

THE OPPOSITE OF THE HUMAN IS ALSO HUMAN

*Power, Imposition, Positional Opposition and the Infrastructuralisation
of Ontological Intervention*

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“The opposite of the human is also human.”

REALITY PARADIGM · THEORETICAL SOCIOLOGY · POWER & INFRASTRUCTURE

Abstract

This article reconceptualises power not through an ontological distinction between different kinds of human beings, but through the social concentration and reproducibility of the capacity to constitute, modify and sustain the binding conditions of reality. Those who impose and those upon whom conditions are imposed remain on the same ontological human plane. Their difference lies not in what they are as human beings, but in the positional distribution of condition-setting capacity. The difference, therefore, is not ontological but positional.

Yet not every positional asymmetry constitutes opposition. Relations such as physician–patient, parent–child or pilot–passenger may involve profound asymmetries of condition-setting capacity without thereby becoming relations of positional opposition. Positional opposition arises at a higher threshold: when the establishment, exercise or reproduction of one party’s condition-setting superiority becomes functionally dependent upon keeping the other party’s effective counter-constitutive capacity weak, neutralised or bypassed. Mere advantage is insufficient. The weakness of one party may benefit another without being necessary to the reproduction of the latter’s superior condition-setting position. Nor does positional opposition require overt conflict, hostility, malice, conscious design or a single directing agent. Its defining mechanism is functional dependence.

The article therefore distinguishes power, positional asymmetry, imposition and positional opposition as analytically separate levels. Power is the reproducible position of condition-setting capacity; asymmetry is the unequal distribution of that capacity; imposition is its binding exercise in the absence of effective counter-constitutive capacity or genuine refusal; positional opposition is the functional dependence of superior condition-setting capacity upon the weakness, neutralisation or bypassing of counter-capacity.

Imposition acquires ontological reach when it no longer merely affects what a person does but alters which lives are genuinely possible, accessible and sustainable for that person and which conditions can actually be refused. ‘Ontological’ refers here not to the metaphysical source of power but to the existential reach of intervention. A finding of ontological intervention therefore requires evidence of material change in real possibility or effective accessibility together with an effect upon sustainability or genuine rejectability, supplemented by causal linkage and counterfactual relevance.

To render these distinctions empirically contestable, the article develops the concept of effective counter-constitutive capacity, the Counter-Capacity Response Test, the Ontological Reach Test, explicit unit-of-analysis rules, process-tracing requirements, three-valued evidentiary coding and a distinction between reliability, discriminant validity and scope robustness.

Homovictimus denotes the tactically agentic subject acting within reality conditions it did not effectively constitute. The Onopticon, by contrast, names neither power nor imposition in general. It denotes the specific infrastructural regime in which ontological imposition becomes feedback-driven, cross-domain, scalable and weakly contestable from the subject’s position. Terminal closure is treated as a distinct high-consequence variant within the wider Onoptic research programme rather than as a substitute for the cross-domain composition threshold of the general model.

The central claim is therefore derived rather than assumed:

The opposite of the human is also human — not because the human is inherently opposed to the human, but because organised human condition-setting capacity can become functionally dependent upon keeping another human being’s effective counter-constitutive capacity weak, neutralised or bypassed.

Keywords: Reality Paradigm; power; imposition; positional opposition; ontological intervention; effective counter-constitutive capacity; Homovictimus; Onopticon.

Box 1. Concept Set and Analytical Architecture

Concept	Working definition	Analytical brake
Condition-setting capacity	Capacity to constitute, modify or sustain conditions that become binding upon another person's field of possible life and action.	Capacity is not yet imposition.
Power	Socially concentrated and reproducible position of condition-setting capacity.	Power ≠ imposition.
Positional asymmetry	Unequal distribution of condition-setting capacity.	Asymmetry ≠ opposition.
Imposition	Binding exercise of condition-setting capacity in the absence of effective counter-constitutive capacity or genuine refusal.	Option-arrangement and option-narrowing may themselves constitute imposition.
Effective counter-constitutive capacity	Direct or institutionally mediated capacity to alter, suspend, reject or participate effectively in constituting a binding condition.	Formal voice is insufficient.
E0	Symbolic or ineffective participation.	Voice without binding effect.
E1	Capacity to correct an individual outcome.	Outcome changes; condition remains.
E2	Effective capacity to alter the binding condition itself.	Condition-level counter-capacity.
Functional advantage	Benefit derived from another party's weakness.	Functional advantage ≠ functional dependence.
Functional dependence	Relation in which superior condition-setting capacity requires weak, neutralised or bypassed counter-capacity for its reproduction or effective exercise.	Required for positional opposition.
Positional opposition	Functional dependence of condition-setting superiority upon weak, neutralised or bypassed counter-capacity.	Conflict ≠ positional opposition.
Counter-Capacity Response Test	Examines what happens when counter-capacity increases: opening, adaptation or neutralisation.	Genuine opening weakens the theory's opposition claim.
Ontological intervention	Imposition reaching the conditions under which viable forms of life exist as real possibilities.	Ontological reach must be demonstrated empirically.
OM1	Change in real possibility.	Is a viable life-path removed or materially reconstituted?
OM2	Change in effective accessibility.	Does the formal option remain practically usable?
OM3	Change in sustainability.	Can the option be maintained without loss of another basic domain?
OM4	Change in genuine rejectability.	Can the condition be refused without forfeiting basic existential capacity?
Homovictimus	Tactically agentic subject acting within conditions it did not effectively constitute.	Agency within conditions ≠ agency over conditions.

Concept	Working definition	Analytical brake
Normative rewriting	Recoding adaptation produced under imposed conditions as preference, trait, risk or responsibility and reusing it in binding decisions.	Adaptation alone is insufficient.
Integrator position	Operational position coordinating access, common classification, correlation and cross-layer outcome production.	Interoperability alone is insufficient.
M3	Social-epistemic feedback in which one decision's outcome becomes input to subsequent classification or decision.	Feedback ≠ regime.
Environmental a priori	Historically constructed technical-material conditions in place before a particular encounter and structuring access, movement or action.	Before the encounter, not before history.
Onopticon	Feedback-driven, cross-domain infrastructural regime of ontological imposition under weak effective contestability and foreclosure.	Ontological intervention ≠ Onopticon.
Imposed reality	Final empirical verdict that binding reality conditions have been infrastructurally imposed.	Verdict, not premise.

