Social Worlds

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and the Logic of Peripherization

(1)
Conjunctural domination ——————————— *Structural* domination **(2)**
Conjunctural emancipation   *Conjunctural* emancipation

(3)
Conjunctural domination ——————————— *Structural* domination **(4)**
Structural emancipation   *Structural* emancipation
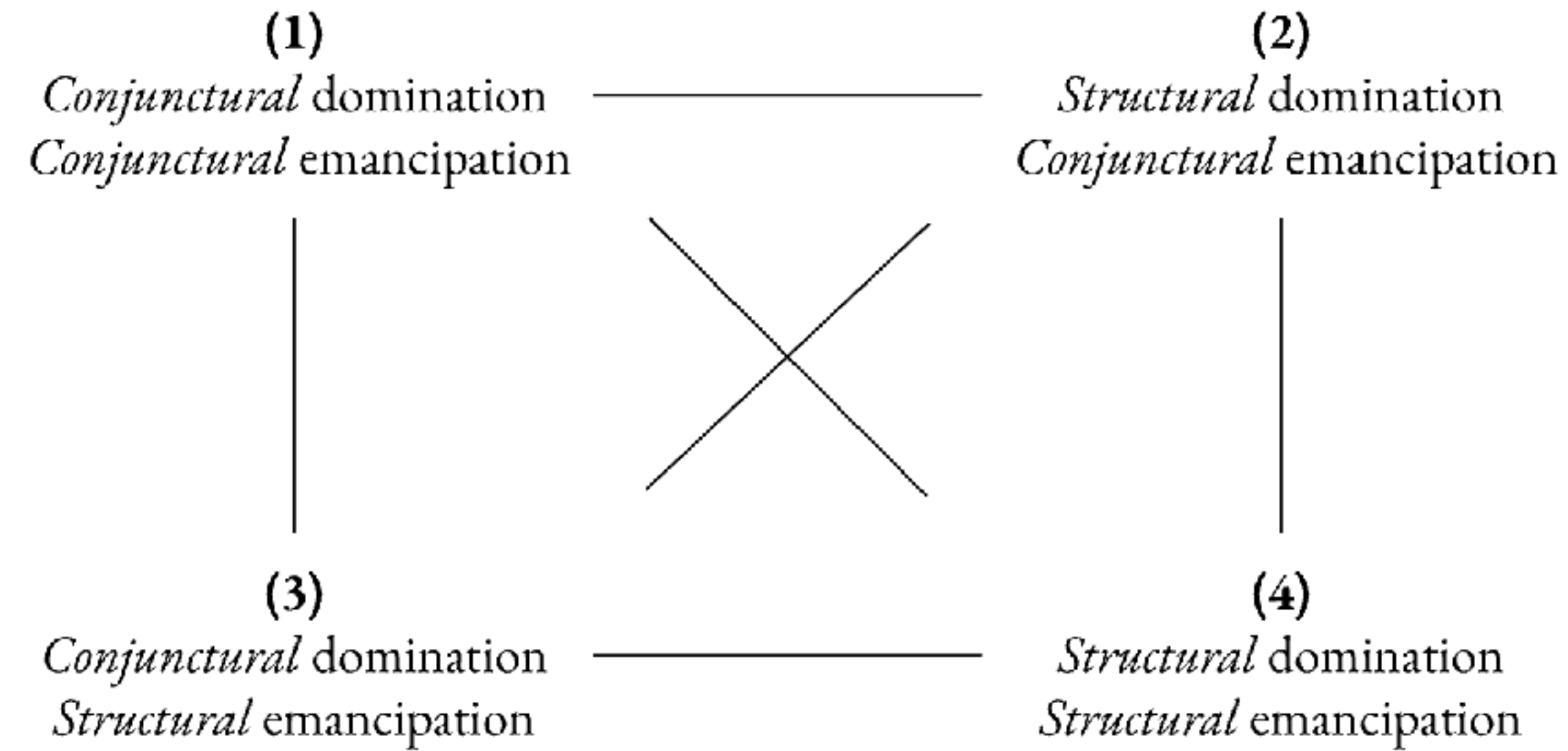
1. Conjuncture and Structure
2. Social Logics and Atoms
3. Space and Time
4. Closure and History

Glossary:

Conjunctural: terms precede relations
Structural: relations precede terms

Examples:

(1) World-Systems Theory
(2) Value-Form Theory
(3) Accelerationism
(4) Subset of Theoretical Practice

To preserve the methodological principle that there must be a homogeneity between description and prescription. But drop the precedence of terms over relations that gives WST its empiricist overtones.

To preserve the concern with the formal conditions for particular processes to acquire social effectivity. But drop the romantic and tragic view of political practice and the excessive isolation of capitalist social formation.

To preserve the interest in the emancipatory potential of social mediations and in the search for large-scale systemic alternatives. But drop the dependence on underlying and converging historical change towards something common and the "stage-ist" take on previous social systems.

Reconstructing the main conceptual distinctions of World-Systems Theory **(1),** we propose a generalization of the Marxist theory of real abstractions that is not restricted to capitalist sociality **(2),** nor assumes an underlying teleology or continuity between social forms **(3)**.

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The basic principles of our approach

1. Conjuncture and Structure
2. Social Logics and Atoms
3. Space and Time
4. Closure and History

Conceptual steps:

(1) Abstract categories

References:

Alain Badiou, Logics of Worlds (2006)

The basic principles of our approach

A. In any given context, not every difference makes a difference. Let us call these particular situations, **logical contexts** and a point of view that singles out only the relevant differences the **transcendental** point of view.

Conceptual steps:

(1) Abstract categories

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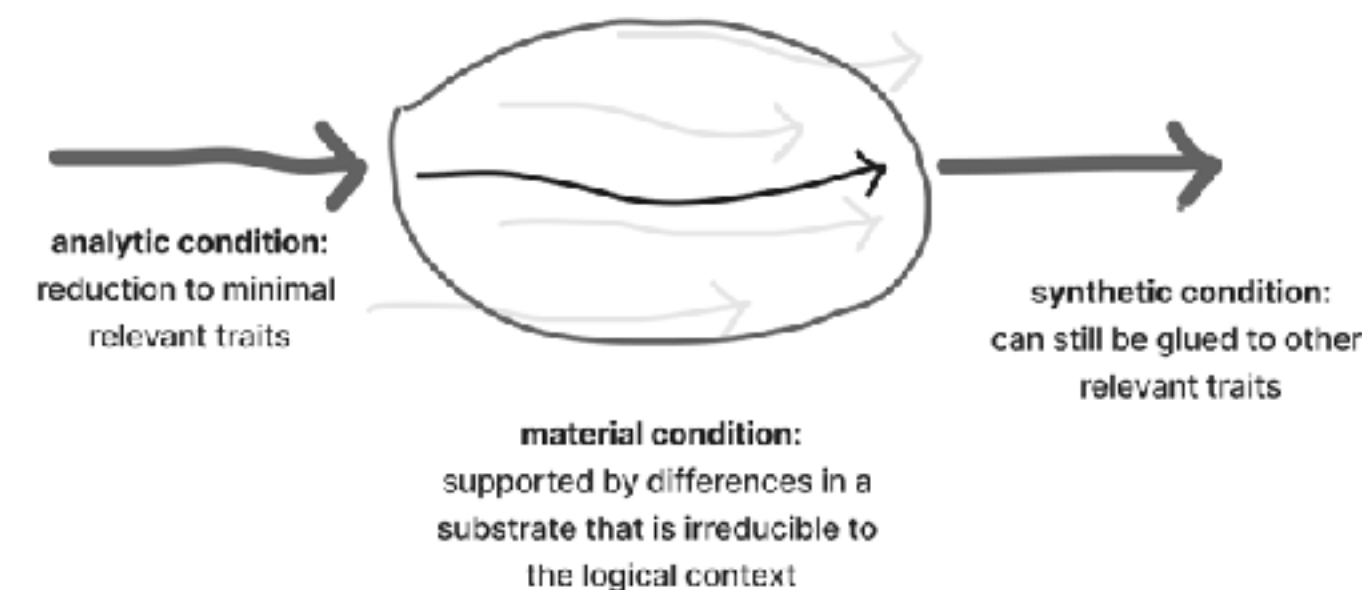
The basic principles of our approach

A. In any given context, not every difference makes a difference. Let us call these particular situations, **logical contexts** and a point of view that singles out only the relevant differences the **transcendental** point of view.

