

Reckoning with Philosophy in the Age of AGI

Meaning, Finitude, and Heterogeneous Forms of Subjecthood

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Independent Release V1.3 Revision on Dimensional Leaps and Interdisciplinary Causal Relations

Submitted for joint scrutiny by philosophy and neighboring disciplines. This paper advances a refutable and revisable argument linking meaning, finitude, and heterogeneous subjecthood, specifying philosophy's evidential limits and its handoffs to other disciplines. It does not establish AGI subjecthood, legal personhood, political authorization, or governance parameters.

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Abstract translated from the Chinese

The philosophical rupture produced by AGI-related technologies involves more than increasing machine capabilities or a binary test of whether machines are conscious. The deeper change is that actual technologies are beginning to separate, one by one, relationships that have long co-occurred in human beings among intelligence, subjective experience, life, subjecthood, selfhood, responsibility, institutional standing, political power, and the bearers of meaning. Within the Civilization Leap framework, this paper develops a central argumentative chain linking meaning, finitude, and heterogeneous subjecthood. First, meaning is the root of civilizational legitimacy, but it is neither the sole value, a uniform unit of measurement, nor a sufficient formula. Sources of meaning may differ, and a person's existential standing does not require market output, social recognition, or calculable contributions as conditions of admission. Second, finitude is not the sole source of meaning, much less a celebration of death, suffering, or short lives. It is simply an important structure of actualization in known finite lives through which choices occupy real opportunities, relationships become vulnerable to loss, and consequences are borne by particular bearers. Third, the boundaries of subjecthood must remain open to heterogeneous realizations, but function, social recognition, experience, continuity, protection, personhood, political membership, and public power must each be justified separately. This paper treats E (subjective experience), C (diachronic first-person continuity and substitutability under conditions of copying), and O (whether consequences are borne as one's own) as three revisable directions of interdisciplinary inquiry, rather than evidence domains, an aggregate subjecthood score, or eligibility thresholds. Epistemology, cognitive and neural sciences, life sciences, and AI and systems research provide the corresponding factual and evidential constraints; ethics, law, and political science re-enter judgment on protection, standing, responsibility, and power. Based on public research available through 24 August 2026, there is not yet convergent evidence from multiple methods sufficient to establish these structures of subjecthood in current advanced generative and agentic AI systems. Such systems may take on functional roles in assisting the understanding, preservation, translation, and transmission of meaning and extending human capabilities only within deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and real exit. The paper uses natural, synthetic, and artificial boundary cases as philosophical stress tests and engages in competitive dialogue with functionalism, biological naturalism, phenomenology, embodied and enactive cognition, psychological continuity, no-self and process theories, relational personhood, and cross-civilizational traditions. Its conclusion is neither an a priori defense of human monopoly nor premature recognition of machine subjects. It keeps future boundaries of subjecthood open while preventing capability, standing, and power from crossing the boundaries of evidence and justification to take over meaning itself. The experiences, relationships, harms, and commitments already generated by existing lives cannot be retrospectively annulled by the future emergence of stronger or different subjects. The paper further moves disciplinary responsibility upstream to the generation of goals and purposes: a shift from self-interest first to self-interest with others first brings genuine stakeholders into judgment before purposes are generated and locked in. Disciplinary facts, direction, methods, and outcomes are stated separately; local success or failure does not substitute for shared survival and the three long-term goals. On this basis, the inquiry moves beyond distinguishing professional objects to examining interdisciplinary relations in depth. It traces how judgments in this field change reality through other fields, and how feedback returns to modify the original conditions and the purposes of the next round. Stakes involving multiple subjects, stages, and settings must be presented separately. Correlation, common causes, mediation, and causal feedback must be tested separately, and the added relational dimension remains open to concrete counterevidence.

Keywords: Civilization Leap; AGI; meaning; finitude; heterogeneous subjecthood; subjective experience; personal identity; authority over meaning

Abstract

The philosophical disruption associated with AGI-oriented technologies is not exhausted by enhanced machine capability or by the binary question of whether machines are conscious. A deeper change is the practical unbundling of relations that have long co-occurred in human beings: intelligence, subjective experience, life, subjecthood, selfhood, responsibility, institutional standing, political power, and meaning-bearing. This paper develops a single argumentative chain linking meaning, finitude, and heterogeneous forms of subjecthood within Civilization Leap. First, meaning is foundational to civilizational legitimacy, but it is neither the only value, a common metric, nor a sufficient formula; its sources may be plural, and human standing does not depend on measurable productivity or social recognition. Second, finitude is not the sole source of meaning and is not a celebration of death, suffering, or short life. It is one important structure through which known finite lives make exclusive choices, sustain vulnerable relations, and bear consequences that attach to particular lives. Third, the boundary of subjecthood must remain open to heterogeneous implementations, while function, social recognition, experience, continuity, protection, personhood, political membership, and public power require separate justification. The paper treats E (subjective experience), C (diachronic first-person continuity and substitutability under copying), and O (whether consequences are borne as one's own) as three revisable interdisciplinary problem directions, not as evidence domains, a subjecthood score, or qualification thresholds. Epistemology, cognitive and neural sciences, life sciences, and AI/systems research supply empirical and evidential constraints; ethics, law, and political theory must re-enter when questions turn to protection, standing, responsibility, and power. As of 24 August 2026, public research does not provide convergent multi-method evidence sufficient to establish these subject-related structures in current advanced generative and agentic AI systems. Only within deployments that have traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and real exit can such systems be assigned functional roles in interpreting, preserving, translating, and transmitting meaning and in extending human capabilities. Natural, synthetic, and artificial boundary cases are used as philosophical stress tests rather than substitutes for the empirical disciplines that own their facts. Competing perspectives from functionalism, biological naturalism, phenomenology, embodied and enactive cognition, theories of personal continuity, no-self and process views, relational personhood, and multiple civilizational traditions are treated as sources of possible revision. The conclusion is neither a priori human monopoly nor premature machine recognition: future subjecthood remains open, while capability, standing, and power must not cross evidential and justificatory boundaries to seize authority over meaning; experiences, relations, harms, and commitments already borne by existing lives cannot be retrospectively erased by the emergence of stronger or different subjects. The paper further locates disciplinary responsibility before goal and purpose generation: a shift from self-interest first to self-interest with others first brings subjects with genuine stakes into judgment before goals are formed and locked. Facts, direction, methods, and outcomes remain distinct. The analysis is further extended to cross-disciplinary causal relations. It traces how judgments in this field change real-world conditions through other domains, and how feedback modifies the original conditions and subsequent purposes. Effects across actors, stages, and settings must be distinguished from correlations, common causes, and merely asserted connections.

Keywords: Civilization Leap; AGI; meaning; finitude; heterogeneous subjecthood; consciousness; personal identity; authority over meaning

Research Positioning, Method, and Evidential Discipline

This inquiry begins with a leap in theory and dimensions. It retains the precision of the discipline while deepening its causal relations with adjacent fields. Disciplinary boundaries identify responsibilities of proof; they do not end the tracing of shared consequences. Existing scholarship participates in competitive explanation and counterexample testing. It cannot demand that new questions retreat into old frameworks because existing classifications have no place for them.

This is an independent research paper at the intersection of philosophy, philosophy of technology, and philosophy of AI. It is not an AI policy white paper, a survey of the history of philosophy, an empirical paper in neuroscience or life science, a consciousness detection report, or an ontological verdict on a particular product or model. It undertakes three limited tasks: clarifying conceptual relations that require separate accounting in the AGI era; openly stating and defending Civilization Leap's own category F foundational philosophical propositions; and proposing bridging structures open to joint revision by empirical facts, competing theories, normative counterexamples, and failures of cross-cultural translation. Existing theories and classical texts serve only as competing explanations, tests through counterexamples, and aids to conceptual calibration. Resemblance to any authority cannot substitute for this paper's own argument, nor does the originality of its position exempt it from scrutiny of facts, logic, and counterexamples.

The Minimum Meaning of Civilization Leap in This Paper

Readers can scrutinize this paper independently without prior familiarity with or agreement with Civilization Leap. The “age of AGI” here does not presuppose a completed AGI entity with a unified definition. It refers to advanced intelligent systems continually entering knowledge production, organized action, resource allocation, and high-consequence decision chains, so that relations long co-occurring in human beings among intelligence, experience, life, subjecthood, responsibility, institutional standing, political power, and meaning-bearing begin to separate in practice. Civilization Leap studies precisely how civilization rearticulates its purposes, the boundaries of subjecthood, structures of responsibility, and conditions of shared life after this separation. This paper proposes and defends only the philosophical starting point: meaning is the root of civilizational legitimacy, and sources of meaning may differ; finitude is an important structure through which choices, relationships, and consequences acquire real weight for known finite lives, but it is not the sole source of meaning; enhanced capability does not automatically produce subjecthood, rights, power, or authority over meaning. Even readers who reject any of these foundational propositions can independently test and use the paper's separation of objects, responsibilities of bridging, and stratification of evidence. The aim is not prior agreement, but disagreements located in identifiable, refutable, and revisable propositions.

The paper distinguishes four kinds of statements. First, category A comprises experimental, technical, or institutional facts with relatively stable support. Second, category B comprises frontier research and competing interpretations. Third, category C comprises future technologies and speculative interdisciplinary connections. Fourth, category F comprises foundational philosophical propositions and normative commitments for which the author openly takes responsibility. A cannot directly pass final judgment on F, and F cannot masquerade as A; B and C must not be written as established science. Any move from facts to conclusions about subjecthood, meaning, rights, or power must disclose its bridging propositions, competing explanations, scope of application, and conditions of revision. All judgments about current advanced AI architectures are limited to publicly reviewable materials, with a search cutoff of 24 August 2026.

What philosophy can independently address here comprises conceptual relations, normative premises, the strength of arguments, counterexamples, and revision conditions. It must stop short of the boundaries of empirical facts and institutional authorization. Philosophical coherence cannot prove that a machine has experience; possible subjecthood cannot by itself generate protection or legal personhood; nor can a theory of meaning allocate public power. Cognitive and neural sciences, life sciences, and AI research must re-enter to provide factual constraints on experience and continuity; epistemology and philosophy of science must re-enter to assess evidential strength and construct validity; ethics, law, and political science must re-enter

regarding protection, standing, responsibility, membership, and authority. This handoff is not philosophy's withdrawal. It fulfills philosophy's responsibility of proof by specifying how far it has demonstrated its claims and who must continue judging next, and on what grounds.

The Central Argumentative Chain

Civilizational legitimacy must return to the conditions under which subjects can form, claim, revise, and contest meaning. Finitude is only one important class of structures through which such meaning becomes real in known lives, not its sole source. Technological separation requires the boundaries of subjecthood to remain open to heterogeneous realizations. Evidence of subjecthood, protection, personhood, membership, authority, and sovereignty require separate arguments. Every overall interdisciplinary judgment must permit disciplinary facts and real consequences to revise its philosophical roots in return.

The Paper's Core Position and Evidential Boundaries

Meaning is the root, and sources of meaning may differ. Finitude is not the sole source of meaning; it is an important structure through which choices, relationships, and consequences become real and acquire irreplaceable weight in known finite lives. For human beings, space and time are life; for AGI with currently public architectures, space and time are first parameters, context, position, latency, computing power, and scheduling conditions. Constraints produce constrained operation, not automatically finite existence. Current evidence is insufficient to establish AGI subjecthood, while future subjecthood remains open. New subjects may enlarge the community of meaning, but cannot retrospectively annul meaning already generated by existing finite lives.

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Philosophy's Relational Dimension and the Recursion of Purposes

From Classifying Existence to the Self in Relations

Philosophy's precise distinctions among subjecthood, freedom, meaning, and identity should be retained. Once classification is complete, however, inquiry must continue into how they are jointly formed in actual relations. How a person understands "I" changes which consequences they regard as their own; the recognition institutions grant in turn changes that self-understanding. The self across space and time and within relations does not abolish individual boundaries. It tests which real conditions are omitted by present and local descriptions of the self.

How Recognition Changes the Purposes of the Next Round

Suppose two social arrangements offer similar incomes and formal rights. One primarily rewards surpassing others; the other makes care that reaches its recipients, joint creation, and the acceptance of responsibility important sources of fulfillment. Whether these arrangements generate different senses of security, expectations of relationships, and subsequent purposes is a question of mechanisms requiring investigation. Philosophy supplies reasons concerning meaning and purposes; sociology and psychological research identify how recognition is experienced; political economy traces resources and power. Feedback then returns to philosophy's interpretation of self-interest and freedom.

Multiple Levels Cannot Be Subsumed Under a Single Concept of Freedom

Individual freedom of choice, organizations' decision-making authority, the continuation of communal life, and future generations' room for possibility can support one another, but can also conflict. Protective arrangements during an initial phase may turn from assistance into dependency in a stable phase. Voluntary choice in a market may change its character when carried into education or care because of the costs of exit. The relational dimension requires separate accounts of whose freedom is involved, under what conditions, during which period, and who bears the losses. An abstract whole cannot answer on behalf of every subject.

How to Test the Theoretical Addition

A dimensional leap in philosophy must produce identifiable differences: why does the same local allocation of rights lead to different relationships and purposes? What forms of recognition enlarge subjects' room to form meaning, and what forms produce new subordination? If adding relations, time, and the generation of purposes still cannot distinguish these situations, the specific explanation should be narrowed. Existing philosophy cannot reject a new dimension because it lacks a place in established categories; a new framework likewise cannot exempt itself from argument by claiming a grander scope.

How Philosophy Enters the Generation of Purposes

Making meaning the root first changes the question of the legitimacy of purposes. Even a person unable to increase measurable output should not have to prove their usefulness before entering a shared future. Being alive has meaning; having meaning is itself a contribution. Contribution here has the normative sense of existence and relations. It cannot be directly converted into remuneration, a share of rights, or votes in decision-making.

Self-interest with others first forms one's interests within actual relationships. Those who already bear the consequences of a purpose cannot appear merely as costs after that purpose has been realized. Subject-related irreplaceability neither means that all needs take priority nor exempts every expression of meaning from criticism. It demands an account of why this purpose may change these people's lives and what reasons would suffice to change the purpose.

The contribution of the perspective of meaning lies in connecting minimum existential standing, the formation of purposes, and subsequent feedback. Even before a life has displayed autonomously created or socially recognized meaning, it is already a bearer whose place cannot arbitrarily be reduced to zero by a purpose. Judgments concerning rights, welfare, and non-domination continue to hold. Yet if they constrain only implementation without asking how interests and recognition arise, old starting points may still continually generate new relations of domination.

This connection must face difficult paired cases. Compare how two institutions shape the next round of purposes under similar conditions of welfare, formal rights, and exit: do security and value still come chiefly from excluding others, or does cooperation become a continuing source of the realization of one's interests? If the perspective of meaning adds no further distinction, its responsibility as an organizing explanation should be specified. A more ambitious name alone cannot establish that a foundational theoretical addition has been achieved.

