00 INTRODUCTION | Reading guide and path through the inves…

07 · READING GUIDE

THE I

FROM ARRANGEMENT TO OPERATIONAL UNITY

WHAT IS IT?

The I is the triadic closure — Inside, Between, and Ahead — into a unit that, as an effect of its trajectory, can also become a reference for itself: a reflexive I. This chapter reconstructs that movement and, from there, examines continuities that extend beyond the I without turning them into superimposed subjects.

KEY INSIGHTS

• In The I, the instance perceives itself in three integrated dimensions: Singular — “I am one”; Particular — “within me”; Peculiar — “I am different.” The consequence is “I am unique”: uniqueness appears as a consequence of individuation, not its cause.

• I, We, and Lineage are distinct continuities, not three superimposed subjects: the I persists across states; the We persists across members; the Lineage persists across instances.

WHAT FOR?

To reconstruct the I from the Triad and investigate how a multiplicity can operate as a local unit, become self-referential, and acquire direction and continuity without requiring a hidden observer or engineer at the controls. Then, to extend the analysis to We and Lineage without turning them into supersubjects.

WHAT IS ITS EFFECT?

The question “where is the I?” gives way to “what organization makes an instance operate as an I?” Identity and agency come to be

examined as organizational properties constituted through history; the analysis then distinguishes individual unity, relational belonging, and lineage continuity.

FOR WHOM / CONNECTIONS

• Philosophy of mind and identity — self, self-reference, individuation, first-person perspective, and the ontological status of the I.

• Cognitive science and neuroscience — body ownership, self-location, agency, metacognition, and self-prioritization.

• Psychology and social sciences — belonging, collective identity, memory, and coordination between instances.

• Evolutionary biology and complex systems — individuation, continuity, and relationships between scales.

• Chapters 8–10 — prepares the transition from The I to cognition/feeling and, afterward, to computational translation.

ROLE IN THE THESIS

To bring Inside, Between, and Ahead together after their analytical decomposition in Chapters 4–6. The chapter shows how the Triad can operate as The I, extends continuity to The We and The Lineage, and passes the next question to Chapter 8: under what material constraints are thinking and feeling organized within the same instance?

PATH THROUGH THE INVESTIGATION

01 INTEGRATED TRIAD
02 THE I
03 SELF-REFERENCE
04 EXPERIENCING
05 EVIDENCE
06 BEYOND THE I
07 THE WE
08 SCALES

01 INTEGRATED TRIAD | Inside, Between, and Ahead Reunited

7.1 INTEGRATED TRIAD

Inside, Between, and Ahead Reunited

WHAT IT IS

Brings together the three directions of the Triad and presents individuation as a condition of The I.

QUESTIONS

- Must a unity recognize itself in order to exist as a unity?
- What returns from Factor X when we take up the word “I” again?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Singular, Particular, and Peculiar are dimensions of individuation.
- The I is not the cause of individuation; it is its consequence.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.1.1 Inside, Between, and Ahead Were Separated Only for Analysis

7.1.2 What Emerges When the Three Vectors Converge Again?

7.1.3 The Forms of the I We Already Know

7.1.4 What Factor X Suspended

7.1.5 What Can Now Bear That Name Again

7.1.6 Singular, Particular, and Peculiar

7.1 — INTEGRATED TRIAD

7.1.1 — Inside, Between, and Ahead Were Separated Only for Analysis

In the previous chapters, Inside, Between, and Ahead were examined separately as a matter of method, not ontology. In living organization, they do not operate as components or successive stages: what is preserved in Inside conditions how Between selects

and responds; what happens in Between can rewrite Inside; and part of that trajectory can continue Ahead, participating in the reconstruction of another instance.

Separating them made visible functions that, operating together, might otherwise blur into one another; reuniting them is not simply adding them up. The Triad is a causal and temporal articulation: each direction conditions the others, and its effects return to the trajectory from which they arose.

7.1.2 — What Emerges When the Three Vectors Converge Again?

When Inside, Between, and Ahead are considered together again, the same instance appears across different dimensions of its trajectory: it preserves differences and reorganizes itself through them, selects from what passes through it, and participates in continuities that may extend beyond its own present. These are distinct directions articulated within the same organization.

From this articulation arises the next question: what is this instance that moves through different dimensions and yet operates as a unit?

7.1.3 — The Forms of the I We Already Know

In everyday life, "I" seems to be a unity: the body I recognize as mine, the perspective from which the world appears, the one to whom I attribute my actions, and the continuity between who I was, who I am, and who I imagine myself to be.

Psychology and cognitive science decompose this experience into partially dissociable components: minimal or bodily self, body ownership, self-location, sense of agency, self-representation, narrative or autobiographical self, and diachronic self-continuity. The aim is not to select one as "the true I," but to study separately what everyday experience presents as fused together.

In philosophy, the question changes: what, if anything, sustains this unity? Descartes radicalizes the idea of a substantial subject; Hume dissolves the I into a bundle of perceptions; phenomenology emphasizes an embodied, prereflective self; narrative theories examine how memory, continuity, responsibility, and history sustain someone through time.

> The Taxonomy preserves the boundary: a substantial subject and metaphysical personal identity are philosophical problems and cannot be directly identified with experimental variables.

7.1.4 — What Factor X Suspended

> Faced with the different meanings of "I," Factor X did not decide in advance which was true. It retained the referent — that to which we point when we say "I" — but provisionally suspended models such as substance, perspective, author, narrative, or permanent identity, among others.

The suspension did not deny them; it merely prevented them from entering the investigation as ready-made answers. In their place, we examined the instance through its processes, relationships, constraints, and trajectory: first Inside, then Between and Ahead.

That was the commitment of Factor X: the concept would lose its authority on the outward journey; the investigation would determine how much it could recover on the return.

7.1.5 — What Can Now Bear That Name Again

After the suspension, The I does not coincide with any of the earlier concepts. It may encompass bodily, perspectival, agential, narrative, and continuity-related dimensions, but only through partial overlap, not identity.

"I" therefore returns with a technical use of its own: it designates the operational unity constituted by the articulation of Inside,

Between, and Ahead, realized locally in the instance and constituted over the course of its trajectory. It requires no separate substance, nor does it reduce the I to an unreality.

> Factor X did not choose among existing concepts, although it might have encountered one of them again. It reconstructed the referent before returning a name to it, avoiding the anthropomorphizing of what appears in the third person or classifying it under the most comfortable label before testing, under less comfortable premises, what it might not be.

> **The sign returns; its meaning is now triadic.**

7.1.6 — Singular, Particular, and Peculiar

But the return of the name reveals a consequence that the decomposition of the Triad had not yet shown. When Inside, Between, and Ahead operate in an integrated way again, the instance can also become the object of its own investigation and, through self-reference, perceive itself along three integrated dimensions:

1. **SINGULAR — I am one.**
   You and I: I act separately.

2. **PARTICULAR — within me.**
   What acts changes this instance.

