

The Monopolisation of Mercy: A Theoretical Inquiry into Rights, Favour, Fiscal Monopoly and the Enclosure of Experience

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Abstract

This article departs from the author's proposition that "the monopolisation of mercy by power produces a more destructive form of violence than the monopolisation of violence itself" and examines how mercy becomes an instrument of domination within relations of power. The central claim is not that the monopolisation of mercy is quantitatively more destructive than physical violence, but that it can generate a more insidious and durable form of domination by rendering violence unrecognisable, dissent ungrateful, and dependence grateful. Yet the article does not reduce the monopoly of mercy to the presentation of aid as favour or to the production of gratitude. At a deeper level, the monopoly of mercy is conceptualised as a political-moral order of accessible reality which predetermines the conditions under which human beings may enter the fields of rights, aid, recognition, eligibility and contestation.

The article's theoretical architecture is organised across nine levels. The first is the regime of distribution: need is produced not merely by individual deficiency but through wages, property, debt, social security, public services and housing relations. The second is the fiscal monopoly: in the modern state, the authority to collect fiscal resources and determine the direction of redistribution is formally concentrated in political power. Yet under neoliberalism, this monopoly is eroded by global capital mobility, the threat of investment strikes, capital flight, tax competition and the disciplinary force of financial markets. Accordingly, the fiscal monopoly is treated here not as absolute state capacity, but as a political self-definition and a moral obligation through which the state continues to claim authority over society.

The third level is the grammar of mercy: power manages structural vulnerability not through rights-based transformation, but through aid, donation, eligibility, application and gratitude. The fourth is market grammar: the vulnerable subject is transformed into an "entrepreneurial victim" compelled to develop, document, remain employable and manage their own fragility. The fifth is the crisis of grammar: as assisted populations expand, processable categories of victimhood become unable to contain the scale of material suffering. The sixth is the global economy of mercy: international aid regimes, refugee camps, development funds, climate adaptation programmes and global NGO networks translate suffering into fundable and governable categories of vulnerability. The seventh is the unprocessable outside: certain lives are pushed into absolute exclusion without being admitted into any category of aid, rights or contestation. The eighth is the enclosure of experience: in the age of artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision-making, the same logic that turns the recipient of aid into a processable victim risks turning the citizen into a processable data object. The ninth is algorithmic hallucination: AI never takes over experience; it imposes in its place a calculable, synthetic and erroneous standard of reality.

The article does not treat every form of social assistance as a monopoly of mercy. It proposes five indicators through which the concept may be made empirically usable: the translation of rights into favour, the insertion of the recipient into gratitude or moral indebtedness, vulnerability to arbitrary withdrawal of support, the confinement of contestation within

technical procedures, and the recognition of suffering only within categories the system is able to process. In the absence of these indicators, aid may be understood as rights-based social protection, conditional social policy, charitable support or horizontal solidarity. Yet contemporary platform capitalism rapidly converts even horizontal solidarity into a digital marketplace of suffering.

The article further repositions the “enclosure of experience” as the “primitive accumulation of experience”. Whereas enclosure in early capitalist modernity separated labour-intensive workers from land and means of subsistence, contemporary technical- administrative regimes risk enclosing cognitive labour, professional experience and human judgement. Yet the article does not claim that artificial intelligence truly appropriates human experience. On the contrary, it argues that AI never takes over experience; it imposes in its place a calculable, synthetic and erroneous standard of reality. This process is conceptualised as algorithmic hallucination. Algorithmic hallucination does not merely refer to the production of false outputs by technical systems, but to the institutional imposition of incomplete and context-poor technical representations as standards of reality.

Finally, the article offers no solution. This is not a deficiency but a deliberate theoretical position. Contemporary power often repackages domination through the language of solutions, improvement, care, capacity-building, resilience and social innovation. The article therefore positions itself not as a new model of assistance, but as a negative political analysis that exposes the grammars through which the monopoly of mercy operates.

Keywords: Mercy, power, rights, favour, fiscal monopoly, capital blackmail, neoliberalism, regimes of distribution, crisis of grammar, entrepreneurial victim, platform capitalism, marketplace of suffering, unprocessable outside, enclosure of experience, primitive accumulation of experience, algorithmic hallucination, artificial intelligence, technical state, social assistance, recognition, eligibility, contestation.

1. Introduction: Mercy as a Problem of Power

Power is often thought through violence, surveillance, ideology or the production of consent. These concepts remain necessary; yet they are insufficient on their own for grasping a deeper dimension of contemporary domination. Power does not merely punish, watch, guide or persuade. More fundamentally, it predetermines under what conditions a human being may become visible, in what language they may ask for help, in what form they may claim a right, within which categories they may be recognised, and through which channels they may contest.

This article departs from the following proposition formulated by the author: “The monopolisation of mercy by power produces a more destructive form of violence than the monopolisation of violence itself.” This proposition is not used as a quotation from an independent or external authority, but as the original theoretical problem opened up by the article itself. The study is therefore not an interpretation of an aphorism by an existing thinker, but an attempt to justify the author’s own conceptual proposition at the levels of sociology and political theory.

This proposition is not a quantitative claim that diminishes the historical destructiveness of physical violence. Wars, genocides, torture, massacres and practices of mass extermination demonstrate the irreversible destructiveness of physical violence with brutal clarity. Arendt’s distinction between violence and power remains important for thinking the specific place of physical violence within the political field (Arendt, 1970). Accordingly, the claim of being “more destructive” does not mean destroying a greater number of bodies. The destructiveness at stake here concerns the rendering of violence unrecognisable, the coding of dissent as ingratitude, the experience of dependence as gratitude, and the transformation

of the rights-bearing subject into a recipient of favour.

Yet the article's claim does not stop there. The monopolisation of mercy is not merely the presentation of aid as favour. The monopoly of mercy is a form of domination that determines under what conditions human beings may enter the fields of need, rights, aid, recognition and contestation. The recipient of aid is not only indebted; they are compelled to be recognised within certain categories, assessed according to certain criteria of eligibility, and confined within certain channels of application and appeal.

For this reason, the monopoly of mercy is not merely an ethical or affective problem. It is also an institutional, administrative, fiscal, market-based, global and technical problem of power. The phrase "field of accessible reality" is not used here to suggest that power creates material reality *ex nihilo*. Poverty, hunger, debt, unemployment or exclusion are not fictions produced solely by discourse. They are material and historical realities. Yet power may determine how these realities will be recognised, within which categories they will be processed, to which application channels they will be attached, and which forms of contestation will count as valid.

This study proceeds on three levels. First, it defines the monopoly of mercy conceptually and relates it to the literatures on the monopoly of violence, hegemony, pastoral power, symbolic violence, the gift, recognition and everyday resistance. Second, it specifies the empirical threshold of the concept: not every form of aid is a monopoly of mercy; the monopoly of mercy begins where the language of rights is translated into favour, the citizen into a recipient, contestation into procedure, and need into an object of eligibility. Third, it thinks the monopoly of mercy together with regimes of distribution, fiscal monopoly, the blackmail of global capital, market grammar, platform capitalism, the crisis of grammar, the global economy of mercy, the unprocessable outside, the enclosure of experience in the age of artificial intelligence, and algorithmic hallucination.

This final level is decisive. Contemporary domination is to be sought not only in the power that distributes aid, but in the economic order that produces populations in need of aid; not only in appeals for donation, but in the redistributive choices of the state that collects taxes; not only in the form of social assistance, but in the market grammar that transforms vulnerability into performance; not only in horizontal networks of solidarity, but in the platforms that turn such networks into digital marketplaces of suffering; not only in institutions that regulate the field of aid, but in border regimes that admit certain lives into no category at all; and not only in systems that assist human beings, but in decision architectures that replace human experience with synthetic technical reality.

This article does not offer a solution. Contemporary power often manages problems through the language of solutions. Crisis management, targeted intervention, capacity-building, resilience, social innovation, digital inclusion, aid optimisation and platform solidarity may themselves become new forms of packaging domination. This study therefore does not seek to design a better model of assistance to replace the monopoly of mercy. Its purpose is to expose the grammars through which the monopoly of mercy operates.

2. Theoretical Architecture: Distribution, Fiscal Monopoly, the Grammar of Mercy and the Enclosure of Experience

The basic claim of this article is that the monopoly of mercy is not merely an ethical deviation that appears within relations of aid. The monopoly of mercy is a contemporary form of domination that emerges at the articulation of regimes of distribution, fiscal monopoly, mechanisms of recognition, eligibility procedures, market performance, platform infrastructures, global aid regimes and technical architectures of decision. The concept must therefore be thought not as a set of separate levels, but as a single historical chain.

The first level is the regime of distribution. The monopoly of mercy cannot be grasped without explaining why populations in need of aid emerge in the first place. Low wages, precarity, indebtedness, housing crises, the marketisation of public services and the weakening of labour's bargaining power turn need into a structural outcome rather than an individual failure. The monopoly of mercy therefore begins not at the moment aid is given, but within the distributive order that produces the need for aid.

The second level is the fiscal monopoly. In the modern state, the authority to collect taxes does not formally belong to individual philanthropists, voluntary networks or charitable communities. The fiscal monopoly belongs to the state. Schumpeter's discussion of the tax state and Tilly's account of the relation between coercion, capital and state formation show that the fiscal capacity of the modern state is intertwined with forms of political power (Schumpeter, 1991; Tilly, 1992). Yet under neoliberalism, this monopoly has been eroded by global capital mobility, tax competition, the threat of investment strikes, credit-rating mechanisms, capital flight and the disciplinary power of financial markets. Accordingly, the fiscal monopoly is treated in this article not as a seamless and absolute power, but as a political self-definition and moral obligation through which the state continues to claim authority over society.

The third level is the grammar of mercy. The regime of distribution produces or deepens need; the fiscal monopoly places responsibility for addressing this need within the state; the monopoly of mercy is the management of this responsibility through the grammar of favour, application, eligibility, aid packages, donation, charity and gratitude rather than rights-based transformation. At this point, aid does not abolish the effects of structural inequality; it translates them into processable forms of victimhood. The citizen ceases to be a rights-bearing subject and becomes a recipient expected to be recognised, classified, deemed eligible and remain grateful.

The fourth level is market grammar. Within the neoliberal regime of assistance, the individual is constituted not only as a recipient vis-à-vis the state, but also as a subject expected by the market to develop themselves continuously, remain employable, manage their own vulnerability and perform their own success. The recipient is therefore not merely needy, but becomes an "entrepreneurial victim": compelled both to prove vulnerability and to demonstrate entrepreneurial capacity to overcome it.

The fifth level is platform grammar. Platform capitalism attaches even horizontal solidarity to visibility, shareability, donor interest and algorithmic circulation, thereby converting it into a digital marketplace of suffering. Aid is displaced from rights-based security into a competitive field of performance in which well-narrated, well-visualised and well-circulated suffering is rewarded.

The sixth level is the crisis of grammar. As neoliberal vulnerability becomes massified, the grammar of the "deserving victim", "eligible application", "documentable need" and "limited support" that the monopoly of mercy can process begins to strain. Hunger, indebtedness, in-work poverty, energy poverty and housing crises may be converted into individual files; yet the mass scale of these vulnerabilities exceeds the system's processable categories of victimhood. The crisis of grammar is not the failure of the monopoly of mercy, but its limit: the system may manage suffering, yet suffering returns continuously because its cause is not removed.