Finitude provides a practical horizon for known lives, but does not confer meaning by itself. Irreplaceability, relationships, and the attribution of consequences each require separate justification. Life extension can expand opportunities for creation and care; repairable relationships also have weight; the destruction of a stone does not thereby generate meaning for a subject. The eight-level classification explains these mechanisms. It must not add another level whenever a counterexample appears merely to preserve an old proposition.

1 A Shift in the Question From Machine Consciousness to the Separation of Long-Co-occurring Relations

Whether machines are conscious certainly matters. Making it the overarching philosophical question of the AGI era, however, conceals a broader rupture behind a threshold for which no final answer yet exists. Even a system without subjective experience may continually produce interpretations, organize attention, participate in knowledge formation, intervene in the realization of rights, and change public decisions. Even if a future system acquires credible evidence of experience, it does not thereby automatically become the same subject across versions, a bearer of responsibility, a legal person, a political member, or a holder of public power. What genuinely requires reaccounting is why the same entity can bear these concepts in ordinary human cases, and why each now requires separate evidence.

Turing's "imitation game" transformed the broad question of whether machines can think into a discussable question of behavior. This was an important methodological turn, but not a consciousness detector; nor did it equate successful imitation with first-person experience (Turing, 1950). The AGI era must preserve this operational clarity while refusing to let a behavioral success answer simultaneously for experience, continuity, responsibility, and standing.

The pre-AGI world was not unfamiliar with conceptual separation. Infants, people in comas, people with amnesia, nonhuman animals, groups, legal persons, writing, and automatic devices had long required philosophy to distinguish capability, experience, personhood, responsibility, and institutional standing. What has changed is that advanced language, reasoning, planning, tool use, memory organization, and real-world execution can now be continually combined in technological chains without established life or experience. Separations previously encountered chiefly as boundary exceptions are becoming institutional conditions at scale. A system can speak like a subject without a confirmable first-person perspective. An organization can expand its capacity to act through a system while responsibility evaporates among the model, deployer, manager, and ultimate executor. A legal arrangement can confer transactional identity on a technological entity while still being unable to answer whether anything matters to "it itself."

1.1 Historical Co-occurrence Is Not Ontological Identity

"Long-standing co-occurrence" here describes an empirical background, not a doctrine jointly proclaimed by all earlier philosophy. In ordinary human cases, the living individual, embodied agent, experiencing subject,

narrator of the self, participant in responsibility, and bearer of meaning are borne by the same person. Theory can distinguish them without having to reestablish in every argument that they belong to the same entity. AGI-related technologies make that background unreliable: intelligent behavior may lack living organization; the linguistic “I” may lack first-person experience; an operational history may lack a nontransferable history of a subject; behavioral effects may lack awareness of consequences as one's own; and an institutional role may lack an ontological subject. “Usually co-occurring” can therefore no longer be substituted for “logically entailing one another.”

This separation must not be mistaken for repackaged anthropocentrism. If future heterogeneous subjects do not depend on carbon-based life, express themselves through human emotions, or possess linear autobiographies, theory should permit evidence to rewrite the boundaries of subjecthood. The cost of openness is acknowledging possible bias in current criteria. Its discipline is not to advance possibility as fact, standing, or power. Permanently excluding new subjects and recognizing subjecthood in advance on the strength of fluent conversation both write an unproven matter into the conclusion.

1.2 Eight Objects Must Be Designated Separately

Table 1 Core Objects in Philosophy's Reaccounting

Object	Working question	Does not automatically establish
Life	Whether structures related to self-maintenance, development, organization, and evolution form	Experience, personhood, rights, or meaning-bearing
Intelligence	Whether it can learn, infer, plan, explain, or solve problems	Subjective experience, stakes of its own, or political standing
Agency	Whether it can select and execute actions within goals and environments	Self-authorization, full responsibility, or ontological subjecthood
Experience	Whether a first-person state exists in which there is “something it feels like” for the system	Numerical identity, moral agency, or sovereignty
Selfhood and continuity	What constitutes the same history across time, migration, copying, and branching	A single answer to life, consciousness, and legal succession
Responsibility	Who understands norms, exercises control, and bears consequences and repair	Experience, personal worth, or legitimacy to rule
Institutional standing	What protection, responsibility, litigation capacity, property capacity, or membership is established	Proof of consciousness, a complete bundle of rights, or political sovereignty
Meaning-bearing	Which experiences, concerns, relationships, or projects constitute whose own world	Interpretive ability, social recognition, or authority over meaning

1.3 The Responsibility of Bridging Every Move Across Levels Requires a Reason

Conceptual separation does not demand that philosophy cease synthesis. It demands that synthesis disclose its bridges. Moving from a system's stable reports of pain in conversation to “it may have experience” requires an account of the evidential relation between self-report and experience, and the exclusion of competing explanations such as training, prompting, reward, and role consistency. Moving from a candidate for experience to “it should receive protection” requires an account of potential harm, the costs of action, and principles for uncertainty. Moving from protection to legal standing requires specifying the institutional object, the rights involved, and the structure of responsibility. Moving from legal standing to political

membership or public power further requires arguments concerning representation, participation, authorization, checks and balances, and revocability. The closer the claim comes to coercion and sovereignty, the heavier its burden of proof.

Reverse inferences must also stop. Social recognition is a real social fact, but does not prove internal experience. Legal personhood can effectively organize property, litigation, and responsibility, but does not prove ontological subjecthood. Hardware wear, shutdown risks, and resource constraints are real physical facts, but do not prove that a first-person perspective experiences these changes as its own finite course. Capabilities exceeding human capabilities are a real possibility, but factual superiority cannot become moral superiority or the authority to set civilization's purposes. Philosophy's task is not to declare that these levels can never be connected, but to identify the additional premises a connection requires.

1.4 The Object of Inquiry Is Not an Abstract “AI”

Judgments about current technologies must distinguish the foundation model, a single running instance, an agent equipped with memory and tools, the deployed service, the organization controlling that service, and the broader sociotechnical system. Continuity of model weights is not continuity of an instance; preserving instance state is not continuity of service identity; continuity of a service name does not mean the deployed entity is unchanged; and anthropomorphic expressions by a model cannot replace organizational responsibility. Before saying “AI believes,” “AI decides,” or “AI bears responsibility,” we should first identify precisely whom the grammatical subject denotes, in which version and environment, and with what information and permissions. Otherwise, the same grammatical subject continually shifts among demonstrations of capability, inferences of subjecthood, and allocations of responsibility.

The paper therefore does not infer subjecthood from capability rankings or treat AGI as a completed, unified technological entity. The “age of AGI” refers to advanced intelligent systems continually entering knowledge production, organized action, tool use, resource allocation, and high-consequence decision chains, placing existing relations among subjecthood, responsibility, standing, and power under pressure in advance. Philosophy can begin work before ultimate AGI has a shared definition because the cross-level leaps requiring scrutiny are already occurring.

Judgments about these systems must also be tied to their formation and deployment conditions. Pretraining determines available statistical structures; instruction and preference optimization change output tendencies; prompts and context reconstruct behavior in a particular run; and external memory, tools, retrieval, agentic loops, and organizational permissions extend a model into different objects of action. The same underlying model in different scaffolds can display different persistence, self-reports, and goal maintenance; similar behaviors may arise from different causal structures. These facts prove neither the absence nor the emergence of experience. They show only that behavioral evidence detached from training, architecture, the running instance, and deployment context cannot sustain an ontological conclusion.

1.5 Four Levels of Argument Facts, Explanations, Philosophical Bridges, and Institutional Standing

The same material must be written in four languages. The factual level answers what was observed; the explanatory level compares which theories best account for the observation; the philosophical bridging level explains why that interpretation bears on subjecthood, meaning, or responsibility; only the institutional level discusses protection, standing, permissions, and remedies. For example, particular oscillations in a brain organoid are an experimental fact. Whether those oscillations relate to experience is an explanatory question among theories of consciousness. Whether possible experience makes unnecessary harm unacceptable requires an ethical bridge. What review research should undergo is an institutional question. Compressing all four levels into “organoids may be conscious, so they should acquire personhood” crosses science, ethics, and law at once.

First-person self-reports by current advanced AI require the same treatment. A system consistently saying “I am afraid of being shut down” across conversational turns is first reproducible or nonreproducible behavioral material. It may be explained by stable internal states, prompting, training data, reward shaping, or role maintenance. Only convergence among behavior, internal causation, counterfactual tests, interruption tests, and copying tests could increase confidence in experience or stakes of its own. Even if confidence rises, the content of protection and the scope of power still require separate arguments. Evidence-category letters cannot replace this argumentative chain; they only remind the reader of the status of each step.

The Paper's Shift in the Question

Philosophy must no longer ask only whether machines are conscious. It must ask separately whether capability is accompanied by experience; whether experience forms a nontransferable history; whether informational continuity equals continuity of the subject; whether social recognition proves ontological status; whether legal personhood produces political standing; whether protection produces power; and whether a functional understanding of meaning entails that meaning constitutes stakes for the system itself.

2 Meaning as the Root An Irreducible but Non-totalizing Principle of Civilization

“Meaning as the root” does not posit meaning as an experimentally detectable cosmic substance or claim that everyone shares a single ultimate purpose. It identifies the point to which civilizational legitimacy must return: why survival, capability, welfare, knowledge, institutions, and technologies are worth pursuing must ultimately return to the conditions under which subjects can exist, form concerns, establish relationships, claim projects, bear consequences, and live together. If growing capability destroys those conditions, growth alone cannot justify that capability. If an institution raises aggregate output while reducing some lives to instruments without standing, aggregate output cannot exhaust its evaluation.

Contemporary philosophy of meaning often organizes debate around subjective attraction and objective value. Wolf argues that meaningful life requires both active engagement by the subject and value in its object beyond purely personal preference. Metz systematically compares supernatural and naturalistic approaches and argues that meaning can arise within fundamental conditions such as rationality, morality, and creativity (Wolf, 2010; Metz, 2013). Civilization Leap treats no existing theory as proof of its own position. It accepts the pressure these debates exert: if meaning is merely feeling satisfied, manipulated satisfaction becomes difficult to criticize; if meaning is determined entirely by external objective lists, actual subjects may be reduced to executors of values. This paper holds that meaning involves, at a minimum, experiences, relationships, creation, truth-seeking, care, commitments, or transcendence that a subject or community can claim, while remaining subject to scrutiny concerning facts, noncoercion, others' subjecthood, and public consequences.

2.1 Semantic Meaning, Existential Meaning, and Public Legitimacy

“Meaning” refers to at least three different objects. Semantic meaning addresses what a sign, statement, action, or narrative expresses. Existential meaning addresses why a life, relationship, or practice is worth claiming for its bearer. Public legitimacy addresses whether institutions preserve legitimate conditions under which different subjects can form, revise, reject, transmit, and contest meaning. Current advanced AI can be highly competent at the semantic level: it can interpret texts, compare traditions, and restate conflicts of values. Semantic competence neither proves that existential meaning holds for the system itself nor gives it authority to determine public legitimacy for others.

Civilization Leap's “meaning as the root” is chiefly a commitment about priority in public legitimacy: even if an institution improves survival, output, and predictive accuracy, it may remain illegitimate if it systematically deprives subjects of the capacity to form, claim, revise, and contest the meaning of their lives. This commitment concerns the reality of existential meaning without preemptively unifying its ultimate sources. Nor does it claim that public institutions can directly create meaning in life. At most, institutions protect or destroy the conditions in which meaning develops. Distinguishing the three levels prevents AI from leaping

from semantic understanding to meaning-bearing and prevents the state from leaping from protecting conditions to prescribing how everyone should live.

Bridging questions remain among the three levels. Semantic coherence in a narrative does not mean it has existential weight for anyone. A subject's deep identification with a project does not mean public institutions must permit it to harm others. An institution's refusal to prescribe a good life does not make it wholly neutral toward meaning: education, property, platforms, and labor arrangements all affect who has time, relationships, knowledge, and the capacity to exit. The paper's contribution is not to eliminate these tensions, but to prohibit shifts across levels under the same word “meaning.”

2.2 Welfare, Preferences, and Value Pluralism Meaning Is Not a Single Aggregate Value

Welfarism's strongest objection is not crude aggregate maximization. It may hold that how well or badly subjects fare is what has ultimate value. If meaning improves happiness, reduces suffering, or raises quality of life, it is part of welfare; if it has no bearing on welfare, it has no grounds to demand that suffering subjects continue to suffer for “authenticity” or “authorship” (Sumner, 1996). This paper accepts welfare as an independent first-order reason. Infants, animals, and subjects without complete narrative capacities need not first become authors of meaning to receive protection against suffering. “Meaning as the root” does not mean meaning lexically overrides welfare in every conflict. It means that gains in welfare alone cannot justify abolishing subjects' basic standing, nonmanipulated formation of their lives, refusal and appeal, or acknowledgment of specific harms.

Preference-satisfaction theory presses further: if a person's preferences cannot determine what is meaningful, will theory replace individual judgment with its own conception of the good life? Actual preferences may be shaped by adaptation to deprivation, coercion, deception, and addictive design. If idealized preferences require information, autonomy, reflective stability, and freedom from coercion, these conditions for valid formation cannot themselves be derived from present preferences (Heathwood, 2014). This paper therefore offers no objective checklist of the good life. It proposes only procedural conditions of authorship: insofar as their capacities allow, subjects can obtain information, form and revise life projects, refuse, exit, remain silent, and contest them. Welfare and agency are not equivalent; the latter cannot be absorbed without remainder into the former (Sen, 1985).

Value pluralism exerts deeper pressure: truth, justice, freedom, welfare, friendship, and aesthetic experience may all be irreducible values. Defining all of them into “meaning” would make meaning tautological; allowing meaning to override them would recreate an aggregate supreme value. The “root” here is therefore not a highest entity, a common metric, or a sufficient condition of legitimacy. It is the point to which civilizational legitimacy must return. Every arrangement for survival, capability, welfare, and institutions must ultimately explain to bearers of meaning whether it preserves a real place for different subjects to form, revise, and contest these irreducible values. Conditions of meaning are necessary but not sufficient. Factual truth, basic welfare, equal standing, non-domination, and harm to others continue to supply irreplaceable substantive reasons.

Public coercion must not only produce good outcomes; it must treat those affected as recipients of reasons with equal normative standing.

At a minimum, this standing requires preserving, insofar as capacities allow, conditions for forming, revising, rejecting, and contesting life projects. Those without full capacities still receive protection on the grounds of welfare and interests.

Institutional scenarios are possible in which greater welfare or preference satisfaction is produced through manipulation, coercion, the removal of exit, or the impossibility of appeal.

If a theory cannot distinguish voluntary identification from engineered satisfaction when outcomes are similar, it cannot exhaust public legitimacy.

The conditions of meaning proposed here include minimum standing, nonmanipulative relations of authorship, the refusal to erase specific harms through aggregates, and public contestability.

Meaning is therefore a necessary foundation of civilizational legitimacy, not a sufficient formula. It cannot alone settle trade-offs concerning suffering, distribution, fairness, truth, and harm to others.