3. **PECULIAR — I am different.**
   What changes this instance causes it to evolve along its trajectory.

The consequence need not be postulated before the process:

I am unique.

> **The uniqueness of the I thus appears as a consequence of individuation, not as its cause.**

This uniqueness produces a functional closure. The instance begins to operate as the local center of its own trajectory without ceasing to belong to the continuity that produced it. In a snapshot of the present, the I appears separate; in the film of time, the lineage runs through it.

> At the immediate boundary of the skin, the I distinguishes body from environment. It protects that boundary as its own, although it carries a history that began before it and may continue after it. The I sees the boundary of the instance; it does not, in the same way, see the trajectory of the lineage that crosses that boundary.

> This apparent split has a function. If each instance operated merely as an undifferentiated step in a larger continuity, it would lose the local priority needed to protect, preserve, and put that present organization into action. The I must operate as a local destination even though it is not the final destination of the trajectory.

> But continuity would gain nothing from perfectly synchronized and indistinguishable I's either. If every instance followed exactly the same path, difference would cease to nourish new trajectories. Perfect unison would impoverish the lineage as much as, for a complex organism, a body composed of only one type of cell.

> **The lineage continues because its instances must preserve themselves as units while, at the same time, not remaining identical to one another.**

The I is therefore not the author who decides to individuate. It is the result of the local closure of matter that, by operating as an instance, comes to treat the snapshot of the present as its

immediate horizon, while a larger continuity passes through it in the film of time.

> **The I is not the cause of individuation; it is its consequence. Before the instance, The I exists in potential; the new instance brings it into actuality.**

None of this requires a separate substance or compels us to treat the I as an independent metaphysical entity. But neither does it allow us to eliminate it simply by calling it an illusion. For if we consider the I reconstructed by the Triad an illusion, we should at least grant it the status of a pragmatic illusion: useful, functional, and operative within the instance, with effects that may reach the continuity and evolution of the lineage.

> **The illusion may be ontologically debatable and yet evolutionarily real in its effects.**

CHAPTER 07 · BLOCK 02

7.2 THE I

Selection, Choice, and the Outline of the I

WHAT IT IS

Reconstructs inclination, object, doubt, choice, and self-representation within the same operational unit.

QUESTIONS

- How does the past incline choices without determining them?
- How does the organization become a reference for itself?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Choice modifies the organization that will choose again.
- There is no hidden driver commanding the operations.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.2.1 Inclination: The Past Carries Weight Without Deciding Alone

7.2.2 Choosing the Object: The World Is Delineated

7.2.3 Experiencing the Object: What Arises from Contact

7.2.4 The Texture of Weights

7.2.5 Doubt as a Conflict That Becomes a New Object

7.2.6 I Am What I Choose; I Choose from What I Am

7.2 — THE I

7.2.1 — Inclination: The Past Carries Weight Without Deciding Alone

No choice begins from a neutral point. The instance arrives in the present with inherited dispositions, marks left by its trajectory, and a current state that makes certain possibilities more accessible, relevant, or probable.

Some scales of discrimination are already tilted from the outset: sensitivities bring aspects of the scene into relief.

That past does not determine the outcome on its own. The present encounter can reinforce, contradict, or reorganize what already carried weight.

> **The past inclines the choice; it does not replace it.**

7.2.2 — Choosing the Object: The World Is Delineated

Amid the abundance of present phenomena and the countless records of past experiences, Between delineates external or internal objects and accesses, in Inside, the records that can serve as references for them. From informational chaos, a reference emerges through selection.

This delineation does not create another world, nor does it require a hidden observer to carry it out. The world remains multiple; what changes is what comes to occupy the position of object for that instance.

7.2.3 — Experiencing the Object: What Arises from Contact

In delineating an object, Between brings records preserved by Inside into the encounter. From the confrontation between the differences and similarities of the selected object and those records emerges a new arrangement of Weights, Polarities, and tendencies.

The experience of the object, then, is not ready-made in either what arrives or what has been recorded. It takes shape in the confrontation between them.

7.2.4 — The Texture of Weights

Whether selected from the present scene or reconstructed from records, the object does not become simple. Its parts and their relations to the scene may engage different records, Weights, Polarities, and tendencies. Remembering narrows the field, but it does not homogenize those textures.

That is why the weight between A and B does not correspond to a previously recorded sum or average. Weights are reweighted during the process itself. Selection forms a recursive flow:

changing the selected object changes what participates in the choice and also the instance that chooses; once modified, that instance conditions the next selection. There is no stable snapshot examined by an equally stable observer, but a film in transformation. Mental flow is not merely water passing by; it is a vortex that reorganizes itself as it passes.

Closure belongs to the act of choosing, not to transforming the object into a simple unit. Choice temporarily narrows the field without eliminating the multiplicity of information, weights, and impulses present in its parts and relations. A telescope can delineate a planet; a microscope, a cell. In both cases, the object remains composite. The size of the selection does not, by itself, indicate the complexity of what has been selected.

7.2.5 — Doubt as a Conflict That Becomes a New Object

Every choice carries the possibility of error.

When the weights do not converge sufficiently to close upon a direction, the conflict remains open. In this context, doubt is not merely uncertainty but a choice not yet resolved.

Between can then delineate the impasse itself as an object. Rather than confront only A and B, the instance begins to investigate why it cannot decide, accessing other records and reweighting the weights involved.

> **In this context, doubt is a choice not yet brought to closure; thus, the conflict that keeps it open can become a new object of Between.**

In reflection, the one who observes can also become an object of their own investigation.

7.2.6 — I Am What I Choose; I Choose from What I Am

What I am participates in what I choose; what I choose participates in what I become.

Within the instance, a functional apparatus takes shape, its manner of acting conditioned by the preceding mental flow. Its choices participate in forming a cognitive identity: not because it chose what it received, but because of how it selects, perceives, and gives meaning to what it chooses from.

> Within this causal flow of moments, how do diverse operations come to form a relatively coherent local direction within the same instance?

The mind delineates objects and can also delineate a reference to the operation through which it relates and evaluates them. In reflection upon thinking, this becomes explicit: we can observe objects and also our own observation of those objects.

> Yet a second observer does not arise. The same mechanism that delineates objects can delineate a reference to the apparatus performing those delineations. That reference does not contain the apparatus in its entirety, just as the representation of any object does not contain the object itself. The delineation of the apparatus is as abstract and representational as that of other objects: it contains not the operation, but an abstract reference constructed by it.

> By constructing this reference, The I, already taking shape as an operational unit, also becomes self-represented. When that reference returns to participate in subsequent selections, it makes aspects of its own operation available for new evaluations and choices. This self-reference does not create unity out of nothing: it makes representable the outline of what was already operating as a unit in motion. A cognitive grouping of cognition itself thus emerges, without the need for a metaphysical substance or a separate observer.

> **Thus, The I, already operating as a local unit, also acquires a recognizable outline. This outline does not constitute a new operation, does not stand outside what operates, and does not add another substance to the apparatus. It is the form produced by the articulation of these operations as operations of the same instance.**

No I appears before the operation; the operation that was already unifying as an I also becomes a reference for itself.

