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A Foundational Acknowledgment: Vibe as the Felt Medium of Human Participation and the Topography of Pursuits

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Abstract

Psychology has sophisticated accounts of emotional contagion, interpersonal synchrony, therapeutic alliance, and affective communication — yet it has never named the single foundational medium all of them only partly approximate. This article names it, and builds a first-order framework upon it. It proposes that psychology acknowledge, as a foundational matter, four claims: that vibe — the word ordinary English has carried since the 1960s, and which Pali Buddhist phenomenology analysed for over two millennia under pavatta, vātā, aprapañca, and vedanā — is the felt medium of participation in the surrounding ambience; that the capacity to perceive it is the most primitive sensory faculty common to all living beings and the initial trigger of both threat perception and belongingness recognition; that it can be felt but cannot be wordified; and that each participant perceives its shades against an accumulated subconscious wealth, structurally unmeasurable on this account, that confers the entitlements determining what becomes perceptible. From these claims the article specifies the architecture of vibe-perception — a continuously updating congregation algorithm performing alignment-checks against ambient vibe-energy — and derives a topography of human pursuits anchored in the prime-trust-ground, the inter-participant substrate that opens once survival is secured. The result is a structural account of participation and pursuit that reorganises, rather than refutes, what the existing literatures have long measured without naming.

1. Introduction: The Word the Discipline Has Not Used

Psychology has built sophisticated empirical literatures on the felt textures of human life. Emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1993) names the transmission of affect between individuals. Interpersonal synchrony (Wheatley et al., 2012) names the spontaneous coupling of physiological and behavioural rhythms in social interaction. The therapeutic alliance (Bordin, 1979)—operationalised through measures such as the Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989) and shown across hundreds of studies and decades of meta-analytic work to predict treatment outcome across modalities (Flückiger et al., 2018)—names the felt relational ground of the clinical encounter. Background mood, ambient feeling, atmosphere—each has been investigated within its register, with measurable findings and replicable effects (Damasio, 2010). What these literatures share is that each names some shadow of a more foundational medium without naming the medium itself.

Ordinary English has held a word for that medium continuously since the 1960s: vibe. The word entered mainstream usage through the Beach Boys' 1966 "Good Vibrations" and spread through the counterculture into general English, where it has persisted across six decades as a stable, productive term. In contemporary usage it operates as both noun ("the vibe of this room") and verb ("they were vibing"), and has generated extensive compound forms (vibe check, vibe shift, vibecession, vibe curator). The word's persistence and productivity suggest that it points at something the language has needed to name.

This article proposes that psychology now learn to attend, with disciplinary seriousness, to what vibe points at. The proposal rests on four foundational claims.

No prior framework in psychology has named this medium, specified its perceiving faculty as primitive and dual-valenced, identified the categorical un-wordifiability of what that faculty registers, or supplied the unit of individuation by which different participants perceive different shades of it. The four claims that follow do each of these things—and in doing so bring under one architectural account a range of phenomena the discipline currently studies in fragmentation: the developmental trajectory of attachment, the physiological signatures of social baseline regulation, the neural signatures of contemplative absorption, cross-cultural variation in social perception, the entry into life’s great pursuit-pathways, and the rupturing and reformation of human collectivities. The claim is not that the existing literatures are wrong but that each is partial—a facet, in its own vocabulary, of an architecture none has yet specified.

First, vibe is the felt medium of participation in the surrounding ambience. Humans, and other living beings, are subsets of that surrounding, and necessarily exhibit its features; vibe is one such feature, registered by every participant as constitutive of being alive rather than as an added perceptual capacity. The participant who enters a room and feels its quality before any inference, the listener who registers a speaker's state before the speaker has spoken, the practitioner who perceives the felt ground of a meditative sitting—each is reading vibe. The reading is prior to articulation.

Second, the capacity to perceive vibe is the most primitive sensory faculty, common to all living beings, and is the initial trigger of both threat perception and belongingness recognition. The living being entering a space reads its vibe at the primitive level and registers, immediately and prior to any conscious analysis, either "I belong here safely" (the wholesome positive outcome) or "I must correct course and escape" (the threat outcome). One sensory faculty, two valenced outcomes. Belongingness, the term Maslow placed at the third level of his hierarchy as an emergent psychological need above survival, is in this framework already a feature of survival-floor perception—the wholesome positive outcome of primitive vibe-reading, present from the first breath of any living being.

