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The Generative Theory of Co-Being: Existence as the Vertical Axis, Co-Sensibility as the Horizontal Axis, and the Lost Present

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Abstract

This paper reconstructs the distinction between existence and co-being as the intersection of a vertical and a horizontal axis within Generative Studies. It argues that the contemporary inability to believe in one's own existence arises from the loss of a co-existential present. The Japanese terms son, zai, and kyo are treated not as claims of historical etymology but as operative philosophical distinctions. Son designates temporal persistence; zai designates concrete presence and position; and kyo designates the relational sharing of a world without the erasure of difference. Existence is consequently defined as the vertical movement through which a self questions its ground and possibility across past, present, and future. Co-being is the horizontal movement through which a self is affected by contemporaneous others, nature, things, places, the dead, and unrealized futures. Zai is not a fixed point at which these axes meet, but a topological interface generated anew through their relation.

The paper distinguishes science from scientism. Scientism is defined here as an epistemic exclusivity that recognizes as real only what can be measured, reproduced, and explained through local and linear causality. It renders invisible those relations involving distance, singularity, opacity, memory, the dead, futurity, and the force of place. This closure produces what the paper calls sensory phase lock, the counterpart of intellectual phase lock.

Lascaux cave imagery, ecclesiastical ornament, ritual, prayer, graffiti, Web Installation, and Sayama Aesthetics School cannot be reduced to one historical purpose. From the perspective of Generative Studies, however, they can be compared as interfaces connecting here with elsewhere, now with other times, the visible with the invisible, and the comprehensible with the incomprehensible. Art does not make the invisible completely visible. It opens a Seki from which the invisible may act upon the present while remaining irreducible to visibility. The paper concludes that contemporary persons have not lost faith in their own existence because they can no longer think about themselves, but because they have lost the horizontal capacity to feel themselves existing with what is other than themselves.

Keywords

Generative Studies; Generative Topological Ontology; Co-Being; Existence; Co-Sensibility; Sensory Phase Lock; Intellectual Phase Lock; Nonlocality; Interface Art; Scientism; Present; Namelessness; Workhood

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Methodological Note

This paper is not a philological attempt to establish the historical etymology of the Japanese characters son, zai, and kyo. Their differentiation is a conceptual operation within Generative Studies, intended to describe how existence is generated through relations. Nor does the paper place prehistoric cave imagery and religious space within a linear genealogy culminating in modern art. The purpose and use of Lascaux imagery, in particular, cannot be conclusively reduced to a single magical or ritual function. The present inquiry instead identifies a structural problem across historically different practices: the embodied and spatial generation of relations with that which is not immediately present.

Nonlocality is also used in an ontological and aesthetic sense rather than as a direct cultural application of quantum nonlocality. Within Generative Studies, a relation is nonlocal when the meaning and efficacy of an existence are not completed by its immediate physical location but are generated through connections with distant places, other times, other beings, memories, and unrealized futures. The present argument is therefore not a claim of physical proof but an ontological description of mediated relational generation.

Generative Studies provides the comprehensive framework of the paper, while Generative Topological Ontology functions as its foundational ontology. The argument integrates the author·s prior concepts of Self-Externalization, Interface Ontology, Pre-Humanity, Self-Precedence, Language Derivatives, Soku, Za, Seki, Position, Namelessness, and Workhood into a theory of Co-Being.

1. The Problem: The Loss of Co-Being amid Information Excess

Contemporary screens deliver images of distant wars, disasters, deaths, ordinary lives, and celebrations with near immediacy. Human beings know more events and visually confirm the presence of more distant others than ever before. Yet this increase in information has not necessarily intensified the sense that, at this very moment, someone somewhere is living with something. As exposure grows, the body, place, time, and weight of each event are frequently compressed onto a homogeneous surface of display.

There is a decisive difference between knowing and being-with. To possess information about an event does not mean that one has entered a relation of co-being with it. Seeing an image, understanding an explanation, or expressing approval or disapproval does not by itself establish co-being. Co-being occurs when the existence of another, which cannot be fully assimilated into one's cognition, is nevertheless capable of altering one's present.

The contemporary crisis is therefore deeper than a shortage of empathy. What is being lost is the ontological condition that made empathy possible: the sensibility that different beings, while remaining different, share one present. This paper calls that condition the co-existential present and its erosion the loss of the co-existential present.

