Research Monograph Series

A Generative Theory of Co-Being and Iroke: Interfaces of Trust and Awareness through Walls, Screens, Fetish, and Mandala

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Abstract

Grounded in Generative Studies and Generative Topological Ontology, this paper reconstructs the distinction between Being and Co-Being through four existential modes: “what is, is,” “what is not, is not,” “what is not, is,” and “what is, is not.” Modern epistemic regimes tend to recognize what is present and measurable as fully real while excluding the invisible, distant, and absent as unreal. Yet the lived present is generated through the overlap of two other modes: the absent nevertheless acts relationally in the present, while what is physically or institutionally present may fail to appear as lived existence. This overlap is defined here as the co-being present.

The wall of a room provides the minimal model of this problem. Persons and things exist beyond the wall, yet they may disappear from one’s operative present because they are not perceived. By contrast, bank balances, images, photographs, and ratings displayed on digital screens acquire powerful certainty even though they are mediated inscriptions produced by institutional and technical relations. Trust in invisible reality is thereby displaced by credit or confidence in visible signs. The paper analyzes this inversion as fetishization: the localization of a nonlocal relational force in a discrete object, accompanied by the forgetting of that localization.

The paper further defines Workhood not as an attraction possessed by an artwork but as a nonlocal sensible attraction generated among work, body, place, time, and absence. When this attraction draws the body prior to explanation and produces awareness of oneself as already drawn, it appears as iroke. Iroke does not mean sexual content. Like sexual attraction, it names a relational generative force that cannot be fully localized in an object.

Finally, Shingon mandala and Ajikan are examined not as idols that enclose force within images, but as interfaces through which localized marks enable embodied participation in the nonlocal dharmadhātu. Localization is not itself an error. When localization forgets its boundary, it becomes fetish and idol. When it reopens toward nonlocal relations, it becomes mark, mandala, work, and interface. Art does not restore a lost sensibility; it designs occasions through which trust in sensing can be regenerated.

Keywords

Generative Studies; Generative Topological Ontology; Co-Being; interface; trust; credit; confidence; wall; digital screen; Workhood; iroke; fetish; idol; mandala; Ajikan; awareness; Reality-Grounding

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Methodological Note

This is a theoretical study across ontology, aesthetics, media theory, and philosophy of religion. “Nonlocality” is not used as a direct application of quantum nonlocality to culture. It is an ontological term indicating that the meaning and efficacy of an existent are not exhausted by physical location but are generated through relations with distance, past, future, others, memory, and institutions.

The discussion of hikikomori neither offers a medical diagnosis nor advances a monocausal explanation. Social withdrawal has diverse psychological, familial, economic, and institutional conditions. The paper describes one possible topological structure—the loss of co-being trust—and does not attribute blame or causal responsibility to those concerned.

Likewise, comparing mandala and Ajikan with the generative concept of interface does not reduce Shingon Buddhism to Generative Studies or assert doctrinal identity. The comparison concerns a structure that connects a localized mark, embodied practice, an invisible whole, and the transformation of the participant.

1. Being and Co-Being in Generative Studies

Generative Studies asks not how already existing entities should be classified, but how existence is generated. Its foundational theory, Generative Topological Ontology, defines being not as an isolated substance but as connectability generated among self, non-self, and environment. Being appears locally, but its meaning and efficacy do not close within the local. It is a provisional stabilization of generation and, at the same time, a structurally non-closed opening toward further connection (Tanaka 2026a).

Being has a vertical duration. In the Japanese conceptual articulation developed in the preceding study, son signifies the work of continuation through time, while zai signifies the reality-grounded position in which that continuation appears in a body, place, and event. By contrast, the "co-" of Co-Being does not refer to the juxtaposition of already completed entities. It names a horizontal relation in which different existences share a present without erasing their differences and thereby alter one another's modes of being. Co-Being is not a later relation between prior beings; it is the generative condition through which each comes to be (Tanaka 2026b).

"Being-with" is therefore not restricted to occupying the same physical location. Distant others, the dead, memories, futures, nature, and what has not yet been named may act upon the present without direct presence. Co-Being is the synchronous and nonlocal whole of the now as mediated through a field. Ordinary accounts of being, by contrast, tend to grasp a local part that persists through time in the same place. The present is the intersection of these axes: not an instant on a clock, but an interface through which a local body responds to nonlocal relations.

2. Four Existential Modes and the Logic of Closure

The present can be described through four existential modes. The first, “what is, is,” affirms what is present as existent. The second, “what is not, is not,” excludes what is not present from existence. Together they form an identitarian closure. This closure is indispensable for identifying objects and determining local causal relations. Yet when it becomes the exhaustive structure of reality, invisible relations, latent possibilities, and the efficacy of the absent are excluded.

