Research Monograph Series

The Loss of Doubt and the Derivative Proliferation of Modern Rationalism:

Scientistic Intellectual Phase-Locking, the Lost Present, and the Critical Point of Self-Objectification

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Abstract

This paper reconstructs modern rationalism after Descartes and Kant, not as a linear intellectual history or the direct cause of scientism, but as a derivative proliferation. Philosophical concepts generated from particular and concrete uncertainty, wounds, and doubt become separated from the conditions of their generation and are subsequently repeated, institutionalized, and automated as general and abstract forms.

Descartes' methodical doubt was a practice that sought certainty by questioning inherited knowledge at its foundation. Kant's critical philosophy examined the capacities and limits of reason through reason itself. Yet when the uncertainty and self-criticism that generated these philosophies are forgotten, and only the resulting forms of the thinking subject, objective world, universal reason, and autonomous individual are abstracted, a rationality born from doubt and critique can be transformed into a scientism incapable of questioning its own modes of objectification.

This paper defines this condition as "scientistic intellectual phase-locking." It does not mean that everyone accepts the same conclusion. It means that the phase of thought, including what can count as a problem, evidence, or rational question, becomes fixed by shared standards of evaluation, institutions, metrics, and algorithms. Dissent is not necessarily prohibited. Rather, even dissent becomes expressible only from within the same evaluative form.

In a contemporary society that predicts the future from past data and optimizes the present according to that prediction, the present ceases to function as the site where contact between self and non-self generates new difference. It becomes an adjustment point oriented toward a predicted future. This paper calls that condition "the lost present." Artificial intelligence is situated not as an alien force arriving from outside modern rationalism, but as one consequence of the intensified objectification and automation of language, judgment, knowledge, and evaluation.

The central thesis is as follows: the critical point of modern rationalism is reached when the subject that objectified the world is itself transformed into an object by objectification. Generative Studies does not reject science or reason. It returns to the present the wounds, doubt, differences, intervals, and emptiness from which they were generated, opening a fixed intellectual phase toward new possibilities of connection.

Keywords

Generative Studies; modern rationalism; scientism; intellectual phase-locking; concept derivatives; doubt; the present; self-objectification; artificial intelligence; general-abstract universality; singular-concrete universality; self-externalization; wound; emptiness; the non-

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0. Methodological Note

This paper does not claim that the philosophies of Descartes and Kant directly caused contemporary scientism, algorithmic governance, or self-objectification. Such a linear causal argument would itself repeat the objectification criticized in this study by removing thought from its historical context and reducing it to a single origin.

The paper instead offers a structural genealogy. It examines how concepts generated from particular and concrete problems become detached from their generative sources, transformed into exchangeable forms, transferred to other domains, and institutionalized.

The term “derivative” is not restricted here to financial instruments. It denotes a structure that is derived from a reality, experience, action, or concept, but weakens its direct relation to that generative source and acquires meaning and value through relations with other objects, evaluations, and predictions.

“Phase-locking” is borrowed from the physical study of synchronization. This paper does not reduce society or thought to physical oscillation. Intellectual phase-locking does not mean the complete identity of multiple forms of thought. It means that their differences become fixed within a shared framework and lose the phase displacement through which new questions could be generated.

The paper also distinguishes criticism of scientism from rejection of science. Science is an indispensable intellectual practice that enables observation, measurement, falsification, replication, and correction. Scientism, as defined here, grants ontological legitimacy only to what can be scientifically objectified and excludes from questioning the historical, cultural, and bodily conditions that make science possible.

1. The Present That Has Lost Doubt

Modern philosophy began with doubt. Descartes questioned inherited knowledge, while Kant criticized the capacities and limits of reason. In the present, however, it remains possible to doubt particular scientific propositions while finding it increasingly difficult to question the framework that determines what becomes a scientific object, what counts as evidence, and what kinds of questions are recognized as rational.