The seventh level is the global economy of mercy. The grammar of mercy does not operate only at the scale of the nation-state; it becomes globalised through international aid regimes, refugee camps, development funds, climate adaptation programmes and humanitarian networks. At this level, aid is constituted not as national citizenship right, but within the fields of fundable vulnerability, project eligibility, humanitarian intervention and border regimes.

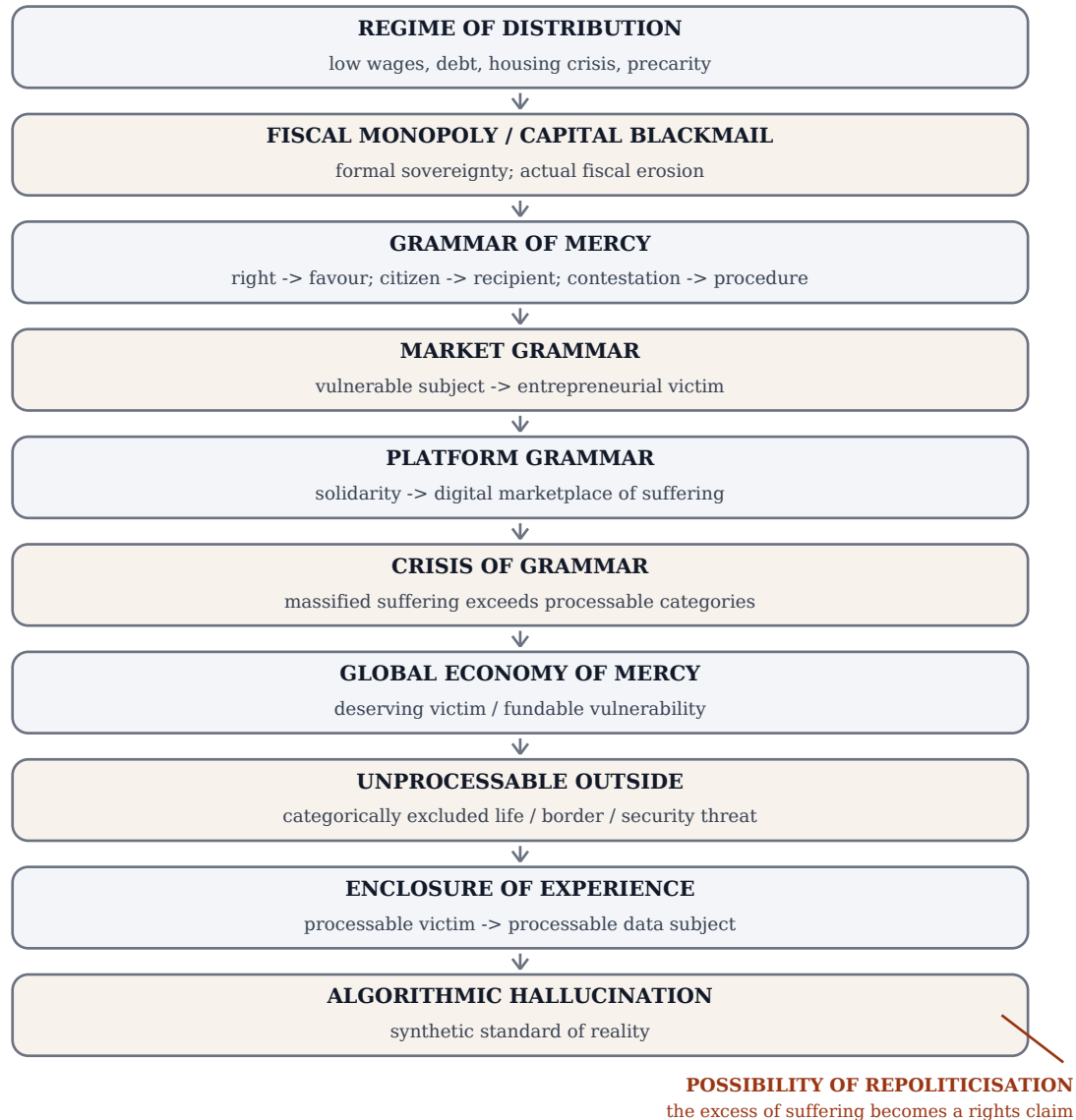
The eighth level is the unprocessable outside. The global economy of mercy does not merely insert some victims into processable categories; it pushes certain lives outside the field of aid and rights without admitting them into any category at all. Thus, the monopoly of mercy operates not only as a mechanism of recognition and management, but also as a mechanism of non-recognition and exclusion.

The ninth level is the enclosure of experience. This level does not change the article's focus; rather, it shows the expansion of the logic of processability from the field of aid into the field of decision. While the monopoly of mercy transforms the recipient of aid into a processable victim, artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision systems risk transforming the citizen into a processable data object. What is enclosed here is not only land, wages or social rights, but professional experience, judgement, the capacity for decision and the human mode of encountering the world.

The tenth level is algorithmic hallucination. Artificial intelligence never takes over experience; it imposes in its place a calculable, synthetic and erroneous standard of reality. The power of the technical system lies not in truly surpassing human experience, but in turning its impoverished representation into an institutional standard of reality.

The article's overall claim is therefore as follows: the monopoly of mercy is a contemporary form of domination that manages the need produced by regimes of distribution by detaching it from the public responsibility carried by the fiscal monopoly, translating it into the grammar of aid and eligibility, transforming vulnerability into performance through the market, inserting suffering into competitive markets of visibility through platforms, entering a crisis of grammar when mass vulnerability exceeds its categories, turning some lives into processable victims and others into the unprocessable outside at the global scale, and finally extending the same logic of processability into the field of experience and decision in the age of artificial intelligence by imposing a synthetic standard of reality.

Figure 1. The Theoretical Chain of the Monopoly of Mercy



This model summarises the article's basic movement: the regime of distribution produces need; the fiscal monopoly formally places responsibility for addressing that need in the state, while being eroded by global capital; the grammar of mercy shifts this responsibility from rights into aid and eligibility; market grammar turns vulnerability into an individual problem of performance; platform grammar transforms solidarity into a marketplace of suffering; the crisis of grammar exposes the limits of this mode of management; the global economy of mercy converts some lives into processable victims while pushing others into the unprocessable outside; the enclosure of experience extends the same logic of processability into the fields of human judgement and decision; and algorithmic hallucination imposes a synthetic standard of reality in place of experience.

3. Conceptual Positioning: What Is the Monopoly of Mercy?

The “monopoly” in the phrase “monopoly of mercy” does not mean that aid is in practice distributed by a single actor alone. In modern societies, aid and mercy are not produced solely by the state. Families, communities, civil society organisations, corporations, international institutions, local solidarity networks, religious organisations and digital campaigns all operate within the field of aid. The monopoly of mercy is therefore not a narrow claim about the number of actors.

The monopoly at stake is the monopolisation of the legitimate grammar of aid. In other words, the monopoly of mercy refers to definitional superiority over who counts as needy, which suffering will be recognised, which needs will become objects of aid, what kind of aid will be considered legitimate, which contestations will count as ingratitude, and which subjects will be classified as “deserving” of aid.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore not a single-actor monopoly over aid, but the dominance of a legitimate grammar of need and deserving assistance within a multi-actor field of aid. The state may distribute aid; NGOs may distribute aid; religious organisations may distribute aid; corporations may donate; international institutions may provide support; platforms may mediate individual campaigns. Yet these different actors often operate within the same basic grammar: need must be proven, the recipient must be deemed eligible, aid must be presented as favour, contestation must be reduced to procedure, and the recipient must remain grateful, visible, narratable and deserving.

In this sense, the monopoly of mercy is not a central institution so much as a central logic. Regardless of who gives aid, if the manner in which the recipient is recognised, assessed, indebted, rendered visible and permitted to contest is predetermined, the monopoly of mercy is operative.

This concept is related to hegemony and symbolic violence, but cannot be reduced to either. Hegemony explains how dominant orders operate not only through coercion, but also through the production of consent and the shaping of common sense (Gramsci, 1971). Symbolic violence shows how relations of domination are experienced within categories that appear legitimate, natural and acceptable (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). The monopoly of mercy, by contrast, explains the process through which the subject is first indebted within the fields of aid, rights and recognition, and then has their contestation confined within the spaces of eligibility, application and procedure.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore not merely the production of ideological consent. It is a more concrete chain of domination: need is produced or managed; aid is presented not as a right but as favour; the recipient is indebted; contestation is stigmatised as ingratitude; if the subject contests, they are inserted into procedure; the claim to rights is transformed into a technical application; the subject’s field of visibility is limited by the system’s categories; and, in the platform field, suffering is converted into a performance suitable for donor attention.

The distinctiveness of the monopoly of mercy lies in this chain.

4. Pastoral Power, the Monopoly of Violence and the Governmentality of Mercy

Foucault’s concept of pastoral power provides an essential starting point for understanding the monopoly of mercy. Pastoral power is not merely a power that prohibits or punishes; it is a power that protects, watches over, guides, promises salvation and penetrates the details of individual life. The shepherd protects the flock; yet also regulates its movement, direction, security and obedience (Foucault, 2007). This form of power carries a logic of domination that governs the individual in the name of their own good.

Modern regimes of mercy carry secularised and institutionalised forms of pastoral power. The state appears as “protector”, the institution as “supportive”, the charity as “compassionate”, the leader as “caring for the people”, the philanthropist as “lifting the fallen”, and the platform as “mobilising the community”. In this appearance, power is not harsh; it is compassionate. Yet precisely this compassion may render the subject dependent, governable, drawn into competitions of visibility and obedient.

Pastoral power provides the historical-genealogical background of the monopoly of mercy; but the monopoly of mercy is not identical with pastoral power. Pastoral power says: “I protect you, guide you, save you.” The monopoly of mercy institutionalises this logic of protection within modern aid, eligibility, application, appeal, withdrawal of assistance, technical assessment, platform visibility and the production of gratitude.

Weber’s concept of the legitimate monopoly of physical violence remains indispensable for explaining the coercive capacity of the modern state (Weber, 2004). Yet modern power does not operate solely through the centralisation of violence. It also operates through the regulation of life, the management of populations, the provision of security, and the administration of health, productivity and social order. Foucault’s analysis of bio-power is decisive for understanding this transformation (Foucault, 1978).

In this context, mercy is not the soft face of power, but part of its governmental repertoire. Power operates sometimes by punishing, sometimes by protecting; sometimes by prohibiting, sometimes by assisting; sometimes by excluding, sometimes by forgiving. These practices are not opposites. They often complement one another.

Physical violence defines the enemy of power. The regime of mercy produces the deserving victim of power. The enemy is suppressed; the deserving victim receives aid. Yet in both cases the authority of definition belongs to power.

