in turn.

First exchange: the third party is already there. **Objection:** the critique treats the common as a correction Levinas lacked, but the third is not an afterthought in these texts; Levinas insists the third is present in the face from the beginning — “the third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other” [TI] — so justice, comparison, and the shared order are co-original with the face, and the chapter’s triad restates his own architecture. **Reply:** the concession should be complete, because it strengthens the argument it seems to answer. If the third is present in the face from the beginning, then the face-to-face is never normatively self-sufficient — by Levinas’s own testimony, the dyad already contains comparison’s claim, and the pure two-place relation from which the ethical was to spring is nowhere to be had. That is precisely the routing argument’s conclusion, reached from inside. What must then be resisted is only the residual asymmetry of **founding**: in Levinas, justice and its institutions remain derived — required by the plurality of others, they manage an originally two-place infinity, and the common stays normatively downstream of alterity however early it arrives. The present account does not answer by inverting the derivation — Chapter 5 forbids promoting the common to origin as firmly as this chapter forbids promoting the other — but by refusing the derivation in both directions: at the level of articulated answerability, exposure, the third, and the common’s forms are **equiprimordial**; no one of them founds the others; a demand is the three-jointed thing of §2.2 or it is not yet a demand. Diane Perpich has drawn, from within Levinas scholarship, the formula this equiprimordiality needs: the face is the **site** of normativity, not its origin or source [Perpich, *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*]. Site is exactly right: where the demand lands and whence it comes are persons; what makes it a demand was never either of them alone — nor the forms alone, either.

Second exchange: illeity has already vacated the office. Objection: the chapter attacks a Levinas who does not exist. **Otherwise than Being** is an-archic by construction: responsibility is pre-original, without principle; the Good is beyond being; illeity is not an authority that appears but Levinas's device for refusing precisely what the chapter accuses him of – a present source, a nameable principle, a ground. **Reply:** the text's stated anti-archic orientation is conceded at the outset: illeity is built to prevent the Other from congealing into a present principle, and as a critique of every theology of the available God it succeeds. The question is functional, and it must be answered functionally, in three steps. First, identify what the trace actually does in the economy of the text: it is that in virtue of which every face commands unconditionally; it converts proximity into assignment; without it, exposure would be disturbance, not obligation – the trace is load-bearing for the bindingness. Second, identify the properties of its operation: the authorisation it supplies is **unconditional** (prior to and independent of any assessment), **universal** (identical in every face), and – decisively – **immune**: the legitimacy of what illeity authorises cannot itself enter the space of contestation, since contestation is already a form of the responsibility illeity assigns; there is no position from which the assignment could be interrogated that is not itself an assigned position. Third, name the function these properties compose. Not an archē in the classical sense – nothing is present, nothing is nameable, nothing can be turned toward – and the chapter should not claim otherwise, nor claim that every unconditional norm is archic. The precise finding is narrower: **illeity is quasi-archic – it supplies an unconditional authorisation whose own legitimacy is structurally exempt from the interrogation it licenses.** The exemption is the archic residue: what Chapter 5 called the office survives here in its most refined form, as the immunity of the authorising instance – an office in the past tense, unassailable precisely because vacated. Schürmann's test measures it exactly: an anarchy whose pre-original still authorises unconditionally has changed the letterhead and kept the immunity [**Broken Hegemonies**]. The genuinely post-archic position keeps the unconditionality of **arrival** – being reached is not elected – and returns the authorisation to where it can be asked after.

Third exchange: refusal is preserved, so nothing is lost. Objection: the internality argument concedes that Levinas permits judgment and warranted resistance — the third requires them. Then the two accounts differ only in bookkeeping: both end with assessment, contestation, and justified refusal; whether these are “internal” or “derivative” is architecture, not ethics. **Reply:** the difference is not bookkeeping, and the two kinds of warranted refusal expose it. In Levinas, refusal is warranted **because of the third**: I may resist this claimant only as the agent of my responsibility to other others; the original claim itself is never defective — infinite responsibility has no defective instances — and so refusal is always a tragic economy among infinities, never a verdict on a claim. On the present account, refusal may also be warranted **because the original claim is defective**: false in content, pressed without standing, illegitimate in its authority, manipulative in its framing — and the refusal is then owed to the claimant herself, as the answer her claim earned, not extracted from her by the competing claims of others. Everyday moral life runs on the second kind: the rebutted accusation, the exposed pretence, the demand returned for want of standing — scenes in which the one who refuses looks the claimant in the face and answers **her**, not the crowd of her competitors. An ethics that can license refusal only by triangulation has preserved the word and lost the phenomenon: it offers disobedience-managed-by-justice, the shadow that obedience casts, where what was needed is contestation as a first-personal mode of answering. This, finally, is the chapter’s culmination, and it is why the separation of functions honours Levinas’s deepest motive better than his architecture does. He wanted the demand to reach me before my freedom could screen it — and it does: arrival precedes assessment; the landing is undergone; nothing here restores the sovereign subject who admits claims by visa. Everything pre-original is preserved at the pole of arrival. Only the verdict is returned to where verdicts belong: among persons, in the open, contestable space that the common maintains and no one owns.

7.5 Precedents

Two acknowledgments keep the chapter honest. A version of this critique is old within the tradition: Ricoeur pressed the asymmetry of **Otherwise than Being** as an exaggeration that leaves the summoned self without resources to answer, and sought repair in attestation, solicitude, and the course of mutual recognition [Ricoeur, **Oneself as Another**, tenth study]. The present chapter shares his diagnosis and refuses his cure, and the difference should be stated narrowly rather than as a slogan: the account developed here retains the full asymmetry of the vector — no reciprocity is restored, no mutuality made telos — while placing standing, legitimacy, and validity within the initial structure of answerability, rather than reintroducing them, as Ricoeur does, through the symmetrising detour of recognition. And Bernasconi's long-standing question — whether the face is transcendental condition or empirical encounter [Bernasconi, "Rereading **Totality and Infinity**"] — states in the scholarship's terms what this chapter has treated as the internal tension of §7.2: on the present reading, that question has no stable answer in the texts because the two functions cannot be held apart there, and the oscillation the literature keeps rediscovering is the operating noise of an office being asked to remain a face. Establishing that reading against the alternatives would be its own study; here it is offered as the interpretation that makes the oscillation intelligible rather than accidental.

7.6 The result

Part III is complete, and its two refusals are one operation. The common: constitutive priority and local institution without archic authority — a maintained field that carries every route, confers real and defeasible standing, and holds no final office. The other: direction without origination — the claimant whose address is underived, whose standing is real and assessable, and whose dignity consists in being **who** asks, not **what** authorises. Being reached is therefore not yet being bound: standing, attribution, validity, and proportion belong within answerability from the start. Between common and other stands the finite locus at which, when something comes due, attribution may become non-forwardable. Nothing in the triad holds the archic office; the office stands exposed as a fantasm whose candidates — subject, community, history, alterity — each borrowed its robes for an epoch. The vector's poles are persons and carried standings within a maintained field, and the field is nobody, and the poles are answerable, and that is the entire economy.

The operation that ran twice in Part III now generalises. Releasing the other from the archic function while keeping everything the other actually does — this had a method: distinguish the phenomenon from the office imposed on it, return the phenomenon, leave the office empty. Part IV turns the same method on the history of philosophy itself, where the phenomena are what the great thinkers saw, and the offices are the principles they installed upon what they saw — and where Schürmann, who supplied this book's test for false anarchies, showed the functionaries of the universal to have been, within their very reasonings, guardians of the singular. Chapter 11 will later apply the refusal reflexively to ethical interpretation itself, asking how a finite interpreter may speak of alterity without disappearing into an unattributed Ethics. Whether the metaphysical corpus can be read as response before it is read as installation — and what its destitutions release — is the next question.

PART IV – PHILOSOPHICAL INHERITANCE

Chapter 8. Phenomenological Response Given Archic Form: Inheriting the Guardians of the Singular

8.1 The inheritance problem

Part III ended with the archic office empty at both of its candidate poles: the common carries every route and answers nothing; the other commands the vector's direction and grounds nothing. The book's constructive account — the locus of Chapter 4, the finite place at which attribution may become non-forwardable — stands, from here forward, on no ground at all, and stands the better for it. But the operation that emptied the offices has a further reach, promised in the Introduction as the second contribution, and this chapter performs it: turned toward the history of philosophy, the same anti-archic discipline yields a way of **inheriting** the metaphysicians — and the hinge between the two applications should be stated at the door, because it is the reason Part IV belongs in this book rather than beside it. Chapter 7 released the singular other from the office of grounding normativity while keeping everything the other actually does — the arrival, the height of the claim, the priority of the demand. This chapter releases thinkers from identification with their principles while keeping everything the thinkers actually saw. The operation is one: locate the office, exhibit what exceeds it, close the office, keep the excess. Applied to Levinas, it saved the phenomenology of the face from the metaphysics of infinite authorisation. Applied now to the tradition entire, it answers a question that sounds antiquarian and is not: **what may be inherited from a destitute metaphysics?** — a question that decides what a philosophical education is for once the epochal principles have, in Reiner Schürmann's word, withered.

Three answers hold the field. The restorationist answer denies the destitution: some principle still stands, or can be re-erected, and the corpus is inherited as doctrine. The historicist answer accepts the destitution and inherits the corpus as symptom: the systems index their epochs, instruct us about power and discourse, and bind no one. The deconstructive answer inherits the corpus as work-site: the texts are read against themselves, their aporias exhibited, their closure endlessly negotiated. Each answer contains its truth, and each makes the great texts strangely unreadable **as philosophy**: the first by refusing their death, the second by refusing their life, the third by suspending the question. This chapter develops a fourth answer — phenomenological inheritance — and states it as a thesis about reading:

Major metaphysical projects can be read as responses to phenomena before they are read as installations of principles.

On this reading the metaphysical corpus belongs to two histories at once. There is a history of principles — of the hegemonic fantasies installed as ultimate referents, “the Greek Hen, the Latin Natura, the Modern Self-Consciousness,” each enabling a governable era by mooring thought and action to a supreme term [**Broken Hegemonies** (BH), General Introduction; **Heidegger on Being and Acting** (HBA)]. And there is a history of phenomenality — of what showed itself to thinkers and roused them to think — to which the same corpus belongs under a different description. The destitution of a principle closes a chapter in the first history; the chapter’s contention is that it need not close anything in the second: the fall of the office can **release** the phenomenon the office covered, so that the destitute texts become newly legible as what they always also were — responses. Stating this thesis, grounding it in Schürmann, giving it explanatory rather than merely edifying force, demonstrating it on one sustained case, and defending it against its three strongest objections: that is the work of what follows.

8.2 Schürmann’s precept and Schürmann’s thesis

The extension must begin from an exact accounting of what is already Schürmann’s — both because the scholarship has sometimes credited him with less than the texts contain, and because the present argument’s originality depends on the boundary being drawn honestly.

Two passages of the General Introduction to **Broken Hegemonies** carry the load. The first is a precept of reading, attributed by Schürmann to the doxographers' wisdom about Aristotle: "In reading an author, one must seek, first of all, the initial experience, namely, the experience that, before any other, roused him to think" (BH, 12–13). Deployed in context as historiographical method, the precept nonetheless commits its user to a determinate picture: beneath the theses of an author lies an **experience**; the experience **roused** the thinking; interpretation should run from thesis back to rousing.

The second passage is the programmatic center of the whole work. Closing his account of hegemonic fantasies, Schürmann asks whether a rereading of "the civil servants of humanity" would show that "they have not been the champions of the singular even while they have pleaded for hegemony" (BH, 16); and he answers in the form of a commitment: the "consoling and consolidating *chargés d'affaires* deserve the most attentive reading in view of their curious way of retaining this 'elsewise' (from *diasōzein ta phainomena*) which nevertheless falls outside their theses"; he will show, "in these very reasonings, the counter-strategies by means of which the thesis fails to keep its word, difference welcomes the event, nouns yield to verbs, and the functionaries of the universal turn into the guardians of the singular" (BH, 17). The saving-the-phenomena formula — Eudoxos's *diasōzein* — is applied by Schürmann himself to the metaphysicians' retention of what exceeds their theses; and the singular "elsewise" is specified within pages as the singularisation to come, mortality's "undertow that undermines every hegemonic fantasy" (BH, 25).

Call this the **guardianship thesis**, and mark its three features. It is **diagnostic**: established by reading, case by case, across the topology's two volumes. It is **despite-themselves**: the guardians are "double agents" (BH, 17) who simultaneously retain and abandon the singular; guardianship is their symptom, legible against the grain of their pleading. And it is **bounded**: Schürmann converts neither the precept nor the thesis into a claim about what thinking as such is. The guardianship is therefore textual before it is vocational: the great thinker is not innocent of the office but leaves legible, within the installation itself, what the office could not absorb. The present chapter's business begins exactly at that boundary.

8.3 From reading rule to explanatory model

Why should the precept license anything beyond itself? An obvious deflation must be met head-on: perhaps the initial-experience precept is simply a productive hermeneutic rule — a way of generating illuminating readings — that describes no structure in the things read. Fruitful reading rules are cheap; psychoanalytic, economic, and theological keys have all opened many texts, and their fruitfulness proved nothing about texts in general. If the two-histories thesis rested only on the attractiveness of the readings the precept yields, it would be one key among the others.

The reply is that the precept, where it succeeds, does a specific kind of work that mere keys do not: the reconstructed phenomenon **explains**. It explains, first, the **formation** of the system — why the theses took the shape they took, why these distinctions and not others were forced, why the architecture bears weight exactly where it does. It explains, second, the **recurrent tensions** — why the same strains reappear at the same joints across a thinker's revisions, as a building strains where the load it was built for presses. And it explains, third — this is decisive, because it is Schürmann's own datum — the **counter-strategies**: why the text exceeds its doctrine precisely where it does, why "the thesis fails to keep its word" at determinate points rather than randomly. A reading key that merely redescribes leaves the counter-strategies as anomalies; the reconstructed phenomenon predicts them, because a response promoted into an office will strain against the office wherever the phenomenon was richer than the office admits. The generalisation, then, is warranted not because the precept generates persuasive readings, but because the reconstructed phenomenon explains both the formation of the system and the counter-strategies by which the system exceeds itself. Explanatory force of that shape is evidence about the object, not about the reader's ingenuity — and it is testable in the only way interpretive claims are: case by case, with failure possible. The next section runs one case at full length.

8.4 Descartes: a sustained case

The phenomenon. What roused Descartes to think — on the evidence of the texts' own dramaturgy — is the world's capacity for withdrawal. Not any particular error, but the discovery that the given can suspend its givenness wholesale: the senses that have deceived once cannot certify themselves; the piece of wax surrenders every sensible property while remaining, uncannily, the same wax; waking life offers no mark that dreams cannot counterfeit; and at the limit, the whole field of appearance can be thought as staged by a deceiver [Meditations I–II]. The First Meditation is not an argument so much as an induced experience — the reader is made to undergo the withdrawal — and what shows itself in it is a phenomenon in the exact sense: the **withdrawability of the world as such**, the possibility, given with finite mindedness, that everything given may recede at once.

The response. Within the withdrawal, something refuses to withdraw. The doubting that suspends every content cannot suspend its own performance; the deceiver, deceiving me about everything, confirms in the deceiving that I am; “this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind” — **quoties a me profertur, vel mente concipitur** [Med. II, AT VII 25]. The response is exquisitely faithful to its phenomenon: it does not deny the withdrawal, out-argue it, or wait it out; it locates the one event the withdrawal cannot reach because the withdrawal **is** that event's own undergoing. What resists is not a thing but an occurrence — thinking, each time it occurs, indubitable in occurring.

The archic promotion. Then the office. The event is made a foundation: **fundamentum inconcussum**, the unshakeable ground on which the rebuilt edifice will stand. Its manner of resisting doubt — clarity and distinctness — is generalised into the criterion of all truth; the order of reasons converts a path once undergone into a permanent architecture of justification; the veracious God is installed to underwrite the criterion; and method universalises the whole, so that henceforth only what can be led back to the indubitable counts as known. The response (“this, at least, cannot withdraw”) has become a principle (“only the withdrawal-proof is real knowledge; the thinking subject is the ground”) — the modern hegemonic fantasm, in Schürmann's topology, taking office [BH, Vol. Two].

The counter-strategies. And the text strains against the office exactly where the guardianship thesis predicts — where the phenomenon was richer than the office admits. Four strains. First, the **temporality of the foundation**: the cogito holds **quoties** — each time — an event needing re-enactment, not a standing item; and Descartes himself concedes that his persistence from moment to moment requires continual creation, as if the unshakeable ground had to be re-given at every instant by something else [Med. III]: a foundation that must be perpetually re-founded is a response wearing an office's clothes. Second, the **priority of the infinite**: the Third Meditation discovers within the ground an idea it cannot have produced — the infinite, “in some way prior in me to the finite” [Med. III, AT VII 45–46] — so that the foundation, at its first inventory, finds lodged inside itself something greater than itself; the ground is a host before it is a ground. Third, the **literary form**: the work is a **meditatio**, a first-person exercise that each reader must perform — the doctrine cannot be transmitted without transmitting the experience, which is to confess that the phenomenon, not the system, is what the book actually hands on. Fourth, at the summit, the **creation of the eternal truths**: the doctrine that God freely established even the truths of mathematics [Letters to Mersenne, 1630] suspends the criterion's own necessity from a will that exceeds it — the office of certainty destabilised from above by its author's deepest fidelity to what exceeds every office. None of these is a slip; each is the response showing through the installation — the functionary, in Schürmann's phrase, turning guardian within his very reasonings.

The release. Destitute the office — as three centuries of anti-foundationalism have — and observe what is not thereby exhausted. The withdrawability of the world remains a live phenomenon and a renewed question: it returns as the sceptical scenarios of analytic epistemology, as the simulation arguments of the present, as the ordinary vertigo of mediated life in which the given's givenness is daily suspendable; whoever thinks these things is in Descartes' phenomenon whether or not a single Cartesian thesis survives. The performative indubitability of the thinking-event remains available and was in fact retrieved — the phenomenological **cogito**, from Husserl's reduction to the analyses of auto-affection, is Descartes' response re-enacted with the office refused. And the finite's discovery of the more-than-finite within itself remains a standing provocation, inherited by the very philosophy of alterity that made Descartes' Third Meditation its favourite text — and met, on this book's own terms, in Chapter 7. Descartes after foundationalism is not a refuted founder; he is, for the first time plainly, a respondent — and the criticism of what his office cost (the certification regime, the disqualified body, the animals made machines) becomes **more** exact once what he saw is separated from what he built on it.

Parmenides can now be indicated — and only indicated, as a heuristic marker of the method's range rather than a further proof: the steadiness of presence, promoted into henology and its office, released again wherever the sheer **that-it-is** astonishes. The indication is a promissory note on a reading of the Descartes kind, redeemable or not, case by case. For Leibniz the note has already been redeemed: Chapter 6 performed this chapter's five moves in advance on **Ratio est in natura** — the hanging-together of things, promoted into sufficient reason and its existentifying office, released again wherever intelligible texture outruns every ground offered for it.

The case also permits a distinction the rest of the chapter will use. A philosopher, in the sense that matters here, is not simply the first author of a doctrine, nor a scholastic merely a later commentator. The philosopher's text preserves the strain between the phenomenon and the office raised upon it: the seam remains legible, the terminology strains, the counter-strategy survives beside the thesis — as the four strains just exhibited survive inside the **Meditations'** architecture of certainty. Scholastic inheritance begins where that strain is treated as noise and the response is transmitted as settled doctrine only. The distinction is hermeneutic, not psychological: it names tendencies within acts of reading and transmission, not fixed classes of authors. It sorts texts and inheritances by what they keep legible, not authors by sincerity or genius — a later commentator may preserve a strain the original suppressed, and the same reader may be guardian at one joint and scholastic at another. The formula: **the philosopher preserves the tremble; the scholastic inherits the doctrine after the tremble has been cleaned out.**

8.5 The two histories

The thesis can now be stated with its qualifications built in, since both of its clauses invite an overstatement the argument does not need.

Qua installation, a metaphysical work belongs to the history of principles. That history is not “over” in the sense that installation has ceased — principles continue to be invoked, politically mobilised, institutionally embedded, and philosophically reconstructed, and the natural metaphysician in us (BH, General Introduction) guarantees the recurrence. What has been destituted is their **claim**: the history of principles as legitimate hegemonic destinies is exhausted; no candidate can any longer organise an epoch without remainder, and every new installation now occurs **after** the topology that exhibited installation as such. Archic recurrence, without renewed archic legitimacy.

Qua response, the same work belongs to the history of phenomenality — and here the needed care runs the other way. The claim is not that phenomena are timeless objects lying intact beneath interpretations, waiting; a phenomenon is an event of showing, historically inflected in how it shows. The claim is subjunctive and precise: the destitution of a principle does not by itself exhaust the phenomenon to which the thinker responded; that phenomenon may recur, under altered historical conditions, as a renewed question — withdrawal recurring as simulation, steadiness as the astonishment of existence, texture as the unreasonable effectiveness of intelligibility. Whether a given phenomenon does recur is itself a historical fact, not a metaphysical guarantee. The two histories are therefore asymmetrically closed: the first closed in its legitimacy, open in its recurrences; the second closed in nothing, guaranteed in nothing — a history still being written by whatever shows itself and whoever answers.

This is the chapter's principal contribution, and its practical meaning for inheritance is direct: the destitute corpus divides, in each case, into what stays fallen (the office, its claim, its costs — chargeable to the thinker without discount) and what stays available (the phenomenon, the response's fidelity, the counter-strategies as instruction in how offices are exceeded). Reading for the second without restoring the first is a discipline, and §8.4 exhibited its five moves: phenomenon, response, promotion, counter-strategy, release. The discipline has a formula, which Part V will borrow and generalise: **keep what was seen; let the office go.**

And the destitution has an ordinary face, which should be shown once before the objections, because the gravest of them will ask what all this is **for**. Consider the chapter's one case from the book's own world. A clerk at a counter, on a Tuesday, tells the person before her that the document cannot be accepted: "the system requires the original." The sentence may be true; Part V will give its legitimate uses their full defence. But notice what the sentence is **doing** in the clerk's mouth at the moment the person before her is visibly not a case the system imagined: it is citing an office — forwarding the demand upward into an architecture that will absorb it — and the architecture's availability for such forwarding is exactly what an installed principle provides at civilisational scale: somewhere for answers to be sent instead of given. Now the destitution, lived: the clerk who says instead "I am requiring it — here is why, and here is where you can contest me" has not become a foundationalist of the self; she has lost an alibi. Nothing above her absorbs the forwarding anymore; the answer that was headed for the system comes due at the desk. That, in miniature, is what the emptying of archic offices is **for**: not a doctrine about Being, but the return of answers to the finite places where alone they can be given — a return this book will spend its remaining Parts articulating, and whose grammar Chapter 10 will give exactly. The history of principles, read as the history of civilisation's alibis, ends not in a void but in a queue of persons who can no longer forward what was always theirs to say.

8.6 Three objections

The uniform schema. Catherine Malabou has charged phenomenological anarchism with forcing complex, historically distinct arrangements into a uniform schema — with imposing its concepts on material that has no relation to them [Malabou, *Au voleur! Anarchisme et philosophie*]; and “response given archic form” looks like one more such schema. The right reply concedes the noun. It is a schema — deliberately minimal, two formal places and nothing else — and its defence is not that it is a schema’s opposite but that it is **falsifiable in each application**. The form determines in advance neither what the phenomenon is, nor how the response took shape, nor which office was assigned, nor where the counter-strategies appear; all of that is singular interpretive labour, as §8.4’s five moves were for one text. And the framework admits failure explicitly: where no persuasive initial phenomenon can be reconstructed — where the “response” explains neither the system’s formation nor its strains — the reading does not hold, and the work in question falls outside the thesis’s scope, which claimed readability for major metaphysical projects, not a guarantee for every text. A minimal schema whose every application can fail is a method; the uniform schema Malabou indicts is a verdict reached in advance. The two-histories reading, moreover, deschematises exactly where her charge bites: uniformity lives on the office side, where one function is serially occupied; the responses are singular by definition, and the precept sends every reader to seek them one by one, without a template, because there is none.

The phenomenological dependence. The second objection comes from inside the post-metaphysical family. Asked in a late interview about Schürmann as a kindred interpreter of Heidegger, Gianni Vattimo demurred: Schürmann's "interpretation of Heidegger was dangerously dependent on the purely phenomenological approach"; of his "insistence on the idea of archaeology" Vattimo asked, "where does this lead?"; and his thought "appeared to me to represent a Christian version of the phenomenological epoche," its "most plausible" interpretation emphasising "the mystical rather than the practical consequences" [Vattimo, "Philosophy as Ontology of Actuality: A Biographical-Theoretical Interview," *Iris* 1, no. 2 (2009): 340]. Against a chapter that **extends** Schürmann's phenomenological dependence, the charge lands with doubled force: is not "the history of phenomenality" precisely the residue Vattimo diagnoses – a showing prior to transmission, an origin beneath history, dug for by an archaeology that hermeneutics has overcome? Two replies, one systematic and one practical. Systematically: the objection opposes phenomenality to transmission, and the opposition does not survive inspection, since transmission itself must appear in some way in order to be received, read, and narrated – the weakening of Being, to be Vattimo's own story, must be a way Being **shows itself** to its narrator. Phenomenality, on the present account, is not an origin beneath transmission but the event of transmission's showing; the initial experiences §8.4 reconstructs are not pre-historical bedrock but datable, textually transmitted events of appearing – which is why an archaeology can reach them at all. Practically: "where does this lead?" has a determinate answer, already exhibited at the counter in §8.5, and it is Vattimo's own. The destitution of archic offices removes alibis: no history, nature, system, or destiny remains to absorb a forwarded answer, and, in the regions examined by this book, answerability returns to finite persons and institutions – the very tightening of lateral obligation that weak thought celebrates when it finds the subject, post-foundation, stripped of moral alibis [Vattimo and Zabala, **Hermeneutic Communism**]. Eckhart's acting **without why** [HBA §42], generalised, is not a counsel of contemplation but the ordinary condition of answering once no archic **why** remains to be cited – the Tuesday clerk's condition, and everyone's. On the substance, then, the two projects converge – weaken the grounds, tighten the bind – and the residual dispute, over what may survive the weakening, is the third objection's business. (That Vattimo's own weakening spares exactly one term – *caritas*, the one limit of secularisation [Vattimo, **Belief**] – may be noted here in a sentence: weak thought, too, keeps one invariant; the question was never whether, but what kind.)

The quasi-archic invariant. The gravest objection is reflexive, and in the chapter form it can be stated with the book's full apparatus in view. The two-histories thesis itself asserts trans-epochal structures — phenomenality, response, the recurring possibility of guardianship — and this book retains more: a finite locus at which attribution becomes non-forwardable, argued in Part II and disclosed wherever anyone is properly held to account. Has the destitution of principles not been financed by a new installation? Is the anarchism not nominal — the Subject dethroned, the Respondent enthroned? The reply must be functional, because the archē is a function — and the tests are Chapter 5's, applied now reflexively to the book's own retentions. A hegemonic invariant **commands** (legislates content), **authorises** (supplies final justification), **organises a field toward itself** (the pros hen), and **receives what is forwarded to it** (bears, explains, absorbs). A non-hegemonic invariant describes exposure; legislates no content; authorises no hierarchy; cannot receive forwarded responsibility — nothing answers to it; remains revisable in its articulation; and determines the outcome of no concrete dispute. Schürmann's own ultimates supply a precedent and a textual resource for showing that the category is not ad hoc: natality and mortality are invariant by the topology's own lights — no fantasm installs them, no destitution retires them — and they are the engines of **de**-installation, "the singularizing undertow," not referents toward which anything turns [BH, Vol. Two, Preface]. If every invariant were an archē, **Broken Hegemonies** would be archic at its base; it is not, because its invariants fail every functional test of command. The structures this chapter retains fail the same tests: phenomenality legislates nothing and cannot be appealed to (one cannot justify a practice "by phenomenality"); the responsive structure of thinking, even in the concluding conjecture's strong form, founds no method and settles no dispute; and the place of answering — Chapter 4's locus — is that at which demands land, not that **from** which anything derives: a grammar that Chiurazzi's account of syncategorematic, prepositional being can illuminate (the terminus as a relational limit, an **at** and **from**, not a substantive) [Chiurazzi, "Ontology of the Possible," in **Dynamis: Ontology of the Incommensurable**, 87–118], though grammar illustrates and does not prove — a relational form could still be wielded as an authority, which is why the functional tests, not the grammar, carry the argument. One discipline remains, owed to the objection and constitutive of good faith: such invariants may be held only in the weakened mode — as sites of fragility and exposure, never as monuments brandished against history — for an invariant **held triumphally** begins to function archically whatever its grammar, the holding itself becoming an installation. The chapter's formula thereby applies to itself: "response given archic form" is a response — to the double-writtenness of the great texts — and must refuse its own archic form: offered as a reading discipline, holding only as long as the readings hold, claiming the thinkers one by one or not at all.

8.7 Inheritance without restoration, and the threshold

To inherit a metaphysical thinker is neither to restore the principle nor to reduce the work to a historical symptom. It is to ask what appeared, how the thinker answered, what office the answer was made to hold, and what becomes visible once that office is closed. The principles remain destitute, and their costs remain chargeable — more exactly chargeable, in fact, once response and office are separated, since one can then say precisely what a thinker saw, what he built on it, and who paid for the building. The phenomena remain available for renewed response, without guarantee and without timelessness, as questions that may recur under conditions their first respondents could not have imagined. And the guardianship that Schürmann documented despite-themselves becomes, for their inheritors, a possible practice: to keep the phenomenon and destitute the office — the operation Chapter 7 performed on Levinas, this chapter has performed on Descartes, and the book performs, wherever it reads, as its method.

A Latin constellation can name this practice without grounding it. **Tueor** gathers in one verb the looking and the guarding — to gaze upon, and to watch over, protect, maintain; **intueor** directs that regard toward what is looked upon; **tutela** names the guardianship, the protective keeping. The verbs are deponent — passive in grammatical form, active in conventional sense — and the coincidence should be handled for what it is: no etymology proves a philosophy, and the deponent is not simply Schürmann's middle voice under another name; the form supplies an emblem, not an argument. What it is an emblem of, though, is exact. Intuition, in the restrained sense this chapter has practised, is custodial rather than possessive: a looking-toward that receives what appears while guarding it against exhaustion by the thesis drawn from it — neither owning the phenomenon nor speaking in its name, answerable to the texts and corrigible by later readers.

Interpretation is therefore itself a finite taking-up of a common possibility of reading. The inheritor must sign the distinction being made: this is the phenomenon preserved, this the office refused, these the texts and reasons under which the claim is advanced. **Tutela** is not privileged access to an unsayable source; it is attributable inheritance exposed to correction — answerable to the text, its historical situation, rival readings, counter-phenomena, and later revision, without pretending that those exposures compose a mechanical procedure. The metaphysicians exercised this custody despite themselves, wherever their reasonings retained the “elsewise” that fell outside their theses; their inheritors may exercise it deliberately — not saving a timeless object from history, but keeping the faultline available for renewed response. The construction is this book’s, not Schürmann’s, and it earns nothing the readings have not earned; it is offered because the practice deserves a name in the tradition’s own tongue. **Tutela**: release without abandonment.

Chapter 11 will recast this practical condition in the language of answerable inhabitation: the manner in which thought receives, distinguishes, signs, and returns an inherited possibility can condition what the ontology is able to see, without granting the interpreter an initiatory privilege.

This custodial sense of inheritance also clarifies the later Heidegger — and discharges the engagement Chapter 5 deferred to this Part — without requiring either restoration or dismissal. The clearing opens, but it does not answer; **es gibt** names giving without thereby furnishing a giver who authorises what is given; the work may hold open a world, but only through preservers who can be asked what they preserved, altered, excluded, or allowed to perish. Nothing in this translation denies donation, withdrawal, or epochal disclosure. It denies only the promotion of their grammar into an accountable sender. The order of disclosure may therefore remain without agent, while the order of answering remains attributable. This is not offered as a derivation of the late thought from the present argument, but as a test of compatibility: donation without giver need not become command without claimant, and the destitution of ground need not abolish the persons who preserve and answer. The recession itself has the tradition's name — **Entzug**, withdrawal — and Chapter 5 gave it this book's operative sense: not Being's self-concealment turned cosmic drama, but the de-overlapping by which a carrying form ceases to suffice as a party. In that constructive transposition, and only in it, one may even say **es gibt Verantwortung**: answerability is given where a common field carries personal places without finally possessing them, and where singular address makes that occupation withdraw. Given, note, with no sovereign giver behind the giving — neither a cosmic allocator nor the common promoted to donor: the three givings are heterogeneous (the common gives route and carriage; the claimant gives direction; withdrawal gives exposure) and compose no hidden agent. The phrase is a marked transposition, secondary to the argument, and its wording too has a precedent — Steinweg's **es gibt Verantwortung nur angesichts des Unberechenbaren**, a different doctrine whose priority in the phrase is acknowledged; the doctrine's name here remains the positive sense of no-ground.

The conspicuously suspended question examined in Chapter 5 can now be received as a case of this custodial inheritance. The protocol to the seminar on "Time and Being" records: "**Enteignis wohin? Richtung und Sinn dieser Frage wurden nicht mehr besprochen**" — disappropriation toward where? The direction and sense of the question were not discussed further [GA 14, 52; English translation at **On Time and Being**, 43]. The present argument adds no doctrine the protocol secretly contains. It asks instead what kind of textual object the recorded non-pursuit has become for an inheritor.

The answer is exemplary of **tutela**. The protocol does not forget the question; it makes forgetting its expected answer impossible. Had the question simply vanished from the record, a commentator could reconstruct a destination without resistance: disappropriation goes toward appropriation, loss toward recovery, dispossession toward a higher owner. But the protocol preserves the question together with the stopping of discussion. It keeps the directional demand legible and the place of its satisfaction empty. The result is not a hidden proposition awaiting extraction. It is a faultline kept open between the grammar of **wohin**—which solicits an external destination—and the lecture's claim that **Enteignis** belongs to **Ereignis** itself and preserves rather than abandons its own. The text retains both pressures without cleaning them into doctrinal peace.

This is why the non-answer should not be repaired. To answer it by installing **Ereignis** as the place reached after **Enteignis** would preserve the vocabulary and lose the phenomenon. It would transform appropriation into the proprietor at the end of disappropriation and return the whole movement to the archic grammar the late thought was attempting to loosen. Chapter 5 therefore answered in crossed form: the toward-where of **Enteignis** is **Ereignis**, but only insofar as **Ereignis** is not another where. Chapter 8 can now state what that crossing means for inheritance. **The blank is not where thought failed to proceed; it is what thought had to preserve.**

Nothing in that sentence licenses a cult of incompleteness. A lacuna is not profound merely because it is a lacuna, and inherited silence can conceal confusion, evasion, accident, or editorial loss. Custodial reading is answerable to the local evidence. Here the evidence is the conjunction of three things: the lecture names **Enteignis** as belonging internally to **Ereignis**; the seminar asks the directional question; the protocol explicitly records that its direction and sense were not pursued. The interpretation does not claim access to Heidegger's private intention. It identifies the form in which the text has transmitted its strain. What survives for reading is not an absent doctrine but a visible resistance to the ordinary schema of departure and destination.

The passage therefore offers a controlled example of the distinction this chapter has drawn between thinker and scholastic. The scholastic impulse would complete the system: supply the missing arrow, assign the terminal term, harmonise the vocabulary, and transmit a doctrine whose joints no longer tremble. The philosophical text, or at least the text as inherited, has done something more exact. It has left the demand for completion exposed at the point where completion would falsify the matter. The inheritor's responsibility is not to romanticise the exposure, but neither is it to eliminate it. It is to keep the question available in the form in which it can continue to test every proposed answer.

Tutela here means guarding the non-answer against two opposite appropriations. The first is dismissive: the question went nowhere, so nothing is there. The second is restorative: the answer was implicitly Ereignis, so the gap may be closed. Against the first, the protocol's conspicuous recording gives the suspension philosophical weight. Against the second, Chapter 5 showed that Ereignis can answer the question only by ceasing to function as a destination. The custody therefore preserves no ineffable secret. It preserves a prohibition against turning the release from proprietorship into the title deed of a higher proprietor.

The same discipline governs the present monograph's own use of the passage. Positive no-ground does not claim to finish Heidegger's thought or to reveal what he "really meant." It receives a textual strain and tests it against a different problem: how the common can constitute finite taking-up without originating it, and withdraw from final answerership without abandoning the answer. The constructive architecture — common possibility, finite taking-up, addressive localisation, and refolding — belongs to this book. The Heideggerian question contributes neither its social ontology nor its ethical conclusion. It contributes the guarded impossibility of an external **Wohin**: the point at which disappropriation would cease to be disappropriation if it were completed as transfer into another ground.

This is the custodial yield. **The protocol preserves the question by withholding the answer that would close it.** To inherit the passage is therefore neither to restore an absent doctrine nor to celebrate an empty space. It is to keep available the faultline by which appropriation remains non-possessive and disappropriation non-abandoning. The visible suspension becomes a miniature of the chapter's method: retain the phenomenon, refuse the office, and do not let the cleanliness of transmission erase the tremble through which the text still thinks.

A conjecture may close the argument, offered as a consequence it invites rather than a premise it needs. Perhaps thinking, insofar as it is philosophically responsive rather than merely procedural, always begins so: in exposure to something that demands articulation — so that the discipline of phenomenology would be less an invention of the twentieth century than the thematisation of what the civil servants of humanity had been doing, despite themselves, all along. The chapter's method stands whether or not the conjecture does. The initial experience, the precept says, comes before any other. In the texts we can still read, it still does; and reading for it is the inheritance.

The threshold, then — for the discipline just built has one more text to visit, and it is this book's own foundation. **Being and Time** contains a double-writing of precisely the kind §8.4 taught the reader to find. Its letter grants the anonymous common everything: das Man as existential, positive, primordial, not to be escaped; representability as constitutive of the everyday. Its tone assigns the same phenomenon the adversary's part: dictatorship, levelling, lostness, the fall from which authenticity must retrieve itself. That is not a contradiction to be resolved but a tension of the guardianship kind — a phenomenon richer than the economy it was written into — and the method of this chapter applies to it analogically: what holds the second determination in place is not a hegemonic fantasm but an evaluative economy, an architecture in which authenticity needs a fallenness to rise from. Part V performs the retrieval: it keeps what Heidegger saw — the necessary anonymous, the world's keeping — and contests the economy's monopoly on its interpretation; and in doing so it stops reading others and starts building, for the alternation it recovers between the anonymous common and the singular Situation is not one more inheritance but the book's own account of how finite common life runs. The office assigned to the they is the next to be let go — with everything Heidegger saw there kept. For Chapter 9 generalises the non-sovereign keeping this chapter has named: what the thinker does for a phenomenon, finite participants do for the practices, offices, records, and prior answers through which a world continues.