In the evolved human mind, the same primitive faculty has been refined, across individual life-history and civilisational accumulation, to perceive vibe at much finer resolution. The evolved human registers multiple shades—hopeful, melancholic, charged, weary, expectant, reverent, conspiratorial, tender, fraught, electric, hollow, alive—none of them collapsible into the others, none of them propositionally describable without loss. These shades are beyond concrete and definite wordy-details. Vibe-shade perception is extremely individualistic: each participant perceives shades according to their entitlement, where entitlement is conferred by accumulated subconscious wealth—wordy and non-wordy—accumulated across the life-history. Two participants in the same ambience do not perceive the same vibe. They perceive different shades of the same vibe according to what their accumulated wealth has earned them the receptivity to access.

A familiar illustration makes this concrete. An infant and its mature primitive-parent occupy the same room when a stranger enters, or a loud sound arrives, or a thunderstorm begins. Both read the same primitive vibe. The infant, with minimal accumulated wealth and therefore minimal entitlement to discriminate finer shades, registers threat and may cry or recoil. The parent, with accumulated wealth from thousands of prior encounters with situations of this kind, registers the same vibe shaded as familiar and manageable—"been there, done that"—and continues whatever they were doing without alarm. Same room, same stranger, same sound, same primitive faculty active in both. The difference is entitlement: the parent has earned, through accumulated subconscious wealth (mostly non-wordy, settled into the body and the perceptual orientation rather than into articulable concepts), the receptivity to a shade the infant has not yet earned.

Third, vibe can be felt but cannot be wordified. The relation between vibe and language is not partial articulation but categorical difference. What the felt medium carries exceeds, in kind, what any articulation can render. Any sentence about a vibe is a sentence; the vibe itself remains in a different register, more like a colour than like a proposition. This claim is the strong form of the conjecture and the article will defend it.

Fourth, each participant perceives shades of vibe against the base of their own accumulated subconscious wealth—wordy and non-wordy—which on this framework's account is structurally unmeasurable, and which confers the particular entitlements that shape what shades become perceptible to that particular participant at that particular moment. The framework's operative unit of

individuation is therefore not the bounded cognitive agent, not the relational self, not the embodied enactor—it is the particular configuration of perceptual entitlements that each participant's accumulated subconscious wealth has earned them at the present moment.

From these four foundational claims, the article develops a topography of human pursuits anchored in what we will call the prime-trust-ground (PTG)—the inter-participant structural region that opens once survival is secured and that hosts all collective human formation, from the dyad to the polity. The present article specifies the medium, its perceiving-and-contributing architecture, and the topography the architecture sustains. The reorganisation of existing motivation theory that this topography invites—of Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1943, 1954), of Kenrick and colleagues' evolutionary renovation of it (Kenrick et al., 2010), and of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017)—together with the research-programme predictions the framework generates, lies beyond the scope of the present article, whose task is to establish the foundational architecture on which such reorganisation and prediction would build.

The article is offered as an invitation to the discipline rather than as a polemic against any existing theory. The motivation frameworks, the affective neuroscience tradition (Panksepp & Biven, 2012), the contemplative neuroscience literature (Brewer et al., 2011; Lutz et al., 2008), and the relational, social-ontological, and intersubjective-phenomenological traditions (Gergen, 2009; Tomasello, 2014; Zahavi, 2014) are each empirically and philosophically valuable within their registers. This framework reorganises them within a foundational claim that none has yet made, while preserving the empirical content each has produced.

2. Two Analytical Traditions: The Etymology of Vibe and the Pali Vocabulary

Two independent analytical traditions — separated by language family, geography, and historical era — have each produced precise vocabulary for the felt medium this article names. That two traditions developed independently from each other have converged on the same structural features is evidence relevant to a foundational article: the features they each name are not artefacts of a single intellectual culture but recognisable in human experience across cultures, available for disciplinary investigation in psychology's own register.

The word vibe arrived in mainstream English in 1966 with the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations," a counterculture megahit that elevated psychedelic slang into general usage. But the word's etymological descent reaches considerably further than 1966, and the descent is itself evidence for the foundational claims this article advances.