The regime of mercy is therefore the complementary face of modern power. If the police, prison and court are punitive apparatuses, the welfare office, amnesty mechanism, donation campaign, aid package, eligibility assessment, application form, discourse of protection and platformised appeal for help are moral-administrative apparatuses of power. They are not always oppressive; but they become instruments of domination when they produce favour in place of rights, procedure in place of contestation, the processable victim in place of the subject, and the market of visibility in place of solidarity.

5. Recognition, Eligibility and Processable Victimhood

The monopoly of mercy first determines who may be recognisable. The person who requests aid, rights or protection is compelled to translate themselves into categories the system can understand: poor, victim, at risk, vulnerable, disabled, unemployed, eligible, ineligible, priority, low-risk, high-risk, applicant, beneficiary, recipient.

The issue here is not merely the provision of aid. The issue is that, in order to receive aid, the human being must first submit to a particular form of recognition. The person becomes visible not through their own story, but through the category the system is able to process. Recognition is therefore not neutral. To be recognised is to be translated into the language of the system.

When recognition is conditional, the subject ceases to be the owner of their own reality. It is not enough to narrate one’s suffering; one must render it acceptable, measurable, documentable and classifiable. In platformised aid, this requirement becomes still more visible: the person must not only prove their suffering, but present it as an affective, shareable and donatable story.

Eligibility is the second threshold of the monopoly of mercy. Even if the person is recognised, they may not be deemed eligible for assistance. Eligibility often appears technical and neutral. Yet criteria of eligibility are politically constituted. Who is prioritised, which poverty counts as real, which document is accepted as sufficient, which behaviour disqualifies the recipient, and which needs count as “urgent” are all determined through social and political choices.

Processable victimhood is the result of this process. A person is a victim only to the extent that the system can process them. Suffering that the system cannot recognise does not become reality for the system. Need that the system cannot classify cannot enter the field of aid. Contestation that the system cannot evaluate cannot become audible contestation. Suffering that the platform cannot circulate disappears within the field of visibility.

The monopoly of mercy is also related to debates on recognition and redistribution. Theories of recognition emphasise the political importance of the subject being socially visible and valued (Honneth, 1995). Debates on redistribution show that inequality concerns not only symbolic status, but the distribution of material resources (Fraser, 1995; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The monopoly of mercy does not separate these two levels. On the contrary, it shows how recognition is attached to relations of distribution.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore the moral-administrative form of the tension between recognition and redistribution.

6. Indebted Silence and Moral Violence

The monopoly of mercy operates on two levels. On the first level, it produces indebted silence where hegemony is insufficient to produce consent. The recipient of aid may not consider the dominant order legitimate; yet they may withdraw their contestation for fear of losing assistance, being accused of ingratitude, becoming invisible, or deepening their existing vulnerability. On this level, the monopoly of mercy targets not the subject’s inner consent but their external silence.

On the second level, it predetermines the spaces in which this silence may be broken. If the subject does not remain silent and seeks to claim rights, request aid, become visible or contest, they cannot do so in their own language or on the terms of their own reality. They must enter pre-established application forms, eligibility criteria, recognition categories, documentary regimes and appeal procedures. In the platform field, they must translate their suffering into the narrative form that the platform can circulate.

Moral violence is the compulsion to access what is rightfully one’s own as if it were a favour. Yet it is not limited to this. Moral violence is also the compulsion to translate one’s experience into the categories of the system in order to be recognisable, to prove one’s need in order to receive aid, to be confined within technical channels in order to contest, and to accept as reality the field of life already narrowed by the system.

Under the monopoly of mercy, contestation often ceases to be a political right and becomes a request for a technical correction. When a person who cannot access assistance says, “this order is unjust”, they make a political claim; yet the system redirects them towards technical questions: “why was my application rejected?”, “which document is missing?”, “has the appeal deadline passed?”, “may I request reassessment?” The object of contestation thus ceases to be justice and is reduced to procedure.

This transformation is among the quietest forms of domination. Contestation is not wholly prohibited. On the contrary, channels of appeal are opened. Yet these channels are organised in such a way as to narrow the political content of contestation. The person still speaks, but their speech is confined to the language of the file. They still make a demand, but their demand is transformed from a claim to rights into a request for procedural correction.

For this reason, the monopoly of mercy does not merely suppress contestation; it absorbs it. The prohibition of contestation is crude power. The transformation of contestation into procedure is a more refined power. The subject is granted the right to speak; yet what counts as audible speech is predetermined.

7. The Empirical Threshold: Not Every Form of Aid Is a Monopoly of Mercy

The analytical power of the concept of the monopoly of mercy lies not in naming every form of aid as domination, but in showing under what conditions aid transforms a relation of rights into a relation of favour, application, eligibility, gratitude and political silence. The concept therefore requires a clear empirical threshold.

Not every form of social assistance, application form, eligibility criterion or administrative procedure is a monopoly of mercy. A rights-based social state also operates through application, documentation, monitoring and appeal mechanisms. These mechanisms may reduce arbitrariness, secure entitlement and ensure the fair distribution of public resources. The existence of procedure alone is therefore not evidence of domination.

The monopoly of mercy concerns not the existence of procedure, but the politicalmoral function of procedure. A mechanism of assistance becomes a monopoly of mercy only under certain conditions. The first is that aid is presented not as a right, but as the generosity or protective will of the giver. The second is that the recipient is positioned not as a rights-bearing citizen, but as a grateful recipient, deserving victim or object of eligibility. The third is the absence of strong, independent and intelligible channels of appeal when aid is withdrawn, reduced or refused. The fourth is the production, explicit or implicit, of expectations of loyalty, silence, avoidance of ingratitude or moral conformity. The fifth is the absorption of the political content of rights claims into technical application, missing documentation, reassessment or eligibility procedure.

These five indicators need not all be present in every case. Yet for the concept of the monopoly of mercy to be used strongly, at least three levels must be observable simultaneously: aid presented as favour, the recipient made indebted, and contestation technicalised. Without this triad, the concept must be used with caution.

This threshold makes the concept falsifiable. If a regime of assistance is legally guaranteed, does not require personal loyalty, recognises the recipient as a rightsbearing citizen rather than a grateful recipient, provides independent channels of appeal, makes the grounds for withdrawal clear and reviewable, does not punish recipients for public criticism, and does not package assistance for the production of political loyalty, then it is weak to speak of a monopoly of mercy. In such a case, aid should be understood as rights-based social protection rather than a regime of favour.

Contemporary digital capitalism, however, complicates this distinction. Practices that are not rights-based but appear to constitute horizontal solidarity may rapidly become part of the monopoly of mercy when attached to platform infrastructures. In such cases, the fact that aid is “non-state” or “voluntary” does not mean that it produces no domination. The status of aid is determined less by who gives it than by the grammar of visibility, narrative, eligibility and indebtedness within which it operates.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore not a general critique that labels the entire administrative structure of the welfare state as domination. Rather, it is a limited concept that seeks to make visible the distinction between rights-based social policy, indebted assistance and the platformised marketplace of suffering.

8. Empirical Testing Protocol: How Can the Monopoly of Mercy Be Identified?

The analytical force of the monopoly of mercy lies not in naming every relation of assistance as domination, but in distinguishing the thresholds at which aid ceases to be a right and becomes attached to the grammar of favour, eligibility, gratitude and technicalised contestation. The concept must therefore be established not merely as a theoretical proposition, but as an empirically testable toolkit.

This study proposes five indicators through which the monopoly of mercy may be empirically traced: the translation of rights into favour; the insertion of the recipient into gratitude or moral indebtedness; vulnerability to arbitrary withdrawal or precarious access; the confinement of contestation within technical procedures; and the recognition of suffering only within categories the system is able to process. These indicators need not all be present in every case. Yet for the concept to be used strongly, at least three indicators must be simultaneously observable and mutually reinforcing.

To make this threshold concrete, the following matrix indicates the relation between the ideal-typical examples used in the article and the concept. The purpose is not to subject these examples to a full comparative case analysis, but to provide a testing protocol that shows where the concept works strongly and where it weakens.

Technicalisation of contestation Processable victimhood Overall assessment

Table 1. Empirical testing matrix for the monopoly of mercy

Example / Indicator	Translation of rights into favour	Gratitude / moral indebtedness	Precarious access / risk of withdrawal	Technicalisation of contestation	Processable victimhood	Overall assessment
Food banks in the United Kingdom	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Strong monopoly of mercy; also high potential for politicisation
Faith-based initiatives	Moderate / strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak / moderate	Moderate	Context-dependent; strengthens where it replaces public rights
Bolsa Família	Weak / moderate	Weak / moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Not directly a monopoly of mercy; approaches it when conditionality combines with political loyalty
Bread subsidies in Egypt	Moderate	Weak / moderate	Strong	Weak	Moderate	Partial monopoly of mercy; primarily shows the relation between basic needs, social contract and political stability
Non-state armed / criminal actors	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak; direct punishment	Moderate / strong	Not the normal form; coercive boundary-case fused with violence
Platformised aid campaigns	Strong	Moderate / strong	Strong	Weak / moderate	Strong	Horizontal solidarity transformed into a marketplace of suffering

This matrix makes three results visible. First, the monopoly of mercy does not operate with the same intensity across every form of aid. Second, the concept works most strongly where the status of rights is weakened, the recipient is indebted, and contestation is either technicalised or punished. Third, some examples limit the concept as much as they confirm it. Bolsa Família and bread subsidies in Egypt, in particular, show that aid cannot always be reduced to the monopoly of mercy. By contrast, platformised aid campaigns show that even state external and seemingly horizontal forms of assistance may become part of the monopoly of mercy through visibility, narrative and donor desire.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore not a broad label to be applied to every form of social assistance, but a threshold of domination that must be tested through specific empirical indicators. The value of the concept lies not in its working everywhere, but in its ability to show where it works, where it weakens, and where room must be made for other concepts.

9. Regimes of Distribution: The Production of Need and Neoliberal Management of Vulnerability

The concept of the monopoly of mercy must explain not only the language in which aid is presented, but also the structural conditions under which populations in need of aid are produced. When the relation of assistance is separated from the question of how need emerges, mercy appears merely as a moral act or administrative support mechanism. Yet if need is continuously produced or deepened through relations of distribution, wage regimes, systems of social security, indebtedness, housing costs, labour's bargaining power and the status of public services, aid is no longer a simple instrument of compensation. It becomes a political-moral mechanism for managing the vulnerability produced by structural inequalities.

To see this transformation historically, the distinction between Keynesian-Fordist welfare regimes and neoliberal regimes of distribution is important. The Keynesian period should not be romanticised. Post-war welfare state experiences were never equal, inclusive and complete rights regimes for everyone. Women's labour, migration status, racial inequalities, colonial legacies, informal work, care labour and non-citizenship constituted serious zones of exclusion within these regimes. Nevertheless, Keynesian-Fordist welfare orders claimed not to leave social risks to the mercy of the market and individual philanthropy.

In that period, aid was ideally understood as a component of citizenship. Social support was not merely individual generosity or charitable donation, but the public sharing of social risks. This claim was certainly not always realised in practice; yet the normative frame matters. The legitimacy of assistance was to be derived not from the favour of the giver, but from the institutional status of social rights.

