

PROJECT APPROVAL

Responding to the Crises of Symbol and Subject in Modernity

Towards a Generative Nomos of Relational Presence

Document: SCS/PA/2026/01
Status: Approved
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Project Initiated: November 6, 2025 (ongoing)
Authority: Founder, pursuant to §14.4 of the Bylaws (Initial Period)

1 Project Identification

Project Name. Responding to the Crises of Symbol and Subject in Modernity: Towards a Generative Nomos of Relational Presence.

Description. A philosophical work diagnosing the epistemological and ontological disintegration of late modernity as a *Symbolic Crisis* — a rupture in the symbolic order’s mediating function that fractures relationality at both the ontological and structural levels, manifest in the erosion of trust, the weakening of shared meaning, and the widening gap between lived relation and symbolic representation. In response, the work advances two concepts: *Relationality*, which offers an ontological foundation through which existence becomes apprehensible beyond the limits of symbolic articulation; and *Generative Presence*, which names the process through which relational being becomes active in lived experience. Within this frame, law and justice appear as forms of symbolic mediation whose force arises from the interplay between formal structure and interpretive generativity. The work articulates a juridical movement reorienting justice toward relational being, and an extra-juridical movement cultivating generative presence — together a pathway for restoring the resonance between being and meaning under conditions of symbolic fragmentation.

Foundational Status within the Society. This Project is the founding theoretical work of Serendip Commons Society. It was undertaken prior to the legal establishment of the Society and provided the philosophical foundation upon which the institution was subsequently built. The Society exists, in significant part, to pursue and develop the research program articulated by this Project. The Project’s approval as SCS/PA/2026/01 accordingly reflects not chronological priority of approval alone but the foundational role of this work in motivating and orienting the institution itself.

Motivations. The work proceeds from the recognition that late modernity is marked by a structural crisis in the symbolic order — manifest in the erosion of trust, the weakening of shared meaning, and the widening gap between lived relation and symbolic representation. This crisis cannot be adequately addressed from within the symbolic order alone, since the crisis is of that order. The work seeks to articulate a different ontological foundation — relational being — and a different mode of engagement with experience — generative presence — through which the resonance between being and meaning may be restored. The motivation is therefore not merely diagnostic but constructive: to provide a philosophical foundation for a different way of being together under conditions of symbolic fragmentation, and to make that foundation available as the conceptual ground upon which institutional and practical work may proceed.

Objectives. The Project pursues the following objectives, of which the first has been substantially realized in the published work and the remainder constitute the continuing program:

1. To diagnose the Symbolic Crisis of late modernity at the levels of epistemology, ontology, and social relation; to articulate the concepts of Relationality and Generative Presence; and to develop the implications of this framework for law, justice, and the social institutions of symbolic mediation;
2. To extend, refine, and defend the framework in continuing scholarly engagement with responses and adjacent work;
3. To develop the conceptual apparatus further as the broader research of the Society proceeds, with particular attention to the relationship between this foundational framework and the subsequent projects it grounds;
4. To provide the philosophical foundation that orients the institutional, infrastructural, and applied work of the Society across its Schedule A domains.

Expected Outcomes. The published work (identifiers in §3 below); the establishment of the foundational concepts (Symbolic Crisis, Relationality, Generative Presence, Generative Nomos) that orient the subsequent work of the Society; sustained scholarly engagement; and the conceptual grounding for the Society’s mission and infrastructural commitments across all domains of Schedule A.

2 Infrastructural Domain Classification

Primary classification. The Project is classified under four domains of Schedule A:

- **Domain I: Theoretical Infrastructure** — “understanding clearly how people are actually connected to one another.”
- **Domain II: Conceptual and Ontological Infrastructure** — “understanding why people in our age feel increasingly lonely and unseen.”
- **Domain IV: Decision Infrastructure** — “keeping a person’s own voice audible in the decisions that shape their fate.”
- **Domain VII: Ethical and Care Infrastructure** — “sustaining a relationship when it cannot be repaid in kind, when the other is fragile and depends on you.”