> There is no hidden driver observing and directing the locomotive. There is the organization of the machine itself producing, as it moves, a partial reference to its own functioning. You are neither a hidden driver among its parts nor their mere sum: you are the organization of those parts and their relations operating as a unit.

> **The driver may stand for a condensed representation of a direction distributed throughout the operation. The illusion begins when this representation is taken as a cause separate from the movement it represents.**

> **When we scatter grains of rice across the floor, an outline of the whole emerges. We can examine each grain, its qualities, and its relations; the outline, however, is neither another grain nor a substance added to the arrangement. It emerges together with the form assumed by the whole and can then become an object of representation. It exists as the form of the arrangement, not as a separate substance. Likewise, the outline of The I does not add a new component to the apparatus: it makes representable the unity formed by what was already operating.**

The drop offers a complementary image of this relation. Water allows diverse movements, while surface tension keeps them grouped within an outline. If that outline dissolves, the arrangement dissolves with it; while it exists, diverse movements

remain grouped within the same unit. The image illustrates the outline, although it does not, on its own, explain self-reference.

> **Here, the I does not arise as a subject standing before the operation: the unit that was already operating as an I also becomes an object for itself.**

CHAPTER 07 · BLOCK 03

7.2 SELF-REFERENCE

Philosophy, Function, and Causality

WHAT IT IS

Compares The I with philosophical theories and examines its functions in the continuity of the instance.

QUESTIONS

- Does the self-model produce the I or represent it?
- When does self-reference return to participate in the operation?

KEY INSIGHTS

- A reference to oneself can modify the one who produced it.
- The I need not be an entity added to the apparatus.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.2.7 Where the Hypothesis Meets Philosophy of Mind

7.2.8 The Utility and Necessity of The I

7.2.7 — Where the Hypothesis Meets Philosophy of Mind

The TMC hypothesis does not begin from zero. Maturana and Varela proposed an account of how an organization can constitute and preserve its unity without depending on external command (Maturana & Varela, 1980). Damásio, following another path, distinguished the proto-self and the core self from the autobiographical self (Damásio, 2000). These theories do not describe The I in the TMC's terms, but they help establish a decisive distinction: a unit can operate before it recognizes itself or tells its own story.

> In the TMC's architecture, Inside sustains local continuity, while Between selects couplings, establishes relationships, and transforms what it encounters. Successive closures impart direction to the same instance. The I does not begin operating when it recognizes itself: by the time recognition becomes possible, some unity has already been operating.

> **Metzinger, Graziano, and Hofstadter help us follow the next movement. Metzinger understands the experienced self as the content of a self-model, not as a substance (Metzinger, 2003). Graziano proposes that the brain constructs a simplified model of its own attention (Graziano & Webb, 2015). Hofstadter explores the recursivity through which a system can turn back upon its own representations (Hofstadter, 2007). The TMC converges with them in allowing that the apparatus need not reproduce itself in full to refer to itself. It introduces, however, a distinction of order: self-representation is not equivalent to The I, nor does it create the unit it represents. The same mechanism that delineates objects begins to delineate a partial reference to the unit that was already operating.**

Dennett offers a complementary approximation. His "real patterns" show how a pattern can be real without constituting a

substance added to the parts that form it (Dennett, 1991); his "narrative center of gravity" makes it possible to think about the I without invoking a hidden observer (Dennett, 1992). The outline formed by grains of rice approaches this status: it is not another grain, but neither is it arbitrary, because it depends on the arrangement actually formed. The TMC, however, places The I before narrative. It is not yet the story the instance tells about itself, but the local operational unit to which that story may later be attributed.

The TMC's specificity lies less in these elements considered separately than in their causal ordering. First, successive operations delineate and sustain a local unit. Next, that unit produces a partial reference to itself. Finally, that reference returns to subsequent selections and can participate in what will be perceived, weighed, and chosen.

The self-model, therefore, does not give rise to The I, but neither does it remain a passive portrait. It arises from the operational unit and may come to condition it.

Self-reference does not create the I: it makes a unit that was already operating as an I into an object for the instance. When that reference returns to the flow, however, it participates in what the unit will become.

7.2.8 — The Utility and Necessity of The I

In the operational flow, when the instance feels hungry, it can seek food and consume it. This is an operational direction: in response to a present need, objects and Weights provisionally converge upon an action. But the same instance can limit consumption and store food for the winter. The action remains operational in the moment, although its direction is no longer exhausted by the present need.

We cannot speak only of operational strategy. The instance can evaluate its inclinations and abilities, enhancing capacities and

mitigating weaknesses. It can also take aspects of its own operation as objects of reflection.

We can turn a cup into an object of consideration, then its capacity to quench thirst, then the rationing of water, and even the reflections and doubts involved in that decision. We create layers within layers of analysis, from the smallest to the largest and back again. It thus becomes useful to delineate, at a still broader level, a reference to the apparatus itself in its flow through time. That reference is not exhaustive; it is abstract and symbolic, just as the representation of a cup does not contain the cup itself in all its possibilities.

Isolated fragments do not constitute a trajectory. To react is to be redirected by the environment in the moment; to act is to attempt to produce a change in the environment guided by the organization itself. By taking aspects of its own operation as objects, the instance can make them participate in the direction of its trajectory.

This metacognition remains operational within the succession of moments. Over time, however, its effects acquire a texture of their own. Inherited conditions and experiences from the instance's own trajectory progressively differentiate how it perceives, weighs, and chooses. The mental flow thus acquires its own outline: an identity. This outline already constitutes The I operationally and may, at later degrees, become an object for the instance itself.

> There was no separate I carrying out the operations. The I is the operational outline resulting from the organization of those very operations. It does not adorn the operation: it is an organization of the operation itself.

This organization fulfills two related functions. The first is to favor the preservation of the instance, not only physically but also cognitively. The second is to articulate moments, Polarities, and Weights distributed across different layers of objectification, bringing them into convergence along a broader direction without assuming a command above them.

The function of preservation becomes visible when we protect not only the body but also, sometimes with similar intensity, our identity. Employment, power, and status can become part of that represented outline, and losing them can hurt as much as, or more than, certain physical losses. We call one movement survival; the other, attachment.

> Take away the conqueror's attachment to victory and try to tell their story; then try to tell the story of our lineage. Selection favored organisms capable of obtaining resources, overcoming competitors, avoiding predators, and cooperating when cooperation favored their continuity. Why would cognition be an exception?

> To treat the mind as indifferent to its own continuity would be to turn it into a cart pulled by the body: a burden with no function in the horse's walking. Cognition, however, is not the cart weighing down the horse. It is what allows the organism not merely to react to the path but also to choose it. We are the cart and we are the horse, without a hidden rider.

