Research Monograph Series

The Power of the Empty Seat and the Generation of Iroke:
Fetish, Scale, Margin, and the Aesthetics of Spatiotemporal Interfaces

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Abstract

This paper defines the empty seat within Tomokazu Tanaka's Generative Studies not as the mere absence of a body or an unused location, but as a spatiotemporal interface that connects traces of the past and possibilities of future participation to the present. It then explains how the power of this interface becomes sensible as iroke. The paper preserves the basic sequence established in the Generative Theory of Za, Seki, and Topology: Mark -> Kata -> Form -> Za -> Seki -> Position -> Namelessness -> Cultural Generation. Empty-seat power, iroke, fetish, scale, margin, and ma are not added as developmental stages. Like emptiness, soku, configuration, provisional affirmation, and differential negation, they belong to distinct logical levels that condition the sequence or arise from its operation.

Za is defined as a communal structure relating multiple possibilities of participation; seki as the localized interface through which za receives a body or action; and the empty seat as a seki in which bodily occupation is not actualized while relational possibility remains reserved. Spatially, an empty seat is localized non-occupation. Temporally, it retains traces of a past body, present expectation, and the possible arrival of a future body. It thereby grounds in a bodily place both the structure of "what is not there being there" developed in the Theory of Language Derivatives and the folding of futurity into the present developed in the theory of derivative space.

Iroke is not a fixed property possessed by a body or object. It is the sensible and relational force arising when an empty seat solicits the attention, approach, and participation of an unspecified other. A fetish, by contrast, is the condensation of a relation to an absent body into a specific form, fragment, or mark. Fetishism is the fixation in which the relation that generated this condensation is forgotten and its force appears as an intrinsic property of the thing. Iroke and fetish are therefore not opposites. Iroke is the mode in which empty-seat power remains open to another; fetish is the mode in which that power becomes localized and condensed in a particular form.

The paper further reinterprets recurrent Japanese techniques of scale, margin, and ma through this spatiotemporal structure. Scale is not mere miniaturization but an operation condensing extensive space and accumulated time into a bounded form. Margin is not a lack of information but an empty seat preserved within form for another's participation and future response. Ma

retains spatial distance and temporal delay together, allowing differentiated beings to come into contact without losing their difference. One important tendency in Japanese form-making can thus be described as the generation of temporal and relational openness through spatial and formal closure.

The revised argument additionally distinguishes nostalgia, nostalgic feeling, melancholy, antiquarian orientation, and restoration as different temporal orientations of empty-seat power. It analyzes simulation and artistic Simulationism as operations that can manufacture pastness and participation as signs, and introduces the distinction between a pseudo-empty seat, whose apparent participation cannot alter its governing model, and a generative empty seat, whose occupation recursively transforms za. Finally, it relates the irreversibility of generation to death as the possibility that cannot be outstripped and introduces Impossible Life (fukanōsei) as a condition in which biological and social continuation persists while Self-Precedence can no longer generate a reality-grounded life. Life cannot be restored as identical past life; it can only be generated anew. This account integrates empty-seat power with Generative Topological Ontology, Interface Ontology, Pre-Humanity and Self-Precedence, the Generative Theory of Force, the Theory of Language Derivatives, Ontology of Kata, Ontology of Namelessness, and the theory of workhood.

Keywords

Generative Studies; Generative Topological Ontology; Empty Seat; Iroke; Fetish; Scale; Margin; Ma; Nostalgia; Simulationism; Simulation; Pseudo-Empty Seat; Irreversibility; Death; Impossible Life; Generative Life; Spatiotemporal Interface; Workhood; Namelessness; Cultural Generation

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0. Methodological Note

0.1 Position of This Paper

Generative Studies investigates how being, selfhood, art, language, artificial intelligence, institutions, capital, and culture are generated through relations and operations rather than treating them as isolated domains. Generative Topological Ontology is its foundational theory. It understands being not as fixed substance but as a local and provisional topology arising through interactions among self, other, and environment.

The present paper does not introduce a rival axiomatic system. It unifies problems of absence, anticipation, contact, condensation, and inheritance distributed across Axioms of Generative Topological Ontology, The Limits of Self-Externalization and Existential Generation, Pre-Humanity and Self-Precedence, The Theory of Language Derivatives, The Dynamics of Evaluation, Proof, and Value, A Generative Theory of Force, The Ontology of Soku, Ontology of Kata, Ontology of Namelessness, and Generative Theory of Za, Seki, and Topology by focusing on the power of the empty seat.

0.2 Distinguishing Sequence from Derived Phenomena

This paper does not alter the basic sequence:

Mark -> Kata -> Form -> Za -> Seki -> Position -> Namelessness -> Cultural Generation

Emptiness is the fundamental condition keeping the sequence open. Soku brings differentiated topologies into reality-grounded contact. Configuration is the appearance of the whole relation inclusive of a position. Provisional affirmation makes a relation generated through soku manifest as “this is,” while differential negation releases this manifestation from fixed identity.