B. For specific logical contexts to cohere, some conditions must be met:

B1. One must be able to define the atomic granularity of that context, beyond which differences do not make a difference — its basic **analytic** component.

B2. This logical atom must, however, preserve enough information to allow us to generate new compatible atoms and combine existing ones - it must have **synthetic** power.

B3. Finally, the atomic differences that make a difference in that context must be supported and propagated by a substrate that is essential indifferent or irreducible to it - its **material** basis.

analytic condition:
reduction to minimal
relevant traits

synthetic condition:
can still be glued to other
relevant traits

material condition:
supported by differences in a
substrate that is irreducible to
the logical context

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C. For a logical context to establish objectivity and regional coherence, one must find ways to propagate differences that abide to clauses B1, B2 and B3. In other words: **that there is a transcendental point of view does not guarantee that there is a global synthesis of a logical space**.

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D. A regionally coherent logic becomes globally consistent when it can guarantee that, for any new situation that presents itself, there is a way to integrate it to its logical space - a system which presents such a property is called a **world**.

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What does it mean for something to be social?

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Conceptual steps:

(1) Abstract categories
(2) Social categories

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What does it mean for something to be social?

A. For something to be "social" it is not enough that it directly involves humans, nor that it involves many people - it implies a type of **interdependence between living systems.**

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What does it mean for something to be social?

A. For something to be "social" it is not enough that it directly involves humans, nor that it involves many people - it implies a type of **interdependence between living systems.**

B. We can distinguish at least three different types of interdependent relations between parts and wholes in living systems:

    B1. An organism is itself a living system composed of parts that are equally living, called organs - this is **organic interdependence.**

    B2. An ecosystem is not itself a living system but it is composed of living organisms concerned with their own individual survival - this is **ecological interdependence.**

    B3. A social system is not itself a living system and it is composed of living parts that are not directly determined by their individual survival, which is only guaranteed indirectly - this is **social interdependence**.

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   B3. A social system is not itself a living system and it is composed of living parts that are not directly determined by their individual survival, which is only guaranteed indirectly - this is **social interdependence**.

C. In a social system, the differences that make a difference for an living individual and those that make a difference for the socio-logical space diverge drastically.

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C. In a social system, the differences that make a difference for an living individual and those that make a difference for the socio-logical space diverge drastically.

D. Because of this divergence, **social contexts cannot count on immediate survival as the basis for propagating relevant social differences**, forming social worlds. This requires social worlds to be formally "plastic" in order to constitute globally synthetic structures.

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The three logics of social worlds

Conceptual steps:
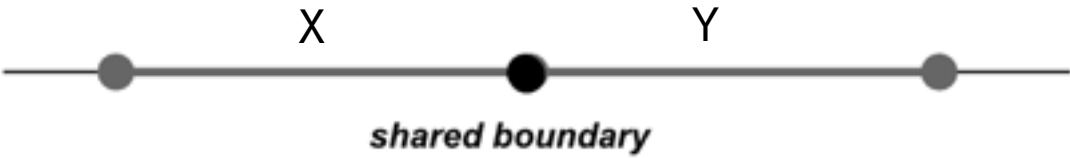
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The three logics of social worlds

	Mode A
Logic	Affinity
Form	Gift and counter-gift
Order	Rules
Unstable Form	War
Example	Families, affinity groups, nations, etc.
Logical structure	Paraconsistent logic
Basic topology	Closed set topology

Closed intervals X and Y

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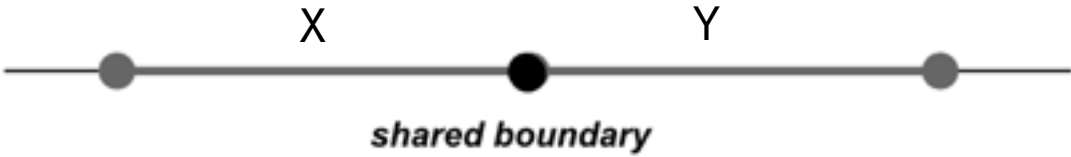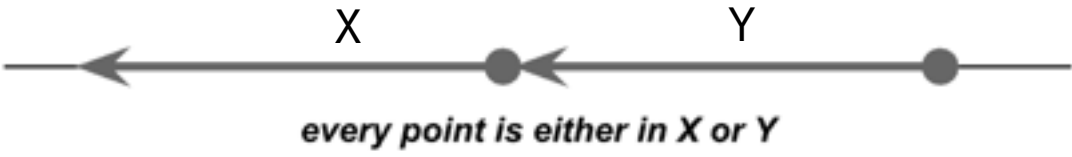**2. Social Logics and Atoms**
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The three logics of social worlds

	Mode A	Mode B
Logic	Affinity	Property
Form	Gift and counter-gift	Enclosure and alienation
Order	Rules	Law
Unstable Form	War	Revolution
Example	Families, affinity groups, nations, etc.	Contracts, pacts, juridical entities, States, etc.
Logical structure	Paraconsistent logic	Classical logic
Basic topology	Closed set topology	Clopen set topology

X   Y

shared boundary

Closed intervals X and Y

X   Y

every point is either in X or Y

Clopen intervals X and Y

Y

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The three logics of social worlds

	Mode A	Mode B	Mode C
Logic	Affinity	Property	Value
Form	Gift and counter-gift	Enclosure and alienation	Commodity exchange
Order	Rules	Law	Tendencies
Unstable Form	War	Revolution	Crisis
Example	Families, affinity groups, nations, etc.	Contracts, pacts, juridical entities, States, etc.	Commodities, money, capital, etc.
Logical structure	Paraconsistent logic	Classical logic	Intuitionistic logic
Basic topology	Closed set topology	Clopen set topology	Open set topology

Closed intervals X and Y

Clopen intervals X and Y

Open intervals X and Y

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Multilayered social worlds

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Multilayered social worlds

A. Because any given social logic is too consistent to be properly propagated by living systems, **all three logics must mix together** to create a coherent social fabric.

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Multilayered social worlds

A. Because any given social logic is too consistent to be properly propagated by living systems, **all three logics must mix together** to create a coherent social fabric.

B. We call the **dominant** social logic the one whose transcendental point of view makes the most relevant differences intelligible.

B1. Social worlds in which mode A is dominant are equivalent to **mini world-systems.**

B2. Social worlds in which mode B is dominant are equivalent to **world-empires**

B3. Social worlds in which mode C is dominant are equivalent to **world-economies,** or capitalist worlds.

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C. A **social atom** is a minimal context abiding to these three modes of intercourse. The particular structure of social atoms can vary locally and the complex switching and composing between them allows social worlds to integrate highly diverse material substrates and contexts.