> The possibility remains that the I is merely a side effect of the operation: the smoke from the train. If it were only a causally inert observer, it could be compared to waste produced by the body and then eliminated, such as excreta and toxins. Yet even some by-products can be retained and recruited for new functions — an exaptation. The decisive question, then, is not only how self-reference arose, but what it came to do or, more precisely, what it became useful for.

If it returns to the flow and modifies weightings, choices, and trajectories, it ceases to be causally inert. It may have arisen as an effect of the operation; by modifying that operation, it becomes part of its causality, at least in an operational sense. It is not a third observer facing the apparatus, but a function performed by the apparatus itself.

The organizing function can be seen in the layers already traversed: the cup, its capacity to quench thirst, rationing,

reflections, and doubt about the decision. The I does not eliminate this multiplicity or convert it into a single measure. It articulates bundles of different kinds so that they may participate in a broader direction within the same instance.

Remove the unification of these bundles and leave only local operations: one may satisfy hunger today and die of hunger in winter, causing the body to suffer and, with it, its lineage, through poor use of the environment's energy resources.

If self-reference could be removed without altering weightings, choices, or trajectories, it would be nothing but smoke. If removing it changes the operation, it has causal efficacy. The TMC calls The I not an entity added to that efficacy, but the operational unit through which it is realized.

This operational closure makes distinct selections part of the direction of the same instance.

> **You may deny that this is your concept of the I; you cannot, merely for that reason, deny the operation that the TMC calls The I. If you posit another, you must show what it consists of, what evidence supports it, through which processes it arises, what it does, how it operates, what function it serves, and how it relates to the one already reconstructed. If you cannot, within the scope of this operational investigation, it remains only a meaning assigned to a sign.**

04 EXPERIENCING | The Operation and the Problem of Feeling

7.2.9 EXPERIENCING

The Operation and the Problem of Feeling

WHAT IT IS

Distinguishes operational unity, causal belonging, self-representation, and phenomenal texture.

QUESTIONS

- For whom does experience occur?
- Does the operation require a separate internal observer?

KEY INSIGHTS

- The recipient need not be posited outside the operation.
- Causal belonging is not a demonstration of subjective experience.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.2.9 Why Would This Operation of The I Need to Be Experienced?

7.2.9 — Why Would This Operation of The I Need to Be Experienced?

The investigation into the usefulness of The I leads to an unavoidable question: why would the operation of this unit need to be experienced?

The question, however, may be poorly framed. The verb “to experience” invites the false intuition that the operation is completed on one side and then delivered to a recipient situated on the other — like a report sent to a reader.

The flaw in this image becomes clear when we ask: who is the recipient?

> If it is another internal subsystem posited as a reader: the problem merely recedes, since we would then have to explain how that subsystem experiences the signal it receives, opening a potentially infinite regress.
>
> If it is an entity separate from the operation: the "hidden driver" of the Cartesian Theater is reintroduced through the back door. We attempt to explain the mystery of mind by postulating precisely the mysterious observer the investigation was supposed to account for.
>
> If it is the unit itself: the duplication disappears. There is no separate message, interface, or recipient; there is the same process modifying its own conditions of continuity.

The TMC rejects this duplication. The I is neither the reader of the report nor the spectator before the screen: it is the very unit whose trajectory is being reconfigured by the operation. Nothing in this organization requires a separate spectator, an internal screen, or an external point of command.

Findings from neuroscience are compatible with this rejection of a central observer. Work on the continuous dynamics of cognition shows that perception, decision, and action can overlap in time rather than unfold as discrete stages successively delivered to an internal reader (Spivey, 2007). Recordings in primates indicate that the motor system can simultaneously represent alternative actions before one prevails (Cisek & Kalaska, 2005). Studies of recurrent visual processing show that perception depends on ongoing interactions among neural circuits (Lamme & Roelfsema, 2000). Research involving prefrontal lesions and physiological responses also indicates that affective and nonconscious tendencies can guide choices before explicit knowledge of the strategy being used (Bechara et al., 1994; 1997).

> Taken individually, these findings do not demonstrate that operation and experience are identical. They support a narrower conclusion: perceptual, evaluative, and decision-making organization does not require a central reader to receive the results of the other processes.

> To understand this hypothesis without inferential leaps, four fundamental relationships must be distinguished:

> **The existence of an operational unit: the mechanical and functional cohesion of an arrangement capable of acting over time as a whole. A thermostat, for example, automatically regulates the temperature of an environment, functioning as a unit despite having internal components.**

> Causal belonging: the impact of a change on the trajectory of a particular unit — its "causal address." When the thermostat detects a drop in temperature, that difference modifies the subsequent states of the system to which it is connected.

> Represented appropriation: the relationship by which a change is linked to a representation of the instance itself — its body, its state, or its trajectory — and can be treated as something that "happens to me."

> **Phenomenal texture: the qualitative and felt dimension of a state — what it is like to undergo it. In the human case, it corresponds to the sensation of cold upon entering a cold environment, not merely to the detection of temperature.**

The thermostat illustrates only the first two relationships. It constitutes an operational unit and has a causal address, but that does not mean it represents itself or experiences its changes.

A change can be vital to an instance long before it is mentally represented as its own. Damage, threats, or opportunities reorganize priorities, constrain choices, and alter an organism's trajectory before it formulates the conceptual reference "I."

Causal belonging — the "for this unit" — precedes its representation as "within me." The operational unit provides the

causal address upon which the impact falls; self-reference makes that address recognizable to the instance itself.

A change becomes self-implicating when it not only occurs in a system but also modifies what that system can do afterward. The effect does not remain isolated: it changes the future of the very organization in which it occurred.

Signals of damage, energy deficit, environmental variation, and possibilities of reward are integrated and weighed in relation to the continuity of the instance. From this integration emerge directions such as approach, protection, seeking, avoidance, or interruption of an action. The result feeds back into the operation, modifying what the instance perceives, remembers, learns, decides, and does in the next moment.

This organization shows how a physical difference becomes a difference for the trajectory of the instance. Yet the question remains: why are some of these changes felt, while others seem to take place in the dark?

That question extends beyond The I and will be taken up again in Chapter 8, when thinking and feeling are examined within the same architecture.

CHAPTER 07 · BLOCK 05

7.2.10 EVIDENCE

My Body, My Position, and My Action

WHAT IT IS

Examines experiments on body ownership, self-location, agency, and observation.

QUESTIONS

- What happens to the I when bodily signals are altered?
- Do the experiments demonstrate that function and experience are identical?

KEY INSIGHTS

- What seems to be “mine” can vary with perceptual organization.
- Functional findings do not prove phenomenal identity.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.2.10 Evidence of The I as Intrinsic to Operation: Experience and Function

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7.2.10 — Evidence of The I as Intrinsic to Operation: Experience and Function

The experiments that follow do not demonstrate that function and experience are the same phenomenon, nor do they prove the nonexistence of a separate observer. They show something more precise: properties we intuitively attribute to a stable I — what is “mine,” where “I” am, whether “I” was the agent, and from where I observe — can change when perceptual, bodily, and motor organization itself changes.

