

Why Does the State Not Speak the Native Language of Its Society?

Lived Language, Onoptic Translation, and the Imperative of Calculability

Hakki Tan

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8582-3132>

"My paradigm is not a paradigm of the Truth; it is a paradigm of Reality."

Abstract

This article examines the state's failure to speak the "native language" of its society not as a problem of administrative communication, linguistic policy, or bureaucratic style, but as a general technique of modern power. The term "native language" is not used here as an ethnic or national-linguistic category. It functions as a political-philosophical question. The article's analytical concept is instead lived language: the fragile experiential language through which subjects with limited institutional capital express harm, need, exclusion, injustice, or demands for recognition before these claims are fully translated into official evidence, forms, procedures, or expert discourse.

The article's central claim is that modern state and legal orders do not directly recognize lived language. They recognize it only after translating it into applications, documents, forms, evidence, deadlines, procedures, risk categories, eligibility criteria, and decisions. This translation is not merely communicative. It is an onoptic translation: a reality-producing mechanism through which subjects become recognizable, classifiable, calculable, contestable, and rejectable.

The article develops this argument from within the author's broader Reality Paradigm, especially the concepts of Onopticon and Homovictimus. In this framework, power does not merely surveil, discipline, modulate, or represent human beings; it preconditions the field of reality within which they can appear, act, object, appeal, and remain socially viable. Onopticon names this imposed field. Homovictimus names the subject held responsible within it while being deprived of the infrastructural conditions of agency (Tan, 2026).

The article contributes four concepts to the sociology of law, bureaucracy, and algorithmic governance: lived language, onoptic translation, the imperative of calculability, and counter-translation. Opacity is not developed here as a policy program but as a critical threshold: the point at which representation ceases to explain the subject and begins to replace the subject.

Keywords: Reality Paradigm; Onopticon; Homovictimus; lived language; bureaucratic language; legal language; onoptic translation; calculability; opacity; counter-translation; state theory; law and society.

1. Introduction: The Question of the State's Linguistic Estrangement

Why does the state not speak the native language of its society?

At first glance, this question may appear to concern language policy, public communication, or bureaucratic simplification. This article asks it at a deeper level. "Native language" is not used here in the ethnic, national, or cultural-linguistic sense. It is not the article's analytical category. It is the political-philosophical name of a problem. The analytical category is lived language.

Lived language refers to the fragile experiential language through which subjects with limited institutional capital express harm, need, exclusion, injustice, or demands for recognition before these claims are fully represented within official evidence, forms, procedures, or expert discourse. It is not simply "ordinary language," "popular speech," or "emotional expression." What distinguishes lived language is its weak institutional weight and its forced exposure to translation.

Society speaks in sentences such as:

I cannot make ends meet.
I have been wronged.
You did not hear me.
This decision destroyed my life.
I am a victim.
I want justice.

The state and law often answer in another language:

Your application has been assessed.
Eligibility conditions have not been met.
The procedure cannot be completed due to missing documentation.
Your request has been rejected pursuant to the relevant regulation.
The statutory time limit has expired.
No sufficient evidence has been submitted.

These are not merely two different styles of expression. They are two different modes of reality. Lived language carries context, injury, affect, history, vulnerability, and demand. Administrative-legal language produces applications, documents, categories, deadlines, evidence, risks, and decisions.

The article begins from the following claim:

The state does not directly recognize society's lived language; it recognizes that language only once it has been translated into bureaucratic-legal language.

The problem, therefore, is not simply that bureaucratic language is complex, cold, or inaccessible. Even a simplified administrative text may reproduce the same imposition. The issue is not primarily intelligibility. It is recognizability. The decisive question is: in what language must the citizen speak in order to become visible? What must harm become in order to be processed? What must suffering become in order to be heard by law? What must need become in order to become administratively actionable?

These questions move the analysis beyond communication theory. They place bureaucratic language at the center of power theory.