The conceptual sequence is:

Condition-setting capacity → Power → Positional asymmetry → Imposition → Positional opposition → Ontological intervention → Homovictimus / adaptation → Feedback → Onopticon

The principal epistemic brakes are:

Power ≠ asymmetry. Asymmetry ≠ imposition. Imposition ≠ opposition. Functional advantage ≠ functional dependence. Conflict ≠ positional opposition. Opposition ≠ ontological intervention. Ontological intervention ≠ Onopticon. Architecture ≠ effect. Reliability ≠ validity.

1. Introduction: Relocating the Question of Power

The classical questions of power theory have largely been organised around visible actors and visible acts: Who governs? Who commands? Who surveils? Who exploits? Who decides?

This article does not reject those questions. It relocates them to an analytically prior level:

Whose organised capacity becomes a binding condition of the reality in which other human beings must live?

A person may inhabit an imposed condition without ever receiving an explicit command. Before a binding decision becomes visible, the field in which that decision acquires force may already have

been structured: the category through which the person will be recognised, the option to which they will be granted access, the price they will encounter, the legal or institutional status under which they will be evaluated, or the material cost attached to refusal.

The analytical object of power is therefore not exhausted by behaviour. Power may enter the field of possibility within which behaviour becomes practicable in the first place.

The question consequently shifts from:

‘What did the person do?’

towards:

Who constituted the conditions of the world within which that person could act?

The central theoretical task is to separate levels that are frequently collapsed into one another: power, positional asymmetry, imposition, positional opposition, ontological intervention and the Onopticon.

The contribution does not lie merely in supplying additional terminology. It lies in specifying the thresholds through which one analytical level may become another and, equally importantly, the conditions under which such a transition is not empirically warranted.

The article therefore rejects the following automatic sequence:

Power $\neq$ asymmetry $\neq$ imposition $\neq$ opposition $\neq$ ontological intervention $\neq$ Onopticon.

Each transition carries a distinct evidentiary burden.

The argument is concept-building and mechanism-oriented. Empirical instances are treated as mechanism probes, negative cases and boundary cases rather than as exhaustive comparative case studies. The purpose is not to issue comprehensive judgements upon whole societies or institutions but to construct an analytical architecture whose claims can be examined independently against specific decision circuits, institutional configurations and life consequences.

2. Theoretical Positioning: From Governing Action to Constituting Conditions

The argument developed here intersects with several major traditions of power analysis, yet it is reducible to none of them. Its distinctive object is the threshold at which organised condition-setting capacity becomes a binding condition of another person’s reality in the absence of effective counter-constitutive capacity, and the further threshold at which such superiority becomes functionally dependent upon the weakness of that counter-capacity.

2.1. Beyond visible decision-making

Bachrach and Baratz demonstrated that power cannot be reduced to observable decisions, since the organisation of agendas can prevent particular issues from becoming actionable at all (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). Lukes extended this critique by examining deeper forms through which preferences and perceptions may themselves be shaped (Lukes, 2005).

The present article shares the refusal to identify power solely with visible command. Its object, however, is narrower in one direction and broader in another. The problem is not only that certain choices are excluded from an agenda, nor that preferences may be shaped. It is that the **material, legal, economic and infrastructural conditions within which choices become real may themselves be asymmetrically constituted.**

A subject may therefore possess a recognisable preference and still lack a practicable world in which that preference can become action.

2.2. Marx: exploitation and conditions

The closest classical relation lies with Marx, particularly where primitive accumulation and the separation of producers from the conditions of subsistence become central to capitalist social relations (Marx, 1976).

Yet exploitation and imposition should not be collapsed.

Exploitation concerns output and value; imposition concerns conditions.

Exploitation concerns the appropriation and distribution of value generated through labour.

Imposition concerns the asymmetric constitution of binding conditions under which life and action become possible.

The two may coincide historically and institutionally, but neither entails the other conceptually.

An employment relation may remain exploitative whilst strong collective bargaining, meaningful legal challenge and real exit inhibit its transition into positional opposition. Conversely, profound imposition can exist where surplus-value extraction is not the primary mechanism.

The analytical shift is therefore from asking only:

Who appropriates what people produce?

towards asking:

Who possesses the capacity to constitute the conditions under which people can live, work, move, refuse and remain viable?

2.3. Foucault: from structuring action to the threshold of imposition

Foucault constitutes the most demanding comparison because his account of power already exceeds command and prohibition. Power operates upon action, and government concerns the structuring of the possible field of action of others (Foucault, 1982).

The distinction advanced here should therefore not be caricatured as a contrast between ‘behaviour’ in Foucault and ‘conditions’ in the Reality Paradigm.

The additional question is instead:

Under what conditions does the structuring of a possible field of action become the imposition of its material, legal, economic and infrastructural conditions by one positional capacity upon another?

The issue is not whether conduct is structured.

It is whether those subjected to the structure possess effective counter-constitutive capacity over its binding conditions.

The additional thresholds introduced here are therefore:

- effective counter-constitutive capacity;
- genuine refusal;
- positional opposition;
- ontological reach;
- cross-domain composition;
- feedback;
- infrastructural closure.

The Reality Paradigm does not deny governmentality. It asks when the structuring of conduct crosses into **imposition**, and when imposition reaches the conditions under which lived possibilities themselves become real.

2.4. Bourdieu: the production of position

Bourdieu’s work helps explain why access to powerful positions is not randomly distributed. Economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital contribute to differentiated capacities and life chances (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990).

Yet:

Capital ≠power. Capital ≠imposition. Capital ≠opposition.

Bourdieu helps explain how positions are socially produced and reproduced.

The additional question posed here is:

When does a socially produced position become a binding condition of another person’s reality?

This moves the analysis from the social production of differentiated positions towards the threshold at which those positions become condition-setting capacities over others.

2.5. Pettit: non-domination and the prior constitution of the field

Pettit's republican conception of freedom as non-domination provides an important point of proximity because arbitrary interference may compromise freedom even when direct interference is absent (Pettit, 1997).

The present theory moves one analytical step earlier.

What if decisive power lies not merely in the capacity to interfere with an existing set of options, but in the capacity to constitute:

- the option-set itself;
- the costs attached to its elements;
- their accessibility;
- their sustainability;
- the conditions under which refusal remains possible?