The empty seat, iroke, fetish, scale, margin, and ma likewise do not constitute additional stages. The empty seat is a specific mode of seki; iroke is the sensible appearance of empty-seat power; fetish is the condensation of an absent relation into form; scale is an operation of formal condensation; margin preserves participatory possibility; and ma conditions relation by coordinating space and time. Distinguishing these logical levels prevents Generative Studies from collapsing into a linear inventory of concepts.

0.3 Against the Essentialization of Japanese Culture

“Japanese culture” does not designate an eternal ethnic spirit or a psychology shared by every Japanese person. It refers here to historically variable techniques recurrently observable in such practices as bonsai, miniature gardens, dry gardens, tea rooms, ink painting, waka, haiku, craft, and architecture. Scale, margin, and ma are analyzed not as the sole essence of Japan but as techniques combining bounded form with open relation.

Nor does the paper claim a direct etymological identity between Buddhist rūpa and modern Japanese iroke. Kuki Shūzō’s iki is not equivalent to iroke as defined here. Freudian fetishism, Marxian commodity fetishism, and Winnicott’s transitional object are not reduced to the Generative Studies concept of fetish. Comparison clarifies difference rather than erasing it.

1. Ontology of the Empty Seat

1.1 Za, Seki, and the Empty Seat

Za is not one physical location. It is a communal generative structure relating multiple seki, bodies, rules, roles, distances, memories, and expectations. Seki is the localized possibility through which za receives a body or action. Their relation is not a static whole-part relation: participation in one seki can transform the configuration of za as a whole.

An empty seat is not a remainder left after something has been removed. It is a seki in which bodily occupation is not presently actualized while possibilities of sitting, returning, substitution, refusal, exclusion, and waiting remain reserved. This relational orientation distinguishes an empty seat from a merely vacant coordinate. An empty space may be only a location; an empty seat anticipates a body and an action.

The first definition is therefore:

An empty seat is a seki that lacks present bodily occupation while locally retaining past relations and possibilities of future participation.

1.2 Non-Presence, Emptiness, and the Empty Seat

No body is present in an empty seat, yet the seat, its rules, expectations, memories, invitations, and exclusions are present. Mere non-presence cannot account for this relational efficacy. Emptiness, however, must not be identified with the empty seat. Emptiness is the fundamental condition under which neither occupancy nor non-occupancy becomes immutable essence. The empty seat is one bodily localization of that condition.

An empty seat is not necessarily accessible to everyone. A reserved seat, throne, memorial chair, institutional vacancy, or excluded person’s seat has a distinct orientation. Openness therefore does not mean unrestricted access. In Generative Studies, openness means that the present relation is not the one terminal relation. Even an institutionally closed seat may remain topologically open when its closure generates memory, protest, substitution, or inheritance.

1.3 The Power of the Empty Seat

The Generative Theory of Force defines force not as a quantity internally possessed by a thing, but as the generative movement through which a connection between heterogeneous topologies becomes actualized as a topological transformation of reality. Empty-seat power is therefore

neither a physical property of a chair nor a mystical energy of vacancy. Empty-seat power is the generative movement through which a relation to unrealized participation transforms present attention, feeling, judgment, and action.

One sees an empty seat and sits, avoids it, waits, remembers, becomes cautious, yields, or invites. A non-present occupant changes present conduct. By foreshadowing a future body and preserving a past one as trace, the empty seat transforms current relations. It is not passive lack but a directional generative force.

2. Spatial and Temporal Interfaces

2.1 Spatial Interface

A spatial interface is not a neutral mechanism joining two domains already complete in themselves. It localizes boundaries between here and there, inside and outside, self and other, and generates a relation through contact. Entrances, screens, gardens, tables, chairs, guest rooms, and digital displays become spatial interfaces through situated use.

Seki is the minimal spatial interface localizing the emptiness of za at bodily scale. When a body enters into soku-contact with a seki, a position such as guest, host, viewer, maker, learner, or researcher is generated. Position is not a property already contained in the body; it arises through contact among seat, body, others, rules, and action.

2.2 Temporal Interface

A temporal interface does not connect past, present, and future as external points on a line. It is a boundary through which past responses and future possibilities act within present conduct. A mark retains past contact in the present; kata makes this contact repeatable in the future; expectation folds an event not yet actualized into present choice.

Pre-Humanity and Self-Precedence defines time not as a background in which being unfolds but as the topology through which interaction between self and non-self becomes response. Present action is offered to what lies beyond the self; non-self responds according to its own orientation; and the response returns in a later present. A temporal interface retains this delay and return.

2.3 The Empty Seat as Intersection

The empty seat is where spatial and temporal interfaces intersect. Spatially it indicates a localized place into which a body may enter. Temporally it superimposes the body that was there, the body now awaited, and the body that may arrive upon one present place.