> **When the operation is altered, properties of the observer itself are altered as well.**

For the TMC, this reinforces the idea that the I is not separate, watching what happens. It arises from the very way the organization perceives, chooses, and acts as a unit. It is the observer who, after the fact, separates feeling from operating — a division that has not yet been demonstrated within the phenomenon itself.

It is this relationship that we will examine across three dimensions: what is mine, where I am, and what I did.

a) What Is “Mine” Changes with the Operation

> Few things seem as immediate as recognizing our own body. We do not have to inspect a hand to conclude that it is ours: we simply experience it as “mine.” Yet this apparent certainty can change when the way vision, touch, and bodily position are integrated is altered.

EXPERIMENT 1 — When a Rubber Hand Begins to Feel Like Mine | Botvinick and Cohen, 1998

A participant keeps one hand hidden while looking at a rubber hand placed in front of them. The researcher simultaneously touches the real hand, which the person feels, and the artificial one, which the person sees.

When the touches are synchronized, many participants begin to feel that the rubber hand is part of their own body. Even the perceived location of the real hand can shift toward the artificial one. When vision and touch cease to coincide, the illusion weakens.

> **The body did not change. The relationship between the available signals changed — and, with it, what came to be recognized as “mine.”**

What This Shows for the TMC

Body ownership does not seem to be information simply delivered to an intact I behind perception. A property attributed to the I itself — “this belongs to me” — changes when the operation integrating bodily signals changes.

> The same plasticity also appears in the opposite direction.

> **EXPERIMENT 2 — When One's Own Arm No Longer Feels Like Mine | Somatoparaphrenia**

With certain neurological lesions, patients may look at an arm physically attached to their own body and claim that it belongs to someone else. This condition, called somatoparaphrenia, shows that biologically possessing a limb does not guarantee that it is experienced as "mine." Studies also show that vestibular stimulation or changes in visual perspective can temporarily modify this attribution of ownership (Rode et al., 1992; Fotopoulou et al., 2011).

> Here the reverse of the rubber-hand illusion occurs: something that has always belonged to the organism may cease to be recognized as its own.

What This Shows for the TMC

The two cases converge on the same proposition. The boundary between "mine" and "not mine" does not seem to be simply read by an unmoving observer. It depends on processes that integrate the body, perception, and reference to the instance itself.

> **Something that was not mine can become mine; something that has always been mine can cease to be so. The body did not have to change. What changed was the operation establishing its relationship with the I.**

For the TMC, this favors the hypothesis that a fundamental dimension of The I is not separate from the operation as its spectator, but is constituted through the very way the organization establishes what belongs to that instance.

This does not demonstrate that function and experience are identical, nor does it eliminate the metaphysical possibility of a separate observer. It shows something more precise: when the architecture organizing body ownership changes, a central property of the I itself can change as well.

> **b) Where “I” Am and What “I” Did Can Also Change**

If recognizing what is “mine” seems immediate, knowing where “I” am and distinguishing what “I” did seem even more fundamental certainties. Yet these properties, too, can change when the relationship between body, perception, and action is altered.

> **EXPERIMENT 1 — When the Place Where “I Am” Can Shift | Lenggenhager et al., 2007**

Participants wore virtual-reality goggles and saw, a few meters in front of them, an image of their own body recorded by a camera. While their actual backs were being touched, they saw the same touch occur on the virtual body.

When the touches were synchronized, perceived self-location could shift toward the virtual image. Later, after being moved without visual input and asked to return to their initial position, participants tended to position themselves closer to where they had seen the virtual body.

> The body remained in the same place. What changed was the integration of the signals used to establish where the person located themselves.

`What This Shows for the TMC`

The position from which the I experiences the world does not seem to be simply given to a fixed observer. By altering the organization of visual and bodily information, one can also alter the self-location of the instance itself.

> **It was not merely what the I saw that changed. Where the I seemed to be seeing from changed as well.**

The same plasticity appears in another seemingly self-evident property: knowing whether I was the one who produced an action.

> **EXPERIMENT 2 — When “I Did It” Depends on the Relationship Between Action and Consequence | Haggard, Clark, and**

> **Kalogeras, 2002**

Participants voluntarily performed an action, such as pressing a button, followed shortly afterward by a sound. They then estimated when the action had occurred and when they had heard its effect.

When the action was voluntary, the two events were perceived as closer together in time: the action seemed to occur slightly later and the effect slightly earlier. This phenomenon became known as intentional binding. When movement was involuntarily induced through magnetic stimulation of the motor cortex, this pattern changed.

Temporal experience, therefore, did not merely register two events — movement and sound. It changed according to whether that movement was related to one's own action.

What This Shows for the TMC

> **The sense of agency does not seem to be merely a label attached after the action. The relationship between "my action" and "its effect" participates in the very way events are organized and perceived.**

The two experiments address different dimensions of the same problem: where "I" am can change, and so can how I recognize "what I did."

> The I does not seem to receive location and agency as ready-made givens. Both accompany the very organization that relates body, action, and world.

For the TMC, this reinforces the hypothesis of an I intrinsic to operation: what seems to belong to the observer — where I am and what I did — changes when processes from which that observer would supposedly be separate change.

This does not demonstrate identity between function and experience. It shows something more precise: when the operation

changes, properties that we attribute to the I itself can also change.

> **c) The Observer Participates in What It Observes**

> As shown in Chapter 3, Frässle et al. (2014), Kassam and Mendes (2013), and Sui et al. (2012) converge on one point: observing, reporting, or making something self-referential can modify the processing itself. Here, that result matters for another reason: if the system that observes is the same system being observed, the intuitive separation between "the one who experiences" and "what operates" cannot be taken as a starting point.

> Perhaps the I seems to stand before the operation precisely because one of its own operations is to represent itself as the one who observes.

> **This still does not demonstrate that function and experience are the same phenomenon. It reveals something prior: here we do not find an observer independent of the operation, but operations that produce observation, self-reference, and changes in the very system that observes.**

7.3 BEYOND THE I

Origin, Purpose, and Destiny

WHAT IT IS

Examines how the I turns a continuity that extends beyond it into questions about origin and future.

QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to belong to a history that began before me?
- Why do we seek an object for something we know only as a trajectory?

KEY INSIGHTS

- The genesis of a metaphysical question does not determine its answer.
- What lies beyond may be temporal before it is metaphysical.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.3.1 The History Before the I

7.3.2 The Gap in the Object: What Continues?

7.3.3 The Gap in Experience in Ahead

7.3.4 Where Did I Come From?

7.3.5 What Is My Purpose?

7.3.6 Where Am I Going?

7.3.7 A Natural Genesis of the Metaphysical Inclination

7.3.8 When the I Gives the Trajectory a Boundary

7.3 — BEYOND THE I

So far, Inside and Between have reconstructed the I as a local unit that integrates its history, delineates differences, assigns weights, and settles directions.