2. The Operative Distinction among Son, Zai, and Kyo

2.1 Son: Persistence through Time

Son names the activity by which something is maintained through time rather than simply disappearing. It includes inheritance from the past and the possibility of continuation from the present toward the future. Yet persistence does not mean the preservation of an unchanging identity. Within Generative Studies, what persists is not a fixed substance but a structure that maintains connectability while undergoing relational transformation.

Son therefore means remaining inheritable amid change, not preserving identical content. Memory, history, habit, names, and institutions support persistence, but they can also imprison an existence within an already established image of itself. Son contains both the force of inheritance and the force that may arrest generation.

2.2 Zai: Concrete Presence Here and Now

Zai designates not abstract continuation but the concrete appearance and positioning of existence here and now. It is more than a coordinate. Zai is a position generated when a body touches an environment, receives the gaze of others, depends on things, and responds to a place.

In this sense, zai is the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes. The intersection, however, is not predetermined. Whenever the meaning of the past changes, relations with others shift, or future possibilities open and close, the location of zai also moves. Zai is not a fixed point but a generative position through which existence becomes grounded in reality.

2.3 Kyo: Sharing without Erasing Difference

Kyo does not mean that multiple existences are identical. Nor is it an external solidarity added after individuals have already been completed. Kyo is the relation in which different existences share a world, time, place, or problem without eliminating their differences.

Kyo is not fusion but overlap. Within an overlap, existences do not coincide completely and cannot be reduced to one another. Nevertheless, the position and possibility of each are transformed by the existence of the other. Co-Being is therefore not the juxtaposition of already completed beings. It is the event through which each existence is generated by being with others.

3. The Vertical Axis of Existence and the Horizontal Axis of Co-Being

The vertical axis of existence is the movement by which a self questions its ground and possibility across past, present, and future. The questions “Who was I?”, “Who am I?”, and “Who may I become?” organize continuity and discontinuity along a temporal axis. Thought constructs this verticality through conceptualization, recollection, anticipation, and self-verification.

The horizontal axis of Co-Being, by contrast, senses with whom, where, and with what one exists. It includes not only contemporary human others but nature, animals, objects, technologies, language, places, the dead, and those who have not yet been born. Before fully understanding them, sensibility receives the fact that it is touched by them and that its own position is being altered.

Existence thus corresponds to thought, and Co-Being to sensibility. This correspondence is not a dualism. Thought without sensibility contracts into abstraction without Reality-Grounding. Sensibility without thought loses the capacity to inherit experience, articulate difference, and transmit it toward the future. Sensibility opens existence horizontally; thought carries Co-Being vertically through time.

Their intersection is the present. The present is not an infinitesimal point in a chronological sequence. It is an interface at which what has been inherited from the past, what arrives from beyond the self, and what remains unrealized in the future become connected. The present is not the newest available information. It is the place from which one can respond, now, to what is other than oneself.

4. From Coexistence to Co-Being

Coexistence is often understood as the condition in which already constituted beings occupy the same environment. In this model, individuals exist first and relations follow. Co-Being is more fundamental. It treats relation as a condition prior to the completed being. A self does not first exist alone and later connect with others. It is articulated as a self from within relations with others, nature, language, culture, and place.

This proposition is consistent with the relational priority of Generative Topological Ontology. Existence is not a closed substance but an open topology of connectability. Self and other are not two entities that were fully separated from the beginning. Their boundaries are generated within relations, and both are renewed as those boundaries move.

Co-Being therefore means not merely the plurality of beings but the originary plurality of existential generation. It precedes the judgment that both I and the other exist. It expresses the structure in which my presence cannot be generated without relations to others.

5. Science and Scientism: The Absolutization of Local Causality

This argument is not anti-scientific. Science offers indispensable methods for testing claims about the world, and contemporary sciences themselves investigate nonlinearity, emergence, ecological interdependence, complex systems, and relations between observation and the observed system. The object of criticism is scientism: the elevation of a restricted scientific method into the sole criterion of reality.

Scientistic rationality isolates an object, controls conditions, and correlates local causes with local effects. This procedure possesses enormous experimental and predictive power. When its local effectiveness is universalized into a total ontology, however, relations that cannot be measured, singular events that cannot be reproduced, sensations irreducible to explanation, and cultural inheritances operating across long durations are treated as less real.