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D. Social atoms can also be **aligned** - in the case where the analytic condition for all three logics rely on the same differences in the substrate - or **misaligned** - when each mode maps differently to their common material basis. This distinction implies that **misaligned atoms are the general form and aligned ones a special case.**
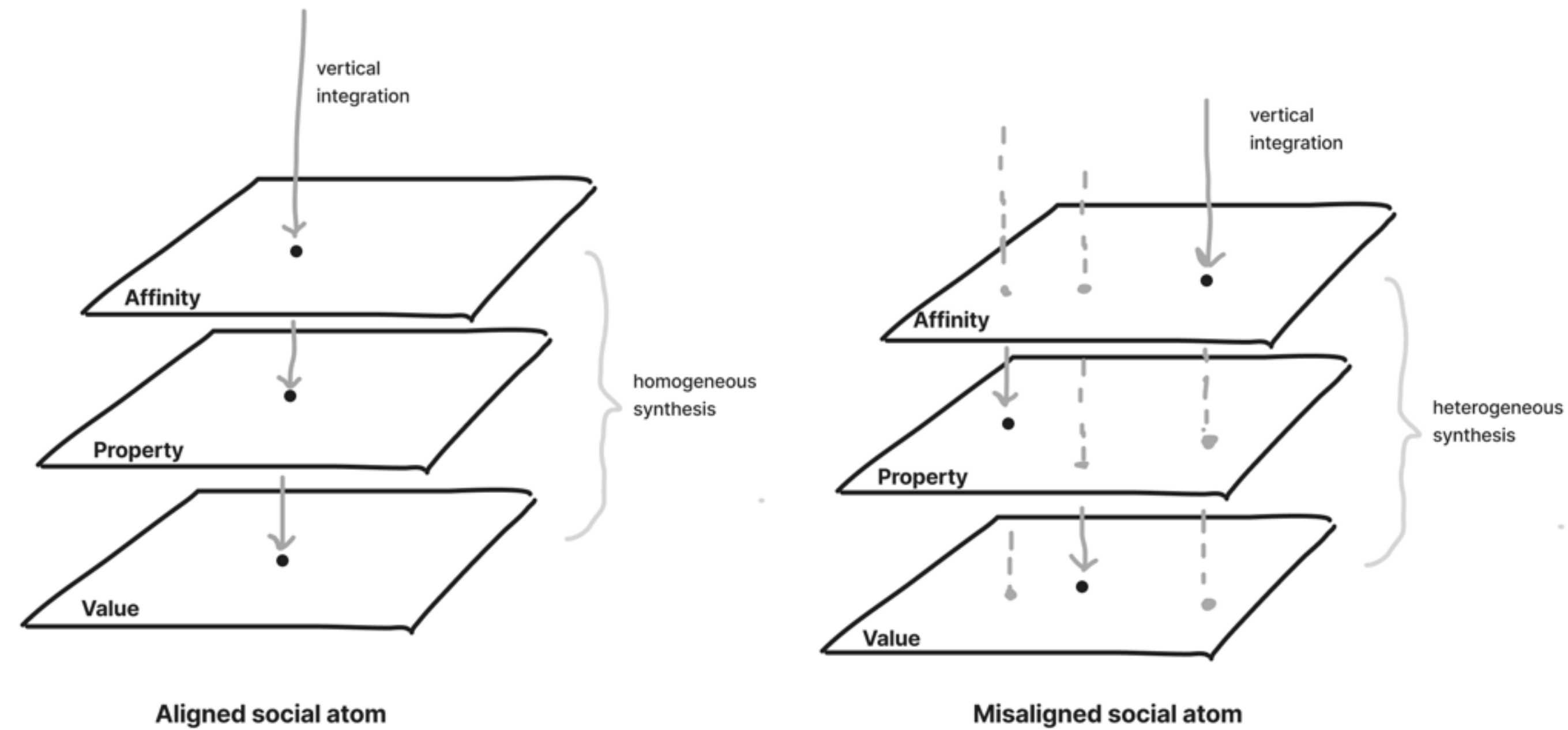
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Multilayered social worlds

Aligned social atom

Misaligned social atom

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Social space

Social space

A. As per our theory of logical atoms, **social space depends on non-social material extension, but it is irreducible to it.**

Recall that:

(1) Atoms define not only which differences count and which do not in a given context, but also how one connects such a context to another.

Social space

A. As per our theory of logical atoms, **social space depends on non-social material extension, but it is irreducible to it.**

B. We call a part of social space every social atom whose **compositions are reversible**: that is, we can move from A to B and back to A.
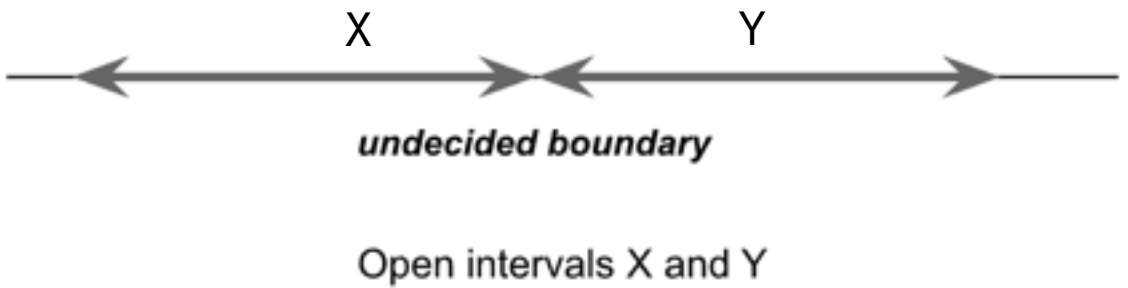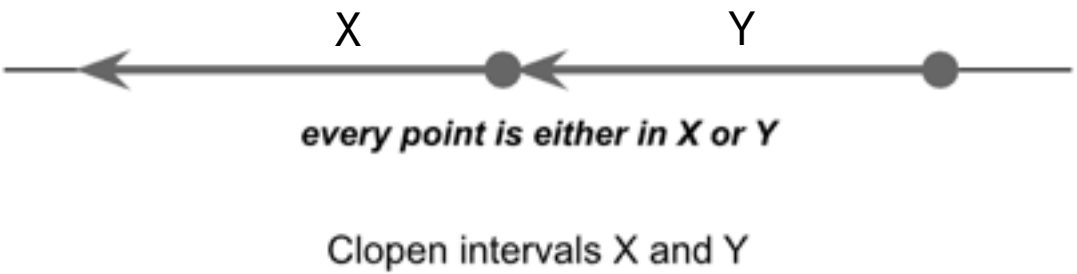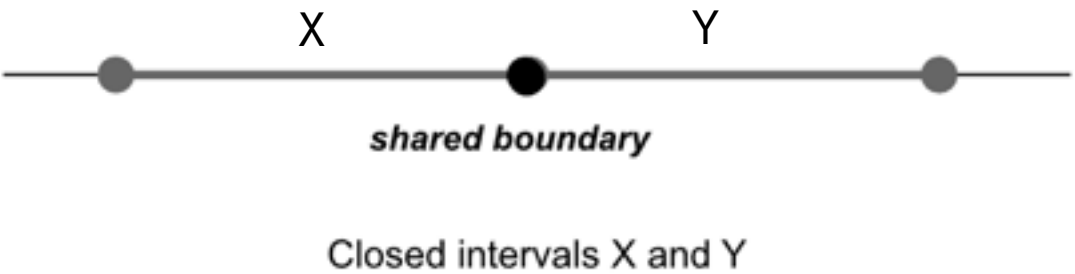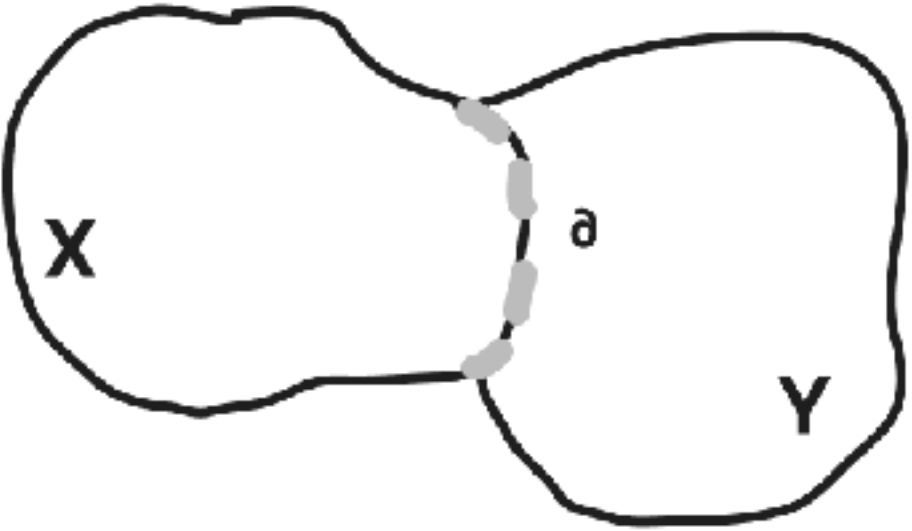
Recall that:

(1) Atoms define not only which differences count and which do not in a given context, but also how one connects such a context to another.
(2) The synthetic conditions of atomic logic are those which determine the regional coherence and co-existence of parts of the same logical space.

Social space

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B. We call a part of social space every social atom whose **compositions are reversible**: that is, we can move from A to B and back to A.