In such a situation, non-interference within a pre-existing field cannot exhaust the question of freedom if the constitutive conditions of that field are themselves asymmetrically imposed.

Choosing within a field is not the same as constituting the field of choice.

2.6. Classification, legibility and infrastructural power

Scott's work on legibility and Bowker and Star's work on classification show that categories may organise reality rather than simply describe it (Scott, 1998; Bowker & Star, 1999).

Mann's concept of infrastructural power similarly draws attention to institutional capacities for social penetration and coordination (Mann, 1984).

The present argument accepts the political significance of classification and infrastructure but introduces stricter threshold conditions:

Classification $\neq$ imposition. Infrastructure $\neq$ Onopticon. Integration $\neq$ closure.

The relevant question is:

At what point does infrastructural and classificatory capacity become an asymmetric and binding constitution of the subject's possible reality?

2.7. Algorithmic governmentality, surveillance capitalism and platform power

Contemporary digital-power literature comes even closer to the present problem.

Rouvroy and Berns analyse algorithmic governmentality as a form of anticipatory and data-driven modulation capable of operating prior to explicit subjective deliberation (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013).

Zuboff examines surveillance capitalism through behavioural surplus, prediction and behavioural modification (Zuboff, 2019).

Srnicek examines platform capitalism and the structural advantages generated by control over platform infrastructures (Srnicek, 2017).

Couldry and Mejias analyse the appropriation of human life through data relations, whilst Bratton examines planetary computation and layered infrastructural sovereignty (Bratton, 2015; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

The Reality Paradigm overlaps with these analyses without becoming synonymous with any of them.

The Onopticon does not require surveillance capitalism.

Imposition may operate through:

- property;
- contract;
- price;
- law;
- institutional eligibility;
- physical infrastructure.

Nor does algorithmic anticipation itself establish Onoptic closure.

The additional questions are:

- Is there foreclosure of a viable alternative?
- Are consequences composed across distinct life-domains?
- Is effective counter-capacity weak?
- Do outcomes feed back into subsequent decisions?
- Has the intervention acquired ontological reach?

The Onopticon therefore designates neither digital governmentality nor platform power as such. It designates a specific regime threshold.

2.8. The specific theoretical contribution

The originality claim advanced here is deliberately controlled.

It is not claimed that power, domination, classification, infrastructure, constraint, agency or surveillance have no theoretical antecedents.

The contribution lies instead in integrating:

- power as reproducible condition-setting capacity;
- positional asymmetry;
- imposition as binding condition-setting without effective counter-capacity;
- positional opposition as functional dependence upon weak counter-capacity;

- ontological intervention as an empirically testable reach;
- Homovictimus as tactical agency under non-co-authored conditions;
- normative rewriting;
- cross-domain composition;
- feedback;
- and Onoptic closure

into one mechanism architecture.

The distinctive question is therefore:

When does condition-setting capacity become imposition; when does imposition become positional opposition; when does its reach become ontological; and when does that intervention become infrastructurally composed into an Onopticon?

3. The Positional Constitution of Human-Human Opposition

3.1. Three propositions: A1-A3

A1 — Human-human opposition is possible

A human being may occupy a position of opposition to another human being. Such opposition need not arise from an ontological difference between kinds of human being, but from the positional structure of a condition-setting relation.

This does not mean that humans are natural enemies.

Nor does it mean that only another human can ever become the opposite of the human.

The narrower claim is:

Human-human opposition does not require ontological difference between human kinds.

A2 — Mediation does not automatically abolish the human-human relation

The mediation of a condition-setting relation through state, corporation, law, market, algorithm or technical infrastructure does not in itself eliminate its human-human character.

The subject may encounter:

- a price;
- a contract;
- a score;
- a category;
- a platform;
- a meter;
- a vehicle;

- a legal status

rather than another person directly.

The disappearance of the human actor from immediate perception does not establish the disappearance of the social relation through which the binding condition was constituted.

A3 — Ultimate normative-operational revisability

For as long as effective ultimate counter-intervention and revisability over the higher-order objectives, norms and outcomes of systems producing binding reality conditions remain in human hands, the ultimate locus of normative-operational sovereignty remains within the human world.

A3 is falsifiable.

If a non-human system were able to alter binding higher-order objectives, generate new binding norms, systematically defeat effective human counter-intervention and sustain those capacities without routine human authorisation, A3 would require revision.

3.2. Power and positional asymmetry

Power is not a synonym for imposition.

Power is the socially concentrated and reproducible position from which binding conditions of reality can be constituted, modified or sustained.

Such capacity may be produced through:

- law;
- property;
- capital;
- organisational authority;
- institutional memory;
- knowledge;
- technical standards;
- data;
- infrastructure.

In compressed form:

Power is reproducible condition-setting capacity.

This definition does not yet contain another party's weakness.

Positional asymmetry refers instead to the unequal distribution of condition-setting capacity.

A physician and patient, parent and young child, pilot and passenger or employer and employee may possess radically unequal capacities to constitute particular conditions.

Yet:

Asymmetry is not opposition.

3.3. Imposition

Imposition designates a specific exercise of condition-setting capacity:

Imposition is the application of condition-setting capacity to the binding reality conditions of another party in the absence of effective counter-constitutive capacity or genuine refusal on the part of those subjected to it.

Imposition cannot therefore be reduced to overt command, prohibition or physical coercion.

It may operate through:

- arranging options;
- narrowing options;
- changing accessibility;
- imposing costs;
- undermining sustainability;
- materially escalating the cost of refusal.

Accordingly:

Imposition extends beyond eliminating an option; it includes asymmetrically constituting the real conditions under which options can exist and be used.

The formal existence of an option therefore does not demonstrate that it exists as an effective freedom.

3.4. Positional opposition

Even imposition does not automatically establish opposition.

Positional opposition is a relation in which the establishment, exercise or reproduction of one party's condition-setting superiority becomes functionally dependent upon keeping the other party's effective counter-constitutive capacity weak, neutralised or bypassed.

Three mechanisms are distinguished.

Weakening concerns arrangements through which the development of condition-level counter-capacity is systematically obstructed.

Neutralisation occurs where counter-capacity formally exists but is prevented from altering binding outcomes.