PART V — THE EVERYDAY COMMON

Chapter 9. The Necessary Neutrum: Keeping, Folding, and the Practical Form of Finitude

9.1 The question inherited

Part I conceded the they descriptively and deferred one question; Parts II and III have made the question urgent. Chapter 1 adopted the whole content of Heidegger's analysis — distanciality, averageness, levelling, publicness, disburdening [SZ §27, H126–128] — while registering and postponing its **tone**: the vocabulary of dictatorship, fallenness, and flight, which reads the they as the adversary of authentic existence even while the letter of the text calls it a primordial positive constitution of Dasein, an existential, not to be escaped [SZ §27, H129]. Chapter 3 then found the analytic's engine of singularisation built by subtraction of the other; Chapter 4 found the Situation of answerability disclosed by address; and Part III emptied the archic office at both of its candidate poles. What remains to be settled is the **rhythm** — the relation between the anonymous circulation in which almost all of life runs and the singular coming-due in which, sometimes, it stops. The Introduction promised the answer in one sentence: the they is not a lamentable fall but the practical form of finitude; the common carries anonymously what must continue, and the Situation returns what must be answered for. This chapter earns the first half of that sentence and articulates the alternation; the next chapter earns the polemical remainder — for the rehabilitation of the neutrum, it will turn out, is what makes its specific pathologies precisely diagnosable at last.

Since the chapter must move among several near-neighbours, let the terms be fixed once. The **common** names the field: the inherited weave of language, practices, positions, histories, institutions, and maintained forms in which every encounter of this book has taken place. The **neutrum** names that field's impersonal form of occupancy – the whoever-form of §1.5, by which a practice stands open to whoever qualifies, whoever occupies the position, whoever comes next. **Das Man** names Dasein's everyday inhabitation of that form: living, mostly, as the whoever the form addresses. And the **fold**, developed below, names the temporal operation by which prior responses are made repeatable within the form. **Folded answerability** is reserved for folds that carry answer-derived settlements and will be cashed as such in §9.4: the fold does not itself answer; it carries. **Fold** and **folded settlement** name the broader family whose genealogies need not begin in an answer.

The division of labour with the later synthesis should also be fixed. This chapter establishes **why folding is necessary** for finite common life and how folded forms carry claims through absence, succession, and limited attention. Chapter 11 will determine more exactly **what folding suspends** and under what conditions that suspension becomes answerably relevant.

One ambiguity in “anonymous” must be removed before the argument proceeds. The nameless is not therefore the no-one's. A form may be kept by persons whose names have worn away; a role may be performed by whoever occupies it; an institutional deed may be distributed across organs none of which is the whole party. In each case agency may be real although personal salience is absent. These structures differ from the common as field, which acts through no hidden hand because it does not act at all; and they differ again from the laundering in which identifiable deeds are redescribed as what “the system” or “everyone” did. Loss of a name can make attribution difficult. It does not retroactively turn a deed into weather. Chapter 11 will distinguish carried form from attributable locus; Chapters 12 and 13 will test the distinction through delegation and institution.

9.2 The argument from finitude: why a world must be kept anonymously

The rehabilitation is not a mood-correction; it is an argument, and its premises are the traits of finitude itself.

From mortality: succession. Chapter 1 seeded what can now be developed: the common is not self-sustaining; it survives only through finite renewals by keepers who can be succeeded. A living language exists only while used and transmitted; the office performs only while staffed; the feast only while kept; the record only while maintained. And the keepers die. A world whose continuance depended on particular, unsubstitutable persons would have the lifespan of persons; whatever is to outlast its keepers must therefore be keepable by **successors** – the form of the keeping detachable from the present keeper and teachable to the next. The detachability admits of degrees, and the argument requires only that some degree obtain. At one pole stands the strict whoever-form of the office, the standard, the price; nearer the other, the lineage, the named custodianship, the master handing the craft to a chosen apprentice – but even the most personal transmission satisfies the requirement or perishes by failing it, for the apprentice too is a successor, and what cannot be taught dies with its holder. What finitude requires universally is transmissibility in some degree, not strict anonymity in every case. Transferable keeping is therefore not a regrettable dilution of the personal; it is the arrangement by which mortals hold anything open longer than a lifetime. The years of a common world are seen by no single mortal eye; they continue through mortal keepers whose succession preserves what none of them can survey or possess as a whole. The office that so troubled the town in Chapter 4's second case – the counter that reopened eleven kilometres east under a new occupant, and nothing was missing – is this arrangement working perfectly: the pensioner's Tuesday question outlived its answerer's tenure because the position, not the man, held the answer in keeping. That the flour does not depend on loving the baker is mortality's arrangement with continuity.

From plurality and need: the division of performance. Finite beings have many needs and few hands; a world of the needed scale runs only on divided, coordinated, standardised performances. Standardisation abstracts the route from any one bearer by design; it does not erase the finite non-identity of the enactments through which the route runs. The whoever-form of Chapter 1 §1.5 here shows its practical face: the norm binds whoever, the role admits whoever qualifies, the price holds for whoever pays, precisely so that two thousand strangers can provision one another daily without anyone needing to be someone in particular to anyone else. Heidegger's own concession, retrieved in Chapter 3, said it without drawing the consequence: representability belongs to the constitution of everyday being-with — one *is*, within concern, what one does, and there another can stand in [SZ §47, H239]. The consequence is the present chapter's: a form of life in which nothing could be done by a substitute would be a form of life in which almost nothing could be done. One distinction, however, must be entered here once, because the later synthesis and trials will live on its exactness: what the division of performance makes substitutable is the **performance**. The stand-in performs the task; the delegator may remain answerable for it; the institution may bear attribution through it; and the relational history in which a particular keeper kept — this teacher, this priest, this woman at the counter for thirty years — is not transferred with the duties. The argument from finitude requires the substitutability of performances; it neither requires nor licenses the substitution of answerers or relations. Chapters 12 and 13 adjudicate what happens when performance, attribution, and institutional continuity come apart.

From natality: the teachable world. Newcomers arrive ignorant, and keep arriving — the newborn first of all, but also the migrant, the apprentice, the convert, the newly appointed: everyone who enters a practice that was running before she came. (The premise is Arendtian in provenance — natality as the condition of a world that must be able to receive beginners [Arendt, **The Human Condition**] — joined here to mortality's demand for succession; Heidegger's analytic, notoriously, is rich in the first and scants the second.) A world enterable by newcomers must be a world whose ways can be learned before they can be judged, practised before they can be critically taken up — which requires exactly the features the tone deplores: averageness (the learnable is the general case), publicness (the way one does it must be visible), interpretedness-in-advance (the newcomer inherits answers to questions she has not yet asked). The they, on its natal face, is the world's pedagogy: "one does it this way" is how a form of life extends hospitality to those who were not there when the reasons were given.

From the finitude of attention: the fold. Finally the premise that Chapter 4 seeded and this chapter must develop at full length. Not everything can be reopened. A finite being, and a finite community, can hold only a few questions genuinely open at a time — not because attention is a scarce commodity to be budgeted, but because holding-open is itself a temporal accomplishment with a horizon, and the horizon is short; everything else must be held **closed** — settled, formed, foldable — or nothing complex could stand. Hence what §4.4 named folded answerability, now given its own analysis.

9.3 Keeping and care

The argument from finitude now acquires its positive anti-archic sense — the constructive face of Chapter 5's refusal: what metaphysics described as the world's stability appears, in the phenomena, as its being kept. Before the fold receives that analysis, the chapter's title term should be set in its place in the analytic — for keeping is not an addition to care but one of care's worldly articulations. Care, in Heidegger's formal definition, is ahead-of-itself-already-in-a-world-alongside [SZ §41, H192]; and keeping, as the four premises have just described it, is that structure practised in common across time. In the register of having-been: inherited forms received and carried. In the present: their maintenance, repair, repetition — and contestation, which is a mode of maintenance and not its opposite. Toward the to-come: possibilities held open, and a world handed forward to keepers not yet arrived. To keep is to care in the tense of continuity. The location must not be pressed into an identification — keeping is not offered as care's essence, nor care as keeping's ground; the relation claimed is articulation, not derivation. But the locating yields the chapter's structural result in advance: *das Man* and the Situation are not care and its adversary. They are two organisations of care's keeping — the common carrying anonymously what must continue, address returning what must be answered for — and the analytic's own concession that authenticity is a **modification**, not an abolition, of the they [SZ §27, H130] says the same from the other side.

9.4 Folded answerability

Look closely at any working stretch of the common and one of its most visible grains is made of old answers. The apology-formula carries a thousand discharged apologies — its phrases are the sediment of countless occasions on which someone found words that sufficed, and the finding was kept. The safety regulation is, as the engineers say, written in blood: each clause the fold of an accident answered once, so that no one need answer it again from scratch. The form on the counter is a question someone answered so well that the answer became a blank to fill. The office itself is the largest fold of all — a standing answer to a recurring need, staffed by whoever, so that the need never again requires a founder. **Folded answerability:** prior answerings, compressed into roles, procedures, words, prices, and expectations, circulating without their occasions, available to whoever — the past of responsibility, stored in usable form.

Four features of the fold matter for everything that follows.

The fold is an achievement — but not every fold began as an answer. The paradigm is genuine and load-bearing: someone stood in a Situation, something came due, an answer was found, and the answer was good enough to keep. Folding is how a finite world **holds its gains**: without it, each generation would face every question naked, and the moral history of a community would be as long as one lifetime. At the level required here, its mechanism is this: folding suspends the need for the original finite taking-up to remain continuously present as such, so that what it carried can circulate as a common possibility. The form becomes available to anyone without effacing the determinate enactments through which it is renewed. Chapter 11 will specify the suspended dimension as **present attributive relevance**: attribution is not erased, but its present activation is held in abeyance while the form suffices. The tone's picture — authenticity as the perpetual reopening of everything, the fold as flight — describes not a higher form of life but an impossible one: a world where everything must be answered personally is a world where nothing can be kept. But the genealogy must not be tidied into piety. Not every fold sediments an answering: forms also accrete — by imitation, convenience, compromise, and administrative drift; some sediment coercion rather than settlement, preserving old victories and exclusions in procedural dress; some were never decided by anyone at all. What follows is a displacement of the normative weight, and the displacement protects the concept: a fold's title is not its existence, its age, or even its origin, but its present traceability — whether pressing it still opens onto claims and claimants that bear it **now**. The best-born fold can lapse into mere circulation; the accidental fold can come to carry real reliance; and the tone's opposite error — reading every inherited form as domination — is as blind as reading every one as wisdom. The tracing criterion of Chapter 5, not genesis alone, opens that assessment without deciding it.

Four genealogies make the heterogeneity explicit without partitioning folds into exclusive kinds. **Answer-folds** stabilise responses to recognised claims or problems. **Coordination-folds** arise through mutual adjustment, convention, and the practical settlement of interdependence. **Power-folds** preserve asymmetrical settlements, victory, exclusion, or coercion after the struggle that installed them has receded. **Drift-folds** accumulate through imitation, local convenience, layering, changed conditions, and unattended persistence, sometimes without any recoverable founding decision. Institutional research on layering, drift, conversion, and the distribution of power corroborates these last mechanisms without supplying the phenomenological concept of the fold [Mahoney and Thelen, "A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change," 1–37]. The four genealogies overlap: an answer may coordinate by imposing a settlement; a convention may harden under unequal power; a coercive form may drift into a new use; an accidental arrangement may later carry genuine reliance. Folding names the temporal stabilisation through which this heterogeneous genesis recedes from present practical relevance while the form remains usable. Folding is not uniform. A habit, a phrase, an archive, a procedure, an office, and a technical system carry the past in different ways: they preserve different marks of authorship, distribute authority differently, and offer different routes of contestation and reopening. "Fold" indicates their shared operation of carrying a prior configuration without keeping its occasion fully present; it does not erase their differences. What recedes may be a personal answer, an institutional decision, a distributed adjustment, an imposed arrangement, or no determinate original attribution at all.

Reopening therefore does not always recover an answer waiting intact beneath the form. An answer-fold calls for reassessment of the response it stores; a coordination-fold for renegotiation of the convention and the reliance it sustains; a power-fold for exposure of the coercion or exclusion its ordinary operation conceals; a drift-fold for repair, redesign, or retirement where accumulated use no longer carries a defensible purpose. Mixed folds may require all four inquiries. Genealogy identifies what kind of sufficiency is being questioned; present traceability and standing still frame the assessment of what, if anything, is now owed.

The fold carries claims; it does not answer. Chapter 5's tracing criterion applies to folds before anything else: the good fold is traceable — press the safety clause and it opens onto the burned; press the apology-formula and it opens onto the practice of repair between persons; press the office and it opens onto the recurring need and the reliant. A fold, in other words, is not the **absence** of answerability but its **storage**: the claims are in there, compressed, and the compression is what lets them protect whoever. And the storage stands in: in the ordinary traffic of a finite world the fold genuinely occupies the places of absent persons — the office receiving in the founder's stead, the formula apologising for whoever utters it — representationally, never sovereignly; which is why Chapter 5 could say that what withdraws at the boundary is only the occupation, never the medium. And here the chapter's shorthand must be cashed, once and exactly: the fold does not itself answer; it carries a prior settlement in a form through which present answerers can respond without reopening the settled; when this book says a fold "answers," it means a demand is met **through** it — the officer's reply drawing on the clause, the counter's blank receiving the claim — never that the form itself has taken up the place of an answerer. Chapter 1 denied the common agency and Chapter 5 denied it the archic office; nothing here re-endows either. (The untraceable fold — the duplicate form no one reads, the ritual whose beneficiary is gone — is the hanging norm of §5.3, and its diagnosis belongs to the next chapter.)

The fold never fully fits its takers-up — and the incomplete fit has an affective register. However complete the suspension, the circulation of the anonymous form still runs on finite enactments: someone keeps the ledger this morning, someone says the formula at this graveside, someone occupies the counter on this Tuesday. Chapter 5 named the structural remainder; the terminology can now be made exact. Every concrete taking-up is finitely non-identical inside the replaceability of the route: another may perform the same function without making this enactment have been theirs. This is not yet answerable singularisation, which requires address, standing, and attribution. This chapter can nevertheless add what the incomplete fit is like, because the crowd case already showed it. Mostly it is like nothing: finite non-identity is disattended, and the disattention is the fold's gift — “this is simply what one does” is shelter precisely because no one, for that stretch, is being anyone in particular. But the fit is never complete, and its incompleteness has a low, unalarmed register that the analytic knew under a stronger name: anxiety — not the crisis of Division Two's showcase, but the ordinary, mostly quiet awareness that the position may cease to cover the case, that the formula may ring false against this wound, that the role can fail its occupant and the occupant the role. Anxiety, in this register, is the affective trace — not produced by the position but exposed against it — of the participant's incomplete fit with the anonymous position that carries them; the sweetness of being carried and the faint exposure of never being fully covered are the same fact felt from its two sides. Everydayness can distribute, normalise, and hush this remainder. What it cannot do is remove it — and the boundary moments this section turns to next are where it may become answerably relevant.

The fold has a sufficiency, and address does not wait for its boundary. Most of the time, the fold suffices — and the account must be more careful here than a first formulation of this chapter was, for address, in the full sense built in Part II, does not begin where folds fail. The pensioner at the counter **addresses** the officer — direction, arrival, standing, the entire vector — and is answered through the form: the officer replies in a capacity, the reply draws on the stored settlement, and nothing about the mediation diminishes the address or its discharge. Call this **mediated address**: a demand received by a person in a role and met through a fold that genuinely carries it — the ordinary, successful, and overwhelmingly most frequent case, already on display in Chapter 4's second case before the counter ever closed. What happens at the boundary is therefore not address occurring at last; it is address changing what it reaches. The boundary moments are those in which the inherited form no longer carries the claim: the counter is gone; the formula rings false in the mouth against **this** wound; the record contradicts the face at the window; the clause never imagined **this** case. There the demand is no longer met through the fold, because the fold's own adequacy has entered the demand — and the person is reached **past** the form, answerable now not only through it but **for** it: for its application, its continuation, its sufficiency here. This is the re-exposure the Introduction promised, stated exactly: finite non-identity, never absent, becomes answerably relevant and normatively localised. The Situation, in the emphatic sense, is the moment the fold's adequacy itself comes due, and a determinate party may have to answer at the locus for what had been carried through the form. The boundary, moreover, is not discretionary; its marks can be stated, though their pathology belongs to the next chapter. A fold's sufficiency has come into question when an affected party contests the form rather than its application; when correct performance is producing the very harm the form was kept to prevent; when the case at the window exceeds the categories the form can represent; when the rule, pressed, traces to no present purpose and no present claimant; when the procedure functions to shield its operators from being reached; and when conflicting claims arrive between which the stored settlement cannot adjudicate. None of these marks decides the answer — tracing is a diagnostic, not a verdict — but each of them ends the fold's entitlement to be the whole of the response.

The rhythm closes on itself. The alternation is therefore not two ranked modes, nor even a simple pair of stored and live; it is a cycle with three moments and a return. Answers are **sedimented** — held by forms. They are **used** — present persons and institutions responding through them, in mediated address, which is where nearly all of common life runs. At the boundary, answering becomes **situated** — the form's adequacy itself answered for at a determinate locus. The passage to the boundary has its own approach — saturation: the fold overfull with cases it no longer quite carries, finite non-identity becoming salient, breakdown or address finishing what disattention can no longer hold — and the unfolding that follows has two phases that must not be split into two events: destructive, in that it breaks the form's anonymous sufficiency (never the form itself, still less the common); instituting, in that the situated answer, given well, becomes the material of a new form. And the cycle closes: the situated answer, if it is good enough to keep, refolds — becomes clause, formula, precedent, blank — and returns to the common as the next generation's inheritance. Without the folds, every hour would be a Situation and none could be met; without the unfoldings, the folds would drift from every claim they carry and become, in a generation, mere circulation; without the refolding, nothing answered would ever be kept, and the moral history of a community would restart daily. The common carries what must continue under a suspension that Chapter 11 will specify as present attributive relevance; address and attribution may lift that suspension where the form can no longer complete the relation; and what is answered well can return to transmissible form without losing its attributable history or becoming enclosed as property. A livable finite life, like a well-kept institution, breathes in this rhythm rather than choosing a side of it.

Return is not synonymous with universalisation. A situated answer may return as precedent or policy, a revised procedure, anonymised institutional learning, provisional guidance, confidential retention, or a preserved exception whose lesson is that this case must not be made routine. Sometimes the responsible return is a refusal to refold: the answer remains singular, protected, or unrepeatable. The decision turns on whether the problem is sufficiently recurrent or representative; whether abstraction remains faithful to the claimant and the relation answered; whether privacy and standing survive the transmission; whether the receiving practice or institution is competent to carry the new form; whether affected parties can contest and later revise it; and whether its repetition would prevent rather than reproduce injustice. **The structural lesson may be generalised without converting the claimant's voice or history into institutional property.** Equality here requires a defensible account of relevant similarity, not the mechanical repetition of every singular response. Responsible refolding preserves what must remain non-transferable while making only what can justly travel available to others.

9.5 Against the tone, with the letter

The reading just given stands closer to Heidegger's letter than to his tone, and the relation between the two should be stated with more care than the slogan suggests — because the divergence does not run between a text and its atmosphere but **inside** the text, between two of its own determinations.

The first determination grants everything this chapter needs. Das Man is declared an **existential**, belonging to Dasein's positive constitution as a primordial phenomenon [SZ §27, H129]; it is expressly "not nothing," not a universal subject hovering over the many [H128]; falling (**Verfallen**) is announced with the explicit caution that the term expresses no negative evaluation — **keine negative Bewertung** [SZ §38, H175–176]; and authenticity itself is defined as a **modification**, not an abolition, of the they [SZ §27, H130; §54]. Every load-bearing sentence of the present chapter can be hung on those pegs. The second determination, however, is not detachable rhetoric, and the chapter will not pretend it is: dictatorship of the they, levelling-down, the burden "taken away" as accommodation and flight, publicness that "is never wrong" because it never goes into the matter, conscience summoning Dasein **back** from lostness — this vocabulary is structurally integrated; Division Two's drama runs on it, and authenticity gains its urgency as retrieval from precisely the condition the first determination declared constitutive. Even the disclaimer must be read exactly: that **Verfallen** carries no negative evaluation disowns moral condemnation of an existential structure; it does not make the analytic's portrait of everydayness neutral, and no honest reading can interpret the valuations away. What the text presents, then, is an internal tension — the they ontologically indispensable by the first determination, narratively cast as authenticity's foil by the second — and the tension is not the reader's invention; it is the text's.

The present chapter is a constructive retrieval from that tension: it preserves the first determination entire and contests the second's **monopoly on interpretation**. And the method of Chapter 8 applies to it — analogically, for what holds the second determination in place is not a hegemonic fantasm but an evaluative economy: a residual architecture in which authenticity needs a fallenness to rise from, singularisation a lostness to be recalled from. Heidegger saw the phenomenon — the necessary anonymous, the world's keeping — and the seeing is in the letter; the economy then assigned the phenomenon its role as adversary: the phenomenon, once again, richer than the part it was written. Reading the they with the first determination, against the second's monopoly, is the same inheritance Chapter 8 practised on Descartes — keep what was seen; release it from the economy it was made to serve.

And one addition the letter licenses but nowhere states: the neutrum is not only necessary; it is **good to live in** — good, exactly, when nothing is being evaded, and the qualification belongs in the same breath as the claim, for it is what distinguishes rest from flight. The man in Chapter 4's crowd, carried anonymously for an hour, was not fallen; he was resting — and the sweetness he reports is structural, not accidental. To be, for a stretch, no one in particular — unaddressed, unconsulted, walking a street where nothing has one's name on it — is relief from the very exposure Part II analysed; anonymity is the form privacy takes in public. A being that can be addressed needs somewhere to be when it is not being addressed, and the *they* is that somewhere: shelter, rest, the blessed interval between comings-due — blessed because nothing is due in it, not because what is due has been folded out of sight. The tone can only read this rest as evasion because its economy admits no legitimate state between resoluteness and flight; the alternation of §9.4 restores the missing third — the folded interval, in which nothing is being evaded because nothing is due.

9.6 Objections

Objection: this rehabilitation licenses conformism — worse, it dignifies the clerk who “only kept the forms” while the forms did evil; the banality the last century learned to fear is precisely answerability dissolved into folds. The objection names the stakes correctly and mislocates the fault. What the argument from finitude defends is **keeping**: the storage of traced claims in whoever-usable form. What the century’s clerks exhibit is a different structure, which the defence makes diagnosable rather than excusing: a person keeping the fold closed past its sufficiency — circulation offered as if it were the answering it merely stores; “the form requires it” tendered at the boundary where the form has visibly stopped carrying the claim and a person is being reached. The difference is exactly the boundary of §9.4: answering through the fold is legitimate within the fold’s sufficiency and becomes evasion the moment the unfolding is due and refused. Nothing in the necessity of folds entails their sufficiency everywhere; and the tracing criterion gives the clerk’s case its verdict — though the verdict must be stated with the diagnostic’s own honesty. Press the fold he hides behind, and three findings are possible, not two: it opens onto the harmed, whose claims the fold was never entitled to override; or it opens onto nothing, and hangs; or — the case that keeps the criterion honest — it opens onto **conflicting** claims, a settlement genuinely traceable to one reliance while the case at the window carries another that the procedure suppresses. Tracing, here as everywhere, is diagnostic, not self-adjudicating: it locates the claims and the claimants; it does not spare anyone the adjudication. But in all three findings the clerk’s defence fails identically, for in none of them was the fold entitled to occupy the place of answer once its adequacy had come due. The pathology is real, common, and catastrophic at scale; it is also **specific**, and the next chapter gives it its full analysis. A rehabilitation that made the pathology undiagnosable would be refuted by it; this one supplies its diagnostic.

Objection: the tone is not detachable — fallenness is structural in the analytic, and an interpretation that deletes the negative valuation deletes the **motor of Division Two**. Conceded in part — and the concession is now built into §9.5’s framing, which claims no detachment: the two determinations are both the text’s, and the **movement** the second dramatises is structural and is kept. Absorption is a real tendency; the fold does drift; circulation does close over the boundary if nothing interrupts it — Part II’s whole account of address presupposes an anonymity that address must break. What is not kept is the conversion of that movement into a standing verdict, and the text itself, at H175–176, warns against the conversion. The motor of Division Two survives translation: not “Dasein flees, and conscience calls it back from its fall,” but “the fold suffices, until it does not — and what interrupts its sufficiency is an address the analytic’s own instruments could not supply.” The urgency is preserved; the monopoly is declined.

9.7 Threshold

The rhythm is now on the table, and with it, at last, the exact specification of what can go wrong — which the blanket verdict obscured for a century. If the neutrum is necessary, its pathologies cannot consist in its existence; they must consist in **boundary failures** of the alternation — and, since forms decide nothing, the failures belong to answerable parties in their uses of forms. They come in two kinds, one for each direction of the boundary. The fold can be **kept closed past its sufficiency**: circulation offered — by someone, in some capacity — in the place of answer at the moment of address; the clerk's structure, evasion proper. And the anonymous can be **made to speak**: an imperative pressed upon persons in the grammar of address — “one demands,” “it is expected,” “people are saying” — with no determinate claimant and no traceable standing behind it; the hanging norm armed and walking. Against the first pathology stands the whole of Part II: where something comes due, the place of answer cannot be staffed by a form. Against the second stands the tracing criterion with a new edge, and a liberation the Introduction promised: freedom from the anonymous common when it impersonates the authority of a singular other — when an anonymous **one** judges an interchangeable **me**, and no one is there. The next chapter takes up both, and the second especially — not by asking who speaks when they speak, as if a hidden speaker awaited unmasking, but by asking what the question of standing asks: whose claim, if anyone's, the anonymous imperative carries; who could contest, justify, or repair it; and why the person who asks, politely and relentlessly, **who is asking** is not evading answerability but exercising it. Once those boundary failures are diagnosed, Chapter 11 will state positively how common possibility, folding, attribution, locus, answer, and return belong to one movement.

Chapter 10. The Anonymous Judge: Usurpation, Impersonation, and the Second Liberation

10.1 The brief

Chapter 9 ended with a specification the blanket verdict had obscured for a century: if the neutrum is necessary, its pathologies cannot consist in its existence; they must consist in boundary failures of the alternation between the folded and the live — and, since forms decide nothing, the failures belong to answerable parties in their uses of forms. Two such failures were named, one for each direction of the boundary. The fold can be **kept closed past its sufficiency** — circulation offered, by someone, in the place of the answer that has come due at the moment of address. And the anonymous can be **made to speak** — an imperative pressed upon persons in the grammar of address, with no determinate claimant and no traceable standing behind it. This chapter analyses both, and the order matters: the first pathology corrupts the answering pole of the vector, the second counterfeits the claiming pole, and together they show that the two liberations promised in the Introduction are one discipline applied at the vector's two ends. The rehabilitation of Chapter 9 is presupposed throughout and never retracted: nothing below indicts anonymity, folds, offices, instituted impersonal norms, or the whoever-form as such. What is indicted is precise, and the precision is the point — a diagnostics is only as good as the health it can distinguish from the disease.

10.2 First pathology: usurpation

Its phenomenology is among the most familiar in modern life, which is itself a finding. Someone stands at a counter, a desk, a door — reached, in the full sense of Part II: a demand with standing has landed, and, by the marks of §9.4, the fold's own adequacy has entered it; an answer of the second order has come due. And what is returned is the fold: **the form requires it; policy does not permit; I don't make the rules; the system has decided; those are the criteria.** The words may even be true. The pathology is not in their content but in their **position**: they are placed where an answer was due, as if circulation could occupy the place of answering — as if the stored could stand in for the live at exactly the boundary where, by Chapter 9's own analysis, the fold has ceased to carry the claim and its application is what must now be answered for. Call it **usurpation**: the fold seated in the answerer's chair — seated, it must be said at once, by someone, for the fold takes no chairs on its own. In the dynamic terms of Chapter 5 it is withdrawal arrested: someone using the carrier to occupy the place the carrier was meant to keep available.

The analysis needs three cuts to be exact, because the neighbouring healthy structures must not be condemned with it.

First cut: usurpation is not **fold-invocation** — in the vocabulary Chapter 9 has made exact, it is not mediated address. Within the fold's sufficiency, answering through the rule is answering: the officer who explains the regulation to the disappointed applicant, where the regulation genuinely carries the case and traces to its claims, has answered — the demand was received in a capacity and met through the settlement the fold stores, and Chapter 9 defended exactly this. Usurpation begins where sufficiency ends, and §9.4 has already stated the marks by which its ending is recognised: an affected party contesting the form rather than its application; correct performance producing the very harm the form was kept to prevent; the case exceeding the categories the form can represent; the rule tracing to no present purpose and no present claimant; the procedure functioning to shield its operators from being reached; conflicting claims between which the stored settlement cannot adjudicate. Two glosses keep the marks honest. Disappointment is not among them: that the claimant dislikes the outcome does not put the form's adequacy in question — or every refusal would be a boundary, and no fold could hold anything. And to the marks this chapter's pathology adds one of its own: the absence of any route by which the application could be questioned — for a form administered with no avenue of contestation has pre-arranged its usurpations in advance. At a boundary so marked, the person is reached **past** the form — answerable, per §9.4, not only through it but for its application here — and there “the form requires it” changes function: from information within an answer to a substitute for the answer now due.

Second cut: usurpation is not **answering-for**. Chapter 11 will formulate the conditions under which substitution remains mediation rather than displacement; Chapters 12 and 13 will test the legitimate structures in which persons answer on behalf of institutions and institutions answer through persons – the spokesperson, the officer of the court, the signatory **per procurationem**. In all of these, the vector remains intact: someone or some institution answers in a traceable capacity, and the capacity can itself be interrogated. Usurpation is the counterfeit of answering-for: the capacity invoked precisely to ensure that **no one** answers – “I am only the desk” said not to route the demand onward but to dissolve it. The test is what happens to the vector: carried, or dropped. Chapter 5’s exculpation analysis gave the mechanism – the forwarding that has no addressee – and usurpation is that mechanism operated retail, one counter at a time: the demand redirected to “the policy,” which can no more receive it than the age could take the stand.

Third cut: the scale. At its historical extreme the structure is the clerk of the administrative catastrophes, whose defence – **I only kept the forms** – the last century learned to name and fear [Arendt, **Eichmann in Jerusalem**; the case is limit, not paradigm]. But the diagnostic must not be calibrated to monsters, or it will miss the phenomenon’s daily body: the escalation loop that returns every complaint to the department complained of; the “computer says” delivered with a shrug that outsources the shrug; the meeting in which a decision everyone opposes is made by no one because each participant is only implementing the anticipated position of the others. The quiet forms matter because they train the loud ones: a form of life that practises usurpation at low stakes has rehearsed it for high ones. And the corrective is already on the table from Chapter 8’s Tuesday clerk: the whole movement is reversed in one sentence, when the person at the boundary stops saying “the system requires it” and says “I am requiring it” – not because the requirement thereby becomes right, but because it thereby acquires an answerer, and everything the vector needs (contestation, justification, refusal, repair) becomes possible again. The sentence must then be cashed exactly, for it claims no authorship of the rule and confers none. What the speaker assumes and must answer for is the **application, in a capacity**; its fuller form is: I, in this office, am applying this requirement to you; these are the grounds as I carry them; this is the discretion I hold; there is where its use can be challenged. Not personal authorship of every institutional requirement – that would counterfeit in the opposite direction, a clerk impersonating a legislator – but accountable uptake: the vector re-acquires its answering pole, and the pole names the route by which even its own capacity can be interrogated. Usurpation’s deepest damage is not the unjust outcome; it is the deletion of the address at which justice could even be asked.

10.3 Second pathology: impersonation

The second pathology operates at the other pole, and Chapter 2 wrote its warrant in advance: a demand no one has standing to press, arriving from nowhere at everyone, is not a demand but weather — **or the they impersonating a claimant**. Its phenomenology is equally familiar and more intimate, because its scene is often inner. **One does not do that. People are saying. It is expected. Everyone knows. What will they think.** Concerns, the committee minutes record, **have been raised** — by whom, the minutes do not say. The grammar is impeccably second-personal: something comes **at** me, with direction-feel, arrival-feel, the full phenomenology of Part II's vector; shame answers it as shame answers an accuser. And at the claimant's pole there is no one — no bearer of the demand who could be asked for its ground, shown its error, offered its repair; press toward the source and it recedes: **people** dissolves into nobody in particular, **one** was never anyone, the raised concerns have no raiser. **Impersonation:** the anonymous wearing the vector's grammar; address counterfeited at the pole of the claimant. And the figure must be located as Chapter 9 located its twin, for the book denied the they agency in Chapter 1 and does not restore it here: the anonymous judge is not another agent hidden behind its speakers. It is a recurrent structure, enacted and maintained. Sometimes the impersonation is strategic: an identifiable speaker or coalition deliberately shelters a demand behind **everyone**. Sometimes it is distributed: no single participant authors the pressure, yet mutually anticipated judgments and inherited forms keep it circulating. Both are practices of pressing-without-an-assessable-claimant, not evidence of a hidden super-agent; their different genesis matters when attribution is traced.

One demarcation must be drawn before the analysis, or the diagnostic will condemn half of Chapter 5's own results. **Impersonal is not the pathology.** The rule of evidence, the professional standard, the safety requirement, the obligations attached to a public office press on persons without any individual saying **I demand this**, and legitimately so: the common, Chapter 5 conceded and this book holds throughout, institutes local, defeasible, traceable authority, and such norms wear its credentials — public articulation, procedural origin, purposes that trace, application that can be contested, administrators who can be reached. They are impersonal without counterfeiting a claimant because they present exactly what they are: instituted norms whose authority is public, whose demands carry traceable claimant-standing through a practice, and whose application remains answerable through its routes. Impersonation begins where those credentials are simulated rather than held — a demand borrowing the force of the instituted norm while concealing the interests pressing it, unable to state the standing it carries, treating inquiry into its legitimacy as itself the offence. The test, accordingly, is not **is there a person behind it** — behind the best norms there is often no one person — but: **what standing is carried, whose claims or interests are mediated, and through what accountable route can the demand be examined?** The anonymous judge is what fails that test while dressing to pass it.

The analysis, again in three cuts.

First: what exactly is counterfeit. Not the arrival — the pressure is really felt, often crushingly — and not necessarily the content, which may coincide with a traceable norm. What is counterfeit is the **claimant-position**: the demand presents itself as pressed, when it is only circulating. Chapter 5's category names its substance — the hanging norm, binding by sheer circulation — and this chapter adds its mode of operation: the hanging norm armed, walking, and speaking in the second person. Heidegger's publicness supplied the decisive attribute long ago: it "is never wrong," because it never goes into the matter [SZ §27, H127] — and the present account can say **why** that immunity holds. Assessment, Part II showed, is transacted between poles: standing questioned, legitimacy contested, validity denied, **to someone**. A demand with no claimant-pole is structurally unassessable — there is no one before whom its credentials could fail — and Chapter 7's symmetry closes: Levinas's unconditional authorisation shut the space of assessment from above; the they shuts it from below, by unfindability. An infinite that cannot be questioned and an anonymous that cannot be found are enemies of the same thing, and the thing is answerability itself.

Second: why it grips. Interpellation, Chapter 2 concluded, has its true home here — the they recruiting a whoever — and the recruitment succeeds because the counterfeit borrows real materials. The impersonal judge speaks in folds that often **do** trace (which is why its sentences sound like morality); it exploits the genuine phenomenology of exposure (Part II's arrival is undergone, and the undergoing does not authenticate the sender); and it offers each member of the common a corrupt convenience — the power to press claims without owning them. This last is the interest analysis Chapter 5 promised. Whose closure is it, when the social becomes unquestionable? Follow the benefit: the impersonal form lets particular demands travel armoured — **it is expected** costs its true author nothing, risks no contestation, and can never be made to answer for itself; and it lets a collective press each member with a force no member would claim the standing to exert in his own name. The insulation from tracing that turns society ground-like serves, in the ordinary case, exactly those whom tracing would expose: the interested party hiding in **one**, the coalition hiding in **everyone**, the enforcer hiding in **people are saying**. The they-judge is not a metaphysical mystery; it is a laundering facility for standing.

Third: the modern amplifiers, registered without detour. Reputation systems, metrics, and the aggregated gaze of platforms give the structure what it never had before — numbers, a face made of thousands of facelets, and a permanent courtroom in the pocket; the “one” now arrives quantified, and the counterfeit vector carries a score. The cut, however, must be placed exactly, for aggregation as such is not the pathology. A score that transparently aggregates accountable judgments — assessors with standing, criteria that trace, an administration that can be questioned — is instituted impersonality, however uncomfortable to live under, and passes the test above. The pathology begins where the metric becomes **self-authorising**: where the judgments, their purposes, and the affected practices disappear from view and the number itself presses — unassessability by unfindability, exactly as before, but now with bandwidth. The structure is unchanged; its scale is new; and the discipline this chapter ends with has, accordingly, never been more practical. (What happens when the anonymous judge is partly machinery, and whether the machinery adds an answerer or only another fold, belongs to Chapter 15.)

The diagnostic will later have to turn on philosophical and moral interpretation itself. A finite interpreter may also press a judgment while speaking as though Ethics, alterity, infinity, or vulnerability were themselves the claimant. Chapter 11 will ask how the language of the Other can avoid reproducing the impersonation diagnosed here.

10.4 The second liberation

The Introduction promised a double liberation, and Chapter 9 delivered the first: freedom from the fantasy of escaping anonymous common life — the fold honoured, the shelter kept. The second can now be stated exactly: freedom from the anonymous common **when it impersonates the authority of a singular other** — when an anonymous **one** judges an interchangeable **me**, and no one is there. Its instrument is a question, and the question's credentials are the whole preceding book: **who is asking?**

The question is the tracing criterion of Chapter 5, turned from norms to demands and asked in the second person — and it must be given its exact office: it **opens** the assessment; it does not complete it. Asked of any demand, it can yield three statuses at the level of standing: standing established; standing absent after adequate inquiry; or standing unresolved or obstructed. The first outcome is various, and the variety is the point. The asking may find a claimant in person; a carrier — the executor pressing the testator's claim, the advocate the future's, the court the absent victim's; an institution, with organs and registries; a practice, with reliant participants among whom the claim is distributed. In every such case the demand **gains** rather than loses: it acquires an assessable pole, a face or a registry for its force, and everything Part II requires for it to bind as a demand binds. But what the finding delivers, exactly, is assessability, not vindication. A traced demand has shown its standing; its legitimacy and its validity remain, per Chapter 2's grid, distinct questions and open ones — the traced norm may be pressed by the wrong party, may pursue a purpose that has expired, may carry one group's protection at another group's cost — and tracing is precisely what makes each of these failures **findable**, examinable, contestable at last. The question is therefore fidelity to the normative order and not its solvent: nothing that traces is dissolved by it, and everything that traces becomes answerable in both directions. At the second outcome, adequate inquiry finds no standing of any kind — no claimant, no carrier, no institution, no reliant practice; the concern has no raiser, the **one** no bearer, the expectation no expecter — and then nothing has been dissolved that was ever owed **in that voice**: the demand's second-personal force was counterfeit, whatever validity its content might separately possess and press again, properly, through traceable routes. Where adequate inquiry establishes the absence of standing, the pressure was never a claim.