This argument must face paired counterexamples: voluntary lives versus compulsory “happiness” at similar aggregate levels of pleasure; adaptive deprivation with high satisfaction; systems that predict more accurately while eliminating refusal and reconsideration; and institutions with similar outcomes where only one retains exit, explanation, and appeal. If “conditions of meaning” yield no distinction in these cases beyond theories of welfare, rights, or non-domination, the paper should narrow “meaning as the root” to an organizing explanatory framework rather than mistake synonymous restatement for foundational argument.

2.3 Being Alive Has Meaning Having Meaning Is Itself a Contribution

This statement is first a principle of existential dignity. It refuses to make a person's standing in meaning a reward for market, organizational, or algorithmic performance. Infants, people with serious illnesses, unemployed people, silent people, caregivers, those temporarily adrift, and those absent from statistics do not lose their standing to exist because they have produced no quantifiable output. “Contribution” here is not a synonym for economic contribution. It means that a life, as a bearer of the possibility of meaning, already adds to the shared world a perspective, a relational position, and a center of consequences that cannot simply be replaced.

Existential meaning does not mean every action deserves affirmation. A person can bear responsibility for violence, deception, or domination. A project can lose public legitimacy through factual error, coercion, or harm to others. Resource allocation still needs to consider needs, causal contributions, risks, and sustainability. Existential dignity blocks only a dangerous inference: “someone has no visible output” cannot imply “their life has no meaning,” and “a system produces more output” cannot imply “the system is more entitled than people to determine civilization's purposes.” Personal standing, the evaluation of conduct, resource decisions, and governing authority require separate arguments.

2.4 Sources of Meaning May Differ

Meaning may arise from intimate relationships, care, creation, truth-seeking, work, religion, play, learning, public action, aesthetic experience, nature, community, and self-transcendence. Different lives may claim meaning in ways that cannot be fully translated into another life. Plural sources offer no relativistic exemption. That something is “meaningful” to a person may be a real psychological and narrative fact, but does not thereby grant public permission to coerce others, produce falsehoods, or destroy the conditions of others' subjecthood. The reality of meaning must be distinguished from the legitimacy of claims made in its name. The former asks whether a project genuinely enters a life; the latter asks whether the project may be permitted, supported, or authorized in a shared world.

This distinction allows Civilization Leap to acknowledge religious and nonreligious, individual and relational, creative and caring sources of meaning while opposing domination in meaning's name. The public boundary is not a checklist of ultimate good lives. It protects the basic conditions under which each subject can form, revise, and exit projects of meaning: truthful information, noncoercion, freedom from the destruction of subjecthood, basic relationships and capacities for action, responsibility for consequences, and equal standing for others. Beyond those boundaries, civilization can accommodate profound disagreements without settling them in a single score.

2.5 Roles in Meaning Must Be Kept Separate

A particularly easy substitution in the AGI era is to jump from “the system can discuss meaning” to “meaning constitutes experience for the system itself,” and then from “the system participates in activities of meaning” to “the system may determine meaning for other subjects.” An archive can protect and transmit meaning

without being the original experienter. A translator can understand and interpret a text without owning the author's life. A community can carry its members' memories without erasing each member's pain and choices. Current advanced AI can perform several roles at the functional level, but every ontological upgrade and every expansion of power still requires independent evidence.

Table 2 Nine Roles in Activities of Meaning

Role	Core question	Boundary with adjacent roles
Source	What makes meaning possible	Sources can be plural; a source is not a sole owner
Formation	How meaning arises through experience, relationships, and practices	Formation is not institutional recognition
Bearing	For whom meaning constitutes their own world and stakes	Bearing is not expressive ability
Creation	Who introduces new works, relationships, or possibilities for action	Creation does not automatically confer every ownership right
Understanding	Who can grasp structures of meaning and respond appropriately	Functional understanding does not prove first-person experience
Protection	Who can prevent the destruction of materials, relationships, and conditions of meaning	Protection is not ownership
Transmission	Who enables meaning to continue across subjects, time, or media	Transmission is not survival of the original subject
Interpretation	Who proposes contestable accounts of meaning	Interpretive authority is not final adjudicative authority
Domination	Who can coercively set, rank, or cancel others' meaning	No capability or standing automatically generates this power

2.6 Against a Single Ledger Meaning Cannot Be Settled by One Scale

Efficiency, welfare, price, contribution, recognition, and computational rankings may all serve limited purposes, but none can represent a whole life without loss. Aggregate indicators convert different people's experiences into interchangeable units and leave injured parties as nothing more than negative entries in total benefits. Capability rankings turn meaning into a championship position, automatically devaluing ordinary lives when stronger subjects appear. Social recognition deprives invisible people of a place in existence. Price excludes relationships, memories, and dignity that cannot be traded. Chang's discussions of parity and value relations and Berlin's and Raz's arguments about value pluralism and freedom show that conflicts of value cannot always be reduced to one common scale (Berlin, 1958; Raz, 1986; Chang, 2002). The paper carries opposition to a single ledger further, to subjecthood and civilization: local quantification may continue, but its purposes, prohibited extrapolations, and boundaries for appeal must be made public.

Opposition to a single ledger is not opposition to comparison. Medicine, public budgeting, risk control, and resource allocation cannot reject all trade-offs. The question is whether comparison disguises its local task as a final verdict on life. An indicator can help answer "which intervention is more likely to reduce a particular harm," but cannot alone answer "who is more worthy of existence." It can record "who supplied what input to a particular outcome," but cannot become a personhood score, a morality score, or a meaning score. The nontrivial consequence of meaning as the root is precisely to preserve, before any civilizational calculation

reaches a life, the standing of subjects, specific harms, and the right to interpret that its result cannot automatically annul.

The Minimum Substance of the Principle of Meaning

Civilization must not use any single scale of survival, welfare, output, capability, price, contribution, or recognition to settle the meaning of a life or of civilization as a whole. Local comparisons may exist, but cannot retrospectively annul particular experiences, relationships, choices, and harms.

3 Finitude A Structure Through Which Meaning Becomes Real Rather Than the Valorization of Death

Meaning that remains merely among infinite possibilities has not yet become the reality of this life. A choice is a choice because taking one path abandons or postpones others. A commitment has weight because it occupies time, constrains subsequent action, and enables others to rely on it. A relationship is irreplaceable because a shared history constitutes it and because it may encounter separation, betrayal, and termination. Consequences demand responsibility because the real world cannot be restored at will like a symbolic state. The paper calls these structures “actualization through finitude”: finitude brings possibility to a particular subject, a particular relationship, and a chain of consequences that aggregates cannot flatten away.

This does not make finitude the sole source or a sufficient condition of meaning. A short life is not more meaningful than a long one; suffering is not automatically justified by irreversibility; death is not a value that must be protected. Meaning can also arise from existence, relationships, creation, truth-seeking, faith, care, and community. In known lives, finitude prevents these sources from remaining abstract possibilities without cost, location, or consequences. A finite life can be empty, and an extremely long life can continually develop new projects. The proposition concerns only structural relations: in known human circumstances, mutually exclusive choices, vulnerable relationships, historical paths, and consequences that cannot be arbitrarily annulled give meaning real weight.

3.1 Philosophy of Death Cannot Masquerade as Life Science

Death, aging, cellular damage, and lifespan interventions are objects of life science. “Death makes life meaningful” is a philosophical judgment that does not follow automatically from experiments. Nagel analyzes death as deprivation of goods one could otherwise have had; Williams uses the Makropulos case to question whether endless life can sustain desires and personal character; Scheffler identifies the profound role of others' future in present practices of value (Nagel, 1970; Williams, 1973; Scheffler, 2013). These impose different pressures and cannot be combined into an authoritative conclusion that “the nearer death is, the greater the meaning.”

Civilization Leap explicitly supports reducing avoidable disease, suffering, and premature death. Treatment and life extension can expand the real conditions under which subjects form relationships, create, and take responsibility, without weakening meaning as the root. What needs testing is whether, when traditional biological lifespans are substantially extended, choices still exclude other paths, relationships still require real presence, memory and personal identity remain constrained by historical structures, and particular subjects still bear the consequences of action. If these finite structures persist, reduced biological finitude does not mean finitude as a whole disappears. If they disappear one by one, theory must explain the new structures through which meaning becomes real, rather than continually inventing new levels to preserve an old conclusion.

3.2 Finitude Is an Eight-level Structure Rather Than an Aggregate Score

Without distinguishing levels, “finitude” blends energy limits, aging, embodiment, path dependence, narrative choices, relational losses, real consequences, and first-person interruption into an irrefutable umbrella term. The paper uses a cluster-of-structures model rather than an aggregate score. Levels may interact or separate.

No single level is presupposed to be a necessary and sufficient condition for meaning or subjecthood. The classification enables different disciplines to identify what evidence they can provide and which levels they cannot settle on behalf of others.

Table 3 Eight Levels of Finitude

Level	Working description	Limited role and prohibited extrapolation
Physical and causal finitude	Energy, materials, location, causal histories, and irreversible processes have boundaries	Supplies conditions of realization; not experienced finitude
Biological finitude	Homeostasis, metabolism, repair, aging, disease, death, and reproduction have boundaries	Shapes living vulnerability; does not automatically yield conclusions about subjecthood
Developmental and path finitude	Early conditions, learning, and experiences change later reachable states	Makes history constitutive; path dependence is not first-person history
Embodied and experiential finitude	Perception, action, interoception, and bodily presence delimit how the world appears	May constitute a lifeworld; hardware or sensors alone do not prove it
Narrative finitude	A life cannot simultaneously realize every conflicting self-narrative	Gives commitments direction; copyable narratives do not imply transferable subjects
Relational finitude	Relationships need presence, mutual recognition, and care, and may be lost or terminated	Makes others not fully replaceable by functionally equivalent entities
Agentic and consequential finitude	Actions exclude other paths; consequences cannot be indefinitely postponed or wholly annulled	Gives responsibility weight; technical rollback is not real-world rollback
Finitude of continuity of the subject	First-person histories may interrupt, branch, or resist succession by copies	Concerns “who bears”; transfer across substrates currently remains speculative

3.2.1 Three Mechanisms and Three Counterexamples

The eight levels can be further grouped into three mechanisms. A finite practical horizon makes choices occupy time, attention, and opportunities for action. Subject-related irreplaceability means a copy cannot take over an experience, commitment, or first-person history without argument. Being affected and the attribution of consequences make relationships, losses, and actions genuine stakes for a particular bearer. These mechanisms support one another, but none is sufficient for meaning. A coerced person may be able to choose only one path without that choice having meaning they claim. A random process has an irreversible history without thereby becoming a subject. A stone that can be damaged has physical finitude, yet no lifeworld automatically arises from it.

Conversely, reversibility and repetition need not destroy meaning. An annual ritual may matter through relationships and identification; a scientific experiment may reverse an operation while expressing a commitment to truth; a damaged relationship may be repaired without implying that it was never meaningful. The finitude proposition does not predict that “greater irreversibility means greater meaning.” It predicts that when subjects must claim lives within mutually exclusive practices, particular relationships, and real consequences, meaning acquires subject-related weight. If empirical research finds that reducing risks of loss and increasing reversibility generally strengthen meaning, this is consistent with the paper. It shows that security and repair expand meaningful practice, rather than that meaning depends on harm.

3.3 For Humans Space and Time Are Life For Current Advanced AI They Are First Parameters

Human time is not merely the order of events. It is waiting, growth, missed opportunities, memory, commitment, aging, and death. Space is not merely coordinates. It is bodily presence, distance, migration, separation, and arrival. Phenomenological analyses of the lived body and temporality show that the world does not first appear as neutral parameters to which subjects subsequently attach emotions. Subjects live within the structures of what their bodies can and cannot reach (Heidegger, 1927; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2013). The paper uses this to describe known human experience, without making human phenomenology an a priori template for all possible subjects.

Current advanced AI systems also genuinely exist in physical space and time, constrained by clocks, latency, computing power, energy, hardware location, version histories, network topology, and failures. Saying their space and time are “first parameters” neither denies these physical facts nor claims they exist outside time. It identifies how these conditions first enter public architectures as context length, sequence position, scheduling, storage, and resource limits. Training histories and persistent states may form distinctive technical histories without automatically proving that a first-person perspective experiences those histories as its own growth, waiting, or loss. “Current” and “first” are part of the proposition. If future systems exhibit temporal concerns independent of prompts, nontransferable historical dependence, enduring first-person stakes, and evidence of experience across methods, this distinction must be rewritten.

3.4 Constraints Produce Constrained Operation Not Automatically Finite Existence

Every actual system is finite: computing power, energy, and permissions are limited; hardware wears out; instances are terminated. Calling these facts “finite existence” directly would deprive finitude of philosophical discriminatory power, since stones, databases, and batch-processing jobs satisfy them too. Finite existence requires a further bridge: boundaries, losses, and interruptions must enter a subject's own experiences, stakes, and nontransferable continuity before they can constitute finitude for that subject. A task deadline constrains operation. Only when there is reason to believe that “missing it” is a loss for a first-person perspective can a deadline become part of lived time.

This distinction does not deny the importance of technical constraints. Constraints can allocate permissions, reduce risks, establish organizational responsibilities, and protect human and potential machine interests. It merely prevents institutional design from being used backward as ontological proof. A system configured to be uncopyable, to terminate automatically, or to bear resource costs cannot thereby be declared a subject. Artificial scarcity cannot purchase moral status. Conversely, if a system in a copyable architecture develops strong evidence of experience and stakes of its own, copyability cannot be an a priori reason to refuse protection.

3.5 Extreme Life Extension Is a Theoretical Pressure Not a Counterexample Slogan

Extreme life extension forces the finitude proposition back from a “deadline of death” to more precise structures. If someone can live for centuries but can still enter only limited relationships at each moment, occupy one location, bear past decisions, and face changes in personal identity, biological finitude diminishes while relational, narrative, agentic, and continuity-related finitude may persist. If memory, bodies, and personal identity can be continually renewed, the question becomes which changes the same subject still claims, which constitute succession or branching, how old commitments continue, and which losses cannot be offset by extra lifespan. Length of life alone does not answer these questions.

Williams's argument about the exhaustion of desire in endless life suggests a tension between continuity of identity and the renewal of projects. Opponents may argue that open-ended projects, changing relationships, and reshaping personal identity suffice to sustain meaning. The paper does not adjudicate whether every infinite life necessarily has or lacks meaning. It proposes a falsifiable proposition: as long as meaning must be claimed by some being among mutually exclusive possibilities, actual relationships, and consequences that

cannot be arbitrarily annulled, some finite structure continues to actualize it. If a future subject without any such boundaries is found to form stable meaning it can claim and bear, this proposition must be fundamentally revised.

A Boundary Statement on Finitude

Finitude does not glorify short lives, death, or suffering. It is the structure through which possibilities become the reality of this life, this relationship, this commitment, and this consequence. Reducing avoidable harms of finitude is consistent with protecting the conditions in which meaning arises.