The third mode, “what is not, is,” names the way something physically absent nevertheless acts relationally in the present. Others beyond a wall, memories of the dead, anticipation of the future, and bodily traces held by an empty seat belong to this mode. The fourth, “what is, is not,” names a condition in which something is physically or institutionally present yet does not appear as a lived and responsive relation. A person may live, remain registered within institutions, and stay connected to information networks while lacking a sense of being alive or addressed by the world.

The actual present is generated not only by the first two modes but by the overlap of the latter two. “What is not, is” and “what is, is not” are not logical defects. They express the operation of the Non-, differential negation. In Generative Studies, the Non- is not simple rejection. It is an interface that reopens identity toward its outside and permits different phases to overlap without eliminating difference. The contemporary impasse arises when the binary closure of “what is, is / what is not, is not” makes the generative overlap of absence and presence imperceptible.

3. The Physical Wall and the Digital Screen

The wall of a room is the minimal model of locality and nonlocality. For an embodied inhabitant, the wall distinguishes inside from outside and makes a local “here” possible. Yet other persons, buildings, roads, air, and forms of life continue beyond it. Not being visible is not equivalent to not existing. Nevertheless, unreflective perception often allows what is unseen to drop out of the operative present.

The wall is both obstruction and interface. Sounds, light, temperature, vibrations, and communications from outside act within the room through or across it. The wall connects precisely by separating “there” and “here.” Co-Being does not abolish the wall. It is the sensible assurance that what remains unseen beyond the wall nevertheless participates in the same present.

The digital screen produces a reverse configuration. Bank balances, photographs, videos, news, and ratings are not reality itself; they are displays generated through selection, calculation, capture, editing, institutions, and networks. Yet because they are visible, they often acquire stronger certainty than realities beyond a physical wall. What actually exists but remains invisible is distrusted, while what cannot be directly touched but appears on a screen is believed.

A bank balance is not simply false. It is an effective inscription that condenses ledgers, law, banking institutions, payment networks, labor, and state-backed claims, and it materially orients a life. Yet when the number is treated not as a display of relations but as wealth itself, the interface approaches the idol. The danger of the screen is not only that it can show falsehood. It can present itself as reality while concealing both the relations that produce its display and the outside that remains undisplayed.

4. Trust, Credit, and Trust in Sensing

This paper distinguishes trust from credit or confidence. Credit is conditionally assessed through records, numbers, proofs, institutions, and reproducibility. Trust accepts a relation with an other or a world that can never be fully verified. This distinction intersects with sociological discussions of trust and confidence (Luhmann 1979), but it is employed here as a specifically generative-ontological distinction.

Sensing is not mere mood. It is the reception of an efficacy coming from the non-self before that efficacy has been completely represented or proved. Trust in sensing is the capacity to accept such efficacy as a real connection even when it is not fully demonstrable. Modern scientism and digitally evaluated environments expand measurable credit while tending to dismiss pre-measurable trust as subjective uncertainty. Trust in persons and places consequently weakens, while credit in screens, numbers, and systems substitutes for a sense of reality.

This displacement contributes to the loss of the co-being present. When one cannot sense unseen others, cannot trust what one senses, and finally distrusts one's own sensibility, the wall ceases to be a boundary that connects by separating and becomes an absolute rupture. From this perspective, some forms of social withdrawal may be considered defensive accommodations formed when the world can no longer be sensed as a responsive outside. This is not a clinical causal thesis, but a description of an ontological structure that may be involved in social withdrawal (Saitō 2013; Teo 2010).

Humanity cannot simply return to a pre-screen sensibility; generation is irreversible. Yet the impossibility of restoring a lost sensibility is not the impossibility of regenerating the capacity to sense. Awareness of the substitution can become an occasion for topological transformation. When one recognizes that a screen display is not reality itself but one connection to it, and that the unseen other is not therefore nonexistent, one's mode of connection to the world begins to change.

5. Workhood, Sexual Attraction, and Iroke

In the artistic practice of bigakusha-haha, a work is not an object that contains a meaning. It is an occasion through which viewers become aware of the boundary of their own perception and of a body that had already been responding to the world. Workhood is therefore not an attribute owned by a completed object. It is a relational structure generated when work, viewer, place, time, memory, and absence connect and induce a topological transition. This formulation accords with the Ontology of Namelessness, which relocates the work from authorial possession to an open condition of cultural generation (Tanaka 2026c).