C. We can derive different types of social space based on each of the different social logics:

C1. Affinity spaces are those in which we can have insides, outsides and also points that are paradoxical: an external dimension existing inside, or an internal point that exists outside. **For every spatial distinction within mode A, there is still an underlying common space we can refer to.**

C2. Property spaces are those in which the division between inside and outside are as clear cut as possible: it is only possible to alienate a material object if it shares no common point with its outside. **Every spatial distinction within mode B seeks to divide parts without any residue.**

C3. Value spaces are those in which boundaries become gradients, with no clear point of division between the inside and outside: this is why one can exploit this space by changing its metrics. **Every spatial distinction within mode C is relative and could be reframed to allow new differences to be integrated into it.**

X   Y
shared boundary
Closed intervals X and Y

X   Y
every point is either in X or Y
Clopen intervals X and Y

X   Y
undecided boundary
Open intervals X and Y

X   ∂   Y

A: ∂ is a common part to X and Y even though these are disjunct regions
B: Y is the complement of X, so ∂ is either a part of one or the other
C: ∂ is a gradient between X and Y

Social space

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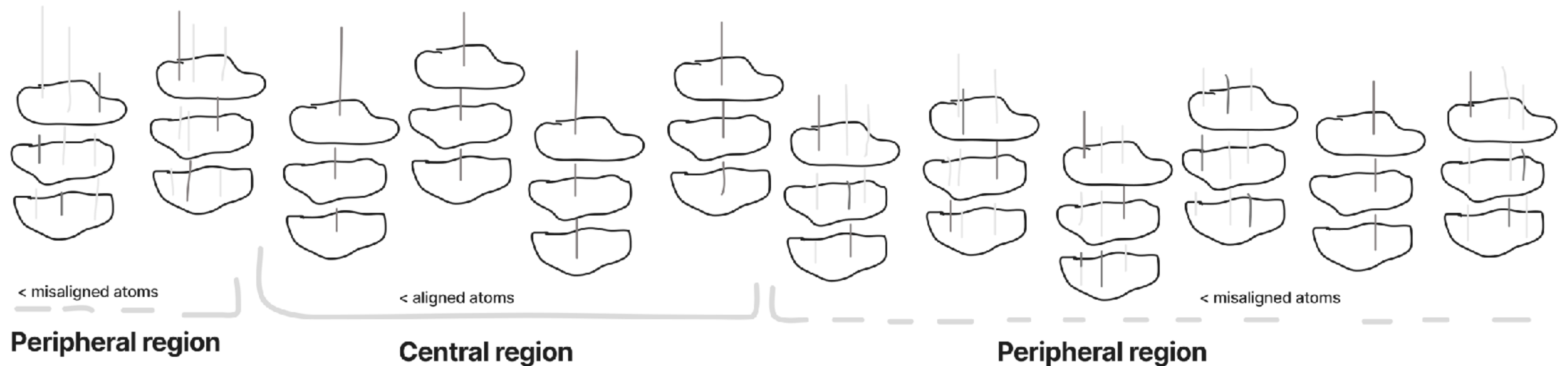
D. We further define regions of a social world in which spatial atoms are mostly aligned to be **central** areas of the world, while those regions with a majority of misaligned atoms are called **peripheral** ones. By our definition of misalignment, we can say that, logically, **the peripheral form is the general one and the central one the special case.**

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4. Closure and History

Recall that:

(3) Aligned atoms map all logics to the same differences, misaligned ones map them irregularly
(4) Places where we must integrate new materials into social reality will tend to require more complex arrangements between social layers.

Social space

< misaligned atoms   < aligned atoms   < misaligned atoms

Peripheral region   **Central region**   **Peripheral region**

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Social time

A. As per our theory of logical atoms, **social time depends on non-social material transformation, but it is irreducible to it.**

Recall that:

(1) Atoms define not only which differences count and which do not in a given context, but also how one connects such a context to another.

Social time

A. As per our theory of logical atoms, **social time depends on non-social material transformation, but it is irreducible to it.**

B. We recognize as part of social time every social atom whose **compositions are irreversible**: that is, we can move from A to B but you cannot go back from B to A.
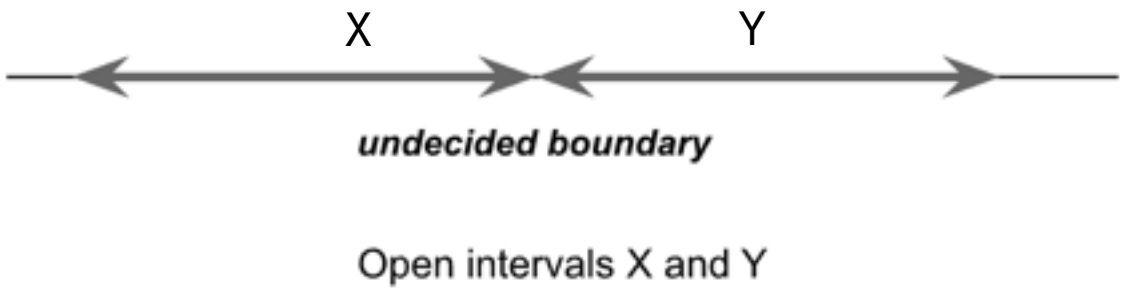
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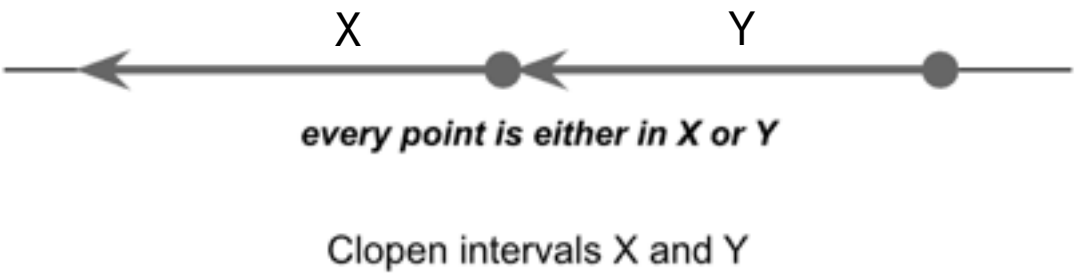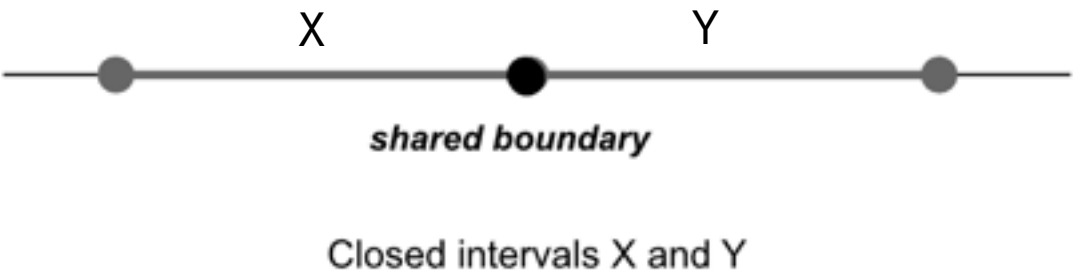
C. We can derive different types of social temporality based on each of the different social logics:

C1. The temporality of affinity does not divide neatly between two instances of time: parts of the past can remain in the present, just as parts of the future can be anticipated in it. **In mode A, it is always possible to refer to a common moment which binds different instances in time.**

C2. The temporality of property is defined by its neat division of time into separate moments: this is why the time of the State is that of calendars, commemorative dates, grand events that mark an scansion in history, periodizing it. **In mode B, time is measured by the clear breaks and segments one can produce in its continuity.**

C3. The temporality of value divides and binds temporal instances such that one can "refine" every metric to further sub-divide it, turning "fuzzy" zones at the frontier between instants into new temporal instants. **In mode C, every temporal division which can make valuable difference is socially effective.**

X Y	X Y	X Y
shared boundary	*every point is either in X or Y*	*undecided boundary*
Closed intervals X and Y	Clopen intervals X and Y	Open intervals X and Y

Recall that:

(3) Each mode was previously associated with a particular logical form and a different topological structure: A: paraconsistent, closed sets; B: classical, clopen sets; C: intuitionistic, open sets.

Social time

A. As per our theory of logical atoms, **social time depends on non-social material transformation, but it is irreducible to it.**

B. We recognize as part of social time every social atom whose **compositions are irreversible**: that is, we can move from A to B but you cannot go back from B to A.