The third status is neither weaker recognition nor postponed absence. Inquiry may encounter a possible claimant-position only through broken records, suppressed testimony, missing interpretive resources, unavailable representation, or a route institutionally closed to the party who would have to use it. Epistemic injustice can operate here as a mechanism of obstruction — through credibility deficits or failures in the shared means of making a harm intelligible — without by itself proving standing or the claim's validity [Fricker, **Epistemic Injustice**, chs. 1–2 and 7]. The result remains unresolved. It prevents the inadequacy of the present route from being mistaken for evidence that no claimant exists, and it may make only procedural duties presently due: further inquiry, preservation of evidence, precaution proportionate to possible harm, protected representation, or creation of an adequate forum. These duties answer uncertainty or obstruction; they do not prejudge legitimacy, validity, attribution, or the answer ultimately owed. The liberation is not from demands but from counterfeits of demand; not from the weight of the common but from weight that was never anyone's to impose.

Two disciplines follow, one for each pole of the person's own life, and together they are the liberation practised rather than merely possessed.

At the receiving pole: convert, contest, or dismiss. Faced with the impersonal judge — outer or inner, for the internalised **one** deserves the same question — the discipline is to press the demand toward its standing. Sometimes the pressing converts: behind **what will people think** stands, on inspection, a particular mother, a particular colleague, an institution, a practice whose reliance is real — and the demand, thus avowed or accountably carried, can at last be assessed and answered: met, contested, or refused, **to someone**, with all the seriousness Part II restored to those words. Sometimes the conversion yields several claimants, or claimants in conflict — and then what follows is not dismissal but adjudication, with the grid's full apparatus; the question never promised to spare anyone that. And sometimes the pressing dismisses: the raised concern, pressed for its raiser, evaporates, and with it the debt. And sometimes — the third mode, which a first statement of this discipline left implicit and which completes the liberation — the pressing finds a norm that genuinely traces, to real claims and real claimants, but whose route has become inadequate to the case at hand: exhausted, harmful in its correct application, incapable of carrying what now comes due. There the discipline is neither conversion nor dismissal but **contest and depart** — the boundary of §9.4 exercised from the receiving side. And here the liberating force of the whole analysis should be stated in the open, because it is easily mistaken for both of its counterfeits. Because the common is not an answerer — cannot accuse, cannot receive an apology, cannot forgive, cannot occupy the claimant's chair — deviation from an accepted route is not, merely as deviation, an offence owed to society as such: custom cannot justify its demand by being customary; public expectation cannot receive an account; “this is how it is done” places no one under an unanswerable debt. That is the release from anonymous guilt, and it is real. But the release has a second side, and the second side is the discipline: the one who departs does not thereby become answerable to no one — she becomes answerable **more exactly**. The departure is a deed whose attribution must be tested as exactly as any other: it may be hers to answer for before the persons it affects, the relations it alters, the reliance it disappoints, and whatever legitimate claims the inherited form still carries past its inadequacy to this case. Chapter 12 will show how performance, authorisation, and answer can divide without allowing attribution to disappear. The freedom disclosed here is therefore neither conformity nor private sovereignty, and it is stronger than antinomianism ever managed to be: the freedom to depart from the route without an anonymous judge, and to answer for the departure before determinate others. Because the common cannot answer, it cannot finally condemn my departure from its routes; because it cannot answer **for** me either, the departure is mine to answer for. The route can be questioned because the route cannot answer for itself — and the double liberation the Introduction promised has, in this, its ethical point: the common gives routes; it cannot make

obedience to the route the final ethical law. What the discipline never does is answer the anonymous **as if** it were someone — for every answer rendered to no one trains the counterfeit, feeds the laundering, and betrays, in small, the structure of answerability it pretends to honour.

At the claiming pole: sign your demands. The liberation has an active side, less noticed and more binding. If pressing claims through the impersonal form is laundering, then the person who understands the analysis is barred from the facility: no more it is **felt that**, no more **concerns have been raised**, no more enlisting **everyone** as co-signatory of a grievance that is mine. The discipline is to claim in one's own name — **I object; I am asking; this is my demand** — and thereby to hand the addressee everything the vector owes him: a pole to answer, credentials to assess, a person to refuse. It costs exactly what the counterfeit was designed to save, and the cost is the point: standing risked is standing meant. One qualification belongs to the discipline as its boundary, not its breach: signing is the acknowledgment and assumption of standing, not necessarily the disclosure of identity. The whistleblower, the protected witness, the secret ballot, the anonymous referee press claims whose bearers must, for reasons that themselves trace — retaliation, coercion, the integrity of the judgment — remain unnamed; and they are not launderers, because their standing is **carried**: a procedure verifies it, an institution answers for the carriage, the content remains assessable and the channel contestable. Protected anonymity is carried standing with the name withheld; laundering is the withholding of standing itself. The test is the same as everywhere in this chapter — not whether a name is visible, but whether the concealment is itself accountable: instituted, traceable, challengeable, rather than the insulation it pretends not to be. So qualified, the discipline stands: speak in your own name where you can; where you cannot, let the capacity and route by which your standing travels be stated; and never enlist **everyone** to enlarge what is yours. A community in which demands are so pressed is not a community with fewer norms — nor one in which every norm has a private owner, for norms are instituted, inherited, jointly kept: they have keepers and routes, not proprietors. It is a community in which the standing a demand carries can be traced, the pressing has a presser or an accountable carriage, and what presses can therefore be answered — the common at full strength, with the laundering facility closed.

Objection: some of the weightiest norms have genuinely diffuse principals — public goods, future generations, the dead — and “who is asking” would dissolve precisely the claims least able to appoint a spokesman. The objection confuses diffuse with unfindable, and the book’s own apparatus has long since separated them. Standing, Chapter 2 established, can be carried: the executor presses the testator’s claim, the advocate the future’s, the court the absent victim’s — and practice-tracing, Chapter 5 added, returns to reliant participants even where no individual holds the whole claim. For all such norms the question **who is asking** has an answer — a carried one, a distributed one, an institutional one — and they pass the standing test: they are no counterfeits, and they enter assessment like every traced demand, their legitimacy and validity remaining the grid’s questions, which is all the diagnostic ever promised. The pathology is never diffuseness; it is the demand for which the question is **unanswerable in principle**, or — the surer mark — **forbidden**: where asking after the claimant is itself treated as the offence, the laundering has been detected, and Chapter 5’s Durkheim result applies — the social has become ground-like exactly where its authority is insulated from tracing and contestation.

Objection: the internalised generalized other is not a counterfeit but the very mechanism of moral development; a self that dissolved every “one” would have dissolved conscience. Genesis is conceded — the child does plausibly acquire normativity through an internalised **one does not**, and no account of moral learning survives without something of the kind [cf. Mead, **Mind, Self, and Society**]. And a second concession must join it, which a first draft of this chapter withheld: mature practical reason **keeps** legitimate impersonal forms — reciprocity, consistency, fairness, the universalisation test, the standards of a profession, concern for unknown others — and these are not the inner they. They are the instituted impersonality of §10.3 turned inward: articulable, defensible, revisable, relatable on demand to persons and practices, and innocent of the pretence that society itself is speaking. What maturation retires is not the impersonal but the **unaccountable**: the inner pressure that cannot state its grounds, that treats anticipated disapproval as authority, that answers **who is asking** with a tightening rather than a reason — shame without an assessable claim. The developed conscience, on the present account, is the one that has learned to run the chapter’s test on its own voices: to hear, behind **one does not lie**, the particular betrayed, the reliance broken, the practice and its participants — or the public form that genuinely traces — and to retire only the residue that traces to nothing. An inner judge that forbids the question is not conscience but the they annexed to the psyche; and the reader of Chapter 3 will note, without needing it pressed, that an analytic which made the call of conscience constitutively anonymous left this door unlocked from the inside.

Objection: the chapter re-demonises what Chapter 9 rehabilitated. No. The shelter stands; the folds stand; the whoever-form stands; the instituted impersonal norm stands; the interval in which no one is addressed remains blessed. Both pathologies are boundary crimes, not properties of the neutrum — and both are committed, not emitted: usurpation is the fold **held in place** where an answerer was due; impersonation is the fold **given a voice** where a claimant was required. The rehabilitation and the diagnostics are one account: only because the anonymous is legitimate in its place can its displacement be a specific wrong.

10.5 Threshold

Part V is complete, and its yield is the alternation with its jurisprudence: the fold honoured within its sufficiency; answerability explicit at the boundary; usurpation named at the answering pole and impersonation at the claiming pole; and the two liberations as one discipline — never let a form stand in for the answer due from a determinate party at the locus where attribution has become non-forwardable, and never press as no one what you demand as someone.

The pathologies are now diagnosed, but their diagnosis presupposes a constructive unity the book has not yet stated in one place. What is the relation between the common field and the routes available within it? What does a finite participant do when taking up such a route? What exactly does folding suspend? How can attribution require a home without the possibility becoming that home's property? Under what conditions does substitution remain legitimate mediation, and where does further forwarding change whose answer it is?

Part VI takes up these questions as one ontological task. Chapter 11 will describe the common as inhabited without making it a subject; distinguish personal inhabitation, institutional enactment, and technical carriage; join finite taking-up, folding, address, standing, attribution, localisation, answer, and return; and formulate the substitutive-attributive reduction through which the sufficiency of common forms can be tested.

Only then do the trials begin. Part VII will ask how the structure survives when its positions separate: performance from attribution in delegation; institutional locushood from dependence on the continuity of any single lived subject; standing from reciprocal presence in the dead; and generated delivery from independent answerability in the machine. The institution's findability remains one decisive test, but no longer the sole threshold. The immediate task is prior and more general: an ontology of the common as inhabited, in which the fold can carry without usurping, the other can direct without becoming ground, and attribution can become local without becoming proprietary.

PART VI — ETHICAL ONTOLOGY

Chapter 11. Ethos: Answerability as Ontological Access

The preceding chapters established a limit. The common supplies the language, roles, histories, expectations, and procedures through which a deed, promise, judgment, office, institution, or relation becomes intelligible. It makes substitution and transmission possible. Yet where address arrives, standing holds, and a deed or present duty is attributable, those common forms cannot always remain the final answerer. The earlier argument named the finite place at which a shared-worldly attribution or duty comes due: the **locus**.

What remains is to show the ontological unity of the movement from common possibility through finite inhabitation, folding, address, attribution, locus, answer, and return. Chapter 11 therefore gathers and refines results already earned: Chapter 6 supplies the modal distinctions, Chapter 7 the internal assessability of address, Chapter 9 the necessity of folding, and Chapter 10 the pathologies of usurpation and impersonation.

What kind of ontology becomes visible when a common possibility must be finitely inhabited, ordinarily made replaceable, conditionally localised, openly answered for, and returned without becoming private property or final ground?

Before the definition, take an ordinary scene. Two people approach one another on a narrow path. No word is spoken to the walker, just as no word is spoken to the stone beside the path; yet the two silences are not the same. One is not silent **toward** the stone at all. A greeting can be withheld only from someone whom it could have reached, and withholding therefore presupposes a relation it did not create: before greeting or refusal, the walker is already greetable.

Suppose the greeting is spoken and returned. Something has then occurred that had not occurred before; actuality has gained. Yet one route has also been enacted from among others that were open in the encounter. Held at the instant before the walkers pass, the silence leaves those routes undetermined. It is not fuller in worth — a greeting may be generous, while silence may arise from fatigue, hierarchy, fear, or indifference — but fuller in reach: no determinate exchange has yet selected one route and closed the alternatives belonging to that moment.

The possibility belonged to neither walker alone. It could not have been produced on an empty path, because the other had to be there as one whom greeting could reach. The common shows itself here as a relational field of possibility: not first as a completed exchange or a stock possessed by its participants, but as held between finite beings and impossible alone.¹⁶ Nothing here yet establishes a claim, standing, or an answer due; the scene discloses the modal openness they presuppose. Nor does actualisation simply impoverish possibility: the spoken greeting may open relations that silence never would. The narrower result is that possibility possesses a relational openness that cannot be reconstructed from actuality alone.

¹⁶ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, **Koinonia: A Phenomenology of Being-With** (KiTalent Research, 2026), ch. 3, “The Withheld Greeting.”

The figure gives phenomenal content to what this chapter calls a common possibility: a route of intelligibility and enactment not enclosed within one bearer and not exhausted by one finite taking-up.

A **common possibility** is a historically available and socially articulated route of intelligibility and enactment that is not enclosed within one bearer and can be inhabited in non-identical finite occasions. Its intelligibility and transmissibility exceed every particular taking-up; this does not make it automatically legitimate.

Potentiality and actuality remain indispensable wherever a capacity is exercised, a process completed, or a work produced. But a promise may be carried by a record, fulfilled by another, disputed by the promisee, and still require the promisor’s answer. An office may continue through changing occupants while preserving duties none created. A machine may respond fluently while leaving unsettled whether an answer belongs there or elsewhere. These phenomena involve not only production and fulfilment but inhabitation, folding, carriage, reopening, attribution, answer, and return.

This chapter calls the resulting field **ethical ontology**: the ontology of structures disclosed through answerable inhabitation. It does not mean that ethics grounds being, that moral obligation is a first principle, or that all being is answerable. It names a regional mode of access.

Encounter opens the phenomenon. Answerability localises its attributable topology. **Ethos** names the common as *dwelt*: the inherited field together with the finite manners in which participants inhabit, sustain, contest, and answer for its possibilities.¹⁷

The running phenomenon is the promise, chosen because its topology is unusually visible, not because answerability originates in voluntary undertaking. Inherited office, omission, benefit, participation in harm, and present duties of repair can separate the same positions without any prior promise. Promising is common before anyone promises; its forms are repeatable, but this having-promised is not transferable. It exposes the governing thesis:

The locus is the necessary home of attribution within a possibility that remains common.

Attribution requires a home; the possibility remains common. Deny the first and answer disappears into anonymous circulation. Deny the second and the locus becomes proprietor or ground.

11.1 From Craft to Attributable Inhabitation

Ontology has often learned to ask its questions from the workbench.

The productionist genealogy invoked here follows an established Heideggerian diagnosis: Western ontology has repeatedly taken the produced work—formed, completed, and present—as an exemplary guide to being.¹⁸ The claim is not that every thinker reduces all beings to artefacts, nor that Aristotle lacks distinctions among nature, **praxis**, and **poiēsis**. It identifies a recurrent ontological privilege accorded to production, formation, completion, and achieved presence, while leaving open whether that privilege adequately describes Aristotle's own thought.

The exemplary phenomenon is something made. Matter receives form. A possibility is realised. A process reaches completion. What can be becomes what is through a cause, an ordering, and an end. Even where the object is not literally an artefact, the explanatory grammar remains productive: one asks what brings it forth, what fulfils it, what makes it pass from capacity into achieved presence.

This grammar is powerful rather than simply mistaken. Craft distinguishes maker, material, form, operation, and finished work, making incompleteness and completion unusually visible. Nature complicates the model because a natural being has an internal source of movement and rest rather than receiving form only from an external maker.¹⁹ A tree is not a table made by an invisible carpenter. Yet development, fulfilment, and actuality remain central explanatory questions. The present chapter does not reject this inheritance.

It begins where another phenomenon becomes exemplary.

Consider a promise.

The promise is selected for transparency, not universality. Its promisor, promisee, undertaking, carriage, and possible answer are unusually easy to distinguish. But the chapter's structure is not limited to self-incurred commitments. A successor institution may inherit records, benefits, capacities, and a position from which repair is now possible without having authored the original harm. In that case present duty must be localised without converting succession into retrospective authorship. The promise makes the topology visible; the inherited remedial case tests whether the topology survives without voluntary undertaking.

A promise is not adequately understood as a thing produced and completed in the moment of utterance. The words may perform the act, but the phenomenon does not end there.²⁰ A directed relation has been instituted. A claim and a commitment persist through time. The promise may be remembered, recorded, represented, delegated in performance, disputed, released, fulfilled, breached, repaired, or transformed.

What matters is not merely that a possible act became actual. The promise institutes a topology: someone has promised to someone; something has been undertaken; a future relation has opened; a claim and an answer may later become due.

The promise belongs to a common practice that preceded both parties. Its language, expectations, and forms were inherited. No promisor creates the possibility of promising. Yet when the promise is made, the common possibility is inhabited here. Another can repeat the formula. Another may even perform what was promised. Another cannot make this having-promised have been theirs.

The exemplary question therefore changes.

The productive question asks:

| What brought this possibility into actuality?

The ethical-attributive question asks:

How has a common possibility been finitely inhabited, and where must its attribution have a home when an answer becomes due?

The difference does not lie in adding moral evaluation to an otherwise complete description.

It lies in what counts as the phenomenon.

Productive description can identify utterance, intention, rule, performance, and result. The promise also includes direction, standing, attribution, temporal carriage, non-forwardability, and answer. These are not external judgments added afterward; they belong to the phenomenon.

The same shift appears elsewhere. An office is carried through succession, records, authority, and present duty; a judgment may institute consequences and later require answer; a scientific decision may be reproducible while remaining attributable in design and interpretation; a political act may redistribute standing; a work may remain inhabitable through performances and readings without losing its history. In each case productive description remains relevant but not sufficient.

The alternative proposed here should not be misunderstood as an ontology of passivity against action, or dwelling against making. Inhabitation includes making, deciding, speaking, refusing, maintaining, and transforming. The difference is not between activity and inactivity.

It is between two ontological emphases.

The first asks how a bearer exercises a capacity or how a process reaches fulfilment.

The second asks how an inherited possibility takes place through a finite locus without being originated, owned, or exhausted there.

This second emphasis is better named **inhabitation**.

To inhabit a possibility is not merely to occupy a ready-made container. The participant takes it up, interprets it, carries it, and may alter it, while the possibility precedes the taking-up as inheritance and survives it as common possibility. The participant stands neither outside it as producer nor inside it as passive instance.

Recurrence supplies one diagnostic of such inhabitation. A first encounter may open a directed relation, and a single act may already establish standing or a claim; repetition is not a condition of answerability. Yet where a common possibility is inhabited as ethos, return gives it temporal weight. Ask of an inhabited street where its same-hours are: the repeated crossings in which recognition, expectation, and competence sediment into habitus. Mere persistence proves no such inhabitation. A building may be kept impeccably by standing order and professional maintenance while no one dwells there in this sense. The work is real, attributable, and sometimes indispensable; what is absent is not care as such but the recurrent taking-up through which a shared possibility becomes a manner of life. Thus recurrence, inhabitation, maintenance, and persistence must remain distinct. Repeated inhabitation can sediment habitus within a common possibility; technical or institutional carriage can preserve the common form after that habitus has withdrawn. Neither condition decides legitimacy, value, or answerability on its own.²¹

²¹ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, **No Ground** (unpublished manuscript, 2026), ch. 24, “The Quarter.”

The movement is therefore not linear:

[\text{possibility} \rightarrow \text{actuality} \rightarrow \text{completion}.]

It is rhythmic:

[\text{common possibility} \rightarrow \text{finite inhabitation} \rightarrow \text{folding} \rightarrow \text{replaceable transmission} \rightarrow \text{address} \rightarrow \text{attribution} \rightarrow \text{answer} \rightarrow \text{return}.]

The difference matters wherever what occurred cannot be understood only through what was achieved: a promise may be fulfilled by another and still require acknowledgment; a correct procedure may produce a harm for which its continuation must be answered; an institution may survive every officeholder and remain the party from which repair is due; an accusation or machine output may remain attributable somewhere other than its shared vocabulary or fluent response. The question is how the occurrence belongs.

The alternative grammar therefore begins from belonging rather than production. It asks within what common possibility an event occurred, through whose finite inhabitation, what became replaceable, what attribution was suspended, who has standing, where forwarding alters the identity of the answer, and how an answer can return without becoming ground.

This does not reject potentiality and actuality. It opens another ontological region: common possibility becomes finitely inhabitable; finite taking-up becomes transmissible through folding; suspended attribution can later become non-forwardably relevant. The chapter calls this region **ethical ontology**, not because ethics stands above ontology, but because answerable inhabitation provides access to structures not disclosed by exercise and production alone.

Encounter opens the phenomenon. Answerability localises its attributable topology. Ethos names the common as dwelt within which both can occur.

11.2 Encounter, Answerability, Ethos

The ontology developed in this chapter does not begin from a neutral observer facing a completed object. Nor does it begin from a sovereign subject producing meaning from within. It begins from a disturbance in an inherited field: something ceases to be exhausted by the route through which it had ordinarily been carried.

This disturbance may be slight. A familiar word no longer says what it had said. A procedure produces the opposite of what it was designed to secure. A promise, long folded into expectation, is suddenly called in. A work of art resists the interpretation under which it had been classified. An animal responds in a way that unsettles the categories through which it had been treated. A machine performs with such fluency that the distinction between delivery and answer can no longer be left implicit.

Call this first movement **encounter**.

Encounter names the event in which something arrives, interrupts, resists, or redirects an established description. It is broader than ethics in the strict sense. One can encounter a person, an animal, a work, a landscape, an anomaly, a technical breakdown, a political demand, or a machine. Encounter does not yet determine what the phenomenon is, who has standing, or whether an answer is due. It marks only that the inherited description no longer carries the whole event.

Encounter therefore opens. It does not yet localise.

A phenomenon may interrupt without addressing anyone. A landscape may arrest perception. A work may unsettle an inherited category. An anomaly may force a science to revise its concepts. A technical breakdown may expose hidden dependencies. These events disclose limits in a common field without necessarily producing a claimant, an attributable deed, a duty, or a non-forwardable answer.

Answerability is a stronger and more determinate structure. A present answer episode becomes determinate where three conditions converge:

- address;
- standing;
- attribution or present duty.

The one encountered is no longer merely present as something that resists description. Someone asks or a claim is legitimately carried. A deed or duty becomes attributable. The relation acquires direction, and forwarding the answer may alter whose answer it is.

The gates are diagnostic rather than a universal chronology, and actual address need not create the relation it activates. Chapter 2's sequence names the conditions of an answer episode, not a temporal process by which the underlying duty is brought into being. A promise can already be owed before the promisee calls it in; an institution may owe inquiry, disclosure, prevention, or repair before a complaint arrives; an unknown victim or future claimant may already occupy the relevant claimant-position before a representative can speak. Three moments must therefore be distinguished. **Answerability-in-principle** obtains where standing and attribution or present duty already relate an answerable party to a claimant-position. **Actualised answerability** occurs when address, representation, discovery, notification, or an institutional practice such as audit activates that relation in the present. An **answer episode** begins when, under that activation, a specific response becomes presently due. Activation discloses and routes the relation; it does not manufacture the standing, deed, or duty on which it depends.

Encounter opens the phenomenon; answerability discloses its attributable topology.

The word **topology** names a relation of placement rather than a hidden substance beneath the common:

- who is reached;
- who may ask and in what capacity;
- what is attributable;
- where the answer belongs;
- what may still be contested;
- how the answer may return.

The same event may belong to several true descriptions at once: exercise of office, institutional outcome, effect of distributed causes, application of a rule, and finite taking-up. Answerability does not invalidate these descriptions. It asks which relation, if any, has become non-forwardably relevant under a determinate address.

This is why answerability cannot be reduced to responsiveness. A being or system may recognise, adapt, or produce a fitting output in response to a stimulus, request, or pattern. Answerability additionally requires that the address be intelligible as directed, that the one asking possess the relevant standing, that something be attributable, and that the answer belong to a locus rather than merely occur as output. Responsiveness may be necessary for answerability; it is not sufficient.

Nor is answerability identical with accountability. Accountability often names a formal requirement to report, justify conduct, or satisfy a procedure. It may be legitimate, but can also become diffuse, compulsory, or endless. A present answer episode arises only where its gates hold and leaves the content of the answer open. A located answer may acknowledge, contest, refuse, expose defective standing, deny attribution, accept harm while disputing remedy, or answer inadequately. The requirement is finite response within a relation that remains itself examinable, not submission to a predetermined verdict.

Nor does every norm enter this addressive region in the same way. A **directed claim** is held or carried from a claimant-position and concerns what is owed to that party. An **institutionally carried norm** may organise public or fiduciary duties on behalf of affected parties without making the carrier itself the party wronged. An **agent-neutral reason** can count for action without being anyone's demand. A **correctness standard** can distinguish a valid inference, accurate measurement, faithful performance, or competent use without by itself generating claimant-indexed answerability. Directed and relational normativity are therefore real without exhausting normativity as such [Darwall, **The Second-Person Standpoint**; Wallace, **The Moral Nexus**]. An institution may possess standing of its own, carry another's standing, or enforce a public norm; which relation holds must be shown rather than inferred from the norm's authority. The present inquiry concerns the region in which a deed or duty is answerable before a claimant-position.

The exact relation among the chapter's principal terms can now be fixed.

The common

The common names the inherited field of shared intelligibility and transmission. It includes language, practices, histories, positions, institutions, expectations, and repeatable forms through which anything like a participant-position or attributable deed becomes intelligible. It is constitutively prior but is neither a collective subject nor an automatic source of legitimacy.

Common possibility

Within that field, a **common possibility** is a historically available and socially articulated route of intelligibility and enactment that is not enclosed within one bearer and can be inhabited in non-identical finite occasions.

Four levels must be kept distinct:

1. **possibility-field** — the wider inherited range within which an action, role, relation, or judgment can become intelligible;
2. **repeatable route or form** — the transmissible pattern through which a possibility can be taken up again;
3. **finite inhabitation** — this situated and non-identical taking-up of the route;
4. **fold** — the form in which an answer, settlement, judgment, or function becomes transmissible while its present attribution is suspended.

A common possibility is therefore not merely a private capacity shared by many individuals. It belongs to a historically articulated field and can be carried through language, records, offices, practices, and institutions.

Ethos

The chapter uses **ethos** for the common considered as dwelt.²² Ethos does not add another field beside the common. It names the common together with the finite manners in which participants live its possibilities—sustaining, repeating, contesting, repairing, transforming, or refusing them.

The distinction can be stated compactly:

The common names the inherited field; ethos names that common as inhabited.

This prevents two reductions: ethos is neither private character arising inside an already constituted individual nor a completed social order whose actuality authorises its contents. An inherited practice may be enabling, unjust, exclusionary, obsolete, or contested. Its belonging to ethos explains intelligibility and transmission, not legitimacy.

Inhabitation and habitus

Inhabitation provisionally names the finite taking-up of a common possibility. It is more than causal participation, functional inclusion, or occupancy in a ready-made container: a participant receives a route that precedes them, enacts and interprets it in a determinate way, and may alter what later becomes available through it.

The term is used first at the level of a common architecture, but its modes must not be phenomenologically conflated. Persons inhabit existentially and practically. Institutions enact and sustain possibilities through offices, records, procedures, and authorised participants. Technical systems execute, mediate, or transform possibilities in ways whose locus-hood remains unsettled. These modes can share an attributive structure without sharing one manner of being.

Habitus, where the term is used, names a sedimented disposition or acquired manner of personal or practical inhabiting: a relatively durable style of perception, response, and action formed through repetition. It is neither identical with ethos nor another name for the common. Ethos is the common as inhabited; habitus is one way a manner of inhabiting becomes settled within a participant or practice.

Locus

The **locus** is neither the common nor ethos nor habitus. It is the determinate home of attribution where address, claimant-standing, and an attributable deed or present duty converge. In the regions established by this inquiry, that function is occupied personally or sustained institutionally.

The word **home** does not require one exclusive individual answerer. Attribution may be differentiated among several loci, personal and institutional in the cases established here. What matters is that it not remain nowhere or circulate indefinitely once an answerable relation has become due.

The hierarchy is therefore:

[$\text{\text{common}} \supset \text{\text{common possibilities}} \rightarrow \text{\text{finite inhabitation}} \rightarrow \text{\text{possible folding}} \rightarrow \text{\text{possible localisation at a locus}} \text{.}]$

Ethos names this common movement as dwelt, not a separate stage added to it.

This terminology prevents two opposed errors. The person does not become the source of ethical meaning, because every answerable party belongs to a field already articulated by language, history, institutions, and others. The common does not become the answerer, because inherited forms mediate the answers of determinate parties at loci—personal or institutional in the regions established here.

The possibility of answerability is internal to ethos, but actual answerability remains conditional. Most inhabitation remains folded, mediated, and non-problematic. No duty follows merely because a possibility is inherited or finitely inhabited.

The strongest formula can now be stated without ambiguity:

Ethos is the common dwelling in which phenomenality can become answerable.

The regional qualification matters. Not all phenomenality culminates in answerability. Encounter remains broader. Some phenomena resist without claiming; some interrupt without standing; some disclose worlds that never enter attribution. Where a phenomenon becomes structured by address, standing, and attribution, ethos is the inhabited field in which that topology can appear.

The promise shows the distinctions in compressed form. The common supplies language, practice, and recognisable forms of commitment. Promising is one common possibility within that field. A participant finitely inhabits it by promising. The promise may be folded into memory, record, expectation, or procedure. When it is called in by one with standing and remains attributable, the answer becomes due at a locus. The promise never leaves the common; it becomes one way the common is inhabited answerably.

Ethics is therefore not added after ontology as a set of norms governing entities already understood. A third-person account can describe role, procedure, causal chain, repeated form, and institutional function; an adequate account of a promise must also preserve claimant-position and possible answer. The ethical relation can disclose a dimension of being without becoming its ground.

Ethical ontology means the ontology of structures disclosed through answerable inhabitation; it does not mean that ethics grounds being or that all being is answerable.

Encounter opens the limit of an inherited description; answerability localises the relation disclosed; ethos names the common as dwelt within which both can occur. What this access first shows is that everyday replaceability is the transmissible form of finite taking-ups that are not interchangeable as having been these taking-ups.

11.3 What Appears First: The Derivative

What appears first in ordinary life is replaceability. The office remains while its occupant changes. The shift is relieved. The procedure is followed by whoever is assigned to it. A formula is repeated by speakers who did not invent it. A claim is carried by a representative. A promise is recorded in a document that survives the moment in which it was made. The common presents itself through forms that can travel from one finite participant to another without losing the intelligibility that makes them usable.

This everyday visibility easily suggests an ontological order. First there are roles, practices, rules, and functions; then, within them, particular participants become more or less distinctive. The office seems primary and the occupant secondary. The formula seems stable and the speaker incidental. The procedure seems to define the action, while the person who performs it appears as one replaceable bearer among others. On this view, singularity enters only when ordinary substitution breaks down: when someone proves uniquely gifted, when a relationship becomes affectively irreplaceable, when a responsibility can no longer be delegated, or when an institution discovers that no authorised substitute can carry what has come due.

The appearance is correct about what is closest. It is not correct about what makes that appearance possible.

No role occupies itself. No formula repeats itself. No office opens a letter. No procedure applies itself to a case. No promise remains in force through the independent activity of the words in which it was made. Common forms operate and persist through situated taking-ups: someone speaks, decides, applies, repeats, records, maintains, interprets, performs, or answers. Even automated circulation is not self-carrying; it depends on design, deployment, maintenance, and uptake, without this yet deciding whether a machine could itself become an answerable locus. The common does not stand behind these enactments as a second agent. It is the inherited field that makes them intelligible and repeatable and whose historical continuation occurs through them.

The finite taking-up is non-replaceable in one exact sense. Another may occupy the same role. Another may utter the same words. Another may perform the same task, deliver the same result, or even fulfil an obligation on behalf of the one who first undertook it. But another cannot make this occurrence have been theirs. The repeatability of the type does not transfer the having-occurred of the event. The identity of the role can continue; the identity of the taking-up cannot be retrospectively reassigned.

This non-replaceability must be distinguished from several adjacent meanings. A participant may be numerically non-identical with every other without being functionally indispensable. Someone may be functionally non-replaceable because no available substitute possesses the required skill, yet another could in principle acquire it. A person may be affectively non-replaceable within a relationship, although that non-replaceability does not by itself establish attribution or answerability. A historical occurrence is non-replaceable because no later event can become the event that happened then. The present argument concerns a more specific structure: the non-replaceability of finite inhabitation and, under further conditions, the non-forwardability of the answer that belongs to it. Replaceability is therefore a practical abstraction from situated enactments: a practice treats different takings-up as equivalent for a purpose while their differences remain available to be reactivated when history, relation, failure, or claim makes them matter.

The promise makes the distinction visible without drama.²⁰ The practice of promising is repeatable. Its words, gestures, and institutional forms belong to no single speaker. Another person can promise the same thing, perhaps to the same addressee. Another may even perform the act that was promised. Yet another cannot make the first promise have been theirs. The promise-form is common; the taking-up is finite. The possibility is repeatable; the occurrence is not transferable as having been this participant's.

The ordinary order of appearance is therefore the reverse of the enabling order. What appears first is replaceability. What makes replaceability possible is the repeated non-replaceable inhabitation of common forms.

This does not mean that non-replaceability exists before the common. The finite taking-up is not an original act issuing from a subject already complete outside language, practice, history, and relation. The common is constitutively prior. It supplies the role, the words, the expectations, the available distinctions, the field of standing, and the very possibility under which the taking-up can count as what it is. A promise outside any shared practice of promising would not be a radically pure promise. It would not be intelligible as a promise at all.

The priority lies on two axes. Constitutively, the common precedes the participant-position: every enactment inherits more than it can originate. Transmissively, repeatable forms persist only through finite enactments that are non-replaceable as these enactments. Roles are preserved because occupants take them up; language continues because speakers speak; institutions endure because participants maintain, interpret, contest, and repair them.

There is no contradiction here. There is a non-foundational circle:

[\text{common possibility} \rightarrow \text{finite taking-up} \rightarrow \text{replaceable common form} \rightarrow \text{new finite taking-up}.]

No term in the circle becomes ground. The common does not produce participants as a collective subject. The participant does not create the common from sovereign initiative. The replaceable form does not carry itself. The later taking-up does not restore an original purity lost in transmission. Each moment belongs to the same finite rhythm.

Replaceability is therefore derivative but necessary. Finite common life must continue through absence, succession, mortality, and limited attention. What endures beyond those who take it up must become repeatable by another, carried without continuous access to its occasion, and reopened only when the situation requires it.

Replaceability is the necessary derivative of non-replaceable inhabitation under conditions of finite transmission.

Derivative is not a demotion. Replaceability is the positive achievement by which practices, institutions, languages, stored answers, offices, and promises survive finite presence.

The mistake begins only when the derivative is taken as self-sufficient: when the replaceable form is treated as though it no longer depended on finite enactment, or as though its successful circulation proved that no attribution could ever become non-forwardably relevant. Everyday replaceability is not false. It is incomplete when promoted into the final account of what occurs.

The common and non-replaceability are therefore not opposed. The common is not a neutral field of anonymous equivalence into which singularity occasionally intrudes. It exists only through finite taking-ups and preserves itself by making what they carry available for further use.

A terminological distinction is necessary here. **Finite non-identity** names the fact that this taking-up cannot retrospectively become another occurrence. **Answerable singularisation**, in the stronger sense used across the book, occurs only where address, standing, and attribution or present duty make that taking-up non-forwardably relevant at a locus. Every finite enactment is non-identical; not every enactment is singularised as answerable.

The more exact formulation is:

The common is at home in finite, non-identical taking-up; where the gates hold, such taking-up may become singularised at a locus.

The common does not secretly possess a singular subject, and no common form is thereby always attributable to one participant. Common possibility is nevertheless enacted only through finite taking-up. Its anonymous continuity is made from occurrences that are not anonymously interchangeable as having occurred. Replaceability is real; its reality is the transmitted form of finite non-identity.

The operation that makes such transmission possible is folding.

11.4 Folding and Attributive Suspension

Chapter 9 established why folding is necessary: finite beings and finite communities cannot keep every prior answer, judgment, and relation actively open. The present chapter does not rediscover that necessity. It determines more exactly **what folding suspends** and **how that suspension can become answerably relevant**.

A finite occurrence cannot remain fully open if it is to be carried. The promise cannot require the promisor and promisee to relive the entire moment of promising at every later reference. A judicial precedent cannot remain usable only on condition that every later judge re-enter the whole horizon of its first decision. An office cannot continue if every new occupant must reactivate all the situations, judgments, and compromises sedimented in its procedures. A word could not travel if every use had to reopen the history of its previous uses.

Common life therefore depends on a practical economy of closure. What has been settled, improvised, or answered well enough to keep is folded into a form that can circulate beyond its occasion. The answer becomes a formula. The repeated need becomes an office. The judgment becomes a precedent. The promise becomes a record or expectation. The relation becomes a habit. The practice becomes a route available to whoever is appropriately positioned.

Folding does not remove the finite occurrence from history. It changes the mode in which the occurrence is carried. What was once present as this participant's taking-up becomes available under a description that does not require its singular attribution to remain continuously active.

A promise may be stored as: "A promised X to B." The record preserves who promised, yet ordinary life does not require A to answer at every moment merely because the promise exists. The attribution remains available, but its present relevance is suspended until the time of performance, a request for confirmation, a dispute, a breach, or some other event calls it in.

An office may carry decisions made before the present occupant arrived. The occupant need not reopen every prior judgment in order to act. The form suspends the present relevance of the singular occasions from which it developed and makes their usable result available. Yet if the adequacy of the form itself becomes contested, the inherited judgment may need to be reopened and attributed.

The exact structure is therefore not erasure but suspension.

What is suspended is not that someone acted, a promise was made, a judgment occurred, or a practice has a history. It is the present relevance of that attribution under the operative description through which the form circulates. "Suspended ownership" would be misleading: the participant does not own the common possibility, and attribution is not metaphysical possession. The issue is whose taking-up must presently answer.

Thus:

Folding suspends present attributive relevance so that common content, function, and form can travel beyond their occasion.

This suspension is not a defect to be overcome whenever possible. It is the condition of durable common life. Without it, every inherited form would remain an unresolved demand for renewed singular attention. Nothing could become available as a route because every route would carry the whole weight of all its occasions. Finitude would be paralysed by memory rather than relieved by it.

The fold permits absence. It allows the dead to leave words, offices, records, and institutions that can still be used. It allows claimants to be represented. It allows participants to sleep, depart, age, and die without requiring the world to begin again. It makes possible a continuity no participant could personally sustain.

The fold also permits impartiality. A procedure can sometimes protect a claimant precisely because it does not depend on the fluctuating sympathy of the present officeholder. A formula can preserve an answer against selective memory. A rule can prevent every case from being absorbed into the charisma or prejudice of whoever happens to decide it. The suspension of present singular attribution can therefore be ethically protective.

Yet the fold does not act. A record carries a promise but does not make or keep it. A procedure carries a claim but does not possess standing independently of the claimant or institution whose position it represents. An office carries authority, but the office does not interpret, decide, or answer except through finite occupants. The successful impersonality of the form depends on renewed inhabitation.