Bypassing occurs where counter-capacity operates, yet the superior condition-setting position can circumvent its effects through another institutional, legal or technical route.

The central question is therefore:

Does the superior condition-setting position functionally depend upon weak, neutralised or bypassed counter-capacity?

3.5. Functional advantage is not functional dependence

This distinction is necessary to prevent positional opposition from becoming too broad.

The weakness of B may provide advantages to A.

It may:

- lower costs;
- increase profit;
- simplify administration;
- reduce resistance;
- accelerate decision-making.

Yet this does not establish that A's superior condition-setting position depends upon that weakness.

Functional advantage $\neq$ functional dependence.

The distinction can be expressed more precisely:

The weakness of B may benefit A without being necessary to the reproduction of A's superior condition-setting position. Positional opposition requires the latter relation.

This produces an additional counterfactual test:

If B's effective counter-capacity ceased to be weak, would A's superior condition-setting position materially diminish, lose unilateral force or require compensatory mechanisms in order to be restored?

If the answer is no, B's weakness may constitute an advantage without establishing positional opposition.

If the answer is yes, and the relation responds by neutralising, bypassing or replacing the emerging counter-capacity, the functional-dependence claim becomes stronger.

3.6. Conflict is not positional opposition

The English term *opposition* may suggest overt disagreement, hostility, organised resistance or conflict.

That is not the concept developed here.

Conflict $\neq$ positional opposition.

Conflict is neither necessary nor sufficient.

Two parties may engage in severe conflict without either possessing condition-setting superiority that depends upon the weakness of the other's counter-capacity.

Conversely, positional opposition may persist without visible conflict, particularly where the subjected party has little effective capacity to contest the binding conditions.

Positional opposition therefore concerns:

the structural relation between condition-setting superiority and counter-capacity, not the presence of overt hostility or disagreement.

3.7. Functional dependence without intention

Positional opposition is not a theory of subjective intention.

A corporation need not declare that consumers must remain weak.

A government agency need not adopt asymmetry-preservation as an explicit objective.

A single central planner need not exist.

Contracts, network effects, standards, switching costs, property relations, information asymmetries, technical architectures or legal procedures may nevertheless reproduce the same weakness in counter-capacity.

Hence:

Intent is not a necessary condition of opposition; functional dependence is.

'Reproduction' refers not to psychological intention but to the repeatable operation of a mechanism through which the same superior condition-setting position continues to be generated.

This permits structural opposition to be analysed without collapsing into conspiracy explanation or methodological individualism.

3.8. The Counter-Capacity Response Test

One of the strongest empirical tests of positional opposition is to examine what occurs when the subjected party's counter-constitutive capacity increases.

Three ideal-typical responses can be distinguished.

Opening

Counter-capacity is accepted as binding.

Decision authority is genuinely shared.

Unilateralism declines.

This weakens the opposition claim.

Adaptation

Counter-capacity is recognised in some domains, but substantial asymmetry remains.

This is a mixed or boundary case.

Neutralisation

Counter-capacity is:

- obstructed;
- made more expensive;
- delayed;
- reduced from binding authority to consultation;
- institutionally absorbed;
- bypassed through another route;

and prior unilateral capacity is effectively restored.

This strengthens the opposition claim.

The discriminating question is:

What happens when B begins to become stronger?

The test must operate against the theory as well as for it.

Genuine opening is genuine negative evidence.

It cannot automatically be redescribed as concealed opposition.

3.9. Protective asymmetry

The intensive-care relationship provides an important counter-case.

An unconscious patient may have almost no immediate capacity over treatment, movement, nutrition or bodily environment.

Medical personnel may exercise profound condition-setting authority.

Yet if restoration of the patient's decision-making capacity reactivates meaningful informed consent, treatment refusal, second opinion and discharge rights, medical authority does not depend upon preserving incapacity.

There may therefore be profound asymmetry without positional opposition.

Protective or proxy asymmetry is not identical to positional opposition.

3.10. Institutionalised positional asymmetry

Condition-setting capacity need not disappear when a particular office-holder disappears.

Law, property, office, procedure, organisational memory and infrastructure may preserve and transmit it.

This persistence may be described as **institutionalised positional asymmetry**.

A person may change whilst the position remains.

Intentions may change whilst the functional sequence persists.

Institutional causality may therefore be real without requiring the institution to become an ontologically independent sovereign subject.

3.11. Power without a single centre

Not every reproduced asymmetry requires a singular commanding centre.

Housing provides a simple illustration.

Property law, mortgage systems, interest rates, planning, investment practices, taxation and infrastructure can jointly generate binding life conditions without a single actor intending the final outcome for a particular individual.

Organised capacity therefore does not necessarily imply unified intention.

Yet:

A merely emergent social outcome is not by itself evidence of power.

A finding of power requires identifiable carrier mechanisms through which asymmetric condition-setting capacity is repeatedly produced.

The preferable question is therefore not simply:

‘Who benefits?’

but:

Which positions repeatedly emerge from the operation of this mechanism with greater condition-setting capacity?

3.12. Exploitation, imposition and opposition

Exploitation, imposition and positional opposition may intersect but are not identical.

Exploitation concerns the appropriation and distribution of produced value.

Imposition concerns the constitution of binding conditions in the absence of effective counter-capacity.

Positional opposition concerns the functional dependence of superior condition-setting capacity upon weak or neutralised counter-capacity.

Accordingly:

Exploitation $\neq$ imposition $\neq$ opposition.

A relation may therefore be exploitative without reaching the threshold of positional opposition.

Likewise, positional opposition may exist where surplus-value extraction is not the primary mechanism.

4. From Imposition to Ontological Intervention

4.1. Effective counter-constitutive capacity

This article does not require equality of resources or identical institutional power between parties.

Its concern is whether unilateral binding force can actually be broken.

Effective counter-constitutive capacity is the direct or institutionally mediated capacity of a subject to alter, suspend, reject or participate effectively in constituting the binding condition to which that subject is exposed.

Three levels are distinguished.

E0 — Symbolic or ineffective capacity

The subject may speak, participate or appeal, but the binding outcome cannot be altered.

E1 — Outcome-corrective capacity

An individual outcome may be changed, whilst the binding condition remains unchanged.

E2 — Condition-level counter-constitutive capacity

The formation, alteration, suspension or removal of the condition itself can be effectively influenced.