The empty seat is thus spatially vacant yet temporally dense. Strong orientation toward the past produces remembrance or loss; strong orientation toward the future produces expectation or allure. When both directions operate together, the seat exceeds mere location and becomes a node of spatiotemporal generation.

The second definition is therefore:

An empty seat is a spatiotemporal interface connecting the past of an absent body and the future of a possible body to a present place.

2.4 Connection to Derivative Space

The Theory of Language Derivatives shows that even a non-existent referent can produce real effects in the present through language, institution, evaluation, and narrative. An empty seat likewise alters current action through an occupant who has not yet arrived or no longer exists. The structure of “what is not there being there” is grounded at bodily scale.

Yet an empty seat is not a purely symbolic derivative. It has dimensions, material resistance, distance, weight, and institutional constraints that permit or prevent an actual body from sitting. Futurity is exposed to reality. The empty seat thereby forms an interface between derivative and material space.

3. Iroke: The Sensible Appearance of Empty-Seat Power

3.1 Releasing Iroke from Attribute

In ordinary Japanese, iroke includes not only erotic attraction but coloration, charm, flavor, interest, and desire. This plurality is not reduced here to one lexical essence. Generative Studies instead attends to the relational structure by which iroke arises between a form and another rather than existing as a self-contained property.

A form has iroke not because it presents all its information, but because what is visible preserves an unseen possibility and solicits another's attention, approach, imagination, or participation. When form is exhaustively explained, fixed through one affirmation, and deprived of any place for another, iroke disappears.

The definition is:

Iroke is the sensible and relational force appearing when form preserves emptiness and, through an empty seat, solicits the participation of an unspecified other.

3.2 The Temporality of "Not Yet"

Iroke contains a "not yet": not yet touched, known, decided, or arrived. This incompletion is not deficient information but a temporal structure in which a future relation is sensed in the present.

Iroke is therefore not soku-contact itself but an orientation inviting soku. The empty seat solicits another; the other responds and enters into soku-contact; position and configuration arise. Provisional affirmation renders this relation manifest. If affirmation exhausts the relation, however, the empty seat closes. Differential negation releases the fixation and recovers the incompletion required by iroke.

3.3 Kyō, Force, and Iroke

In improvisation, kyō (興) is the directional animation of force arising from contact with reality. Iroke is the configuration through which form makes such contact possible and desirable before it occurs. Iroke invites contact; kyō is the movement arising from contact.

Force encompasses both. Iroke is the sensible appearance of generative force latent in the empty seat, whereas kyō is the phase in which that force arises with direction through contact with reality mediated by the generative structure of soku. Without iroke, participation lacks orientation; without soku, iroke remains an unrealized anticipation.

3.4 Comparison with Kuki's Iki

Kuki Shūzō analyzes iki through the conjunction of coquetry, spirited pride, and resignation, disclosing a tension in which approach and distance, possibility and renunciation coexist. Iroke overlaps with iki insofar as relational attraction depends upon distance and non-completion.

Generative iroke, however, is not restricted to Edo taste or erotic relations. It can arise in an empty seat, architecture, garden, artwork, web interface, institution, or language. It is not a cultural type but the relational force appearing whenever form remains non-closed toward another's participation.

4. Fetish: Condensation of Absence into Form

4.1 Generative Definition

“Fetish” has referred to sexual fixation on a body part or object, a religiously charged object, and the reification through which a commodity appears to possess autonomous value. The present theory does not identify these domains. It extracts a shared structure: relational force appears condensed in a particular thing.

A fetish is the state in which contact with an absent body or invisible relation becomes condensed into a specific form, fragment, object, or mark.

A worn chair, discarded garment, abraded tool, memorial stone, sacred rope, or graffiti mark makes present a body, action, or memory exceeding the object’s material presence. It becomes a form in which an absent other remains present through a mark.

4.2 Freud, Marx, and Winnicott

Freud’s account centers on fetishistic disavowal and substitution. Marx’s commodity fetishism analyzes the inversion through which social relations of labor appear as natural relations among things. Winnicott’s transitional object describes an intermediate field between subjective creation and external reality that mediates separation and relation.

The fetish of the empty seat cannot be reduced to any one of these. It may function as psychic substitution, commodity value, or transitional object, but Generative Studies asks a different question: how is a relation to absence localized in form, and does that form open or close further participation?

4.3 Iroke, Fetish, and Fetishism

Iroke and fetish are continuous but distinct. When an empty seat remains open to an unspecified other, its force appears as iroke. When the force of absence becomes strongly bound to a particular person, body part, object, or mark, a fetish emerges.

A fetish is not necessarily closed. Condensed past force may invite new interpretation and participation and thereby reopen an empty seat. Fetishism begins when the relational origin of force is forgotten and the thing is treated as possessing absolute power in itself.

Iroke is open solicitation; fetish is condensation in particular form; fetishism is fixation that forgets the genesis of condensation. Differential negation need not destroy the fetish. It returns

the affirmed thing to its relations and reopens a seat within form.