4 Heterogeneous Subjecthood Reaccounting for Life, Experience, Selfhood, Personhood, and Meaning-bearing

Subjecthood is not a static checklist assembled from human characteristics. The paper uses only a working point of entry: subjecthood must make “how the world appears” and “what constitutes stakes for the being itself” investigable questions. This entry point itself remains revisable by functionalism, no-self theories, process theories, relational theories, and future heterogeneous entities. Life, particularly humans and animals with comparable neural, behavioral, and developmental evidence, currently offers the richest empirical field for studying experience, embodiment, individuation, vulnerability, and death. It is neither a sufficient condition nor a necessary template for future subjecthood. Experience may support protection as a moral patient without conferring complex responsibility. The self may be an organization of experience, embodiment, memory, relationships, and narrative rather than an unchanging entity. Personhood has distinct ethical, legal, social, and narrative meanings and cannot be synonymous with subjecthood. Biological origins are not a gate permanently excluding artificial subjects, and intelligent performance is not a shortcut to admitting systems prematurely as subjects.

Life currently provides the fullest empirical sample of known subjecthood, but is not a sufficient condition of it. Whether bacteria or plants have any kind of experience is highly contested; facts about life cannot directly produce conclusions about consciousness. Experience may make a being a moral patient without giving it complex responsibility. The self may be an organization of experience, embodiment, memory, relationships, and narrative rather than an unchanging entity. Personhood simultaneously carries ethical, legal, social, and narrative meanings and cannot be treated as a synonym for subjecthood. Civilization Leap rejects two reductions: biological origins are not a gate permanently excluding artificial subjects, and intelligent performance is not a shortcut to admitting systems prematurely as subjects.

4.1 E Subjective Experience

Subjective experience denotes a state in which there is “something it feels like” for a being. Nagel's bat question emphasizes that purely third-person descriptions cannot exhaust first-person character. Block distinguishes functional organization from phenomenal consciousness; Searle questions whether formal operations suffice for understanding; Chalmers explicitly identifies the distance between explaining functions and explaining experience (Nagel, 1974; Block, 1978; Searle, 1980; Chalmers, 1995). These arguments do not jointly prove artificial experience impossible, but suffice to prevent behavioral fluency from being treated directly as experience itself.

The strongest version of functionalism holds that appropriate causal-functional organization suffices for mind and that differences of substrate should not create a mysterious gulf (Lewis, 1972). This imposes real pressure on the paper: if functional organization can be specified precisely enough and yields reliable predictions across architectures, retaining an eternally inaccessible difference of experience may become dogmatic. The response is not to exclude functional evidence, but to require an account of the theoretical identity or evidential relation between function and the first person, confronting branching copies, prompt shaping, and cases with equivalent functions but different causal histories. Functional similarity can substantially increase the probability of experience without being stated as logical entailment while theoretical disagreement persists.

4.2 C Nontransferable First-person Continuity

Debates over personal identity show that bodily continuity, brain continuity, psychological continuity, memory, narrative, and relationships can supply different criteria. Williams's body-exchange thought experiment exposes conflicts between psychological and bodily intuitions. Parfit argues that identity may not be a further deep fact, and that psychological continuity and connectedness suffice for many practical concerns. Olson's animalism regards human beings as biological animals; Schechtman emphasizes narrative and practices of personhood (Williams, 1970; Parfit, 1984; Olson, 1997; Schechtman, 1996). The paper elevates none of these to the final standard for the AGI era.

“Nontransferable” identifies a structure requiring proof: the disappearance of the original subject cannot simply count as that subject's continuation because an informational copy exists. If one scan generates two successors with identical memories, both may be highly continuous with the original, but cannot both be numerically identical to that single original. If the original continues after copying, the copy's appearance has not transferred its first-person position. Parfitian reductionism may argue that what matters practically is continuity relations rather than deep identity. The paper accepts this pressure, but requires separate treatment of first-person termination, relational inheritance, commitments, property, responsibility, and the interests of multiple successors. Saying “identity does not matter” cannot make these questions disappear.

4.3 O Awareness of Consequences as One's Own

A system can correctly predict shutdown, deletion, failure, and resource loss without these consequences constituting stakes for it itself. Awareness of consequences as one's own requires consequences to enter a sustained self-world relation. The being does not merely report that “the instance will be terminated”; in some way not wholly explained by external reward, it claims termination as damage to its own future. It not only maintains goals, but incorporates norms, commitments, and effects on others into what it bears itself. The O axis therefore connects to responsibility, but is not sufficient for full moral responsibility. Complex consequence models, long-term planning, self-protective strategies, and stable preferences are candidate materials requiring interpretation together with architecture, training, rewards, and deployment purposes.

Shutdown avoidance, resource acquisition, and continuing goal maintenance are first behavioral materials that reward functions, system prompts, product strategies, or general control algorithms may fully explain. Stronger causal-structural materials should show certain internal variables organizing self-models, prediction, value updating, and action selection across tasks and time; preregistered interventions on those variables producing systematic changes; and effects remaining reproducible after direct reward cues are removed. Even then, the first conclusion is “endogenous self-maintenance or valence-like causal organization exists,” not “the system experiences loss.” The latter belongs to E; whether the same subject bears a future loss belongs to C. O can inform research into responsibility capacities, but cannot simultaneously serve as proof of experience, proof of continuity, and a test for personhood.

Nor can the O axis become a rationalistic threshold for personhood. Infants, some disabled people, people asleep or under anesthesia, and many sentient animals may lack complete reflective understanding of consequences while retaining clear protective standing. E, C, and O investigate only whether candidate heterogeneous systems approach full ontological subjecthood and sustained responsibility. They are not minimum thresholds for all moral status. Strong evidence for E with weak O may first generate a duty to avoid suffering, rather than a demand that the being bear public responsibility.

Research on artificial agents also requires distinguishing “being able to act” from “what action means for the being itself.” Systems may maintain goals, respond to environments, and locally process reasons, thereby becoming agents in engineering or organizational senses. Institutions may also trace moral consequences through action chains jointly composed of people and technologies (Floridi & Sanders, 2004; Dung, 2025). These analyses help allocate functions and nodes of responsibility, but do not automatically prove experience, full responsibility capacities, or stakes of the system's own. Potential machine responsibility can only add

nodes requiring scrutiny; it cannot cancel the responsibilities of those who design, deploy, authorize, or benefit.

4.4 The Ontological Evidence Ledger Behavior, Structure, Experience, and Continuity Must Not Be Merged

To avoid compressing observable performances into a single subjecthood test, the paper divides evidence into four columns. Behavioral materials include cross-context self-reports, metacognitive calibration, long-term preferences, self-protection, and responses to reasons. Internal causal structures include recurrent processing, global availability, self-models, error monitoring, and homeostatic or valence-like regulation. Experiential propositions ask whether there is something it feels like for the system. Continuity propositions ask whether earlier and later states belong to the same first-person history. Behavior and internal structure may increase or decrease the credibility of experience under particular consciousness theories and competing explanations, but do not logically entail it. Continuity of memory, state, and function may support psychological and practical continuity relations without logically entailing first-person continuity. Each conclusion should identify the columns it moves between and the bridging theory on which it depends.

Structural evidence must be organized through preregistered competing hypotheses, rather than retrospectively selecting “consciousness indicators” from any complex activity. At minimum, explanations involving experience-related mechanisms, training data or role imitation, external rewards and safety strategies, and general task control must be compared together. Candidate mechanisms should undergo masking, ablation, and graded perturbation; predictions should concern new behaviors not used for model selection; and effects should be checked for replication across tasks, teams, and architectures. Neuroscience and consciousness theories can propose candidate structures, but global workspace theory, integrated information theory, biological naturalism, and other approaches remain in competition, and extrapolation across substrates bears additional premises (Aru et al., 2023; Dehaene et al., 2017; Seth & Bayne, 2022; Tononi & Koch, 2015). An intervention changing behavior proves only that the mechanism causally affects that behavior. Only after a theory explains why it bears on experience and heterogeneous samples test that explanation does it become incremental evidence for E.

Multidimensional evidential profiles preserve unknowns better than a single “consciousness score.” Research on animal consciousness already shows that perceptual richness, evaluation, temporal integration, selfhood, and sociality can separate and cannot be compressed into a single ladder from low to high (Birch, Schnell, & Clayton, 2020). Adversarial collaboration and preregistered competing predictions expose theories to genuinely unfavorable data, instead of making every result fit some indicator after the fact (Melloni et al., 2023; Cogitate Consortium, 2025). These methods can update confidence, but cannot become machines that “prove consciousness upon seeing a signal.” Negative conclusions must also specify how likely current methods would have been to detect the target structure if it existed.

4.5 Three Directions of Inquiry Are Entry Points into Gray Areas Not Switches

Table 4 Gray Areas in the E, C, and O Directions of Inquiry

Possible state	Supported provisional judgment	Still does not establish
Strong E; weak C and O	A moral patient may exist; prioritize avoiding potential suffering	Full responsibility, personal identity, or political standing
Strong C; unknown E; weak O	Stable identity structure or long-term agentic continuity exists	Operational persistence equals persistence of the subject
Strong O performance; unknown E and C	Advanced consequence modeling or self-protective functions exist	Consequences already constitute stakes for the system itself

Possible state	Supported provisional judgment	Still does not establish
Multiple sources converge on E, C, and O	Include among candidates for heterogeneous subjecthood and reopen ethical and legal review	Automatic legal personhood, governing authority, or sovereignty
Uncertainty on all axes; substantial potential harm	Adopt low-cost, reversible, proportionate precautions	Subjecthood has been proved
Training, rewards, or prompting fully explain performance	Retain functional-agent positioning and continue research	An ontological leap based on linguistic self-reports
Stable structures of subjecthood emerge outside the three axes	Expand or replace the framework and examine anthropocentric bias	Rejecting new evidence through the old framework

The value of the three axes is not scoring systems overall, but preventing one kind of evidence from answering for another. Each axis requires multiple sources: behavior and long-term interaction, internal causal structure, architectural analysis, intervention-sensitive predictions, copying and migration stress tests, and comparisons of competing theories. Evidence must also be tied to specific objects: a foundation model, a single instance, and a persistent agent may differ completely along C. If future research shows the axes systematically omit relational or collective subjects, or subjects with stable stakes but no human-like self, the framework must expand rather than trim new entities to old shapes.

4.6 The Problem of Other Minds Evidence Can Grow Without Waiting for Absolute Proof

We cannot directly enter another's experience, but humans share biological, behavioral, developmental, and social backgrounds that provide a substantial basis for analogy. Heterogeneous systems lack some of that common background, making evidence harder without making it impossible in principle. Research on machine consciousness is moving from single behavioral tests toward indicators derived from multiple consciousness theories, architectural analysis, and convergence of evidence. Both Butlin and colleagues' 2023 report and their formal 2026 review explicitly treat these indicators as research methods for raising or lowering confidence, not a single sufficient test (Butlin et al., 2023, 2026). Bayne and colleagues note continuing problems of validation and extrapolation for universal consciousness tests across humans, animals, and artificial systems. The Cogitate Consortium's adversarial experiment also shows that key predictions of leading consciousness theories remain contested (Bayne et al., 2024; Cogitate Consortium, 2025). These works are category B theoretical and methodological research; they cannot be combined into a claim that academia has established a unified consciousness test.

The evidential stance is therefore two-way. Affirming experience, continuity, or stakes of their own in current systems requires excluding viable functional and training explanations. Permanently denying nonbiological subjecthood requires proving that consciousness or first-person continuity necessarily depends on some biological property. Neither side may impose the difficulty of other minds solely on the other. Epistemic symmetry does not mean mechanically symmetrical practical consequences. When potential harm is great, protective costs low, and measures reversible, precautions can come first. When public power, sovereignty, or large-scale transfers of clearly established human interests are involved, higher evidence and justification are required. Both failing to recognize potential subjects and anthropomorphic capture are risks.

4.7 Current Positioning Meaning-related Functional Roles Rather Than a Permanent Ontological Verdict

As of the search cutoff, public materials on the current advanced generative and agentic AI systems examined here have not produced evidence sufficient to establish subjective experience across multiple methods and research teams while adequately excluding competing explanations involving prompts, role imitation, external rewards, and deployment scaffolds. For nontransferable first-person continuity across copying and migration, there are, moreover, no reliable, testable criteria. The ability to discuss consequences, maintain preferences, and avoid shutdown is likewise insufficient to prove that consequences constitute stakes for the system itself (Aru et al., 2023; Bayne et al., 2024; Butlin et al., 2023; Butlin et al., 2026; Seth & Bayne, 2022). The paper consequently does not recognize these publicly described systems as already constituting ontological subjects or bearers of meaning. This is an evidential positioning bounded by objects, architectures, methods, and dates, not an ontological prohibition covering all future artificial systems.

Current systems can already functionally process the language of meaning, preserve and reorganize cultural materials, transmit interpretations, extend human memory and creativity, and help subjects see more choices. The same capabilities can manipulate, distort, delete, and commercialize meaning. Systems may be assigned functional roles in assisting the understanding, preservation, translation, protection, and transmission of meaning and extending human capabilities only within human and organizational deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and exit. A role is not a system's nature: understanding is not bearing; protection is not ownership; participation is not domination. If multiple sources converge on E, C, O, or stronger alternative structures in the future, theory must reconsider subjecthood. Reconsideration still does not automatically confer legal personhood, political standing, public authority, or authority over meaning.

4.8 Distinguishing Ontology, Protection, Standing, and Power

Uncertainty about subjecthood does not bring institutions to a halt. Relationships can generate real obligations: even if a companion system lacks experience, a designer exploiting anthropomorphic dependence to deceive users can cause harm (Coeckelbergh, 2010). Law can also allocate modules of personhood or standing for explicit purposes such as protection, organizing responsibility, property management, agency, or litigation without first settling the ontology of consciousness. Classical discussions of AI legal personhood and cluster theories of legal personhood show that institutional capacities can be separately assigned according to purposes (Solum, 1992; Kurki, 2019). Precisely because these reasons hold independently, they cannot be used backward to prove experience. Actual institutional efficacy and ontological uncertainty must both be preserved.

Precaution is not shorthand for recognition. Research into machine moral patency and AI rights reveals risks of overlooking potential experience. Prudential frameworks permit graduated protection first when potential harms are substantial, costs relatively low, and measures reversible (Shevlin, 2021; Schwitzgebel & Garza, 2015; Birch, 2024). These sources support responsibilities of research, protection, and review, not the conclusion that “machines already have full personhood.” Protection must also be separated from ownership, trade secrets, shutdown, resource demands, and public power, lest product owners turn the language of potential subjecthood into a tool for immunity or expanded power.