To doubt a number is to be asked for another number. To doubt an evaluation is to be asked for a better evaluative standard. To doubt a model is to be asked for a more accurate model. Critique is thereby absorbed not as an occasion for opening objectification, but as information for improving the performance of an existing system.

What is lost is not only the freedom to express dissent. It is the present of doubt that emerges from contact between self and non-self before a question is absorbed into an already available objective form.

Science originally corrects itself through doubt. Scientism restricts the doubt that generates science to forms of doubt already recognized as scientific. Science doubts propositions; scientism excludes doubt directed toward the framework through which propositions become possible.

2. The Wound of Doubt in Descartes

Descartes' methodical doubt was not merely a logical technique. It was a cut performed by thought upon itself in response to the uncertainty that the senses, tradition, education, and inherited learning could no longer be accepted without examination.

To doubt everything is not to place the self in a secure position of cognition. It is to lose the world upon which the self has relied and to expose oneself to a condition without certain foundations. In this sense, methodical doubt is a self-externalization accompanied by an ontological wound.

The cogito can be understood as the mark generated from this wound. Even if everything being doubted were false, the occurrence of doubt itself could not occur without the existence of the thinking self. The cogito did not initially declare a closed and completed subject. It was the minimal mark left by a self that had lost its inherited connections to the world through doubt.

When this generative process is forgotten and only the result called the cogito is abstracted, the distinction between a thinking subject and an objectified world becomes fixed. The self is understood as a subject that knows from outside, while the world becomes an extended object available for measurement, calculation, and control.

The task is not to blame Descartes as the singular cause of dualism. The problem lies in the derivative abstraction of the form of the certain subject after the doubt and anxiety that generated Cartesian thought have receded from view.

Descartes' doubt was a form of thought that wounded the self. Modern rationalism forgot the wound and inherited only the result called certainty.

3. Critique and Universalization in Kant

Kant's critical philosophy was not an unlimited affirmation of reason. The Critique of Pure Reason sought to determine, through reason itself, what reason could know and where it reached its limits. Critique was reason's self-limitation.

Kantian ethics likewise grounded morality not simply in external authority or empirical desire, but in the autonomy through which rational beings legislate moral law for themselves. This transformation made possible a form of ethical universality independent of ecclesiastical institutions and revelation.

Kantian reason did not, however, arise from a completely ahistorical position. Moral law, duty, radical evil, the highest good, and the kingdom of ends retain transformed continuities with the Christian and Pietist historical world in which Kantian philosophy developed.

This does not reduce Kantian ethics to Christianity in disguise. It indicates a topological transformation through which singular-concrete religious and cultural universality became general-abstract rational universality.

The problem arises when the transformed form forgets the historical and cultural ground from which it was generated and functions as though it were a pure universality generated from nowhere. A form produced through the critique of reason becomes a criterion of reason that can no longer itself be criticized.

If Descartes generated the certain subject from doubt and Kant constructed universal reason through critique, subsequent modern rationalism abstracted doubt and critique away and institutionalized only the resulting forms of subject and reason.

4. Concept Derivatives and the Proliferation of Modern Rationalism

Philosophical concepts do not initially exist within a purely abstract space. They emerge from a philosopher's contact with uncertainty, contradiction, religion, politics, embodiment, death, and historical crisis. A concept is a mark left when thought is wounded by reality.

When a concept is separated from the question and wound that generated it, however, it becomes an object used to classify, explain, and evaluate other concepts. A concept emerges from a lived problem; a system emerges from the concept; interpretations emerge from the system; and research and evaluation emerge from those interpretations.

This paper calls this condition "concept derivativization."

A concept derivative is a concept generated from a singular-concrete question and wound that has weakened its connection to its generative source and now proliferates meaning and value through relations with other concepts, interpretations, evaluations, and expected future uses.

Concept derivativization should not be rejected as such. Without the transfer of concepts beyond their original situations, philosophical sharing, criticism, and inheritance would be impossible. The problem arises when a transferred concept forgets its derivative character and substitutes itself for reality.