The contemporary noun vibe is a shortened form of vibration, which entered modern English through the Latin *vibratio* (a shaking, a trembling), itself derived from the verb *vibrare* (to tremble, to oscillate). The verb traces, through Proto-Italic, to the Proto-Indo-European root **weip-**, **reconstructed by historical**

linguists with a core sense of "to turn, to oscillate" (Pokorny, 1959; Mallory & Adams, 2006**) and glossed in popular etymological summaries as "to turn, vacillate, tremble ecstatically" (Harper, n.d.). The reconstruction is robust: cognates appear across Indo-European branches—Sanskrit vepate (he trembles), Old English wīpian (to wipe, to move quickly), Lithuanian vyburti (to wag, of a tail)—all carrying a core meaning of rapid oscillatory motion, with affective associations recurring in derived forms.**

Between the PIE root and contemporary English, the word passes through one philosophically significant station: David Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1749), where vibration was proposed as the literal physiological medium of mental life. Hartley argued that sensations, ideas, and emotions were carried as vibrations in the nerves and in the brain's "medullary substance"—that the felt textures of mental life were literal vibrations in the body. The theory was empirically wrong in its mechanical specifics (the nervous system does not transmit signals as Hartley imagined), but it captured something the discipline of psychology has been working its way back toward for two centuries: that mental life is felt, embodied, and registered as a textural quality that ordinary language has always recognised under terms like trembling, being moved, resonating, being touched.

This etymology matters for the present article in a specific way. It shows that the meaning vibe now carries in ordinary English is not a recent invention or a piece of cultural ephemera. It is the contemporary surface of a meaning the language has carried for at least four millennia: the recognition that there is a felt textural quality to being alive in the world, that this quality oscillates and trembles, and that it can be perceived directly by participants without being explicable in propositional terms. The word's persistence across millennia, and its productivity in contemporary English, is evidence that ordinary language has been holding open a conceptual space the discipline of psychology has not yet entered formally.

A second analytical tradition, developed independently of the Indo-European linguistic line, has examined the same felt medium with technical precision for more than two millennia. In the Pali Buddhist tradition — whose canonical literature constitutes one of the world’s most extensive pre-modern philosophical literatures — several terms together do work that the framework here calls vibe.

The ambient felt current of a place—what one perceives upon entering a temple or a tense room before any conscious analysis—is named in Pali as *pavatta* (a current, a flow, that-which-is-occurring) or *vātā* (literally wind, but used phenomenologically for the felt quality of movement lingering in a space). Early Buddhist monastic literature describes how a meditator entering a place registers its *pavatta* or *vātā* as a felt quality of stillness, agitation, sanctity, or unease—what the framework here calls the vibe of the place. The vocabulary recognises that this ambient felt current exists, can be perceived, and has a quality that affects those who enter it without being articulable in propositional terms.

The un-articulable character of this felt current is named through a distinct term: *prapañca* (Sanskrit; *papañca* in Pali), which names conceptual proliferation—the cascade of thinking, naming, and elaborating that happens once an experience has been registered. Its negation, *aprapañca* (Sanskrit;

nippapañca in Pali), names what is beyond or prior to such elaboration (Ñāṇananda, 1971). The ambient felt current of a place, in Pali analysis, is in its essential quality *aprapañca*—it can be experienced but cannot be conceptually contained; any attempt to render it in concepts moves the experience from *aprapañca* into *prapañca*, changing it in kind.

A third Pali term, *vedanā*, names something related but distinct: the felt sensation that arises in the mind when one of the six sensory perceptors (the five physical senses plus the mind itself, in the Buddhist account) makes contact with its object (Bodhi, 2000). *Vedanā* is the immediate affective register of any such sensory contact—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—prior to and beneath any conceptual elaboration. *Vedanā* operates at the level of individual sensation arising from contact; the framework's notion of vibe-perception encompasses *vedanā* but is broader, since vibe is read as an ambient quality of an environment or another participant as well as in discrete sensory contacts.

The relevance of these distinctions for the present article is that the Pali tradition has spent two and a half millennia developing precise vocabulary for the phenomenon the framework here calls vibe. *Pavatta* and *vātā* name the ambient felt current; *aprapañca* names its un-articulable quality; *vedanā* names the contact-arising sensation through which felt registration occurs. The framework does not claim that vibe is any one of these terms; it draws on them to show that two distinct intellectual traditions—the contemporary English word and the Pali Buddhist analysis—have independently arrived at recognitions of the same structural features of human experience, and that the convergence is evidence that the features exist and warrant disciplinary attention.

A discipline that has not yet named what ordinary language has named for four millennia, and what one of the world's major contemplative-philosophical traditions has analysed for two and a half millennia, has work to do.

3. The Architecture of Vibe-Perception: Congregation, Alignment, and Continuous Updating

The four foundational claims of § 1 establish what vibe is, how it is perceived, and how individuation works through accumulated wealth. The architecture by which vibe-perception operates can now be specified more precisely.