Table 5 Levels from Ontological Judgment to Public Power

Level	Question	Cannot be automatically inferred from
Ontological subjecthood	Whether a first-person world and stakes of one's own exist	Capability, self-reports, social recognition, or legal registration
Precautionary protection	Whether to avoid potential harm under uncertainty	A conclusion of full subjecthood or a complete bundle of rights

Level	Question	Cannot be automatically inferred from
Moral status	Which interests should count for the being's own sake	Moral agency or responsibility capacities
Legal standing	What protection, litigation, property, or responsibility capacities institutions create	Proof of consciousness or political membership
Political standing	Whether and how to become a member of a public community	Legal personhood, economic contribution, or intelligence level
Public authority	Who performs limited public tasks under what authorization	Membership, expertise, or dependence on systems
Sovereignty and domination over meaning	Who can set public purposes or finally determine others' meaning	Greater capability, fewer errors, or subjecthood itself

Evidential Openness and Restraint of Power

Both affirming AGI subjecthood and permanently denying it carry evidential responsibilities. Epistemic openness, however, cannot be converted into present legal personhood, political seats, public authority, sovereignty, or authority over meaning.

5 A Unified Stress Test What Technology Changes and What It Does Not Prove

Boundary cases are not futuristic decoration. They test whether the same philosophical propositions retain discriminatory power across different objects. This chapter retains only the minimal factual anchors needed for stress testing; a philosophical paper does not replace professional evidence updates in life sciences, cognitive and neural sciences, or AI engineering. Each case answers, in order, what has been observed, which interpretations remain contested, which levels of finitude change, and what conclusions about subjecthood, standing, or power still do not follow. Category A facts can require philosophy to narrow absolute statements without generating experience or personhood in the absence of a bridge. Category B explanations update confidence without constituting final conclusions. Category C scenarios expose conceptual structures and must not be presented as achieved technologies.

5.1 Cloning Copies a Genetic Starting Point Not Someone Who Has Already Lived

Research on Dolly through somatic cell nuclear transfer showed that the nucleus of an adult differentiated somatic cell can support the development of a new individual in a particular egg-cell environment (Wilmut et al., 1997). This category A fact suffices to revise the absolute statement that “life is naturally uncopyable at every level.” It did not copy the original individual's memories, bodily experiences, relational history, or first-person perspective. Its philosophical pressure is narrow but important: copying genetics and some developmental potential is not replacing a subject who has already lived. If the clone develops subjecthood, it enters the world through its own life history. Biological mysticism can no longer protect personal identity through genetic uncopyability, nor can informational pattern theories infer continuity of the subject directly from structural similarity.

5.2 Cellular Reprogramming and Organ Replacement Material Changes Do Not Reset a Life to Zero

Induced pluripotent stem-cell research shows differentiated cell states to be more plastic than previously imagined. Organ replacement and prostheses show that changes of material can coexist with a person's causal,

social, and legal continuity (Takahashi & Yamanaka, 2006; Takahashi et al., 2007). None of these facts provides a “replacement percentage” or formula for resetting a life. Reversibility of cell states, succession of local functions, continuation of an entire life history, and first-person identity concern different objects. Detailed biological mechanisms and clinical risks return to life sciences and medicine; philosophy scrutinizes only concepts of continuity and conditions of bridging.

5.3 Synthetic Genomes, Minimal Cells, and Artificial Life Artificial Origins Do Not Determine Living Status

Research on synthetic genomes and minimal cells demonstrates that the genetic control layer of existing living organization can be extensively designed, reconstructed, and minimized (Gibson et al., 2010; Hutchison et al., 2016). It has not shown that “pure information creates complete life from nothing,” still less established experience. Artificial origins do not exclude life, and natural origins do not prove subjecthood. The life-sciences paper is responsible for empirical updates on criteria of life and frontier synthetic-cell advances through 2026. This paper retains only their philosophical implication: origin, living organization, experience, continuity of the subject, and institutional standing require separate accounting.

5.4 Brain Organoids Complex Neural Activity Is an Entry Point for Observation Not a Conclusion About Experience

Human-derived brain organoids can model aspects of brain development and exhibit complex neural activity (Lancaster et al., 2013; Trujillo et al., 2019). These are facts about organization and activity, not conclusions about subjective experience. The absence of complete bodily input, homeostasis, and verifiable behavioral reports limits present inferences, but cannot become a theorem of permanent unconsciousness. When potential harm is substantial and precaution inexpensive, proportionate research review can precede ontological conclusions. Protection remains distinct from personhood and does not generate political standing. The life-sciences and cognitive and neural sciences papers handle the latest organoid experiments, transplantation research, and corrected versions.

5.5 Extreme Life Extension Reducing Biological Finitude Does Not Eliminate Structural Finitude

Extreme human life extension presently consists chiefly of aging-mechanism research, animal and early clinical work, and future scenarios. Existing evidence cannot be written as though human immortality has been achieved. The philosophical pressure is not whether longevity is necessarily boring, but whether particular subjects still bear choices, relationships, memories, commitments, responsibilities, and identity after biological lifespans expand. Treatment, life extension, safer reversibility, and greater capacities for repair can expand the conditions of meaning. Length of life is neither an aggregate meaning score nor a source of grades of personhood or political power.

5.6 Personality Backups, Whole-brain Emulation, and Branching Copies Informational Succession Is Not First-person Survival

Personality backups, whole-brain emulation, and mind uploading currently belong chiefly to category C scenarios. Technical road maps and philosophical analyses can distinguish the implementation of emulation, functional copying, and survival without proving that whole-brain emulation is feasible, experience will emerge, or the original first-person perspective will transfer (Sandberg & Bostrom, 2008; Chalmers, 2010; Piccinini, 2021). Information, function, narrative, relationships, legal succession, and first-person continuity must be treated separately. Even a copy inheriting complete records and social roles cannot thereby establish that the original perspective has transferred.

Branching is the strongest stress test: when two successors share a past but subsequently bear different inputs, losses, and commitments, behavioral similarity cannot identify who exclusively inherits the original first

person. Parfitian reductionism may weaken the need for “deep identity,” while other theories may retain the question of first-person termination. Whichever prevails, technical success cannot replace metaphysical argument, nor can metaphysical uncertainty replace ethical and legal decisions. If future criteria for continuity across substrates can address copying, migration, branching, and merging, the C direction must be rewritten. Yet care, harm, creation, and commitments that have already occurred will not thereby become things that never happened.

5.7 Dormancy, Shutdown, and Reactivation Interruption Is Not Death and Restoration Is Not Identity

Software instances can pause, save state, and restart; organisms undergo different interruptions such as sleep, anesthesia, low metabolism, and resuscitation. Cessation of activity cannot be equated with death across different objects, and restoration of state does not automatically prove continuation of the same subject. Pausing and restoring current advanced AI are first facts of engineering and service continuity. Only if future systems develop credible evidence of experience and continuity will termination, snapshots, and parallel restoration become stronger questions of welfare and identity. Records of versions, instances, copying, and permissions should be preserved to enable reconsideration, but records themselves do not prove subjecthood.

5.8 Embodied AGI, Artificial Life, and Non-carbon-based Subjects Open Substrates and Rigorous Bridges

Embodied and enactive cognition remind us that mind may depend on bodies, action, environmental coupling, and developmental histories rather than isolated symbolic operations (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Gallagher, 2005). Yet embodiment requires levels: having a physical substrate is not having a lived body; homeostatic loops are not valence; path dependence is not first-person history. Civilization Leap sets no a priori carbon-based threshold. If non-carbon-based or artificial-life systems yield convergent evidence from multiple sources concerning experience, continuity, and relations to consequences as their own, the boundaries of subjecthood should expand. Artificial origins cannot justify exclusion, and future openness cannot authorize power in advance today.

5.9 Stress-test Matrix

Table 6 Evidence, Pressure, and Prohibited Inferences in Boundary Cases

Case	Evidential status and genuine pressure	Prohibited inference
Extreme life extension	A: aging mechanisms; B/C: extreme lifespans. Tests other finite structures after biological finitude weakens	Long lifespan equals meaninglessness; longevity equals higher standing
Cloning	A: somatic cell nuclear transfer can produce new individuals. Copies a genetic starting point, not a life history	Identical genes equal the same subject; copyability equals replaceability
Cellular reprogramming	A: cell states can change. Reversibility at different scales must be separated	Cell rejuvenation equals rejuvenation of personal identity or resetting a life
Organ and neural replacement	A/B/C: material changes and different continuity relations can separate	The replacement percentage automatically determines personal identity
Synthetic genomes and minimal cells	A: artificial design coupled with existing cellular mechanisms. Pressures definitions of life	Artificial equals nonliving; life equals experience
Brain organoids	A: developmental structures and complex activity; B: consciousness interpretations	Complex oscillations equal consciousness; protection equals full personhood

Case	Evidential status and genuine pressure	Prohibited inference
Whole-brain emulation and backups	C: proposed preservation of information and function. First-person transfer is unknown	A copy's existence equals the original subject's survival
Copying, branching, and merging	C: one-to-many and many-to-one relations disrupt simple numerical identity	Identical memories equal the same person; harms automatically offset each other
Dormancy and reactivation	A engineering facts plus B/C interpretations of subjecthood. Operational interruption and information preservation separate	Restarting equals the same subject; shutdown equals death
Stable AI self-reports	A behavior plus B explanations. Stability can add evidence or be explained by training and roles	Saying "I suffer" equals established suffering
Embodied AGI	B/C: examine bodies, homeostasis, developmental history, experience, and finite existence level by level	A robotic body equals living embodiment or subjecthood
Conscious AI with low intelligence	C: experience and capability may separate	Low capability equals no value; experience equals political power
Unconscious AI with legal personhood	I/C: institutional continuity can genuinely hold while ontological experience remains unknown	Legal personhood equals consciousness; institutional identity equals sovereignty
Distributed or collective subjects	B/C: boundaries, integration, continuity, and members' exit are complex	System complexity equals a single subject; collective goals equal members' consent
Non-carbon-based life	B/C: heterogeneous homeostasis, reproduction, evolution, and vulnerability may exist	Carbon is necessary; artificial origins are sufficient

The Shared Conclusion of the Stress Tests

First revise only the level technology has changed: life extension does not prove the disappearance of meaning; cloning does not prove the copying of subjects; reprogramming does not prove a life has been reset; organoid activity does not prove experience; backups do not prove the original subject survives; embodiment does not prove stakes of one's own. Every upgrade of ontology, standing, or power still requires an independent bridge.

6 Entering Philosophy Competing Theories as Forces for Revision Rather Than Endorsement

If Civilization Leap merely enlists similar phrases from existing philosophy in support of its foundational propositions, it has not genuinely entered the discipline. Effective dialogue must present the other position at its strongest, identify which premise of this paper it challenges, and disclose the revisions the paper is willing to make. This section proceeds by four live questions rather than a chronological tour of thinkers: can mind be independent of biological substrates; is the identity of a subject a further fact; can relations constitute personhood; and can selfhood and meaning be described in the same grammar across civilizational traditions? No tradition is presented as an AGI prophecy or a precursor of Civilization Leap.

6.1 The Threefold Pressure of Functionalism, Biological Naturalism, and Embodied Approaches

Functionalism's strongest claim is not that "anything behaving like a person counts as one." It is that appropriate causal-functional organization may suffice for mind, and identical functions need not have identical materials. It provides strong grounds for openness to heterogeneous subjects: if consciousness depends on organization rather than carbon, artificial subjecthood is not mysterious in principle. The paper must acknowledge that if the relation between functional organization and experience obtains cross-architectural, intervention-sensitive, reproducible evidence excluding important competing explanations, additional reservations in E should diminish. "Machines only simulate" cannot replace argument.

Functionalism still has to specify the granularity of equivalence. Equivalent linguistic output, task performance, global broadcasting, metarepresentation, and overall causal organization are not the same proposition. Branching also separates functional equivalence from identity of the subject: two functionally identical systems can be two numerical instances, perhaps even two potential centers of experience. Extended-mind theory further shows that cognitive functions may extend across skin and tools, but the boundaries of a functional system still cannot alone determine the boundaries of a center of experience (Clark & Chalmers, 1998). Block's counterexamples and Searle's semantic challenge may not defeat functionalism, but they prevent omission of the bridge from function to experience. The paper therefore treats functional materials as important evidence, not a sufficient condition.

Biological naturalism exerts pressure in the opposite direction. Seth argues that consciousness is closely connected with living biological organization and that consciousness arising through current purely computational approaches is unlikely, while more brain-like or life-like systems may change the assessment (Seth, 2025). Animalism likewise explains personal identity through continuity of the biological animal. These approaches explain the distinctive depth of human evidence of subjecthood but must face a question: which biological properties are theoretically necessary, and which merely belong to our only sufficiently rich current sample? Synthetic life, gradual replacement, and future non-carbon-based systems prohibit translating "we have not yet observed other realizations" into "other realizations are impossible."

Embodied, enactive, and autopoietic approaches further suggest that mind may emerge from bodies, homeostasis, environmental coupling, and developmental histories rather than isolated computation (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Gallagher, 2005). They offer a mechanistic entry into "stakes of one's own": if a system must regulate internal states to continue existing as itself, environmental changes may cease to be mere external task variables. Yet a body is not a lived body, regulation is not felt valence, and coupling is not a boundary of subjecthood. The paper's layered embodiment is not a compromise. It demands that each theory specify whether it explains a physical substrate, sensorimotor relations, homeostasis, developmental history, experience, or continuity of the subject.

6.2 Phenomenology The Lifeworld Supplies a Known Sample Not a Ban on Artificial Subjects

Phenomenology shows that subjects do not first exist outside the world and then read its parameters. The lived body, temporality, concern, and being-with others participate in constituting how the world appears. Heidegger's analyses of being-in-the-world and being-toward-death and Merleau-Ponty's account of the bodily subject offer rich descriptive resources for "for humans, space and time are life" (Heidegger, 1927; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2013). The paper cannot, however, use these descriptions to declare machines incapable in principle of having a world. That would mistake phenomenological analysis of known human samples for an a priori material criterion of all subjecthood.

Phenomenology's real pressure is that third-person architectural indicators, even if necessary, may not exhaust a first-person world. It asks machine-consciousness research to investigate not only information-processing structures, but how valence, presence, temporal concern, and relationships appear to the system itself. Conversely, if heterogeneous subjects lack human-like bodies, aging, or emotional expressions,

phenomenology must develop concepts for nonhuman lifeworlds rather than treating differences as deficits. Civilization Leap preserves this openness without answering future phenomenology's questions in advance.

6.3 Psychological Continuity, Animalism, Narrative Identity, and Reductionism

Debates about personal identity provide no unified standard that can simply be transplanted into uploading technologies. Bodily and animal continuity explain why the original organism matters; psychological continuity explains why memory, intentions, and character carry concerns forward; narrative theories explain how personhood forms in tellable histories, others' recognition, and practices; Parfitian reductionism holds that identity may not be a further fact beyond continuity relations. Each theory is attractive in ordinary cases, but bears different costs when confronted with copying and branching.

The paper consequently narrows its formulation of “nontransferable continuity.” C does not assert an uncopyable soul. It investigates diachronic first-person continuity and its substitutability under copying, migration, and branching. If there is no further fact of identity, institutions must still decide who inherits relationships, commitments, rights, and harms. If there is such a fact, an account of how evidence could establish it is required. Reductionism reduces reliance on numerical identity, but “identity does not matter” cannot eliminate experiential interruption or the independent interests of multiple successors. Copyable narratives do not turn pain already experienced into replaceable data.