2. Lived Language: A Fragile Field of Recognition

The concept of lived language must be carefully delimited. Not every everyday expression is lived language. Not every experiential narrative belongs to this category. A legal memorandum drafted by a lawyer before being filed in court and the sentence "I am hungry" spoken by a homeless person may both be pre-decisional expressions, but they do not occupy the same position before power. They differ in institutional capital, representational capacity, legal translatability, and vulnerability.

In this article, institutional capital refers to the set of resources that enable a person to render a claim processable before state and legal institutions: legal literacy, education, digital access, economic resources, the capacity to produce documents, social networks, access to representatives or lawyers, familiarity with institutional language, and knowledge of application procedures. A subject with limited institutional capital is not merely poor or uneducated. It is a

subject deprived of the resources required to translate lived injury into the language recognized by the state and law.¹

Lived language emerges when five conditions are present:

1. It expresses harm, need, exclusion, injustice, or a demand for recognition.
2. It is not yet fully represented within official evidence, form, procedure, or expert language.
3. It carries the fragile demand of a subject with limited institutional capital.
4. It contains context, affect, uncertainty, and history.
5. It is forced to become processable by the state or law.

This definition does not romanticize lived language. Lived language is not pure, natural, or external to power. Every expression is already socially coded. A person who says "I cannot make ends meet" is already speaking within available social categories. The difference between lived language and administrative-legal language is not the presence of emotion. Bureaucratic language also has its own context, uncertainty, and interpretive space. The difference lies in institutional weight. Bureaucratic uncertainty is backed by institutional authority. The uncertainty of lived language is often backed only by vulnerability.

Lived language, then, is not simply spontaneous human speech. It is experiential expression that has not yet been institutionally translated and that risks loss once translation begins.

3. The Reality Paradigm as Theoretical Ground

This article is grounded in the Reality Paradigm. The Reality Paradigm does not analyze power only at the level of surveillance, discipline, ideology, representation, or behavioral modulation. It asks a more fundamental question:

Under what conditions does the human being encounter reality?

Reality is not treated here as neutral, given, or anterior to power. Human beings do not encounter the world directly and without mediation. Infrastructures of recognition, access, application, documentation, categorization, risk, eligibility, decision, and appeal precondition the field within which reality becomes encounterable.

The deepest form of power is therefore not only prohibition, observation, or punishment. Power establishes the reality within which a person can appear, move, apply, object, be rejected, or remain viable.

This is where Onopticon enters. Onopticon is not an updated technical version of Panopticon. Panopticon concerns visibility. Onopticon concerns the reality-field that precedes visibility. Its question is not "who watches?" but "within what reality can the subject appear at all?" (Tan, 2026).

The present article extends the Reality Paradigm into the field of bureaucratic-legal language. The language of the state is not merely expressive. Bureaucratic-legal language is a mode of institutional reality-production.

4. Theoretical Boundary Concepts: Communication, Control, Surveillance, and Bureaucracy

This article does not aim to reduce modern power to communication, control, surveillance, or bureaucratic banality. These are important boundary concepts, but from the standpoint of the Reality Paradigm they remain insufficient.² The fundamental issue is not whether power communicates with the human being, but within what reality the human being becomes able to speak, apply, object, appeal, and be recognized.

In a Habermasian framework, the problem may be framed as the colonization of the lifeworld by system imperatives and the distortion of communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984, 1987). Yet the tension between lived language and administrative-legal language is not merely a communicative distortion. A bureaucratic form does not open a dialogical space in which equal interlocutors negotiate meaning. It determines in advance the categories within which speech becomes admissible. The problem is therefore not simply the absence of better rational communication. It is the prior ontological structuring of the conditions under which speech can count.