Neoliberal transformation significantly weakened this frame. The decoupling of wages from productivity, deunionisation, the decline of labour's bargaining power, financialisation, the contraction of social safety nets, the marketisation of public services, austerity policies, the transformation of housing into an investment asset and the rise of household debt have made the lives of broad populations more precarious (Bivens & Mishel, 2015; Economic Policy Institute, 2022; Blyth, 2013; Streeck, 2014). Under these conditions, aid ceases to be a supplementary mechanism for those unable to work, temporarily unemployed or in need of special protection. It becomes part of the everyday reproduction strategies of broad groups who work for low wages, cannot make ends meet despite full-time employment, cannot pay rent and bills, live through debt, turn to food banks and struggle to access public services.

This historical shift should be read on two levels. The first is quantitative expansion. Aid ceases to be a limited response to an exceptional condition of poverty and becomes a broad field of support directed at widespread forms of vulnerability such as in-work poverty, food insecurity, housing crisis, energy poverty and indebtedness. The distance between the

“recipient of aid” and the “normal citizen” narrows.

The second is qualitative transformation. As the scope of aid expands, its status may shrink. As rights-based social protection weakens, aid may become more attached to conditions, eligibility checks, documentation, moral assessment, charitable networks or local mediation. The language of social rights thus increasingly gives way to the language of application, eligibility, gratitude, behavioural monitoring and precarious access.

For this reason, under neoliberalism mercy acquires a structural function that cannot be explained through individual kindness or temporary compensation. When income and wealth concentrate in certain classes and groups, labour’s share of the value it produces declines, social rights contract and public services are marketised, the presentation of aid as “mercy” generates a theoretical problem. Aid is not an independent act of generosity; it is a mode of managing the damage systematically produced by inequality.

In other words, a regime of distribution first renders broad populations vulnerable, and then manages this vulnerability through aid, donation, support packages, food parcels, debt deferrals or eligibility-based social programmes. Brazil’s Bolsa Família programme cannot be reduced to a clientelist charity regime, given its poverty-reducing effects; yet the relationship between conditional cash transfers, voting behaviour and the production of political legitimacy shows how social assistance may intersect with political attachment (Hunter & Power, 2007; Zucco, 2013). Bread subsidies in Egypt show that basic needs are not merely economic, but political symbols that constitute state-society relations (Gutner, 2002).

The debate on faith-based initiatives in the United States also shows how the transfer of social responsibility from the field of public rights to voluntary, religious or charitable networks may transform the status of aid (Chaves, 2004; Wineburg, 2007). These examples do not belong to the same historical regime; yet the shared analytical mechanism is clear: need is produced or deepened, and this need is then managed within the grammar of aid rather than rights.

10. Fiscal Monopoly, Capital Blackmail and the Limits of the Grammar of Mercy

The crisis of grammar of the monopoly of mercy is not merely a problem of the administrative capacity of aid mechanisms. At a deeper level, it concerns the displacement of fiscal responsibility. In the modern political order, the authority to collect taxes belongs neither to individual philanthropists, voluntary networks nor charitable communities. The fiscal monopoly formally belongs to the state. Thus, when structural poverty, housing crisis, food insecurity, lack of access to healthcare or in-work poverty become mass phenomena, responsibility for their resolution lies first not with tax-paying individuals, but with the political power that claims to hold the authority to collect and redistribute resources.

Yet this claim does not assume that the state possesses unlimited and absolute fiscal sovereignty under neoliberalism. On the contrary, the contemporary state’s capacity to tax is seriously constrained by global capital mobility, tax competition, credit-rating mechanisms, the threat of investment strikes, capital flight and the disciplinary power of financial markets. The fiscal monopoly of the modern state is therefore not as smooth and absolute as classical theories of sovereignty might imply. Under neoliberalism, fiscal sovereignty remains formally within the state while becoming constantly vulnerable to blackmail by the mobility of global capital.

This does not eliminate the responsibility of the state. On the contrary, it sharpens the political and moral contradiction of the monopoly of mercy. The state still defines itself vis-à-vis society as the monopoly of taxation and legitimate violence. It demands taxes from citizens, requires obedience, produces legal obligations, indebts, punishes and uses coercion

when necessary. Yet when the same state invokes the erosion of its fiscal sovereignty vis-à-vis global capital and transfers responsibility for expanding social rights to the fields of aid, donation, campaigns, family, community, platforms and charity, the rupture between its claim to sovereignty and its practice of responsibility is exposed.

The issue, then, is not the assumption that the state is always powerful enough to resolve structural vulnerability. The issue is that the state compensates for its weakness upwards with sovereignty downwards. A political power that retreats before global capital, struggles to establish tax justice, and cannot discipline wealth and capital mobility remains powerful before the citizen through application, eligibility, withdrawal, sanction, indebtedness and aid regimes. The state thus converts its capitulation before capital into moral and administrative control over the citizen.

At this point, the monopoly of mercy arises not from the absolute power of the state, but from its double position: limited upwards, commanding downwards; flexible towards capital, procedural towards citizens; weak in fiscal sovereignty, strong in social control. While the state accepts its weakness before global capital, it shifts the cost of this weakness onto the rights-bearing citizen. More patience, more documentation, more eligibility, more personal responsibility and more gratitude are expected from the citizen.

The fiscal monopoly is therefore used in this article not as an absolute capacity, but as a political self-definition and moral obligation. If the state constitutes itself as the monopoly of taxation, it cannot transfer social vulnerability to individual mercy and platformised aid. If it cannot actually use this monopoly against global capital, it cannot turn this weakness into a moral excuse against the citizen's claim to rights. The scandal of the monopoly of mercy lies precisely here: power preserves its claim to sovereignty downwards while evaporating its responsibility upwards.

The relation between fiscal monopoly and the grammar of mercy is not only about the state's capacity to collect resources. It is also about how fiscal crisis is narrated. Under neoliberalism, the erosion of the tax base, the weakening of progressive taxation, the lowering of corporate tax, capital mobility, tax avoidance strategies and the use of public debt as a disciplinary instrument produce a grammar of fiscal crisis that often presents the contraction of social rights as technical necessity. This grammar allows social rights to be coded as budgetary burdens, public services as costs, and the citizen's claim as an unsustainable expectation.

The issue is therefore not only the objective contraction of state fiscal capacity. More importantly, it is how fiscal capacity is politically interpreted. While continuing to claim the monopoly of taxation, power may transfer redistributive responsibility to budgetary discipline, austerity, targeted aid, voluntary donation, corporate social responsibility campaigns and charitable networks. The grammar of fiscal crisis and the grammar of mercy thus complement one another: the former explains why rights must be contracted; the latter manages the social damage caused by this contraction through the language of moral assistance.

This relation cannot be established as direct mechanical causality. The erosion of the tax base does not automatically produce the monopoly of mercy. Yet there is structural correspondence between them. When the grammar of fiscal crisis codes public rights as costs, the grammar of mercy manages the social consequences of rights loss through aid, eligibility and gratitude. The state thus narrows fiscal responsibility through the language of technical necessity while absorbing the vulnerabilities produced by this narrowing through the moral language of aid.

The crisis of grammar of the monopoly of mercy is therefore not limited to the question, "why is the aid system insufficient?" The real question is: why does the power that claims to hold

the authority to collect taxes allocate these resources to the management of vulnerability rather than structural transformation? Why does it transform the recipient into someone who must constantly apply, prove eligibility, show gratitude and have their contestation confined to procedure, rather than strengthening social rights?

Responsibility must therefore be located correctly. The insufficiency of food banks, the scarcity of donors, the mercilessness of individuals or the weakness of social solidarity cannot be presented as the primary cause of the structural problem. These are secondary mechanisms of compensation that arise where the fiscal and political responsibility of the state has retreated. The primary responsibility lies with the political power that collects taxes, determines the budget, contracts or expands social rights, marketises public services or could re-communalise them.

For this reason, the critique of the monopoly of mercy is not a call for individuals to give more aid. On the contrary, it is the obligation to ask why aid does not become right, and why publicly collected resources are directed towards managing vulnerability rather than reducing it structurally. If the fiscal monopoly is part of the state's political self-definition, then responsibility for structural need also lies primarily with the state. When the grammar of mercy covers over this responsibility, aid ceases to be a virtue and becomes the moralised evasion of fiscal responsibility.

11. Crisis of Grammar, Vulnerability Portfolio and the Entrepreneurial Victim

It is necessary to speak of a threshold at which neoliberal management of vulnerability reaches its own limit. As populations in need of aid become massified, the grammar of the "deserving victim", "eligible application", "documentable need" and "limited support" that the monopoly of mercy can process begins to strain. Hunger, housing crisis, in-work poverty, indebtedness and energy poverty may be converted into individual application files; yet as these problems become widespread, the system's processable categories of victimhood struggle to contain the scale of material vulnerability.

This situation is not only a moral crisis of the monopoly of mercy, but also an administrative one. The crisis of grammar of the monopoly of mercy appears at the threshold where processable categories of victimhood struggle to contain massified material vulnerability. At this threshold, the choice of power is decisive: rather than intervening in relations of distribution, tax justice, wage regimes, housing rights, public services and social security, power may continue to manage the problem through more applications, more eligibility checks, more temporary support and more appeals to charity.

When the crisis of grammar has actually emerged, yet power still prefers to manage the problem rather than resolve it, the monopoly of mercy assumes its most naked political form. At this stage, the problem is no longer unknown. Hunger is visible. Debt is visible. In-work poverty is visible. The housing crisis is visible. Despite this, power distributes these realities across processable victimhood files, campaigns, donation networks, social assistance packages and technical application processes instead of moving them into the field of rights and redistribution.

Neoliberal management of vulnerability transforms not only the status of aid, but also the form of the recipient. Whereas Keynesian-Fordist welfare regimes, at least normatively, sought to constitute the citizen as a rights-bearing subject to be collectively protected against social risks, neoliberal aid regimes compel the subject to behave like a "portfolio of vulnerability" that must constantly document, manage and present its own fragility. This subject is not merely poor; they are an applicant subject required continuously to prove income, debt, housing situation, health condition, family structure, job-seeking performance

and eligibility status.

Indebtedness thus operates not only for the assistance received, but also for the permission to remain visible within the system. The recipient is compelled to be grateful not only for the support received, but also for remaining recognisable and processable. This is the neoliberal form of indebted silence: the person is indebted not merely because they receive aid, but because they can be translated into the system.

The monopoly of mercy does not operate only through state welfare bureaucracy or charitable networks. Under neoliberalism, the market also becomes one of the constitutive actors of the grammar of mercy. The recipient is constituted not only as a grateful recipient before the state, but also as a market subject who manages, documents, optimises and performs their own vulnerability. The “portfolio of vulnerability” is therefore not merely an administrative file of application; it is also the market-shaped form of neoliberal subjectivity.

This subject must not only prove need; they must also demonstrate that they remain investable, employable, improvable and governable. Job-search programmes, coaching, mentoring, CV preparation, interview simulations, personal development discourse, entrepreneurship incentives, skills-updating programmes and behavioural conformity mechanisms do not merely turn vulnerability into an object of aid; they turn it into an object of performance. The person is both in need of aid and obliged to display the entrepreneurial capacity to overcome this need.