Reasoning for the classification.

The Project’s classification under four domains reflects its character as the foundational theoretical work of the Society. As the work upon which the broader research program rests, it does not occupy a single substantive domain but rather provides the conceptual ground from which work in multiple domains becomes possible.

Under **Domain I**, the Project articulates the ontological framework — relational being as the prior reality of which symbolic articulation is a derivative — that establishes how people are theoretically understood as connected to one another. The work is theoretical infrastructure in the strict sense: it constructs the conceptual apparatus.

Under **Domain II**, the Project’s diagnosis of the Symbolic Crisis directly addresses, at the conceptual and ontological level, the question of why people in late modernity feel increasingly lonely and unseen. The rupture of the symbolic order’s mediating function is given a specific ontological articulation that makes the felt condition theoretically tractable.

Under **Domain IV**, the Project’s account of law and justice as forms of symbolic mediation, and its juridical movement reorienting justice toward relational being, develops the conditions under which a person’s own voice — their participation as a relational subject rather than as an object of symbolic framing — is preserved or eroded within the institutions that shape their fate.

Under **Domain VII**, the Project’s account of generative presence, and its extra-juridical movement cultivating that presence, provides the philosophical ground for an ethics that sustains relationship under conditions of asymmetry and dependency — relationship that cannot be repaid in kind because its currency is presence itself.

The Project’s classification under four domains is unusual among projects of the Society and reflects its foundational role. Subsequent projects of the Society typically classify under one or a small number of domains; this work, as foundational, articulates the conceptual conditions for work across the full Schedule A.

3 Publication and Licensing

The primary work has been published with the following identifiers:

- DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.5752104
- SSRN abstract: ssrn.com/abstract=5752104
- OSF foundational source: DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/5R6CD

Copies released through the Society’s own channels (including serendip.ngo) are made available under the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY 4.0), consistent with the Society’s commitment to open scholarly exchange under §3.4 of the Bylaws. Future papers extending or refining the framework will be published through scholarly venues appropriate to each work, on the same licensing terms where the Society controls publication.

4 Ethics Review Determination

Determination. Ethics review under §3.5 of the Bylaws is **not required** for the Project.

Reasoning for the determination. The Project is theoretical philosophical research. It

does not constitute empirical research involving human subjects, does not collect data from identifiable individuals, does not involve sensitive personal data of third parties, is not biomedical or psychological research, and does not involve any vulnerable population within the meaning of §3.5. The Project’s engagement is conceptual, diagnostic, and constructive, not investigative or interventional.

Ethical commitments of the author. The author undertakes the following voluntary practices in conducting the Project:

1. Proper attribution of intellectual debts, accurate representation of opposing positions, and citation of sources, in accordance with the standards of scholarly ethics applicable to philosophical research;
2. Where the work engages with the thought of specific living scholars, accurate and good-faith representation of their positions, with corrections made promptly when errors are identified;
3. Where the work draws on traditions or frameworks (psychoanalytic, jurisprudential, phenomenological, and others), responsible scholarly engagement with those traditions rather than instrumental appropriation.

5 Authority and Effective Date

This Project Approval is issued by the undersigned Founder under the authority granted by §14.4 of the Bylaws to approve projects of the Society during the Initial Period. The Project was initiated on November 6, 2025 — prior to the legal establishment of the Society — and is ongoing. This Approval formally brings the existing Project under the governance framework of the Society. The Society shall maintain this Project Approval document, together with all subsequent records relating to the Project, in the permanent records of the Society pursuant to §5.11 of the Bylaws.

The numbering of this Project Approval as SCS/PA/2026/01 reflects the Project’s foundational status in the intellectual genealogy of the Society, rather than its chronological position in the sequence of approvals issued. The Project is the work upon which the Society itself was conceived and built.

Wanhong, Founder

Date: June 26, 2026