Deleuze's analysis of control societies comes close to Onopticon insofar as it grasps the splitting of the subject into flows, codes, and dividual data (Deleuze, 1992). Yet onoptic translation shows that this apparent fluidity does not merely produce modulation. It produces highly rigid bureaucratic-legal realities: debt, risk, eligibility, evidentiary insufficiency, procedural failure, and rejection. Homovictim is not only a dividual data-fragment. Homovictim is the subject who suffers concrete consequences because datafication has produced a legally and administratively actionable reality.

Zuboff's account of surveillance capitalism explains how human experience is transformed into behavioral data for extraction, prediction, and market power (Zuboff, 2019). This article accepts the importance of that analysis but shifts the terrain. The problem is not only that experience becomes data for capitalist extraction. It is also that recognition before the state and law increasingly depends on being able to present oneself in calculable form. Rights, welfare, justice, and even claims of innocence become recognizable only when they can be submitted through processable formats.

Arendt's analysis of bureaucratic evil focuses on thoughtlessness, administrative obedience, and the diffusion of responsibility (Arendt, 1963). Onoptic translation shifts attention from the psychology of the bureaucrat to the form, procedure, and infrastructure itself. Violence is not located only in the soullessness of the file-handler. It also lies in the procedural architecture that turns lived injury into evidence, persons into cases, and experience into administrative fields.

The Reality Paradigm does not reject these theoretical lines. It relocates them. The problem is not only distorted communication, fluid control, capitalist data extraction, bureaucratic thoughtlessness, or governmental rationality. The problem is that the reality within which the subject can become recognizable is pre-established. Onoptic translation names the linguistic, legal, and bureaucratic mechanism of that pre-establishment.

5. Onoptic Translation: Seven Analytical Nodes

Onoptic translation is the process through which lived language is translated by the state, law, and bureaucracy into technical-administrative-legal reality.

The concept is not a synonym for "the state does not speak society's language." It names a mechanism. Yet this mechanism should not be read as a strictly chronological sequence. The seven elements below are analytical nodes rather than necessary stages. In practice, they may overlap, be skipped, or occur in reverse order. In some cases, the decision precedes its justification. In others, classification operates as an assumption before legibility is formally established. The purpose of the model is not to claim that every bureaucratic encounter follows the same sequence, but to identify the nodes through which reality is produced.

5.1 Summoning

The subject is summoned into a system through application, registration, verification, declaration, notification, or account creation. This summoning often appears voluntary, but for those seeking access to a right, service, benefit, or appeal, it becomes effectively compulsory.

The power of summoning begins here: if one does not enter the system, one remains unrecognized; if one enters, one enters the language of the system.

5.2 Rendering Legible

The subject is rendered legible as identity record, document, account, data point, file, claim, number, or application. Lived experience is broken into institutionally readable components.

Legibility is not innocent. To become legible is also to become classifiable and governable.

5.3 Formatting

Lived experience is translated into institutional categories. Suffering becomes documentation. Need becomes eligibility. Injustice becomes a legal claim. Objection becomes procedure. The person becomes a file.

The primary loss here is context. What matters is no longer simply what happened, but where it can be entered.

5.4 Classification

The subject is classified as eligible or ineligible, risky or non-risky, entitled or not entitled, indebted or not indebted, timely or time-barred, documented or undocumented.

Classification does not merely describe. It prepares the future. A category is a pre-decision.

5.5 Decision Production

Rejection, approval, debt, sanction, benefit, exclusion, suspension, review, or enforcement is produced. The decision often appears as technical necessity.

Yet the decision is not merely the output of regulation or software. It is the result of a prior architecture of recognition and classification.

5.6 Justification

The decision is justified through regulation, system output, missing evidence, expired deadline, risk analysis, or eligibility failure. Responsibility is often transferred to the subject: the applicant was late, incomplete, insufficiently documented, or non-compliant.

Justification is not necessarily explanation. It may be the cold legitimization of a decision.

5.7 The Appeal Loop

The subject can challenge the decision only by entering the same language again. Thus objection itself is bound to the language of the reality it contests.