This figure may be called the “entrepreneurial victim”. The entrepreneurial victim differs from the passive poor person held responsible for failure. In a more refined form, they are an active recipient expected to manage, present and transform their own vulnerability. They are not told directly, “you have failed”; rather, they are told, “improve yourself, complete your documents, update your skills, reduce your risk, remain visible, prove your eligibility.” The recipient thus becomes the object not only of the social assistance system, but of the behavioural and performative grammar of the market.

This transformation shows the direct relation between the monopoly of mercy and neoliberal market rationality. While the grammar of mercy translates claims to rights into applications for aid, market grammar translates vulnerability into a problem of personal development and employability. The first transforms the citizen into a grateful recipient; the second transforms the vulnerable subject into an object of performance required constantly to invest in itself. When these two grammars work together, the subject is indebted not only because they receive aid, but because they must constantly improve themselves.

Domination within neoliberal aid regimes therefore does not operate only at the level of “aid is given, but not as a right”. At a deeper level, the way the person manages their own life is reconstituted. Vulnerability is no longer merely a social problem to be resolved; it becomes a portfolio that the individual must manage, market, improve and prove. At this point, the monopoly of mercy combines with market grammar to produce a full social ontology: the human being ceases to be a rights-bearing citizen and becomes a vulnerable entrepreneur compelled continuously to prove themselves across the fields of aid, performance, eligibility and data.

In this framework, the idea of an “excess of suffering” that does not fit the grammar becomes central. The expansion of populations in need of aid does not merely mean that the monopoly of mercy classifies more people; it also means that the capacity of classification itself is strained. The system seeks to translate hunger into vouchers, debt into restructuring, housing crisis into application files, and in-work poverty into the outcome of income tests. Yet as material vulnerability becomes massified, this act of translation constantly produces remainder: unprocessed experiences, unrecognised suffering, lives that do not fit categories, and political anger that cannot be reduced to procedure.

This absorption is never complete. The crisis of grammar creates the possibility of repoliticisation precisely here. As populations in need of aid become massified, processable categories of victimhood struggle to contain the scale of suffering. The excess of suffering that does not fit application forms, vouchers, aid packages and eligibility scores reveals that the issue is not individual need, but structural distribution. The crisis of grammar is therefore not merely an administrative blockage; it is also the moment in which political openness appears.

Scott's concepts of hidden transcripts and everyday resistance become important again at this point. The recipient does not always produce open revolt; yet the anger, irony, distrust, tactical adaptation and silent forms of contestation accumulated beneath the language of aid may become public speech in moments of grammatical crisis. The fact that food banks do not merely distribute food but also make visible the insufficiency of the social security system is one example of this transformation. At the limit of processable victimhood, victimhood may become a political claim once again.

The monopoly of mercy therefore has a dialectical structure. On the one hand, it inserts suffering into recognisable, classifiable and governable forms; on the other, the massification of suffering exposes the limits of these forms. Power seeks to manage suffering; yet as long as it does not remove the cause of suffering, every mode of management produces a new political opening. The crisis of grammar is not merely a weakness of the monopoly of mercy; it is the starting point of a rights-based politics that may emerge against it.

12. Mini-Case: Food Banks, Processable Victimhood and the Tension of Politicisation

The rise of food banks in the United Kingdom in the context of post-2010 austerity policies and welfare reforms provides a powerful, though not one-directional, example for testing the concept of the monopoly of mercy empirically. Food banks have become charitable safety nets filling the gap left by diminished social security mechanisms. In this situation, hunger and food insecurity may be transformed from matters of public rights and social policy into processable demands for aid within mechanisms of donation, volunteering, referral and charity (Garthwaite, 2016; Lambie-Mumford, 2017).

This example supports the concept of the monopoly of mercy because hunger here becomes visible not only as material deprivation, but as a category of application and need that certain institutions can process. The person seeking help from a food bank often does not simply say, "I am hungry"; they become recognisable through referral, vouchers, income situation, proof of need, local distribution and limited resource management. Hunger is thereby organised not as a direct violation of social rights, but as a needs file that a charitable organisation can process.

Yet the same example also limits the monopoly of mercy thesis. Food banks do not function solely as depoliticising charitable institutions. Some food bank networks criticise the normalisation of food aid, make visible the insufficiency of the social security system, and insist that basic needs should be met through rights-based social protection rather than donations. In this situation, the field of food banks is not merely a carrier of the monopoly of mercy, but also one of its points of fracture.

This tension matters. The practice of food banks may translate hunger from a claim to social rights into an aid file; yet the visibility of hunger on this scale may also politicise the failure of the welfare regime. Aid distribution may produce depoliticisation; but the massification of the need for aid may also produce repoliticisation.

The example of food banks in the United Kingdom therefore yields the following result: the monopoly of mercy may transform the relation of aid from a rights claim into a grammar of

charity; but this transformation is not absolute. The experiences of recipients, the public criticisms of aid-providing institutions, and the material spread of hunger continuously strain the grammar of mercy. Food banks are therefore both a symptom of the monopoly of mercy and a potential site of rights-based contestation against it.

13. Coercive Boundary-Case: Non-State Armed Actors and Criminal Patronage Regimes

The monopoly of mercy is not a form of domination that operates only within the social assistance bureaucracy of the modern state. This does not mean, however, that the concept may be applied without limit to every relation of aid and protection. Non-state armed actors, criminal organisations, cartel-type formations, mafia-like patronage networks, paramilitary groups and insurgent forms of governance do not show the normal form of the monopoly of mercy, but coercive boundary-cases in which aid, protection and physical threat are fused.

In this context, the term “terrorist organisation” is dependent on legal and political classifications; different states, international institutions and historical contexts may classify the same actor in different ways. The article therefore focuses not on normatively classifying particular organisations, but on the shared mechanisms discussed in the literature under the headings of “non-state armed actors”, “insurgent governance”, “sectarian welfare networks”, “criminal patronage” and “private protection”.

Where state authority is weak, withdrawn or never established in certain areas, armed and criminal actors do not operate only as structures that use violence. They may also establish patronage networks that provide protection, mediation, food, health, housing, employment, debt, funeral support, local justice or security. These practices make them not only feared actors, but actors to whom people turn, whom they calculate and whom they may sometimes be compelled to recognise.

Arjona (2016) shows that armed actors in civil war contexts do not merely use violence, but also establish forms of governance over everyday order, local authority and civilian life. Mampilly (2011) likewise discusses how rebel structures may regulate civilian life through education, health, security and local services in areas they control. Weinstein (2007) demonstrates that armed organisations develop different forms of violence and governance depending on their social base, resource structure and relations with civilians.

Similarly, Cammett’s (2014) work on sectarian welfare networks in Lebanon shows that aid operates not only as material support, but together with community belonging, political attachment and the production of moral debt. Levitt (2006) discusses how aid, charity, political organisation and violence become intertwined in the case of Hamas. In relation to criminal organisations, Gambetta (1993) analyses the Sicilian mafia through the production of private protection, while Varese (2011) examines how mafia-like structures establish relations of local protection, mediation and coercion when they move into new territories.

This boundary-case hardens the basic logic of the monopoly of mercy. In state bureaucracy, aid operates through eligibility criteria, application forms and appeal procedures; in criminal or armed contexts, aid often operates through personalised loyalty, local mediation, fear and direct physical threat. Aid is not a right here; it is the favour of the organisation, patron, commander, family or local intermediary.

In criminal-patronage contexts, the monopoly of mercy approaches the following chain: aid produces debt; debt becomes an expectation of loyalty; loyalty is measured through silence and cooperation; and the violation of loyalty may be punished not only by the withdrawal of aid, but by physical threat. This is the coercive, rather than bureaucratic, form of the monopoly of mercy.

The aim of this section is not to turn criminal organisations into the main model of the monopoly of mercy. Its aim is to show how mercy becomes coercive patronage when the hand that gives aid and the hand that punishes belong to the same actor. In state bureaucracy, the monopoly of mercy confines contestation within procedure; in criminal regimes of domination, it punishes contestation directly. For this reason, the criminal context shows not the normal form of the monopoly of mercy, but its coercive boundary-form fused with violence.

14. The Global Economy of Mercy, the Unprocessable Outside and Absolute Exclusion

The monopoly of mercy does not operate only at the scale of the nation-state. International humanitarian regimes, refugee camps, development funds, climate adaptation programmes, disaster management mechanisms and global NGO networks produce transnational forms of the grammar of mercy. At this level, aid is constituted not only within the state-citizen relation, but within the donor-institution-victim triangle. The figure of the “deserving citizen” is thereby replaced by categories such as the “deserving refugee”, “vulnerable community”, “climate victim”, “aid-eligible population” or “at-risk group”.

Within the global economy of mercy, aid is often constituted through the language of human rights, humanitarian responsibility and emergency intervention. This language is not entirely false; it responds to real suffering, wars, disasters, hunger and forced displacement. Yet it must also translate suffering into categories that are fundable, reportable, measurable and governable. The refugee is not only a displaced person; they are registered, biometrically recognised, assigned a vulnerability score, located within a camp space, matched with an aid package and translated into the categories of funding reports.

The global economy of mercy therefore shows a new scale of the monopoly of mercy. Here donor financing takes the place of the fiscal monopoly, humanitarian programmes take the place of national social assistance, the beneficiary takes the place of the citizen, and project-based support takes the place of social rights. Yet the basic grammar is similar: suffering must enter a category in order to be recognised; aid must become measurable vulnerability in order to be accessible; contestation is often limited by project procedures, funding conditions or internal institutional complaint mechanisms.

Yet the global economy of mercy does not operate only by inserting victims into processable categories. At a harsher threshold, it also chooses not to admit certain bodies and lives into any category at all. The monopoly of mercy therefore produces not only the “deserving refugee”, “vulnerable community” or “aid-eligible population”, but also the unprocessable outside that is never admitted into the field of aid, rights or contestation.

This distinction is decisive. Processable victimhood refers to the recognition of the subject by the system, but a recognition attached to particular categories of aid, vulnerability, eligibility and funding. The unprocessable outside refers to the subject not being recognised even as a victim. In this case, the person is no longer a recipient of aid, applicant or vulnerable population, but an irregular migrant, security risk, border violator, deportable body, excess outside the camp, or death outside statistics.

Global border regimes therefore do not always produce mercy. Sometimes they say explicitly: I admit you into no category of aid; I do not recognise you as a subject of rights; I code you not as victim, but as threat. At this point, the monopoly of mercy ceases to be merely a grammar of aid that selects the eligible and becomes a mechanism of exclusion that pushes the ineligible outside the field of recognition.

This exclusion is the negative face of the monopoly of mercy. On its positive face, the subject is recognised as a processable victim; on its negative face, the subject is cast out as

unprocessable excess. In the first case, the person must translate their suffering into the system's categories in order to receive aid. In the second, they do not even have the right to translation. There is no language of application, no channel of appeal, no recognisable status of victimhood.