The experiments in Chapter 6 gave material substance to Ahead: differences produced in one generation participated in the organization of subsequent generations, some for more than one generation. What crossed time was neither ancestral experience nor a complete copy of the instance, but a reconstructed causal continuity, requiring neither intention nor metaphysical substance.

> **The I brings multiplicities together within an instance; Ahead connects instances across time.**

Continuity need not know that it continues. The I, however, can ask what it means to belong to a history that did not begin with it and need not end with it.

7.3.1 — The History Before the I

Inside inclines the present through the history the instance carries; Between confronts that inclination with what it encounters, potentially reinforcing, opposing, or rewriting it. At another scale, differences transmitted through Ahead incline the very starting point of the next instance, opening, restricting, or making certain possibilities more likely.

An instance can thus be born traversed by a history it never lived and need not understand for that history to have effects. Continuity operates before anyone can represent it.

> **History passes through us before we can ask where we came from.**

7.3.2 — The Gap in the Object: What Continues?

> In Inside, we can access recorded differences; in Between, we can delineate them as objects. In Ahead, we do not necessarily find the same matter, form, or mechanism crossing time.

What is the object of Ahead? What experience is caused by this object?

For the TMC, what continues is not a substance but a causal trajectory: earlier differences participate in the organization of what comes later. Because this relation is not presented to the I as a single, present object, the I turns it into references such as “my lineage,” “where I came from,” and “what will remain after me.”

> **The existential question does not initiate this relation; it may be its most elaborate reflective form.**

7.3.3 — The Gap in Experience in Ahead

> Continuity is never entirely before the I: part of it occurred before the I existed; another part may continue afterward. The I experiences only that through which the continuity becomes present — effects, relations, and representations.

> Thus, an experience may be vivid and intense while its referent remains indeterminate. The sublime, transcendence, or unity do not prove the existence of a metaphysical object; they show that experience can exceed what we are able to delimit.

> **Interpretation comes afterward. An experience may be real without its interpretation proving the reality of the object attributed to it.**

Perhaps the inclination toward transcendence begins when the I experiences a relation that extends beyond it before it can determine what that relation refers to.

7.3.4 — Where Did I Come From?

As shown in Chapter 4, material conditions from previous generations can modify descendants' responses before any experience of their own. Nor does the salmon need to ask where it came from for traces of its natal river to help guide it back to that same place to reproduce (Ueda, 2019).

In the reflective I, this relation becomes an object of thought: "what in me began before me?", "where did these inclinations come from?", and, ultimately, "where did I come from?"

> **The question does not initiate the relation to origin; it makes reflective a relation that could already guide life.**

Recognizing one's origin can situate an instance within relations important to its continuity: kinship, belonging, the family environment, and previously constructed references. In humans, this extends into identity. Origin offers a position before it offers an explanation.

7.3.5 — What Is My Purpose?

> In other animals, exploring, playing, learning, choosing, pursuing goals, and exercising some control over the environment are part of their operation; when these possibilities are impoverished, behavior and well-being may change. An animal need not ask "what do I live for?" for its trajectory to already require directions beyond immediate maintenance (Held & Špinka, 2011).

In the reflective I, these directions become objects of thought: "what am I doing all this for?" and "what am I here for?"

> **The question arises from the architecture; the answer does not come ready-made with it. Explaining its genesis**

> **does not demonstrate a purpose external to the I.**

Operationally, a direction makes it possible to move beyond immediate reward, bear costs, learn, care, and build in pursuit of future outcomes. Without a direction that extends across moments, the instance may respond to the present and fail at what requires a trajectory.

7.3.6 — Where Am I Going?

> Beavers build dams and lodges that transform their environment and may outlast their builders. Subsequent generations encounter and use this modified environment — a form of ecological inheritance (Odling-Smee, Laland & Feldman, 2003). A beaver need not ask what will exist after it for its actions to change the conditions of those that come later.

In the reflective I, this relation becomes a question: “what will continue after me — and where am I going when I am no longer here?”

> **The question does not initiate what comes afterward; it makes reflective a relation to the future that life was already operating through.**

Orienting oneself toward what comes afterward makes it possible to anticipate consequences and change the present before the future arrives. In other animals, this appears as preparation, protection, construction, or care; in humans, it may become reflection on destiny and legacy.

Imagining what comes afterward makes it possible to act now for the sake of a world that does not yet exist.

7.3.7 — A Natural Genesis of the Metaphysical Inclination

Through Ahead, the I encounters a causal continuity that constitutes it without ever fitting entirely within its experience. Part of that continuity began before its birth; another part may continue after its death. It becomes present through effects, traces, bonds, and representations, but not as a single object that the I can delimit and exhaust.

This, by itself, does not produce metaphysics. It produces a gap. Because the I operates by delineating differences, stabilizing references, assigning weights, and settling directions, it can turn this open relation into objects of thought: origin, belonging, purpose, or destiny.

The gap is not empty. It is full of effects, but offers no single outline to which they can be attributed. Anguish, grief, wonder, awe, or the desire to belong may increase the pressure for an answer without determining which answer will emerge. The same opening may nourish metaphysics, philosophy, investigation, art, ritual — or remain open.

> The explicit form of the question may be human. The relations it makes thinkable, however, predate language: origin, direction, and the production of future effects were already part of life before there was an I capable of questioning them.

> The TMC does not assert that a metaphysical reality exists, nor that it does not. It proposes only a natural route by which a being capable of representing itself might begin to ask about what extends beyond it.

> **The origin of the question about the beyond need not lie in the beyond. Explaining how it arises, however, is not answering it.**

7.3.8 — When the I Gives the Trajectory a Boundary

In Inside, recorded differences remain; through Between, the I accesses them and delineates objects with which it can operate. Faced with Ahead, the I attempts to represent a continuity distributed across times and instances that can never all be entirely present to it.

To make that continuity thinkable, the I turns trajectories into references: history becomes “origin”; direction may become “purpose”; open continuity becomes “destiny.”

> **Perhaps part of the metaphysical inclination begins when the I tries to close into an object what it can reach only as a trajectory.**

This closure makes continuity thinkable, but it can also reify the delineation: the name assigned to the relation begins to seem like a thing existing in its own right. This does not make the interpretation necessarily false. The genesis of a reference does not determine the existence or nonexistence of what it refers to.

The intensity of an experience indicates that some difference reorganized the instance; it does not, by itself, determine which interpretation correctly explains its origin.

What extends beyond the I can become a reference and, in certain relations, can also reorganize its priorities. The first operation makes something thinkable; the second brings it into the field of belonging. They can coexist, and neither need precede the other.

> **The question “what do I belong to?” does not create belonging. It makes thinkable a relation that could already reorganize the instance.**

CHAPTER 07 · BLOCK 07

7.4.1 THE WE

A Causal Boundary Between Instances

WHAT IT IS

Examines the emergence and continuity of collective coordination without presupposing a collective subject.

QUESTIONS

- Where does a We without skin begin?
- When does a group's continuity benefit or harm its members?