Hence:

Changing an individual outcome is E1; changing the condition is E2.

E2 does not require individual sovereignty.

It may be mediated through:

- independent courts;
- binding representation;
- collective bargaining;
- collective veto;
- constitutional review;
- independent regulatory counter-authority.

For such mechanisms to count:

- the channel cannot be wholly internal to the condition-setting authority;
- it must be capable of changing binding consequences;
- it must operate before irreversible harm occurs.

Formal participation is insufficient.

4.2. Subject-side contestability

The presence of a human being inside a decision architecture does not demonstrate that the human being subjected to that architecture can alter its consequences.

Internal review, command approval or *human-in-the-loop* arrangements must therefore be distinguished from subject-side contestability.

Human-in-the-loop $\neq$ subject-in-the-loop.

Subject-side contestability requires that the subject:

- can know the relevant category;
- possesses genuine standing to challenge it;
- can alter the consequence before it becomes irreversible.

Counter-capacity may be individually or institutionally mediated.

4.3. Ontological intervention

Imposition may extend beyond conduct and immediate choice.

It may reach:

- which lives are genuinely possible;
- whether a formal option is materially accessible;
- whether it can be sustainably lived;
- whether a condition can be refused without loss of basic life capacity.

At this point imposition acquires **ontological reach**.

‘Ontological’ does not refer here to an immutable human essence.

It refers to intervention into:

the conditions under which particular forms of life exist as real possibilities for the subject.

Hence:

The source is social; the relation is positional; the intervention may acquire ontological reach.

There is no ontological difference between the parties.

There may nevertheless be ontological intervention.

4.4. The Ontological Reach Test

Four evidentiary questions prevent the term from expanding to encompass every serious disadvantage.

OM1 — Real possibility

Does the intervention remove or materially reconstitute a viable life-path?

OM2 — Effective accessibility

Is a formally available option genuinely usable?

OM3 — Sustainability

Can the option be sustained without losing another basic domain such as:

- income;
- housing;
- health;
- care;
- basic security?

OM4 — Genuine rejectability

Can the condition actually be refused whilst preserving basic existential capacity?

OM1–OM4 are not additive scores.

A finding of ontological intervention requires two wings.

Possibility wing:

OM1 or OM2.

Existential consequence wing:

OM3 or OM4.

Both must be supplemented by:

- causal linkage;
- counterfactual relevance.

The central counterfactual question is:

Had the condition-setting intervention not occurred, would a meaningfully different and practicable life alternative have been reasonably available?

The minimal rule is therefore:

OM1 or OM2 + OM3 or OM4 + causal linkage + counterfactual relevance.

4.5. The material threshold of ontological reach

A rise in preference cost alone does not establish ontological intervention.

An intervention crosses the **material threshold of ontological reach** when it meaningfully changes the practical existence, accessibility, sustainability or rejectability of at least one viable life alternative.

‘Material’ does not refer to a universal percentage, monetary amount or duration.

The same formal intervention may produce very different existential effects for differently positioned subjects.

A two-hour change in working time may be trivial for one worker yet make employment incompatible with care obligations for another.

Therefore:

The same formal condition is not the same ontological possibility for everyone.

This does not authorise arbitrary interpretation.

Causal attribution and counterfactual analysis remain mandatory.

4.6. Metabolic reach

Human beings are embodied.

They eat, sleep, tire, become ill and depend upon energy and care.

Imposition may therefore reach metabolic conditions.

Yet:

Bodily harm is not by itself metabolic imposition.

A mechanism must be demonstrated:

Asymmetric condition-setting → alteration of the real option-set → adaptation → bodily consequence.

The relevant issue is whether imposed social conditions reorganise the bodily conditions of sustainability.

4.7. Homovictimus

Homovictimus is not a passive victim.

The subject continues to choose, negotiate, adapt, avoid and resist.

Yet:

Agency within conditions is not the same as agency over conditions.

Homovictimus is:

the positional subject who remains tactically agentic within reality conditions it did not effectively constitute, and whose adaptations may subsequently be rewritten as individual preference, character, risk or responsibility.

Three distinctions follow:

Tactical agency $\neq$ condition-setting agency. Adaptation $\neq$ free choice. Choosing $\neq$ constituting the world of choice.

This does not deny agency.

It denies the inference that action within a field establishes co-authorship of the field.

4.8. Normative rewriting

Normative rewriting occurs when behaviour generated under imposed conditions is detached from those conditions, recoded as individual preference, trait, risk or responsibility, and reused in later binding assessments.

The mechanism is:

Condition $\rightarrow$ adaptation $\rightarrow$ behaviour $\rightarrow$ record $\rightarrow$ individualising category $\rightarrow$ binding consequence.

An adaptation record alone is insufficient.

Household self-rationing under prepayment energy arrangements, for example, may demonstrate tactical adaptation.

The label *self-disconnection* does not itself establish normative rewriting.

A second evidentiary layer must show that the record subsequently enters a binding judgement concerning:

- eligibility;
- debt;
- price;
- risk;
- service;
- responsibility.

Thus:

Adaptation record ≠ normative rewriting.

Normative rewriting should also be distinguished from doxa:

Doxa naturalises the order; normative rewriting individualises the behaviour produced by that order.

5. The Infrastructuralisation of Imposition

5.1. Fragmented consent, integrated exposure

Modern subjects enter different systems under different statuses:

- patient;
- worker;
- debtor;
- student;
- citizen;
- passenger;
- user.

Consent or compulsion at each point may concern only the relevant layer.

Those layers may later be composed into a decision architecture for which no equivalent constitutive consent was supplied.

The controlled claim is:

Fragmented consent is not constitutive consent to integrated conditions of reality.

This does not automatically establish illegitimacy.

It establishes that consent at one level cannot simply be projected onto another.

5.2. The integrator position

The **integrator position** does not provide a universal theory of power.

It designates an operational position within multilayered decision architectures.

Its minimum functions are:

- access to heterogeneous layers;
- translation into a common classificatory language;
- correlation around the same subject;
- production of coordinated cross-layer outcomes.

Where those outcomes subsequently feed back into action, the architecture may proceed towards M3.

Not every exchange of data establishes an integrator position.

It exists only where access, classification/correlation and common outcome production form coordinated components of the same operational decision chain.

Technical interoperability alone is insufficient.

Distributed does not mean unbounded.