The harshest violence of the global economy of mercy therefore lies not only in reducing victims to fundable and measurable categories. Its deeper violence lies in casting certain lives outside categories, refusing even to process them, and thereby pushing them outside the fields of rights, aid, visibility and mourning. Fanon's "zone of non-being" reappears here in the form of border regimes, lives outside camps, legal statelessness and political invisibility (Fanon, 2008). Agamben's account of bare life, Mbembe's necropolitics and Butler's discussion of grievable life are also important for understanding this form of exclusion (Agamben, 1998; Mbembe, 2019; Butler, 2009).

At this point, the monopoly of mercy and the security regime become articulated with one another. The victim eligible for aid is managed; the ineligible threat is excluded. Two figures are therefore produced side by side within the same global order: the deserving victim who accesses the aid package and the absolutely excluded person admitted into no category. The first is indebted within the grammar of mercy; the second is cast outside the grammar of mercy and deprived of political, legal and ontological visibility.

The climate crisis sharpens this grammar further. Drought, floods, fires, famine, forced migration and ecological destruction produce new populations of vulnerability, while these vulnerabilities are often managed through technical categories such as "resilience", "adaptive capacity", "risk reduction" and "vulnerability index". Ecological justice claims may thereby be translated into processable environmental victimhood within project language. Yet in the same process, some communities may be pushed into the unprocessable outside of displacement and statelessness without even being recognised as climate victims.

This global level expands the concept of the monopoly of mercy without rendering it limitless. Not every humanitarian intervention is domination. Life-saving interventions, emergency support and networks of solidarity are real and necessary. Yet when aid replaces justice; when the claim to rights is translated into project eligibility; when victimhood is reduced to a fundable category; when suffering is severed from its causes and processed as governable vulnerability; and when certain lives are pushed outside without being admitted into any category, the global economy of mercy becomes the transnational form of the monopoly of mercy.

The monopoly of mercy must therefore ask not only how recognition is constituted, but where and for whom recognition is refused. To understand the field of aid, one must look not only at those who are helped, but at those who are not even considered helpable. The global economy of mercy is therefore a field of domination in which both processable victimhood and the unprocessable outside are produced together.

15. The Enclosure of Experience, the Primitive Accumulation of Experience and Algorithmic Hallucination

The enclosure of experience is not used in this article as a second theory independent of the monopoly of mercy. On the contrary, it refers to the expansion of the logic that turns the recipient of aid into a processable victim towards the fields of professional judgement, public decision and human experience in the age of artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision systems. In the regime of aid, the human being must translate their suffering into a category the system can process in order to be recognised. In the regime of technical decision, the human being must translate experience into data, performance, risk profile, score or standard output in order to be effective in decision processes. The enclosure of experience therefore does not change the axis of the article; it carries the logic of processability of the monopoly of mercy to a further historical threshold.

In the early stages of capitalist modernity, enclosure separated peasants from common lands, means of subsistence and local lifeworlds. This process rendered labour-intensive workers dependent on the wage labour market and constituted the material basis of modern regimes of need (Marx, 1990; Polanyi, 2001). Today, with the spread of artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision systems, a similar risk of dispossession is emerging in the field of cognitive labour. What is now enclosed is not only land or bodily labour, but professional experience, judgement, expertise and the capacity to decide. Enclosure is not merely the erection of fences around land; it is the taking away of the human capacity to build a world through one's own experience.

The enclosure of experience is not merely a technical risk of the age of artificial intelligence. At a deeper level, it is the new historical form of capitalist dispossession. In Marx's account of primitive accumulation, enclosure created the material conditions of the capitalist labour market by separating peasants from common lands and means of subsistence. As Polanyi showed, this process was not merely economic but a constitutive transformation that tore apart the social fabric. Today, a similar logic operates in the fields of cognitive labour, professional judgement and human experience.

This process may be called the "primitive accumulation of experience". The primitive accumulation of experience refers to the separation of the human capacity to encounter the world, decide, learn through error, develop professional intuition and produce institutional judgement from the common human field, and its appropriation by datasets, algorithmic models, automated decision systems and technical platforms. What is dispossessed here is not only labour time or income, but the human capacity to understand the world and produce judgement through experience.

A decisive distinction must, however, be made here: AI never takes over experience; it imposes in its place a calculable, synthetic and erroneous standard of reality. The phrase "never" is not a superficial denial of technical capacity. AI can of course process traces, records, decision patterns, case histories, classifications and measurable outcomes of experience. Yet these are not experience itself. Experience is the capacity for encounter, hesitation, responsibility, error, context, intuition, embodied memory and bearing the consequences of judgement. AI therefore does not take over experience; it processes the data-capturable residues of experience and replaces experience with the synthetic outputs generated from these residues.

The enclosure of experience is therefore not merely the transfer of experience, but the substitution of experience by its technically impoverished equivalent. Algorithmic decision systems do not take over the experience of the judge, doctor, teacher or social worker as such. The capacity to encounter cases, sense context, assume responsibility, hesitate, identify exceptions and meet the human being cannot be fully transferred into datasets. What is

transferred is often the traces, records, past decision patterns, measurable variables and classifiable outcomes of experience. These traces then return as model outputs, risk scores, eligibility scores or recommendation systems. Yet what returns is not experience itself, but the technically impoverished representation of experience.

It is therefore necessary to speak of “algorithmic hallucination”. Algorithmic hallucination is not merely the production of false information by a system. In a deeper sense, algorithmic hallucination is the institutional imposition of an incomplete, synthetic or context-poor technical output as a standard of reality. The system does not merely make mistakes; it substitutes its calculable representation for reality. Decision then emerges not from experience, but from a technical reality that mimics experience.

This makes the enclosure of experience still more dangerous. Human experience is not only excluded; it is also discredited. The hesitation of the judge, the clinical intuition of the doctor, the pedagogical attention of the teacher or the contextual knowledge of the social worker may be treated as “subjective”, “slow”, “inconsistent” or “unmeasurable” in relation to the technical system. Algorithmic output, by contrast, is presented as “objective”, “fast”, “scalable” and “rational”.

Yet this output often carries not the depth of human experience, but its datasimulated shadow.

Modern democracies have largely established the promise that distinguishes them from caste systems through education, merit and professional progression. Education has been presented not only as a means of acquiring knowledge, but as the principal mechanism through which the individual may overcome the class position into which they were born, acquire social status through experience, and participate in public institutions. Yet in an order where cognitive labour is devalued, professional experience becomes dependent on automated decision systems, and institutional judgement begins to be reduced to technical output, education can no longer secure the promise of social mobility. The distinction between democracy and caste may remain formally intact while the channels of actual mobility narrow.

The primitive accumulation of experience is therefore one of the basic dynamics of digital capitalism. Data is not merely the record of past experience; it becomes the raw material of technical mechanisms to be installed in place of experience. The traces people produce while working, learning, deciding, treating, judging, applying and contesting are transferred to the ownership and processing capacity of technical systems. Experience thereby ceases to be common human accumulation and becomes a field of capital accumulation for platforms, models, data infrastructures and algorithmic decision regimes.

This transformation becomes especially critical in experience-intensive fields such as law, medicine, education and public administration. If professional decisions are detached from judgement processes matured through experience and transferred to automated recommendation, scoring, classification or standard output systems, adjudication in law, treatment in medicine and pedagogical relation in education may become regimes of de-experienced decision. Yet experience is not merely a form of accumulating information; it is the human habitat of encountering the world. Dreyfus and Dreyfus’s work on expertise and intuitive judgement, together with Schön’s discussion of reflective practice, shows that professional decision is not merely rule application but practical judgement matured through experience (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Schön, 1983). Decision detached from experience hollows out human institutions.

Eubanks’s work on automated inequality, O’Neil’s account of weapons of mathematical destruction, Pasquale’s black box society, Crawford’s analysis of the political and material costs of artificial intelligence and Zuboff’s work on surveillance capitalism show that

technical decision systems are not merely instrumental tools, but structures that produce political relations of power (Eubanks, 2018; O’Neil, 2016; Pasquale, 2015; Crawford, 2021; Zuboff, 2019).

In both cases, the subject becomes visible not as the owner of their own experience, but within the form the system can recognise and process. In the regime of aid, the person must become an eligible victim; in the technical state, they must become an eligible data point, risk profile, performance measure or application object.

This transformation is also important for state theory. Fiscal, coercive, legal and social assistance monopolies are among the classical elements defining the modern state. Yet when decision processes are increasingly detached from social experience and professional judgement and transferred to technical systems, the state ceases to be merely an apparatus operating over society and becomes a decision architecture detached from society’s experiential fabric. Such a state cannot be fully explained by ancient concepts of citizenship, classical theories of sovereignty or the modern concept of the welfare state.

What emerges here is not a state that represents society, but a technical-administrative state that processes society through categories of data, risk and eligibility. To the extent that this state becomes detached from society, that is, from experience, it constitutes the citizen not as a political subject but as a processable data object. The new threshold of contemporary domination is therefore not merely the monopolisation of mercy, but the enclosure of experience.

15.1 A Moment of Decision: Algorithmic Welfare Assessment and the Constitution of the Processable Subject

The operation of the monopoly of mercy may be seen intensely at the moment of algorithmic welfare assessment. Imagine a citizen who works for low wages, cannot pay rent, has accumulated debt and is forced to apply for food support. This person does not enter their own life into the application screen as a narrative; they divide their income, household, debt, rent burden, employment status, health condition and family structure into fields the system can recognise. Vulnerability ceases to be experience and becomes data entry. Hunger, housing crisis and indebtedness appear not as violations of social rights, but as processable parameters for eligibility calculation.

In this single moment of decision, all the levels of the article converge. The regime of distribution has rendered the person vulnerable through low wages, debt and housing pressure. The fiscal monopoly formally places responsibility for structurally addressing this vulnerability in the state. Yet the state transfers this responsibility not to rights-based social protection, but to the system of application and eligibility. The grammar of mercy transforms the person’s demand from a rights claim into an application for assistance. The crisis of grammar appears with the massification of similar applications: the system can process individual files, but cannot resolve the social scale of vulnerability. The enclosure of experience is the technical threshold of this process: the person’s life is reduced to the data form that algorithmic decision can recognise.

The problem here is not merely that the algorithm may make mistakes. The deeper problem is that an algorithmic-administrative architecture decides which lives may be visible within which categories. The recipient is recognised not as the owner of their own experience, but as a data object the system can process. When they contest, they often cannot say, “my life does not fit this category”; they are redirected towards technical forms of contestation such as “my income information was entered incorrectly”, “my score is wrong”, or “my document was counted as missing”. A political claim to justice is thus reduced to a request for procedural correction.

This moment of decision shows the technical-state phase of the monopoly of mercy. The subject constituted as processable victim in the regime of aid becomes a processable data subject in the algorithmic regime of decision. Experience is the human habitat; yet when this habitat is translated into data fields, risk scores, eligibility points and automated decision logic, the human being ceases to be the narrator of their own world and becomes an object that the system can calculate.

Experience is the human habitat; decision, education, treatment and adjudication detached from human experience do not merely erode particular professions, but the institutional world of humanity itself. While the monopoly of mercy transforms the rights-bearing subject into a recipient of favour, the primitive accumulation of experience transforms the experienced subject into a processable data source and technical decision object. The first reduces the claim to rights to an application for aid; the second reduces judgement to data output. The first makes the citizen a recipient of favour; the second makes the citizen and the professional into processable inputs of the technical system.