Philosophy then ceases to generate questions from present wounds and instead generates one philosophical object from another. Classifications such as Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian, or Heideggerian assist understanding, but their completion can conceal what the present experience is asking for the first time.

Understanding a concept is not identical to reliving in the present the doubt from which that concept was generated.

5. Scientific Language and Scientism

Scientific language removes, as far as possible, the particularity of the observer, affect, location, and time from individual experience in order to generate forms that can be compared, measured, tested, and repeated. This abstraction is indispensable for the formation of general-abstract universality.

Scientific language does not, however, emerge from outside culture. Decisions about what should become an object of study, what counts as evidence, which procedures are valid, and which errors require correction are sustained by the education, ethics, trust, institutions, and language-games of scientific communities.

Scientific universality is therefore not simply opposed to cultural universality. General-abstract universality extracts difference from singular-concrete universality and makes it repeatable across places and observers.

Scientism forgets this order of generation. It forgets that general-abstract forms were generated from singular-concrete bodies, lives, cultures, and histories, and establishes itself as the sole criterion for determining reality.

The pain of one person is real for that person before it can be statistically generalized. Science requires measurement and testing in order to transform that pain into comparable knowledge. Scientism, however, transforms the methodological reservation that something “cannot yet be generalized” into the ontological negation that it “does not exist” or “has no meaning.”

Scientific verification is necessary, but verification occurs only after an event. By the time proof has been established, the present in which pain first occurred has already become the past. Scientism forgets this temporal difference and denies ontological standing to the present before proof.

6. Scientistic Intellectual Phase-Locking

In physical phase-locking, interacting oscillations maintain a stable phase relation. Phase-locking does not necessarily entail complete identity; it can include synchronization that preserves a constant phase difference.

Intellectual phase-locking in Generative Studies likewise does not mean that everyone holds the same opinion. It describes a condition in which, despite different opinions, the phase of thought governing what can be questioned, accepted as evidence, or recognized as rational explanation becomes fixed.

Scientistic intellectual phase-locking need not prohibit dissent. Alternative metrics, models, and evaluations may even be welcomed. Yet questions concerning why quantification is required, why evaluation is necessary, or why only what conforms to a model should be recognized as real become difficult to establish as rational questions.

The completion of intellectual phase-locking is not the prohibition of dissent. It is the condition in which dissent can be expressed only from within the same phase.

When critique is evaluated by the same form and absorbed as a proposal for improvement, doubt itself becomes derivative. Doubt no longer opens the existing framework. It becomes information that increases the framework’s efficiency.

Scientism is not the completion of science. It is the suspension of the difference, doubt, and self-correction through which science has been generated.

7. Language Derivatives and Pseudo-Diversity

Language derivativization separates language from the body, place, other, and action from which it emerged and recombines it through relations with other language, evaluation, citation, and predicted response.

A single event can generate reports, summaries, posts, commentaries, criticism, and AI-generated texts. These appear as many different expressions. Yet when they derive from the same original information, evaluative standard, or generative model, their agreement does not constitute multiple independent forms of evidence.

An increase in the quantity of language is not identical to an increase in the diversity of its generative sources. Words may multiply while the singular-concrete positions from which words emerge diminish.

In this condition, the mere existence of a large quantity of language is taken as evidence of social agreement. Derivative expressions cite, evaluate, and verify one another, amplifying trust without adequate Reality-Grounding.

This is intellectual phase-locking through language derivatives. Even where expressive diversity remains visible, the phase of generation is synchronized, concealing the emptiness in which a new difference could emerge between zero and one.

8. The Lost Present

The present is not merely an instant on a chronological line. It is the position in which self and non-self enter into contact and generate a difference not yet absorbed into an established object, language, or evaluation.

Contemporary institutions and algorithms, however, predict the future from past data and optimize present action according to that prediction. The present ceases to be the place where generation begins and becomes an adjustment point oriented toward a predicted future.