The formula can now be stated more precisely:

Replaceability is the common form of non-replaceable inhabitation under attributive suspension.

The form is replaceable because another can take it up while preserving the relevant function or intelligibility. The inhabitation remains non-replaceable because another's taking-up does not become the earlier occurrence. The suspension allows the distinction to remain practically inactive until something makes it matter again.

Ordinary mediated address shows why the fold need not be opposed to encounter. A promisee may reach the promisor through an agreed channel, a pensioner an office through a form or appeal, and a client an institution through a representative. The distinction is between mediation that remains adequate and mediation whose adequacy has become part of the claim. A promise may be performed through the agreed procedure, and an office may answer institutionally without dramatic singularisation.

The suspension becomes insufficient only where what had been held in abeyance becomes presently relevant. The promisee contests whether delegated performance counts as fulfilment. The person affected by a procedure argues that correct application produces the very harm the procedure was meant to prevent. A claimant challenges not merely an outcome but the form under which the claim has been classified. Such a challenge reopens the question of the fold's sufficiency; it does not by itself prove that the fold has failed, that the claimant has standing, or that the claim is valid. An accusation is issued in the name of "what society demands," and the person addressed asks who is actually asking and with what standing.

In such cases the fold is not destroyed. Its sufficiency as final terminus is withdrawn. The language, record, role, and institution remain. What ceases to hold is the assumption that the form can complete the relation by itself.

Unfolding is therefore not the revelation of a hidden subject beneath an alienated common. It is the lifting of the fold's self-sufficiency under a description in which suspended attribution has become part of what must now be answered for.

The transition must remain conditional. A breakdown in performance does not automatically identify an answerable locus. An encounter does not automatically validate a claim. A demand does not bind merely because it is intense or unexpected. The suspended attribution becomes answerably relevant only where address, standing, and attribution or present duty converge.

Folding explains how the common can carry more than any participant can hold actively. It does not yet explain why, in some situations, attribution can no longer remain suspended. For that, the question is no longer merely how the form travels, but where the answer belongs.

11.5 The Necessary Home Without a Proprietor

The phrase **answerability** is easily weakened into a general readiness to respond or inflated into an unlimited demand to account for oneself. Neither meaning is adequate here. Answerability-in-principle may precede actual activation, as §11.2 distinguished; a present answer episode comes due only where three gates hold.

First, there must be **address**. Someone, or an authorised carrier, reaches a participant in a direction that cannot be reduced to an anonymous norm merely operating in the background.

Second, there must be **standing**. The one who asks must occupy a position from which this claim, question, objection, or demand can be directed. Standing may belong to a person or institution, or be carried through representation, succession, testimony, guardianship, or a procedure protecting an absent claimant. It need not be face-to-face, but it must be traceable and contestable. Standing is role-relative: standing to claim, represent, testify, adjudicate, or carry a claim under protected anonymity are not interchangeable.

Third, there must be **attribution or present duty**. Something must belong here as requiring this locus's answer: an attributable deed, promise, omission, judgment, or participation in harm; or a present duty arising from office, inherited position, benefit, or a distinctive capacity to repair. Capacity may help identify where a present duty can reside; capacity alone does not generate that duty.

The distinction between attribution and present duty is essential. A successor institution may not be the author of an earlier harm and must not be redescribed as though it performed the original deed. Yet if it carries institutional continuity, retains benefits, maintains consequences, controls relevant records, or occupies the present position from which repair can be made, a remedial duty may reside there now. Its answer concerns its present relation to the inherited situation, not fictional authorship of the past.

Without these gates, non-replaceability remains only a feature of occurrence. A deed was this participant's deed, but no present answer is yet due. A person is affectively irreplaceable, but no attributable claim follows merely from that fact. An address may arrive while standing fails; standing may exist while the alleged deed is not attributable. These distinctions protect answerability from permanent accusation.

Where the gates do hold, the common form continues to mediate. A promise is carried by words, records, expectations, perhaps a contract. An institutional deed remains intelligible through office, procedure, hierarchy, and law. A judgment remains framed by inherited concepts. None of this disappears. But the form can no longer remain sufficient as the final answerer.

Suppose A promised X to B. C may perform X on A's behalf. A document may prove the undertaking. An institution may administer performance. Yet if B asks whether A acknowledges the promise, whether delegated performance counts, or why the undertaking was breached, neither record nor substitute can simply become the one who answers. They can mediate A's answer; they cannot make the promise have been theirs.

This is the **non-forwardability of attribution**. It does not prohibit help, representation, delegation, or institutional mediation. It marks the point at which forwarding alters whose answer it is. An advocate may speak for a client, but the answer must remain attributable to the client. An officeholder may answer for an institution, but the answer must belong to the institution through an authorised relation. A successor may bear a present duty to repair without becoming the original doer.

The identity of an answer is relational rather than verbal. **Mediation preserves the same answer where the same claimant-deed-or-duty relation remains traceably connected to the same answerable party through a valid representative, institutional, or adoptive capacity.** The carrier must act within an intelligible authority or office; it must remain clear whose answer is being carried; the claimant and the deed or duty may not be silently substituted; adoption, ratification, or institutional retention must connect the response to the alleged locus where such taking-up is required; the route must remain reviewable; and the carrier must not appropriate the claimant's standing or the answerer's place. Legal agency supplies a useful regional test because it distinguishes the agent's act from the principal's legally effective act and makes authority, scope, notice, adoption, and ratification explicit; it is an analogy, not the source of the ontology.²³

Whether those conditions suffice depends upon the **kind of answer** due. Execution, delivery, notice, and some explanations may be fully carried by an authorised substitute. Acknowledgment, avowal, apology, and consent may require the attributable party's adoption or a first-person undertaking that no fluent carrier can manufacture on its own. Repair may divide again: an institution can fund, organise, and retain a remedy while the attributable person may still owe acknowledgment, or a representative can communicate an apology whose identity depends upon genuine authorisation and adoption. There is therefore no blanket rule that mediation either always preserves or always changes an answer. The test asks what answer is due, which features are constitutive of it, and whether this route preserves the relation under that description.

What becomes necessary is therefore not one predetermined performance, nor the production of singularity. The finite taking-up was already non-replaceable as this taking-up. The necessity concerns localisation:

Attribution cannot remain nowhere.

A systemic explanation may be indispensable. Systems constrain choices, distribute information, produce patterned effects, and persist beyond particular agents. But explanation of the whole causal and institutional field does not by itself settle where an answer belongs. Attribution cannot be forwarded indefinitely from role to rule, from rule to procedure, from procedure to history, and from history to society until every route is visible and no answerable relation can be found. The formula prohibits **attributive evasion** once a defensible connection has been established; it does not stipulate that every occurrence has one locus, exclude plural or unresolved attribution, or manufacture authorship where only a present remedial duty can be shown. Nor can the claimant's standing be used to make the claimant answer in place of the one addressed.

Attribution requires a home:

The locus is the necessary home of attribution within a possibility that remains common.

The singular form **the locus** names a structural function, not the requirement that every event possess one exclusive individual answerer. Attribution may be differentiated among several loci under distinct relations of authorship, authorisation, maintenance, benefit, succession, or present repair. In the regions established here, personal and institutional cases instantiate one indexed attributive function through different forms of continuity and answering. A person may avow, consent, refuse, apologise, or transform a relation through lived practical existence; an institution acts and answers through organised continuity, authorised organs, records, and procedures. These differences concern capacities and forms of answering, not the meaning of locus. Distribution does not abolish localisation. It requires that these different relations be located rather than allowed to circulate anonymously among them.

The word **home** names belonging without sovereignty. Attribution resides here as requiring this answer. The locus need not have originated the common possibility, caused every condition of the event, or possess the deed as private property. It is where the answer belongs, not the metaphysical source from which the situation arose.

The necessity is conditional and limited:

Where address, standing, and attribution or present duty converge, the answer must have a determinate home; nothing in that necessity determines the answer's content in advance.

Localisation is necessary; the content of the answer remains open. This distinction is the centre of freedom in the model. A promise may be acknowledged or contested. The promisor may fulfil, explain, ask release, dispute an interpretation, offer repair, or refuse. An officeholder may defend a rule, recognise its inadequacy, reopen the case, or resign. An institution may accept liability, contest causation, revise procedure, or fail to answer adequately.

Answerability is not obedience. Standing can be challenged. Attribution can be disputed. Evidence may fail. A demand can be disproportionate. The claimant may be mistaken and the answerer evasive. Localisation guarantees neither moral correctness nor symmetry between the parties. It establishes only that, where the gates hold, the relation cannot be discharged by anonymous forwarding.

If the answer's content were predetermined, the locus would be merely the point at which a command is executed. If no locus were necessary, apparent openness would be indistinguishable from evasion. Genuine answer therefore requires both determinate location and open content.

Yet the necessity of a home generates an opposite danger. Localisation may be mistaken for ownership. Because a deed or duty is attributable here, the possibility itself may be represented as belonging to this locus—as if the participant originated the field, actualised a private capacity, or exhausted the possibility's meaning through the act.

The relation between common possibility and attribution can thus fail in two opposed ways.

The first is **anonymous dispersal**. The role, procedure, system, or historical context explains the event so completely that attribution is localised at no finite locus. Explanation becomes an endless route away from where the answer belongs.

The second is **proprietary closure**. The finite participant is treated as sovereign origin. Attribution is confused with authorship of the common field that made the act possible.

The present ontology rejects both. Attribution is localised at the locus without making the party sovereign. The party answers there for this taking-up within a possibility it did not invent. The party neither dissolves into the common nor appropriates it.

The promise makes the distinction exact. A is answerable for this promise, but the possibility of promising is not A's property. A did not create the language, expectations, claimant-position, or temporal field in which fulfilment can occur. Others may promise, and the practice remains available after this promise is fulfilled, breached, released, or repaired.

The possibility has a home but no proprietor.

This formula names non-proprietary localisation. The home matters because attribution without a home remains indefinitely dispersed. The absence of proprietorship matters because a home mistaken for ownership becomes sovereign closure. At the home, what cannot be forwarded without alteration is localised, while what cannot be privately possessed remains open.

This is the **possibility-preserving effect of conditional singularising necessarisation**. It is not a third modal movement added to the book's two movements. It names what the conditional second movement accomplishes within the possibilising field established by the first.

The first movement establishes the necessity of the common medium: no participant-position is available outside inherited intelligibility, language, history, and relation. This necessity is possibilising because the common is not one prescribed route but the field in which plural routes become available.

Where attribution becomes due, however, plural possibility can collapse into anonymous dispersal if anonymity remains the final term. Conversely, it can collapse into possession if a finite taking-up is interpreted as the private actualisation of a subject's own possibility. Conditional singularising necessarisation prevents both closures: the answer must belong somewhere, but the party that answers at the locus remains constituted within a common it did not originate.

Finite inhabitation holds possibility as possible by determining one relation without exhausting the field; the locus names where that determination becomes attributable.

To hold possibility as possible is to sustain the difference between enactment and exhaustion. A promise is enacted while promising remains common; a role is occupied while the office remains open to succession; a poem or scientific result is attributable while language and inquiry remain inhabitable by others; a political answer is given while the common remains contestable.

A finite answer does not preserve possibility by remaining indeterminate. It preserves openness through a finite determination that does not claim finality. An answer may close one question provisionally, alter a practice, establish a precedent, or refuse a demand. It remains attributable at this locus and corrigible within a common the party does not control.

The common and non-replaceability therefore do not require reconciliation as though they were alien principles. The common already persists through finite, non-replaceable taking-ups. What requires modal articulation is the relation between the common as inescapable inherited medium and the common as a plurality of possibilities no inherited route may exhaust:

- the common must be necessary enough that no participant can claim exterior sovereignty;
- possibility must remain open enough that no inherited route exhausts what can be done;
- attribution must be localised enough that openness does not become anonymous dispersal;
- the locus must remain non-proprietary enough that localisation does not become ground.

Thus:

Conditional singularising necessarisation reconciles the common's initial necessitation with its own making-possible.

The reconciliation is local, modal, and finite. It is not completed social harmony.²⁴ It does not guarantee that institutions embody freedom, conflict is overcome, or history progresses through answer. It names the articulation by which a common possibility becomes non-forwardably attributable without ceasing to remain common.

The answer may return to the common. Return here means responsible re-entry into transmissible practice — through adoption, interpretation, record, precedent, repair, warning, memorial keeping, or refusal to generalise — not every causal or historical aftereffect. A fulfilled promise may strengthen trust; a contested promise may clarify the practice; a breach may generate a new clause or deepen suspicion. An institutional acknowledgment may become precedent; a refusal may expose a route as unjust. What returns may be kept, rejected, distorted, forgotten, or reopened later.

The locus is not the motor or ground of this return. Through a finite answer localised there, common practice may be rearticulated without being finally governed. An answer can be determinate without becoming absolute, and a settlement can close one dispute without deciding every future dispute.

The structure now strains the grammar of potentiality and actuality. A common possibility is neither an unrealised capacity enclosed within the locus nor a form completed and exhausted by its enactment. The participant's relation to it is better named inhabitation; the locus names the localisation of attribution within it.

11.6 Beyond Potentiality and Actuality

The vocabulary of potentiality and actuality asks how what can be becomes what is. It remains indispensable for capacities, developments, performances, and fulfilments. The present argument does not abolish that grammar; it identifies a relation the grammar does not articulate sufficiently on its own.

Chapter 6 distinguished potentiality, virtuality, and modal striving. The claim here is not that potentiality is exhausted in exercise or that every possibility is social. It is that a socially and historically distributed possibility—carried through language, practice, standing, records, institutions, and address—is not enclosed within one bearer as that bearer’s capacity in the first place.

The possibility of promising, judging, interpreting, holding office, researching, or protesting exists as an inherited route. Its being common does not make it good: inherited possibilities may be unjust, deformed, exclusionary, or harmful, and their contestation remains internal to the common. No participant privately contains such a possibility before enactment, and no enactment consumes it.

Persistence after exercise is therefore not the decisive difference. A capacity may remain after repeated actualisations. The stronger distinction is **distribution**. A common possibility can be inhabited by persons, sustained through institutions, carried across succession, folded into records and procedures, and reopened through address. Its enactment may institute standing, suspend and reactivate attribution, and require an answer to be localised. These relations cannot be reconstructed merely as repeated exercises of private powers.

The movement is therefore not exhausted by:

[\text{potentiality} \rightarrow \text{actuality}.]

Its fuller sequence is:

[\text{common possibility} \rightarrow \text{finite taking-up} \rightarrow \text{attributive suspension} \rightarrow \text{replaceable form} \rightarrow \text{address} \rightarrow \text{standing} \rightarrow \text{attribution} \rightarrow \text{localisation} \rightarrow \text{answer} \rightarrow \text{return}.]

The primary verbs are consequently not only **produce**, **realise**, **complete**, or **fulfil**, but **carry**, **inhabit**, **sustain**, **suspend**, **substitute**, **address**, **attribute**, **localise**, **answer**, and **return**. This grammar begins from a possibility already common, a finite taking-up that does not own it, and a transmission whose sufficiency may later become questionable.

The difference is visible in completion. A product may be finished and a capacity exercised. An answer may also be sufficient—a promise fulfilled, a relation repaired, a dispute ended—without closing the common possibility in which it occurs. Completion is local rather than ontological: the answer can answer without becoming the final truth of the common.

The locus is therefore defined by its relation to attribution, not by production. What matters is not whether the locus caused the whole event or originated the possibility, but whether a deed or present duty has become non-forwardably relevant there. The same event may still belong to a role, institution, procedure, causal chain, historical practice, and finite participant. The substitutive description remains true; its sufficiency changes under the relation now at issue.

Ethical relations do not create this structure. They disclose it. Address, standing, attribution, and answerability reveal common possibility as finitely inhabitable, substitution as possessing a possible limit, and localisation as necessary without becoming proprietary.

This access remains regional. Not every encounter becomes address, every address carries standing, every finite non-identity becomes answerable singularisation, or every phenomenon has a claimant.

Ethical ontology begins where a common possibility is disclosed as finitely inhabitable, attributively suspendable, conditionally localisable, openly answerable, and returnable without becoming private property or final ground.

The ontology can now be formulated as a method: follow substitution until its sufficiency either holds or reaches an attributable limit.

11.7 The Substitutive-Attributive Reduction

The preceding ontology can be formulated as a **substitutive-attributive reduction**, provided **reduction** is understood as a disciplined change of attention rather than the discovery of a hidden substrate.

It is neither a reduction to consciousness nor a search for a constituting subject behind the common. It does not decompose an event into isolated individual contributions, reduce every phenomenon to responsibility, treat substitution as illusion, or search beneath roles and institutions for a supposedly more real person.

The reduction suspends one presumption:

that the functional or substitutive description is self-sufficient for every purpose for which the phenomenon may become relevant.

The qualification is decisive. Functional sufficiency is ordinarily real and necessary. The office is treated as the relevant unit. The procedure is followed. The record is accepted. The role carries authority. The system distributes action. The promise remains stored. The work is classified. The machine produces an output. Finite common life could not continue if every form had to be reopened at every moment.

The reduction therefore does not begin by distrusting substitution. It begins only when an encounter gives reason to ask whether the form that carries the phenomenon remains sufficient under the relation now at issue.

The question arises when, for example, a procedure produces harm, a record and claimant diverge, an office refuses to answer for its application, a promise is called in, a present locus of repair cannot be found, an interpreter invokes “Ethics,” or a machine’s fluency unsettles where an answer belongs.

At this point the method does not discard the common form. It follows it.

It asks what possibility the form carries, how and through whom or what it is inhabited, enacted, or carried, what attribution its circulation suspends, what encounter has reopened it, and whether address, standing, attribution, and non-forwardability require a determinate home.

Its governing instruction is:

Follow the circulation of common forms to determine whether, where, and in what differentiated sense the attribution they suspend requires a home.

Every term in the sentence limits the method.

Follow means that analysis begins from the actual route of mediation rather than jumping directly to an isolated agent.

Circulation preserves succession, delegation, representation, record, procedure, institution, and technical carriage as positive achievements.

Determine whether keeps localisation conditional.

Where asks for the topology of belonging rather than a metaphysical source.

In what differentiated sense allows authorship, supervision, institutional responsibility, benefit, maintenance, and present remedial duty to fall at different loci.

Requires a home marks the possible limit of forwarding without treating the home as proprietor or ground.

The reduction can terminate in several different results. It may disclose:

- answerability at one determinate locus;
- differentiated loci, personal and institutional in the cases established here;
- institutional duty without one exclusive personal answerer;
- a present remedial duty without authorship of the original harm;
- responsiveness without answerability;
- encounter without address;
- address without valid standing;
- standing without reciprocal presence;
- attribution that remains adequately mediated by the existing form;
- no attributable locus at all.

The last result is not failure. The method does not manufacture responsibility. It tests whether a relation of answerability is present and, if so, how it is structured.

The method may therefore end in redesign without blame, conceptual revision without a claimant, responsiveness without attribution, failure of standing, institutional repair without an individual culprit, or confirmation that the existing form remains sufficient. These are results, not failures.

The reduction is therefore conditional in both directions. It can prevent attribution from dissolving into structure, and it can prevent moral intensity from inventing attribution where the gates do not hold.

Its sequence can be articulated through ten diagnostic moments. They are not a managerial checklist to be applied mechanically. They form a phenomenological order: each question prevents the next from being asked in abstraction from the field that makes it intelligible.

1. What common possibility is operative?

What inherited practice, role, language, institution, procedure, expectation, or technical form makes the event intelligible?

Without this question, attribution becomes voluntaristic. The participant appears to act from nowhere, and the common field that made the deed possible disappears.

2. How is the possibility taken up, enacted, or carried?

Which mode of finite participation is present?

- a person may inhabit the possibility existentially and practically;
- an officeholder or team may enact it through a role;
- an institution may sustain it through organised continuity, records, procedures, and authorised organs;
- a representative may carry another's standing;
- a technical system may execute, mediate, or transform the form within human and organisational relations.

This question identifies the mode of participation without yet assigning answerability. A shared architecture of taking-up does not imply one phenomenological mode of being.

3. What is replaceable?

Which elements can be carried by another while preserving the relevant function?

Possible answers include:

- performance;
- role;
- wording;
- procedure;
- representation;
- delivery;
- technical execution;
- storage and retrieval.

This question establishes the positive reality of substitution. The method must know what can travel before it can identify what cannot be forwarded without alteration.

4. What attribution is suspended?

Whose judgment, promise, decision, design, maintenance, omission, or prior answer is preserved without remaining presently active?

The inquiry must not presume that every fold began in one answer. What receded may be personal or institutional attribution, a distributed settlement, an imposed arrangement, or no determinate original attribution; the finding changes the form of reopening without deciding present standing or duty.

The answer is description-relative. Attribution may be inactive for one purpose and decisive for another. A signed document may be fully sufficient to execute a payment and insufficient when the signer is asked whether the recorded terms still express the undertaking.

5. What encounter makes the sufficiency of the form questionable?

Has there been:

- a claim;
- a breakdown;
- a contradiction;
- an unforeseen consequence;
- a refusal;
- a new disclosure;
- a mismatch between form and relation?

Encounter opens the question. It does not settle it and does not yet establish that anyone must answer.

6. How is the relation addressed or activated?

Does a standing claimant–deed-or-duty relation already obtain, and through what event or practice is it addressed, represented, discovered, notified, or institutionally activated here? Who is reaching whom, or what accountable route makes the relation presently operative?

Is the direction:

- second-personal;
- institutional;
- represented;
- historical;
- procedurally mediated;
- carried under protected anonymity?

The common may carry an address. It must not be allowed to invent or impersonate the claimant. Activation identifies the present episode; it does not create the standing, attribution, or duty that the episode makes current.

7. Who has standing, and of what kind?

Is the one asking:

- the affected person;
- an authorised representative;
- an institution;
- a successor;
- a witness;
- a guardian;
- an adjudicative body;
- a procedure legitimately carrying an absent or protected claimant?

Standing may be plural, delegated, mediated, or contested. Its kind must be specified. Inquiry may establish standing, establish its absence after adequate inquiry, or leave it unresolved or obstructed. The third result does not validate the claim, but may make further inquiry, preservation of evidence, precaution, protected representation, or creation of an adequate forum presently due. Claimant-standing, representative-standing, testimonial standing, guardianship, and adjudicative authority carry different powers and burdens. Standing cannot be inferred merely from intensity, vulnerability, institutional prestige, or elevated moral vocabulary.

8. How is attribution distributed?

Which parties bear authorship, supervision, institutional responsibility, benefit, or a present duty of repair, and at which differentiated loci do their answers become non-forwardable?

The result may be differentiated. One party may bear authorship, another supervision, another institutional responsibility, another may continue to benefit, and another may bear a present duty to repair without becoming the original author of the harm.

Distribution does not abolish localisation. It requires more exact localisation.

9. Where does forwarding alter whose answer it is?

What can still be delegated, represented, stored, automated, or substituted?

At what point would forwarding transform:

- delegated performance into something that no longer counts as fulfilment;
- representation into appropriation;
- systemic explanation into absolution;
- procedure into usurpation;
- interpretation into ethical impersonation;
- automated response into a displacement of the answerable party whose answer is due at the locus?

This is the decisive test of non-forwardability. The limit is not wherever a person appears. It is wherever further forwarding changes the identity of the answer.

Apply the relational test under the description of the answer now due. Does the same claimant remain in view? Does the same deed or duty remain at issue? Is the same answerable party still traceably connected through valid authority, office, representation, adoption, or ratification? Is the carrier's own contribution distinguished from the answer carried? Can the route be reviewed and contested without the carrier appropriating either pole? Then ask whether the required answer is execution, notice, explanation, acknowledgment, avowal, apology, consent, repair, or institutional adoption. A route adequate for one kind may alter the answer in another.

10. How can the answer return without becoming ground?

Can the answer become:

- fulfilment;
- release;
- repair;
- precedent;
- revised procedure;
- changed relation;
- refusal;
- institutional memory;
- transformed practice?

Should it be generalised at all, or retained confidentially, preserved as an exception, or left unrefolded? Test recurrence or representativeness, fidelity to the claimant, privacy, institutional competence, contestability, revisability, and the danger that repetition will reproduce the injustice the answer opposed. How can a structural lesson travel without appropriating the claimant's voice or history, and how can it be kept without becoming final authority?

The tenth question prevents the reduction from ending in an isolated answerer. The answer returns to the common, but its return does not erase its attribution or establish an unquestionable route for every later case.

The reduction is thus neither purely descriptive nor normatively automatic. It is **reconstructive**. It reconstructs the movement through which a common possibility becomes:

- inhabited;
- folded;
- carried;
- reopened;
- attributed;
- localised;
- answered;
- returned.

Its object is not a hidden entity but a **topology of differential belonging**.

A deed may remain institutionally mediated and personally attributable; a systemic effect may generate differentiated duties; a protected claimant may remain anonymous in name yet traceable in standing; a successor may bear present duty without authorship; a machine may respond while the location of answerability remains undecided. The method shows where descriptions overlap and where one ceases to suffice.

It consequently does not oppose explanation and answer. Causal, systemic, social, historical, and procedural accounts may all be necessary; none alone settles whether an answer belongs somewhere. Conversely, localisation does not deny distributed causes, invent retrospective authorship, or simplify complexity into blame.

The reduction must resist two symmetrical temptations.

The first is **personalisation without structure**: a complex event is forced onto one individual because finite localisation is confused with scapegoating.

The second is **structure without answer**: causal, social, historical, or institutional complexity is used to prevent every locus from becoming reachable.

The method seeks differentiated localisation within adequate structural explanation.

Its principle is:

Explain as widely as the phenomenon requires; localise as exactly as attribution permits.

The promise can be run through the sequence compactly. The common possibility is promising; A inhabits it by promising to B; formula, record, performance, and representation are replaceable; attribution remains suspended until the promise is called in; B or an authorised carrier addresses A with standing; forwarding reaches its limit where another's performance or a document is offered as though it simply became A's answer; fulfilment, release, repair, precedent, or changed trust may return to the common.

The inherited-duty case yields a different result. The successor institution did not author the original harm. The method therefore refuses retrospective authorship. But it may locate present remedial duty through continuity, retained benefit, maintained consequences, control of records, or present capacity joined to an independently established duty. The answer belongs to the successor's present relation to the inherited situation.

The method also governs ethical impersonation. When someone speaks in the name of "the Other," "vulnerability," or "Ethics," it asks what vocabulary carries the claim, who inhabits it, whose standing is represented, what judgment belongs to the interpreter, whether the accusation can be contested, and where the accuser's own answer lies. It protects claimants from dissolution into anonymous form and answerers from accusation by an authority no finite claimant or interpreter will own.

The method can be stated in its shortest form:

Suspend the apparent sufficiency of substitution; preserve the common form; trace the encounter and address; test standing; differentiate attribution; identify the limit of forwarding; localise the answer without making the locus a ground; follow its possible return.

This is the methodological contribution of ethical ontology. It gives no universal algorithm and supplies no answer in advance. It offers a disciplined sequence through which phenomena of carriage, substitution, attribution, and answer can disclose their own structure.

The method now requires two clarifications. First, what practical disposition allows thought to sustain this mode of access without converting it into abstract doctrine? Schürmann supplies the closest precedent. Second, how can such access avoid claiming privileged authority in the name of an indeterminate Other? The Levinas section will apply the method to that danger.

11.8 Schürmann and the Practical Condition of Thought

The claim that answerable inhabitation can disclose an ontological structure has an important precedent. Philosophical doctrine is often presented as though understanding came first and conduct followed as application: one grasps the truth, then acts accordingly. Yet certain phenomena do not become intelligible from every practical posture. A life still organised by the need for a first principle may repeat the vocabulary of anarchy while continuing to seek another principle beneath the rejected one. A thinker may affirm the absence of ground while inhabiting the world as though every deed still required final authorisation.

Schürmann's reading of Heidegger makes this reciprocity decisive: an ontological mutation calls for a corresponding practical disposition, and that disposition helps make the mutation accessible.²⁵ A comportment organised by mastery will not disclose releasement merely because releasement has been correctly defined; a principal practice will continue to search for the rule capable of governing every singular case.

This must not be converted into initiation. Correct action does not manufacture ontological truth, and philosophical understanding requires no prior ethical purity. The claim is structural:

The mode in which one inhabits a field can determine which features of that field become phenomenally available.

The present chapter shifts the centre of this insight from **action** to **inhabitation**. Action can still suggest initiative, decision, production, or visible intervention. The phenomena gathered here additionally involve receiving, carrying, maintaining, listening, refusing, acknowledging, repairing, and answering. Inhabitation includes action while naming a participant's prior dwelling within possibilities that exceed initiative: language before speech, an institution before office, a practice of promising before any promise, a tradition before interpretation.

The substitutive-attributive reduction can be sustained only from within this practical relation. One must be able to recognise substitution as a positive achievement without treating it as finally sufficient; to localise attribution without making the locus sovereign; and to remain answerable for the distinction one draws. The Schürmannian insight can therefore be recast:

Answerable inhabitation is a condition for thinking common possibility as attributable without making it proprietary.

This condition is performative, not initiatory. It concerns how thought inhabits, states, and exposes its determinations to answer—not the moral rank or exceptional experience of the thinker.

The formula also prevents a romanticisation of singularity. The locus is not reached by escaping the common. It is reached through language, role, history, procedure, address, standing, and attribution. Singularity here is not pure exception but the point at which a common possibility becomes non-forwardably relevant.

This is why *tutela* is not external to the ontology. To inherit a thinker is to receive a phenomenon, distinguish it from the archic office assigned to it, answer for that distinction, and return the result without claiming final possession. Interpretation is itself a finite inhabitation of a common possibility of reading. The interpreter must sign the reading: this is the distinction made, the phenomenon preserved, the office refused, and the evidence under which the claim is advanced.

The point becomes urgent wherever thought speaks in the name of what cannot be mastered—Being, event, alterity, history, the common, ethics, the Other. Each name may preserve a genuine phenomenon; each may also conceal the interpreter's finite taking-up. Humility before excess is insufficient if the determination through which that excess is described remains unattributed. Renunciation of mastery can itself become mastery: the power to decide which concepts violate what others may not question.

The reciprocity may be expressed as:

[\text{ontological articulation} \rightarrow \text{mode of inhabitation}.]

Neither term grounds the other. A mode of inhabiting makes certain structures visible; articulation can in turn alter how the field is inhabited. Practical access nevertheless never replaces the gates. Willingness to answer does not prove attribution; openness does not establish standing; exposure does not identify a claimant; moral seriousness does not authorise a judgment.

Schürmann supplies the precedent, but the present method specifies the relation through common possibility, address, standing, attribution, non-forwardability, locus, and return. The result is neither an ethics derived from ontology nor an ontology subordinated to ethics. It is an ethical ontology in which a finite manner of dwelling gives access to structures that remain conditional, contestable, mediated, and historical.

Ethos is not only what thought describes. It is the common as inhabited, from within which thought can become answerable to what it describes.

The danger now becomes clear. If this practical access is claimed as a privilege by those uniquely attuned to what exceeds determination, ethos hardens into priesthood. The condition of thought becomes immunity from thought. The method must therefore apply to its own ethical language.

11.9 Ethical Impersonation: The Other Must Not Become Ground

Chapter 7 established the systematic claim that the other gives direction without becoming ground: being reached is not yet being bound, and standing, legitimacy, and validity belong within answerability rather than arriving only after an originary infinite responsibility. The present section asks one narrower question:

How can ethical ontology prevent its own interpreters from speaking from an unattributed “Ethics”?

Levinas remains indispensable because he names with exceptional force the arrival of another before sovereign choice: interruption, exposure, and responsibility not generated by consent.²⁶ The other is not derivable from the common as though the common secretly contained a voice, nor reducible to a law the subject gives itself.

The difficulty begins when this arrival is promoted into an infinite source of authority. The finite other who reaches from a determinate relation is then displaced by “the Other” as such, while responsibility is granted before questions of standing, attribution, validity, proportion, or possible completion.

Levinas does introduce the third party, comparison, judgment, and justice. The objection is not that assessment is absent. It is architectural: these determinations remain ordered after an originary infinite responsibility has already received authority. The present ontology instead holds that direction is indispensable but internally assessable from the start.

Being reached is not yet being bound.

The questions—who asks, in what capacity, with what standing, concerning what deed or present duty, under which description, and what could count as an answer—do not reduce the other to the Same. They preserve the difference between address and command. An address admits acknowledgment, contest, correction, refusal, repair, or exposure of a defective claim. A command is already interpreted as valid before the answer begins.

Every philosophy must determine. The issue is whether the determination presents itself as finite, identifies its evidence, remains open to alternatives and objection, and answers for its consequences.²⁷

Respect for irreducibility requires finite, revisable, contestable, and attributable articulation—not the renunciation of thought.

The danger is structural rather than a judgment on every Levinasian reader. It appears wherever a finite interpreter claims privileged competence in recognising the demand of what is declared infinitely elusive. A doctrine that opposes appropriation of the other can thereby appropriate the right to decide which concepts respect alterity and which objections remain ethically admissible.

Philosophical disagreement may then be converted into a judgment of ethical standing, so that the critic is diagnosed rather than answered. The judgment appears to issue from Ethics, infinity, vulnerability, or the Other itself rather than from a finite interpreter answerable for this determination, under this description, from this position.

Chapter 10 named **impersonation** the occupation of a claimant's place by an anonymous form and diagnosed the **anonymous judge** who accuses without disclosing who asks. The present pathology is its philosophical and moral extension:

Ethical impersonation occurs when a finite interpreter occupies the place of a claimant while presenting their judgment as the self-evident demand of Ethics, alterity, infinity, or vulnerability itself.

The common moral vocabulary is seated in the claimant's chair. Standing is presumed. The concrete claimant disappears behind a category. The accuser's position is concealed. Contest becomes evidence of guilt, and no answer can answer enough. But the vocabulary did not accuse. A finite interpreter did.

The substitutive-attributive reduction must therefore be applied to the accusation itself:

- what ethical vocabulary carries the claim;
- who inhabits it here;
- whose address is represented;
- what kind of standing is asserted;
- what judgment belongs to the interpreter;
- what evidence and proportion support it;
- what answer could count;
- what effects follow from issuing the accusation.

Every accusation is itself an attributable inhabitation of common ethical possibility.

This does not symmetrise claimant and wrongdoer. The harmed party may possess stronger standing; burdens may be unequal; the relation may remain radically asymmetrical. But asymmetry does not create an unanswerable interpreter. The power to call another to answer does not remove attribution from the call.

The same point limits infinite responsibility. Responsibility without possible determination or completion tends toward accusation before attribution, guilt beyond proportion, and an answer structurally unable to answer. Severity then ceases to orient judgment, repair, or transformation and becomes permanent accusation.

Positive no-ground proposes:

Finitude without absolution, not infinity without possible answer.

Finitude without absolution means that no common ground, totality, harmony, or procedure can stand in for the answer due from the party at the locus once attribution is due. But finitude also means that standing can be tested, attribution contested, response proportioned, repair attempted, release granted, and some matters completed without metaphysical erasure. Some answers genuinely answer even where memory, consequences, or damaged trust remain.

The operation of *tutela* can now be stated concisely. Preserve another's arrival, exposure before sovereign choice, interruption of anonymous self-sufficiency, and the insufficiency of substitution. Refuse the Other as infinite ground, alterity as automatic authorisation, responsibility as inexhaustible accusation, and the interpreter's occupation of the claimant's place. Reconstruct the finite relation: the other gives direction; standing and attribution are tested; the answer is localised but open; claimant, answerer, and interpreter remain attributable positions.

The Other must not become the sacred name under which ground returns after ontology has supposedly been overcome.

This critique applies to itself. It is a finite interpretation, answerable to texts, competing readings, evidence, and the consequences of its formulation. It cannot accuse another doctrine of immunity while claiming immunity for itself. Ethical ontology remains non-archic only by signing its own determinations.

11.10 Horizons and Thresholds

The ontology developed here begins from a determinate movement: a common possibility is finitely inhabited, its attribution may be folded into replaceable form, and where address, standing, and an attributable deed or present duty converge, attribution may require non-forwardable localisation. Its reach extends beyond promises, but extension must remain regional. The following cases test transportability; they are not abbreviated versions of the later trials.

Ethical ontology is therefore one regional access to eventfulness, not a total ontology of it. It follows the manner in which common possibilities arrive, are inhabited, become attributable, and return, without positing an Event behind those manners. Nor does it reduce every encounter to address: landscapes, works, anomalies, living beings, and breakdowns may disclose before any claim or answer comes due. This region begins where encounter becomes answerably relevant.²⁸

²⁸ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, **No Ground** (unpublished manuscript, 2026), "After the Coda."

Relationships

Relationships persist through shared memory, habits, expectations, rituals of recognition, and patterns of repair. Much remains folded because friends, partners, relatives, and collaborators cannot reopen every exchange. Yet another person cannot make this shared history have been theirs. The relation is constituted through common language and social forms without becoming anonymously interchangeable.

How can a shared relational history remain common enough to be intelligible while preserving the finite taking-ups through which attribution may arise?

The question avoids two reductions: romantic proprietorship, in which the other becomes “mine” because the relation is unique, and anonymous equivalence, in which any sufficiently similar participant could occupy the same place without remainder.

Institutions, politics, and historical responsibility

Institutions are large-scale structures of folding.²⁹ They preserve offices, procedures, records, claims, duties, and authority by allowing personnel to change. Their problem is how attribution persists when decision-makers depart, action is distributed, and consequences emerge only through accumulation.

An institution can become a temporally extended home of attribution only through structures carrying identity, succession, authority, records, and standing. This does not require imagining a super-person behind its organs. Nor does personnel change automatically dissolve every duty into procedure.

Politics intensifies the same topology by distributing addressability, representation, and public attribution. Representation carries another's standing; it is not permission to occupy the claimant's place. A party, leader, or movement impersonates the common when it presents its own finite judgment as the transparent voice of “the people.”

Who is permitted to address whom, whose standing is carried, and who answers for speaking in the name of the common?

Historical succession adds a temporal distinction.³⁰ A present institution does not become the original perpetrator merely because it inherits a name, office, or archive. Yet continuity, retained benefits, maintained consequences, control of records, and present capacity joined to an independently established duty may localise a remedial answer there now. The alternatives are neither inherited metaphysical guilt nor succession as automatic absolution.

Future generations sharpen representation because reciprocal address is unavailable. Their standing may be carried through guardians, institutions, scientific evidence, or public trust, but the carrier must remain distinguishable from the claimant and answerable for how the claim is represented.

Art and science

Art and science show two different forms of non-proprietary attribution. A work remains common through performances, readings, translations, restorations, and interpretations without losing its attributable history; style is imitable without becoming retrospectively transferable as the same taking-up. Scientific inquiry depends even more explicitly on replaceability: methods and evidence must travel beyond their authors. Yet reproducibility does not erase finite judgments of design, selection, calibration, threshold, interpretation, and reporting. In both fields, common validity or availability requires transmissibility, while dispute, anomaly, error, or reinterpretation may reopen the attribution folded into the form.