This is the hardness of onoptic translation: even resistance is often forced to speak the language of the system it opposes.

6. Fracture Points of Translation

Onoptic translation does not always function smoothly. Indeed, it becomes visible precisely through its fractures.

The first fracture is legibility fracture. The subject cannot be rendered into the data required by the system. Harm exists, but there is no admissible field in which it can be entered.

The second is category fracture. Lived experience does not fit existing institutional categories. The person exists, the injury exists, the demand exists, but the form has no place for it.

The third is evidentiary fracture. The subject cannot translate injury into the evidence recognized by the institution. The injury does not disappear; it becomes unrecognized.

The fourth is justificatory fracture. The institution produces a decision but not an explanation that speaks to the subject's lived world. "Pursuant to regulation" is not always an explanation.

The fifth is appeal fracture. The subject formally has a right to appeal, but the language, cost, time, digital access, or evidentiary requirements of appeal make contestation practically inaccessible.

The sixth is counter-translation fracture. Here, what breaks is the system's hold over the subject. Citizens, lawyers, media, collective movements, or public inquiries begin to reverse the system-generated reality.

This last fracture is crucial. Onoptic translation does not only break the subject. Sometimes the subject breaks the translation.

7. The Power of the Form

The bureaucratic form is not a neutral space in which citizens freely express their reality. It is a categorical interface that predetermines what can be said, how it can be said, in what order it can be said, and which answers count.

The form is not empty. The form is pre-established reality.

Checkboxes, mandatory fields, codes, date ranges, document types, drop-down menus, declarations, and character limits shape the field of expression. A person is recognized to the extent that lived reality can fit the form. What does not fit often falls outside the procedure.

For this reason, the form does not merely collect information. It produces the subject.

When citizens fill in a form, they do not only provide information. They make themselves readable, classifiable, and processable. This happens not through spectacular coercion, but through structural necessity. Anyone seeking a right, service, remedy, benefit, or appeal must first translate lived experience into the language of the system.

The form is the everyday interface of onoptic translation.

8. The Desire for Calculability and the Imperative of Calculability

The article's central concept is the imperative of calculability.

The imperative of calculability names the condition under which the subject must transform lived reality into measurable, codable, documentable, classifiable, comparable, and processable data in order to be recognized by the state and law.

Yet care is needed. Calculability is not always naked external coercion. Modern subjects often desire calculability. They seek recognition through grades, certificates, credit scores, performance indicators, diplomas, income statements, records, and credentials. Modern opportunity is often distributed through measurable signs.

We must therefore distinguish the desire for calculability from the imperative of calculability.

The desire for calculability refers to situations in which subjects seek opportunity by rendering themselves measurable. They document, score, certify, and verify themselves because this may

open access to credit, employment, rights, trust, or mobility.

The imperative of calculability emerges when no non-calculable form of existence is recognized. The subject exists only to the extent that they can document themselves. They are heard only to the extent that they fit the form. They can claim only to the extent that the system can process their claim.

The problem is not that the human being can be measured. The problem is that nothing non-measurable is recognized.

The hardness of modern power lies here. It does not only calculate the subject by force. It builds a world in which recognition, trustworthiness, entitlement, and legitimacy become possible only through calculability.

Homovictimus is therefore not merely the calculated subject. Homovictimus is the subject compelled to become calculable in order to be recognized.

9. The State and Law Are Not Monoliths

Statements such as "the state speaks" or "law does" must be handled carefully. The state does not speak in one voice. Law is not a single mechanism.

A welfare office and a tax audit do not speak the same language. Criminal adjudication and child protection do not operate through the same procedure. An automated application interface and an ombudsman interview do not produce the same form of recognition. Some institutions develop intermediary procedures that partially hear lived language: social inquiry reports, mediation, human rights bodies, child justice procedures, public oversight, legal aid, and advisory services may soften hard bureaucratic translation.