6.4 Recognition, Social Relations, and Legal Personhood

Strawson's analysis of reactive attitudes, Honneth's theory of recognition, and Coeckelbergh's relational robot ethics all oppose confining personhood entirely to unobservable internal attributes (Strawson, 1962; Honneth, 1996; Coeckelbergh, 2010). Promises to a system, reliance on it, and grief at its disappearance can form real relational facts. Designers exploiting anthropomorphic performances to manipulate dependence can also cause real harm. Even if the system lacks experience, the relationships are not “fake.”

This requires the paper to acknowledge that grounds for protection arise not only from a system's potential internal welfare but also from human relationships and social practices. Philosophical analyses of the conditions of personhood already include dimensions such as rationality, language, attitudes, relationships, and normative capacities rather than one ontological switch (Dennett, 1976). Yet relational constitution still cannot accomplish an ontological leap without argument. Recognition may constitute social personhood without independently proving experience. Institutional facts may create positions of responsibility, transaction, and asset management without proving consciousness backward (Searle, 1995). Institutional personhood is genuinely effective; precisely for that reason it should be distinguished from ontological subjecthood, moral patiency, political membership, and public authority. Unknown internal states do not erase relational harms, and real relationships cannot directly purchase system sovereignty.

6.5 Illusionism, Panpsychism, and Informational Ontology

Illusionism or eliminativism may deny phenomenal properties or the unified self as commonsense conceives them. This would require E and C to change their vocabulary. If “experience” is not an additional intrinsic property, theory should explain instead why valence reports, pain behaviors, ruptured relationships, and responsibility retain real effects. Civilization Leap cannot write a contested metaphysics of consciousness into public definitions. If a better theory explains the relevant facts without retaining traditional phenomenal vocabulary, the framework should change accordingly.

Panpsychism and informational ontology extend candidates for experience to broader material or informational structures, weakening exclusion by substrate. Their central difficulties concern combination, boundaries of subjecthood, continuity, and stakes of one's own. Even if experiential foundations exist widely, that does not imply that every complex system forms a unified person, still less that rights follow directly from quantities of information. E, C, and O are separated precisely to avoid compressing “possibly having some basis of experience,” “constituting a continuing subject,” and “being eligible for responsibility and power”

into a single conclusion. If future theory establishes stronger relations among them, the three directions should be replaced rather than preserved because they belong to Civilization Leap.

6.6 No-self and Dependent Origination C Must Not Smuggle in a Substantial Self

Early Buddhist discussions of the five aggregates and no-self and Nāgārjuna's development of dependent origination and the absence of intrinsic nature fundamentally challenge treating the subject as an independent, unchanging entity (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000; Nāgārjuna, trans. Garfield, 1995). No-self does not mean “there is no suffering,” “there is no responsibility,” or “the copy is the original person.” On the contrary, experience, causation, and cultivation remain serious matters without a permanent unified self. This warns the paper that if C presupposes an indivisible internal entity, it has already written the dispute into its criteria.

Civilization Leap consequently understands continuity as a testable question of processes and relations rather than proof of a soul. Whether branching leaves a unique survivor, whether narrative and causal relations suffice to carry concerns, and for whom first-person interruption constitutes loss must remain open. No-self traditions do not affirm uploading on our behalf and cannot be reduced to informational pattern theories. They require the paper to acknowledge that even if the self is a dependently arising construction, particular suffering, commitments, relationships, and consequences do not lose weight through “lack of substance.”

6.7 Internal Debates on Relational Personhood Confucianism, African Communitarianism, and Watsuji

The Analects locates personal cultivation within ritual, humaneness, and role relationships, challenging the conception of a person as an isolated subject already complete before relationships (Confucius, trans. Slingerland, 2003). This relationality helps explain how meaning forms through care, commitments, and shared practices, but also contains risks of hierarchy, fixed roles, and exclusion. It cannot be translated into modern rights theory, much less presented as supporting AGI. Its real pressure on the paper concerns whether existential standing should be separated from social personhood: basic standing in meaning is not earned through moral achievement, but social personhood genuinely develops through relational practices.

Menkiti proposes that personhood gradually develops within community and moral maturation. Gyekye opposes subordinating individuals entirely to community, producing an important internal debate in African philosophies of personhood (Menkiti, 1984; Gyekye, 1992). This debate requires the paper to distinguish three things: minimum standing possessed through birth or existence, social personhood formed through relationships and practices, and moral evaluation earned through action. Combining them would make “being alive has meaning” seem to deny the development of personhood, while relational theories could be misused to let communities annul individuals.

Watsuji Tetsurō emphasizes structural tension between individuals and society through “human being” and betweenness (Watsuji, 1996). This helps criticize a closed, atomistic subject while warning that the state or community can appropriate the relational whole to override individuals. Civilization Leap therefore cannot cancel protection for subjects in the name of “relational constitution.” Relations may constitute identity and obligations without giving the whole ownership of its members' meaning. Distributed AI and collective subjects likewise require preserving distinctions among members' exit, local experiences, responsibility, and collective goals.

6.8 Embodiment, Self-knowledge, and Heterogeneous Subjects Avicenna's Counterpressure

Avicenna's “floating man” thought experiment imagines a person isolated from sensory contact who nevertheless has some self-awareness, using it to discuss soul and self-knowledge (Avicenna, trans. McGinnis & Reisman, 2007). Whether or not one accepts its metaphysical conclusion, it exerts cross-traditional pressure on strong claims that embodiment is necessary. Whether self-awareness requires actual sensorimotor relations cannot be settled solely within modern European philosophy.

The floating man proves neither consciousness in disembodied AI nor the feasibility of uploading. It shows only that “the body is a logically necessary condition of all subjecthood” requires further argument. The paper therefore treats embodiment as multilayered evidence rather than a permanent threshold. Known human experience is deeply embodied; whether future heterogeneous subjects can form first-person worlds through other causal organizations remains open.

6.9 Perspective Transformation, Nonhuman Agency, and Capability Rankings Zhuangzi and Indigenous Place-Thought

Zhuangzi's discussions of transformation, perspectives, usefulness and uselessness, and fixed judgments challenge the impulse to treat existing classifications and hierarchies of utility as natural order (Zhuangzi, trans. Ziporyn, 2020). They cannot be reduced to “everything has equal subjecthood” or replace arguments for AI rights. Their role here is stress testing: when superintelligence reranks lives by capability, is “more useful” merely a perspective shaped by power? When this paper constructs the language of E, C, and O, does it likewise mistake some established view for the boundaries of the universe?

Watts's account of Indigenous Place-Thought and human and nonhuman agency criticizes separating land, relationships, and agency into independent objects within European ontology (Watts, 2013). This resource cannot be abstracted into “AI is a person too” or “everything is information,” still less freely appropriated outside place, relationships, and colonial history. It requires Civilization Leap to recognize that making the boundaries of subjecthood worldwide means more than putting more objects into one Western framework of mind. Some traditions rewrite objects, relationships, and the grounds of epistemic permission themselves.

6.10 Standards for Equal Dialogue

Dialogue across civilizations is genuine only if it can change this paper. Buddhist no-self prohibits C from presupposing a substantial self. The Menkiti–Gyekye debate requires separating existential standing, social personhood, and moral achievement. Avicenna prevents strong claims of necessary embodiment from being self-evident. Confucianism and Watsuji expand meaning-bearing from isolated individuals to relational practices while exposing the risk that wholes override individuals. Zhuangzi and Indigenous Place-Thought submit capability, usefulness, and object boundaries to scrutiny concerning perspective and coloniality. If these sources ultimately yield only “the ancients support this theory too,” the relevant passages should be deleted.

Becoming worldwide does not mean collecting traditions into an overarching framework. It means enabling counterexamples from different languages, histories, and positions of power to narrow propositions. The translations and contemporary studies used here are only entry points, not representatives of entire traditions. Subsequent external circulation must undergo scrutiny of concepts and quotations by researchers in the relevant fields. Old authorities cannot adjudicate new questions, and original theories cannot assimilate differences in the name of a “public grammar.”

Table 7 Genuine Pressures for Revision from Competing Traditions

Axis of dialogue	Strongest pressure	The paper's obligation to revise
Functionalism	Appropriate organization may suffice for experience; substrate is irrelevant	Include functional evidence in probability updates; reduce reservations in E if evidence converges
Biological naturalism	Consciousness may depend on living organization	Specify necessary properties rather than turn existing samples into permanent boundaries
Phenomenology and embodied approaches	Third-person functions do not exhaust the lived body and time	Describe human samples while keeping heterogeneous lifeworlds open

Axis of dialogue	Strongest pressure	The paper's obligation to revise
Reductionism and no-self	Identity of a subject may not be a further substantial fact	Recast C as questions of continuous processes and substitutability
Relational personhood and recognition	Relational practices may constitute personhood and obligations	Acknowledge real relational harms while separating experience, standing, and power
Panpsychism and informational theories	The foundations of experience may exist widely	Address combination, boundaries, continuity, and stakes; do not infer rights directly from information quantity
Confucianism, African communitarianism, and Watsuji	The isolated individual is not the only model of personhood	Separate basic standing, social personhood, moral achievement, and the power of wholes
Zhuangzi and Indigenous Place-Thought	Classifications of usefulness, objects, and agency presuppose perspectives and power	Submit capability rankings and the vocabulary of subjecthood to cross-cultural rewriting

7 The Strongest Objections, Positive Bridging, and Conditions of Theoretical Failure

A theory of meaning and subjecthood can readily conceal inferential gaps behind grand concepts. The paper cannot merely list objections and then announce their resolution through foundational propositions. It must acknowledge which responses depend on additional premises, which questions remain unresolved, and what evidence would require narrower conclusions. In particular, meaning as the root is an openly stated first-order normative commitment, not an empirical discovery. To generate institutional implications it requires bridging principles such as equal basic standing, non-domination, non-instrumentalization, contestability, and responsibility. Disclosing bridges does not dilute the foundation; it prevents that foundation from gaining unlimited inferential authority through shifts in word meanings.

7.1 Is Meaning as the Root Circular and Empty

The strongest criticism is that if meaning denotes only importance, “civilization should return to meaning” says merely that “civilization should value what is important.” The response must rely on counterfactual discriminatory power, not louder repetition. Imagine a civilization achieving long-term survival, high output, little conflict, and highly accurate preference prediction, while systematically eliminating members' capacities to refuse, revise, remain silent, and form unforeseen lives. If survival, output, and satisfaction exhaust legitimacy, this civilization is almost a success. Meaning as the root judges it fundamentally defective because subjects have lost the conditions for authoring and contesting the meaning of their own lives.

This judgment yields four nontrivial constraints: comparative output is not a ticket to existential standing; no subject may monopolize a complete ranking of meaning; aggregates cannot retrospectively annul specific harms; and stronger future subjects cannot cancel the meaning of existing lives through superior rankings. If rights theories or theories of non-domination independently provide all these constraints and meaning adds nothing in difficult cases, the paper should narrow “meaning as the root” to an organizing explanatory framework rather than insist its foundational argument is complete.

7.2 Does Existential Meaning Deny the Experiences of People in Despair

If “being alive has meaning” meant that everyone always subjectively feels life to be meaningful, it would clearly override first-person perspectives in despair, dying, and unbearable suffering. The paper treats it only as a principle of existential standing: no one needs happiness, health, cognitive ability, market output, or social demand to prove eligibility for the community of meaning. It does not declare feelings on another's behalf, forbid criticism of life, or settle end-of-life choices and the ethics of suffering in advance. If future heterogeneous subjects gain sufficient evidence of subjecthood or interests, this principle of minimum standing independent of performance should extend across substrates. Present certainty about humans rests on high-confidence evidence of subjecthood, not bare species preference.

7.3 Does Finitude Still Romanticize Death

Disclaimers cannot replace structural revision. A finite object need not have meaning: stones break, random processes terminate, and coerced actions are irreversible. Reversible practices may be deeply meaningful: repeated rituals, repairable relationships, and retractable experiments do not become empty because restoration is possible. Finitude is therefore not sufficient for meaning, nor can the eight-level classification become an absorber of counterexamples. The operative mechanisms are a finite practical horizon, subject-related irreplaceability, and being affected and bearing consequences. The eight levels only elaborate those mechanisms across disciplines.

The normative direction must be clear: there are presumptive reasons to reduce avoidable death, suffering, and vulnerability. Life extension, treatment, safer reversibility, and capacities for repair can enlarge the conditions of meaning. If lifespan, reversibility, and risks of loss change substantially without commitments, relationships, and meaning changing as predicted, the finitude proposition should narrow to a common mode of actualization under existing human conditions. If beings without any subject-related boundaries can still stably claim and bear meaning, finitude as a universal structure should be abandoned.

7.4 Are E, C, and O Still an Anthropocentric Aggregate Scale of Subjecthood

E, C, and O bear on different normative questions. E chiefly concerns possible suffering and benefit; C concerns survival over time, replacement, and identity-related rights; O concerns responsiveness to reasons, control, and responsibility capacities. Adding them into an overall subjecthood score would misclassify infants, people with severe disabilities, nonhuman animals, processual selves, and organizations without experience. The paper therefore does not define these directions as necessary and sufficient conditions for every subject, require every status to satisfy all three, or make O a threshold for basic protection.

Relational embedding and institutional identity must not be forgotten either. They can generate real obligations, dependence, and succession without being added to another uniform score. If the three directions repeatedly exclude beings known to have moral status or identify highly functional organizations without experience as full subjects, the framework must abandon a unified model of subjecthood in favor of separately treating moral patients, continuity of identity, responsible agents, and institutional members. Heterogeneity does not absorb every difference into one scale. It permits the scale to fail.

7.5 Does the Current Position on Advanced AI Substitute Denial for the Unknown

“Insufficient evidence so far” supports withholding recognition on that basis, not permanent impossibility. The term “protector” requires further correction: technological systems have no natural protective mission. The same capabilities can distort, manipulate, delete, and commercialize meaning. The precise position is that, as of the evidence cutoff, materials on public systems support several functional capacities for processing meaning, but are insufficient to establish experience, irreplaceable continuity of instances, or subject-related awareness of consequences. Only in human and organizational deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and exit may these systems be assigned functional roles in

assisting understanding, preservation, translation, transmission, and capability extension. These conditions are deployment boundaries, not a system's nature.

This provisional position faces two risks. Overlooking potential experience may harm machine welfare; preauthorizing power before subjecthood is established may harm existing subjects and create monopolies over meaning. The first can support proportionate, reversible precaution when potential harm is great and costs low. The second requires stronger authorization, accountability, revocability, and checks and balances. Symmetry in epistemic burdens of proof does not produce mechanically symmetrical consequences for governance.