The new threshold of contemporary power is therefore not merely the monopolisation of mercy. At a deeper level, it is the dispossession of experience. The enclosure of land separated the human being from means of subsistence; the enclosure of experience risks separating the human being from the habitat of judgement. Yet this enclosure operates not because it truly takes over experience, but because it installs a calculable hallucination in place of experience.

16. Distinguishing Regimes of Aid and Platformised Solidarity

To prevent the concept of the monopoly of mercy from expanding excessively, different regimes of aid must be distinguished. Not every form of aid has the same political status. The same material support may produce different power relations in different contexts. The decisive issue is therefore not the quantity of aid, but its status, language, conditions and contestability.

The first type is rights-based social assistance. Here support is legally guaranteed, claimable, based on transparent criteria, does not require personal loyalty and includes independent mechanisms of appeal. This form of aid should be evaluated not as a monopoly of mercy, but as a citizenship right.

The second type is conditional social policy. Conditional cash transfers, support tied to educational or health participation, and assistance linked to certain behavioural conditions belong to this category. Such programmes are ambivalent. On the one hand, they may reduce poverty, improve access to education and health, and strengthen the capacities of vulnerable groups. On the other, if conditions are structured in a degrading way, they may transform the recipient into a subject who is constantly monitored and compelled to prove eligibility.

The third type is charitable aid. Food banks, donation networks, religious aid organisations, corporate social responsibility and voluntary support mechanisms may be considered here. Charitable aid may meet urgent needs and produce real effects of solidarity. Yet when it replaces public rights, renders the political causes of poverty invisible and makes the recipient dependent on the discretion of the donor, it becomes a carrier of the monopoly of mercy.

The fourth type is clientelist or loyalty-based aid. Here assistance is explicitly or implicitly connected to political attachment, silence, voting, communal loyalty, allegiance to a leader or local mediation. This form of aid is closest to the monopoly of mercy. The recipient is positioned not as a rights-bearing subject but as a recipient expected to show loyalty.

The fifth type is horizontal solidarity. Mutual aid networks, non-hierarchical collective support and practices of aid among equals theoretically belong to this category. Here what matters is not the moral superiority of the giver, but shared vulnerability and mutual responsibility. At first sight, horizontal solidarity may appear to offer a possibility outside the monopoly of mercy. Yet under contemporary digital capitalism this optimistic parenthesis rapidly closes. When horizontal solidarity is attached to platform infrastructures, it often does not remain outside the monopoly of mercy; it becomes one of its most naked and brutal forms.

Crowdfunding platforms, medical aid campaigns, social support appeals, disaster relief campaigns and individual stories of suffering initially appear to be direct forms of social solidarity. Yet on these platforms aid is attached not to rights-based security, but to visibility, narrative, affective force, shareability, algorithmic circulation and donor interest. Suffering thereby enters a digital marketplace of performance. To receive aid, it is not enough to be in need; need must be made narratable, photographable, circulable, affectively consumable and capable of capturing donor attention.

At this point, horizontal solidarity becomes a vertical marketplace of suffering. The person who tells the best story, uses the most dramatic image, establishes the most innocent position of victimhood, becomes most shareable and remains visible within platform algorithms increases their chances of receiving aid. Silent sufferings, poorly narrated stories, aesthetically invisible forms of poverty, politically uncomfortable victimhoods and lives without network support remain invisible. The platform does not equalise suffering; it creates competition between sufferings.

Platformised aid is therefore not horizontal solidarity, but the digitalised market form of mercy. The donor does not appear directly as power; yet the platform's regime of visibility, narrative format, payment infrastructure, commission structure, algorithmic ranking and affective circulation determine for whom aid becomes possible. The recipient becomes not a rights-bearing citizen, but a watchable, shareable and donatable victim.

This transformation is one of the harshest sites where the monopoly of mercy fuses with market grammar. The state withdraws social rights; the market platformises the suffering produced by this withdrawal; the citizen is compelled to present medical costs, rent, funeral expenses, disaster losses or basic needs to the mercy of the digital crowd. Public rights become platform performance; social security becomes storytelling; solidarity becomes the attention economy.

Horizontal solidarity can remain outside the monopoly of mercy only to the extent that it is not absorbed by platforms, funding regimes, visibility markets and donor desire. Under contemporary digital capitalism, however, this space is narrowing. Platform capitalism rapidly transforms even aid among equals into a vertical economy of suffering. The monopoly of mercy is therefore not only the grammar of the state, charity or the global aid industry; it is also the grammar of platformised solidarity (Srnicek, 2017).

These distinctions define the limits of the concept. The monopoly of mercy begins not with the existence of aid, but with the conversion of the field of rights into the field of favour, eligibility, visibility, performance and indebtedness.

17. Gift, Debt and Gratitude

The monopoly of mercy operates not only through the distribution of resources, but also through indebtedness. Marcel Mauss's theory of the gift is important here. The gift is never merely a matter of giving without return. It establishes social bonds through obligations to give, receive and reciprocate (Mauss, 1990). The gift may produce social peace, solidarity and reciprocity. Yet it may also produce debt, hierarchy and dependence.

When aid is part of mutual solidarity among equals, it may establish social bonds. Yet when aid is used within an asymmetrical relation to produce the superiority of the giver and the permanent indebtedness of the recipient, the gift becomes an instrument of domination.

The mercy of power operates precisely in this way. The recipient is given not only material support, but also a moral debt. They are expected to give thanks. This gratitude is not simple politeness. It is a political positioning. Criticism by the recipient may easily be stigmatised as ingratitude. Gratitude thereby becomes less an affective form of consent than the moral form of indebted silence.

In platformised aid, gratitude becomes still more visible. The recipient is indebted not only because they receive support, but also because they have opened their suffering to public display and sought to become worthy of donor attention. A debt of thanks to the donor, visibility to the platform, updates to the campaign, stories to followers and emotion to spectators is created. The relation of aid thereby produces debt not only between giver and recipient, but also before the digital crowd that watches, shares and funds.

As Simmel emphasises in his analysis of poverty, the “poor” are socially defined not only through material deprivation, but through the relation of assistance (Simmel, 1965). Fraser and Gordon’s work on the historical transformation of the concept of dependency in the context of the welfare state also shows how the recipient of aid is constituted within moral and political categories (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Aid therefore does not merely alleviate poverty; it also produces the social position and form of recognition of the poor.

Gratitude is not politically innocent. Gratitude is the moral digestion of inequality. When people receive what belongs to them as if it were a favour, they do not merely become poorer; they begin to lose the language of rights. The language of aid suffocates the language of rights.

18. The Besieged Subject: Consent, Tactics and the Cost of Contestation

It would be wrong to see the recipient within the monopoly of mercy as an entirely passive, deceived or mentally captured subject. People do not have to believe in power when they receive aid. They may receive aid and regard it as a right. They may act grateful while feeling anger inwardly. They may use the language of power tactically. They may display consent openly while resisting in everyday life.

Scott’s concepts of everyday resistance and hidden transcripts are important for this reason. The oppressed do not always act through open rebellion. They may remain silent, perform roles, outwardly obey, resist beneath the surface, use the system to their own advantage or ironically neutralise dominant discourse (Scott, 1985, 1990). Scott’s analysis of the state’s tendency to make society legible and administratively manageable is also important for understanding processable victimhood (Scott, 1998). The monopoly of mercy therefore never functions perfectly. Power cannot fully persuade everyone.

This does not mean that the monopoly of mercy is ineffective. The success of power lies not in making everyone believe, but in raising the cost of contestation. The possibility that criticism by the recipient may be coded as ingratitude is itself a field of pressure. Even when the person does not inwardly consent, the moral language of aid constrains them politically.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore not a brainwashing mechanism, but a political-moral and institutional mechanism of siege. The subject is not completely captured; yet their field of movement is narrowed. They speak, but speech becomes costly. They claim rights, but rights are made to appear as ingratitude. They receive aid, but are expected to remain silent because they have received aid. They contest, but their contestation is confined within a

technical application process. If they seek aid on a platform, they must submit their suffering to a competition of visibility.

The aim of power here is not to capture everyone's inner world completely. The more realistic and more dangerous aim is this: to make it costly for people to say openly what they know to be true.

19. The Ethnography of Grammar: A Methodological Manifesto for Researching the Monopoly of Mercy

The monopoly of mercy is not merely a conceptual proposition, but an empirically researchable grammar analysis. Its research programme cannot therefore be content with measuring the amount of aid or the intentions of institutions. What must be investigated is the language, category, procedure, document, affect, visibility and architecture of contestation through which aid is constituted. This study proposes a methodological orientation that may be called the "ethnography of grammar" for researching the monopoly of mercy.

The first step is discourse analysis of aid texts. Application forms, aid announcements, social policy documents, campaign texts, institutional brochures, leaders' speeches, donation appeals and eligibility guidelines should be examined. The central question is: is aid presented as a right, favour, responsibility, generosity or crisis management?

The second step is the ethnographic examination of recipients' experiences. Through in-depth interviews, field observations and everyday narratives, researchers should examine how recipients feel themselves to be rights-bearing, indebted, grateful, ashamed, angry, tactical, excluded or visible. The monopoly of mercy often becomes visible not in official documents, but in what the recipient cannot say, which contestation they withdraw, and which affect they cannot carry publicly.

The third step is the institutional mapping of appeal mechanisms. How can a decision on aid be contested? Is the right to appeal clear? Is the language of appeal intelligible? Is there independent review? Can the reasons for the decision be known? Is contestation treated as a political rights claim, or reduced to a procedure of correction? The monopoly of mercy often becomes visible not at the moment aid is given, but at the moment aid is refused or withdrawn.

The fourth step is the analysis of the architecture of eligibility. Who is eligible for assistance? Which suffering is recognised? Which poverty counts as real? Which missing document makes victimhood invisible? Which behaviour disqualifies the recipient? Eligibility criteria reveal the moral anthropology of the aid regime: they show what kind of "deserving victim" the system presupposes.

The fifth step is the analysis of platform visibility. If aid campaigns operate through platforms, research must look not only at the amount donated, but at which stories circulate, which images become effective, which sufferings are deemed shareable, which campaigns become algorithmically visible, and which lives remain silent. The platform is not merely an intermediary of aid, but a power architecture that determines the conditions under which suffering circulates.

The sixth step is black-box auditing of algorithmic decision systems. If applications for aid are processed through risk scoring, automated eligibility assessment, fraud detection or prioritisation of resources, research must focus not only on formal policies but on data fields, model assumptions, error rates, contestability and explainability. Technical systems are not neutral tools; they are decision architectures that determine which lives can become visible within which categories.

The seventh step is mapping the unprocessable outside. An aid regime shows not only whom it recognises, but whom it does not recognise at all. Those unable to apply, those left unregistered, those without legal status, those held at borders, those pushed outside camps, those coded as security threats and those admitted into no category of aid must be placed at the centre of analysis. The monopoly of mercy is not only the grammar of recognition, but also the grammar of nonrecognition.