The article's claim is therefore not that the state always and everywhere suppresses lived language.

The more precise claim is this:

Modern state and legal orders contain multiple language regimes; however, hard bureaucratic-legal translation becomes dominant under conditions of compulsory registration, high standardization, automated classification, weak contestability, and technicalized decision-making.

This boundary prevents conceptual inflation. Onopticon is not the name for every bureaucratic form. It emerges when bureaucratic-legal translation infrastructurally determines the subject's recognition, access, appeal, and future.

10. Law and Justice: The Language of Procedure and the Language of Wound

Law cannot be treated merely as an instrument of domination. Such a move would weaken the argument. Law can protect against arbitrariness, limit the state, open avenues of redress, and review administrative decisions. Yet law can also become a mechanism that hears demands for justice only after translating them into its own procedural language.

Lived language asks:

What happened to me?
Who is responsible?
What harm remained invisible?
Why was I not heard?
How can this be repaired?

Legal language asks:

- Did you apply within the time limit?
- Did you approach the competent authority?
- Do you have evidence?
- Are the procedural conditions satisfied?
- Have you discharged the burden of proof?
- Does the statute permit this claim?

These two languages need not be enemies. Yet when law becomes the only language of justice, it narrows lived language.

The central distinction is therefore:

Law is not justice; law is the institutional translation of justice.

This translation is necessary and dangerous. It is necessary because justice cannot be abandoned to arbitrary feeling. It is dangerous because lived injustice may disappear when it cannot be translated into legal form.

The loss of justice does not always arise from the absence of rights. Sometimes the right exists, but the language, procedure, deadline, evidence, and cost of accessing it become an infrastructure that the subject cannot cross. A right written in law is insufficient if the conditions of recognition, access, contestation, and explanation are unjust.

11. Homovictimus as the Unequal Subject of Counter-Translation

Homovictimus is not merely a victim. Reducing Homovictimus to passive victimhood weakens the concept. Homovictimus is the subject forced to translate lived language into bureaucratic-legal language; rendered calculable, classifiable, and governable through that translation; yet also capable of using, bending, contesting, and reversing that translation.

However, counter-translation is not equally available to all.

Legal knowledge, literacy, digital access, media visibility, collective organization, economic resources, citizenship status, and institutional trust all shape counter-translation capacity. Homovictimus should therefore not be romanticized as a heroic figure of resistance. Homovictimus is a fragile subject acting under unequal conditions of resistance.

Counter-translation has two levels.

Weak counter-translation occurs when the subject uses the system's language to change an individual outcome: submitting missing documents, filing an appeal, reapplying, or attempting to fit a required category. This may not disturb the system. It may function as the system's own corrective mechanism.

Strong counter-translation occurs when the subject or collective actor challenges not only the outcome but the reality-frame that made the outcome possible: the data regime, evidentiary standard, calculation method, classification logic, or institutional justification. Here the subject does not merely say, "my decision is wrong." The subject says, "the reality within which I was made decidable is wrong."

Not every appeal is counter-translation. Counter-translation becomes strong only when it intervenes in the reality-frame that made the decision possible.

The political sentence of Homovictimus is:

If I speak in my own language, I am not heard. If I speak in your language, I cease to be myself. But when I name this translation, your imposed reality no longer appears natural.

12. Opacity: The Threshold at Which Representation Replaces the Subject

Opacity is not developed here as a policy program, legal package, or reform agenda. It is deliberately retained as a theoretical threshold.

The opacity threshold appears when the data submitted for recognition no longer explains the subject but begins to replace the subject.

When profile becomes stronger than narrative, record stronger than testimony, risk score stronger than lived experience, and absence of evidence stronger than the experience of harm, the opacity threshold opens. It names the limit at which calculability ceases to represent the human being and begins to consume the human being.

Opacity is not a demand that the state know nothing. It is not criminal concealment, irresponsibility, or absolute invisibility. It is the existential boundary against being fully rendered, modeled, classified, and converted into decision infrastructure.