C. We can derive different types of social temporality based on each of the different social logics:

C1. The temporality of affinity does not divide neatly between two instances of time: parts of the past can remain in the present, just as parts of the future can be anticipated in it. **In mode A, it is always possible to refer to a common moment which binds different instances in time.**

C2. The temporality of property is defined by its neat division of time into separate moments: this is why the time of the State is that of calendars, commemorative dates, grand events that mark an scansion in history, periodizing it. **In mode B, time is measured by the clear breaks and segments one can produce in its continuity.**

C3. The temporality of value divides and binds temporal instances such that one can "refine" every metric to further sub-divide it, turning "fuzzy" zones at the frontier between instants into new temporal instants. **In mode C, every temporal division which can make valuable difference is socially effective.**

D. We can also define two basic experiences of time in any given social world: those in which most social atoms are either aligned or misaligned create the logic of **temporal stagnation**, while those in which there is an expansion of one type of social atom with regards to another - either more aligned taking over, or the inverse - we get a sense of temporal **unfolding**.

Recall that:

(4) Aligned atoms map all logics to the same differences, misaligned ones map them irregularly
(5) Places where we must integrate new materials into social reality will tend to require more complex arrangements between social layers.

1. Conjuncture and Structure
2. Social Logics and Atoms
3. Space and Time
4. Closure and History

World-closure and forms of historicity

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C. History is the name we give to the world-closure of social worlds, and different dominant logics give rise to different types of history:

C1. Social worlds dominated by mode A present paraconsistent closures: locally, they are ridden with paradoxes, but globally they cover everything. This is the logic of the **cosmos**: the world forms a totality "upwards", but every local encounter is threatened by untamed otherness.

C2. Social worlds dominated by mode B present classical closures: through stratification of levels, one tries to tame inconsistency and incompleteness. This is the logic of **dynasties** or **dominiums**: the world can be totalized upwards and local situations classified, but breaking points lead to new orders, sequential but unmoving.

C3. Social worlds dominated by mode C present intuitionistic closures: locally, one can reintegrate decompositions, but globally it remains incomplete. This is the logic of **growth**: every localizable frontier can be reintegrated into the world, but at the level of totality it remains open to otherness and the unknown.

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Technical note:

Each type of logical closure described in point **C** directly corresponds to that of each logical framework presented before. On this, see:

Başkent, Can 2018 'Paraconsistency and Topological Semantics'
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D. Ultimately, **history is not a matter of time** — which is why it can be reignited through spatial movements as well as temporal transformations. It is also not a modern principle, there are many types of historicity.

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The logic of peripherization

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The logic of peripherization

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(2) Aligned atoms have all layers pointing to the same differences in the substrate, misaligned ones do not.

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C. Combining these ideas, we can arrive at the following definitions:

    C1. We call **modernization** when growth requires the production of more aligned atoms in order to "stitch" together the capitalist world.

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D. Peripherization, then, does not name the dismantling or disordering of capitalist social forms, but the general form of which modernity is a special case. The logic of peripherization implies that **the specific atomic compositions that allow parts of the world to be stitched together cannot be easily generalized out of a sample**.

World-Closure

modernization: new parts must be aligned in order for synthesis to be possible

peripherization: new parts must be misaligned in order for synthesis to be possible

W ⟶ W'

1. Conjuncture and Structure
2. Social Logics and Atoms
3. Space and Time
4. Closure and History
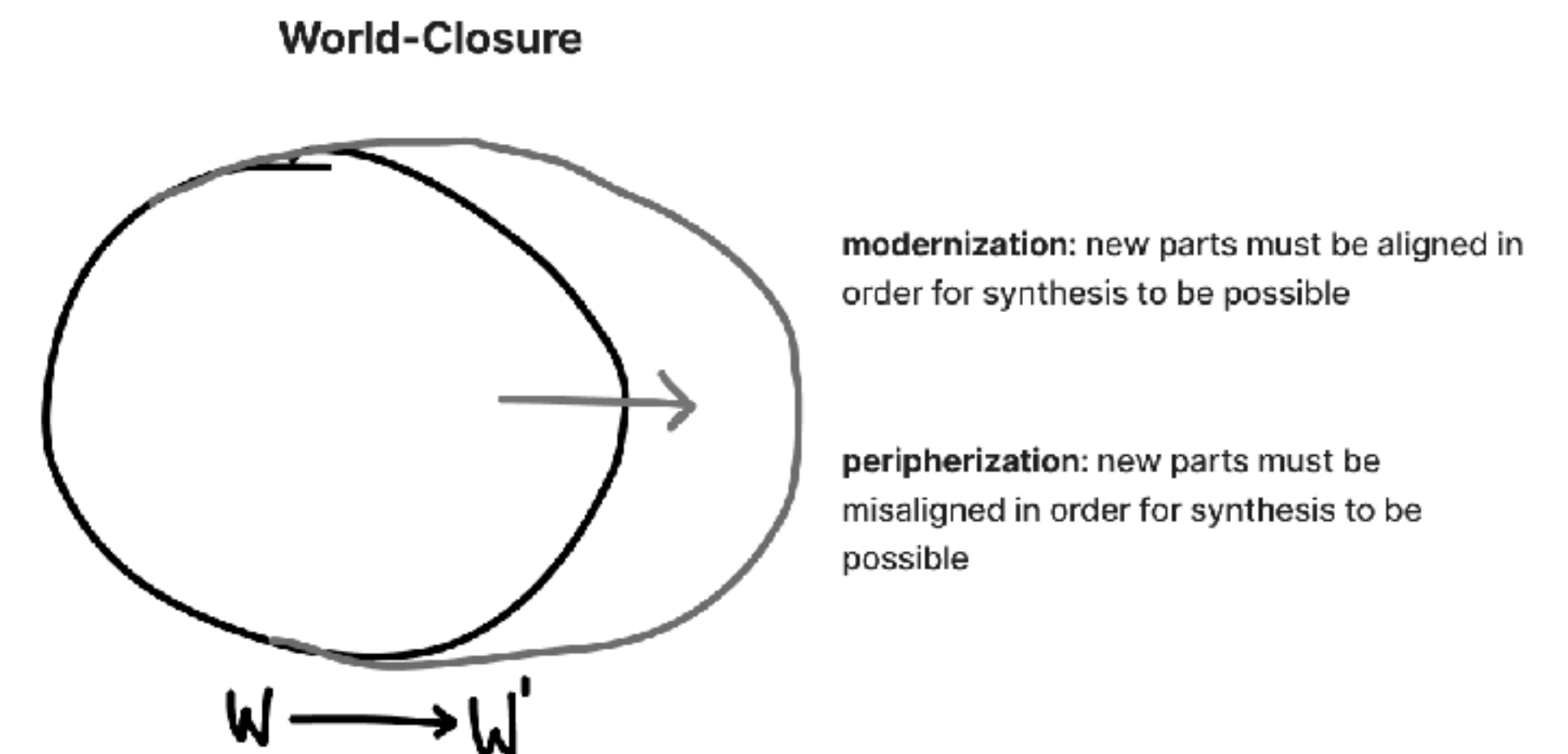
Recapitulation

1. Conjuncture and Structure
2. Social Logics and Atoms
3. Space and Time
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Recapitulation

A. We introduced the challenge of inheriting the traits of different theoretical strategies, in terms of how they conceive the dominating structures of social life and the challenges of emancipatory politics.

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B. We defined the general concepts of transcendental point of view, logical context, the analytic, synthetic and material conditions for real atoms and the idea of world. This was our abstract reworking of the basis of the Marxist theory of real abstractions, the underpinning of Value-Form Theory.

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F. We have also shown that different concepts of historicity follow from these definitions, as well as a useful reconstruction of the difference between modernization and peripherization.

1. Conjuncture and Structure
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Conclusion

Our theory has preserved the crucial concepts of WST as well as its basic homogeneity principle, approaching domination and emancipation with similar tools...

... but it has done so from within the paradigm of VFT, which starts not from empirical data, but from the question of the form data must acquire to be amenable to social effective syntheses...

... at the same time, this reliance on structure has not led us to equate abstraction and domination in itself, but preserve the possibility this same framework might help us think political emancipation.