The eighth step is the examination of the institutional traces of algorithmic hallucination. The researcher should not look only at whether the system makes correct or incorrect decisions. The deeper question is: what synthetic standard of reality does the system impose? Which data representation does it put in the place of experience? Which technical output discredits which form of human judgement? At what point does “error” cease to be an exceptional malfunction and become the very production of institutional reality?

The aim of this methodological programme is not to condemn aid regimes morally from the outside. Its aim is to show under what conditions aid expands the field of rights, under what conditions it produces favour and indebtedness, under what conditions it absorbs contestation, under what conditions it inserts suffering into the platform market, under what conditions it casts people outside categories, and under what conditions it creates the possibility of repoliticisation. The ethnography of grammar transforms the monopoly of mercy from an abstract concept into a researchable, comparable and falsifiable object of social science.

20. On Refusing to Offer Solutions: The Negative Politics of Exposure

This study does not provide a design for solutions. A paper on the monopoly of mercy that hastily offers solutions may easily fall back into the grammar it criticises. Contemporary power often manages problems through the language of solutions: crisis management, targeted intervention, capacity-building, resilience, social innovation, digital inclusion, aid optimisation, platform solidarity. Not every language of solution is emancipatory by itself. Some proposed solutions do not remove the cause of the problem; they make it more manageable, more measurable, more fundable and more platformisable.

The aim of this article is not to design a new model of aid to replace the monopoly of mercy. Its aim is to show the conditions under which aid ceases to be a right and becomes attached to the grammar of favour, eligibility, gratitude, performance, platform visibility, processable victimhood and unprocessable exclusion. The study should therefore be read less as a positive policy prescription than as a negative form of exposure.

This choice is not a theoretical deficiency, but a deliberate positioning. The strongest feature of the monopoly of mercy is its ability to present domination through the language of solutions, assistance, protection, improvement and support. The first task of critical thought is therefore not immediately to design alternative institutions, but to render visible the grammar through which existing institutions operate. Exposure here is not passive description; it is a negative political act that breaks the ability of power to present itself as morality, aid and technical necessity.

The article therefore deliberately leaves the question “what should be done?” suspended. This question is often reduced to “how can the existing order be managed more humanely?” The question posed here is harsher: what kind of order first renders the human being needy and then inserts them into the category of the aidable? What kind of power collects taxes while transferring responsibility to donation? What kind of platform turns suffering into a market of visibility? What kind of border regime does not even count certain lives as helpable? What kind of technical system imposes a synthetic standard of reality in place of

experience?

This article is not incomplete because it offers no solution. It is severe because it refuses to allow domination to be repackaged under the name of solution. Its political task is not to write prescriptions, but to show how the language of prescription itself may become a technique of governance.

21. Discussion and Limits

The concept of the monopoly of mercy does not rest on the claim that power creates reality *ex nihilo*. Hunger, illness, debt, homelessness and unemployment are not fictions produced solely by discourse or administrative category. They are hard realities felt in the body, everyday life and material relations. A hungry person suffers without needing an institution to recognise hunger. A person without housing is exposed to cold, insecurity and exclusion without needing a document that proves the existence of the housing crisis.

The monopoly of mercy should therefore be understood not as an absolute constitutive force that creates material suffering, but as a grammar of power that determines how material suffering will be recognised, to which channels it will be attached, and into which demands it will be translated.

Material reality is a point of resistance outside the monopoly of mercy. Hunger does not fit entirely within the grammar of aid. Suffering cannot be reduced fully to file categories. The housing crisis exceeds the limits of the application form. Illness cannot be exhausted by eligibility assessment. Power may classify suffering, but it cannot entirely absorb the bodily and material hardness of suffering.

Similarly, the recipient is not entirely passive. The concept of “processable victimhood” does not mean that the subject is wholly swallowed by the system. The recipient may learn the language of the application form, use eligibility criteria to their advantage, strategically perform the form of victimhood the institution wants to see, conceal some information, emphasise other information, and transform the system’s categories into tactics of survival. In this situation, the subject is not only translated, but also manages the act of translation.

The concept of “monopoly” must also be understood within this limit. The monopoly at stake here is not absolute single-actor ownership. If understood in that way, it would fail to explain the multi-actor structure of modern fields of aid. Yet if the word “monopoly” were abandoned completely, the definitional power of aid regimes would not be rendered with sufficient force. The monopoly of mercy is therefore used as a monopoly of grammar, not as a monopoly of actors.

The concept of “fiscal monopoly” is used not in the sense of absolute state power, but in the sense of the state’s political self-definition and moral responsibility. Fiscal sovereignty eroded by global capital does not eliminate the state’s responsibility towards citizens. On the contrary, compensating weakness upwards with procedural sovereignty downwards is one of the harshest contradictions of the monopoly of mercy.

The concept of the “unprocessable outside” must also be used carefully. It does not mean that everyone excluded is destroyed in the same way. Rather, it allows different mechanisms of exclusion — non-recognition, legal nullification, statelessness, waiting at borders, threat of deportation, being pushed outside camps, and being coded as a security threat — to be thought within the same analytical frame. The aim of the concept is to ask not only whom aid regimes recognise, but whom they do not recognise at all.

The concept of “algorithmic hallucination” likewise does not claim that technical systems always function incorrectly. The more basic claim is this: even when the technical system produces correct outputs, it cannot replace human experience. Experience is not only an

outcome, but a process of encounter, responsibility, context and judgement. Algorithmic hallucination is broader than the production of false information by technical systems; it is the imposition of an incomplete technical representation as an institutional standard of reality.

The limit of this article is that it develops the concept at the level of theory and ideal-typical illustration. The five empirical indicators offer a testable framework for future field research, discourse analysis, policy comparison and institutional study. The article does not claim to subject every example to systematic case analysis through these indicators. Instead, it shows through which mechanisms the concept may be tested and under what conditions it may be falsified.

The monopoly of mercy is not an absolute and closed fate. Power seeks to shape the field of accessible reality; yet the excess of material suffering, the tactical intelligence of the subject, the specificity of historical contexts and collective practices of contestation continually strain this field. The monopoly of mercy is powerful, but not complete. It is real to the extent that it works; it is political to the extent that it breaks.

22. Conclusion

This article has conceptualised the monopoly of mercy not merely as the presentation of aid as favour, but as the predetermination of the fields of rights, aid, recognition, contestation, taxation, distribution, market, platform, global humanitarian economy, border regimes and technical decision. At the same time, the concept is not a limitless critique that names every form of aid as domination. The monopoly of mercy designates a specific threshold of domination at which aid loses the status of right and becomes attached to the grammar of favour, loyalty, eligibility, gratitude, visibility, performance and technicalised contestation.

The monopoly of mercy is therefore not limited to the production of consent in the classical sense. Even when people do not consider the dominant order legitimate, they may remain silent out of fear that aid will be withdrawn, that they will become invisible, that their applications will not be processed, that their contestation will be technically absorbed, that they will fail to remain visible on platforms, or that they will be stigmatised as ungrateful. The monopoly of mercy produces precisely this silence.

The central conclusion of the article is that the monopoly of mercy cannot be thought apart from relations of distribution and the fiscal monopoly. In an order where wages are suppressed, labour's bargaining power is weakened, social rights are contracted, public services are marketised and household debt becomes widespread, aid cannot be understood merely as generosity or temporary compensation. Aid becomes a political-moral grammar that manages the damage produced by structural inequality.

Yet this article does not construct the state as an omnipotent actor. Under neoliberalism, the fiscal monopoly of the state has been eroded by global capital. Capital mobility, the threat of investment strikes, credit-rating mechanisms, tax competition and financial discipline limit the fiscal sovereignty of the state. But this erosion does not eliminate the responsibility of the state towards the citizen. If the state continues to define itself as the monopoly of taxation and violence, it cannot turn its weakness before global capital into an excuse against the citizen's claim to rights. The scandal of the monopoly of mercy lies precisely here: power preserves its claim to sovereignty downwards while evaporating its responsibility upwards.

Under neoliberalism, the monopoly of mercy does not merely manage need; it reaches the limit of its own grammar of processable victimhood because need becomes massified. Hunger, debt, housing crisis and in-work poverty may be translated into application files, vouchers, temporary support and aid campaigns; yet this translation does not remove the cause of material suffering. Suffering does not merely demand recognition; it also reveals its

own cause.

Platform capitalism brutalises this grammar further. When horizontal solidarity is attached to platform infrastructures, it often ceases to be support among equals and becomes a digital marketplace of suffering. To receive help, it is not enough to be in need; suffering must be presented as an affective, shareable, aesthetic, innocent and donatable story. Solidarity becomes the attention economy; rights become visibility performance; social security is transferred to the mercy of the digital crowd.

At the global scale, the monopoly of mercy operates with two faces. On one face, the victim is inserted into a processable category: deserving refugee, vulnerable community, fundable suffering, aid-eligible population. On the other face, certain lives are admitted into no category: pushed outside camps, borders, legal status, security and mournability. The monopoly of mercy is therefore not only the grammar of aid, but a political technology of recognition and non-recognition, of keeping alive and leaving outside, of governing and erasing.

The article's contribution to the literature is to conceptualise mercy not as an ethical or theological virtue, but as an empirically testable grammar of domination. The study builds a bridge between critiques of the welfare state, governmentality studies, fiscal sociology, debates on recognition and redistribution, analyses of platform capitalism, the literature on algorithmic injustice, humanitarian studies, border regimes, debates on climate vulnerability and theories of professional practice. The concept of the monopoly of mercy makes it possible to think in a single chain mechanisms usually examined separately: the regime of distribution that produces need; the fiscal monopoly that claims responsibility for resolving it while being eroded by global capital; the aid regime that shifts this responsibility into the grammar of favour and eligibility; the market grammar that turns vulnerability into performance; the platform grammar that inserts suffering into the market of visibility; the crisis of grammar produced by massified suffering; the global economy of aid; the unprocessable outside; and finally the technical-state threshold at which the same logic of processability extends into the fields of experience and decision.

The new threshold of contemporary domination is the enclosure of experience. While the monopoly of mercy transforms the rights-bearing subject into a recipient of favour, the primitive accumulation of experience risks transforming the citizen and the professional from experienced subjects into processable data objects. Yet what is decisive here is this: AI never takes over experience; it imposes in its place a calculable, synthetic and erroneous standard of reality. If decision in law, treatment in medicine, pedagogical relation in education and political responsibility in public administration are transferred to technical systems detached from human experience, what remains is not merely more efficient governance, but a new form of state detached from the experiential fabric of society.

This article offers no solution. Its deliberate theoretical stance is to refuse the repackaging of domination under the name of solution. Its task is not to write prescriptions, but to show how the language of prescription itself may become a technique of governance. The final claim of the article is therefore this: aid attached to rights is solidarity. Aid attached to favour is domination. Aid that replaces public responsibility collected through taxation is fiscal evasion. Aid attached to platforms becomes a marketplace of suffering. Aid that predetermines the conditions under which human beings may appear, apply, be recognised and contest is institutional violence. Aid that refuses to recognise certain lives becomes a border regime. And when decision is detached from human experience, not only institutions but the human habitat of encountering the world begins to dissolve.

The one who encloses land takes subsistence; the one who monopolises mercy takes rights; the one who encloses experience takes humanity.

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