Each specific human being is constituted by a particular organising pattern—what we may call, neutrally, the being's congregation algorithm. This term names whatever the integrated organisational structure is that makes this particular human being this particular being rather than some other: the configuration of neural, physiological, perceptual, cognitive, and accumulated experiential features that together constitute one individual. The framework does not need to commit to a specific physical, neurochemical, or computational specification of the congregation algorithm. It needs only to recognise that each human being is constituted by such an integrated pattern and that the pattern develops, through life-

history and accumulated subconscious wealth, into the specific configuration that the being is at any given moment.

Vibe-perception, on this account, is the felt registration of the alignment or misalignment between this congregation algorithm and the ambient vibe-energy of the surrounding situation. When the human being enters a room, encounters another participant, faces a problem, or sits down to meditate, the being's congregation algorithm performs, at a level beneath conscious awareness, an alignment check with the ambient situation. Two binary outcomes are possible at the primitive level:

Alignment—the congregation algorithm finds its organising pattern compatible with, accommodated by, or resonant with the ambient vibe-energy. The result is felt as the positive valence: belongingness, safe approach, "I can be here as I am." The body relaxes, attention opens, the participant becomes available for engagement with whatever is in the situation.

Misalignment—the congregation algorithm finds its organising pattern in conflict with, threatened by, or unable to accommodate the ambient vibe-energy. The result is felt as the negative valence: threat, course-correction, "I must escape or change something." The body tenses, attention narrows, the participant becomes oriented toward removing themselves from the situation or altering it.

This alignment-misalignment architecture explains several features of human experience that existing psychological frameworks have described without fully accounting for. It explains why the same room can feel welcoming to one person and oppressive to another (their congregation algorithms differ, so their alignment results differ). It explains why trauma survivors often experience threat in objectively safe situations (their congregation algorithm has been shaped by past misalignment experiences such that it now registers misalignment even where none is structurally present). It explains why contemplative practice produces a felt sense of alignment that practitioners describe as inseparable from the practice's value (sustained practice shapes the congregation algorithm toward broader and more flexible alignment with a wider range of ambient conditions).

The alignment-misalignment architecture also accounts for the multi-shade phenomenon developed in § 1. At the primitive level, the alignment check produces a binary read-out (aligned/misaligned, belonging/threat). In the evolved human mind, with substantial accumulated subconscious wealth, the same alignment check operates at much finer resolution. Rather than producing only the binary, it produces a multi-dimensional read-out of how the congregation algorithm is aligned or misaligned with the ambient situation—yielding the shades the article has named. Each shade is a particular manner in which the alignment-misalignment relationship is registering. The shades are not propositionally describable because they are not propositional in nature; they are felt registrations of complex configurations of partial alignment along multiple dimensions of the congregation algorithm's relationship with the ambient situation.

A critical feature of the congregation algorithm has not yet been named: the algorithm is not a fixed structure but a continuously updating one. Every alignment-misalignment encounter is simultaneously

an output of the algorithm (a perceived shade, a threat or belongingness reading, an attentional response) and an input to it (an update that modifies the algorithm's configuration for future alignment checks). The accumulated subconscious wealth that the framework has named is precisely this: the current state of the algorithm's continuous self-updating across the life-history. Wealth is not a separate store consulted by the algorithm; wealth is the algorithm's present configuration, expressed as the entitlements it currently confers.

The updating operates at a temporal scale that warrants explicit acknowledgment: the algorithm is updated continuously, at every moment of encounter with ambient vibe-energy, not periodically at developmental milestones or significant life events. Every moment of waking and sleeping life is simultaneously an alignment-check output (a perceived shade, a felt state, an attentional disposition) and an algorithmic update event (a small modification to the algorithm's configuration that will shape subsequent alignment-checks). The participant who reads the vibe of a room is, in the very act of reading, becoming a slightly different participant—one whose entitlements have been refined by this encounter, whose next reading will be conducted from a slightly altered configuration. The increments are typically too small to register at the level of phenomenal experience; but they are continuous, they accumulate, and over years they constitute the developmental, contemplative, clinical, and cross-cultural trajectories that this article will return to.