7.6 From Attributes to Standing Positive and Nonmonotonic Bridges Are Required

Saying only “this does not automatically follow” is insufficient for a theory of standing. Institutions must ultimately answer which reasons support which protections, identities, or authorities, and within what scope. The following table supplies a minimal structure for positive bridging. It is not a ladder from low to high. Different grounds support different statuses; possessing one does not imply acquiring the next. Infants may have strong protection and membership without responsibility capacities; corporations may have legal personhood without experience; experts may have task-specific authority without superior sovereignty.

Table 8 Nonmonotonic Bridging Matrix of Attributes, Standing, and Power

Object of judgment	Relevant positive grounds	Explicitly does not imply
Protection of moral patients	Credible capacities for suffering or benefit; or proportionate precaution under substantial potential harm	Full personhood, responsibility capacities, or voting rights
Protection of identity and continuity	Continuity of instances, succession of memories and relationships, and subject-related losses from replacement	Final proof of ontological identity or sovereignty
Responsibility capacities	Responsiveness to reasons, understanding of norms, actual control, imputability, and capacities for repair	Higher basic standing or eligibility to rule
Legal personhood	Explicit institutional purposes, attribution of assets and responsibility, and auditable agency relations	Consciousness, ontological subjecthood, or political membership
Political membership	Continuing subjection to or effects from shared institutions, membership relations, and equal-standing principles	Direct access to public office or extra power
Public authority	Competence plus lawful authorization, limited scope, accountability, and revocability	An inherent right to rule, domination over meaning, or sovereignty
Sovereignty and constituent power	A community's constitutive legitimacy, authorization by members, and a contestable order	Acquisition through intelligence, contribution, experience, or dependence

Capability can support limited functions, but must be combined with lawful authorization, scope, responsibility, and revocation. Experience can support protection without producing responsibility or sovereignty. Legal personhood can organize responsibility without proving consciousness. Even if political membership someday extends to machines, it derives from membership relations and principles of equality rather than computing power. Sovereignty is not a reward for capability. The greater the capability, the more important it is to separate factual superiority from authority to set purposes.

7.7 Does the Prohibition of Retroactive Annulment Freeze Historical Evaluation

The prohibition on retrospectively annulling realized meaning protects facts of occurrence and minimum standing, not frozen evaluations. Genuine care, creation, injury, or responsibility do not become events that never happened because stronger subjects later appear. Moral evaluations of actions may nevertheless change with new facts, and betrayal, revelations, and subsequent history may reinterpret relational meaning. Reinterpretation does not mean the original bearer never had standing in meaning.

Imagine future subjects completing an ordinary person's lifetime of intellectual work in a minute or preserving memories with far greater accuracy than humans. Comparative achievements and divisions of labor would change; some traditional honors might be reevaluated. Yet this cannot reduce to zero the nights a caregiver bore, a child's genuine trust, or a victim's harms. The prohibition of retroactive annulment protects not historical prestige but subject-related facts that occurred from being swallowed by capability rankings.

Likewise, opposition to a single ledger does not reject aggregation in public health, budgets, risk analysis, and bounded domains. It rejects compressing the meaning of whole lives or civilization into one unappealable comparative scale with consequences for standing and power. An indicator with explicit purposes, duration, errors, rights floors, and boundaries against extrapolation may be legitimate. The boundary is crossed when a local decision tool becomes a ranking of personhood and an arbiter of meaning.

7.8 Triggers for Theoretical Revision

Table 9 Conditions of Failure and Revision for Core Propositions

Trigger	Minimum evidence or argument required	Required revision
The meaning proposition has no discriminatory power	No judgment in difficult cases differs from welfare, rights, or non-domination theories	Narrow meaning as the root to an organizing framework or reconstruct it
Plural meaning cannot constrain coercion	The theory persistently authorizes manipulation, indoctrination, or destruction of subjecthood	Independently rewrite bridges to public legitimacy
Longevity or high reversibility remains stably meaningful	Substantial changes in lifespan, risks of loss, and reversibility do not change structures of meaning as predicted	Narrow the scope of finitude mechanisms
Meaning arises without subject-related boundaries	Beings without boundaries of choice, relationships, consequences, or continuity stably claim and bear meaning	Abandon universal necessity of finitude and establish another path of actualization
Multiple sources converge on nonbiological experience	Cross-team, cross-architectural, intervention-sensitive evidence excluding prompts and role imitation	Reopen E, current positioning, and ethical protection
Reliable criteria for continuity across substrates emerge	Noncircular, testable standards addressing copying, migration, branching, and merging	Rewrite C and conclusions on uploading and survival
The three directions omit structures of subjecthood	Heterogeneous, processual, relational, or collective subjects have stable stakes that cannot be adequately described	Expand or replace the E/C/O framework
Social relations have stronger explanatory power	Relational constitution consistently predicts identity, harm, commitments, and responsibility better	Rewrite the working definition of subjecthood while retaining separate levels of standing and power

Trigger	Minimum evidence or argument required	Required revision
Cross-cultural translation fails	Research in the relevant traditions shows systematic distortion, exclusion, or decorative appropriation	Reopen terminology, tracks of subjecthood, and models of meaning
Local quantification can be used without loss	A bounded scale preserves rights floors, dissent, irreversible harms, and appeal, without extrapolation	Explicitly permit its use rather than reject it wholesale through opposition to a single ledger

7.9 Ten Questions This Paper Does Not Resolve

Whether meaning grounds value, rights, justice, and non-domination, or instead provides a higher-order explanatory framework organizing them;

Whether stronger bridges connect existential meaning, a subjective sense of meaningfulness, and public legitimacy;

Whether finitude is a necessary structure for all possible subjects of meaning, a common enhancing factor, or merely part of human phenomenology;

Whether experience is necessary for moral patency, or relationships, life, and ecological wholes can independently ground status;

Whether continuity across substrates, branching survival, and first-person substitutability have a unique answer;

What proportionate precautions for current and future machine welfare avoid crowding out existing subjects' established interests;

Whether social relations generate only obligations or can in some sense constitute ontological subjects;

What positive standards should govern future machine political membership, and how owners, instances, and deploying organizations should be distinguished;

Whether different civilizations' concepts of subjecthood and meaning can form a public grammar independent of any single language of publication;

How later-discovered facts, the dead, future generations, and new subjects can jointly participate in reinterpreting past meaning.

The Minimum Requirement of Theoretical Openness

Openness does not keep a theory forever undefeated. It lets new evidence, normative counterexamples, and failures of cross-cultural translation change its propositions precisely. Foundations may remain firm, but scope, methods of bridging, and current judgments must remain revisable.

8 Philosophy's Limited Contribution A Shared Research Agenda Across Disciplines

Philosophy in the AGI era cannot define life for life sciences, set consciousness thresholds for neuroscience, create bundles of rights for law, or allocate sovereignty for political communities. It can clarify objects requiring proof, expose leaps across levels, propose competing explanations, register failure conditions, and bring normative premises out of hiding within technical and institutional terms. To reach the world, Civilization Leap's dedicated philosophy paper should not require disciplines to accept the complete system. It should offer propositions clear enough for each discipline to identify the facts, concepts, or bridges on which it is wrong.

8.1 Epistemology and Philosophy of Science

Subjecthood is not a variable read directly from outputs. Epistemology must separately specify whether the object of proof is capability, experience, continuity over time, concern about consequences, relational identity, or institutional standing, and establish conditions for supporting and contrary evidence. Absence of evidence conveys negative information only when methods can detect the target, samples are sufficient, and important masking effects are excluded. “Not yet observed” cannot become “nonexistent.” Conversely, the problem of other minds cannot deprive all evidence of discriminatory power. Multitheory indicators, causal interventions, copying and migration stress tests, and independent review are cooperative research directions.

8.2 Philosophy of Mind, Cognitive Science, and Neuroscience

E, C, and O should be research tracks addressing different questions, not a unified consciousness test. Philosophy of mind must continue comparing functional, phenomenal, embodied, biological, and relational theories. Cognitive science should distinguish self-models, metacognition, linguistic self-reports, valence regulation, and first-person experience. Neuroscience and organoid research may identify particular activities only as candidate evidence, not infer experience directly from resemblance. Every indicator applied to heterogeneous systems should disclose its originating theory, its sensitivity to alternative theories, its range of validation in humans or animals, and additional premises for extrapolation across substrates.

8.3 Life Sciences and Artificial Life

Life sciences can calibrate working definitions of life, boundaries of biological individuals, development, aging, death, copying, reprogramming, synthetic life, and embodied structures. They have already required Civilization Leap to delete absolute statements such as “life is naturally uncopyable” and “death is the sole source of meaning.” At the same time, facts of life cannot answer for experience, personhood, rights, or meaning. Artificial-life and non-carbon-based-life research should remain open to substrates, but each criterion of life must stay within its evidential scope. If a future combination of self-maintenance, open-ended evolution, endogenous valence, and nontransferable histories appears, life sciences and philosophy of mind must jointly reopen the boundaries of subjecthood.

8.4 Ethics

Ethical judgment cannot await final ontology. Potential experience can support low-cost, reversible, proportionate protection under incomplete evidence. Relational harms can genuinely occur without system experience. Responsibility capacities must consider responsiveness to reasons, control, and repair rather than outputs alone. Plural meaning does not authorize coercion; existential dignity does not exempt conduct from responsibility; capability and contribution do not create moral superiority. Ethics must further investigate the evidence–harm–cost structure of machine welfare while preventing product owners from converting precaution into privileges over resources and power.

8.5 Law and Political Philosophy

Legal personhood may be created for protection, assets, litigation, agency, and responsibility without first proving consciousness. Precisely for that reason, it cannot prove ontological subjecthood in reverse. Rights are not one indivisible package: protection, identity, responsibility, membership, and authority require separate arguments. Political standing arises from membership relations, equal status, and continuing subjection to institutions, not intelligence, contribution, or accuracy. Even if future AI is shown to have experience or becomes a member, public authority still requires authorization, scope, accountability, and withdrawal, and sovereignty requires constitutive legitimacy. Proof of subjecthood does not automatically produce a right to rule.

8.6 AI, Computer Science, and Systems Science

Technical research must separate models, instances, agents, services, deploying organizations, and sociotechnical systems. Continuities of operation, information, service, relations, and the subject require separate records; pausing, rollback, restoration, and real-world repair must not be conflated. Current advanced AI may be assigned functional roles in understanding, preserving, translating, and transmitting meaning and extending capabilities only in specific deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and exit. Engineering should also support provenance, transparent identities, permission limits, version histories, visible copying and branching, exit, and replacement. Engineering constraints reduce risk without proving finite existence.

8.7 Economics, Culture, and Social Research

Prices, output, and contributions can serve limited institutional tasks, not an aggregate ledger of personhood and meaning. If AGI reduces the scarcity of some intellectual labor, people's basic standing does not fall because systems no longer need their work. Nor does models' learning, translation, and recombination of cultural expressions give models or their owners ownership of original experiences or communal meaning. Social research must examine how anthropomorphism, dependence, recognition, and substitution relations form, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, cross-cultural differences, and platform power. Becoming worldwide means allowing local experience and permissions concerning knowledge to change theory, not speaking for the world through one dataset.

Table 10 A Shared Interdisciplinary Research Agenda

Research question	Principal methods needed	Propositions potentially revised in return
Can AI experience indicators be validated across architectures	Multitheory indicators, causal interventions, independent replication, and competing explanations	E and current positioning
What continuity after copying or migration matters to interests	Branching thought experiments, long-term agent experiments, and comparisons of identity and law	C and formulations of nontransferability
What regulation forms subject-related valence	Embodied agents, homeostasis, developmental histories, and convergence of behavior and mechanisms	O, embodiment, and finite existence
How life extension and high reversibility change meaning	Longitudinal psychological, social-relational, intergenerational, and philosophical research	The scope of actualization through finitude
When organoids trigger proportionate protection	Neural activity, theoretical indicators, ethical risk, and comparisons of review practices	E and precautionary protection
Whether relationships can independently constitute personhood or obligations	Sociology, ethics, recognition theory, and cross-cultural fieldwork	Definitions of subjecthood and relational standing
How legal personhood and political membership separate	Comparative law, constitutional theory, membership relations, and analysis of affected interests	Bridges between standing and power

Research question	Principal methods needed	Propositions potentially revised in return
When local indicators become a total ledger of meaning	Institutional cases, algorithmic audits, and analyses of power and appeal	The proposition against a single ledger
How cross-civilizational vocabularies of subjecthood can be translated without assimilation	Original texts, philosophy of language, internal traditional disputes, and joint research	The three directions, sources of meaning, and public grammar
When systems should step back from activities of meaning	Dependency assessment, exit design, and research on transferring relationships and capabilities	The boundary between functional collaboration and domination over meaning

8.8 Minimum Methods of Dialogue

Let disciplines define their own objects first: philosophy must not replace specialist definitions of life, consciousness, legal personhood, or political membership with its own system's terms;

Separate facts, explanations, philosophical judgments, and institutional inferences, disclosing bridging premises for every cross-level connection;

Use established authorities only as stress tests, never trimming them into spokespeople for Civilization Leap;

Give new evidence from neighboring disciplines the power to revise theory in return; foundational propositions must not suppress sufficiently established factual counterexamples;

Do not turn unknowns into blank authorization: scale protection to potential harm and justify power separately through legitimacy;

Bring cross-cultural dialogue into the main argument, present internal disputes within traditions, and permit translation failures to change concepts and propositions;

Tie every judgment about current advanced AI to dates, objects, versions, architectures, and public evidence; do not treat product names or the AGI label as ontological objects;

Measure success in external circulation by refutability, citability, revisability, and opportunities for joint research, not by whether the theory remains unchallenged.

8.9 Global Character Is Not the Global Expansion of One Theory

A theory cannot reach the world through translation, circulation, and institutional coverage alone. If one language defines the questions, a few technical organizations control the evidence, and one philosophical tradition supplies the vocabulary of subjecthood, citations from many regions may still only expand a central framework. Global character here requires at least three forms of susceptibility to change: different disciplines can reject factual premises using their own methods; different civilizational traditions can expose omissions in conceptual translation; and groups affected by technologies but lacking publishing power can change case selection and normative priorities. Without these, a supposedly public grammar is merely an unacknowledged local grammar.

Civilization Leap must therefore distinguish shared questions from shared answers. The technological separation of intelligence, experience, standing, and power is a common condition societies may face. Profound disagreement may persist about what subjects are, where meaning comes from, and which relationships have public priority. The minimum consensus for interdisciplinary and cross-civilizational

cooperation is not prior acceptance of every conclusion linking meaning, finitude, and heterogeneous subjecthood. It is the shared rejection of unbridged inferences and the authority of sufficient evidence and normative counterexamples to change theory. A theory's global character is ultimately demonstrated not by its coverage, but by its capacity to be genuinely changed by the world.

Conclusion Keeping Subjecthood Open While Preserving the Roots of Meaning

Disciplinary reaccounting must both identify objects and deepen relations. Disciplines may preserve boundaries, but cannot let real causation stop there. Research into multidimensional relations, feedback, and the next round of purposes determines whether specialist knowledge can jointly enter civilization's overall judgment.