5. Scale, Margin, and Ma

5.1 Scale Is Not Mere Miniaturization

Japanese orientations toward compactness have been discussed through the packing of wide functions or worlds into bento boxes, folding fans, nested containers, miniature gardens, and bonsai. In Generative Studies, however, scale is not simply the small reproduction of a large object. A generative scaled form must preserve connectability to the world from which it condenses relations.

Bonsai is not a model of a large tree. Within the boundary of a pot it condenses mountain, wind, light, season, growth, death, and extended care. A miniature garden compresses not only geographical extension but possibilities of walking, viewing, narrative, and memory. Scale reduces neither world nor meaning; it localizes broad relations at high density.

Scale is the generative operation that condenses spatial extension and temporal accumulation into a bounded form while enabling that form to connect beyond itself.

5.2 Margin as Empty Seat

Margin is not an unused part left by failed depiction or description. It prevents form from closing into one meaning and preserves a possibility through which viewer, reader, or user can participate. The unpainted surface of ink painting, the scene omitted from waka, the simplicity of the tea room, and the sand plane of a garden are seats through which another position may arise.

Margin is not exclusively visual. Linguistic omission, pause in movement, musical silence, undecided use, and delayed meaning are margins. They retain spatial non-occupation and temporal incompletion together.

Margin is an empty seat preserved within form for another’s interpretation, body, action, and future response.

5.3 Ma as Spatiotemporal Interface

Ma is not contentless distance left between two beings. It coordinates distance and delay so that sound and sound, gesture and gesture, building and garden, self and other can enter into contact without erasing their difference. Isozaki Arata’s presentation of ma as Japanese space-time underscores the importance of not separating spatial from temporal interval.

Generative Studies defines ma as a spatiotemporal interface. If the interval is too short, difference is absorbed; if too long, contact is lost. A generative ma enables soku while preventing identity. It is the structure of distance and waiting through which an empty seat retains its power.

5.4 Closure and Openness

Scale produces a boundary and limits form; in this respect it closes. Margin preserves unrealized relations within the bounded form; in this respect it opens. Ma coordinates their intensities.

One important structure in Japanese form-making is not weak external definition but strong formal limitation joined to semantic and temporal openness. The tea room, fixed poetic form, pot, and garden boundary can be strict. Because they are strict, slight difference, silence, season, and bodily movement acquire greater force.

Openness and closure are therefore not opposites. Generative closure localizes relation and grounds it in reality. Generative openness prevents the localized relation from becoming its sole essence. The concurrence of formal closure and relational openness maximizes empty-seat power.

6. Concrete Modes in Japanese Culture

6.1 Bonsai

Bonsai brings scale, margin, ma, Pre-Humanity, and Self-Precedence into one practice. The pot spatially limits roots and soil, but the tree responds beyond the maker's control through season, light, water, disease, and physiology. A temporal ma separates intervention from response.

The interval among branches is not merely missing foliage. It is an empty seat for light, wind, vision, and future growth. The iroke of bonsai arises less from completion than from preserved capacity for growth and response. Age, scars, and wear condense the past and produce fetish intensity, yet because the tree lives, that intensity remains open to futurity.

6.2 Garden, Tea Room, and Architecture

A garden is not a copy of nature but a za localizing relation with nature at bodily scale. Stepping stones, path, rock, sand, and planting produce multiple seki; walking and looking generate different positions. Hidden views and turns fold future bodily movement into present composition.

The tea room limits entrance, tatami, alcove, utensils, and bodily distance. This closure does not fix participants to one meaning; it intensifies distance, silence, exchange, and the singular temporality of a season and encounter. Spatial contraction increases temporal density, and one empty seat generates anticipation of an arrival.

6.3 Ink Painting, Waka, and Haiku

The margin in ink painting does not merely ask the viewer's mind to reconstruct an unpainted nature. It provides a seki in which paper, ink, gaze, body, and memory generate a new relation. Margin is not where the recipient recovers authorial meaning but where a configuration irreducible to the author may appear.

The fixed forms of waka and haiku close language through rule while opening unspoken scenery through kata. Season, place, body, and affect are condensed into limited sound units; omission invites the reader's time. Scale produces linguistic density, while margin produces an empty seat of meaning.

6.4 Sayama Aesthetics School and Web Installation

At Sayama Aesthetics School, the building functions as a za transforming lodging, everyday life, making, education, viewing, and research into one another. Guest rooms, dining table, garden, entrance, artworks, and screens form multiple seki. An unused room or chair is not merely idle capacity; it anticipates an unknown visitor and event in the present place.

Web Installation likewise does more than present completed images and texts. The screen is a spatial interface connecting “there” and “here” and a temporal interface connecting past records and future viewing or response to the present. Links, unfinished pages, revision, and user operations form digital margins and empty seats. When the screen closes into a self-sufficient surface of signs, it loses iroke. When it connects to material place and bodily action, its empty seats can generate new topologies.