This continuous-updating architecture unifies several developmental, contemplative, clinical, and cross-cultural phenomena under a single architectural account. Development is the trajectory of algorithmic updates across childhood and adolescence that progressively refine the alignment check, accounting for why a seasoned parent reads the same primitive ambience differently from an infant—not because the parent has cognitively learned something the infant has not, but because the parent's algorithm has been updated through decades of encounter into a configuration that produces finer and more accurate shade-readings. Contemplative training is the sustained, attention-rich algorithmic updating that meditative and other contemplative practices produce, accounting for the measurable neural and behavioural differences reliably observed in long-term practitioners (Davidson & Lutz, 2008; Lutz et al., 2008). Trauma, on this account, is a pattern of algorithmic updates that have shaped the algorithm toward misalignment-readings even where current ambient conditions do not warrant them, and therapeutic work is the facilitation of new updates that allow the algorithm to recover broader alignment capacity (Porges, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014). Cultural variation in perception is the consequence of systematic differences in the kinds of alignment-misalignment encounters that members of different cultural PTGs accumulate, accounting for documented cross-cultural differences in attention, emotion-recognition, and social cognition (Henrich et al., 2010; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007) without requiring any cognitive-architectural difference between cultures.

These four domains—developmental, contemplative, clinical, cross-cultural—have been studied in psychology under largely separate research programmes with separate vocabularies. The framework here proposes that they are not separate phenomena but four contexts in which the same underlying architecture (continuously updating congregation algorithms performing alignment checks against

ambient vibe-energy) operates with different patterns of update. The empirical productivity of recognising this common architecture is something the article will return to in § 7, where the framework's five research-programme predictions are presented.

This architecture connects directly to existing psychological literatures. Attachment theory's secure base (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969) describes a relationship in which the developing child's congregation algorithm has been shaped by repeated alignment experiences with a caregiver, producing a stable expectation of alignment that supports exploration. Polyvagal theory's safe-and-social state (Porges, 2011) describes the physiological signature of alignment—the ventral vagal activation that occurs when neuroception registers the ambient situation as supportive of social engagement. Self-Determination Theory's autonomy and relatedness needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017) describe the wellbeing consequences of sustained alignment in the relevant domains. What each of these frameworks describes from within its particular vocabulary, the present framework recognises as instances of the same underlying architecture: vibe-perception as the alignment check between a specific, continuously updating congregation algorithm and an ambient vibe-energy.

The architectural register in which the framework operates also bears a relation to a major contemporary research programme in computational neuroscience and theoretical biology: the free-energy / active-inference framework (Friston, 2010), which proposes that organisms maintain themselves through continuous minimisation of variational free energy via predictive models of their environment. The framework’s alignment-check between congregation algorithm and ambient vibe-energy is structurally adjacent to, while differing from, this programme: both treat the organism’s state as continuously compared against environmental input through an internal generative model, but the construct that does the substantive work in the present framework—accumulated subconscious wealth—is not, on the framework’s account, reducible to a parameterised generative model. (The framework’s register-choice and its relation to other architectural-register theories are addressed in the closing methodological note of this section.) Whether the framework’s structural commitments can ultimately be reconciled with active-inference formalism, or whether they constitute a genuine alternative, is a research question the framework opens rather than resolves.

The alignment-check of the continuously-updating congregation algorithm. Ambient vibe-energy is matched against the algorithm's current configuration of accumulated subconscious wealth; the alignment-check produces either belongingness-vibe (alignment) or threat-vibe (misalignment); every check is simultaneously an output and an input that updates the algorithm's configuration for future checks.

3.5 A Note on the Bidirectional Architecture

The architecture specified above has been described from the side of the receptor—the participant whose congregation algorithm reads ambient vibe and registers alignment or misalignment. A complete account of vibe-perception requires that the architecture also be described from the side of the ambience—what the receptor's reception does to the vibe that is being received. The framework names

this as the bidirectional architecture of vibe-perception, and identifies three layers at which bidirectionality operates.

At the single-event level, every alignment-check produces an output that does not merely register internally. The output—registered as belongingness-vibe or threat-vibe, expressed in the participant's body, attention, and behavioural disposition—discharges back into the ambient vibe and is immediately perceptible to other receptors present. The receptor is, in this respect, simultaneously a reader of ambient vibe and a contributor to it. Every act of vibe-perception is also an act of vibe-emission. When the participant who has just registered threat retreats, the retreat does not merely remove that participant from the ambience; it leaves behind a perturbation in the ambient vibe that the remaining participants read in their next alignment-check, prior to any verbal account of why the participant left. When the participant who has just registered belongingness orients-toward the ambience—the felt orientation the framework names ownness—the orientation contributes its own colour to the ambient vibe, which the welcoming ambience reciprocates.