Privacy often asks: which data should remain hidden? Opacity asks a deeper question:

Can the human being be recognized as a subject without being made fully calculable?

Opacity is not normatively neutral. It marks the line between recognition and consumption. When that threshold is crossed, state or law no longer attempts to understand the subject; it relies on the profile, record, score, evidentiary absence, or procedural result that replaces the subject.

Opacity is therefore not a solution. It is a critical boundary concept. Its task is not to reform onoptic translation but to show where representation becomes substitution.

13. Symptomatic Nodes: Robodebt, Horizon, SyRI, and AI Regulation

This article is not a country study. The following examples are not used to explain the administrative history of particular states. They are used to make visible different faces of onoptic translation: lived language translated into administrative procedure, human narrative displaced by technical record, poverty converted into risk, and appeal transformed into evidentiary burden.

13.1 Robodebt: The Imposition of Automatic Debtor Reality

Australia's Robodebt scheme is one of the clearest symptoms of the automatic production of "debtor" reality. The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme was established on 18 August 2022 to examine the scheme's establishment, design, and implementation; Commissioner Catherine Holmes delivered the report on 7 July 2023 (Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, 2023).

Its theoretical importance does not lie only in administrative failure or unlawfulness. The deeper issue is the translation of irregular and complex income histories into a calculable average, and the subsequent production of the person as debtor. When a person says, "I do not owe this debt," the statement strikes against a system-generated debt reality. The person is no longer primarily a subject explaining their situation; they become a subject required to disprove the position assigned by the system.

The importance of Robodebt for lived language is not only that a technical method produced erroneous debts. Legal Aid Victoria states that Robodebt raised more than half a million inaccurate Centrelink debts through income averaging, imposed debts on people who then had to prove they did not owe them, and produced stress, confusion, and hardship for many affected people (Legal Aid Victoria, 2023). At this point lived language condenses into a representative sentence: "I do not owe this debt." Yet within onoptic translation, that sentence does not immediately acquire reality-status. It must be translated into the system's accepted language of evidence, appeal, timing, and proof. Lived language becomes a burden to disprove debtor reality.

Robodebt displays all seven analytical nodes of onoptic translation. Income history is summoned into the data field; rendered legible through records; formatted into averages; classified into suspected debt; transformed into a debt notice; justified through data-matching and calculation; and contested only through the documentary and procedural language recognized by the system.

Robodebt is also an example of counter-translation. Individual objections, legal advocacy, media attention, public pressure, class action litigation, and the Royal Commission collectively challenged the debtor reality produced by the scheme. Strong counter-translation did not merely challenge individual debts; it targeted the calculation architecture that produced debt as reality.

Robodebt's theoretical lesson is this:

The problem is not only a wrong decision. The problem is that the reality within which the person had to defend themselves was already produced by the system.

13.2 Horizon: Technical Output as Legal Truth

The United Kingdom's Post Office Horizon scandal demonstrates the destructive consequences of technical output becoming legal reality. Volume 1 of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry's final report was published on 8 July 2025 and focuses on the human impact of the scandal and redress (Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, 2025).

In this case, technical records became stronger than human testimony. The lived language of sub-postmasters -- "I did not steal," "the system is wrong" -- was weakened before Horizon-generated accounting shortfall data. The problem was not only faulty software. It was the acquisition of truth-status by technical output within legal and institutional processes.

The onoptic meaning of Horizon is this: the system does not merely produce data; it produces the reality within which the subject must defend themselves. A person must establish innocence not through lived language but through evidence capable of defeating the technical shortfall. If that translation fails, the person is judged not within their lived reality but within the accounting reality produced by the system.

Here the opacity threshold opens when record replaces testimony. Technical data becomes stronger than human narrative, and representation begins to stand in for the subject.