A central database is not required.

Functional coordination is.

5.3. Feedback and M3

A category may return to the subject as a consequence affecting:

- movement;
- payment;
- access;
- health;
- legal status;
- employment;
- security.

If that consequence generates new behaviour and that behaviour becomes new data for subsequent classification and decision, the architecture can transform adaptations produced by its own conditions into inputs for further decisions.

M3 therefore represents more than technical feedback.

It is a:

social-epistemic feedback circuit.

Yet:

M3 $\neq$ Onopticon.

Feedback establishes a circuit.

It does not by itself establish regime-level closure.

5.4. Environmental a priori

A decision may reach the subject not as a separate administrative instruction, but through the behaviour of the material environment.

The vehicle does not start.

The lock does not open.

The meter interrupts supply.

The networked object may thereby cease merely to sense and begin materially to execute a prior decision.

The term **environmental or infrastructural a priori** is used here in a deliberately non-Kantian sense.

It refers to:

a historically constituted technical-material arrangement already in place before a particular encounter and pre-structuring recognition, access, movement and action within that encounter.

Thus:

The a priori here is not before history; it is before the encounter.

5.5. K1–K5 and M3

The Onopticon must not be inferred from technical integration alone.

For the general theory developed here, six analytical dimensions are distinguished.

K1 — Categorisation

Is the subject rendered actionable through an operative category?

K2 — Eligibility / Access

Does that category condition:

- access;
- status;
- entitlement;
- price;
- participation?

K1 and K2 are **entry gates**.

They do not establish Onoptic closure by themselves.

K3 — Foreclosure

Has at least one viable alternative in a consequential domain become practically unavailable, materially unsustainable or prohibitively costly?

K4 — Cross-Domain Composition

Are categories, outputs or decisions demonstrably reused across distinct domains of life rather than merely producing incidental spillovers?

K5 — Weak Effective Contestability

Is the subject's effective capacity to understand, challenge, suspend or alter the binding consequence substantively weak?

M3 — Feedback

Does the output of one decision become recorded input into a subsequent decision in a manner capable of reproducing or intensifying the imposed condition?

At regime level:

Onopticon = M3 AND (K3 = 2) AND (K4 = 2) AND (K5 = 2)

K1 and K2 place the subject within the decision architecture.

K3, K4, K5 and M3 establish the stronger closure threshold.

Therefore:

Categorisation ≠ closure. Eligibility ≠ closure. Integration ≠ closure. Feedback alone ≠ closure.

5.6. Terminal closure and formal consistency

Terminal closure should not be treated as an implicit alternative to K4 in the present general model.

The formal Onopticon threshold developed here requires **cross-domain composition**.

Terminal closure is therefore treated as:

a distinct high-consequence variant within the wider Onoptic research programme rather than as a substitute for the K4 cross-domain composition threshold.

This distinction preserves formal consistency.

Accordingly, the general regime definition remains:

Onopticon = M3 AND (K3 = 2) AND (K4 = 2) AND (K5 = 2)

whilst terminal decision circuits may be separately analysed as an extreme operational variant.

5.7. The Onopticon

The Onopticon is not a synonym for:

- surveillance;
- database;
- algorithm;

- platform;
- integration;
- imposition itself.

The Onopticon is the infrastructural regime in which the ontological reach of imposition becomes feedback-driven, cross-domain, scalable and weakly counterable from the position of the subject.

The central distinction is:

not the layer but the composition; not visibility but feedback; not integration but closure under weak contestability.

Imposed reality is likewise not the assumption with which inquiry begins.

The mechanism must first be documented.

Deployment must be demonstrated.

Consequences must be distinguished from capability.

Counter-capacity and viable alternatives must be examined.

Only then may imposed reality be found.

Imposed reality is a verdict, not a premise.

5.8. Coercion, government, imposition and attrition

At least three relational modalities must be distinguished.

Coercion concerns direct intervention upon body, property or movement.

Government concerns the steering of conduct within an existing field of action.

Imposition concerns the asymmetric constitution of the conditions of possibility and refusal themselves.

These may overlap.

Attrition belongs to a different analytical level.

It is the cumulative erosion of:

- economic;
- bodily;
- temporal;
- cognitive;
- counter-constitutive

capacity through coercion, government, imposition or combinations of them.

Attrition is therefore a processual effect or strategy rather than a fourth co-equal modality.

5.9. Negative cases and positive-case discipline

A theory examining only cases resembling its concepts cannot establish discriminating power.

Negative cases are essential.

Highly integrated infrastructures that preserve meaningful counter-capacity demonstrate that integration is insufficient for Onoptic closure.

X-Road-type systems may be useful in this regard, not because technical architecture alone guarantees openness, but because high integration may coexist with:

- technical distribution;
- access visibility;
- wider legal counter-capacity;
- meaningful institutional contestability.

Accordingly:

Integration $\neq$ Onopticon.

The same evidentiary standard must be applied to positive cases.

The presence of multiple functions on a platform does not prove that a category generated in one domain produces binding closure in another.

Architecture $\neq$ effect.

Cross-domain closure requires independent deployment-level evidence.

Unverified effects must remain indeterminate or be removed from coding.

This is not a retreat from theory.

It is a condition of epistemic credibility.

6. Empirical Calibration and Epistemic Discipline

6.1. From concept to empirical judgement

Conceptual clarity does not automatically produce empirical codability.

Two findings carry especially high evidentiary burdens:

This relation constitutes positional opposition.

and:

This imposition possesses ontological reach.

Three stages must therefore remain distinct:

- conceptual definability;
- empirical codability;
- empirical validity.

6.2. The unit-of-analysis rule

No finding of power, imposition, positional opposition or Onopticon should be issued without specifying the unit of analysis.

The same phenomenon may be coded differently at the level of:

- individual decision;
- institution;
- platform;
- sector;
- legal regime;
- state.

Every empirical analysis must specify:

Subject: From whose position is the condition evaluated?

Condition-setting position: Which actor, institution, functional sequence or stabilised mechanism is under analysis?

Binding condition: Which condition of access, cost, status, movement or life is being constituted?

Scale: At what level is the judgement being made?

An impositional individual decision does not automatically characterise an entire institution.

Opposition within one institution does not automatically characterise an entire state.

6.3. Demonstrating functional dependence

A powerful A and weak B may establish asymmetry.