Local causality draws a boundary by stating that this cause produced this effect. Yet a word may alter the action of a distant other; a dead person may act upon a present decision; and an unrealized image of the future may organize present institutions. These effects are not confined to a single present location. Generative Studies does not classify them as supernatural causes. It understands them as nonlocal modes of existential generation mediated by meaning, memory, anticipation, form, and technical or cultural interfaces.

The problem with scientism is not that it enlarges the domain of understanding. It is that it treats what remains incomprehensible as if it did not exist and closes the world with what can already be explained. This closure produces scientistic intellectual phase lock. Within it, questioning the framework of prevailing rationality is itself classified as irrational, and the opportunity to sense an exterior to that rationality is lost.

6. Art, Ritual, and Nonlocal Communication

Cave imagery, religious architecture, ritual, and prayer cannot be reduced to modern aesthetic contemplation. Interpretations of Lascaux remain multiple, and its imagery cannot be explained conclusively through a single theory of hunting magic. Even so, the darkness of the cave, bodily movement, animal figures, resonant sound, and flickering fire may be understood as constituting a relational field different from ordinary space. What matters here is the structural possibility that the image was not merely a copy of an object but a mediator connecting humans, animals, life, death, memory, and anticipation.

In ecclesiastical environments, murals, sculpture, icons, stained glass, light, acoustics, fragrance, and prayer are likewise more than decoration. They present legible narratives while generating an embodied connection between earth and heaven, the living and the dead, the individual and the community, the visible and the invisible. Ornament is not a superficial addition to architecture. It transforms architecture into an interface for communication with what is distant or absent.

Communication here does not mean only the accurate transmission and reception of information. It means that what is not directly present can act on the present through an image, trace, object, sound, or place. Its interlocutor need not be a distant living person. It may be the dead, an ancestor, a deity, an animal, nature, a future other, or something not yet named.

Art does not convert the invisible completely into the visible. Were it to do so, invisibility would be assimilated into visible information. Art instead opens a Seki from which the invisible, while remaining invisible, and the incomprehensible, while remaining incomprehensible, can nevertheless act upon the present.

7. The Visible, the Invisible, the Comprehensible, and the Incomprehensible

Modern cognition has separated the seeing subject from the seen object and treated clear objectification as a condition of knowledge. Yet seeing itself depends upon body, distance, light, memory, expectation, and the gaze of others. Visibility is not an isolated function of vision but a relational event supported by invisible conditions.

What is comprehensible likewise emerges at a boundary with what remains incomprehensible. If everything were fully understood, neither new questions nor responses could arise. Incomprehensibility is not simply a defect of knowledge. It is a condition under which the other avoids reduction to the self. Within Generative Studies, understanding does not eliminate the unknown. It changes one's position while maintaining a connection with what cannot be fully understood.

Empathy, from this perspective, is not the possession of an identical feeling. The declaration that one completely understands another risks appropriating the other's singularity into one's own comprehension. The basis of empathy is the recognition that an incomprehensible other exists now in the same world and that one's own present can be moved by that existence.

8. Redefining Co-Sensibility and Sensory Phase Lock

The term co-sensibility used here is distinguished from neurological synesthesia, in which one sensory stimulus automatically evokes an additional sensory experience. Co-sensibility is the capacity through which vision, hearing, touch, memory, affect, and thought remain mutually open and through which a self senses that it shares a present with what is other than itself.

Human beings have not lost their sensory organs. What has been lost is the connectability among senses and their power to open the self toward what is other. An image may be seen on a screen without the temperature, smell, duration, or bodily danger of its place being received. A statistic may be understood without sensing the singular lives it contains. The senses continue to function, yet cease to generate Co-Being.

This condition is defined as sensory phase lock. Intellectual phase lock is the inability to think outside a prevailing rational framework or to question the framework itself. Sensory phase lock is the inability to sense an existence that does not enter an established form of recognition.

The two forms of phase lock reinforce one another. What cannot be sensed does not become an object of thought; what cannot be thought is excluded from sensibility as nonexistent. The boundary of recognizability is thereby mistaken for the boundary of reality.