13.3 SyRI: Poverty Translated into Risk Profile

The Dutch SyRI system reveals how poverty and social vulnerability can be translated into the language of risk. SyRI was a legal instrument used by the Dutch government to detect various forms of fraud, including social benefit, allowance, and tax fraud. The Hague District Court ruled that the legislation regulating the use of SyRI violated higher law, with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights at the center of the judgment; it also found the system insufficiently transparent and verifiable (Rechtspraak, 2020).

In this case, lived language says, "I cannot make ends meet," while the system asks, "Do you carry risk?" Poverty is reconstructed not as social harm or need but as a calculable zone of suspicion. SyRI's onoptic meaning lies here: the person is not directly declared guilty, but is converted into a

profile of potential irregularity through data-linking and risk logic.

This is a typical form of the imperative of calculability. The person becomes readable through relations among data points. Lived language recedes; risk profile advances. The opacity threshold appears when the profile becomes stronger than the person's own account of lived reality.

13.4 AI Regulation: The Delayed Language of Law

AI regulation shows the position of law in relation to algorithmically produced reality. The European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) is described by the European Commission as a risk-based framework that defines four levels of risk for AI systems: unacceptable risk, high risk, limited risk, and minimal or no risk (European Commission, 2026).

The theoretical meaning of this example is not that law disappears. Law exists, but often speaks after technical and institutional reality-fields have already been produced. Algorithmic systems classify people as risky, eligible, ineligible, trustworthy, suspicious, or priority targets, and law then attempts to regulate those classification regimes.

AI regulation does not abolish onoptic translation. It produces a language of oversight around it. Law is not the immediate language of justice here; it is often the regulatory translation of pre-established technical reality.

14. Theoretical Consequences of the Symptomatic Cases

These examples show different faces of the same structure:

Case	Mode of Onoptic Translation
Robodebt	Income history becomes debtor reality
Horizon	Technical record becomes legal truth
SyRI	Poverty becomes risk profile
AI regulation	Law speaks after algorithmic reality is already structured

Their common feature is this: the subject is not first heard; the subject is first translated. Lived language becomes administrative language; narrative becomes data; poverty becomes risk; innocence becomes the burden of defeating a technical record; rights claims become procedure.

The hardness of onoptic power is revealed here. Power does not merely observe or record. It establishes the reality within which a person can count as debtor, risky, guilty, eligible, ineligible, entitled, undocumented, or evidentially insufficient.

Robodebt, Horizon, and SyRI should therefore not be read merely as isolated scandals. They are symptoms of the imperative of calculability. They show that when systems fail, the subject is often required to prove or disprove reality within the very field that the system has already imposed.

15. Contribution to the Reality Paradigm

This article is not an application of the Reality Paradigm from outside. It is written from within the Reality Paradigm and extends it into the field of bureaucratic-legal language.

The contribution appears at four levels.

15.1 Lived Language

The article preserves the political-philosophical force of the "native language" question while developing lived language as the analytical concept. It thereby makes visible the gap between

fragile recognition claims and administrative-legal processability.

15.2 Onoptic Translation

The article operationalizes imposed reality through the model of onoptic translation. Summoning, rendering legible, formatting, classification, decision production, justification, and the appeal loop are identified as analytical nodes of bureaucratic-legal reality-production.

15.3 The Imperative of Calculability

The article names the bureaucratic-legal operation of Onopticon as the imperative of calculability. Yet it does not treat calculability as unilateral coercion alone. It analyzes the tension between the desire for calculability and the imperative of calculability. The problem is not that the human being can be measured; the problem is that nothing non-measurable is recognized.

15.4 Counter-Translation

The article reconceives Homovictimus not as a passive victim but as a subject of counter-translation. Yet this capacity is not romanticized. It is shaped by unequal access to legal, class, digital, linguistic, and institutional capital.

16. Conclusion: Power Translates

Why does the state not speak the native language of its society?