7. Integration with the Existing Theory of bigakusha-haha

7.1 Self-Externalization and Interface Ontology

Self-externalization is not the replication of a completed interior self outside itself. The self offers action to non-self and is transformed through resistance and response. The empty seat preserves outside the self the possibility required for this response. If self-expression occupies everything, no seat remains from which non-self can answer.

Leaving a margin in a work is therefore not decorative restraint. It designs an interface through which self-externalization can exceed self-expansion and receive generation from what lies beyond the self.

7.2 Pre-Humanity and Self-Precedence

Pre-Humanity is the universality of nature that precedes human meaning and continues to generate the human. Self-Precedence is the particular-concrete universality that precedes socially or symbolically fixed self-images and continues to generate the self. The empty seat reserves their possible encounter without predetermining its content.

The interval among bonsai branches, the margin of a garden, and an unfinished form leave seki through which natural response is not fully determined by the human. Self-Precedence offers action; Pre-Humanity responds through time. When that response returns, position arises in the empty seat and Self-Verification occurs.

7.3 Language Derivatives

A language derivative folds future meaning, evaluation, and narrative into the present, giving operative force to what does not yet exist. The empty seat similarly folds a future body into the present. Yet its dimensions and material resistance ground the derivative in possible bodily participation.

When an “open seat” exists only as a sign and no participant can transform the surrounding za, it becomes pseudo-openness. A generative empty seat must not merely announce participation; it must be an effective interface through which participation can alter the whole relation.

7.4 Kata, Namelessness, and Cultural Generation

Kata preserves the repeatability of a mark while receiving difference. If kata closes into exhaustive procedure, successors inherit no empty seat. A generative kata preserves a framework of repetition together with margins through which different bodies, eras, and environments can generate positions.

Namelessness is not the absence of names but the mode in which generation does not close into one author or owner and can pass into repetition and variation by others. Cultural generation is the inheritance of kata containing empty seats. Successors do not possess a finished product; they enter the retained seats through soku and generate another configuration.

7.5 Workhood

Workhood is not the recognized status of an object as art. It is the operation through which form transforms relations among self, other, and environment and continues to generate sensation, meaning, questions, and action. It requires condensation into form and the preservation of a seat for others.

A work may possess fetish intensity because time, bodies, and memory are condensed in one form. Workhood nevertheless prevents this condensation from closing into self-contained thinghood. The iroke of a work lies in its ability to have intensity while remaining sit-able by another.

8. Comparative Philosophical Position

8.1 Heidegger

Heidegger's being-in-the-world does not place a subject inside a container called world. It describes Dasein as always already involved in a nexus of equipment, others, purposes, and moods. Temporality likewise relates past, present, and future as mutually opening ecstases rather than isolated points.

The empty seat localizes this structure as a concrete possibility of participation. It is not worldhood as a whole but an interface through which a body can enter a world and generate a position. Generative Studies further emphasizes recursion: participation can transform the za that made it possible.

8.2 Buddhist Emptiness

In Prajñāpāramitā thought, emptiness is not a nothing reached by erasing form but the absence of immutable self-nature in dependently arisen phenomena. Generative emptiness likewise does not substantialize the vacant seat as a mystical void. The seat has power because its relation to a body is not essentialized into one occupant.

Empty-seat power is therefore not the possession of emptiness. It is the bodily and sensible appearance of the fact that relation does not reach terminal closure.

8.3 Nishida and Nishitani

Nishida Kitarō's logic of place treats the field in which individuals arise not as an external container but as a ground of self-world formation. Nishitani Keiji's field of emptiness reopens the subject-object opposition at its root. These theories help prevent the interpretation of the empty seat as neutral space available for sovereign occupation.

Generative Studies, however, explicitly theorizes seki as the localization of place for particular participation and soku as the generative structure through which contact becomes actualized. The empty seat is not the encompassing whole; it is the minimal boundary through which a whole opens to a particular body.

9. Nostalgia and the Temporal Orientations of Empty-Seat Power

9.1 Nostalgia Is Not Empty-Seat Power Itself

Empty-seat power is more fundamental than nostalgia. It is the structural capacity of absence and non-arrival to affect the present; nostalgia is one affective orientation produced when this capacity is directed predominantly toward a lost or imagined past. The same empty seat may also orient the present toward a future occupant and become sensible as iroke. Nostalgia and iroke are therefore neither synonyms nor simple opposites. They are past-oriented and future-oriented configurations of one spatiotemporal interface.

Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia clarifies two possible closures of the empty seat. Restorative nostalgia seeks to rebuild a lost home and treats its reconstruction as recovery of truth. Reflective nostalgia remains with longing, distance, and the irreversibility of time. In the present theory, restoration tends to return a designated past occupant to the seat, while reflection preserves the seat's tension between trace and non-return. Neither category is automatically generative: restoration may reopen a living kata, and reflection may become passive consumption of melancholy. The criterion is whether present participation can transform the inherited za.