9. Contraction into an Individualistic Vertical Axis

When the horizontal axis of Co-Being is lost, only the vertical axis of individual existence appears to remain. The person manages a history, qualifications, abilities, achievements, evaluations, and future plans, continually proving from within the self who that self is. This vertical axis appears to strengthen individuality. Yet a vertical axis deprived of a horizontal intersection cannot determine its own position.

However extensive a personal history may be, the self who is here now cannot appear if the question of with whom, where, and with what one exists has been lost. Individualism that absolutizes the self does not make the self more certain. It renders invisible the relations with others, place, nature, culture, the dead, and the future that supported the self. At its limit, a person possesses abundant information describing the self while losing the sense that the self is real.

Disbelief in one's own existence is therefore not merely a psychological symptom. It is the consequence of an ontological structure that attempts to complete self-verification within the self alone. The self cannot verify itself solely through itself. The feeling of existing is generated by being touched by what is other than the self, responding to it, and experiencing how that response changes the configuration of a world.

10. Self-Externalization, Pre-Humanity, and Self-Precedence

Self-Externalization is the movement through which a self appears beyond itself in language, works, institutions, technologies, and actions. External projection alone, however, does not establish Co-Being. If the exterior is occupied by representations of the self, the other is reduced to an extension of that self.

At the limit of Self-Externalization, Pre-Humanity and Self-Precedence become indispensable. Pre-Humanity indicates that concrete relations among life, body, and environment precede the abstraction of the human in general. Self-Precedence indicates that contact and response with what is other than the self precede an established self-identity and participate in generating it.

Co-Being is the form through which these modes of precedence act in the present. I do not approach another as a completed self; I become myself anew through contact with another. Co-Being is therefore not the negation of selfhood. It is the condition that releases the self from closed identity and makes singularity more concrete.

11. The Space of Language Derivatives and the Lost Present

The Theory of Language Derivatives demonstrates that language does not merely describe an already existing reality. It folds unrealized meanings, future evaluations, and anticipated reactions into the present and organizes action in advance. Within contemporary information environments, events are converted into headlines, indicators, predictions, narratives, and evaluations before they are experienced as events in their own right.

Connections across distance multiply in this derivative space, but Co-Being does not necessarily increase. A distant event may be consumed not as the reality of another requiring a response, but as a sign through which a person displays a position, feeling, or evaluation. The future is similarly transformed from an open possibility into an object of prediction and management.

The present thereby ceases to be the zai in which past and future, self and other, become connected. It becomes a continuously updated display surface. There is recency without presentness and communication without Co-Being. This separation defines the lost present.

12. Co-Being as Soku, Za, Seki, and Position

Soku is the occasion on which different terms enter a direct relation without being subsequently joined by an external mediator. Their difference is retained, and a new topology is generated through that relation. Existence and Co-Being, thought and sensibility, visibility and invisibility are connected through Soku without being reduced to either side.

Za is the disposition of a place that enables this connection. It does not determine its content in advance. It opens a field in which different existences can arrive, take a position, and generate relations. Seki is the singular and concrete receptivity within Za. An empty seat is not mere absence. It is the margin through which an other not yet present, a future, the dead, or what is other than the self can act on the present.

Position is generated provisionally within relations. It does not mean a fixed status or hierarchy. It is the point at which vertical and horizontal axes intersect and become grounded in reality. Zai is thus generated as position, and position moves as relations change.

The co-existential present is consequently a generative field connected through Soku, opened as Za, receptive through Seki, and grounded in reality as Position.

13. Namelessness and Workhood

The relations constituting Co-Being cannot all be attributed to the ownership of a determinate subject. Culture, language, ritual, and place are generated through the inheritance of countless named and unnamed actions. Even when no one can determine who began a practice, that practice may support the present and be transmitted toward the future.

Namelessness is neither the absence of an author nor the erasure of names. It is the mode through which existential generation is inherited beyond individual attribution. The horizontal axis of Co-Being is supported not only by those whose names are known, but by unknown others, the dead, and those who have not yet been born.

Workhood is the capacity of a made thing to continue generating relations beyond the intention and ownership of its maker. A work is not a completed object that expresses an author. It leaves a seat at which another existence can arrive and respond differently. As long as this seat remains open, the work functions as a co-existential interface.