At the cumulative-constructive level, single-event discharges leave trails in the ambient vibe. Same-kind trails accumulate as colour; the fine-grained variations of those trails accumulate as shades; the accumulation across time constitutes the ambience's evolutional trajectory. An ambience's character is not in its physical structure or its declared institutional form but in the accumulated trail-medium that its receptors have laid down. Same-kind receptors, contacting an ambience whose evolutional trajectory has been shaped substantially by their kind, register a form of recognition that extends belongingness-vibe—the felt recognition that this ambience has been built, in part, by participants of one's own kind. This is what the framework names ownness, distinguished from belongingness as a historical-cumulative recognition rather than as a present-moment alignment state.

At the cumulative-divisive level, the same architecture that produces constructive accumulation also produces, under different conditions, rupturous division. When the receptors contacting an ambience are of incompatible kinds—when their trails leave colours and shades that are mutually opposing rather than mutually reinforcing—the ambient trajectory does not accumulate coherently. Conflicting colours and shades diverge; ownness becomes distributed across incompatible clusters; the ambience, no longer able to contain both ownness-clusters within a single coherent character, undergoes structural rupture. The original ambience bifurcates into sub-ambiences, each consolidating around one ownness-cluster and accumulating its own subsequent trajectory. The framework treats rupturous division not as a failure of the architecture but as one of its lawful outcomes—a structural feature of any ambience that gathers receptors of incompatible kinds for long enough.

The bidirectional architecture is sketched here to identify its claims and its terminology—vibe-receptor, ownness, evolutional trajectory, rupturous division, and the three-layer specification of bidirectionality—and to position it as an architectural elaboration of the framework rather than as a separate framework. Its substantive development, with the methodological implications it carries for the study of polarisation, schism, cultural continuity-with-evolution, and the felt content of collective life, is left for future work.

A brief note on the register in which this architecture is specified. The framework operates at what may be called the architectural register—describing the structure of vibe-perception, the conditions under which its components engage, and the relations among them—rather than at the register of a formal computational or mathematical model. This is a deliberate methodological choice, not a deferred ambition. The phenomenon being theorised—vibe as a felt medium, perceived against accumulated subconscious wealth that is on this framework's account structurally unmeasurable (§ 7.6)—does not yet license the parameter-specifications that formal models require. The framework is in this respect closer in register to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and dual-process theory (Kahneman, 2011) than to the formal computational models that have been developed for narrower psychological domains. Formal specification of the alignment-check, the trail-accumulation function, and the conditions for rupturous division is a tractable downstream research task; the present article supplies the architecture that such formal work would specify, and identifies in advance (§ 7) the empirical landmarks at which formal specification would become warranted.

4. The Topography of Pursuits: The Prime-Trust-Ground and the Pathways It Hosts

With the foundational claims established (§ 1), the etymological and Pali evidence laid out (§ 2), and the architecture of vibe-perception specified (§ 3), the article now develops the framework's structural account of human pursuits. The topography presented here is not a hierarchy of needs and not a partial-order of motivations. It is a region map of the felt landscape that vibe-perception opens for human participants. Three structural elements compose this map: the survival floor as the ground from which the topography rises; the prime-trust-ground (PTG) as the encompassing substrate within which the entire pursuit-life of human beings is conducted; and the recurrent pursuit pathways that open within the PTG at bewilderment-junctures, each pursued by participants whose accumulated subconscious wealth has earned them the entitlement to enter it. Figure 2 presents the topography schematically and provides a visual anchor for the architectural claims developed in the remainder of this section.

The topography of pursuits within the prime-trust-ground. The survival floor sits beneath the PTG, which opens once survival concerns are addressed. The PTG is an encompassing substrate (not a peer-region) that hosts an internal topography of recurrent pursuit-pathways: procreative, artistic, intellectual (with scientific, explorative, and experimentation sub-pathways), philosophical and contemplative aloneness, and further pathways the framework treats the catalogue as open-ended. Wealth-mode operates as a cross-cutting orientation. The mistuned-alignment pathway is the structural location at which psychopathology occurs — inside the architecture rather than outside it.

4.1 The Survival Floor

The survival floor is the region in which the human participant operates when threat-avoidance, hunger-management, or shelter-finding is the dominant concern. As established in § 1, primitive vibe-perception is the perceptual faculty that makes these survival pursuits possible: the participant reads the ambient

vibe through the alignment-check of their congregation algorithm and registers, immediately and prior to any conscious analysis, whether the situation supports continued presence (alignment, belongingness-vibe) or requires course-correction (misalignment, threat-vibe). This is the perceptual architecture that animal psychology has recognised under terms like predator detection, resource-seeking, and habitat selection. Vibe-perception is the underlying faculty that performs these operations in humans and in other animals alike.