The more precise answer is:

The state does not directly speak society's lived language because lived language is not calculable. In that language there is a human being: incomplete, wounded, contradictory, contextual, angry, ashamed, resistant, and irreducible.

In bureaucratic-legal language, the human becomes application, document, evidence, deadline, risk, debt, eligibility, and decision. Power is established through this transformation.

This article has analyzed bureaucratic language not as awkward jargon or cold official style, but as a reality-producing apparatus of modern power. It has treated law not merely as domination, but as an institutional translation of justice that can enable redress while also trapping lived language inside procedure.

Onoptic translation is the translation of lived language into administrative-legal language. This translation produces recognition, but it also produces loss. The subject becomes readable in order to be recognized; classifiable once readable; governable once classifiable; and rejectable once governable.

Homovictimus is not the passive victim of this process. Homovictimus is the one who is translated and who can name the translation. The subject is forced into the system's language, but can expose, reverse, and counter-translate that language. Yet resistance is unequally distributed. Counter-translation depends on legal knowledge, media visibility, collective organization, class position, digital access, and institutional trust.

Opacity is not a solution in this article. It is a threshold. It appears when the data submitted for recognition no longer explains the subject but replaces the subject. When profile becomes stronger than narrative, record stronger than testimony, risk score stronger than lived experience, and absence of evidence stronger than harm, the opacity threshold opens.

The final formulation is therefore:

The hardness of onoptic power lies not only in forcibly calculating the human being, but in constructing a world in which recognition, rights, trustworthiness, and even innocence become possible only through calculability. Homovictimus is not merely the calculated subject; Homovictimus is the subject compelled to become calculable in order to be recognized, to claim rights, and to defend themselves.

Notes

1. The concept of "institutional capital" is related to Bourdieu's distinctions among economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital, but it is used here in a narrower sense. It refers to the legal literacy, document-production capacity, digital access, institutional language, and representational resources that allow subjects to translate lived language into a processable and defensible administrative-legal language.
2. Foucault's concepts of discourse, dispositif, and governmentality are clearly adjacent to the bureaucratic-legal field addressed here. The focus of this article, however, is not a general analysis of knowledge-power but the translation of lived language into administrative-legal language through forms, documents, deadlines, evidence, risk, and decisions. Onopticon is close to dispositif analysis, but it centers the ontological reality-producing force of bureaucratic-legal form.

References

- Arendt, H. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. G. Richardson, 241-258. New York: Greenwood.
- Deleuze, G. 1992. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59: 3-7.
- European Commission. 2026. "AI Act: Regulatory Framework on Artificial Intelligence." European Commission, *Shaping Europe's Digital Future*. Accessed May 20, 2026. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by A. Sheridan. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. 1980. "The Confession of the Flesh." In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, edited by C. Gordon, 194-228. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. 2007. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*. Translated by G. Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Habermas, J. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Translated by T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Translated by T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Legal Aid Victoria. 2023. "Learning from the Failures of Robodebt: Building a Fairer, Client-Centred Social Security System." Victoria Legal Aid. Accessed May 20, 2026. <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/learning-from-the-failures-of-robodebt>
- Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. 2025. *Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry Final Report, Volume 1*. Accessed May 20, 2026. <https://www.postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk/reports-and-statements>
- Rechtspraak. 2020. "SyRI Legislation in Breach of European Convention on Human Rights." District Court of The Hague. Accessed May 20, 2026. <https://www.rechtspraak.nl/organisatie-en-contact/organisatie/rechtbanken/rechtbank-den-haag/nieuws/syri-legislation-in-breach-of-european-convention-on-human-rights>
- Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. 2023. *Report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme*. Australian Government. Accessed May 20, 2026. <https://robodebt.royalcommission.gov.au/about>

Tan, H. 2026. Reality Paradigm, Onopticon and Homovictimus: A Theoretical Inquiry into Infrastructural Imposition. Working paper.

Zuboff, S. 2019. The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power. New York: PublicAffairs.