14. Art and the Regeneration of the Co-Existential Present

The task of art is not to restore nostalgically a lost, unified worldview. Nor is it to reproduce magic or religion unchanged in the present. Premodern communities also contained violence and exclusion; community itself cannot be treated as an unconditional good.

What art regenerates is not a closed community but a connectability through which different beings can share a present while remaining different. Art neither converts the incomprehensible into an already understood object nor converts the invisible into a complete image. It creates a field in which what is other than the self can act while remaining other.

Graffiti acts upon an urban present through a trace even when the writer's body is absent. Web Installation connects viewers in distant locations, screens, communication infrastructures, and physical places, generating the existence of a work anew with each access. Sayama Aesthetics School does not separate everyday life, lodging, education, making, locality, and visitors. As a reality display, it repeatedly generates the boundary between over there and over here.

What these practices share is that the work is not the completion of self-expression but the creation of an occasion for Co-Being. Art does not explain Co-Being to an isolated existence. Through body, place, trace, interval, and time, it composes conditions under which one may sense that what is other than oneself exists here now.

Art is thus an interface that allows isolated existence to remember Co-Being. Remembering does not mean returning to a previous state. It means generating anew, in the present, a relational possibility that had been lost.

15. Propositions on Co-Being within Generative Studies

The preceding argument permits the following propositions.

First, existence generates the self vertically, while Co-Being generates a world horizontally.

Second, zai is not a fixed intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes. It is a topological interface generated anew through their relation.

Third, Co-Being is not a social condition added after existence. Each existence is generated by being with others.

Fourth, empathy is not the possession of the same feeling. It is the capacity for one's present to be moved by the existence of another who cannot be fully comprehended.

Fifth, co-sensibility is not a confusion of senses. It is the co-existential sensibility through which multiple senses and multiple existences appear in one present without losing their differences.

Sixth, scientism renders nonlocal relations invisible by treating local causality and explainability as the sole criteria of reality.

Seventh, a vertical axis deprived of its horizontal axis loses its intersection, and the self becomes unable to determine where it exists.

Eighth, disbelief in one's own existence arises not from an insufficiency of selfhood but from the severance of the co-existential relations that generate the self.

Ninth, art does not make the invisible completely visible. It opens a Seki from which the invisible can act upon the present while remaining invisible.

Tenth, what art regenerates is not self-expression but the present in which self and what is other than self can exist together.

Conclusion

This paper has treated existence as a vertical axis, Co-Being as a horizontal axis, and zai as the generative interface at which they intersect. Son designates temporal persistence and inheritance; zai, concrete presence and Reality-Grounding; and kyo, relational sharing that preserves difference. Through these distinctions, existence appears not as an isolated substance but as an event in which temporal inheritance and relational responsiveness intersect.

Contemporary scientistic rationality absolutizes local causality, measurability, and reproducibility. It marginalizes invisibility, singularity, distance, opacity, and incomprehensibility when they cannot be assimilated to these criteria. This epistemic closure produces intellectual phase lock and, subsequently, sensory phase lock: an incapacity to sense forms of existence that do not enter established modes of recognition. Human beings thereby connect to vast quantities of information while becoming unable to feel the presence of someone, somewhere, or something sharing their historical moment.

The individual who loses the horizontal axis of Co-Being is left to manage a personal history, evaluations, abilities, and future along a vertical line. Yet a vertical axis without a horizontal axis has no intersection through which a present can be generated. At the limit of individualism, the self is not strengthened but deprived of position and reality. Contemporary persons lose faith in their existence not because they lack the ability to think about themselves, but because they have lost the capacity to be touched by what is other, to respond to it, and to sense themselves existing within that relation.

Art, ritual, religious space, traces, and ornament are historically distinct, yet they may be compared as interfaces connecting the visible and invisible, present and distant, self and other. Art neither eliminates incomprehensibility nor converts invisibility into complete visibility. It opens a Seki through which both may act upon the present. At this Seki, thought and sensibility, existence and Co-Being, past and future are connected through Soku.

The final proposition of Co-Being within Generative Studies can therefore be stated as follows:

What we are losing is not information about others. What we are losing is the present in which the other exists now, together with us.

What art generates is not the image of an isolated self. It generates the present in which a self first appears as itself by existing with what is other than itself.

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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.