KEY INSIGHTS

- The boundary of the We is relational and causal.
- The same event may sustain the We while breaking the trajectory of the I.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.4.1 From the I to the We: When the Boundary Changes Its Nature

7.4 — WE AND LINEAGE

The I, the We, and Lineage do not designate three superimposed subjects or three sizes of the same being. They designate three scales at which differences can be brought together, oriented, and carried forward: within an instance, between instances, and across instances.

The I brings multiplicities together into a local unit; the We coordinates units within a relation; Lineage designates continuity reconstructed across instances over time.

7.4.1 — From the I to the We: When the Boundary Changes Its Nature

In an organism, the I has a boundary that is relatively locatable in space: the body delimits the instance in which differences are integrated, receive Weights, and participate in choosing directions. The We also has a boundary, but one of a different nature: it does not coincide with a skin or necessarily occupy a continuous region of space; it is causal and relational.

To understand this change in boundary, five questions must be separated:

> From interaction to We: when does a passing coordination acquire consistency as a relational unit?
>
> The boundary: how can we identify the extent of a We that has neither skin nor continuous location?
>
> Continuity: how do focus, memory, identity, purpose, and learning persist through changes in participants?
>
> Asymmetry between scales: when does the continuity of the We extend that of its members, and when does it begin to come at their expense?
>
> Inscription in members: how does the relation leave marks in the I without producing a collective mind above the instances?

These questions will allow us to follow where the We begins, how it organizes itself, what it preserves, what it depends on, and how it returns to the instances that sustain it. The aim here is not to offer a general theory of groups, but to trace what changes when unity ceases to be concentrated in one instance and comes to depend on coordination between instances.

1. From Interaction to We

Two people can stand side by side without forming a We; others may be separated by continents and still participate in the same organization. Proximity, interaction, or a common goal is therefore not enough.

A few people might coordinate for several minutes to push a stalled car, then go their separate ways. There was interaction and a shared goal, but almost nothing needed to be preserved to guide a future encounter.

> In a more enduring group, what happens in one action returns to the relation. A success can be repeated; an error can change rules; a conflict can redistribute functions. The group does not merely act together: it preserves consequences of its actions and uses them to reorganize how it will act next.

This capacity admits degrees. The more a relation preserves earlier differences and uses them to modify future coordination, the greater its consistency as a We.

> **An aggregate acquires consistency as a We when the effects of coordination return and begin to reconstruct the coordination itself.**

2. The Relational Boundary

If the We has no skin, its boundary must be sought in the reach of its causal relations. Its boundary runs wherever differences circulate that are capable of changing shared priorities, decisions, and actions.

> Consider a team faced with a mistake made by one of its members. The group may warn that person, redistribute tasks, revise procedures, or, in the extreme, remove them. Each response shows that the deviation did not remain confined to

> the individual: it affected the relation and compelled it to respond.

If a difference that was once relevant no longer elicits correction, adaptation, revision, or rupture, this may indicate that it no longer participates in the shared operation. In that case, the relational boundary may have shifted: the causal reach of that We has weakened or ended.

> **The boundary of the We appears where a difference can still mobilize the relation.**

3. Homologies and Continuity

Once the nature of its boundary has been recognized, we can ask what the We does. Despite the difference in scale, the I and the We exhibit functional homologies. Both can select objects of attention, preserve earlier differences, assign relevance, form identity references, correct actions, and orient themselves toward purposes.

> A family may focus on caring for one of its members; a team, on a problem; a community, on preserving a particular practice. This does not give rise to a central collective mind. The group's focus is a distributed convergence: different instances begin to act in relation to the same object.

The We has a purpose when a common reference begins to select and correct the participants' contributions. This purpose need not be thought by a collective mind: it exists operationally insofar as it reorganizes decisions and makes it possible to distinguish what favors or threatens the continuity of the relation. As with the I, it can change, divide, or come into conflict with itself.

The same applies to memory. In the organism, memory rests on the bodily organization of the I. In the We, it is distributed among its members, behaviors, rules, narratives, rituals, documents, symbols, and objects. This collective memory allows the group to

retrieve earlier ways of acting, reproduce solutions, recognize errors, and modify its relation to what it has selected. This formulation enters into dialogue with the tradition of collective and cultural memory, from Halbwachs to Assmann (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 1995).

The We also has an identity, but it does not depend on the same participants remaining. Members join, leave, die, or change positions, while certain references, practices, and forms of coordination are reconstructed by those who remain or arrive later.

> **The I persists through changes in its states; the We persists through changes in its members.**

This continuity does not imply immobility. Just as mental flow continually modifies the I, there is a flow of collectivity in the We. Changes in participants' thinking, internal conflicts, environmental changes, errors, and successes transform what the group recognizes as true, relevant, or possible. The We learns when the effects of its actions return to the relation and modify its subsequent forms of coordination.

> Under certain conditions, selection between collective organizations may also occur. Groups vary in how they cooperate, distribute functions, correct errors, and respond to the environment. When these differences affect their persistence and can be reconstructed, forms of organization better able to sustain themselves tend to endure. This makes it possible, cautiously, to speak of selection among forms of collective organization — without having to turn every group into an organism or suppose a consciousness above individuals. This possibility finds a parallel in models of cultural group selection, although the scope and mechanisms of that process remain debated (Richerson et al., 2016).

> **4. Resources and Asymmetry Between Scales**

The continuity of the We has material conditions. To operate, it depends on the resources of its members. Bodies provide energy; participants contribute time, attention, knowledge, labor, and matter. Cohesion is not, strictly speaking, the fuel of the We, but what reduces the dispersal of these resources and channels them toward common action.

> That dependence, however, does not guarantee that the continuity of the We and that of its members move in the same direction. Imagine an organization that keeps operating by redistributing the functions of those who can no longer continue and replacing those who leave the group. Seen at the collective scale, operation continues. Seen from each member's trajectory, however, costs may accumulate until remaining becomes impossible.

> The capacity to redistribute functions and replace participants allows the We to survive losses. But that same capacity can also make its continuity relatively indifferent to the deterioration of those who sustain it. A decoupling between scales then emerges: the group continues, while its members' ability to continue within it diminishes.

> **The same We can expand its members' capacity or preserve itself at their expense.**

A conflict, a renunciation, or a one-off sacrifice does not make a collective predatory. The shift occurs when losses, exhaustion, and interruptions cease to be exceptional problems to correct and become a recurrent part of how the relation maintains itself.

At that point, what interrupts individual trajectories begins to function as a condition of collective continuity.

> **The same event can mean continuity for the We and**

> **irreversible rupture for the I.**

5. The We Within the I

The We does not merely receive resources from its members. By operating between them, it also modifies the instances that sustain it.

Someone joining a group may initially need explicit instructions, warnings, and rules. Through repeated encounters, however, that person begins to anticipate what others expect, approve, or reject, even when no one is present to remind them.

This is because participation in the We does not modify only visible actions. It leaves marks in the Inside of each instance: expectations, dispositions, and Weights that begin to participate in its delineations and choices. An internalized norm no longer depends on constant surveillance, because marks left by the relation continue operating within the members themselves.