Workhood is “sexual” in this structural sense. This does not mean sexual representation, nor does it reduce art to libido. Sexual attraction commonly occurs before analytical explanation: one is first drawn and only later constructs reasons. Moreover, attraction is not localized exclusively in another body. It emerges from distance, voice, atmosphere, time, memory, the unknown, prohibition, and expectation. Workhood likewise operates as an attraction that cannot be fully localized in its object.

This attraction is called iroke. Iroke does not arise from complete formal presence, but from the overlap of what is and is not seen, nearness and inaccessibility, presence and absence. Beauty may be evaluated as the form of an object; iroke is generated between self and non-self. It is the sensible force through which “what is not, is” and “what is, is not” intersect in the body (Tanaka 2026d).

The viewer therefore does not primarily discover a hidden answer in the work. The viewer discovers that he or she had already been drawn before having a reason, and had already been affected by the non-self. The work does not transmit awareness as information. It leaves an Empty Seat in which awareness may occur. Even when the work is not immediately understood, a later pause before a bank balance or a sudden awareness of life beyond a wall may belong to the temporality of Workhood.

6. Fetish, Idol, and the Forgetting of Localization

Nonlocal relations are difficult to own, compare, preserve, or exchange as such. Human beings obtain certainty by localizing forces generated in relational fields within objects, images, bodies, names, and numbers. This operation is necessary for compressing a complex world into actionable form. The problem is not localization itself, but forgetting that localization has occurred.

Fetishization occurs when a force generated through relations is received as a force inherently owned by an object. Marx's account of commodity fetishism shows how relations among persons can appear as relations among things (Marx 1976). Generative Studies extends this structure beyond money to artistic value, brands, sexual images, ratings, authority, and screen visibility. Yet a fetish need not be rejected in every case. The absence of a body and the sedimentation of time may be condensed in a fragment or mark, allowing a lost relation to be sensed again.

We may therefore distinguish the closed fetish from the generative fetish. The closed fetish encloses force within the object and causes the relations behind it to be forgotten. The generative fetish uses a local object to reopen connections to bodies, times, places, and others that cannot be reduced to it. The former tends toward idolization; the latter tends toward the mark and the interface.

An idol is thus not defined by the mere existence of an image. It emerges when an image is treated as the final location of force. A mark opens what lies beyond through the object; an idol encloses the beyond within the object. A numerical or visual display remains an interface so long as it opens relations, but becomes idol-like when it substitutes for the whole of reality.

7. Mandala and Ajikan as Interface

In Shingon Buddhism, a mandala is not merely a religious picture in which Mahāvairocana and other deities are arranged. It visually and ritually actualizes the dharmadhātu as a relational order. The Two-Realm Mandala articulates structures associated with the Mahāvairocana Sūtra and the Vajraśekhara tradition through relations of center and periphery, differentiation and mutual inclusion (Kiyota 1987; Abé 1999). In this sense, the mandala is less a copy of the world than a practical configuration through which a participant reorganizes his or her relation to the world.

The letter A in Ajikan is likewise not an image to be possessed as the final object of worship. The moon disc, lotus, and Siddham A organize posture, breath, vision, voice, and awareness, connecting the local body with Mahāvairocana, the dharmadhātu, and the significance of non-arising (Yamasaki 1988). A is a small and localized mark. Yet its locality does not contain the whole within itself; it serves as an entrance through which the practitioner participates in a nonlocal relational whole.

From the standpoint of Generative Studies, Ajikan is therefore not merely a metaphor for an interface; it is itself an interface. The practitioner does not remain an unchanged observer outside the letter. One enters a relation among mark, body, breath, place, and lineage, and one's phase of being is altered through that connection. If the subject remains unchanged before an image, the event may remain a consumption of representation. When contact with the image changes the relation between seer and seen, an interface occurs.

Nevertheless, no religious image is essentially an idol and no mandala is essentially non-idolatrous simply by formal classification. A mandala may itself be fetishized when enclosed within ownership, authority, or rarity. Conversely, a single image may function as an interface when used in a practice that opens relations beyond it. What determines the distinction is not form alone, but whether localization closes or reopens.

8. Art as Awareness and Sayama Aesthetics School

Bigakusha-haha treats awareness—the trigger or occasion of noticing—as the work. An occasion is not informational content taught by the artwork. It is an event in which viewers become aware of how their perception and trust have been arranged and begin to change their connection to the world. Art does not give an answer; it reveals the phase of the self that demanded one.

This account of the work is difficult to understand within an art system that demands visible objects, authorial intentions, explicable meanings, market values, and measurable effects. Moreover, the sensibility required to receive an occasion of awareness has itself been weakened by credit in screens and numbers. Yet non-understanding must not be treated as proof of the work's correctness, for that would make the theory unfalsifiable and closed. The task of the work is not to exclude those who no longer sense, but to introduce a minimal difference, interval, and possibility of response into the very condition of not sensing.