The survival floor is not a region the human exits permanently. Throughout life, threats arise, hunger arises, shelter must be re-secured. The survival floor remains operative beneath every other pursuit, ready to claim attention when its concerns become acute. What changes with development and accumulated subconscious wealth is not that the human leaves the survival floor but that survival-floor concerns are addressed more efficiently—the experienced adult identifies threats with fewer false alarms than the inexperienced child, secures food and shelter with less expenditure of attention than the novice—leaving more attentional capacity available for pursuits in the topography above. This developmental story is consistent with established research on the maturation of threat-detection circuitry, the development of executive function, and the gradual handover of attention from survival-monitoring to higher-order pursuits (Diamond, 2013; LeDoux, 2015).

4.2 The Prime-Trust-Ground: The Encompassing Substrate of Human-Pursuit-Life

When survival concerns are addressed—when threat is avoided, hunger is answered, shelter is secured—a structural region of human life opens that is not available to the participant in active survival pursuit. This region is the prime-trust-ground (PTG).

The PTG is not one region among several in the topography. It is the encompassing substrate within which the entire topography of human-pursuit-life is conducted. The procreative, artistic, intellectual, scientific, explorative, experimentation, wealth, philosophical, and contemplative pursuits that humans engage in across their lives—all of these are conducted within the PTG. They are not parallel regions to it; they are the rich internal topography that the PTG hosts.

4.2.1 The PTG as inter-participant structural region

The PTG opens specifically when two or more participants, each having addressed their immediate survival concerns, find themselves co-present in a state of mutual vibe-availability. Each participant's congregation algorithm performs the alignment-check with the ambient situation that now includes the other participant. When alignment-with-the-other is registered—when each reads in the other a vibe compatible with their own, a desires-commonness recognition—the PTG between them opens. The recognition is mutual, immediate, and pre-linguistic. It is what social-baseline theory (Beckes & Coan, 2011) has described as the human default of treating relational presence as a resource for the alignment-check itself; what attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) has described as the establishment of a secure base from which exploration becomes possible; what polyvagal theory

(Porges, 2011) has described as the ventral vagal social-engagement state activated by neuroception of safety.

What these existing frameworks describe within their respective vocabularies, the present framework recognises as the same underlying phenomenon: the opening of inter-participant structural availability when survival-secured participants find their congregation algorithms aligning with one another's vibe.

4.2.2 Reinforcement, fortification, and the scaling of the PTG

The PTG between participants does not remain at the initial recognition. Through repeated co-presence in moments of shared pursuit, shared safety, and shared meaning, the trust-vibe between them is reinforced. Each successful joint engagement—a shared meal, a difficulty survived, a celebration shared—produces an algorithmic update in each participant that includes the felt residue of having-been-with-this-other in alignment. The reinforcement is not primarily cognitive or informational; it is the depositing of accumulated subconscious wealth that includes the other as a reliably aligning presence. This is consistent with research on relationship-specific schemas (Baldwin, 1992), on couples' co-regulation of physiological state (Sbarra & Hazan, 2008), and on the long-term consolidation of attachment relationships into stable working models (Fraley, 2002).

Reinforced trust-vibe becomes fortified when it acquires structural protections against disruption. Fortification operates at multiple scales: at the level of pairs (declared loyalties, rituals of commitment, shared property, jointly-borne responsibility); at the level of families (kinship structures, naming conventions, inheritance patterns); at the level of larger PTGs (institutions, laws, oaths, written constitutions, shared symbols, shared narratives). Fortification allows a PTG to survive periods of stress, separation, or disagreement that would dissolve unfortified trust-vibe. Marriage as an institution is the fortification of pair-vibe. Citizenship as an institution is the fortification of polity-vibe. Religious community as an institution is the fortification of shared-meaning-vibe.

A structural observation worth naming: fortifications can become rigid and outlast the trust-vibe they were built to protect. Institutions can persist as hollow forms long after the underlying mutual vibe that they once carried has dissipated—marriages that have become institutional shells, religious communities that have become ritual without felt content, polities that maintain forms without civic vitality. When fortification outlasts its underlying trust-vibe, it requires either disruption (to allow fresh trust-vibe to form within new structures) or replacement. This dynamics of reinforcement, fortification, and occasional de-fortification accounts for much of how human collective life actually works at the scale of historical and political change.