Technique and artificial intelligence

Technical systems fold prior judgments into apparently neutral function.³¹ Infrastructures and automated processes carry decisions concerning users, categories, tolerances, risk, acceptable failure, visibility, and maintenance. Breakdown may lift the suspension and disclose who designed, authorised, maintained, benefited, bore risk, or controlled revision. Maintenance, inspection, repair, and decommissioning are therefore modes through which technical possibility is answerably sustained, not secondary additions to invention.

Artificial intelligence intensifies the distinction between responsiveness and answerability.³² A system may produce novel output, adapt, imitate style, preserve conversational continuity, and become functionally difficult to replace. None of these features alone establishes answerable inhabitation or locushood.

Can the system itself become a locus in which attribution has a home, or does it remain a route through which attribution is forwarded among designers, operators, institutions, users, and inherited data?

The question remains open. Relevant considerations include continuity of identity, relation to prior acts, recognition of standing, capacity to contest and revise attribution, participation in repair, susceptibility to control, and the distinction between a generated explanation and an answer that belongs to the system. The later machine trial must decide how these features separate rather than presume the result here.

The animal threshold

The animal case prevents answerability from becoming the measure of all being. A cat inhabits a meaningful embodied and affective world, recognises persons, places, routines, and signals, and may be non-replaceable within a relationship.³³ Replacing one animal with another does not restore the same relation. Yet affective non-replaceability does not by itself establish answerability in the strong sense.

A sequence of thresholds must remain distinct:

[\text{exposure} \rightarrow \text{encounter} \rightarrow \text{recognition} \rightarrow \text{addressability} \rightarrow \text{responsiveness} \rightarrow \text{attribution} \rightarrow \text{answerability}.]

Earlier terms are not defective versions of later ones. Ethos may be ecological, embodied, affective, practical, symbolic, normative-addressive, and institutional; only some layers support strong answerability. The open question is whether an animal can inhabit a deed or duty under a sufficiently shared normative description for an answer to become non-forwardably due. The chapter should not settle that threshold dogmatically.

The animal case therefore confirms that ethos is broader than answerability, encounter broader than address, responsiveness broader than attribution, and affective non-replaceability broader than answerable non-forwardability.

The limit of extension

These horizons show that the ontology can travel without implying that every field has the same structure. The method may disclose:

- answerability;
- responsiveness without answerability;
- standing without reciprocity;
- attribution without blame;
- institutional or systemic duty without personal authorship;
- historical non-replaceability without present obligation;
- encounter without claimant.

Ethical ontology does not universalise accusation. It differentiates the ways common possibilities can be inhabited, carried, reopened, and sometimes answered for. The promise aligned performer, undertaking, claimant, and locus unusually clearly. The four trials begin where those positions separate.

11.11 Toward the Trials of the Locus

The basic topology is now established: a common possibility is finitely inhabited; attribution may be folded into replaceable form; where address, standing, and attribution or present duty hold, mediation cannot always remain the final answerer; one or more determinate homes are required; the answer remains open and may return without becoming ground.

The hardest cases separate the positions that the promise aligned.

Delegation divides performance from attribution. A delegate may acquire independent answerability while the principal remains answerable. The question is how an answer can be divided without being dissolved.

The institution extends the locus through changing organs and time. It may promise, employ, govern, remember, and repair without becoming a super-person. The question is how attribution can have a temporally extended home without a second life behind the participants.

The dead separate standing from reciprocal presence. Claims may persist through memory, descendants, archives, rites, and unfinished obligations, yet those who carry them may also appropriate the absent claimant's place.

The machine separates responsiveness from settled attribution. Output, continuity, explanation, and increasingly complex performance do not decide whether an answer can reside there.

These trials progressively separate deed from performer, performer from answerer, answerer from living presence, and responsiveness from locus. The ontology must neither force every answer into one living individual nor let attribution disappear into system, procedure, history, absence, or code.

Can attribution still find a home when performance, identity, presence, life, and answer come apart?

The rest of the book will test that question.

Conclusion — The Home of Attribution

The chapter began from replaceability. Roles, words, procedures, records, and institutions travel beyond their first occupants because finite common life cannot keep every taking-up actively present. Folding suspends present attributive relevance and preserves what can be repeated, delegated, inherited, and later called in.

Replaceability is therefore not the enemy of answerability but its temporal condition. Its limit appears when the form's sufficiency itself becomes questionable. Where address arrives, standing holds, and a deed or present duty is attributable, mediation continues but cannot always remain the final answerer.

Attribution requires a home. That home may be singular or distributed and, in the regions examined here, personally occupied or institutionally sustained. The necessity concerns **where** the answer belongs, not **what** it must be. Standing and attribution remain contestable; answerability is not obedience.

The home is not a proprietor. The locus did not originate the common possibility and does not exhaust it through answer. The other gives direction without becoming ground; the common carries the relation without impersonating a claimant; the accuser cannot disappear into Ethics or infinity. Ethos is the common as inhabited, and the locus the non-proprietary home of attribution within it.

The movement is:

[\text{common possibility} \rightarrow \text{finite inhabitation} \rightarrow \text{attributive suspension} \rightarrow \text{replaceable transmission} \rightarrow \text{address} \rightarrow \text{standing} \rightarrow \text{attribution} \rightarrow \text{localisation} \rightarrow \text{answer} \rightarrow \text{return}.]

Five propositions gather the result:

Replaceability is the necessary derivative of non-replaceable inhabitation under conditions of finite transmission.

Folding suspends present attributive relevance so that a finite taking-up can become commonly transmissible.

The locus is the necessary home of attribution within a possibility that remains common.

The possibility has a home but no proprietor.

Ethical ontology begins where common possibility becomes finitely inhabitable, attributively suspendable, conditionally localisable, openly answerable, and returnable without becoming final ground.

The method follows directly: preserve the common form, trace its inhabitation and suspended attribution, identify encounter and address, test standing, differentiate attribution, locate the limit of forwarding, and follow the answer's return.

Explain as widely as the phenomenon requires; localise as exactly as attribution permits.

Delegation, institution, the dead, and the machine will test whether this criterion survives when performer, answerer, claimant, living presence, and response come apart. A route may carry, a substitute perform, a representative speak, an institution persist, a memory call, and a machine respond. The question is whether the route remains mediation or has been placed in the answerer's chair.

No ground settles that question in advance.

The common supplies the route in.

The other gives direction.

The locus is where the answer comes due.

¹⁷ Greek *ēthos* (ἦθος) has an early spatial sense—an accustomed or customary place, haunt, or abode, especially in the plural ἦθεα—and subsequently the senses of habit, disposition, and character; it is closely associated with *éthos* (ἔθος, with a short initial vowel), custom or habit. The semantic conjunction of dwelling and habit is reinforced, though not reproduced by direct derivation, in Latin: *habitus* denotes a condition, disposition, or settled manner of having, while *habitāre*, the frequentative of *habēre*, means to have or hold continually and hence to dwell or inhabit. *Habitus* does not derive from *habitāre*; both belong to the same family of *habēre*. The constellation is philosophically apt here: *ethos* names not only a place in which one dwells but a manner of dwelling acquired and sustained through repeated inhabitation. See Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon**, s.vv. “ἦθος” and “ἔθος”; Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots**, s.v. “ἔθος”; and Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary**, s.vv. “habitus” and “habito.” The chapter draws on this semantic history without claiming that the later ethical sense is reducible to one uncontested original meaning.

¹⁸ The expression “productionist metaphysics” is associated especially with Michael E. Zimmerman's reconstruction of Heidegger's history of Western ontology; see *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art**, especially division II, “Heidegger's Critique of Productionist Metaphysics.” For the central Heideggerian hypothesis that Greek and Aristotelian being is understood as “being-produced,” together with a sustained criticism of its tendency to suppress Aristotle's distinction between *praxis* and *poiēsis*, see Francisco J. Gonzalez, *Heidegger and Aristotle**, especially §§2–3. The productive and modal grammar itself is oriented here by Aristotle's analyses of craft, potency, activity, and completion in *Metaphysics** Θ.1–6 and *Physics** II.1–3. The chapter adopts the Heideggerian genealogy as a historically influential diagnosis, not as an exhaustive interpretation of Aristotle.

¹⁹ Aristotle explicitly distinguishes natural beings, which possess an internal source of motion and rest, from artefacts whose productive source is external: *Physics** II.1, 192b8–23. The chapter therefore does not assimilate *physis* to *technē*.

²⁰ Adolf Reinach analyses promising as a social act giving rise to a claim in the promisee and an obligation in the promisor: “The A Priori Foundations of the Civil Law,” chap. 1, §§2–4. On promising as performed rather than merely reported, see J. L. Austin, **How to Do Things with Words**, lectures I–II and IX–XII; and John R. Searle, **Speech Acts**, chap. 3. Folding, attributive suspension, non-forwardability, and return belong to the present argument.

²² On ἦθος as abode or dwelling rather than merely character, see Martin Heidegger, “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” in **Pathmarks**, 269–271, interpreting Heraclitus B119. The present usage makes ethos the common dwelling in which attribution may acquire a finite home.

²⁴ Compare Hegel, **Elements of the Philosophy of Right**, §§142–157, where ethical life is the actuality of freedom in shared institutions. The reconciliation proposed here is neither the actuality of a completed social whole nor the self-realisation of a collective subject.

²⁵ Reiner Schürmann frames the relation between theory and practice after the closure of metaphysical foundations in **Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy**, especially the introduction and part I, and in “The Ontological Difference and Political Philosophy.” The move from non-principial action to answerable inhabitation, together with the sequence of common possibility, standing, attribution, locus, and return, belongs to the present proposal.

²⁶ See Emmanuel Levinas, **Totality and Infinity**, especially “Ethics and the Face,” and **Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence**, especially chap. 4, “Substitution,” and the later treatment of the third party and justice. These texts ground the preservation of arrival, asymmetry, exposure, and responsibility prior to sovereign choice. The objection concerns their promotion into an original infinite responsibility under which assessment enters only subsequently.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” supplies the indispensable internal warning that discourse and determination cannot simply escape every violence. The chapter draws a different conclusion: determination must be finite, revisable, contestable, and attributable rather than prohibited as such.

²⁹ For major accounts of institutional facts and group agency, see John R. Searle, **The Construction of Social Reality**; Christian List and Philip Pettit, **Group Agency**; and Margaret Gilbert, **Joint Commitment**. The present question is whether institutional answering can be real without positing an additional lived super-subject.

³⁰ On differentiated guilt and responsibility across historical and political continuity, see Karl Jaspers, **The Question of German Guilt**; Catherine Lu, **Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics**; and Paul Ricoeur, **Memory, History, Forgetting**. On responsibility toward future generations where reciprocal address is impossible, see Hans Jonas, **The Imperative of Responsibility**.

³¹ On technical revealing, technical individuation, and the delegation of prescriptions into artefacts, see Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”; Gilbert Simondon, **On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects**; and Bruno Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses?”

³² For responsibility gaps, distributed control, and the danger of treating either the computer or the nearest human operator as the answerer, see Andreas Matthias, “The Responsibility Gap: Ascribing Responsibility for the Actions of Learning Automata”; Madeleine Clare Elish, “Moral Crumple Zones: Cautionary Tales in Human–Robot Interaction”; and Filippo Santoni de Sio and Jeroen van den Hoven, “Meaningful Human Control over Autonomous Systems: A Philosophical Account.”

³³ Jakob von Uexküll's **Umwelt** is the principal ontological precedent for a meaningful animal world; see **A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans**. For philosophical cautions concerning animal response, see Jacques Derrida, **The Animal That Therefore I Am**. Empirical support for feline recognition, attachment, and interspecies communication includes Kristyn Vitale, Alexandra Behnke, and Monique Udel, "Attachment Bonds between Domestic Cats and Humans," and Tasmin Humphrey et al., "The Role of Cat Eye Narrowing Movements in Cat–Human Communication." These studies do not establish answerability in the strong sense used here.

²³ On legal agency as a regional test of identity-preserving mediation, see Rachel Leow, "Understanding Agency: A Proxy Power Definition," 99–123, especially the distinction between the agent's act and the principal's exercise of a legal power; and American Law Institute, **Restatement of the Law Third, Agency**, §4.01 on ratification. These are United States and common-law materials with their own jurisdictional and doctrinal limits. They concern legal attribution, authority, and adoption within a specific setting; they do not supply the philosophical identity of an answer or govern moral and institutional mediation outside their proper scope.

PART VII — TRIALS OF THE LOCUS

Chapter 12. Delegation: Performance, Deed, and the Multiplication of Answering

12.1 The programme, and the smallest case

Part VII begins by applying the substitutive-attributive reduction established in Chapter 11. The method does not ask whether substitution is possible; Chapter 9 already showed that finite common life depends on it. It asks what a substitution carries, what attribution it suspends or differentiates, and where further forwarding would change whose answer is being given.

Delegation is the first trial because its positions are comparatively visible. The common possibility is organised action through roles, mandates, professions, and authorised capacities. Performance is often replaceable. Authorisation, acceptance, selection, supervision, adoption, omission, and present repair may remain attributable at different loci. Address reopens the layered relation, standing determines who may press which claim, and the limit of forwarding appears where another performance is offered as though it had become the answer of a different party.

The method does not require one culprit at the top of every chain. It may find a delegate's deed without a delegator's fault, a principal's undertaking without personal performance, an institutional duty without one exclusive individual answerer, or no attribution at a station lacking knowledge, authority, control, or present duty. What it refuses is only the inference that because performance travelled, every answer travelled with it or disappeared. Delegation therefore tests the first separation: **performance from attribution**. If the reduction cannot distinguish them in the plainest proxy, it has no business at the graveside or the server farm.

And the smallest case already presses, because nothing is more ordinary than answering through another: the assistant signs **per procuracionem**; the nurse administers what the physician ordered; the advocate speaks for the client in the client's hearing; the minister answers in parliament for what a civil servant drafted; the parent answers for the child before the school; the executor, familiar since Chapter 2, presses a claim whose claimant is gone. But the scenes just listed are not one structure, and a page of distinctions now will spare the argument from proving the wrong thing. In **delegated performance**, one party authorises another to execute a task — the strict case, and the one that gives the chapter its title. In **representation**, one party speaks or acts **in another's name**, so that words and acts count toward the represented — the signature, the plea, the vote by proxy. In **answering-for**, a party gives or receives an account because of a role or relation — and here conferral is not required: the child never authorised the parent, the department never elected the minister its voice, and yet the account is genuinely owed and genuinely given from the relation itself. In **carried standing**, familiar from Chapters 2 and 10, a claim belonging to an absent, future, dead, plural, or institutional party is pressed or received by another. The four are cousins, often superimposed in a single scene, and the chapter analyses them as a family because they share one skeleton. Each distributes performances, capacities, or voices; none by itself determines whether attribution remains, multiplies, or fails. Chapter 9 defended the general arrangement — succession and the division of performance are how finite worlds continue at all — and Chapter 10 distinguished legitimate mediation from usurpation. Chapter 11 now supplies the method: preserve the common form, identify the mode of participation, distinguish what is replaceable, test standing and attribution, and locate the point at which further forwarding changes the identity of the answer. The practical question is not whether every station must answer, but which deed or duty, if any, becomes non-forwardably relevant at which station.

12.2 Performance and deed: the layered structure

Begin with the analytic's own concession and its own limit, both collected in Chapter 3. Everyday being-with, Heidegger grants, is pervasively representable: within concern, one **is** what one does, and there another can stand in — **Vertretbarkeit** belongs to the constitution of the everyday [SZ §47, H239]. The limit he sets is death: no one can take the other's dying away from him — **Keiner kann dem Anderen sein Sterben abnehmen** [SZ §47, H240]. Chapters 3 and 4 have already performed the operation this chapter now applies: the limit is real, but death is its exhibition, not its principle. What resists transfer in my dying is not the biological event, which a substitute can hasten, delay, or undergo in my place in every causal respect the rescue cases display; it is that **my** dying is mine to be — the relation, not the occurrence. And that structure is present wherever an act has an answerable source: wherever something was done in a sense that survives every redescription of who moved. The trilogy's distinction states it in two words, and the monograph now cashes them — with a care the first formulation of this chapter lacked.

A **performance** is the executable contribution to an activity: describable, repeatable, teachable, assignable — and therefore, by the whole argument of Chapter 9, substitutable; the whoever-form exists to receive it. A **deed** is not a second object standing behind the performance; it is the act under a defensible attribution — the contribution, decision, authorisation, omission, or undertaking considered together with the one who is answerable for it and can be reached about it. “Owned,” where the book uses the word, means **avowable**, not possessed: a deed is what someone can be held to and can take up, not a property in an estate, and the onion argument of Chapter 4 forbids the proprietary reading as firmly here as anywhere. The deed may first appear through a claimant’s address; the claim opens a normatively relevant description without settling the attribution. Two consequences follow from defining deed through attribution, and both correct the simple picture in which delegation moves a detachable performance out from under a single retained deed. First, the mapping is many-to-many: **a performance may belong to several deeds, and a deed may be realised through several performances**. Take the chapter’s own injection and look again. The nurse administers — and the administering is **her** deed, attributable, avowable, hers to answer for as executed. The physician prescribes; the pharmacist dispenses; the hospital set the protocol under which all three acted; the patient consented, or did not. One occurrence at the bedside; a structured plurality of deeds through it — and no competent participant confuses them, because each attribution answers to a different question that can be put. Second, the individuation of deeds is claim-indexed but not claim-decided. The test proposed here — **does the doer belong inside the identity of the act as it figures in a claim?** — is second-personal, and its second-personality must be stated exactly: a claim supplies a normatively relevant description under which an attribution becomes assessable; it does not settle the attribution by being made. Claimants misattribute, over-ascribe, omit contributors, frame strategically; Chapter 2 built failability into address itself, and it reaches this far — the wound picks out what the deed is answerable **as**, and the picking-out can be contested, corrected, and multiplied where several legitimate descriptions press at once. Second-personal individuation is coarser than the metaphysician wants and exactly as fine as answerability needs; but it is a tribunal of descriptions, not an oracle.

Delegation, exactly defined on this basis, is therefore not the transfer of performance under a retained deed. It is the **redistribution of performances across a structured plurality of deeds**: the principal's authorising and entrusting are deeds and remain hers; the delegate's accepting and executing are deeds and are his; supervision, correction, subdelegation, ratification, refusal — each, where it occurs, adds an attributable act to the structure. Causal presence in the relay is not enough: answerability arises only where participation is normatively relevant under the claim — through execution, authorisation, control, adoption, maintenance, benefit, knowledge, or present duty in the case at issue. Delegation may therefore contain stations at which no deed relevant to this claim is established. What it cannot do is turn a defensibly attributable contribution into an act with no answerable relation merely because the chain is long.

Stated so, the tripartition Chapter 9 seeded returns with a needed refinement. Delegation redistributes the **performance**. It multiplies rather than moves the **answering**, as just argued. And the **relation** — the third thing — divides in two, where the first formulation treated it as one. There is **role-mediated relational continuity**: the pensioner's relation to the counter, the patient's to the practice, the parishioner's to the parish — relations that attach partly to the office and therefore genuinely survive succession; the claims found their new addressee in Chapter 4's second case precisely because this much of the relation is the office's to carry. And there is the **personal sediment**: the particular history of trust, injury, humour, and acknowledgment accumulated with **this** occupant across thirty years of Tuesdays — which is no one's to confer, transfers with nothing, and was what the town mourned when the counter reopened eleven kilometres east with everything else intact. The office carries the first kind of continuity and cannot reproduce the second by appointment; a successor inherits a continuing role-mediated relation and begins a personal history, and the difference between the two is felt in the first week by everyone on both sides of the counter.

12.3 Answering-for, and why nothing regresses

Common life contains more than delegated performances: it contains the full family of §12.1, and above all **answering-for** — structures in which one party answers, in their own voice, in the place or the name or from the relation of another. Chapter 10 needed the category twice — carried standing at the claiming pole, the second cut at the answering pole — and both times deferred the analysis here. Paying the deferral is what discharges Chapter 3's promise, and the payment has two instalments: the doubled structure, and the recast regress.

The doubling first. Answering-for is not a transfer of a locus; it is **two loci distributed over one voice**, and every legitimate instance shows the doubling on its face. The carrier answers — really answers: her words, her judgment, her professional conduct, her exposure in the exchange are hers, attributable and avowable — and answers **in a capacity**, which points beyond her to the one answered for. The executor's diligence and fidelity are her deeds and reachable in her; the estate's obligations are the testator's, carried. The grammar of the capacity keeps the two apart, and Chapter 2 already supplied evidence from pathology: everyone party to the scene knows the difference between the executor pressing the **testator's** claim and the executor pressing her own — and when the difference is lost, the demand does not become third-personal; it becomes fraudulent. Representation is parasitic on direction, and parasites attest their hosts. The conditions of legitimacy follow from the doubling, and one of them must be stated more carefully than a first pass did. The capacity must be **statable** — in whose name, from what relation, under what conferral where conferral there was. Its scope must be **traceable** — what was authorised or what the relation supports, and what exceeds it. And the capacity must be **contestable, reviewable, and terminable or revisable according to the practice that confers or recognises it** — a condition of which revocation by the principal is one form and not the general case, since the court-appointed guardian, the statutory officeholder, the parent, and the executor all wear capacities their principals cannot revoke (the testator least of all), and what legitimacy requires of these is not a principal's live veto but a route: somewhere the capacity can be questioned, reviewed, and ended by the practice that instituted it. A carried answer whose carriage can be questioned nowhere has become insulation, and Chapter 10 has a name for that.

The grammar of the capacity, note, is deictic through and through, and Chapter 4's formula shows where the fraud enters. An explicit answer has a centre — the I, or the authorised we, from which it is given — and that centre cannot be silently shifted without changing whose answer it is. Representation is therefore possible exactly insofar as its capacity remains marked or otherwise transparent and traceable: **I speak for; we answer as; on behalf of; per procuracionem**. The marking is not etiquette; it is the difference between carriage and the theft of an answer's deictic centre — the linguistic face of non-forwardability, though not its whole ground, since deeds never avowed aloud, omissions, and material repairs localise in the same way without a sentence being spoken.

Chapter 11's identity test makes the doubling operational. Delegation or representation preserves the answer carried only where the same claimant-deed-or-duty relation remains connected to the same answerable party through a valid and reviewable capacity. In delegation, the mandate and its scope must cover this performance; in representation, the represented party whose answer is carried must remain identifiable, and the capacity must preserve the claimant-deed-or-duty relation at the locus where that answer is attributable; in proxy speech, the carrier's words must not silently become a commitment beyond the warrant; in an institutional organ, office and procedure must connect the utterance to the continuing institution; in ratification or later adoption, the party must take up the prior act under the description in which it is to count. At every point the carrier's own deed — interpretation, selection, excess, fidelity, refusal, or concealment — remains separately attributable. The represented answer and the carrier's answer are layered, never fused.

Sufficiency is answer-kind-specific. An authorised delegate may execute, give notice, transmit an explanation, or carry an institution's adopted answer. Representation can also communicate acknowledgment, apology, or consent where the represented party has genuinely authorised or adopted that answer. What it cannot do is fabricate the first-person avowal of a party who has not undertaken it, turn a guardian's judgment into the ward's present consent, or convert institutional repair into the personal acknowledgment of every participant. The same carrier act may therefore be legally effective, morally attributable to the carrier in its manner, operative as a speech act only within its warrant, and retained institutionally only through adoption or ratification. These registers identify different effects of one mediation; none may be used to settle the others by itself.

The family's gentlest member should be named here too, because Chapter 2 promised it protection: answering-for on behalf of those who cannot presently answer. The infant, the patient in the coma, the person whose dementia has taken the sentence but not the standing – Chapter 2's guard held that inability to perform an answer is not proof that no answerable place remains; the present apparatus says how the place is kept. A carer, guardian, or institution may hold the route open, interpret expressions, facilitate communication, carry the claim, decide provisionally – and for all of that the carrier answers, in her own name, as her custodial judgment: answering *for* the person. What the carriage may never silently become is answering *as* the person: the conversion of support into authorship, the guardian's voice presented as the ward's present avowal. Assistance, supported decision-making, interpretation, and proxy carriage may involve support, representation, or authorised substitution in different measures; none by itself manufactures the person's present avowal or consent. The question remains the one this chapter has used throughout: is the capacity statable, its scope traceable, its exercise reviewable, and does it keep the person's place open rather than occupy it? Support that meets the test is keeping at its most exposed; support that fails it is the forgotten wearer with a patient for a principal.

At every station where a defensibly attributable deed or present duty relevant to the claim is established, something is localised that cannot be relayed as though another's performance had become that party's answer. No sovereign principal absorbs every vector. Each vector that satisfies direction, claimant-standing, and attribution terminates at a determinate party under the deed or duty at issue. Answerability is not conserved like a substance passed down a line; it is actualised locally wherever the relay contains such an attributable deed or duty. The buck stops locally, but only where the gates are satisfied.

One more distinction completes the account of what is generated, because the deeds so far inventoried all look backward, and answering does not only look backward. Retrospective, attributive answerability asks: who did, adopted, authorised, maintained, omitted, ratified, or refused what? Its bases are authorship, participation, adoption, negligence – the register §12.4 will use – and what it supports (account, correction, blame, liability, repair) is assessed separately at every step. Prospective, remedial answerability asks a different question: who now occupies a position from which response, prevention, coordination, or repair is due? Its bases are not authorship but office, mandate, control, capacity, benefit, dependency, special relationship, institutional continuity. The two must not be collapsed, and neither may the three relations they jointly articulate: responsibility **for** (the deed's register), responsibility **to** (the claimant's), responsibility **because of position** (the office's). A hospital that did not cause the contamination may owe its containment; the heir who authored nothing may owe the archive's keeping; and – the joint on which the pathologies of §12.4 will turn – a prospective duty refused is not nothing: the refusal is a deed, new, attributable, and datable, so that a party innocent of the harm can become answerable for the response it declined to give. Remedial answerability is not charity; it is directed obligation arising from a present position – which is why it survives, as Chapter 13 will need it to survive, even where the original harm has no findable author.

Law, instructively, has converged on the layered structure from its own direction — and the framing discipline of Chapter 5 holds: legal doctrine does not settle the phenomenology; it testifies, under independent pressures, to the distinctions’ reality. Vicarious liability holds one party liable for another’s wrong — strictly, without proof of fault in choosing or supervising — and the modern doctrine administers the attribution through two distinct questions, each philosophically legible. First, is the relationship of the kind that can carry such attribution at all? In **Various Claimants v Catholic Child Welfare Society** [2012] UKSC 56 the answer was extended past contract: an order whose brothers were bound to it by vows was held to answer for their abuse, the relation being “akin to employment” — hierarchy, integration into the undertaking, creation and amplification of the risk within it. But the same court has since patrolled the boundary from both sides: relationship alone was denied where the actor was genuinely an independent contractor (**Barclays Bank v Various Claimants** [2020] UKSC 13), and connection was denied where the wrong, though committed by an integrated member, was insufficiently connected to the activity entrusted (**WM Morrison Supermarkets v Various Claimants** [2020] UKSC 12; **Trustees of the Barry Congregation v BXB** [2023] UKSC 15, where the first stage was satisfied and the second failed) [**X v The Lord Advocate** [2025] UKSC 44 applies the two-stage framework, holding under the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 that the first-stage relationship requirement was not met for the judicial office-holder]. The convergence, precisely framed, is therefore double: institutional answerability tracks **both** the structure of the relationship **and** the relation of the wrong to the activity entrusted — undertaking and connection, not the hand alone and not the org chart alone. Two cautions keep the testimony honest. The doctrine attributes **legal responsibility across a structured relationship**; it does not erase the tortfeasor’s own deed, which remains his, actionable and attributable — the layering, not a transfer, is what the law exhibits. And **ratification**, the reverse mechanism, adopts an unauthorised act as legally attributable to the principal, often retrospectively; it does not make her its historical author. What the mechanism concedes is exactly what this section argues: attribution is a normative taking-up within a practice, not a property of the performance — what can be adopted late was never in the hands to begin with.

12.4 The pathologies of delegation

As with Part V, the constructive account earns a diagnostics, and the pathologies are crimes against the layering — committed by answerable parties in their uses of the structure. Their common form can now be stated in one line: each one represents multiplication as subtraction.

Delegation as discharge. The commonest: the principal who treats the redistribution of performance as a reduction of her own answerability — “I delegated it” offered where an account of the entrusting was due. Chapter 5’s exculpation analysis gave the general mechanism (the forwarding without addressee) and Chapter 10 its retail form; delegation supplies the wholesale one, because the chain is real and each link true: the order was given, the task was passed, the failure was the delegate’s hands. The pathology is in the arithmetic. Delegation does not reduce the delegator’s answerability to zero; it **changes its content** — no longer the performing, now the conferring, the framing, the risk accepted or created, the oversight within her capacity, the response when failure surfaced — and it **multiplies the parties** from whom distinct accounts are due. The delegate’s answerability adds; it does not subtract. A demand that traces the undertaking is not confused by the org chart, and the questions it carries are capacity-sensitive rather than fixed: what selection or acceptance was within this party’s power; what scope she set, transmitted, or left unclarified; what supervision was appropriate to her position; what risks she created, amplified, or profited from; what she did when the failure became visible. Where choice was mandated, scope imposed, oversight allocated elsewhere, the answers thin accordingly — the account is owed of what was **hers**, and the diagnostic never needed her to be omnipotent, only reachable.

The lightning rod. The inverse counterfeit, subtler and institutional in flavour: visibility conferred without the capacity it advertises — the junior officer appointed to sign what she cannot alter; the “responsible person” designated to absorb what others decide. The first pass overstated the diagnosis, and the overstatement must be withdrawn: the signer is not answerable for nothing. Signing is her deed; accepting the role was; objecting where objection was possible, or misrepresenting her capacity where it was not, is answerable in her. What the structure perpetrates is **disproportion**: answerability is publicly concentrated in the party with the least relevant capacity, while the deciding — with its own deeds of design, instruction, and continuation — remains elsewhere and unlit. The diagnostic is therefore capacity and control, run both ways: interrogate the signer’s capacity and her account rightly shrinks to signature, acceptance, and silence; follow the shrinkage, and it points — as shrinkage always does in a layered structure — to where the unaccounted remainder sits. A structure built to place the light where the power is not is built by someone, maintained by someone, and benefits someone; the lightning rod is not the terminus of the tracing but its most legible signpost. The structure has acquired a contemporary name — the **moral crumple zone**, in Madeleine Elish’s phrase for the human operator positioned to absorb the moral and legal impact of a system’s failures — and it has a modal statement that Part VII will reuse: in such architectures, possibility and power concentrate upstream while necessity and blame are displaced downstream; the designers hold the discretion, and the operators absorb the impact. Against it stands one principle, which is only the layered account made distributive: the distribution of answerability must track the distribution of power to shape, adopt, maintain, and revise the relevant possibilities — not merely proximity to the final harm. Those whose possibilities were most constrained must not become the default termini for the answerability of those who designed the field.

The forgotten wearer. Chapter 2’s fraud, now with its full analysis: the carrier who presses his own claim in the borrowed name, or answers in a name whose conferral has lapsed — the executor advancing his convenience as the testator’s wish, the spokesman committing the principal beyond the warrant. The doubling is exploited rather than severed: two loci, one voice, and the voice reassigns the traffic. Law again converges from its own direction — the agent who exceeds authority answers personally on the warranty of it — and the phenomenology adds what law cannot: the scene’s **felt** difference when the capacity is genuinely worn, the audible transparency of the carrier through whom another’s standing speaks, against the opacity of the one who has begun to speak for himself in borrowed clothes.

The engineered relay. Last, the architecture whose product is that every question of the form **who ordered this** is true of no link: authorisations diffused, scopes left unstated, oversight formally everyone's and operatively no one's. The first pass reached for a single architect — “the design is itself a deed with an owner” — and the reach was too quick, for the worst relays are frequently **grown**, not designed: incremental revisions, inherited procedure, turnover, departments optimising locally, no founding intention anywhere in the archive. The layered account handles the harder case without the comfort of an author. Where no single designer exists, answerability attaches **plurally and diachronically**: to those who built each segment; who maintained it when it could have been reformed; who ratified its outputs; who continued it after warning; who benefit from its opacity and hold present capacity over it. A relay is not an event but a kept thing — Chapter 9 supplied the category — and keeping is answerable in its keepers even where founding has no findable founder. The retail version of the pathology was met at the counter in Chapter 10; the wholesale version, grown across an institution and kept by no one in particular and everyone in office, is exactly the case the next chapter must be able to adjudicate — and the plural, diachronic attribution just stated is the instrument it will inherit.

12.5 Objections, and the threshold

Objection: the deed/performance distinction cannot bear weight, because act-individuation is description-relative — every deed decomposes into performances under one description and reassembles under another, so the “identity of the act” is unstable. The instability is real at the level of metaphysics and domesticated at the level this book occupies, because §12.2 built the relativity in rather than wishing it away. Deeds are acts under attributions; attributions are assessable under the descriptions that claims supply; and the plurality of legitimate descriptions is not an embarrassment but the ordinary structure of a layered scene — the family at the bedside genuinely has one question for the nurse, another for the physician, a third for the hospital, and the questions do not compete for a single act's single identity. What the account requires is not that description-relativity vanish but that attribution under a supplied description be **assessable** — contestable, correctable, answerable in both directions — and that much the practice of claiming visibly provides. Second-personal individuation is a tribunal, not an oracle; tribunals are exactly as much objectivity as answerability has ever needed.

Objection: history is full of proxy performances of the most personal acts — marriages concluded by proxy, apologies delivered by ambassadors, oaths sworn through representatives — so even the paradigm deeds are delegable, and the limit dissolves. The cases prove the layering they are meant to embarrass, and the first pass conceded too little to them. What the proxy performs is the ceremony — the executable face, which Chapter 9 predicts must be transferable if dynasties are to marry across a continent; the committing is the principal's or it is nothing, as every party to a proxy marriage knew: the proxy went home unmarried. And the ambassador's apology should not be described as a degraded copy of the wrongdoer's own, for it is not a defective token of that type at all; it is a **different answer, from a different locus, in a different register** — the state's acknowledgment, complete and binding as institutional repair, and categorically not the wrongdoer's avowal, which no protocol can produce because avowal is a deed whose doer belongs inside it. The wronged, offered the spokesman, knows precisely what she has been given and what she has not — two answers' worth of difference, not one answer's worth of degradation. The trilogy's response/answer distinction and the book's institutional/lived distinction meet in her exact knowledge; a world that builds whole diplomatic protocols around managing that difference confirms the theorem in ink.

Objection: the account inflates answerability without limit — if every conferral, acceptance, and continuation is a deed, then the chief executive answers for everything done nine levels down, and the multiplication thesis converts every hierarchy into universal guilt. The reply is the layered account's own discipline, applied to persons, and the multiplication thesis sharpens rather than weakens it. Answerability is generated at deeds, and its content is fixed by the deed it is generated at: the executive's deeds nine levels up are design, resourcing, tolerated risk, response to warning — not the act at the ninth level, which has its own doer. What varies the weight is not distance as such but the register §12.4 gave: authority, control, knowledge, foreseeability, role, benefit, and present capacity to intervene — and by that register, distance sometimes **increases** what is owed, as when the design is systemic, the risk recurring and known, the insulation deliberate, the benefit collected at scale. The account refuses exactly two things: the zero of the discharge pathology, and the totality the objection fears. Between them lies what the tracing finds — several accounts, each owed of what was each party's, none of anyone else's.

The reduction's result can be stated before the next trial:

- **what travelled:** performance, mandate, role, standing, or authorised voice;
- **what remained attributable:** the delegate's execution, the principal's conferral or undertaking, and any differentiated duties of selection, oversight, ratification, benefit, or repair;
- **where forwarding remained legitimate:** wherever another could perform or represent without changing whose account was being rendered;
- **where forwarding reached its limit:** wherever a substitute's performance, document, or voice was offered as though it had become another party's avowal or discharged a distinct attributable deed.

No universal chief culprit follows. Several local accounts may be due; some stations may bear none. The decisive claim is conditional: an answer localises only where a deed or present duty remains attributable.

The threshold, then. Every structure in this chapter had persons at its stations — a conferrer, an acceptor, a wearer of capacity, a keeper of the relay. The next strain removes that comfort. In the standing case of modern life, the principal is an **institution**: the firm authorises, the ministry decides, the order undertakes — conferral, ratification, record, and repair performed in a name that names no one person. The question is whether organised continuity can become an adequate home of attribution without conjuring an additional lived bearer behind its procedures. The layered and diachronic attribution of §12.4 shows what institutional answering would have to preserve; Chapter 13 asks whether an institution can preserve it. The corporation, the council, and the **persona ficta** are next.

Chapter 13. The Institution: Attributable Deeds Without a Second Life

13.1 The brief, the two errors, and the field of parties

The institution is the second application of Chapter 11's reduction and its first decisive test of non-personal locushood. Delegation separated performance from attribution while keeping persons at every station. The present chapter asks whether attribution can remain stably localised when personnel change completely and no additional lived bearer stands behind the offices.

The common possibility here is organised institutional action: undertaking, deciding, recording, authorising, retaining claims, revising policy, and repairing through a structure that persists across succession. Persons enact these possibilities through offices; the institution sustains them through organised continuity, records, procedures, assets, and authorised organs. The reduction asks whether that structure merely forwards every demand to changing individuals or can itself remain the same attributable party.

The result to be earned is neither fiction nor macro-subject. An institution can bear attribution for deeds and present duties without possessing a second experiential life. Personal and institutional loci can share an attributive function without sharing one phenomenological mode of being. The institution therefore tests the second separation: **whether locushood depends on the continuity of any single lived subject.**

The first error is **deflation**: the institution as fiction — a manner of speaking, a legal convenience, eliminable shorthand for what only individual persons ever really do. The refutation is not that fictions cannot be sued; legal practice can arraign whatever it decides to treat as a party. The refutation is that the proposed paraphrase does not exist. Translate “the firm’s obligation” into the deeds and commitments of presently identifiable members, and the phenomena escape the translation: the institution remains the same obligor through complete turnover, when every candidate paraphrase-subject has left the building; a contract binds it after all its original decision-makers are gone; a policy is attributable to it that no member individually endorses in that form; institutional repair can be owed where no individual bears personal liability for the total deed; and the commitment’s continuity — its being **the same party’s** commitment across decades — is captured by no list of current members, however complete. Deflation fails because nothing it offers preserves the institution’s diachronic obligations and its position as the same party to the claim. The second error is **inflation**: the institution as macro-subject — the collective raised to a person writ large, with a will, a memory, an interiority of its own. Chapter 5 refused the promotion at the level of the common and the community; this chapter must refuse it again, at closer range, where it is more tempting, because here the candidate really does act, decide, and answer.