9.2 Nostalgic Feeling, Melancholy, Antiquarian Orientation, and Restoration

Nostalgic feeling arises when a sensory mark such as smell, sound, surface, tool, or place brings an earlier relation into contact with the present self. It is a temporal soku through which a forgotten earlier self becomes newly manifest. Melancholy arises when this return simultaneously discloses that the past cannot be recovered. It is not mere sadness but the configuration in which something is present as trace precisely through its irreversible absence.

An antiquarian orientation evaluates past forms, practices, and ways of living positively. Restoration goes further by attempting to reactualize those forms in the present. Generative Studies distinguishes closed restoration, which treats the past as a completed answer to which present bodies must submit, from generative restoration, in which a present body enters an empty seat retained within an inherited kata and produces another topology. Cultural inheritance depends upon the latter: the past is neither discarded nor reproduced identically but exposed to new reality-grounded response.

9.3 Pastness as Iroke or Closure

A worn building, garment, vehicle, tool, or garden can condense traces of past life and acquire fetish intensity. If these traces refer only to a lost owner, the form tends toward nostalgia. If the traces are presented as a complete model to be reconstructed, it tends toward restoration. If the condensed past keeps a seat open for an unknown body and use, it acquires iroke.

Pastness is therefore not generative merely because it is old. The decisive issue is whether time has become a closed image or remains an interface. A work with historical density and future openness can bear nostalgia, melancholy, fetish intensity, and iroke simultaneously without collapsing them into one affect.

10. Simulation, Simulationism, and the Pseudo-Empty Seat

10.1 Simulation and Simulationism

Simulation is an operation that reconstructs the behavior or experiential conditions of a reality through a model. Simulationism is an artistic and critical orientation that addresses a social condition in which models, commodities, media images, and established styles precede and organize experience. Associated with appropriation, Neo-Geo, and postmodern debates, it does not merely imitate an original; it discloses how the distinction between original and copy is destabilized by circulating signs.

Baudrillard's account of simulacra is relevant because a sign may no longer refer to a recoverable original and may instead help produce what counts as reality. Generative Studies accepts the force of this diagnosis but refuses to treat all reality as exhausted by sign circulation. Bodily, material, ecological, temporal, and interpersonal resistance can answer a model in ways the model did not determine. This irreducible response is the point of reality-grounding.

10.2 Simulated Nostalgia and Simulated Iroke

Nostalgia can be manufactured by arranging visual and acoustic signs of pastness: obsolete typography, faded color, film grain, old furniture, recorded noise, or retro packaging. One may feel nostalgia for an era never lived because the affect is organized by circulating images of that era. What returns is not past life itself but a model of "pastness."

Iroke can likewise be simulated through lighting, distance, silence, concealment, staged incompletion, and calculated margin. Yet simulated iroke differs from generative iroke. In the former, how the other will be attracted and how participation will proceed are substantially predetermined. In the latter, participation can produce a response not contained in the design and can transform the relation that solicited it.

10.3 Pseudo-Empty Seat and Generative Empty Seat

A simulation can display an empty seat and announce openness while retaining all operative decisions within its model. The participant chooses among predefined paths, produces data, or confirms a scenario, but cannot alter the za governing participation. This is a pseudo-empty seat.

A generative empty seat is different. Its occupation produces not only a position within a stable system but a transformation of configuration and potentially of za itself. The result cannot be

exhaustively predicted or reset without remainder, because the body, material, other, and environment respond with their own orientations.

The distinction is therefore not between digital and physical, artificial and authentic, or copy and original. A physical museum installation may offer only pseudo-participation, while a digital interface may permit genuine institutional and interpersonal transformation. The criterion is recursive transformability under reality-grounded response.

10.4 Reversibility and Irreversibility

Simulation tends toward repeatability, reset, and model-bounded variation. Existential generation is marked by irreversibility: contact leaves marks, participants change, history accumulates, and the prior topology cannot be perfectly restored. A simulated death can be replayed; bodily death cannot be reset. A simulated past can be rendered present; lived time cannot be made identical again.

Simulation becomes generatively significant when it ceases to be self-sufficient and functions as an interface to an answer from beyond the model. Simulationism critically reveals that apparent empty seats are already occupied by codes, brands, institutions, and art-historical styles. Generative art begins when differential negation releases this occupation and makes effective participation possible.

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11. Irreversibility, Death, and Impossible Life

11.1 “Cannot Return” as the Local Structure of Generation

Every reality-grounded soku-contact introduces a difference that cannot be fully reduced to the state preceding it. Bodies, materials, others, memories, and places change; even restoration leaves the history of having restored. “Cannot return” is therefore the local temporal structure of generation. It distinguishes an event from a reversible rearrangement of signs.

Irreversibility does not mean that every consequence is permanent or that repair is impossible. It means that repair itself becomes another event in the history of relation. The original topology is not recovered as if nothing had occurred.