Human beings determine the present less through what they feel now than through how they expect to be evaluated, which choice is predicted to be optimal, and which action is expected to produce measurable results. A future inferred from the past determines the meaning of the present in advance.

The contemporary age is the age of the present in which the present can no longer exist.

When a wound or discomfort arising in the present does not conform to an existing model, it is processed as subjectivity, exception, error, or noise. From the perspective of Generative Studies, however, the difference that fails to fit an existing model is precisely where a new question and new knowledge may be generated.

Recovering the lost present does not mean abandoning scientific testing in favor of immediate judgment. It means refusing to eliminate an unproven singular mark as nonexistent and preserving it as an occasion open to future verification and new relations.

9. Artificial Intelligence and the Automation of Rationalism

Artificial intelligence is not an alien force that has suddenly arrived from outside modern rationalism. It extends a history in which human language, judgment, knowledge, classification, and evaluation have been objectified and transformed into calculable forms.

Artificial intelligence transforms linguistic marks into high-dimensional numerical representations and generates statistically coherent outputs from them. Recent work on latent-space reasoning processes intermediate states without decoding every step into natural language and has shown the possibility of retaining multiple reasoning alternatives on some tasks. It has not been established, however, that latent reasoning exceeds linguistic reasoning in every domain. (Hao et al. 2024)

The natural-language explanation provided by an AI system is not necessarily identical to its internal computation. Research has found that Chain-of-Thought explanations do not invariably report the factors that actually influenced a model's judgment. An AI explanation may therefore be a secondary object generated to fit an internal process into a human language-game. (Turpin et al. 2023)

When humans receive AI output not as one among multiple possible solutions but as a neutral and general answer, artificial intelligence becomes a powerful signal of intellectual synchronization. In a circuit where AI output is generated from human language, returns to everyday language, and becomes future training data, the quantity of language can grow while its generative sources converge.

Artificial intelligence does not, however, necessarily intensify intellectual phase-locking. If AI opens multiple possible solutions and humans reground them within language-games involving bodies, places, others, and responsibility, humans and AI can form a complementary relation.

AI can explore numerous relational possibilities. Human beings must select among them through irreversible action and live with the consequences. The decisive problem is not that AI thinks, but that humans delegate judgment, pain, doubt, and responsibility to an object.

10. The Critical Point of Self-Objectification

As the rationality that objectifies the world proliferates, the self that employs that rationality becomes objectified in turn.

The self is represented as biography, credential, income, diagnosis, follower count, productivity, creditworthiness, and behavioral data. The person then improves, manages, and adapts this objectified self to institutional and market evaluation.

The self no longer merely operates upon objects. It becomes an object operated upon according to objects generated about itself.

Self-externalization originally generates a mark through contact between self and non-self and transforms the self through that contact. In self-objectification, by contrast, one object about the self generates another object about the self.

This transformation proceeds gradually. Each instance of quantification, delegation, or optimization appears small and rational. The pain that signals divergence between the self and reality consequently weakens, making proximity to criticality increasingly difficult to perceive.

The contemporary age is not an age in which wounds have disappeared. It is an age in which the relation between wound and pain has been severed.

The critical point of modern rationalism is reached when the subject that objectified the world is itself transformed into an object by objectification.

Criticality does not denote a final point at which objectification becomes completely closed. Generative Topological Ontology admits no terminal object. It denotes a condition in which representations have become detached from Reality-Grounding while reality and the self are nevertheless reorganized according to those representations, and sensory, cultural, and ethical feedback can no longer correct the divergence.

11. The Turn of Generative Studies

Generative Studies does not reject Descartes, Kant, modern rationalism, science, or artificial intelligence. If negation were used to fix an anti-rationalism, it would produce another intellectual phase-lock.

Generative Studies asks not only whether a concept or form of rationality is correct or incorrect. It asks from which wound, doubt, cut, body, culture, and history it was generated.