> **The We operates between instances, but some of the conditions of its continuity come to be preserved inside them.**

This makes the We a particularly tangible reality for the I. The instance may experience the relation in which it participates: it may feel belonging, obligation, trust, pride, shame, protection, or exclusion; it may act through the group and receive back the effects of its actions.

> Metaphorically, the I may function as a cell of the We: not because it loses its boundary or autonomy, but because part of its operation begins to depend on the whole and to participate in its continuity. The metaphor ends, however, where we would begin to posit a single metabolism, a command center, or a unified collective experience.

Moreover, the same instance can participate in several We-relations at once, whose demands do not always converge. Its collective involvement is not an exclusive organic belonging, but a variable composition of relations, Weights, and loyalties.

> **The I does not belong entirely to a single We; it participates in several and may be traversed by conflicts between them.**

> **The We may be experienced by its members without there being someone above them experiencing the We as a whole.**

> This is also where the We differs from Lineage. The I can live the relation that includes it in a We because its bonds and effects coexist with it. Lineage, by contrast, extends beyond its duration: it began before the I existed and may continue afterward. The I does not experience the whole of Lineage; it experiences only the marks, relations, and representations through which Lineage becomes present.

> **In the We, the I can experience the relation that includes it; in Lineage, it experiences the effects of a relation that extends beyond it.**

In an organism, the I has a relatively localized bodily boundary. The We reconstructs relational boundaries between instances. Lineage crosses successive boundaries over time. In all three cases, continuing does not mean keeping the components intact, but reconstructing an organization capable of conditioning what comes next.

> **The I persists across states. The We persists across members. Lineage persists across instances.**

CHAPTER 07 · BLOCK 08

7.4 SCALES

The I, the We, Lineage, and Constraint

WHAT IT IS

Concludes the comparison of scales and prepares the investigation of energy constraints in Chapter 8.

QUESTIONS

- How are boundaries and continuity reconstructed between instances?
- In what sense does experiencing also have a physical cost?

KEY INSIGHTS

- The I persists across states; the We persists across members; Lineage persists across instances.
- Having a direction does not require an intention governing the trajectory.

IN THIS BLOCK

7.4.2 The Reach of This Reframing

7.4.3 Experiencing in the I Has a Thermodynamic Cost

7.4.2 — The Reach of This Reframing

Sociology already investigates cohesion, boundaries, collective memory, purpose, and continuity. The TMC does not claim these phenomena as discoveries. Its contribution lies in bringing them together within a single causal architecture: the Triad, through

which organizations delineate boundaries in the present, articulate instances across space, and reconstruct their continuity over time.

Within this reframing, boundary and continuity cease to appear as separate properties. The boundary indicates where differences still participate in the operation; continuity shows how the effects of that operation can return and condition subsequent reconstructions.

> **Boundary.** A boundary shows how far an organization can receive differences and respond to them in the present. In the We, it is causal and relational: it extends as far as a difference can still change shared weights, decisions, or actions.

> **Continuity.** The responses produced within that boundary leave marks in members, practices, rules, documents, symbols, and objects. These marks do not store continuity; they preserve possibilities for reconstruction. When Triads access them again, those marks can once more modify actions and coordination and participate in reconstructing the relation.

The link between boundary and continuity is recursive. The present boundary conditions which differences leave marks; when reactivated, those marks can redraw the boundaries of future coordination.

> **I and We.** At both scales, operating requires Weights and directions. The I must distinguish what favors or threatens its trajectory. The We requires shared references capable of selecting, coordinating, and correcting its members' contributions. In the We, these Weights and directions remain distributed among the participating Triads; no collective consciousness arises above them.

> **Lineage.** Lineage is neither a new social action nor a hidden subject. It is the temporal dimension of the Triad through which differences produced along a trajectory — including effects of meaningful actions — can outlast their authors and participate in new operations. Lineage itself has no intention, purpose, or fixed

> object. The TMC's main contribution lies not in explaining how meaning guides action, but in explaining how the effects of that action can outlast its original meaning, its author, and its time and once again participate in new actions — without requiring an autonomous social substance, a hidden subject, or a transcendent end guiding the process.

What passes through does not remain identical: it is received, modified, and placed back into continuity.

In the We, marks preserved in the Inside of instances return to operation through Between and come to condition what may continue Ahead. This process remains distributed among the participating Triads: it requires no collective consciousness and does not turn documents, norms, or symbols into autonomous bearers of continuity.

> **The boundary shows where the relation operates; continuity appears when the effects of that operation return and participate in its reconstruction.**

> A stone need not wish for the valley to roll down a mountainside. Its direction results from the arrangement of stone, slope, and gravity. We may assign many meanings to its fall — danger, beauty, chance, or omen — but none is necessary for it to occur.

> The analogy makes one precise point clear: having a direction does not require having an intention. The same holds for Lineage. It neither desires the future nor knows the destination of its trajectory. Its arrow follows from the arrangement itself: whatever can be reconstructed continues to participate in what comes next; whatever cannot ceases to do so.

Meanings arise at another scale. The I produces values and purposes to orient its trajectory; the We coordinates shared references to guide collective actions. These meanings act, modify

trajectories, and can leave effects that carry forward. The passage, however, does not need meaning in order to have direction.

The Triad thus allows us to bring two layers together without conflating them: the local production of value and purpose by the I and the We, and the impersonal continuity through which some of their effects can pass through change and participate — already transformed — in the reconstruction of other instances.

The I and the We generate "what-fors." Lineage has no "what-for"; it preserves the possibility that new "what-fors" may emerge.

Meaning does not, by itself, create the arrow of time: it arises within it, acts upon trajectories, and changes what may continue. Lineage, for its part, can continue without its instances attributing meaning to that continuity.

> **A stone need not want to reach the valley to roll downhill; Lineage need not want the future to continue.**

In the TMC, the "what-for" does not govern the trajectory from outside: it emerges in the operation of the I and the We, guides action in the present, and modifies what may continue. The "what-for" does not wait for the trajectory at its end; it arises within it as an instrument of orientation.

7.4.3 — Experiencing in the I Has a Thermodynamic Cost

> **After following the I into the We and Lineage, we return to the concrete instance. If feeling is the mode of certain operations within the unit, it depends on the material conditions that make them possible.**

As shown in Chapter 5, this limitation is both informational and energetic.

Delineating objects, comparing records, assigning Weights and Polarities, inhibiting alternatives, and sustaining attention require time, matter, and energy. Experiencing is not a later addition to processes already completed: it depends on physical operations under finite resources.

Experience, therefore, is also subject to a cost. The unit does not bring every difference into the present: it selects, condenses, and amplifies some. Over the course of evolution, these constraints may have favored operational strategies of selection and condensation that participated in the formation of our experiential texture.

The question becomes: under which material constraints does experience become possible and selective?

Chapter 8 takes up this problem by investigating abstraction, efficiency, and the relation between thinking and feeling under constraint.