11.2 Death as the Possibility That Cannot Be Outstripped

Heidegger characterizes death as Dasein’s ownmost, non-relational, certain, indefinite, and not-to-be-outstripped possibility. Generative Studies interprets this not as the possibility of representing an afterlife but as the limit at which the self cannot experience its own death as a completed past and return to report it. Death can be anticipated and folded into present action, but its actuality abolishes the self’s capacity to receive its result as a later response.

Ordinary generation retains a transformed self after an event: action is offered, non-self responds, and the changed self encounters that response. In death, there is no post-event return to the same experiential subject. Death is thus the maximal asymmetry of irreversibility and the ultimate reality-grounding limit against fantasies of total simulation.

11.3 The Impossibility of Retrieving Life

The life already lived cannot be retrieved as an identical possession. Lost time, abandoned possibilities, broken relations, and forgotten Self-Precedence may be remembered, simulated, or ritually reactivated, but they cannot be made the same life again. Nostalgia feels this distance; restoration attempts to overcome it; simulation produces an operational image of its overcoming.

Generative Studies therefore rejects the idea that existential renewal is a return to an original life waiting intact in the past. Life cannot be retrieved; it can be generated anew through another soku-contact. This is not compensation for loss but the creation of a topology that did not previously exist.

11.4 Impossible Life

This paper introduces Impossible Life as a technical term. It does not mean biological death or logical impossibility. It names a condition in which biological and social continuation persists while the self is structurally prevented from generating a life grounded in its own particular-concrete interaction with non-self.

In Impossible Life, institutions, evaluation, capital, algorithms, and symbolic identities preassign the available seats, responses, and outcomes. The subject moves, works, consumes, and communicates, yet its action is returned primarily as score, status, image, or market value. Self-Precedence is not destroyed, but its contact with Pre-Humanity is blocked or converted into predefined symbolic response. The person survives while the experience of living loses generative force.

Impossible Life is therefore the state in which the empty seat has lost futurity. It appears open, but every viable occupation has already been scripted. This is the existential form of the pseudo-empty seat.

11.5 Generative Life

Generative Life is not the recovered version of a lost life. It begins by accepting that the past cannot be restored and death cannot be outstripped. A body nevertheless enters a real empty seat, offers an action to non-self, receives an unpredictable response through time, and becomes unable to return to its prior topology. This irreversible transformation is not the failure of recovery but the actuality of life.

The present is therefore not merely a point between an unrecoverable past and an unsurpassable death. It is the empty seat in which a relation not yet determined may become real. Iroke is the sensible arrival of futurity in this seat; soku is the generative structure that enables its actualization; Self-Verification is the later recognition of the response; workhood is the preservation of such seats for others.

11.6 Death, Empty Seat, and Namelessness

At death, the self can no longer return to its own seat, but marks, kata, objects, practices, and effects remain. The seat of the dead becomes powerful because bodily non-return and relational continuation coexist. Oriented exclusively toward its former occupant, it produces nostalgia, mourning, or fetish. Opened to successors without claiming that they reproduce the dead, it becomes an interface of namelessness and cultural generation.

A work does not allow its author to outstrip death. It allows generation to continue where the author cannot return. Workhood is therefore not symbolic immortality or preservation of authorial identity; it is the capacity to leave an empty seat through which another can generate a different position and configuration.

12. Unified Propositions

Proposition 1: Empty Seat

An empty seat is a seki that lacks present occupation while locally retaining past relations and possibilities of future participation.

Proposition 2: Spatiotemporal Interface

The empty seat connects the past of an absent body and the future of a possible body to a present place.

Proposition 3: Empty-Seat Power

Empty-seat power is the generative movement through which a relation to unrealized participation transforms present attention, feeling, judgment, and action.

Proposition 4: Iroke

Iroke is the sensible and relational force appearing when form preserves emptiness and solicits an unspecified other's participation through an empty seat.

Proposition 5: Incompletion

Iroke arises not from complete presence but from the incompletion of a relation retaining the temporality of "not yet."

Proposition 6: Fetish

A fetish is the condensation of contact with an absent body or invisible relation into a particular form, fragment, object, or mark.

Proposition 7: Fetishism

Fetishism occurs when the relation generating condensation is forgotten and its force is fixed as an intrinsic property of the thing.

Proposition 8: Scale

Scale condenses spatial extension and temporal accumulation into bounded form while preserving connection beyond that form.

Proposition 9: Margin

Margin is an empty seat preserved within form for another's interpretation, body, action, and future response.

Proposition 10: Ma

Ma is an interface coordinating spatial distance and temporal delay so that differentiated beings may enter soku-contact without losing difference.

Proposition 11: Co-Generation of Closure and Openness

A generative form closes spatially and formally through boundaries while opening temporally and relationally through margin.

Proposition 12: Workhood

Workhood condenses time and relation into form while preserving within that form an empty seat in which another can participate.