Rather than merely repeating Cartesian certainty, it reopens in the present the wound that led Descartes toward doubt. Rather than merely applying Kantian universal forms, it reconnects the present to the difference that compelled Kant to question the limits of reason.

This is not a restoration of past philosophy. It regrounds a concept in the wound that generated it and transforms the concept through present contact.

The non- in Generative Studies does not eliminate reason. It is the operation through which reason departs from closed self-identity and opens toward the non-self. Emptiness is not a lack of knowledge. It is the possibility of connection not yet determined as an existing zero or one. Soku is not an identity that abolishes difference between self and non-self. It is Reality-Grounding through which both are transformed while difference remains.

Generative Studies therefore understands doubt not as the absence of conclusion, but as a force capable of generating new connections.

12. Artistic Phase Displacement

Intellectual phase-locking cannot always be released through logical counterargument. A counterargument can itself be evaluated and absorbed within the same form.

Art does not merely propose another correct answer. It wounds the boundary through which correct and incorrect have been separated. A work interrupts a fixed rhythm of thought and renders perceptible a difference previously excluded as noise.

The graffiti practice of bigakusha-haha inscribes lines into the relations among wall, city, ownership, regulation, and body, displacing established spatial and institutional phases. Sayama Aesthetics School wounds fixed distinctions between life and art, guest and author, private and public space, and everyday and non-everyday, sustaining those boundaries as movable interfaces.

A work does not communicate the completed meaning of the self. It is a wound inscribed between the self and what is other than the self, a mark that generates a new difference within a fixed intellectual phase.

Art does not synchronize everyone to another singular phase. It opens an emptiness in which each person can externalize the self from a different position and begin a new connection.

13. Recursive Critique of Generative Studies

Generative Studies is not exempt from concept derivativization or intellectual phase-locking.

If generation, emptiness, the non-, Soku, the mark, the wound, self-externalization, and language derivatives become fixed concepts used only to classify present experience, Generative Studies itself will become a closed conceptual space in which objects generate further objects.

The axioms of Generative Studies do not declare a final truth. They function as interfaces through which conceptual consistency can be examined and criticism and revision by others can occur.

For Generative Studies to remain generative, it must doubt from within itself the possibility that it may become an intellectual phase-lock.

This self-criticism is not theoretical weakness. It is the methodological consistency of Generative Topological Ontology, which posits no terminal object and permits theory itself to be transformed through contact with others.

14. Conclusion

This paper has reconstructed modern rationalism after Descartes and Kant not as the simple negation of doubt and critique, but as a structure in which concepts generated from doubt and critique proliferate derivatively after forgetting their generative sources.

Cartesian methodical doubt and Kantian critical philosophy were not fixed forms of rationality. They were marks externalized by forms of thought wounded by the uncertainty and limits of their respective times.

When these wounds are forgotten and only the resulting forms of the thinking subject, objective world, and universal reason are institutionalized, rationality loses the capacity to question its own mode of objectification. Scientistic intellectual phase-locking is the collective, institutional, and technological fixation of this loss of doubt.

In a society that predicts the future from past data and optimizes the present according to that prediction, the present becomes an adjustment point rather than a place of generation. Artificial intelligence can automate and amplify this rationality, but it can also become a complementary interface that opens multiple possible solutions.

The decisive problem is not the existence of artificial intelligence. It is the human delegation of judgment, pain, doubt, and responsibility to objects, followed by the management of the self according to its objectified representations.

The critical point of modern rationalism is reached when the subject that objectified the world is itself transformed into an object by objectification.

Generative Studies does not reject reason or science. It returns to the present the wounds and doubt from which they were generated and regrounds general-abstract universality in the singular-concrete universality underlying it.

Philosophy is born from wounds. When concepts born from wounds forget those wounds, philosophy becomes an intellectual phase-lock.

Generative Studies does not negate concepts. It returns to the present the wounds that generated them and reopens difference, interval, and emptiness between concept and reality.

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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.