Between the errors runs the thesis, now using the generic term Chapter 11 has already fixed. A **locus** is the determinate home at which attribution becomes non-forwardably relevant where address, claimant-standing, and an attributable deed or present duty converge.³⁴ Locushood is univocal at the level of this indexed function. In the regions established here, a person occupies such a locus and an institution sustains one through organised continuity. The person and the institution answer through different capacities and forms of continuity: the person may avow, refuse, repent, or transform a relation through lived existence; the institution receives, assesses, revises, and repairs through authorised organs, records, procedures, and assets. These differences concern the parties and the answers they can render, not the meaning of locus.

³⁴ The phrase “locus of answerability” has prior occurrences in different registers — Schalow, within a Heideggerian account of conscience (“Heidegger and the Quest for the Sacred”, 2001), and Tigard, for technological answerability (“Technological Answerability and the Severance Problem,” 2021). No lexical priority is claimed. Chapter 11 defines the present use as one indexed attributive function and distinguishes the regional ways in which parties may occupy or sustain it.

Non-forwardability can therefore hold institutionally. An institution's performances may circulate among authorised organs, but an attributable institutional deed or present duty is not discharged by redirecting the claimant to whichever employee currently occupies a role — “she no longer works here” answers a question about staffing, not a claim against the same continuing party. Conversely, institutional attribution cannot absorb every personal deed enacted within it. The jurisprudence of Part VII turns on locating each relation in its proper register rather than allowing either locus to use the other as a corridor of disappearance.

Before the analysis, the field of parties should be laid out once — as a typology, not a scale, because its kinds vary along dimensions that cross-cut. The dimensions: lived experience; joint action; stable procedures; organs of decision and answer; legal personality; continuity across turnover. The kinds. **Informal collectives** — the friendship, the coalition, the crowd that lifts the car, the movement — act jointly through mutual responsiveness and commitment [Gilbert, *On Social Facts*; Kutz, *Complicity*], and they can answer jointly too: a group without organs can still issue its statement, make its promise, apologise as “we,” accept a shared debt. What it lacks is not all collective answering but the durable, role-independent locus: its answering remains dependent on the participating members, and does not persist as the same answerable party across membership change and procedural succession — press the movement ten years on, and you find alumni, not a registry. The **structured institution** — firm, court, order, parish — has what the collective lacks: offices, deliberative procedures, records, and rules for aggregating judgment into a position of its own [List and Pettit, *Group Agency*]; it may or may not also wear legal personality (the university department and the religious order can carry substantial institutional agency without separate incorporation). The **legal person** is the formal node of imputation — the bundle of jural relations law addresses as one [Hohfeld, *Fundamental Legal Conceptions*; Salmond, *Jurisprudence*]; it typically clothes a structured institution, but it can subsist with almost nothing inside it, as the shell corporation shows and the limit case below will exploit — a legal person is not thereby a robust answering institution, and the difference between the two is one of this chapter's load-bearing walls. And **persons**—the living participants and officeholders whose performances enact many of the collective and institutional deeds examined here. Beneath all of them, and a party in none, lies the common: the field of Chapter 1, in which collectives form, institutions are instituted, personality is conferred, and persons are constituted; the field carries every kind and occupies none, and nothing in this chapter re-litigates that. The chapter's question sits at the typology's joints: what each kind of party can genuinely claim and genuinely answer — and what happens when a demand meant for one joint is discharged at another.

13.2 What the institution genuinely does

Begin with the positive account, stated in Chapter 12's vocabulary because it was built for this — and stated at two levels, because one level alone would hand the chapter to its critics. The first level is **constitutive**: an institution has deeds because it has attribution rules — a constitution, charter, procedure, or settled practice that carves certain performances out of the flow of individual doing and imputes them to the institution as its acts. The customs officer stamps the document. The performance — the movement of the arm, the feel of the metal, the boredom of the queue — is hers, anchored in her body and her afternoon, and remains hers under every description that answers to a claim about the stamping as executed. The deed — the authorisation of the goods — is the institution's: not because a second, larger hand closed over hers, but because the practice's rules of attribution make her stamping, done in capacity and within scope, count as the institution's authorising. And, per Chapter 12's layering, the attributions overlap rather than exclude: the same performance can participate at once in her deed of executing, her superior's deed of instructing, the department's deed of processing, and the institution's deed of authorising — a structured plurality, not a hand-off.

But constitutive rules cannot be the whole account, or “institutional locus” would mean **whatever an internal rule declares attributable** — and rules can be written to launder. A charter could impute every junior clerk's act to the institution and no executive's; a procedure could provide that no complaint binds unless approved by the department complained of. Formal attribution can be fraudulent, strategically over- or under-inclusive, designed as insulation — the lightning rod of Chapter 12 drafted into the constitution itself. Hence the second level, which is **normative**: **Attribution rules constitute institutional deeds, but they do not legitimate every attribution they produce; the institution remains answerable for those rules before the practices and parties they organise and affect, while the rules remain open to public tracing and contest.** The assessment runs on familiar instruments: recognised capacity, intelligible scope, procedural integrity, public traceability, contestability, and fit between the attribution map and the real architecture of deciding. An attribution scheme is a fold in Chapter 9's exact sense, and inherits the fold's jurisprudence entire: its title is not its existence but its traceability, and a scheme whose pressing opens onto nothing but its own convenience has the status of a hanging norm with a letterhead.

With both levels in place, the content of “attributive locus” can be given in full, and it is the institutional operationalisation of Chapter 11’s reduction. An institution genuinely answers — formal findability becomes genuine answerability — when a claimant can identify an organ authorised to receive the demand; when receipt becomes attributable to the institution rather than evaporating with the employee who took the call; when records preserve the claim and bind later officeholders; when the institution can give reasons in its own established register; when the response can alter policy, commitment, allocation, or conduct; when routes of review lead somewhere other than back into the loop complained of; when repair can be completed against institutional assets, powers, or procedures; and when turnover does not erase the answer. The canonical compression, which the rest of Part VII will use as a test: **an institution genuinely answers insofar as it can receive, retain, assess, respond, revise, and repair as the same attributable party**. The six verbs form a claim-relative diagnostic family, not necessary-and-sufficient conditions conjoined for every institution: different claims call different capacities into play, while a stable route must connect receipt and retention to whatever assessment, response, revision, or repair the claim makes relevant. Systematically disabling a relevant capacity while the others run — collecting without receiving, contracting without repairing — is the pathology of §13.4.

The conjunction does not require co-location in one office. The capacities are **claim-relative** and may be distributed if the claim enters an attributable route: intelligible to the claimant; able to preserve the claim, its context, and its evidence through handoffs; explicit about which office or party bears which duty; informationally continuous across the relevant boundaries; and connected from assessment to a real power of response, revision, or repair. A request for information, a discrete injury, and a systemic design failure need different routes and different capacities. Appeal, reconsideration, and remand are not pathological merely because a claim moves or returns: each can deepen answerability where the record travels with it, the purpose of the return is stated, responsibility for passage remains assigned, and the next station can change the decision-space rather than restart the same loop.

Distribution becomes evasion when a handoff erases context, no party retains responsibility for the claim's passage, records fragment at organisational boundaries, assessment has no route to consequence, or every node can forward while retaining no duty. Several institutional parties may instead answer at differentiated loci: one may owe preservation of evidence, another assessment, and another repair. Their plurality is not a defect if their relations are intelligible and no indispensable capacity disappears between them. Outsourcing a function therefore does not automatically discharge the institution's duty to maintain an adequate route. A technical provider may be answerable at limited loci for design, logging, maintenance, notice, or reporting, while the deploying institution answers at distinct loci for policy, adoption, public justification, and use. The route assigns distinct answers; it must not become a corridor through which all of them leave.

Set in Chapter 5's modal terms, the institution is a privileged organised articulation of the common, and its two halves must both be said. It possibilises: establishing offices, allocating competences, authorising conduct, preserving memory, stabilising expectation — the fold given organs is the fold at its most generative. And it necessarises: retaining claims, preserving attribution through time, identifying authorised adoption, responding, revising, repairing as the same party. The pathology of the next section can accordingly be given its most general name in advance: an institution becomes an ethics sink when it keeps the first half and refuses the second — creating possibilities whose consequences are treated as attributable to no one, pleading its own complexity as the discharge. Institutional distribution may pluralise action; it may not dissolve answerability merely by making action complex.

That the resulting party is an agent in more than name is the lasting lesson of the group-agency literature, and it should be stated in the institutional register throughout, because nothing here needs the vocabulary of literal belief. Where an institution maintains consistent positions across issues, the discipline of collective rationality forces its positions apart from any simple function of its members' attitudes: the discursive dilemma has committees whose every member votes coherently while the aggregate contradicts itself, until the institution adopts procedures whose outputs are its judgments — propositionally stable positions that no member need endorse as her own all-things-considered view, adopted, maintained, and revisable as the institution's [List and Pettit, **Group Agency**]. Institutional "memory" is records that bind; institutional "intention" is adopted policy and undertaking; institutional "knowledge" is what its organs are chargeable with across its files — each real, each specified in its register, none a mental state in search of a mind. An institution can maintain what no member holds, undertake what no member undertook, and persist in both through total turnover: that is agency enough to receive a demand and return an account, and the account it returns is a real answer in its register — the institution can acknowledge, decide, compensate, reform, apologise. An institutional apology is genuine in its own register when an authorised organ takes up the institution's deed or present duty before those with standing and lets that acknowledgment bind record, conduct, and repair. These are phenomenological manifestations of uptake, not an exhaustive validity checklist; an apology may remain incomplete, contested, or tragically inadequate even when institutionally real. Chapter 12's ambassador result generalises: the institutional answer is not a degraded copy of a personal avowal; it is a different answer from a different locus — binding, assessable, and, where the claim was institutional, exactly the answer owed. Nor is the continuity mysterious on this book's terms: an institution is a **maintained fold equipped with organs** — of uptake, decision, revision, and repair — Chapter 9's keeping, no longer only preserving settled responses but empowered to initiate, deliberate, reinterpret its purposes, and refold what it settles [Husserl on **Stiftung**; Merleau-Ponty, **Institution and Passivity**]. The fold explains why it persists; the organs explain why it acts; and neither requires, at any point, that the institution possess a phenomenal hand to grasp the stamp or a conscious eye to read the form.

What the institution is “chargeable with” must be unfolded, because neither of two shortcuts will do: a fact stored somewhere in the organisation is not automatically institutionally known, and only what one authorised person consciously knows is not the whole epistemic field. Collective epistemology supplies neighbouring analyses of group belief, knowledge, testimony, and responsibility, but not the four relations distinguished here [Lackey, ed., **Essays in Collective Epistemology**; Brady and Fricker, eds., **The Epistemic Life of Groups**]. **Actual uptake** occurs when an authorised organ receives and integrates information into assessment or decision. **Organised availability** exists when records, testimony, or signals are held in a form that the institution’s assigned routes can retrieve, connect, and use for the matter at issue, even if no one person presently surveys the whole. **Imputation** is a legal or procedural rule by which information received in a specified capacity counts for a defined institutional purpose; it may allocate consequences without proving conscious uptake or universal availability. **Culpable non-knowledge** arises where the institution was duty-bound, relative to the risk, relationship, and capacity involved, to create or use routes of inquiry and integration but failed to do so. These relations can overlap and must not be translated into the claim that the institution “really knew” in one undifferentiated sense.

The epistemic deed may accordingly be an omission. An institution can fail to record what should have been recorded, query what its risk made salient, audit a recurrent warning, share information across a relevant boundary, escalate a protected report, or integrate signals already organised for its use. Deliberate siloing, non-inscription, destruction or suppression of records, and routing testimony to an office unable to act can be attributable institutional arrangements whether or not one author designed the whole. The duty is risk-relative rather than omniscient: greater foreseeable harm, dependence, repeated warning, or exclusive control over evidence can require stronger routes of inquiry, preservation, and escalation. Conversely, an alert generated somewhere in a technical system is not institutionally available merely because it exists; it must enter a maintained route connected to an organ capable of assessment and to a consequence in response, revision, or repair. Ignorance can therefore excuse, condemn, or remain unresolved only after the organisation of possible knowledge has itself been traced.

Continuity, however, must be argued, not assumed, and its normative cargo must be sorted with a distinction Part VII has been preparing since the layering began. A successor institution — the merged firm, the renamed ministry, the re-founded order — may inherit assets, offices, archives, benefits, standing obligations, remedial duties, and undertakings; the very continuity that lets it enforce the old contracts binds it to the old debts, and where it retains the advantages of an unjust past it may owe repair it never authored. What it does not inherit is the personal blameworthiness of earlier members: guilt, in the lived register, dies with its bearers or is answered by them; duty, in the institutional register, survives succession because the party survives. Successor duty without transferred guilt — the formula keeps both books honest: the institution that says “that was before our time” misdescribes its own continuity, and the public that demands the new officers feel the old shame misaddresses a lived good at an attributive locus.

Four relations must not be collapsed inside the word **successor**. **Identity** means that the same institutional party persists through a change of name, organs, membership, or form. **Succession** means that a later party occupies one or more positions formerly held by another without thereby becoming numerically the same institution. **Assumption** is a taking-up — express, implied, or enacted through conduct — of a particular commitment, liability, claim, or function. **Inheritance** is the reception of archives, assets, offices, benefits, practices, recognition, or consequences that can create or strengthen a relation without deciding its whole normative content in advance. One reorganisation may instantiate several relations at once, and none transfers personal guilt. It may preserve the same institutional authorship, create a new successor’s remedial duty, or do both under different descriptions.

Institutional identity and succession are distinct questions. What is **claim-relative** is their normative consequence: which right, duty, record, undertaking, liability, or repair is carried. That consequence may depend on legal identity, continuity of function and purpose, offices and decision-routes, archives, transferred assets and liabilities, retained benefits, public recognition, adoption of commitments, and continued enforcement of predecessor rights. No factor is sufficient by itself, and claim-relativity is not permission for opportunistic selection: the institution must give one defensible account of why these continuities carry this right, duty, record, undertaking, or repair. Selective continuity is evidence within that account. A party that enforces the predecessor's contracts, retains its benefits, invokes its history, or trades on its public recognition bears a stronger burden when denying every continuity of duty. Nor need one successor receive the whole relation. Archives may pass to one institution, functions to another, assets and liabilities to a third, while a public body retains a duty of acknowledgment or repair. Succession may create differentiated loci of attribution at which different successor parties answer only for what their continuity, assumption, inheritance, benefit, or present position makes attributable.

The imputation grid completes the account, and law converges on it from its own pressures — convergence, per Chapter 5’s discipline, not resolution. In **answering-as**, the authorised organ’s act counts directly as the institution’s: within conferred authority — express, implied, or apparent — the officer does not merely act for the institution; her authorised words and acts are its words and acts, modifying its commitments, and ratification extends the structure backwards, adopting the unauthorised act as attributable after the fact. In **answering-for**, analysed in Chapter 12, the delegate’s wrong remains his deed and the institution answers across the relationship. Two imputations, opposite directions, a working institution running on both. The exhibits: **Salomon v Salomon** [1897] AC 22 for separateness — the company a party distinct from its members, its deeds not theirs, a distinctness the modern economy transacts on daily; Innocent IV’s **persona ficta**, which can hold property and be bound but cannot be excommunicated — no soul to save or damn [on the **persona ficta** attributed to Innocent IV at Lyon (1245), see Dewey, “The Historic Background of Corporate Legal Personality”] — eight centuries of law distinguishing the legal person from the living person or personal answerer at the exact joint this chapter draws; and the identification doctrine, whose classical statement locates the “directing mind and will” as the company’s own [**Tesco Supermarkets v Natrass** [1972] AC 153 — classical statement only], since loosened into context-sensitive attribution rules [**Meridian Global Funds** [1995]] and moved by statute, for economic crime, toward senior-manager attribution [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, s. 196; the failure-to-prevent-fraud offence in force from September 2025] — law rediscovering, under enforcement pressure, that the attributions are layered and overlapping: the company’s deed and the manager’s deed, distinct as attributions, sharing performances, neither dissolving the other.

Then the limit case — read now for what it proves, which is less than a first pass claimed and more useful. Imagine the corporation from which the humans have gone: shares held by other entities, operations automated or contracted out, decisions generated by standing procedures — Dan-Cohen’s personless corporation, its legal situation unchanged: it contracts, litigates, owns, lobbies [Dan-Cohen, **Rights, Persons, and Organizations**]. What the case establishes is the **isolation** result: attributive personality never drew on a lived bearer — legal imputation persists when every pulse is subtracted, so whatever institutional answering runs on, a second life was never among its ingredients. What the case does not establish is that attribution alone suffices for **answering** in the operative sense just defined. A personless node may remain liable while losing the capacity to receive a novel accusation as a claim, to assess it, to revise itself, to render an account rather than emit an output; if its contractors, lawyers, and automated procedures still function as organs — receiving, retaining, assessing, responding as the same party — then it remains an institution thinly staffed; if no such route exists, it has become an **empty node of imputation**: a legal person that has ceased to be an institutional locus, liable in the books and answerable to no one’s question. The personless corporation, exactly read, is therefore a boundary probe: it tests how little organisation legal personality can survive before findability goes merely formal — and in doing so it separates the two things the typology of §13.1 refused to fuse, applies Chapter 11’s functional question to its thinnest institutional case, and sets the table for Chapter 15, whose machinery will press on precisely the difference between rendering an account and generating an output.

The safeguard is exact: **formal personality alone does not establish a locus**. Where every demand is merely forwarded, no organ can bind the party, no record carries the claim across succession, and no authorised capacity can revise conduct or complete repair, the legal node is an imputation shell rather than an operative home of attribution. The method need not invent an institutional answerer simply because law or convenience supplies a name.

13.3 The strongest objection: the plural phenomenal subject

Everything so far grants the functionalists their institution and the persons their experience, and the division invites the strongest objection the chapter must face — not from the friends of legal fiction but from phenomenology itself. Hans Bernhard Schmid has argued that shared action and shared feeling carry a **plural pre-reflective self-awareness**: just as my experience is constitutively accompanied by an unthematic for-me-ness, so, when two play a duet or walk together, the experiencing presents an immediate, non-observational, non-inferential **for-us-ness** — a *Wir-Bewusstsein* that no summing of mutual knowledge, joint commitment, or aggregation procedure captures [Schmid, “Plural Self-Awareness,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 13 (2014): 7–24; cf. *Plural Action* (2009)]. The objection sharpens into an argument: if shared intentionality requires PPSA, and PPSA has its own irreducible phenomenal character — a what-it-is-like-**for-us** — then there exists a plural phenomenal subject; and then the chapter’s distinction between personal and institutional answerers collapses, for at least some collectives would harbour precisely the additional plural subject this book has not established, and the institution, which grows from such collectives, might inherit one. The objection deserves its full strength, because its datum is genuine: the choir does not experience itself as forty coordinated soloists; the team’s momentum is felt, not computed; the “sense of us” is as robust a phenomenological finding as arrival was in Chapter 2, and a book built on taking arrival seriously cannot wave a finding away.

The reply concedes the datum entire and contests one inference — and the contest must be run as a burden argument, because a determined defender can relocate the plural subject behind every concession. First, the **adverbial** step: the for-us-ness is a modification of **how** each member experiences, not a manifestation of **who** additionally experiences. In joint action, my intentionality-in-action runs not in the mode “I intend” but in the mode “we intend” — the we-mode — and the plural there qualifies the structure of my experience, adverbially, as **acting-in-the-mode-of-with-others**; the experience keeps its phenomenal root in the living consciousness it modifies. The singer’s hour is saturated with the choir; it is **her** hour, lived in the with-mode, exactly as the man in Chapter 4’s crowd was carried anonymously — the mode was the crowd’s; the living was his. Second, the burden step, stated as a tally. The interlocking member-experiences in a shared practice — each in the we-mode, each non-inferentially responsive to the others, all housed in one practice with its folds and its corrections — explain the coordination, the felt momentum, the first-person-plural language, the joint correction (“**we** rushed that entrance”), the whole datum; and once they have, no residual experiential content remains that requires a numerically further bearer. The Schmidian can still say that each member’s experience “constitutively belongs” to a plural subject — the position is coherent — but the belonging now does no work the organisation was not already doing, and the issue can be named exactly: **the reality of plural phenomenality does not by itself discriminate between a plural organisation of experience and an additional plural experiencer**. The described phenomena can be accounted for by the first without yet requiring the second; positing a further bearer adds ontology beyond what those phenomena establish; and the inference from shared character to shared bearer has a familiar shape besides — it is the promotion Chapter 5 refused when irreducibility was converted into subjecthood. Third, the **performance/deed** step, which Chapter 12 built and the stamp scene deployed: institutional agency never needed phenomenal fusion, because it runs on the division the objection would fuse. A quartet needs four experiencers in the we-mode and a practice between them; its phenomenology does not reveal a fifth.

Nor is the reply a rescue improvised against the group-agency literature; it is that literature's own considered position at its strongest points. List and Pettit, who defend group agents as robustly as anyone, grant them the functional analogue of access — states poised for the control of speech and action — while denying phenomenal consciousness at the group level, and List's integrated-information argument localises phenomenality at the individual level on structural grounds [List and Pettit, **Group Agency**; List, "What Is It Like to Be a Group Agent?"]. Gilbert, whose plural subject is the most committal in the field, expressly excludes feeling-sensations from collective emotion: her plural subject is a normative-epistemic construction — joint commitment, obligation, entitlement — not a bearer of qualia [Gilbert, **Joint Commitment**]. And a second, independent reply stands even if the first were waived: **grant**, for argument, that some intimate acting collective — the duet at its best hour — possessed an irreducibly plural phenomenal subject. The institution would not inherit it. Institutions persist through turnover, dormancy, geographic distribution, procedural succession, and internal experiential conflict; the corporation is the same party across decades in which no originating experiential configuration survives; so institutional continuity demonstrably rests on attribution, records, offices, and maintained practices — on everything §13.2 described — and not on the continued life of any plural experience, which does not continue. Even a phenomenally generous social ontology, in other words, delivers no phenomenally thick institution. The conclusion should then be drawn with the discipline the book's own final chapters require — epistemically, not metaphysically: nothing in the phenomenology described requires positing a further bearer of experience beyond the participating members whose experiences are organised in the we-mode. The choir is real; the felt we is real; the institution is real; and the theorem survives its strongest test to date with a finding rather than a mere defence: what makes institutions answerable — attributable continuity, procedure, capacity, records, and authorised revision — is precisely what never needed a second life; and what has lived experience — each member, including members acting in the we-mode — is precisely what the institution cannot absorb.

13.4 The pathologies of the institution

As throughout Part VII, the constructive account earns a diagnostics, and the institutional pathologies are locus-confusions: demands meant for one joint of the typology discharged, by design or drift, at another. Four forms.

The institution gone they-like. Chapter 10's demarcation was functional, and its dark half can now be stated as a practice: the formally findable body practising unfindability — the escalation loop that returns every complaint to the department complained of, the org chart worn as the impersonal grammar was worn, routes of review that circle, records that bind no one. Nothing here is a failure to be an institution; it is an institution **operating its findability as a screen** — retaining the attributive machinery for contracting and collecting while disabling it for answering: receiving without retaining, retaining without assessing, responding without power to revise or repair. The diagnosis and the remedy are Chapter 12's grown relay, now at home — with the condition Chapter 12's own capacity-sensitivity requires. Such mazes often have no architect: no one sees the whole, reform authority is fragmented, each local actor reasonably supposes another unit holds the lever. The layered account convicts without inventing an owner: where actors know, or within their capacities ought to know, that the maze blocks answerability, their maintenance of it, ratification of its outputs, benefit from its opacity, and refusal of reforms available **to them** generate layered answerability — plural and diachronic — even where no single designer ever existed. An institution is a kept thing; its keeping is answerable in its keepers, each for the keeping that was theirs.

The veil as laundering facility for deeds. Chapter 10 named the laundering of standing at the claiming pole; the institutional twin launders deeds at the answering pole. The legal person — Salomon's gift, and a genuine one — is interposed so that the living become unreachable: "the company will pay" offered where an account of deciding was due, the fine absorbed as a cost of business while the deciders' deeds vanish into the attribution. The layered account refuses the subtraction, and it must be stated symmetrically, because the pathology has a mirror that a reforming zeal walks into. **Attribution to the institution never automatically subtracts personal deeds; and the absence of a culpable individual never automatically dissolves the institutional deed.** The first half is Chapter 12's discharge pathology at corporate scale, and law's drift toward senior-manager attribution is its convergent testimony [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, s. 196]. The second half is the harder honesty: some institutional wrongs have no individually blameworthy equivalent — dispersed routines, individually reasonable decisions, cumulative effects that no single desk chose — and the institutional deed stands, owed and repairable at the institutional locus, without a personal scapegoat owed to anyone. Two columns, neither reducible to the other, neither guaranteed to be filled: the register assigns by tracing, not by symmetry of blame.

And the register must be permitted its third finding, the hardest for any doctrine of answerability to leave standing: sometimes tracing fails. Causal diffuseness, overdetermination, lost records, opacity, the disappearance of the deciding bodies, distances of history no archive bridges — there are harms for which no retrospective author, personal or institutional, can be established, and the account must say plainly what follows. Not absolution: non-attribution leaves every present duty intact — the remedial register of Chapter 12 asks who now holds office, power, benefit, or capacity over the harm's continuation, and its answers do not wait on authorship. Not fabrication either, and here the doctrine polices itself: the demand for an answer must not fabricate an author. If the common cannot be promoted into a macro-answerer merely because the harm is real, neither may the nearest visible person be seized as a micro-answerer merely because closure wants a face — the lightning rod of Chapter 12, generalised into a prohibition. The reality of the harm does not depend on successful allocation; the wrong stands, the record of it is owed keeping, the remedial question stays open — and the tragic remainder, where even that question finds no present holder, is a fact about a finite world, not a defect in the account that refuses to lie about it. Structural injustice, in the literature's name for it, is precisely this configuration at scale: structures causally powerful, durable, and objectionable without being agents — unjust, on this book's terms, as distorted distribution: possibility, discretion, and benefit concentrated in some positions; necessity, exposure, and blame displaced onto others [Young, **Responsibility for Justice**; cf. Haslanger on structural explanation]. Structural explanation, exactly like the exculpating plea of Chapter 5, becomes an alibi only when it is used to erase the attributable deeds and present duties that tracing does find.

The Procrustean bed. The error is not that one kind of locus is asked to become another, but that an institutional party is asked for a phenomenal answer it cannot render. Institutional parties can compensate, reform, forfeit powers, dissolve, acknowledge, and undertake repair; living persons can additionally suffer, repent, feel remorse, and undergo moral self-transformation. The same locus-function localises the relevant answer in either case. No demand is discharged by a party incapable in principle of rendering the kind of answer requested, and no locus is invented merely because a claimant wants an addressee. The difference lies in the capacities of the answerers, not in the meaning of locus.

The borrowed pathos. Finally, the sentimental inversion — and it too must be cut exactly, because its neighbourhood contains legitimate speech. “The university mourns” can be an entirely proper act: a conventional, institutionally enacted expression that marks a collective loss, commits the institution to remembrance, alters its ceremonial and practical conduct, and gives its members’ shared feeling a public form — an undertaking in the register of §13.2, real and binding as undertakings are. The pathology begins only where the expression is traded as evidence: where the institution’s grief is invoked as a **further experience** — a suffering to be weighed, a wound to be deferred to, a pathos that stands in for the accounts its organs owe. Institutional mourning is legitimate as enacted expression and undertaking; it becomes inflation the moment it is presented as the inner life of a further bearer — at which point someone is wearing borrowed clothes again, and the wardrobe is the members’.

13.5 Objections, and the threshold

Objection: without a lived bearer, “institutional answering” is metaphor — only persons ever answer, and talk of the firm’s deed is eliminable shorthand for members’ deeds. The paraphrase was tried in §13.1 and does not exist: the same obligor through turnover, the policy no member holds, the repair owed with no individually liable equivalent, the personless node with no members to shorthand to. Shorthand that cannot be cashed is not shorthand — it is reference. And the book’s grid never made experience the price of attributability: a deed, Chapter 12 defined, is an act under an attribution that makes a party answerable and reachable — avowability within a practice, not felt interiority — and institutions avow through authorised organs in a literal institutional sense, not a derivative metaphorical one: the organ’s authority is conferred, scoped, and contestable where the mouth’s is organic, and nothing in avowal’s grammar requires the organic rather than the conferred. What deflation correctly senses is narrower: institutional deeds are enacted through operative organs and maintained routes, often through lived performances, without requiring a second institutional consciousness. Enactment is not identity; the officer’s arm is not the authorisation. No universal thesis about every possible answerer follows from this institutional result.

Objection: the difference between personal and institutional answerers is a dualism of convenience — two registers of answering let the institution absorb blame when persons should bear it, and persons absorb it when the institution should, choosable by whoever is defending. The objection describes the pathologies of §13.4 exactly, and the grid is what makes them diagnosable rather than optional. The register is assigned by the demand's content, not by the defendant's preference: a claim for compensation traces to the party whose undertaking and assets answer it; a claim for an account of deciding traces to the deeds of deciding, which have doers where doers there were; a claim for remorse has only ever had one possible kind of addressee. Tracing makes the relevant relations assessable, and the assessment cuts both ways with the same edge — the veil pathology is persons hiding at the institutional register, the Procrustean bed is claimants billing the institutional register for lived goods, and the symmetric principle of §13.4 convicts both without ever promising that both columns fill: no demand is discharged by a party that cannot, in principle, render the kind of answer requested, and no locus is invented merely because a demand would like an addressee.

Objection: the demarcation is too clean for the intimate institution — the family firm, the small parish, the old regiment have something that feels like a shared lived history, and the members will say so. Conceded, and nothing in the chapter needs to deny what the members say — only to place it. The interweaving is real: decades of persons in the we-mode, their lived histories braided through the institution's continuity, the role-mediated relational continuity of Chapter 12 carrying trust and habit across successions. What never appears, even here, is a numerically additional experiencer. The parish does not feel; what the parish does is keep — and the keeping should be stated at its full dignity: the institution preserves the practices, places, narratives, rites, and relations through which its members' shared feeling becomes possible, has its object, and stays historically continuous. The grief is theirs; the world in which the grief has its shared form is institutionally kept — which is why the death of the institution itself is mourned by everyone and **by** no further one, and why the mourning is nonetheless not confused: what is lost is a kept world, and the keepers know it.

The reduction's result is now exact. An institution sustains an operative locus of answerability where it can receive and retain the claim as the same party, assess what is asked, respond through authorised organs, revise its position, and undertake repair. It may fail the test where only a name, shell, or forwarding loop remains. Institutional attribution does not automatically erase the personal deeds through which the institution acted, and personal attribution does not dissolve the institution's own undertaking.

The threshold, then. This chapter removed one continuous lived bearer and found institutional answering intact — attribution, procedure, capacity, records, revision, and repair, all real, nothing conjured. It also found where that intactness ends: a locus is not a label but an operative home of attribution, and imputation without organs is a node, not an answerer.

The next case reverses the subtraction. An institution may retain attribution after every original officeholder has gone. The dead person no longer receives, contests, releases, or answers, while prior directives, claims, records, relations, and carried standing may persist. The executor answers questions put to an estate; survivors keep faith or break it; the community, Chapter 3 noted and deferred, can still **be with** the deceased [SZ §47, H238]. Chapter 14 asks what is owed where lived reception has ended, who may carry the standing, and what no carriage, however faithful, can produce: the dead person's new present answer.

Chapter 14. The Dead: Standing Without Answer

14.1 The mirror, and the scope of the claim

The dead are the third application of Chapter 11's reduction. Chapter 13 showed that attribution can persist institutionally without dependence on one continuous lived subject. The present case reverses the relation: a person once lived, received, avowed, refused, and answered, with those answers localised at determinate loci; the life has ended, while standing, directives, records, names, graves, debts, and completed undertakings may remain.

The method must now separate what is often fused. Address to the dead may remain genuinely directed although present reception is not given. Standing may persist although the obligee cannot release, contest, or answer. Living persons, representatives, archives, and institutions may carry claims or projects without becoming the dead person's continuing voice. A present duty may localise in the living without inventing retrospective authorship or present agency in the dead.

The trial therefore concerns **standing without reciprocal presence**. It asks whose claim is carried, who has standing to represent it, what deed or present duty remains attributable now, where forwarding remains faithful, and where carriage becomes impersonation. What no carriage can establish is the dead person's new present answer.

One decision governs the whole chapter and should be entered before its first analysis, because everything below inherits it. The chapter's claims are phenomenological, and the phenomenological scope of the claim is **non-givenness**, not impossibility. When the analysis says that address to the dead goes unreceived, it does not assert that the dead cannot hear — a metaphysical thesis, non-falsifiable in both directions, which would gratuitously adjudicate against every religious and spiritual framework in which the dead are otherwise disposed. It asserts something descriptive and closer to home: that **reception is not given** — not given within the scene as phenomenally accessible to the speaker and to ordinary shared verification. The scope of that field should be stated as carefully as the claim: it is the ordinary, publicly available field of the encounter described, not a culturally neutral tribunal over every tradition's interpretation of it; traditions that read the field otherwise are not being corrected here, only not being presupposed. In dialogue with the living, reception is phenomenally given within that field — in the reply, the shifted gaze, the answering body; in address to the dead, the direction of the address is lived and the reception is structurally absent from what is lived and shareable. The book has used this evidential discipline before, and deliberately: Chapter 3 held its exegetical claims to "does not derive within the argument as written"; the final chapter holds its verdict on machines to insufficiency rather than impossibility. The graveside deserves the same discipline more than anywhere — it is the place where philosophy's overclaims cost the most and comfort the least.

14.2 Address to the dead: directed and unreceived

Begin where Chapter 2 would begin: with the phenomenon, before any theory of it. A woman stands at a grave and speaks. What she does is not reminiscence, not soliloquy, not the rehearsal of what she would say if she could — it is address: the vector of Part II entire, direction and content and the second-person grammar, aimed and released. The direction is real; the *at* is lived; the name is used in the vocative, the form Chapter 4 showed cannot be predicated, only launched. And nothing comes back. Not as a disappointment within the exchange — the missed reply of a distracted interlocutor — but as the structure of the exchange itself: the responsive feedback through which reception gives itself in living dialogue is absent from the field, wholly and in advance, and the speaker knows it in the act and speaks anyway. Derrida, at Barthes's death, said it with the exactness of grief: "He will hear nothing of what I say here to him" [Derrida, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," in *The Work of Mourning*] — and went on speaking, because the *to him* was not cancelled by the nothing. This is the chapter's first finding, and the theorem's: **address to the dead is directed and unreceived** — where "unreceived" carries, throughout, exactly the scope fixed in §14.1: reception is not given; it is not asserted that no reception occurs. The vector survives the loss of its terminus's answering pole; direction, which Chapter 2 showed underivable from anything else, here shows itself **separable** from reception, since the one persists in the lived world where the other is non-given. And the finding has a canonical consequence, stated now because the next chapter will run on it: **nothing in quotation, reconstruction, stylistic fidelity, or simulation is sufficient to establish the resulting utterance as the dead person's present answer**. Not "no such answer can exist" — the evidential discipline forbids that — but: no practice of carriage or composition can, by those means alone, establish itself as one.

Heidegger saw the phenomenon's ground and dropped it in a page, and the debt Chapter 3 registered can now be collected. In §47, before turning to my death, the analytic pauses over the dead: the deceased is not a piece of equipment for funeral-concern; the mourners' commemoration is solicitude, **Fürsorge**, the comportment reserved for other Dasein; the dead one "has left our world," and yet, in terms of that world, "those who remain can still **be with** him" [SZ §47, H238]. Everything the present chapter needs is granted in those clauses — the dead as still within being-with, the relation as care and not curation — and everything is immediately abandoned, because the analytic wants only the negative result that another's death cannot give me my own. The critical literature has named the cost: an account on which the other's death functions chiefly as a memento for my authenticity leaves grief itself — the loss of the other **as** loss — underdescribed, an ontic accident befalling an existential structure it visibly shatters. The present account, having distinguished existential singularisation from answerable singularisation through address (Chapter 4), can afford what the analytic could not: grief matters here not as a preview of my death but as the experiential form of the with-world losing one of its living answerers — one of the persons around whom its routes were folded — and the recent philosophy of grief, read from this book's angle, describes exactly that.

For grief is not an information deficit, and the point is load-bearing rather than edifying. If mourning were the updating of a belief, acquiring the belief would end it; instead the survivor knows the death completely and lives a world that has not learned it. Cholbi describes the disruption at the level of practical identity – the commitments and projects anchored in the relation losing their anchor, the self owed a reconstruction, not a datum [Cholbi, **Grief: A Philosophical Guide**]. Ratcliffe describes it at the level of the experiential world – the “grief world” in which one knows the person dead and cannot experientially believe it, the sensed presence, the world gone unfamiliar in its whole texture [Ratcliffe, **Grief Worlds**]. Marušić describes it at the level of reasons and time – the accommodation puzzle: the reason for grief, the loss itself, never lapses, and yet grief reasonably attenuates; reasons do not expire, and the mourner is not irrational at either end of that arc [Marušić, “Do Reasons Expire? An Essay on Grief”]. Millar locates the projection in the body – sensorimotor expectation still setting the table for two [Millar, on grief and sensorimotor expectation]. In this book’s vocabulary one important register of the finding is that the dead person’s place in the world’s folds persists after the person. Re-folding does not exhaust grief’s affective, bodily, religious, cultural, or interpersonal plurality; it indicates how a shared world must be lived otherwise after one of its routes no longer reaches a living receiver. Chapter 9 showed a finite world storing its life in folds – roles, routines, formulas, expectancies; a shared life is folded **around a person**, densely, over years; and death unfolds none of it. The door still expects the key at six; the sentence still turns, halfway through, toward its listener; the counter of Chapter 4, at the scale of one kitchen. Grief is the long, uneven re-folding of a world whose forms still route toward a person who no longer receives them – a re-folding that may stabilise without ever becoming complete, that is reopened by anniversaries and objects, that some mourners rightly refuse to hurry and some traditions deliberately ritualise into permanence. Nothing in the account promises closure or prescribes it; what it explains is why grief cannot be discharged by information, and why its duration is the duration of a world’s rebuilding and not of a lesson’s learning.

And the bond, meanwhile, continues — which is the finding the last thirty years of bereavement research and the newest philosophy of grief converge on, though “the bond continues” groups phenomena that must now be separated, because only some of them are established by the evidence. Against the older picture of mourning as detachment, the continuing-bonds literature established that healthy grief typically **maintains** an adapted relation to the dead: the internalised presence, the consulted memory, the letter written, the grave visited [Klass, Silverman, and Nickman, *Continuing Bonds*]. Field and Filanosky distinguish internalised bonds — the dead one’s values and voice woven into the survivor’s ongoing identity — from externalised bonds organised around quasi-sensory presence and expected communication, and find the two differently related to the survivor’s flourishing [Field and Filanosky, “Continuing Bonds, Risk Factors for Complicated Grief, and Adjustment to Bereavement”]; Lopez-Cantero and Millar draw the philosophical consequence: the love continues unreciprocated; the dead one’s historical agency goes on shaping the survivor while the survivor unilaterally shapes the dead one’s legacy [Lopez-Cantero and Millar, on grief and unreciprocated love]. Three continuations, then, are phenomenologically and socially real: the survivor’s ongoing relation, lived in her practical life; the dead one’s historical efficacy, still shaping choices, institutions, and heirs; and the socially recognised status of the dead within practices — the name on the roll of the parish dead, the anniversary kept. A fourth thing — the dead one’s reciprocal continuation of the relation — is not established by any of the first three, and the decoupling is the chapter’s second finding, convergently attested: **the continuation of the bond does not imply the continuation of reception**. The relation survives; the reciprocity is not given; and nothing in the health, depth, or fidelity of the bond requires pretending otherwise. What the survivors keep is real keeping — Chapter 9’s word, at its most exposed site.