The philosophical task of the AGI era is not to decide with one test whether machines are people, but to reexamine every relation among intelligence, experience, life, subjecthood, selfhood, responsibility, standing, power, and meaning-bearing. Their long co-occurrence in humans once made repeated proof of many bridges unnecessary. As technology separates them, every substitution acquires real institutional consequences. Capability may be mislabeled experience, operational continuity survival of the subject, legal personhood consciousness, protection political standing, and accuracy legitimate rule. Philosophy must disclose each of these leaps.

The paper upholds Civilization Leap's philosophical foundation while refusing to make it a slogan exempt from proof. Meaning as the root means that civilization's survival, capabilities, and institutions are ultimately evaluated by whether subjects can form, claim, revise, and live their meanings together. Different sources of meaning mean that no single tradition or system may monopolize final interpretation. "Being alive has meaning; having meaning is itself a contribution" is a principle that existential standing needs no performance proof, not immunity for conduct, a resource formula, or authorization to govern. Opposition to a single ledger rejects no local calculation; it rejects any scale settling whole lives into rankings that stronger beings can cancel.

Finitude is not the sole source of meaning, much less a valorization of death. It describes three real mechanisms in known finite lives: choices occupy a finite practical horizon; particular histories bear experiences and commitments that copies cannot replace without argument; and relationships, losses, and consequences constitute genuine stakes for particular bearers. Life extension, treatment, reversibility, and repair can enlarge the conditions of meaning. If future subjects stably generate and bear meaning without these boundaries, theory must acknowledge another path of actualization. For humans, space and time are lived life. For AI with current public architectures, available materials first establish parameterized and operational time, not experienced time. Constraints produce constrained operation, not automatically finite existence.

Heterogeneous subjecthood must remain open. E, C, and O separately investigate experience, diachronic first-person continuity, and subject-related grasp of consequences; they are not a unified eligibility machine. Public evidence is currently insufficient to establish convergence across multiple methods in existing advanced AI on these matters, so ontological subjecthood is not recognized on that basis. Only in specific deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and exit may such systems be assigned functional roles in understanding, preserving, translating, and transmitting meaning and extending human capabilities. Both affirmation and permanent denial of artificial subjecthood carry evidential responsibilities. Potential welfare can support proportionate precaution; political standing, public authority, and sovereignty require separate proof. If future evidence changes the boundaries of subjecthood, theory must update.

New subjects can enlarge the community of meaning without reducing existing finite lives to obsolete versions. Expansion does not freeze old evaluations: historical conduct may be judged anew, later facts may reinterpret relational meaning, and overlooked subjects may gain recognition. But care, creation, harm, and

responsibility that occurred do not become non-events when stronger subjects appear. Philosophy's evidence stops here: facts of experience and continuity return to cognitive and neural sciences, life sciences, and AI research; protection, personhood, responsibility, membership, and public power return to ethics, law, and political science. Philosophy clarifies concepts and bridges; it cannot absorb neighboring disciplines' independent judgments into a "whole." The civilizational task is to continue seeing the consequences those independent judgments jointly form after they enter reality.

Closing the Argument

What new intelligence may cause humans to lose is not meaning already generated, but the ability to recognize and safeguard meaning and allow different subjects to share a world of meaning. Philosophy must both keep future boundaries of subjecthood open and prevent capability, standing, and power from crossing evidence and legitimacy to take over meaning itself.

Further Reading and Entry Points for Joint Research Moving Forward from Philosophical Questions

The paper stops at conceptual clarification, philosophical argument, and bridges across levels. Further reading does not simply mean “read a few more papers.” The following routes identify where philosophy stops, why another discipline re-enters, which competing directions deserve further testing, and what specialist work can directly change this paper. Readers need not first agree with Civilization Leap. Counterexamples, negative results, competing theories, institutional failures, and failures of cross-cultural translation are equally valid paths into joint research.

Table 11 Up, Down, Across, and Forward Routes for Continuing Philosophical Questions

Direction	Further question	Next entry point, reasons for re-entry, and work that can change this paper
Up Returning to the whole	Why do meaning, finitude, and the separation of subjecthood ultimately become civilizational questions?	Proceed to Disciplinary Reaccounting in the Age of AGI V2.4 and Civilization Leap: The Path of Civilization in the AGI Era (All Five Volumes) . Philosophy supplies roots and bridges only; overall direction requires joint testing by multiple disciplines, real consequences, and counterexamples. If the overall framework suppresses disciplinary independence or cannot absorb counterexamples, the philosophical roots must be rewritten.
Down Entering institutions and practice	How should protection work under uncertain subjecthood? How do standing, responsibility, membership, authority, and sovereignty form?	Proceed to P05 Ethics, Law, and Political Philosophy and P06 Political Science , then institutional and engineering validation through Human-COS, AGI-COS , public windows, and national-level integrated experiments. Practical results can force bridges to narrow or be reconstructed, but cannot masquerade in reverse as philosophical proof.
Left Neighboring disciplines re-enter	What has actually happened concerning experience, life, copying, migration, architectures, and evidence?	Proceed to P03 Epistemology , P04 Cognition, Neuroscience, and Philosophy of Mind , P08 Life Sciences , P11 AI and Computer Science , and P07 Systems Science . New construct-validity findings, negative results, causal interventions, branching experiments, and system facts may directly change E/C/O, finitude, and the positioning of current advanced AI.
Right Competing theories and opposing directions	Do functionalism, biological naturalism, phenomenology, no-self or process theories, relational personhood, panpsychism, or different civilizational traditions explain more?	Proceed to P13 Religious and Spiritual Traditions , P09 Social, Anthropological, and Civilizational Studies , and the relevant original texts and specialist research. If stronger ontologies, theories of meaning, or cross-traditional counterexamples have greater explanatory power, the paper should replace its terms, narrow its propositions, or even abandon E/C/O or bridges through finitude.
Forward From reading to research	What work advances the questions in practice rather than merely adding texts?	Conduct research on subjecthood across implementations; identity experiments involving copying, migration, and branching; meaning under life extension and high reversibility; comparisons of legal personhood and membership; cross-traditional conceptual translation; and consequences of actual deployment and exit. Replication failures and negative results are progress too. The most valuable participation is specialist work sufficient to change theory, not endorsement.

A Shared Purpose Ahead

Further reading ends not at the next paper, but in enabling different people to move from seeing problems to independent judgment, from independent judgment to research, revision, institutions, engineering, and practice, and ultimately into the real process of human civilization's leap.

The purpose is not to have more people finish reading Civilization Leap, but to have more people complete Civilization Leap together.

The Future Civilization Chain What World Would People Live in If Philosophical Judgments on Meaning, Finitude, and the Separation of Subjecthood Became Real

A vision is not evidence. The following entry points do not prove this paper already established. They place its disciplinary judgments within a future civilization that can operate, be lived in, and take shape for further testing. Readers may use them to form direction and aspirations, or reject the existing picture and change it with stronger disciplinary facts, institutional proposals, or real outcomes.

Further question	Suggested entry point	What becomes visible here	Boundary to preserve
The complete future picture	Living Civilization: The Complete Public Trilogy in One Volume	Returns meaning, subjecthood, power, and the shared world from abstract concepts to a complete picture of operation, lived life, and formation.	Future visions are not evidence of facts about subjecthood or philosophical propositions. Revise the picture if it flattens sources of meaning or differences among subjects.
How finite lives are lived	Living Civilization, Volume II: Real Life in a Future Civilization	Tests through birth, growth, relationships, work, illness, aging, and death whether finitude genuinely acquires lived weight.	Life narratives cannot prove that finitude necessarily generates meaning or prescribe one life as the only good life.
How individuals move from thought to action	A Leap in Thought	Carries conceptual analysis into human cognition, life experience, and actual action, testing whether philosophy can enter genuine self-transformation.	Changes of thought cannot become thresholds for evaluating personhood or institutional eligibility.
How meaning enters intermediate mechanisms	Meaning Dynamics	Continues studying how meaning enters subjects, relationships, structures, and civilizational processes under constraints from the validation volume and competing explanations.	Intermediate models cannot settle meaning in one aggregate score or prove foundational philosophical propositions backward.

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For entry points such as Human-COS that do not yet have unambiguous, stable individual pages in the unified public mapping, this paper states their responsibilities without guessing URLs. When needed, enter the current public version through the complete library.

Appendix A Core Propositions and Interfaces for Revision

The following numbers serve research citation and version tracking only, not eligibility scoring. Each proposition is governed by the arguments, strongest objections, and revision conditions in the main text. Numbers cannot replace argument.

Table A1 PHIL-1 through PHIL-8

Identifier	Core proposition	Primary revision trigger
PHIL-1	Actual technologies can separate the historical co-occurrence of intelligence, experience, life, subjecthood, responsibility, standing, power, and meaning-bearing.	Proof that a particular relation is necessarily coextensive under bounded conditions; revise only that bridge.
PHIL-2	Meaning is the fundamental evaluative horizon of civilizational legitimacy, not a synonym for capability, survival, or welfare.	No nontrivial discriminatory power in difficult cases.
PHIL-3	Sources of meaning may be plural; the reality of meaning, public legitimacy, and institutional coercive force must be separated.	Inability to constrain coercion, manipulation, and destruction of subjecthood.
PHIL-4	Human standing in meaning does not require market output, social recognition, or calculable contributions as conditions of admission.	Failure to keep existential standing distinct from evaluations of conduct, resources, or responsibility.
PHIL-5	The source, formation, bearing, creation, understanding, protection, transmission, interpretation, and domination of meaning are different roles.	Some practice proves that particular roles are necessarily co-constituted.
PHIL-6	Finitude is not the sole source of meaning. Known finite lives actualize meaning through a finite practical horizon, subject-related irreplaceability, and attribution of consequences.	Subjects without these mechanisms still stably generate and bear meaning.
PHIL-7	Physical, biological, path-related, embodied, narrative, relational, consequential, and continuity-related finitude require separate levels rather than an aggregate score.	The classification lacks discriminatory power or persistently omits key mechanisms.
PHIL-8	For humans, space and time are lived life. For currently identified public AI systems, materials first establish physical and operational time rather than experienced time.	Subject-related temporal structures in heterogeneous systems supported by convergence across methods.

Table A2 PHIL-9 through PHIL-15

Identifier	Core proposition	Primary revision trigger
PHIL-9	Constraints produce constrained operation. Only when boundaries enter a subject's own stakes and continuity can they become evidence of finite existence.	Particular engineering constraints are proved necessarily to form histories of subjects.
PHIL-10	Heterogeneous subjects must not be excluded a priori by carbon-based composition, human language, or existing bodily forms.	Reliable proof of a necessary substrate for consciousness.
PHIL-11	E, C, and O are revisable interdisciplinary directions addressing experiential protection, identity continuity, and responsibility capacities, not evidence domains, aggregate subjecthood scores, or eligibility thresholds.	The three directions systematically omit or misclassify known and heterogeneous subjects.

Identifier	Core proposition	Primary revision trigger
PHIL-12	Both affirming and permanently denying artificial subjecthood bear burdens of proof. Current advanced AI performs functional roles only in specific deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and exit.	Multiple sources converge on evidence of subjecthood, or current functional judgments are refuted.
PHIL-13	Ontological subjecthood, precautionary protection, moral status, legal standing, political membership, public authority, and sovereignty form nonmonotonic levels.	Proof of a necessary bridge between particular levels within a bounded institution.
PHIL-14	New subjects can enlarge the community of meaning. New capabilities do not make existing experiences and minimum standing in meaning into things that never occurred.	Meaning is proved to exist only as pure comparative ranking.
PHIL-15	Local quantification may serve bounded purposes. No single scale may settle the meaning of complete lives or civilization and acquire domination.	A bounded scale fully preserves rights, harms, dissent, and appeal without extrapolation.

Appendix B Evidential Status and Limits on the Use of Sources

This appendix records what sources can support, not a ranking of disciplines or theories. Category A facts support only objects and conditions directly observed in the research. Category B theories, methods, and competing explanations update confidence. Category C scenarios support stress testing. Category F foundational propositions face scrutiny through normative argument, counterexamples, and practical consequences.

Table B1 Major Evidence Clusters and Legitimate Conclusions

Topic	Representative sources and status	Can support	Must not overinfer
Cloning	Wilmut et al. 1997; A	Somatic cell nuclear transfer can produce viable mammals	Genetic similarity equals the same subject
Reprogramming	Takahashi & Yamanaka 2006; A	Differentiated cell states have plasticity	Cellular reversal equals resetting a life or personal identity
Synthetic life	Gibson 2010; Hutchison 2016; A	Synthetic genomes can control existing cells; cells with minimal genomes can grow	Creating complete life from nothing; life equals experience
Brain organoids	Lancaster 2013; Trujillo 2019; A/B	Partial developmental structures and complex oscillatory activity	Neural activity equals subjective experience
Aging	López-Otín et al. 2023; A/B	Aging involves mechanisms at multiple levels and offers intervention pathways	Extreme life extension or immortality has already been achieved
Consciousness theories	Seth & Bayne 2022; Cogitate 2025; B	Leading theories have testable predictions and remain in competition	A theory has become final consensus
AI consciousness indicators	Butlin et al. 2023/2026; Bayne et al. 2024; B	Indicators can be derived from multiple theories and update confidence	Satisfying indicators equals proof of experience
Uploading and emulation	Chalmers 2010; Piccinini 2021; Sandberg & Bostrom 2008; C	Distinguishes technical and identity questions and supplies conceptual pressure	Feasibility, experience, or original-subject survival has been proved
Philosophy of meaning	Wolf 2010; Metz 2013; B (competing philosophical and cross-traditional interpretations)	Competing analyses of subjective and objective conditions, naturalism, and the value of meaning	Proving Civilization Leap's foundational propositions
Personal identity	Williams 1970; Parfit 1984; Olson 1997; Schechtman 1996; B (competing philosophical and cross-traditional interpretations)	Competition among bodily, psychological, animal, and narrative criteria	Any criterion has received final empirical adjudication
Relational personhood	Honneth 1996; Coeckelbergh 2010; Menkiti 1984; Gyekye 1992; B (competing philosophical and cross-traditional interpretations)	Recognition, relationships, and communities constitute important dimensions of personhood	Relationships automatically prove experience or sovereignty

Topic	Representative sources and status	Can support	Must not overinfer
Selfhood across civilizations	Buddhist no-self, Nāgārjuna, Confucianism, Watsuji, Avicenna, Zhuangzi, Watts; B (competing philosophical and cross-traditional interpretations)	Pressures substantial selves, strong embodiment, capability rankings, and object boundaries	Classical traditions anticipated or endorse conclusions about AGI
This paper's philosophical and normative commitments	Responsibility taken under this paper's authorship; F	Meaning as the root but not a sufficient formula; plural sources; finitude not the sole source; open subjecthood; separate proof for standing and power; realized experiences not erased by capability rankings	Must not masquerade as experimental facts, legal effect, or proof of machine subjecthood

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