Proposition 13: Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a past-oriented configuration of empty-seat power in which an absent or imagined past acts affectively upon the present.

Proposition 14: Pseudo-Empty Seat

A pseudo-empty seat presents participation as possible while preventing participation from transforming the model or za that governs it.

Proposition 15: Generative Empty Seat

A generative empty seat is a seki whose occupation can recursively transform position, configuration, and za through a response not exhausted by prior design.

Proposition 16: Irreversibility

Every reality-grounded generation leaves a difference that prevents complete return to the topology preceding the event.

Proposition 17: Impossible Life

Impossible Life is the condition in which biological and social continuation persists while Self-Precedence is prevented from generating a reality-grounded life through particular-concrete interaction with non-self.

Proposition 18: Generative Life

Generative Life does not retrieve an identical past life or outstrip death; it begins anew when a body enters a real empty seat through soku and is irreversibly transformed by the response of non-self.

13. Theoretical Significance and Limits

The first contribution of this paper is its transformation of the empty seat from a metaphor of absence into a spatiotemporal interface. Seki thereby becomes not a static container awaiting a body but a node through which past and future act upon the present.

The second contribution is the release of iroke from the status of bodily or objective attribute. Defined as the relational force soliciting participation, iroke becomes analyzable in artworks, architecture, gardens, institutions, and digital interfaces rather than only in erotic attraction.

The third contribution is the distinction between fetish as condensation of time and absence into form and fetishism as closure that forgets the relational genesis of force. The fourth is the interpretation of scale, margin, and ma not as an essence of Japan but as techniques co-generating formal closure and relational openness.

The fifth contribution is the articulation of nostalgia, simulation, and death within one theory of temporal interface. Nostalgia is treated as a past-oriented configuration of empty-seat power, Simulationism as a critical disclosure of seats already occupied by signs, and death as the unsurpassable limit that separates symbolic projection from bodily return. The sixth contribution is the concept of Impossible Life, which names the contemporary condition in which survival continues while generative contact is structurally blocked. This concept prevents “recovering life” from becoming another nostalgic or restorative simulation and redirects it toward the generation of a new life.

This paper does not explain all Japanese culture through one principle, nor does it replace historical lexicography of iroke, Kuki studies, psychoanalysis, Marx scholarship, Buddhist studies, or architectural history. Further research must compare concrete works, examine institutional exclusion from empty seats, address gender and desire, analyze the commodification of iroke into fetishism, and distinguish effective digital empty seats from simulated participation.

Conclusion

This paper has defined the empty seat not as a place where a body is missing but as a spatiotemporal interface connecting past traces and future possibilities of participation to the present. Empty-seat power is the generative movement through which a relation to unrealized participation transforms present bodies and actions. When this power solicits another through the non-closure of form, it is sensed as iroke.

Iroke is the open force of the empty seat. A fetish is the condensation of that force into a particular form or mark. Fetishism closes the process by forgetting the relation that generated condensation and treating form as self-possessed power. Differential negation releases this fixation and reopens an empty seat within form.

Scale closes a world into form; margin opens that form back toward a world. Ma coordinates the distance and delay of closure and openness. Recurrent Japanese techniques of scale and margin are therefore not merely an aesthetics of smallness or blankness. They limit space in order to open time and condense relation in order to make another's participation possible.

Nostalgia directs empty-seat power toward a lost past; iroke directs it toward an unspecified future. Simulation can manufacture the signs of both pastness and openness, while Simulationism reveals their coded circulation. The decisive distinction is therefore between a pseudo-empty seat, which contains participation within a prior model, and a generative empty seat, which permits response to transform its model and za.

The self cannot retrieve its past life as identical, nor can it outstrip its own death and return from that event. Impossible Life arises when, between these two limits, the present is already occupied by institutional, evaluative, and symbolic scripts. Generative Life begins not by restoring the past or simulating the afterlife, but by entering an effective empty seat and accepting irreversible transformation through the response of non-self.

This structure does not alter the basic sequence:

Mark -> Kata -> Form -> Za -> Seki -> Position -> Namelessness -> Cultural Generation

The empty seat is a spatiotemporal mode of seki, and iroke is the sensible appearance of its force. Fetish, scale, margin, and ma describe how that force is condensed into form, preserved, and reopened. Emptiness guarantees non-closure; soku actualizes participation in the seat and

generates position and configuration; provisional affirmation makes the relation manifest; differential negation reopens fixed affirmation to emptiness.

The final thesis is as follows:

The empty seat is the place where a future other acts upon the present and where an absent past remains without becoming recoverable. Iroke is the force through which futurity becomes sensible within form. Impossible Life is the closure of that futurity by a pre-scripted present. Generative Life begins when a body enters an effective empty seat through soku and receives a reality-grounded response. Workhood condenses time and relation into form without making form self-complete, leaving a seat through which generation may continue beyond a self that cannot outstrip its own death.

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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.

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