Sayama Aesthetics School, operating as a guesthouse and a long-duration installation, is Interface Art in this sense. It does not dissolve the different phases of lodging, domestic life, research site, and artwork into one identity. It makes mobile the boundaries between there and here, guest and inhabitant, daily life and art, interior and exterior. Its walls are not neutral backgrounds for displayed objects. Walls, rooms, stays, conversations, silences, and time form za and seki through which invisible others may be sensed as co-present.

The work in this practice is not a completed object of "what is, is." Workhood is generated when relations previously excluded from the present emerge through an apparently Empty Seat. Iroke is the force by which that Empty Seat draws the body; awareness is the event in which the self discovers itself as already drawn.

9. Discussion: Regeneration Rather Than Recovery

Contemporary subjects increasingly find it difficult to sense the reality beyond physical walls while trusting the surface of the digital wall as the world. This inversion is not a technological problem alone. It is the outcome of a longer epistemic history that privileges displays over sensibility, credit over trust, and localized objects over relations. Discarding screens would not solve the problem. A screen can also become an interface if it makes its boundary and outside perceptible.

The task is not to negate locality and return to a boundaryless whole. Without local bodies, objects, images, and numbers, nonlocal relations cannot become Reality-Grounded. Yet if localizations are treated as final substances, relations close within idols. Generative Studies therefore calls for a circulation between localization and nonlocal reopening. A mark localizes a relation; soku brings a body into contact with the mark; a position is generated; and the Non- reopens the established position toward its outside.

This circulation regenerates trust in sensing. We cannot return to a past community or a pre-screen sensibility. The same feeling cannot be recovered. Yet awareness of this irretrievability may become an occasion through which a screen-experienced body learns to respond anew to others, absence, futures, and realities beyond walls.

Conclusion

This paper has defined the co-being present as the overlap of “what is not, is” and “what is, is not.” “What is, is / what is not, is not” is necessary for local identification, but when it encloses the whole world, unseen others are excluded from the present and the present self fails to appear as lived existence. The loss of Co-Being ultimately produces distrust in one’s own existence.

The physical wall conceals what lies beyond while preserving its reality. The digital screen displays what lies beyond while concealing its exterior. When this difference is forgotten, trust is replaced by credit, relations by displays, and the world by the screen. Fetish and idol arise when the force of nonlocal relations is attributed to a local object and the act of localization is forgotten.

By contrast, mandala, Ajikan, the work, and Sayama Aesthetics School can be understood as interfaces that preserve localized forms while opening them toward nonlocal relations. Workhood is not the charm possessed by an object but the iroke generated in this connection. Iroke is a sensible generative force that draws the body prior to explanation and makes one aware that one had already been responding to the world.

The art of bigakusha-haha therefore neither represents a lost sensibility nor restores a past one. It designs occasions that generate awareness of having lost sensibility and reconfigure trust in sensing.

> Art does not convert the invisible into a visible object. It opens a Seki in which one can sense that the invisible acts in the present while remaining invisible, and can begin to trust that sensing again.

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Research Method

This text is published as a Research Memorandum within the continuing development of Generative Topological Ontology.

The concepts, definitions, hypotheses, and arguments presented here record the theoretical position reached at the time of writing and publication. They should not be understood as a finally established theoretical system. They may be expanded, revised, redefined, or reorganized through future research, artistic practice, interaction with reality, academic dialogue, and peer review.

This research does not regard only completed theories as legitimate research outcomes. It also treats the processes through which concepts emerge, become interconnected, undergo transformation, and are integrated into a theoretical structure as significant objects of inquiry. Accordingly, this memorandum should be understood not merely as an incomplete draft, but as a record of a particular phase in the generation of the theory.

The public release of a Research Memorandum is not intended to present a developing theory prematurely as a completed one. Rather, it is a method of documenting the generative processes of thought and practice, enabling their subsequent examination and reconstruction, and opening them to academic and artistic dialogue from different perspectives.

If the contents of this memorandum are subsequently developed into a peer-reviewed article, scholarly monograph, or other formal research output, the finalized work will be identified as a separate and fixed document.

When citing or referring to this memorandum, please include the title, author, version number, and date of the most recent update. Different versions may contain substantive differences in concepts, definitions, and lines of argument.

This Research Memorandum is not a final conclusion. It is one theoretical position reached within the continuing formation of Generative Topological Ontology and, at the same time, an interface open to further generation.