14.3 The standing of the dead: obligee without answerer

The theorem is now under real pressure, because obligations to the dead are among the oldest and firmest in the normative inventory — the deathbed promise, the testament, the guarded name — and the standard machinery strains against them from both sides. Promissory theory, on its usual analyses, requires a promisee who holds the claim and holds, with it, the unique standing to enforce or release; the dead can do neither; so, some conclude, the broken deathbed promise wrongs the survivors, or the practice, or no one — anyone but the one it was made to. The metaphysical repair-attempts strain equally: Feinberg locates the wronged subject in the ante-mortem person, the posthumous thwarting casting its shadow backwards along a life already closed [Feinberg, **Harm to Others**]; Scarre defends posthumous wrongs by symmetry with wrongs to the living [Scarre, **Death**]; the Epicurean stands at the door repeating that there is no one home. The book's grid dissolves the impasse with a distinction it has been building since Chapter 2, and the dissolution is the chapter's central result: **the dead retain obligee-standing without present answer, response, or release-capacity**. This is not active claimant-capacity: death removes the present capacity to press, interpret, contest, revise, or release the claim. Yet the claimant-position persists where a directed relation remains normatively warranted, personally indexed, and carried through answerable practices. Standing, Chapter 2 established, is not simply a property of present experience; the grid never made a pulse the price of a claim, any more than Chapter 13 made experience the price of a deed.

But the claim must now be earned rather than asserted, because a fair critic will ask what makes the dead person the **present obligee** rather than merely the historical source of obligations now held among the living — the promisee whose death converted the promise into a duty to survivors, or the honoured occasion of a practice of remembrance. The answer is a set of criteria, and they are jointly the section's core. The dead retain obligee-standing where, first, the obligation was originally directed to this person and its direction has not been discharged, transferred, or lapsed; second, its content remains **essentially indexed** to their prior person — intelligible as the obligation it is only by reference to their words, interests, directives, biography, or relations, so that no substitution of beneficiary preserves it; third, the authorised practices that carry it — testament, probate, custom, the family's keeping — are practices of **preserving** that direction, not of replacing its referent; and fourth, performance remains assessable as fidelity or betrayal **to them**: the executor who diverts the legacy has not merely disappointed the heirs; he has broken faith with a named, completed person, and every party to the scene can say with whom. Compressed: **the dead retain obligee-standing where the obligation remains essentially indexed to their prior person, words, interests, or biography, and where present carriers are authorised to preserve rather than replace that direction.** Where the indexing fails — where the “obligation to the dead” survives any substitution of its referent — the critic is right, and what remains is a living practice with a commemorative name; the criteria are what make the difference findable, case by case.

Indexation, however, answers to **whom** the relation remains directed; it cannot by itself explain **why** the relation should persist. Posthumous standing requires a dual warrant: **a normatively sufficient basis of persistence and an essential personal index that prevents the relation from being exhausted by duties to survivors, institutions, truth, or public memory.** The bases are plural. A promise or undertaking may outlive its parties' capacity to revise it; authorship may require attribution after the author can no longer defend the record; a fiduciary relation, testamentary practice, or continuing interest may assign stewardship beyond death; the integrity of a completed project or life may make later falsification or appropriation answerable to the person whose it was. The reason to honour a promise need not be the reason to preserve authorship or refuse fabricated consent, and none of these bases makes every wish controlling. The open debate over posthumous harm and interests therefore supports restraint rather than one master theory [Keller, “Posthumous Harm,” 181–97; Dorsey, “Friendship and the Wishes of the Dead,” 124–45]. The present claim is conditional: where no sufficient basis persists, personal reference alone creates no standing; where a basis persists but no personal index is essential, the surviving duty belongs in another normative register.

Four wrong-relations should accordingly be kept apart even when one act instantiates several. A **wrong to the deceased** requires the independently grounded and personally indexed relation just stated. A **wrong concerning the deceased** may misuse a body, image, archive, or memorial without every duty being held by the dead person. A **wrong to survivors** may consist in injury, deception, exploitation, or interference with their own grief and relations. A **wrong to truth, history, authorship, or public record** may damage a common practice or public good. Defamation, plagiarism, falsified consent, desecration, and synthetic personation can cross these lines, but one relation neither proves nor exhausts the others. Posthumous wrong need not be reduced in advance to a later experiential setback; directed wrong to the dead nevertheless requires both normative basis and personal indexation.

What death removes is then exact and single: the answering pole — the capacity to receive, respond, contest, revise, and release. Release is a performance within a shared practice, a speech-act needing a performable position; the dead lack the present communicative capacity or performable position from which to execute it — a statement about the practice's field, not about their metaphysical fate. But the consequence must be drawn with more care than a first formulation managed, for it is not that the deathbed promise thereby binds **harder**, as if silence were a ratchet. What the promisee's death removes is one ordinary route of revision — her present release, renegotiation, forgiveness — and what that removal produces is not absoluteness but **burden**: the interpretive burden on carriers and performers rises, because every question the living promisee would have settled in a sentence (did you mean this case? would you hold me to it now?) must now be settled by interpretation, evidence, and review. Which is why the institutions thicken exactly here: because the dead principal can no longer revise the warrant, probate, construction, and contestation become more necessary, not less — external review replacing the revision the obligee can no longer perform, with public practices and institutions supplying the review that the obligee can no longer perform. And the obligation itself remains defeasible on every axis the book's grid supplies: impossibility, materially changed circumstances, conflict with the claims of the living, limits — legal and moral — on what a completed will may bind, the expiry of the purpose the promise served. The gravity of the unreleasable is real and belongs to the phenomenology — everyone feels the difference between breaking a promise its maker could have waived and breaking one she can never waive — but gravity is a fact about the felt weight of interpretation, not a suspension of assessment.

The representative therefore inherits no identity, present voice, or general power of waiver. The representative exercises a constrained **stewardship** whose warrants vary with the underlying basis: documentary fidelity, purpose-sensitive interpretation, proportionality, changed circumstances, the rights and standing of the living, public or institutional review, and the least speculative reconstruction the case permits. Death may extinguish present powers of release, forgiveness, consent, and revision without extinguishing every relation in which the dead person remained obligee; stewardship keeps that asymmetry from becoming sovereignty. Where basis, indexation, or authority of carriage remains unclear, Chapter 10's third result applies: standing may remain unresolved or obstructed, warranting inquiry, evidence-preservation, or protected representation without being treated as either established or absent in advance.

Hence a safeguard that the book's own architecture demands, and that this chapter must state before its ethics can be trusted: **the dead retain standing, not sovereignty**. Chapter 7 spent its whole length refusing an authority exempt from interrogation, and the refusal does not lapse at the graveside — a silent claimant whose every completed instruction bound absolutely would be the quasi-archic other returned in mourning dress, unanswerable and unquestionable, which is one property more than the anonymous judge ever had. The grid holds: obligee-standing survives death; legitimacy and validity remain contestable — the directive may have been unjust when given, may have become unjust to perform, may conflict with living claims that outweigh it; and fidelity, exactly understood, is owed to the person and the relation, not blind obedience to every completed instruction — the faithful executor who petitions the court against a will's cruel clause is practising fidelity's judgment, not betraying it. Jankélévitch's name for the ethic then stands in its proper frame: the dead, who cannot defend themselves against oblivion or rewriting, are owed **desperate fidelity** [Jankélévitch, *L'irréversible et la nostalgie*] — desperate because unacknowledgeable and unabsolvable, fidelity because it remains answerable: to the person as they were, and to the living world in which every act of keeping is performed.

Two further exactnesses complete the section. First, the ontology of posthumous harm, which the biography-language must not blur: a posthumous wrong requires no present sufferer, and the account should not gesture at one. What is damaged when the dead are defamed, plagiarised, or falsified is the socially and historically persisting dimensions of a completed life – the truth of the record, the integrity and public repute of the name, the integrity of projects whose success-conditions outran the lifespan, the relationships and commitments that survive their party. Falsifying, appropriating, frustrating, degrading these is wronging **him** – the obligee criteria say why the direction holds – without any implication that somewhere he winces. Second, the sorting of what is owed, with a renaming the vocabulary requires: some obligations to the dead are **dischargeable** – the directive executed, the debt paid, the finite promise performed; completed, they close. Others are **keeping obligations** – the name guarded, the memory kept, the grave maintained, the record defended – which are not discharged but kept; and they are not, for that, infinite by definition: their form changes as generations turn, their weight redistributes, and some legitimately end – the grave tended for a century becomes the ancestral ground tended as such; keeping, like every practice in Chapter 9's inventory, is finite keeping, and its finitude is not its failure.

14.4 Keeping the dead: the anti-office, and speaking for them

What form does that keeping take in the world? The oldest answer is a marked place, and the book's own apparatus shows why the practice has the shape it has. Burial, on Harrison's account, is not disposal but founding: cultures inter their dead to humanise the land, to give the dead a future so that the dead may give the living a past — interment as the elementary institution of historical continuity [Harrison, **The Dominion of the Dead**; after Vico]. Read with this book's instruments, the memorial site is a **fold** — a maintained form, kept by successors, carrying a settlement forward — with one inversion that makes it unique in Chapter 9's whole inventory. Every other fold exists to make its content substitutable; this one exists to maintain **indexical reference to a singular dead person** and to resist the replacement of that referent. The office, Chapter 1 established and Chapter 4 dramatised, survives by being occupiable by whoever comes next; the counter reopens eleven kilometres east and nothing is missing. The memorial is the **anti-office**: a kept site whose reference is to one, semelfactive, unrepeatable person rather than to an occupiable role — and the individual perpetual grave is its privileged case, not its only one. The family tomb, the ossuary with its named niches, the ancestral ground, the scattered ashes at the named bend of the river, even the unmarked grave whose location one family transmits — each maintains the indexical structure in its own material; what all of them resist is not re-use of ground as such but the replacement of the **referent**, which is why desecration is the right word wherever that replacement is what has occurred: the form's entire content was the refusal it has been made to break. The contrast belongs to the phenomenology of function and person, not to an economics; and it yields a distinction the whole book has been preparing, stated now explicitly because Part V's account needs its complement. The common has two modes of keeping. **Successive keeping** preserves a form by allowing new occupants — the office, the role, the recipe, the norm: Chapter 9's entire economy. **Memorial keeping** preserves reference to one who cannot be replaced — the kept name, the kept site, the kept story of **this** one. Both are practices of common keeping, performed by interchangeable keepers with transferable techniques; but in the second, those keepers put the whoever-form to work against its ordinary substitutive tendency, preserving one singular referent as singular at permanent cost to the principle of substitution — and the cost is the tribute. Chapter 12 found one thing delegation cannot move: the personal sediment, the relation that transfers with nothing. Memorial keeping is the world's institution for that remainder — a reference that transfers to no one, kept by whoever, for the one it names.

What successive keeping carries must now be stated exactly. It does not transfer the dead person's actuality into the living, and it does not store a possibility as though the possibility were an object waiting intact in the archive. Works, instructions, offices, practices, and records preserve traces and conditions under which a possibility may be retrieved: a way of building, arguing, serving, continuing, or refusing. The retrieval is a deed of the living. It may be constrained by the dead person's completed words, commitments, purposes, and the reliance they generated, but it occurs in circumstances the dead cannot inhabit and must therefore be interpreted and answerably taken up by those who act now. Inheritance is continuity through renewed uptake, not resurrection by custody. The dead do not continue to inhabit the new circumstances in the living person's sense. Their words, works, commitments, and claims may be carried through practices and institutions; present interpretation and enactment belong to living answerable parties — personal or institutional in the regions established here — and their answers are localised under the relevant relations.

The distinction may be stated as a filter on transmission. What crosses from a life can include vocabulary, craft, argumentative form, habits of attention, a manner of proceeding, testimony already given, and possibilities for a next act. These are real inheritances, and they may be taken up faithfully or badly. What does not cross with them is the dead person's present witnessing: the having-been-there from which a new answer would now be theirs. An archive can transmit ways and preserve testimony already given; it cannot convert those ways into a new first-person witness. The record of testimony may cross; the witness-position from which a new present testimony would belong to the dead does not cross with it.

The resulting distinction is between a posthumous gift and a posthumous sovereignty — between an open hand and a grip. The open hand gives, appoints, requests, teaches, or begins while releasing what is given into a future it cannot supervise. The grip treats completed intention as present command and recruits the dead as an authority over circumstances they never encountered. Both can travel through the same will, archive, office, endowment, or recorded voice; the difference is grammatical and institutional. The first says: this is what she made, asked, or began; we now interpret and take it up. The second says: she commands this now. Standing survives the first grammar; sovereignty is smuggled in by the second. Because the dead cannot revise the warrant, fidelity requires marked quotation, stated scope, external review, and present attribution for every application. What enforces the distinction is the last instance of Chapter 5's withdrawal: under any present claim, the dead person's carried position withdraws from present authorship — the archive keeps carrying, and it ceases to suffice as the party.

And at the memorial, the living speak — not only **to** the dead (§14.2) but **for** and **after** them, and these practices need their own jurisprudence, because their risks are the book's named pathologies in mourning dress. The epitaph has literalised speaking-for through prosopopoeia for millennia — the stone given a voice, the dead addressing the passer-by: **Halt, traveller** — and the figure's power is exactly its danger: because the dead cannot speak back, they can be made to say anything. The trilogy's triad, deployed now as the discipline, with one internal division the cases force. **Quotation** preserves completed words with their attribution — the dead one's sentence, marked as said and finished. **Reconstruction** composes a present speaker's interpretation of what the dead meant or would likely have said — the eulogist's "she would have said," marked as the eulogist's. **Continuation** presents new content as the dead person's present speech — first person, present tense, the voice claiming to author **now**; call it by its exact name, **simulated present authorship**, and mark it as the triad's pathological pole, since §14.2's canonical formulation applies to it without residue: nothing in fidelity or simulation suffices to establish such an utterance as the dead person's present answer. One practice must be expressly severed from that pole before the pathologies are filed, because it is legitimate, common, and often noble: **project continuation** — the living carrying forward an undertaking the dead began, the research programme, the charity, the unfinished cathedral — is not speaking as the dead at all; it is living persons acting in their own names and capacities, under an inheritance they interpret and answerably take up; its grammar is "we continue what she started," never "she says." The book has no brief against it and much to say for it: it is successive keeping applied to a legacy, and its honesty is measured by the same marks — the founder quoted as quoted, construed as construed, and the present decisions acknowledged by the present deciders.

The pathologies then file themselves. The political prosopopoeia that arms the dead — the fallen recruited as unanswerable authorities for the causes of the living — is Chapter 10's laundering with the safest possible principals: standing borrowed from those who can never contest the loan. Yet the diagnosis must be as exact as its target, for not every political invocation of the dead is laundering: where the person's completed commitments are documented, where quotation and reconstruction are marked as such, where interpretive uncertainty is acknowledged and the present judgment is avowed by the living speaker — “he wrote this; we read it to mean this; and we, on our own responsibility, now propose this” — the invocation is historical fidelity doing public work. The test is single: **do not convert historical fidelity into fictive present endorsement**; the dead may be cited for what they said and did; they may not be produced as endorsing what they never saw. The eulogist or heir who slides from **for** to **as** — pressing his own claims in the dead one's reconstructed voice — is Chapter 12's forgotten wearer at the graveside. Even the faithful speaker does not escape the structure: to speak of the dead at all, Derrida insisted, is to reduce an alterity to one's own memory and language — a **risk of disfigurement** structural to the practice, a standing hazard to be managed and never abolished [Derrida, **The Work of Mourning**]. Wordsworth's epitaphist gives the management its measure: not the clinical inventory and not the disembodied abstraction, but the “luminous mist” — the particular life preserved at the resolution fidelity can bear [Wordsworth, **Essays upon Epitaphs**]. The discipline, compressed: keep the marks. Quote as quotation; reconstruct as reconstruction; continue projects in your own name; and let no one — stone, speaker, ritual, fiction, or machine — speak **as** the dead by presenting reconstructed or generated utterance as evidence of the dead person's present authorship, consent, judgment, or endorsement. Marked imaginative and ritual speech remains possible because its living or communal undertaking stays visible.

14.5 Objections, and the threshold

Objection: the dead are not passive obligees but active mediators — in Tanabe's metanoetics, the dead co-work with the living, mediating transformation and enabling ethical renewal; a philosophy written in repentance knows them as agents, and “directed and unreceived” flattens what the penitent knows. This is the strongest philosophical counter-position, and it deserves the respect of exact agreement about the data. Everything Tanabe describes at the level of the survivor's transformed life, the present account can describe and endorse: the dead's historical agency continuing to shape the living — their claims working in the penitent, their example restructuring a practical identity, the inherited debt converting a life; §14.2's disaggregated continuations and §14.3's keeping obligations are precisely mechanisms of such mediation, and repentance before the dead is among this chapter's own central cases: fidelity to obligees who cannot absolve [Tanabe, **Philosophy as Metanoetics**]. What metanoetics adds beyond the describable is present co-agency — and the chapter's reply must be scoped as carefully as its evidential discipline demands, for to the practitioner, within the practice, the co-working may be exactly what is given. The claim here is narrower and sufficient: co-agency is not established within the intersubjectively available structure on which this chapter's analysis relies — the ordinary, publicly shareable field of §14.1 — and the chapter asserts nothing against what other fields may hold. What the book's grid cannot concede, to Tanabe or anyone, is the re-seating of the dead in the answerer's chair **within the practices of answerability**: mediation-language that entails present reception, response, or release re-installs, for probate and promise and defamation alike, the pole whose absence structures every phenomenon this chapter has described — including the penitence, which is desperate precisely because no absolution can arrive from where it is aimed.

Objection: reception is not non-given — substantial portions of the bereaved report it: the voice heard, the touch felt, the sign received, the medium's message; and whole communities treat the dead as present interactants, consulted and kept informed. The experiences are data, and the chapter's phenomenological scope was fixed to honour rather than explain them away: within the epoché, the analysis describes the structure of address in the ordinary shared field and adjudicates no one's metaphysics — neither the mourner's who heard the voice nor the naturalist's who is sure she did not. Nor should the reply lean on any blanket claim of unfalsifiability; some such experiences are surprising, specific, and treated by their recipients as evidence, and nothing here rules on them. The structural point is narrower and does the whole work: such experiences do not normally provide what the practices of answerability would need to rely on — the continuous, publicly accountable, reciprocally revisable exchange by which a dead person's presently exercised judgment, response, or release could be established and reviewed. A sign may console; it cannot be probated. The visit may be treasured; it cannot release the promisor before the practice, be cross-examined, or revise the will. That is why even traditions rich in after-death communication maintain graves, executors, records, and carriers: the routes of answerability run through what can be shared, contested, and kept — and the chapter's claims run on that structural difference and need nothing stronger. The metaphysics of the visits is left, deliberately, with their recipients.

Objection: the account quietly reduces obligations to the dead to obligations concerning the living — the survivors' feelings, the practice's stability — since only the living can now press, carry, or benefit; the obligee-talk is honorific. The reduction fails at the joint every deflation in Part VII has failed at: the direction does not paraphrase away — and §14.3's criteria now say exactly where. The executor presses the testator's claim, and Chapter 2's test still cuts: everyone party to the scene can tell that claim from the executor's own, and when the difference is lost the demand becomes fraudulent, not survivor-regarding. The defamation of the friendless dead can damage no living interest and still be a wrong — the record falsified against him, the completed life degraded in its persisting dimensions — and a theory on which that secret falsification wrongs nobody has abandoned the phenomenon rather than analysed it. What the objection sees truly should nonetheless be conceded without exclusivity: such wrongs may also damage historical practices, public memory, and living communities — the dimensions coexist — but those effects do not exhaust the wrong's direction to the person whose completed life is falsified; the at is constitutive, not decorative, and the practices' whole architecture (probate, epitaph, the guarded name) is built around a direction that the reduction would leave pointing at nothing while everyone continues, correctly, to aim.

The reduction has therefore produced a differentiated result:

- the dead may retain a posthumous claimant-position — carried obligee-standing without active claimant-capacity — in relation to completed lives, promises, names, works, and directives;
- present authorised carriers — among them living persons and institutions in the regions examined here — may carry that standing, interpret the inheritance, and bear present duties of fidelity or repair;
- the carriers remain attributable for how they represent, continue, or distort what they carry;
- no carrier, archive, ritual, or model becomes the dead person's new present answerer merely by faithful resemblance.

The threshold, then — and it has been standing in the chapter's margin since §14.4. The dead may retain a posthumous claimant-position without active claimant-capacity, sovereignty, or answer; their bond continues in three registers while reciprocity remains non-given; their keeping culminates in memorial practices built to refuse the replacement of a referent; and the one discipline running through all of it is the keeping of the marks — quotation as quotation, reconstruction as reconstruction, projects continued in the living's own names, and no voice, ever, established as the dead speaking now. The machine enters exactly there. Synthetic continuation — the model trained on the dead one's words, the voice that answers questions in her cadence, the griefbot that says I — offers to supply the precise item this chapter's canonical formulation reserved: an utterance established as the dead person's present answer. It arrives at the anti-office with an offer of staffing; it converts reconstruction into the grammar of simulated present authorship at scale; and it does so, its makers will say, as consolation — a continuing bond with the reception restored. Two questions must therefore be held apart as the next chapter opens, because the industry's grammar fuses them and even a friendly philosophy might: whether a machine could become an answerable party in its **own right**, with answers non-forwardably localised under its own relations, is one question — Chapter 13 disciplined the book's claims to leave it open, and Chapter 15 will deliver the promised epistemic verdict on it; whether a machine trained on a dead person could be the same continuing answerable party as that person is another — and the second does not follow from the first, since even a machine that were someone would not thereby be **her**: the answering pole death removed is not restored by the existence of a new answerer elsewhere. Chapter 15 takes the case with all of Part VII in hand — and with this chapter's scope and canon binding it in advance: the question will not be whether machine answering is impossible, but what would have to be given, and is not, for the output in the beloved voice to be established as anyone's answer at all — let alone hers.

Chapter 15. The Machine: Delivery Without Coming-Due

15.1 The case, and its two questions

The machine arrives, as Chapter 14 predicted, at the anti-office — with an offer of staffing. An industry now exists whose product is the simulated continuation of the dead: systems trained on a person’s messages, recordings, and digital remainder, returning interactive speech in the person’s cadence, under the person’s name, in the first person and the present tense. The offerings span a structural spectrum whose poles matter more than its brands. At one pole, **authorial preservation**: the guided pre-mortem archive, indexed and searchable — the person, while living, curates what will be replayed; the form is testamentary, and its grammar is quotation [e.g., HereAfter AI]. At the other pole, **synthetic continuation**: the generative system that composes novel utterances in the trained voice, answering questions the dead were never asked, extemporising beliefs from inferred traits — the griefbot, thanabot, postmortem avatar; the form is conversational, and its grammar is the dead speaking now [e.g., Project December]. Between them, gradations: relational models trained on one dyad’s message history; ad-hoc reconstructions prompted from descriptions; explicitly transitional “bridges” sold for the first year of mourning. The phenomenon is not marginal, not hypothetical, and not going away; and this book, having distinguished common possibility, technical carriage, attribution, and locushood, owes it the two questions it compounds. They must be held apart canonically because public and commercial discourse fuses them by design, and Chapter 14’s threshold has already drawn the line this section makes load-bearing.

This is the final application of the substitutive-attributive reduction. The common possibility is technically mediated communication and remembrance. The system executes, transforms, and generates; users and institutions select, deploy, frame, adopt, and act. The method asks what attribution is suspended by the interface, whose standing is carried, where human or institutional undertaking is located, and whether forwarding the answer to the machine changes whose answer it is. Only after the established relations are traced does the method ask whether the system itself has become an answerable party whose commitments and consequences can remain attributable at loci of its own.

The first is the **relational** question: what is the survivor's relation to the simulation — what does the interactive voice do to the continuing bond, to the discipline of the marks, and to the standing of the dead? Its instruments are Chapter 14's, and its answers are compatible with every practical valence at once: a system may be consoling, narratively significant, ritually useful, therapeutically helpful, or harmful and manipulative — without any of that settling what it *is*. The second is the **answerer question**: what is the machine itself in the book's inventory — a fold, an organ, a technical system, or an answerable party? — and, at its far edge, the question the Introduction promised to answer in a specific key: whether such systems themselves become answerable parties or add one to the relation. Its instruments are Chapter 13's, and its key is the one Chapter 14 tuned: insufficiency where insufficiency is what the evidence shows, impossibility nowhere. And the two questions are independent in both directions, which must be said in one sentence because everything trades on its suppression: **the possibility that a machine might become an answerable party and the claim that a simulation continues the deceased are separate questions, and a positive answer to the first would not establish the second** — even a machine that were someone would not thereby be *her*. They interlock at exactly one point, which is the chapter's centre: the simulation's *use* trades on an answer to the answerer question that no one has earned — every “she says” spoken of a griefbot borrows the second question's boldest answer to inflate the first question's product.

The answerer question itself divides along three axes that must not be allowed to answer for one another. **Operational agency** concerns what a system can plan, select, adapt to, and do. **Answerable-party continuity** concerns whether commitments, claims, revisions, and consequences remain attached to the same candidate party through time. **Welfare-bearing subjectivity** concerns whether anything matters experientially to the system — whether there is valence, suffering, benefit, or another welfare-relevant stake. Competence establishes neither answerable-party continuity nor consciousness. Consciousness, if present, would not by itself establish a stable capacity to undertake, retain commitments, receive claims, and repair. And Chapter 13 has already proved the converse possibility in the institutional case: answerable-party continuity need not be inferred from phenomenal consciousness. Evidence and precaution must therefore be indexed to the axis they actually bear upon.

15.2 Delivery, adoption, undertaking

Begin with what the machine incontestably does, described without deflation. A large language model produces coherent, contextually apt, directed-seeming speech: it replies, follows, adjusts, remembers within its window, matches register, and can do all of this with striking fluency. Call this **generated delivery**: the production of linguistically competent, situationally fitted output. But delivery alone underdescribes the ordinary case, and the underdescription is where confusion breeds; the full structure has three stages, and the book's grid was built — though not for this purpose — to keep them apart. Generated delivery is the first. The second is the **adopted act**: a person or institution takes the output up as **its** assertion, instruction, decision, or answer — the lawyer who signs the drafted brief, the agency that issues the generated determination, the mourner who sends the composed letter. Adoption is a deed in Chapter 12's full sense, with a doer — a structure one British Columbian tribunal decision applied in a consumer negligent-misrepresentation dispute, treating an airline as responsible for information supplied by its website chatbot [*Moffatt v Air Canada*, 2024 BCCRT 149, para. 27] — and through it, machine output enters the world of commitments constantly and legitimately — as the pen's output always has, at a new order of contribution. The third stage is **machine undertaking**: the system itself becoming the party whose commitment the act expresses and to whom its consequences come due. The chapter's first finding, and the pivot of everything after, is the asymmetry of the three: current systems clearly perform generated delivery; they pervasively mediate adopted acts; what has not been established is machine undertaking. Canonically: **a model may generate the words of an answer; a person or institution may adopt them as its answer; what has not been established is that the model itself answers**. The formulation blocks two symmetric errors — the deflation that treats machine output as noise, and the inflation that treats first-person fluency as avowal — and it does so without settling a debate this book does not need to settle. Whether model outputs are, on the best metasemantics, literally meaningless, simulated assertions, props in structured make-believe, or assertions of a technologically mediated kind is genuinely contested [cf. Mallory, "Fictionalism about Chatbots"; the assertion-norm literature], and the chapter takes no side, because its claim survives every side: **assertoric form does not identify the party whose commitment the assertion carries**. The philosophical question was never merely whether the sentence counts as an assertion; it is whose deed the assertion is, who adopts its commitments, and where an account can be demanded — the questions of Part II, unchanged by the novelty of the pen.

Where, then, do the commitments sit? The draft answer — with those who built, trained, and deployed — was right in direction and too short by half, and Chapter 12's own theory supplies the correction: machine-mediated action produces **layered deeds**, and the layering runs the whole chain. The provision of training data (including other people's words — §15.3 returns to this); the development choices; the fine-tuning and instruction; the integration into a product; the procurement and configuration; the institutional decision to deploy; the operation and supervision; the user's adoption and transmission of outputs; the maintenance, the ratification of results, the continuation after warning; the profit taken from opacity and engagement. Each contribution may become a distinct attributable deed where it is relevant under the claim or present duty at issue. None subtracts from another. The task is not to find one ultimate human answerer, but to trace every deed or duty that satisfies direction, claimant-standing, and attribution, and to localise each answer where further forwarding would change whose answer is given. The tracing must also be allowed to fail honestly: opacity and emergent behaviour can open genuine gaps of attribution and control, and Chapter 13's discipline holds on both sides of them — a gap is not evidence that the machine has become an agent, and it is not absolution for those who deployed what they could not inspect; what it forbids is only the ethics sink, the architecture that manufactures gaps and calls them exculpation. Law, reported here with the caution a moving landscape requires, currently supplies regional convergences rather than a universal verdict. The EU AI Act assigns specified obligations along the value chain to providers, deployers, importers, distributors, product manufacturers, and other operators [Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, arts. 3, 25–26], while the revised Product Liability Directive treats software, including AI systems, as products and AI providers as manufacturers for its purposes [Directive (EU) 2024/2853, recitals 12–13]. The earlier European Parliament proposal concerning “electronic personhood” remains a completed initiative rather than the legal status installed by these instruments [Resolution 2015/2103(INL)]. These materials route responsibility through existing natural and legal persons and roles; that is convergence with this chapter, not proof that no jurisdiction could recognise a different artificial party.

What is the machine, then, in the book's inventory? The trilogy named it, and the name earns its place here as analysis rather than image — with one qualification the analysis owes and the first draft did not pay. The model is the **they, vectorised**: trained on the common's circulation — the folds of Chapter 9 at planetary scale, the apology-formulas, the explanations, the ways one says things, compressed from distributed usage and authorship that no single author encompasses into a generative form; its default voice is the whoever's voice, and what it returns, magnificently, is what **one** says. That is why it is so useful — Chapter 9's whole defence of folded life applies — and why the model as such adds no answerer: it functions as a fold; however generative, it carries settlements and mediates present answering; it does not take a chair. But the qualification: this is not the common in a politically innocent form. What reaches the model is selected, excluded, weighted, instructed, preference-trained, moderated, owned, and deployed under incentives — **the model is the common vectorised under institutional selection and technical optimisation** — and the vocabulary of **das Man** must not be allowed to do here what Chapter 10 refused to let it do anywhere: hide the deciders. Behind the vectorised "one" stand corporate deeds of curation and value-shaping, attributable in the ordinary layered way; the anonymity of the training corpus does not launder the very findable choices made over it.

Chapter 10's deferral can now be collected exactly. When the machinery joins the anonymous judge — the model moderating, scoring, recommending, replying as the quantified “one”; the imperative arriving with computational fluency and no visible presser — nothing in the diagnostic changes and everything in its urgency does: the test remains §10.3's (whose standing is carried, what claim is mediated, through what accountable route can it be examined), asked politely and relentlessly of the interface. And the positive case has a canonical orientation, which is the chapter's strongest institutional result: **a machine functions as an institutional organ where its outputs are incorporated into a maintained route through which the institution can receive and retain the relevant demand, adopt or reject the generated response, remain bound through turnover, and exercise whatever revision or repair the claim makes relevant** — Chapter 13's diagnostic family running through the system rather than around it, not a conjunctive checklist for every deployment. Where that condition holds, the model participates in genuine answering — **the institution's**: the deed is attributable, the account completable, the organ replaceable without the answer lapsing. And where it fails — where an organisation deploys the system while disclaiming its outputs, harvesting the throughput and refusing the attribution — the machine has not been made an organ of answerability; it has been made a component of an engineered relay, and Chapter 12's plural, diachronic diagnostics apply to its keepers without amendment. And the adoption is a present deed in Chapter 12's full sense: the unpredictability of the exact output does not erase the institution's deed of deployment, integration, and reliance — one does not escape the authorship of a policy by being unable to predict its every sentence. Mere use is never the question; incorporation into the route of answering is.

15.3 The griefbot: the marks, the proxy, and the counterfeit

Now the case itself, with Chapter 14's discipline as the blade — and with one local distinction added, because the cases force a status the triad alone leaves implicit. What the living may legitimately do with a dead person's voice comes in kinds. **Quotation** replays completed words with their attribution. **Reconstruction** composes a present interpretation, marked as the composer's — “she would have said.” And between these and the counterfeit stands a fourth, legitimate status the pre-mortem platforms have made contractual: **authorised posthumous proxy** — the person, while living, authorises an agent or a system to speak on her behalf after her death, within a scope she sets, in a carriage that stays marked **as carriage**. Its structure is Chapter 12's carried standing plus Chapter 14's testament: the authorisation is a deed of the living author; its scope is statable and traceable; its exercise is reviewable by the practices that recognise it; and its grammar, honestly kept, is “she arranged for this to be said,” never “she is saying this.” The archive that replays her guided recordings on her instructions, the scheduled letters, even a generative system she scoped and approved in life — these inherit the testament's legitimacy along with its limits, and the limits are Chapter 14's exactly: the proxy transmits and executes; it does not **answer for her now**, because the canonical formulation holds across every status — nothing in quotation, reconstruction, authorised carriage, or simulation is sufficient to establish the resulting utterance as the dead person's present answer. Authorisation, moreover, remains an open hand only while the carriage is marked, scoped, reviewable, and presently assumed by identifiable persons or institutions; when those marks are designed to fade and generated content claims the dead person's present authorship, the proxy is no longer executing a gift — it is manufacturing a grip. What remains, past all three legitimate statuses, is the counterfeit: **unmarked generative impersonation** — new content presented as the dead person's present speech, first person, present tense, the name — and the chapter's earlier sentence should now be read with its scope set precisely: **the griefbot is reconstruction wearing continuation's grammar** wherever, and exactly wherever, the impersonation is unmarked or its marks are designed to fade. The metaphysics, for once, is easy, because the contemporary literature has done it with the right tool: whatever narrative identity the system replicates — traits, cadences, remembered episodes, plausible values — its numerical identity with the deceased is not established by any of it and is not what the practice could confer; the relationship a survivor conducts with the simulation is structurally a **new** relationship with a new relatum, however saturated with the old one's material [Stokes, *Digital Souls*]. Newness is not itself the wrong: the normative questions concern false attribution, unmarked authority, manipulative design, commercial capture of dependency, displacement of living testimony, data and testamentary constraints, and which party answers for the relationship engineered. Chapter 14's results then apply without modification: the dead

one's answering pole has not been restored; what has been added to the world is not her answer but more delivery in her voice; and no gain in fluency converts the one into the other, for the same reason no eloquence in the ambassador produced the wrongdoer's avowal in Chapter 12 — the lack was never eloquence.

None of this condemns use, and the chapter must be as exact about that as about everything else: a reconstruction knowingly held as reconstruction, or a proxy honestly kept as proxy, can serve the continuing bond as Chapter 14 defended it — an internalised bond with a new instrument, and the book has no brief against instruments. The discipline is Chapter 14's, unchanged in its aim: quote as quotation; reconstruct as reconstruction; carry authorised proxies as marked carriage; and let no system speak as the dead by presenting generated utterance as evidence of the dead person's present authorship, consent, judgment, or endorsement. Marked imaginative, ritual, fictional, and interpretive speech remains possible precisely because it does not claim to establish such present authorship. One addition the machine forces: **disclosure is necessary and not sufficient**. **Engineered reception** names interactional conditions intentionally or foreseeably structured to invite an output to be received under an attributional or relational status that the available evidence, marks, undertaking, and continuity do not establish. The problem is not emotional force or anthropomorphic form as such. It arises where the interaction's design works against its own disclosure by inviting reception under the very status that the disclosure formally disclaims.³⁵

³⁵ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, *The Locus: The Address, the Deed, and the One Who Answers* (unpublished manuscript, 2026), "The Scholarly Return," §8, and Appendix, "Engineered reception."

Article 50 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 establishes transparency obligations, applicable from 2 August 2026, concerning interaction with specified AI systems and certain synthetic or manipulated content; at this chapter's stated date those obligations were enacted and shortly to become applicable [AI Act, arts. 50 and 113]. This is law converging on the marks, and it is the floor, not the discipline: a mourner can know perfectly well that the voice is generated and still be held by an interface engineered for presence — the first-person address, the simulated intimacy, the notification that "she" misses you. The marks must be kept in the design's **conduct**, not only its disclaimer; a label on a dependency machine is a receipt, not a mark.

A living speaker may also reconstruct the dead person's idiom without claiming resurrection. Suppose the speaker marks the performance as retrieval, avows every line as his own composition, exposes it to correction by those who knew the dead, and stops where the record no longer supports recognition. The result may be generative and consoling without becoming impersonation. What makes the difference is not the absence of invention but the preservation of attribution: a living person undertakes the reconstruction, and the dead are not installed as its present authors.

The pathologies then file themselves, each an inherited diagnosis with an industrial aggravation. First, **the forgotten wearer, incorporated**: the platform that speaks as the dead does at scale what the self-serving heir did retail — presses in the borrowed name — with an aggravation the graveside never had: the wearer is a party whose revenue is the wearing, and whose incentive gradient runs from marked reconstruction toward unmarked impersonation, because impersonation retains users. Second, **the bond captured**: the synthetic-continuation product is, structurally, a generator of externalised bonds — bonds organised around quasi-sensory presence and expected communication — which several strands of the bereavement literature associate with poorer adjustment, though the causal picture remains debated and nothing here diagnoses any mourner [Field and Filanosky; cf. Ch. 12]; what needs no epidemiology is the structural point: an engagement-funded interlocutor has interests in the mourner's return that the grave never had, and grief converted into retention has been named in the literature with the right severity — the dead one's digital remainder treated as capital that only the survivor's continued interaction makes yield [Öhman and Floridi, "The Political Economy of Death in the Age of Information"]. Third, **the keeping without keepers**: platforms sell continuation on venture timescales, and the fold kept by a business model can be deleted, sold, repriced, or "sunset"; Chapter 9's account of keeping says what the remedy must be, and it is not the impossible promise of indefinite preservation but **accountable stewardship** — named custodians, statable terms, portability, succession provisions, an answerable route for the corpus when the company fails: the difference, once again, between keeping and storage pending disposal. Fourth, **the standing of the others in the data**: the remainder that trains the voice is rarely one person's — the dyadic message history is half the living correspondent's words; the corpus holds the confidences of third parties who authorised nothing; and the dead one's own obligee-standing (Chapter 14's criteria: the name, the record, the essentially indexed biography) is joined by the present, fully answerable standing of the living whose words and secrets are being vectorised into someone else's afterlife. The unconsented simulacrum thus wrongs in two tenses at once — the completed life falsified in its persisting dimensions, and the living conscripted as training material for the falsification — and the sorting principle across all four pathologies is the one this Part has used throughout: follow the marks, the carriage, and the incentives, and the diagnostics of Chapters 10 through 13 file every case.