Finally, our approach to structural domination in terms of social worlds also opens up to a different approach to structural emancipation — no longer conceived as mere trust in mediations, but a more experimental and politicized conception of how political organizations might lead us to new atomic logics, new forms of local, regional and global composition. All the formal tools developed in this presentation can be used to think the concrete challenges of political organizing — specially under conditions of peripherization of the world, when several of our basic assumptions about social homogeneity and progress are being disproven.

1. Conjuncture and Structure
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and the Logic of Peripherization

Peripherization: <u>there is no necessary connection between capitalist development and the creation of a socially and politically cohesive space</u> - the alignment between these dimensions was local and circumstantial, and conditioned on the deepening of social and natural destruction everywhere else. Not only this, but the hybrid forms of domination nurtured in countries, neighborhoods and favelas where this alignment was never in place now emerge as the most adaptable and applicable set of social technologies for control and production. For us, this thesis indicates <u>the need to abandon both political theories that rely on capitalist development to produce the conditions for its own systemic overcoming as well as those that rely on spontaneous social unrest to disturb the stability of capitalist forms</u>. The process of peripherization indicates, instead, that the more the social space becomes fractured, hybrid and heterogeneous, the more capital is allowed to circulate without the hindrances of human inertia.

Appendix:
Theses on our conjuncture

Vulgarization: there is a <u>political-economic thrust towards social refraction that increasingly separates the homogeneous abstract space of capital from the fractured social terrain which supports it</u>, like a perfectly smooth highway cutting across a ruinous landscape. For us, the vulgarization thesis implies, first of all, <u>a step back from both political theories that still rely on an underlying common social experience supposedly promoted by capitalist exploitation and its accompanying social institutions, as well as from those that treat this process of heterogenization as a purely ideological one</u> - as if these differences did not respond to actual, concrete transformations to the social bedrock itself. Instead, this thesis claims that we must treat social life under peripheric capitalist forms as composed of a patchwork of truly distinct social fragments, each potentially organized around different normative conflicts that people need to mediate and navigate, and each faced with different types of distortions when one tries to generalize their local properties to social experience at large.

Appendix:
Theses on our conjuncture

Political saturation: there is a <u>structural mismatch between political forms produced under assumptions of temporal and spatial social convergence and the political forces that emerge within peripheric and vulgarized social conditions</u>. Adopting this thesis implies, for us, <u>rejecting both political theories that ultimately read the new popular revolts as inherently reactionary outbursts of political energy as well as those that associate their political potential to the formlessness of new political forces, displacing the saturation of our political language onto a mystified image of the revolts</u>. Rather than lose ourselves in fear and fascination with the efficacy of the new extreme-Right and their capacity to tame this popular force, the thesis of political saturation invites us to focus on the elaboration of a new political grammar based on the new social forms that already shape the complex reality of peripheric social life.

Appendix:
Theses on our conjuncture

Endogenous reproduction: one of the effects of intense political saturation is <u>the increasing separation of the reproductive dynamics of the Left ecosystem from the logic of social reproduction of its own social terrain</u>. For us, such a thesis implies that we <u>should reject both political theories that directly attach themselves to any of these already established political standpoints within the Leftist spectrum, to the detriment of the others, as well as those which are incapable of recognizing the legitimate rationality of all of these political positions</u>. Instead, we are required to take a step back from identifying relevant political actors through their own political emblems: the more these insignias refer only to tensions within Leftist organizations and discourses, the less they shine a light on the actual political forces at play in peripheric social formations. By separating the forms of social reproduction of the Left from its immediate claims to political relevance, we are also freed to recognize the political import of social phenomena which might, until now, pass by us unnoticed.

Appendix:
Theses on our conjuncture

Political multiplicity: If there truly is a saturation of the political model built upon modernizing premises, then the first step to develop a political grammar that is native to peripheric conditions is to drop the belief in any underlying common essence to the Left itself. One of its main consequences is to embed the political field back into contemporary social reality. What we have called the vulgarization of the social space implies, after all, that in the absence of an overarching homogenous social structure people are tasked with navigating sometimes incommensurate normative commitments in order to organize their daily lives, go to work, deal with the police, etc. To suppose that there is no necessary unity or convergence between Leftist projects is simply to extend that same task to political life itself - with two useful corollaries: firstly, that our political challenges now potentially resonate with the organizational challenges faced by people everywhere and, secondly, that local political solutions to these challenges might function as models of solutions to structural problems elsewhere.
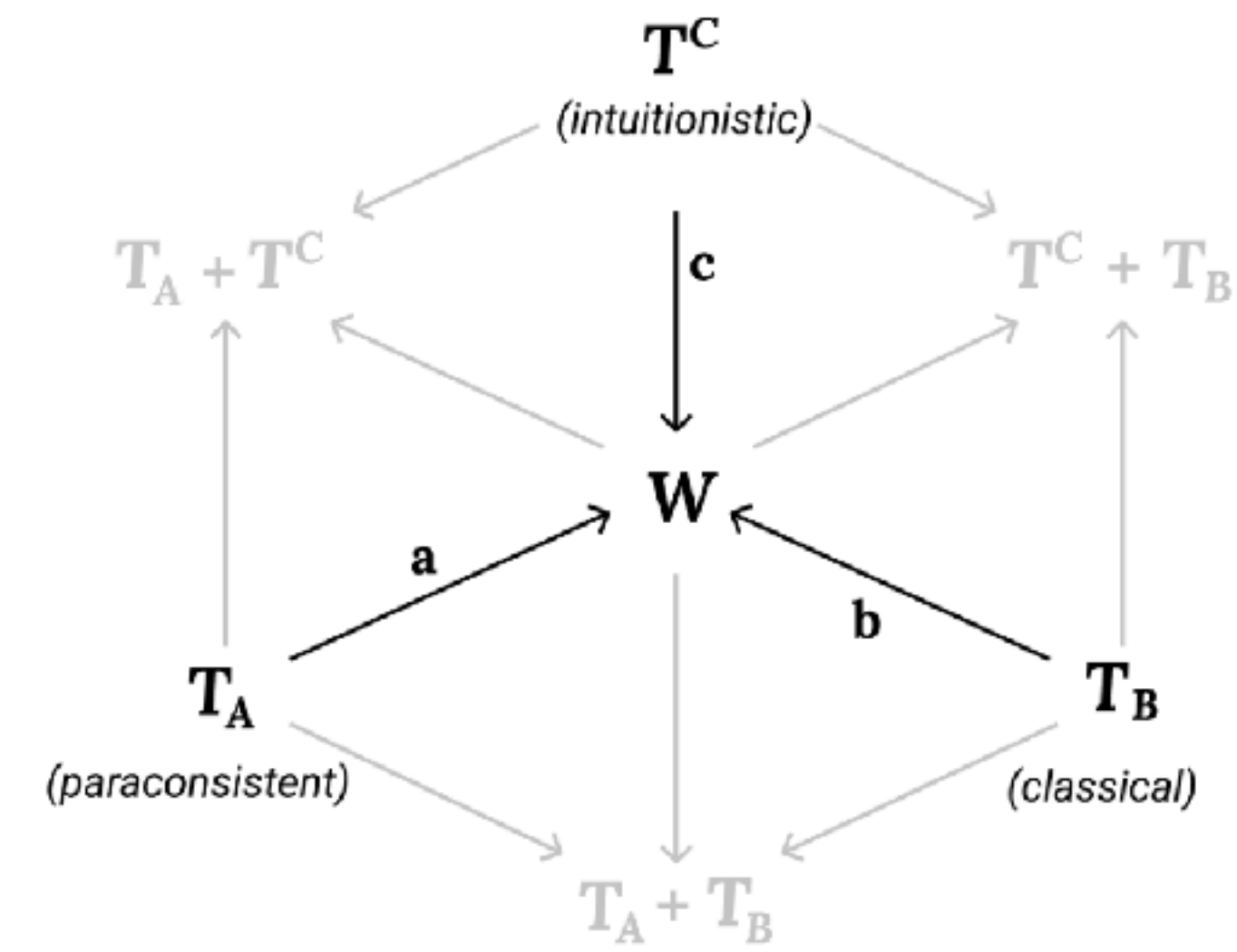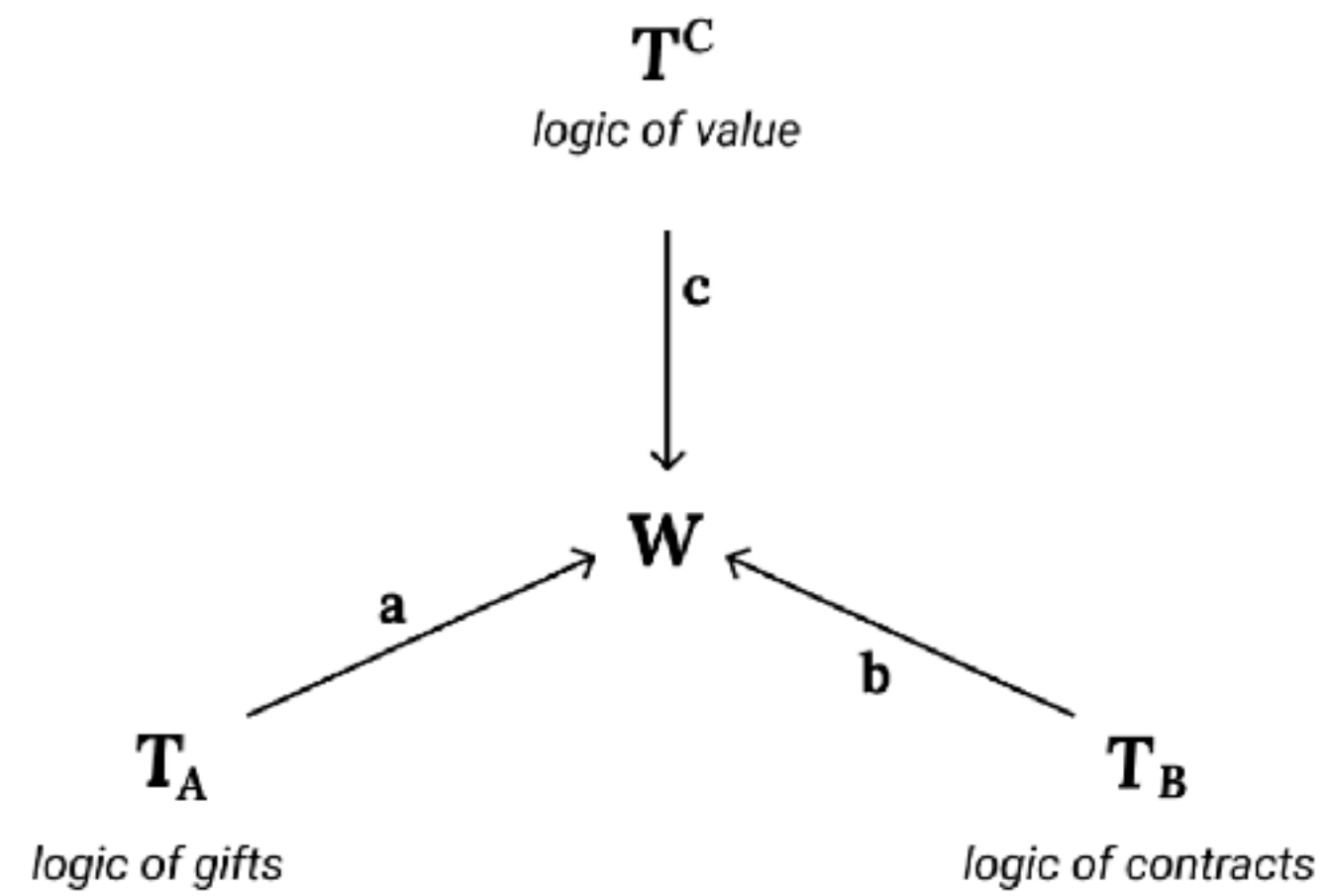
Appendix:
Theses on our conjuncture