They do not establish positional opposition.

The empirical question is whether the continuation of A's superior condition-setting position actually depends upon weak, neutralised or bypassed counter-capacity.

Process tracing is especially useful.

Relevant evidence may include:

- relocation of authority after the emergence of counter-authority;
- narrowing the scope of challenge;
- new eligibility barriers;
- rising costs of contestation;
- conversion of binding participation into consultation;
- timing arrangements that deprive challenge of practical effect;

- institutional substitution that reproduces the same unilateral outcome through a different mechanism.

No individual observation alone establishes opposition.

The causal question remains:

Did the change function to preserve or restore the threatened condition-setting superiority?

6.4. Functional advantage versus dependence

The empirical protocol must also distinguish benefit from necessity.

The relevant questions are:

Does B's weakness merely benefit A?

or:

Does A's superior condition-setting position materially depend upon B remaining weak?

This distinction may be tested counterfactually:

If B acquired effective counter-capacity, would A's superior condition-setting position remain substantively intact without compensatory neutralisation or bypass?

If yes, the relation may involve functional advantage without positional opposition.

If no, and compensatory mechanisms emerge in response, functional dependence becomes more plausible.

6.5. Neutralisation versus ordinary institutional adaptation

Not every institutional response constitutes neutralisation.

Three questions are useful.

First:

Can the new counter-capacity genuinely alter binding outcomes?

Second:

Does another mechanism restore the previous unilateral position after counter-capacity appears?

Third:

Had the counter-capacity operated fully, what result should have differed — and does the new arrangement specifically eliminate that difference?

Hence:

Neutralisation is not institutional response as such; it is the systematic withdrawal of the binding effect of counter-capacity.

6.6. Evidentiary rule for positional opposition

A relation should not be coded as positional opposition unless the following sequence can be supported:

Condition-setting capacity → positional asymmetry → binding exercise without effective counter-capacity or genuine refusal → functional dependence upon counter-capacity weakness → process evidence of reproduction, neutralisation or bypassing

Where the first three elements are present but the final two cannot be demonstrated, the case may be coded as imposition.

It should not be coded as positional opposition.

Not every imposition is opposition.

6.7. Coding ontological reach

OM1–OM4 should each be coded:

- supported;
- unsupported;
- indeterminate.

Causal linkage and counterfactual relevance should be assessed independently.

The dimensions must not be aggregated into a single ontological score.

The decision rule remains:

OM1 or OM2 + OM3 or OM4 + adequate causal linkage + counterfactual relevance.

Where evidence is insufficient, the finding should remain provisional or indeterminate.

Empirical uncertainty is preferable to forced classification.

6.8. Present, absent or indeterminate

For high-burden mechanisms, three-valued coding is preferable:

Present Absent Indeterminate / insufficient evidence

‘Indeterminate’ does not count as confirmation.

Nor does it count as absence.

This is especially important for:

- functional dependence;
- neutralisation;
- ontological reach;
- normative rewriting;
- counterfactual effect.

6.9. Reliability

The first empirical question is whether independent researchers can apply the coding rules consistently.

Given:

- the same unit of analysis;
- the same evidence set;
- the same codebook;

do they reach sufficiently comparable classifications?

Cohen’s kappa, weighted kappa or related measures may be appropriate depending upon the coding structure.

This assesses:

reliability.

It does not establish theoretical validity.

6.10. Discriminant and construct validity

The second question is whether the coding architecture distinguishes what the theory claims to distinguish.

Can it separate:

- asymmetry from imposition;
- imposition from positional opposition;
- functional advantage from functional dependence;
- opposition from ontological reach;
- ontological intervention from Onopticon;

- adaptation from normative rewriting;
- integration from closure?

This requires:

- positive cases;
- negative cases;
- boundary cases;
- process tracing;
- independent effect evidence;
- counterfactual assessment.

Thus:

Inter-coder reliability $\neq$ construct validity.

A perfectly reproducible coding system may still reproduce the wrong distinction.

6.11. Scope robustness

A third empirical question concerns the scope of the theory.

A mechanism may be internally coherent and reliably coded yet operate differently across:

- labour;
- welfare;
- health;
- credit;
- platform governance;
- migration;
- policing;
- housing;
- infrastructure.

The relevant question is not whether identical empirical outcomes appear everywhere.

It is:

Across which institutional and social domains does the mechanism architecture remain discriminating, and where do its assumptions cease to hold?

Scope robustness therefore concerns the portability of the framework without requiring universality.

Failure in a domain may indicate:

- inappropriate scope;
- missing mechanism;
- boundary condition;

- or theory revision.

This must not automatically be redescribed as a defective case.

6.12. Three levels of falsification

Case rejection, mechanism falsification and theory falsification must remain separate.

Case rejection

A particular case does not meet the relevant criteria.

The theory is not falsified.

Mechanism falsification

A specific causal relation proposed by the theory fails to operate as predicted.

The mechanism requires revision.

Theory falsification

A phenomenon the theory is committed to explaining systematically appears without a mechanism the theory treats as necessary.

The theoretical core requires revision.

Thus:

Case rejection $\neq$ mechanism falsification $\neq$ theory falsification.

The same discipline applies to technical claims:

Technical capacity $\neq$ deployment $\neq$ effect $\neq$ regime.

6.13. Non-human agency: O0–O3

Non-human agency is a boundary condition rather than the central object of the article.

O0: Human actors determine objective and method.

O1: Objective remains human; computational systems may adapt methods.

O2: Systems may generate sub-goals and pathways; ultimate normative authority remains human.

O3: A system can alter binding higher-order objectives, generate binding new norms, systematically defeat effective human counter-intervention and sustain those capacities without routine human authorisation.

A single anomalous episode does not constitute O3-System.

A sustained and repeatable structure would.

Accordingly:

O3-System would falsify A3.

It would not automatically falsify A1 or A2.

This preserves another distinction:

Human origin does not entail continuous human control.

7. Historical and Social Reach

7.1. Enclosure: historical pre-form, not origin myth

Imposition did not begin with digital systems.

Enclosure provides an important historical example of the restructuring of direct access to subsistence through property and legal recognition.

Yet:

Enclosure $\neq$ Onopticon.

Its relevance lies in structural homology rather than compulsory causal continuity.

‘From enclosed land to enclosed reality’ should therefore not be interpreted as a universal historical law.