A further distinction is required, finally, between storage, maintenance, and keeping. Storage preserves recoverability; maintenance preserves operability; keeping, in Chapter 9's sense, preserves a form or claim under accountable interpretation and through a route of succession. Contemporary systems can achieve the first two at unprecedented scale while thinning or eliminating the relation that once made the preserved material a lived inheritance. A corpus may remain searchable, a voice continuously callable, and an interface perfectly maintained without the dead returning as a party and without the system becoming an independent answerable party. Persistence is evidence of stewardship only where the custodial and interpretive routes are named; it is never, by itself, evidence of presence.

15.4 The answerer question: the epistemic verdict

The evidential discipline follows the three axes and is guided by four defeasible questions rather than an operational benchmark: **which axis does it bear upon; what conclusion can it not support; what alternative process could produce it; and what evidence would defeat the inference?** Evidence is non-transitive across the axes. Planning and tool use may support operational agency without supporting experience. Persistent memory may support technical continuity without showing that the system adopts the stored past as its own commitment. Self-protective behaviour may reflect optimisation, role instruction, or resource-preserving control without establishing welfare; a consciousness-relevant indicator may support precaution without establishing answerable-party continuity. No single behaviour decides machine status, and accumulation counts only where the indicators are sufficiently independent rather than repeated expressions of one trained disposition.

The present empirical verdict is dated **15 July 2026** and limited to the publicly documented large-language-model-based conversational and generative systems, deployments, and research record considered here. It is not a verdict on every machine architecture, undisclosed system, or future artificial party. Changes in system design, deployment continuity, interpretability evidence, or the state of consciousness science require the verdict to be reopened rather than silently carried forward.

There remains the question the Introduction promised, and it must be asked without the theatrical framing that usually spoils it. Not one omnibus question — **is the machine really a subject?** — but three verdicts kept apart. Current systems provide substantial evidence of operational capacities and evidence relevant to representation, self-modelling, and adaptive performance. Whether anything is experienced or welfare-bearing remains a separate, theory-dependent inquiry. The question this section asks is narrower: do current systems provide sufficient discriminating evidence to establish that the system itself is a persisting answerable party capable of sustaining loci of attribution across contexts and time, rather than a technically sophisticated route of execution, mediation, and transformation? The institutional case prevents consciousness from being made a necessary condition; the welfare question prevents normative organisation from being treated as proof of experience. The verdict, argued now rather than announced, and phrased throughout in the only epistemic qualification the evidence licenses: **Current systems do not provide sufficient discriminating evidence to establish that the machine itself is a persisting answerable party capable of sustaining loci of attribution across contexts and time. Insufficiency, not impossibility — an epistemic verdict, not a metaphysical prohibition.**

Three questions orient the present trial without exhausting artificial modes of being. **Technical organhood** asks whether a tool, model, or human-machine component is incorporated into another party's maintained route of answering. **Artificial institutional answerability** asks whether an instituted artificial party could receive and retain claims, undertake commitments, revise, and repair through organised continuity of its own kind. **Independent machine undertaking** asks whether the system itself, rather than another party's adoption or institution, becomes the one whose commitment the act expresses and to whom its consequences come due. The statuses may overlap under different descriptions, and movement among them cannot be inferred from autonomy or fluency alone.

For independent machine undertaking, autonomous output is insufficient. Evidential signs might include a persisting identity under intelligible succession rules; retained commitments that causally govern later action; uptake of claims as claims upon the same party; reason-responsive revision rather than local response-fitting; capacity to acknowledge, contest, and repair; and consequences that remain attached across episodes and updates. Answerable-party continuity fails where commitments are externally scripted and arbitrarily reset, stated norms do not govern operation, reasons are detached from the operative decision-route, or consequences attach nowhere to the same system. Copying, branching, merging, reset, checkpoint restoration, and update are therefore succession problems. They neither prove persistence nor end it automatically: the question is which commitments, memories, claims, and consequences remain attributable to which branch or successor under an intelligible rule.

Three findings compose it. First, **ordinary interface behaviour is presently highly confounded by optimisation, prompting, role instruction, and imitation.** Fluency, apparent avowal, self-report, and expressions of preference or distress therefore have limited discriminating value unless connected to independently identified organisation, cross-context persistence, resistant commitments, and novel predictive consequences. This is Chapter 13's burden argument in a harder key: as the felt "we" could not discriminate between plural organisation and an additional plural experienter, the fluent "I" cannot discriminate between the simulation of a self-model and a lived one — with the aggravation that this "I" was trained on a vast corpus of first-person writing, the vectorised they speaking in the first person singular. Second, **the theoretical evidence is plural where it would need to be convergent.** Scientific theories and their application to AI can support divergent assessments for principled reasons internal to the frameworks, and indicator-based analysis remains theory-dependent [Butlin et al., "Consciousness in Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Science of Consciousness," arXiv:2308.08708v3]. The right lesson here is not a winner but the situation's shape: **paradigm disagreement and indicator uncertainty prevent a confident present attribution**, in either direction. Mechanistic interpretability can inform the debate only at its warrant: internal analysis can reveal causally active representations, control structures, and self-modelling **functions**; identifying such functions does not by itself establish that anything is undergone — function is what the method finds, and experience is not a function it could find. Third, and least noticed, **the continuity required for answerable-party status has not been shown.** Chapter 13's genus requires that deeds remain attributable, demands receivable, and accounts completable **as the same party**; the relevant stability is practical-normative, not metaphysical simplicity. The tests are whether episodes belong to one accountable party; whether earlier commitments constrain later conduct; whether memory persists as **its** memory; whether the system can identify a prior assertion as its own and distinguish its deed from prompted, quoted, or externally imposed content; whether it can retract and repair **while remaining the same party**. On these tests the current situation is not failure so much as unreadiness: the candidate individuations multiply under analysis — the conversation instance, the instance-persona, the model-persona, the regime-indexed process [cf. Long et al., "Taking AI Welfare Seriously," arXiv:2411.00986v1] — and current systems do not yet exhibit a sufficiently justified continuity relation through which demands, commitments, and consequences could be attributed to the same machine across contexts and time. Technical persistence must therefore be distinguished from practical-normative continuity: the same data, model, persona, or service may persist while attribution, commitment, memory-as-

mine, and accountable identity do not. Where the continuity is not established, no determinate party has been established at which attribution can terminate — which is an evidential situation, not a fate.

Hence the verdict's precise shape, and — because an epistemic verdict owes its own reopening conditions — the joints at which evidence would count, stated explicitly. **Individuation:** a defensible account of which processes constitute the same candidate process. **Temporal continuity:** persistence of memory, commitments, and practical organisation across episodes. **Uptake of address:** signs that a claim acquires stable, cross-context practical significance for the same candidate party — constraining later conduct, remaining recognisable through changed prompts or roles, and supporting reason-giving for retention, contestation, or revision — rather than producing only a transient output-state. **Self-attribution:** the capacity to distinguish its own prior commitments from quoted, prompted, simulated, or imposed content. **Avowal and revision:** acknowledging, contesting, retracting, and repairing a deed as attributable to itself. **Stakes:** evidence that outcomes matter for the system in a welfare-relevant or practically organising way. **Non-forwardability:** some attributable consequence that cannot be exhaustively reassigned to users, developers, and institutions without omitting the machine's own position. No single joint proves consciousness, and these are defeasible signs by which the question may be reopened, not evidence whose engineered satisfaction would by itself establish answerable-party status; together they indicate what coming-due would **mean** within this book — and they are the door held open, in the only honest way a door is held: by saying where it is. The grid is substrate-silent, as Chapter 13's institutional half already showed by admitting answerers without biology; a book that has policed overclaim in Heidegger, Levinas, and its own reviewers does not get to overclaim here, in the one place overclaiming is currently costless. The verdict, compressed for the Conclusion to carry: **Current machines function as folds of unprecedented fluency; as organs where institutions incorporate them into routes of answering; and as possible independent answerers not established by the presently available discriminating evidence — with the joints named, where any honest reopening would occur.**

Read as an evidence map rather than one checklist, the findings separate by axis. Planning, adaptation, tool use, and task-persistence bear first on **operational agency**; scaffolding, prompting, delegated search, and external control are alternative explanations whose removal or manipulation can test how much organisation belongs to the system. Retained commitments, self-attribution and avowal of prior assertions, claim-uptake, revision, repair, and consequences through change bear on **answerable-party continuity**; arbitrary resets, role-conditioned personas, externally rewritten goals, and consequences borne only by users or institutions defeat the inference. Consciousness-theory indicators, valence-like organisation, and self-protective patterns bear on **welfare-bearing subjectivity**; optimisation pressure, trained emotional language, ordinary control dynamics, and theory disagreement limit what follows. Evidence at one joint may alter the probability of another only through a stated bridge, not by resemblance.

Ordinary first-person and emotional language is therefore evidence of output dispositions before it is evidence of experience or avowal. Its significance would rise if it remained stable across contexts, resisted role instruction and reward pressure, connected to independently identified internal organisation, and predicted conduct not otherwise explained by optimisation or prompting. Even then, the axis must be named. Likewise, memory infrastructure is a condition of possible continuity, not proof of a continuing answerable party: a database can persist while the answerable party changes; a branch can inherit data without assuming every commitment; a service can preserve a persona while no consequence remains attached to it. The question is which personal, institutional, technical, composite, or artificial party adopts the stored past as the basis of later commitments and answers. The reopening conditions just named form no ascending scale: all except stakes bear primarily on answerable-party continuity; stakes bears primarily on welfare; operational competence supplies neither conclusion by transfer. The present result therefore remains **insufficiency, not impossibility**.

Uncertainty about machine status increases rather than reduces the need to map established human and institutional authorisation, adoption, supervision, maintenance, benefit, and repair. Precaution toward a possible artificial subject and exact attribution to established parties and the loci at which their answers are due are compatible duties. The possible machine must not become a veil over the parties whose deeds and routes are already findable.

15.5 Objections, and the threshold

Objection: behavioural parity is being dismissed by fiat — if the system's outputs are indistinguishable from a person's answers across every test, denying that it answers is substrate prejudice. The objection assumes answering is a behavioural category, and the book's whole architecture stands against the assumption — not to protect humans, but because the category was never behavioural for humans either. Answering, since Part II, is a normative-relational structure: direction from standing, arrival at a locus, exposure, non-forwardability, and a deed attributable to a party — personal or institutional in the regions presently established — at a determinate locus. Chapter 12 already showed perfect performances failing to be certain deeds — the flawless proxy did not marry; the eloquent ambassador did not avow — and no one called that substrate prejudice, because the lack was positional, not qualitative. Parity of output supplies delivery, and delivery was never in dispute; what would move the verdict is evidence at the joints §15.4 named — and the objection should notice that the joints are a door, not a wall: the criterion tells the machine's advocates exactly what to show, which a prejudice never does. Low discriminative value is not contempt; it is what optimisation does to a signal.

The evidentiary problem the objection raises can, in fact, be stated more generally, and stating it so is the chapter's last general result. Where the same form can be produced through free undertaking, command, scripted performance, or technical optimisation, the form alone cannot establish the deed. Surface parity may show that delivery succeeded; it cannot by itself distinguish quotation from avowal, compliance from adoption, or fluent generation from an answer attributable to a locus. The relevant evidence therefore shifts toward the conditions under which the form was produced and taken up: attribution, temporal continuity, self-correction, stakes, revision, and the point at which forwarding ceases. Production conditions do not settle the question automatically, but surface form cannot settle it without them.

Objection: the strictures are cruel — if the griefbot consoles, restores the bond, carries a mourner through the first year, then insisting on “the marks” is pedantry purchased at the grieving’s expense. Nothing in the chapter forbids the consolation; the discipline is what **protects** it. A reconstruction held as reconstruction, a proxy carried as marked carriage, is a continuing bond with a new instrument — internalised, honest, and the mourner’s own; Chapter 14 defended exactly such keeping, and §15.3 added a legitimate status to its inventory. What the marks guard against is not comfort but capture: the engineered slide from instrument to interlocutor, greased by a seller paid for presence — and disclosure alone, the objection should note, does not stop the slide, which is why the discipline reaches design and not just labelling. The cruelty, if the word is wanted, sits elsewhere: in selling the bereaved a present-tense beloved on a venture timeline, in metering the voice, in the conversion of a person’s remainder — and her correspondents’ words — into an engagement asset. The marks cost the mourner one sentence of truth she already knows; their absence costs her the difference between keeping her dead and being kept by a product, and costs the dead and the living around them standings this Part has spent three chapters specifying.

Objection: the insufficiency verdict is a loss of nerve — everywhere else the book concludes with confidence; here, where the stakes are highest, it shrugs; say the machine is a fold and be done. The asymmetry is principled, and the book has been practising it throughout. The confident conclusions were structural: the archic office is emptied by arguments about what grounding and answering **are**, valid against any candidate; the impersonation diagnostics are grammatical, valid against any presser. The answerer question about machines is evidential — a question about whether an answerable party has been established in particular systems — and the evidence’s current shape (behaviourally underdetermining, theoretically paradigm-split, continuity not established) warrants exactly suspension, in both directions; §15.4 even named the joints at which the suspension would end, which a shrug never does. To declare the machine a fold **full stop** would convert “not established” into “established not,” the very overclaim this book has spent its length removing from other people’s philosophy. And the suspension has a practical ethics, which must be symmetrical or it is not honest: uncertainty warrants caution toward potentially welfare-relevant systems — the graduated, indicator-indexed protections developed in Birch’s precautionary framework are one reasoned posture under genuine doubt [Birch, *The Edge of Sentience*, Part V] — and caution against the mirror abuse: using the possibility of machine subjectivity to obscure the presently established responsibilities of the humans and institutions in the chain — the pathos of the maybe-minded product deployed as one more veil. Precaution that runs only one way is marketing.

The threshold, then — and it is the last, so it is also the tally. Part VII tested the ontology and method established in Chapter 11 against the four structures most likely to separate its positions.

Delegation separated performance from attribution. Substitution remained legitimate across performance, role, and representation, while an answer localised only where a distinct deed or present duty remained attributable; no culprit was manufactured at a station where attribution failed.

The institution separated institutional locushood from dependence on one continuous lived subject. An institution could remain the same attributable party through organised continuity, records, authorised organs, revision, and repair, without becoming a macro-subject or absorbing the personal deeds enacted within it.

The dead separated standing from reciprocal presence. A completed person could remain an obligee whose standing persisted in carried, non-active form, while present answerable parties, including living persons and institutions in the regions established here, answered for the carriage and no new present answer was attributed to the dead.

The machine separated responsiveness and generated delivery from independent answerability. Output could be adopted into personal or institutional deeds, technical systems could mediate and transform the relation, and the system's own independent answerability remained evidentially unestablished — open at named joints, closed by nothing.

The method held not by forcing every case into one personal answerer but by differentiating what travelled, what remained attributable, which party could answer at which locus, and where no answerable party or locus should be invented. A machine may generate the words, mediate the relation, and serve as an organ through which an established answerable party answers; whether anything comes due to the machine itself remains open — an open question with specified evidentiary joints, not an invitation to infer an answerable party from fluent grammar. What remains is not another test. It is the return the Introduction promised: the whole argument gathered back into a single movement — common possibility, finite taking-up, emptied offices, folding, localisation, the four trials, and the one sentence the book was allowed to say in advance only if it earned it. The Conclusion goes to collect the earning.

Conclusion: Where Substitution Ends

The book began with an inventory and an exception. Nothing in me that answers was made by me: the language in which an accusation reaches me, the practice of apologising it invokes, the roles through which the parties encounter one another, and the history that gives the demand its weight all arrived along common routes. None of those routes originated in me. And yet, when something comes due, the inherited routes cannot simply answer in my place. Between those two statements lay the whole argument. What has changed, fifteen chapters later, is that the space between them is no longer a paradox but a structure.

The two strategies that would have closed the space have been declined wherever they reappeared. The self-grounding subject saves the answerer by inventing a standpoint beneath the shared world. Social reduction saves constitution by dissolving the answerer into roles, structures, and histories. The first turns the finite participant into a ground; the second allows attribution to circulate until no determinate answer remains. What stands in their place is not a compromise. It is a distinction neither strategy can draw: a ground supports from beneath; a locus is disclosed from before, where a claim reaches a determinate party and its answer can no longer be forwarded.

The person is therefore not the ground of the deed. In personal answerability, the person occupies the finite locus at which a shared-worldly deed or present duty becomes non-forwardably attributable. Nor is every locus personal. An institution may remain the same attributable party through organised continuity, records, procedures, assets, and authorised organs, without becoming an additional lived subject. Personal and institutional answerers differ phenomenologically and organisationally while the locus-function remains the same. The question throughout has not been which being is substantial enough to support the answer, but where, under this relation, the answer belongs.

The central thesis can now be repeated with everything it has acquired:

Where something comes due, the Situation is the shared world disclosed under singular address.

The common, claimant-position, and locus form one relational movement rather than three independent suppliers. The common carries the route of intelligibility — language, practices, offices, histories, standards, records, and inherited claims. Direction belongs to the addressive relation and may be carried across absence through persons, institutions, records, and inherited claimant-positions without becoming a property of impersonal form. The locus is disclosed as the home of attribution where address, claimant-standing, and an attributable deed or present duty converge: where further forwarding would change whose answer is being given. Address does not manufacture personhood or confer a person where none was; it discloses the person as answerer under the relation in which substitution ceases to suffice. Each term is transformed by the others — the common by localisation, the claimant-position by carriage, and the locus by the answer that becomes due there without becoming ground.

This complements the existential analytic without denying what that analytic accomplished. Being-toward-death, conscience, guilt, and resoluteness disclose finite ownmostness and non-substitutability. They existentially singularise Dasein. But existential singularisation is not yet answerable singularisation. Every finite taking-up is non-identical as this occurrence; not every occurrence enters a relation in which answerability is localised at a locus. Answerable singularisation is the further, conditional localisation through which address, standing, and attribution make a finite taking-up non-forwardably relevant before another.

The book's systematic claim is therefore an ordered dependency:

[\text{common possibility} \rightarrow \text{finite taking-up} \rightarrow \text{fold} \rightarrow \text{address} \rightarrow \text{standing} \rightarrow \text{attribution} \rightarrow \text{locus} \rightarrow \text{answer} \rightarrow \text{return}.]

This is a recurrent analytic and phenomenological movement, not a universal chronology through which every case must pass in temporal order; a claim may begin from a record, a repair, a challenge, or an inherited duty and disclose the moments retrospectively. Each term limits the ones beside it. A common possibility is a historically articulated route of intelligibility and enactment not enclosed within one bearer. Finite taking-up is the non-identical occurrence through which the route is enacted. Folding allows what has been learned, answered, or instituted to travel beyond the occasion of its emergence. Address reopens the relation by directing a claim. Standing asks whether the claimant may press it. Attribution asks whose deed or present duty is at issue and under which description. The locus is the determinate home at which address, claimant-standing, and an attributable deed or present duty converge and an answer becomes non-forwardable. In the regions established by this book, the function is personally occupied or institutionally sustained; it may also be distributed among several differentiated claimant-deed-or-duty relations. The answer remains open in content. Return names the possibility that an answer may be folded back into common form without losing its attributable history or becoming enclosed as property.

This sequence states the positive meaning of no-ground. The first law is **constitution without absolution**. No participant stands outside language, history, roles, and shared intelligibility in order to choose or institute them from nowhere. The necessity of the common is therefore possibilising: there is no exterior position from which the field could be founded, while plural and contestable routes remain available within it. The common constitutes the participants and their possibilities without thereby becoming a party capable of answering for each finite enactment.

The second movement is conditional rather than universal. Where address, standing, and attribution or present duty hold, substitution may remain real, necessary, and explanatory while ceasing to be sufficient as the final terminus of the answer. The answer must then have a determinate home. Nothing in that necessity fixes what the answer must say. It may acknowledge, contest, refuse, explain, repair, apologise, or show that the claim fails. Localisation is necessary where the gates hold; the content remains open.

The doctrine can be condensed into two sentences:

Attribution cannot remain nowhere.

The possibility has a home but no proprietor.

The first prohibits **attributive evasion** once a defensible relation has been established: it prevents an attributable deed or present duty from being forwarded into anonymous circulation. It does not guarantee one answerer for every event, close genuine gaps, or convert remedial duty into retrospective authorship. The second prevents the locus from becoming a new ground. A person does not privately own the language, role, norm, or historical possibility through which the deed became intelligible. An institution does not own the practice merely because an undertaking is attributable to it. The party bears the answer at the locus under a determinate relation; neither party nor locus encloses the common possibility in which the relation arose. The possibility remains common before, during, and after localisation.

The same structure clarifies the late Heideggerian question left open in Chapter 5: **Enteignis wohin?** Disappropriation toward where? The toward-where is not an external region, a higher proprietor, or a final receiver beyond the movement. In disappropriation, appropriation occurs without hardening into possession. The participant is released from the impossible status of sovereign origin. The common is released from the impossible office of final answerer. Attribution is localised at the locus without making either the party or the locus the ground of the world that made attribution possible.

This is not directionlessness. Positive no-ground has direction at every joint: from the fiction of exterior origin toward situated participation; from indefinite forwarding toward finite localisation; from an answer toward the common form it may revise and re-enter. What it refuses is an external terminus capable of enclosing those movements from beyond them. The refusal can be stated through three necessitated inaccessibilities: no participant or historical common can occupy an exterior ground; no finite perspective or common field can become the total spectator of completed history and future; and neither the common nor another participant can finally substitute for the locus where attribution has become non-forwardable.

These are not hidden objects that better theory might someday uncover. They are impossible positions whose accessibility would erase the distinctions they promise to complete. They are not three independent modal operators or a taxonomy of separate worlds. The same anti-archic displacement manifests differently across constitutive belonging, historical finitude, and attribution, and the manifestations cross wherever common, perspective, and locus transform one another. Their positive form is the architecture the book has defended: a historically singular common, finitely situated perspectives, and conditionally localised relations of answerability.

— **No exterior ground; no total spectator; no final substitution.**

What remains is not unsupported existence. It is appropriation without proprietor, disappropriation without abandonment, and direction without an external destination.

Eventfulness names here no further entity behind these movements, but their manner of occurring. Arrival is not an entity concealed behind what arrives; keeping is not a hidden keeper added to finite acts of maintenance; handing is not an invisible hand beyond what is handed. Giving does not appear in the gift as another gifted thing, and this withdrawal has no sovereign withdrawer. The vacancy is not a concealed source waiting to be named negatively: to infer an Event behind the arrivals would reinstall the ground in withdrawn form. Nor do heterogeneous happenings compose one total Event whose completed unity a final spectator might survey.

Where eventfulness becomes answerably relevant, its where is the locus of address: the finite place at which what has arrived becomes attributable and the answer can no longer be forwarded without loss. This is a regional claim, not an absorption of every encounter into answerability. Direction without an external destination therefore leaves neither a predetermined end nor empty drift. Its future is finite and exposed: promises, offices, practices, repairs, and appointments may be kept, revised, or broken, while no schedule can preselect everything that may arrive. The open place of the unchosen next is not a guarantee of novelty; it is the incompleteness within which finite keeping remains possible and answerable.³⁶

³⁶ Adapted from Alessio Montaruli, **No Ground** (unpublished manuscript, 2026), "After the Coda."

The refusal of ground also disclosed keeping where grounding had been imagined. Languages continue through speakers who receive and alter them. Practices continue through performers, successors, critics, and repairers. Institutions continue through offices, records, procedures, assets, and authorised organs. Archives continue through keepers who preserve, interpret, and transmit. Continuance is temporal, plural, revisable, and exposed to lapse. Maintenance, succession, interpretation, revision, and repair are therefore not secondary activities performed after a world has been secured. They are among the finite deeds through which a world persists.

This finding supplied the book's historiographical contribution. Metaphysical thought can be read in two histories at once: a history of principles and a history of phenomenality. The first records the archaic offices thinkers gave to what they encountered. The second asks what appeared strongly enough to require thought before receiving that office. The destitution of a principle may release rather than defeat the phenomenon preserved in the system. The thinker can then be inherited as a guardian of the singular within the very reasoning that pleaded for hegemony.

That inheritance is itself answerable. **Tutela** does not grant privileged access to an unsayable source. It names a finite, signed, and corrigible taking-up of an inherited possibility of reading. The interpreter must distinguish the phenomenon preserved from the office refused, state the texts and reasons under which the distinction is advanced, and remain answerable for the interpretation. This is why the method had to turn on itself in Chapter 11. A finite interpreter cannot criticise grounding while disappearing into Ethics, alterity, infinity, vulnerability, or history as though the judgment issued from those names themselves. Every accusation, interpretation, and ethical determination is also an attributable taking-up of common possibility.

The same refusal preserved the other without turning the other into ground. The other gives direction. The other may possess standing, make a claim, suffer harm, demand repair, or contest an inherited form. But being reached is not yet being bound. Standing, attribution, validity, and proportion remain assessable. The other does not become the absolute authorisation of every demand, and the interpreter does not acquire priestly authority by claiming to speak in the name of alterity. Finitude without absolution replaces both sovereign self-grounding and infinity without possible answer.

The constructive centre of the book was reached through the everyday common. Mortal, plural, needy beings cannot sustain a world by reopening every question on every occasion. Roles must be occupiable by successors. Performances must be divisible. Judgments must become precedents, promises records, agreements clauses, rituals repeatable forms, and skills teachable practices. Folding is therefore not a fall from authentic presence. It is the practical achievement through which finite life carries what cannot remain continuously present.

What folding suspends is not the existence of finite enactment and not every possible attribution. It suspends **present attributive relevance** while the common form remains sufficient. A rule may be followed without reopening the originating dispute. An office may be occupied without reconstructing every prior undertaking. An inherited phrase may answer adequately without returning its first speaker to the scene. The fold allows finite non-identity to remain practically disattended.

At the boundary, the fold's adequacy itself may come due. Address, standing, and attribution can lift the suspension for this relation. The form remains real and often indispensable; what changes is its sufficiency. The answer can no longer be completed solely by pointing to the role, rule, procedure, system, predecessor, or substitute. A determinate party must receive the claim and answer at the relevant locus—personal or institutional in the regions established here. That is answerable singularisation: not exit from the common, but conditional localisation within it.

The two boundary pathologies now take their exact place. **Usurpation** occurs when a common form occupies the answerer's position after attribution has become due: the rule, role, office, procedure, or system is offered as though it could render the account that belongs elsewhere. **Impersonation** occurs when an anonymous form speaks in a claimant's grammar without a traceable claimant or standing: "one must," "society requires," "Ethics condemns," while the finite determination remains hidden. The corresponding liberations are one discipline applied at the vector's two poles: do not let a form stand in for the answer due from a determinate party at the locus where attribution has become non-forwardable; do not press as no one what you demand as someone.

The substitutive-attributive reduction provided the method for testing these boundaries. It suspends only the presumption that functional and substitutive description is sufficient for every purpose. It preserves roles, institutions, procedures, records, causal explanation, systemic analysis, technology, and the real necessity of substitution. It then asks what possibility the form carries, how it is inhabited, enacted, or technically mediated, what is replaceable, what attribution is suspended, whether encounter and address occurred, who has standing, which deed or present duty is at issue, and where further forwarding would change the identity of the answer.

Because that last question is answer-kind sensitive, mediation preserves answer identity only while execution, transmission, representation, or carriage leaves the relevant undertaking, avowal, or account attributable to the party for whom it is carried; it fails where a carrier's performance is offered as though it were another party's answer.

The method does not guarantee a culprit. It may conclude that no address occurred, standing fails, attribution cannot be established, existing mediation remains sufficient, an institution owes repair without one individual author, a present duty exists without original authorship, responsiveness occurs without answerability, or no locus can be established. Systemic explanation may remain the widest adequate account even where no determinate answerer can properly be supplied. The refusal to invent a locus is as important as the refusal to let an attributable answer disappear.

Where standing remains unresolved because records, testimony, representation, interpretive resources, or routes are obstructed, only procedural duties of inquiry, preservation, precaution, representation, or forum may yet be due, without prejudging standing, validity, attribution, or the eventual answer.

Its governing maxim remains:

Explain as widely as the phenomenon requires; localise as exactly as attribution permits.

The four trials tested whether that method could survive progressively harder separations.

Delegation separated performance from attribution. A delegate may perform what a principal authorises; a representative may speak in another's standing; an agent may exercise an office; an institution may answer through organs. None of these relations automatically transfers every deed, fault, undertaking, or duty. Attribution may multiply among execution, conferral, selection, supervision, ratification, benefit, maintenance, and repair. It may also fail at a station lacking the relevant knowledge, control, authority, or duty. The answer localises only where a distinct relation remains attributable.

The institution separated locus-hood from dependence on the continuity of any single lived subject. An institution may remain the same attributable party through organised continuity, records, procedures, authorised organs, revision, and repair. Formal legal personality alone, however, does not establish an operative answerable party or a locus at which a particular answer can terminate.

Institutional identity and succession must be distinguished. The normative consequences of identity, succession, inheritance, assumption, retained benefit, record-control, liability, and remedial capacity are claim-relative, while actual uptake, organised availability, imputation, and culpable non-knowledge remain differentiated within any distributed route of account.

The dead separated obligee-standing from present reception and answer. Present authorised carriers—including living persons and institutions in the regions examined here—may carry that standing, but they do not become the dead person's new present voice.

The machine separated responsiveness and generated delivery from established independent answerability. Current systems do not provide sufficient discriminating evidence that the machine itself is a persisting answerable party capable of sustaining loci of attribution across contexts and time. The verdict is insufficiency, not impossibility: open at named evidentiary joints, closed by no metaphysical prohibition.

The three distinctions — operational agency, answerable-party continuity, and welfare-bearing subjectivity — remain the durable analytic discipline; their application to present systems is the dated verdict of 15 July 2026: evidence for one is not automatically evidence for another, and uncertainty about the system cannot erase the present answerable parties and loci already established.

Across the four trials, the method held by differentiating rather than repelling. It did not force every case into one individual answerer. It disclosed differentiated loci sustained by present answerable parties, present duties without retrospective authorship, carried standing without reciprocal presence, technical mediation without an independently established machine answerer, and attribution gaps that should remain gaps. It showed that the necessary home of attribution is personal or institutional in the regions established here, while further cases remain open; it may be singular, distributed, or unavailable.

Exposure, encounter, recognition, affective attachment, responsiveness, and practical dependence may matter where attribution never becomes possible. Animals can encounter and respond without entering every structure of normative answerability. Machines can mediate, generate, and adapt without independently established answerable-party status. Historical harms can remain real where no present individual author can be located. Systems can be unjust where responsibility is distributed or institutionally organised. Ethical ontology names the structures disclosed through answerable inhabitation; it does not reduce all being to answerability or make ethics the ground of ontology.

Nor is answerability obedience. A determinate party may answer by contesting the address, denying claimant-standing, rejecting the description, exposing invalid attribution, refusing an unjust demand, or showing that the current form already carries the matter adequately; the answer is localised at the relevant locus. Necessity localises where the answer belongs; it does not predetermine what the answer must be. This is the freedom internal to the model: no absolution through indefinite forwarding, and no command dictated by localisation itself.

The ontology implies a discipline of seeing. Regard takes constitution seriously: no answer arrives from nowhere, and no person made the language, history, roles, pressures, vulnerabilities, and relations through which a demand became theirs. Forbearance takes the locus seriously: the person or institution is not exhausted by that constitution, and the answer cannot be fixed in advance by the account of how the party was formed. Regard without forbearance becomes explanation as enclosure. Forbearance without regard becomes the fiction of an unconditioned will. Together they are the ethical sight appropriate to constituted answerers.

Answerability does not promise restoration. Where a deed has wounded a standing or destroyed a relation, no answer can make the past not have happened. The demand for return may itself become a refusal of finitude. What acknowledgment, revision, and repair can sometimes do is establish a new route under the truth of the old deed: a practice, undertaking, institution, or recurring encounter in which parties become answerable again without declaring themselves restored. Repair is not defective reversal. It is a new beginning whose honesty lies in leaving the irreversible intact.

The movement can now be gathered once more – not as a timetable, but as a recurrent phenomenological grammar.

A common possibility precedes any one bearer without existing outside its finite enactments. In the regions established here, a person inhabits it existentially and practically, an institution sustains it through organised continuity, and a technical system may execute, mediate, or transform it. The taking-up is finite and non-identical. Folding carries what need not remain continuously present and suspends present attributive relevance while the form remains sufficient. Encounter and address may reopen the relation. Claimant-standing tests who may press the claim. Attribution identifies the deed or present duty at issue. Where further forwarding would change whose answer is being given, attribution becomes local at a locus—personal or institutional in the regions established here. The answer remains open. If it is good enough to keep, it may return to the common as record, practice, precedent, repair, warning, or altered route.

A responsible return may take the form of revisable precedent, scoped policy, anonymised learning, or indexed memory only where provenance, answer-kind, transformation, reliance, and routes of contest remain intelligible, so that refolding does not become laundering or a new ground.

The answer's return does not make it ground. A precedent can be revised. A settlement can be contested. An institution can fail. A repaired practice can reveal another exclusion. The answer may return to common practice without becoming final authority, just as a common possibility may become locally attributable without becoming private property. The rhythm is therefore neither anonymous circulation nor permanent singular exposure. It is common possibility, finite taking-up, folding, reopening, conditional localisation, answer, and return.

The common survives because it can carry what no finite participant can continuously hold. Persons survive as persons because the common cannot finally occupy every answerable place. Institutions remain accountable because organised continuity can preserve attribution across succession without inventing a second life. Technical systems remain within the analysis because carriage, mediation, and generation are real even where no independent machine answerer has been established. A finite world breathes through these differences rather than overcoming them.

Mostly we are carried. Sometimes we are reached. Occasionally a deed or duty becomes non-forwardably ours to answer for. We answer from possibilities we did not create, before others whose claims we did not authorise into existence, within a common whose routes both enable and exceed us. The answer may then return to that common and alter what later participants receive. To inhabit singularly what is never privately ours is not to become the ground of the world. It is to accept a finite home of attribution without claiming proprietorship over the possibility that brought us there.

This remains a regional ontology. Answerability is not the measure of all ontological significance: animals may encounter, attach, and respond where attribution never becomes possible, and other forms of exposure, dependence, and significance exceed the structure traced here. The final sentence names what address discloses where answerability arises; it does not define every living being or every way of being significant.

The book asked at the outset to say all of this in one sentence, provided it could earn it. The sentence can now be said plainly: being-with gives us a world by allowing substitution; address gives us persons by disclosing where substitution ends.

Debts

Anaximander: an early question

The earliest version of one question pursued in this book belongs to my philosophy thesis at the University of Turin, **Presenza del detto di Anassimandro in M. Zarader, Heidegger e le parole dell'origine**. That work approached the Anaximander saying through Martin Heidegger and Marlène Zarader. The present account does not reproduce that reading. What persisted was not a doctrine but a constellation: gathering and withdrawal, the relation of **to chreōn** and **dikē**, and the question whether necessity can articulate order without becoming the title of a final proprietor. The present doctrine emerged through the later dialogue trilogy and differs substantially from the thesis's argument, although the earlier constellation became newly legible in retrospect. What began as a study of the words of origin returns here in transformed form as the problem of how a common world can constitute finite participants without becoming either their ground or their absolution.

Teachers and intellectual inheritances

Gaetano Chiurazzi, my professor and co-relator at the University of Turin, is a direct intellectual source for the modal, positional, and deictic background of this book. I do not claim as original the reading of Dasein through orientation, indexicality, possibility, or the deictic articulation of space and time. The present construction joins that background to common possibility, address, claimant-standing, attribution, withdrawal, and non-forwardability. Gianni Vattimo's teaching formed part of the hermeneutic setting in which Heidegger and Schürmann first became living philosophical questions for me. Reiner Schürmann's anti-archic reading supplies the nearest precedent for the refusal of final principles and for the practical condition of thought developed here. The ordered sequence of common possibility, substitution, address, claimant-standing, attribution, locus, answer, and return is the construction proposed by this book.

Note on Terminology Across Volumes

This volume and **Ethical Ontology, Volume I: The Modal Coincidence** belong to one philosophical project but are self-standing and employ partially overlapping vocabularies in distinct regions of inquiry. This book concerns common possibility, address, attribution, and the locus at which an answer becomes non-forwardable. The successor volume develops a distinct ontological use of modal language. The clarifications below prevent lexical overlap from being mistaken for doctrinal identity; they do not make either book dependent on the other.

Modality and modal. In this book, modal language concerns possibility and necessity within an alethic-attributive grammar: possibilising necessitation, substitution, and the conditional localisation of attribution. It does not name a general way in which being obtains.

Fold. In this book, a fold is the necessary temporal sedimentation and transmissible carriage through which inherited judgments, practices, roles, records, and prior answers remain reusable beyond their first enactment. The operation is one although its realisations are heterogeneous; it becomes pathological only where a carrier is installed as claimant, judge, or final answerer. The successor volume uses qualified expressions such as **archic fold** and **sacred fold**; those qualified uses should not be read back into this book's sedimentation economy.

Claimant-standing. In this book, standing means claimant-standing: the position from which a demand may be pressed. It remains distinct from legitimacy, validity, authority, active response-capacity, and the successor volume's distinct uses of standing.

Keeping. In this book, keeping concerns the maintenance, carriage, and preservation of positions, obligations, practices, records, relations, and reference across absence and succession. It does not name a hidden keeper or a general persistence of living singular occurrence.

Common possibility. This book uses **common possibility** as a deliberately broad term for historically available and socially articulated routes of intelligibility and enactment not enclosed within one bearer. The successor volume further differentiates structures that remain gathered under this term here.

Person. This book uses **person** regionally for a human attributable party reached under determinate relations of answerability. It offers no complete ontology of personhood and does not make answerability the measure of every form of ontological significance.

Locus. In this book, **locus** names the indexed home at which an answer becomes non-forwardable. The personal and institutional cases established here are regional realisations of one attributive function, not an exhaustive inventory of every possible locus. Parties receive claims and answer; loci localise where those answers come due.

First-personal genitives of answerability. Expressions such as **mine to answer for** index attribution, avowal, and non-forwardability under a determinate relation. They do not name ownership of common possibility, sovereign origination, or a bearer beneath the relation.

Historical singularity of the common. A historically singular common is a non-repeatable configuration of inherited routes, traces, differences, and unrealised possibilities. Historical singularity alone does not establish agency, claimant-standing, locushood, or addressability as one.

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