Organizational point of view: the best way to avoid treating novel social and political forces as formless irruptions or ineffable potentialities is to develop a theoretical grammar that can remain continuous while thematizing radically discontinuous forms. The organizational standpoint is an answer to the impasse of endogenous reproduction and the general principle of political multiplicity: using the same organizational grammar to think different political forms and to think the different ways they might interact with each other, it becomes easier to mix together "first" and "second-order" political tasks, anticipating questions about the effects of certain tactical choices on the ecology of organizations. In other words, the organizational standpoints "flattens" both the infra-political and the political - by treating social life as already being organized life - and the political and the meta-political - by treating the composition of organizations itself as an organizational problem.
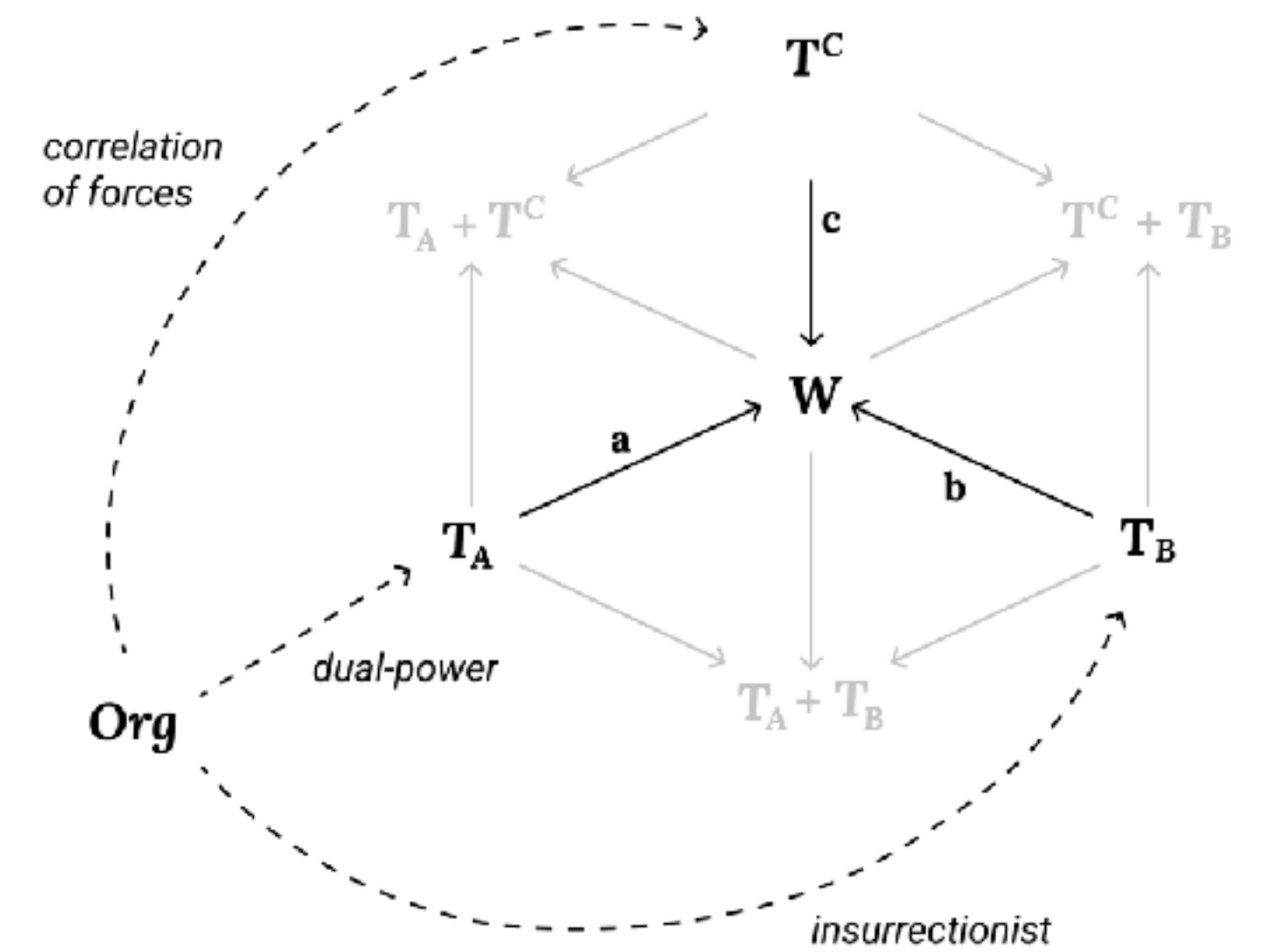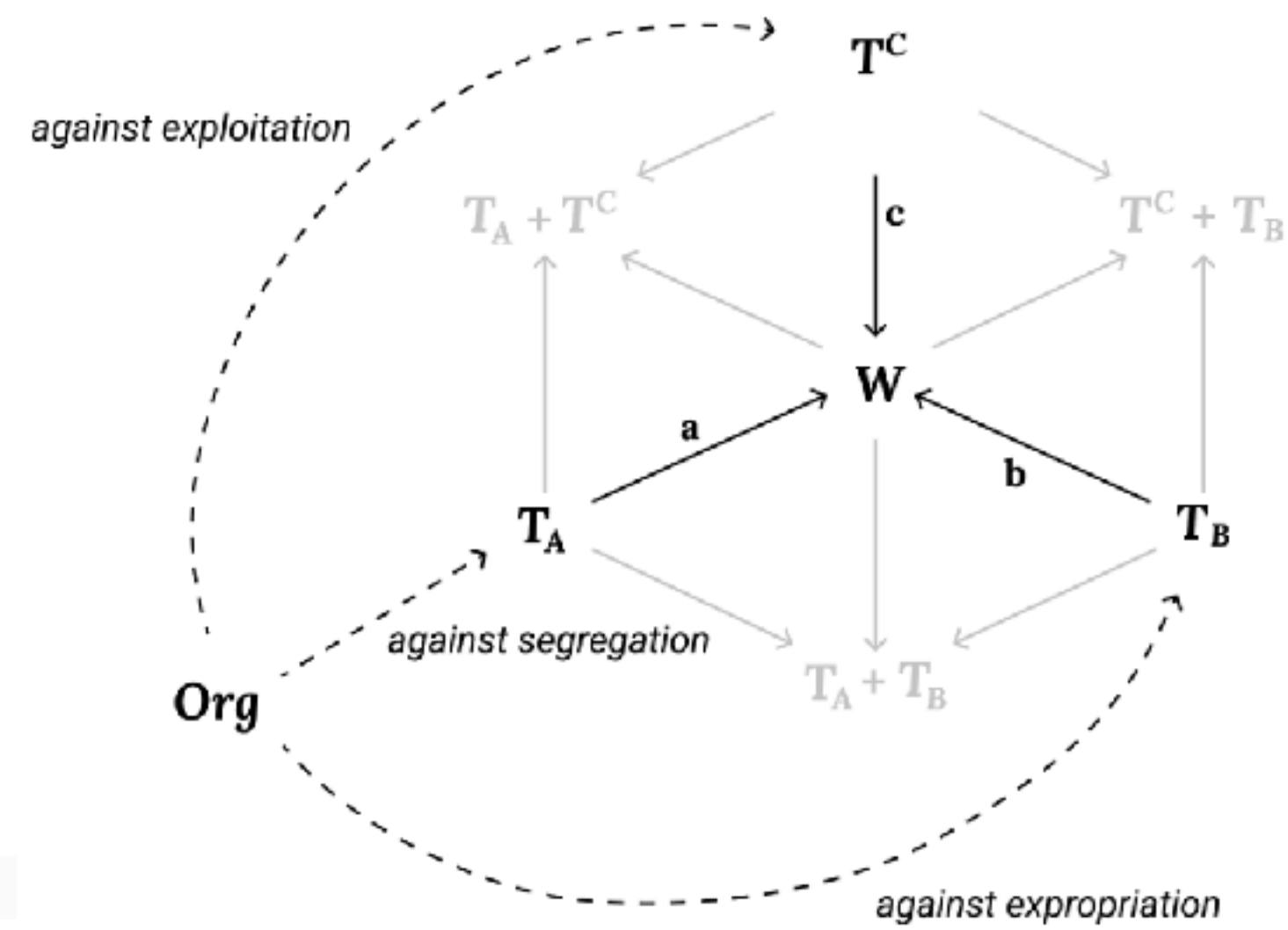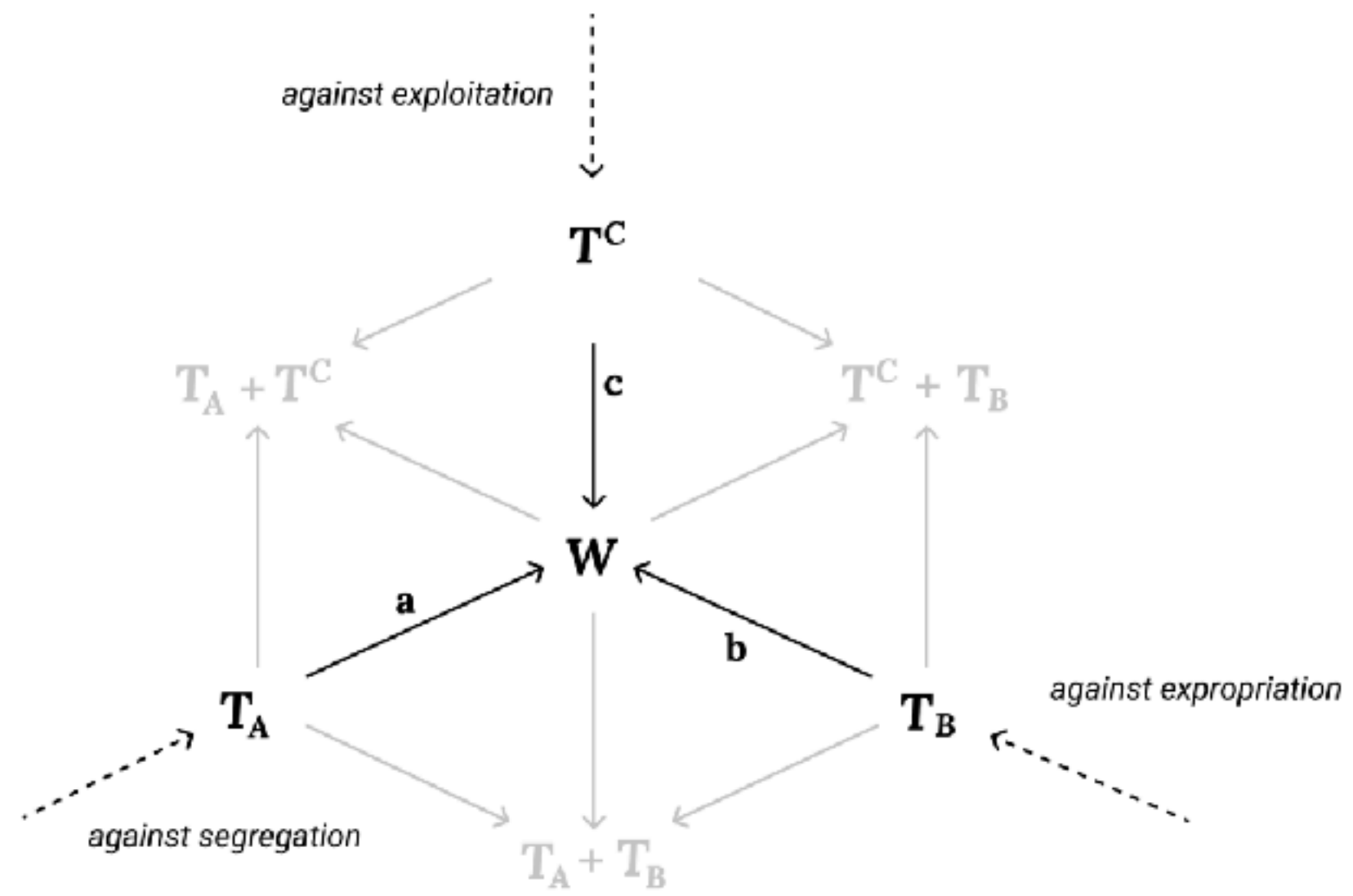
Appendix:

Theses on our conjuncture

T^C
logic of value

c

W

a

b

T_A
logic of gifts

T_B
logic of contracts

T^C
(intuitionistic)

$T_A + T^C$

c

$T^C + T_B$

W

a

b

T_A
(paraconsistent)

T_B
(classical)

$T_A + T_B$

Appendix:
From political thinking to social mapping

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From political thinking to social mapping