Two analytical trajectories may instead be distinguished.

The first concerns mediation of existential access:

common access → enclosure → property mediation → market/wage dependence → institutional access dependence

The second concerns the scaling of condition-setting capacity:

recording → calculability → automation → integration → feedback → infrastructuralisation

The first illustrates how access to life conditions may become mediated.

The second shows how decision capacity over those conditions may become scalable.

The Onopticon is not the necessary culmination of either sequence.

It may arise from particular historical compositions of the two.

7.2. Unequal social exposure

A general mechanism of imposition does not imply equal exposure to it.

Class, gender, racialisation, citizenship, migration status, disability and care burdens may alter:

- viable options;
- economic buffers;
- available time;
- exit costs;
- access to information;
- bodily sustainability;
- counter-constitutive capacity.

Therefore:

The same formal option is not the same ontological possibility for everyone.

These are important domains in which the general theory can be empirically extended and tested. They need not be converted into separate full theories within the present article.

7.3. Diagnosis and programme

This article does not propose a detailed political programme.

That does not render counter-capacity or institutional opening irrelevant.

On the contrary, E2-level counter-capacity, subject-side contestability, independent counter-institutions and open technical-legal architectures demonstrate that imposition and positional opposition are not analytically inevitable.

Nevertheless:

Diagnosis and solution are not the same epistemic task.

Which political programme should follow requires a separate normative argument.

8. Conclusion: The Opposite of the Human Is Also Human — but Not Every Human Relation Is Opposition

This article began with the proposition:

‘The opposite of the human is also human.’

It does not end by treating that proposition as an anthropological axiom.

It derives it.

Those who impose and those upon whom conditions are imposed remain human beings on the same ontological plane.

Therefore:

The difference is not ontological but positional.

Yet positional difference alone does not constitute opposition.

An actor may possess greater condition-setting capacity.

That is **power**.

That capacity may be unequally distributed.

That is **positional asymmetry**.

The capacity may be exercised over the binding conditions of another person in the absence of effective counter-constitutive capacity or genuine refusal.

That is **imposition**.

Opposition requires more.

A human being enters a position of opposition when the superiority of their condition-setting position becomes functionally dependent upon keeping another human being's effective counter-constitutive capacity weak, neutralised or bypassed.

The fact that the weakness of one party benefits another is insufficient.

Functional advantage is not functional dependence.

Nor does positional opposition require overt hostility.

Conflict is not positional opposition.

Two actors may conflict without standing in the specific structural relation described here.

Conversely, positional opposition may operate without overt conflict at all.

No malicious intention is necessary.

No unified plan is necessary.

No single centre is necessary.

The analytical core is not intention.

It is functional dependence.

For that reason, positional opposition should be tested through the response of the relation to emerging counter-capacity.

If counter-capacity is accepted as binding and unilateralism declines, the opposition thesis weakens.

If counter-capacity is obstructed, made costly, delayed, absorbed, neutralised or bypassed, and unilateral capacity is reconstructed through another mechanism, the opposition thesis strengthens.

Positional opposition is therefore not simply an unequal distribution of power.

It is:

a reproducible relation whose dependence upon weak counter-capacity can be tested through what occurs when that weakness begins to disappear.

Imposition may then extend into lived possibility itself.

When it changes which lives can genuinely be lived, which options remain effectively accessible, which life paths remain sustainable and which conditions can actually be refused, it acquires ontological reach.

Yet this finding cannot rest on conceptual intensity alone.

Real possibility or accessibility must be affected.

Sustainability or genuine rejectability must be affected.

Causal linkage must be established.

Counterfactual relevance must be shown.

Thus:

Ontological intervention is not a metaphor. It is an evidentiary judgement concerning the reach of imposition.

Homovictimus does not disappear as an agent.

The subject chooses.

Negotiates.

Adapts.

Avoids.

Resists.

But:

Agency within conditions is not the same as agency over conditions.

And:

To choose is not to constitute the world in which choice occurs.

Adaptation to imposed conditions does not establish authorship of those conditions.

Nor may adaptation automatically be rewritten as free preference, individual risk or personal responsibility without a separate evidentiary chain.

The Onopticon, finally, is not the name of the whole theoretical architecture.

It designates a specific regime:

the infrastructuralisation of ontological imposition through feedback-driven, cross-domain closure under conditions of foreclosure and weak effective contestability.

The general regime threshold is therefore:

Onopticon = M3 AND (K3 = 2) AND (K4 = 2) AND (K5 = 2)

with K1 and K2 functioning as entry gates rather than closure conditions.

Terminal closure remains an analytically distinct high-consequence variant within the wider Onoptic research programme and does not replace the cross-domain composition threshold of the general model.

The theory therefore rejects the following conceptual collapses:

Power $\neq$ asymmetry. Asymmetry $\neq$ imposition. Imposition $\neq$ opposition. Functional advantage $\neq$ functional dependence. Conflict $\neq$ positional opposition. Opposition $\neq$ ontological intervention. Ontological intervention $\neq$ Onopticon.

And it applies the same discipline to evidence:

Layer $\neq$ circuit. Integration $\neq$ regime. Architecture $\neq$ effect. Human-in-the-loop $\neq$ subject-in-the-loop. Reliability $\neq$ validity. Case rejection $\neq$ mechanism falsification $\neq$ theory falsification. Imposed reality $\neq$ opening premise.

These distinctions deliberately restrict the explanatory reach of the Reality Paradigm.

It does not classify every inequality as power.

It does not classify every power relation as imposition.

It does not classify every imposition as opposition.

It does not classify every opposition as ontological intervention.

It does not classify every ontological intervention as Onopticon.

Its discriminating power lies precisely in refusing those collapses.

The architecture can therefore be compressed into seven propositions:

Power is capacity. Asymmetry is distribution. Imposition is binding exercise. Opposition is functional dependence. Ontological intervention is the reach of imposition into the real conditions of possible life. Homovictimus is the tactical agent within those conditions. The Onopticon is the feedback-driven infrastructural regime of their closure.

The proposition in the title can therefore be stated in its fully derived form:

The opposite of the human is also human — not because the human is opposed to the human by nature, but because organised human condition-setting capacity can become functionally dependent upon keeping another human being's effective counter-constitutive capacity weak, neutralised or bypassed.

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