The PTG scales without changing in kind. The dyad of two participants reading one another's vibe directly is the smallest PTG. A family in continuous co-presence is a PTG sustained largely by direct vibe-reading. A small community is a PTG sustained by direct mutual vibe-availability among most pairs and by mediating structures for the remainder. At larger scales—towns, cities, regions, nations—direct vibe-

reading among all participants is no longer possible. The PTG at these scales is sustained by mediating structures: shared language, rituals, narratives, myths, symbols, institutions, infrastructure, identified edges and outsiders. These structures do not create the PTG; they sustain it across distances at which direct vibe-perception cannot reach. The polity is a PTG of millions of participants who do not directly perceive each other's vibes but who share, through mediating structures, a felt sense of belonging to a common formation.

This scale-invariance unifies what existing literatures have addressed in fragments. Attachment theory has addressed the dyadic PTG; small-group dynamics research (Forsyth, 2018) has addressed the band-scale PTG; social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) has addressed group-level PTGs; nationalism and political-community research (Anderson, 1983) has addressed polity-scale PTGs. Each has produced empirical findings within its scale. The framework here recognises that these are the same architecture operating at different scales with different mixes of direct and mediated vibe-availability.

4.2.3 The PTG as developmental ground

The infant born to a pair or to a larger family arrives into an existing PTG and begins, immediately, to be inducted into it. The infant's congregation algorithm is shaped by repeated alignment-encounters with caregivers in this PTG; the accumulated subconscious wealth that the infant deposits over the first years of life is largely the wealth of having-been-aligned-with-these-particular-others. This is what attachment theory has been describing under the vocabulary of working models and secure base; the present framework recognises it as the algorithmic-updating story of how the infant's vibe-reading capacities are shaped by the PTG into which they have been born.

The developmental trajectory through childhood and adolescence is the trajectory of progressively widening PTG participation. The child enters the extended-family PTG, then peer-group PTGs at school and in the neighbourhood, then institutional PTGs (the school as PTG, the religious community as PTG, the youth team as PTG), eventually the wider PTGs of profession, civic life, and adult community. Each entry into a new PTG is an algorithmic-updating event: the congregation algorithm updates to include the new PTG's vibe-conditions in its repertoire of recognised alignment-patterns. Some PTGs are entered easily and quickly; others require sustained presence before the algorithm has accumulated enough wealth to perceive the PTG's finer vibe-shades and to participate in its life with discrimination.

4.2.4 Entitlement-thresholds and bewilderment-junctures: the joint architecture of pursuit-pathway entry

The most structurally important feature of the PTG's internal topography is the joint operation of two mechanisms: the continuous accumulation of entitlements through algorithmic updating, and the bewilderment-junctures at which those entitlements become operative for pursuit-pathway entry.

Entitlements are what the participant's congregation algorithm currently confers as perceptual capacity. At certain points in continuous algorithmic-updating, accumulated wealth crosses a threshold that confers a new entitlement: the capacity to perceive a shade of vibe that was not previously perceptible,

or to recognise a pursuit avenue as a possibility that was not previously visible. A musician's entitlement to perceive a particular timbral relationship arises at the threshold when their accumulated musical wealth has updated their algorithm sufficiently. A clinician's entitlement to perceive a particular kind of patient-state arises at the threshold when their accumulated clinical wealth has done the same. A parent's entitlement to perceive a particular shade of their child's emotional state arises at the threshold when their accumulated child-specific wealth has done the same. The entitlement is not a credential and not a piece of knowledge; it is a perceptual capacity that the participant's algorithm now confers.

Entitlement-thresholds are also crossed collectively. A polity recognises the validity of an identity-category, the legitimacy of a grievance, or the existence of a phenomenon, when sufficient participants in the PTG have crossed individual entitlement-thresholds for that category. Collective entitlement-thresholds of this kind are the structural location at which what historians and sociologists describe as cultural change actually occurs—not as the change of beliefs or the diffusion of information, but as the cumulative crossing of individual thresholds across enough of the PTG's participants that the collective recognition becomes operative.

But the entitlement, by itself, only confers visibility. It does not by itself produce pathway-entry. The pathway has to become available for entry—and this happens at the bewilderment-juncture. A bewilderment-juncture occurs when the participant's congregation algorithm encounters an ambient vibe-energy for which the existing accumulations and entitlements offer no settled alignment-pathway. The alignment-check produces no clear binary, no familiar shade-reading, no recognised pursuit-response. The participant is, for that moment, structurally between configurations: the old algorithmic configuration is no longer producing useful readings, and a new configuration has not yet stabilised.

A note on terminology is necessary at this point. The word bewilderment in ordinary English carries connotations of confusion, distress, being lost, or being overwhelmed in a negative way. None of these connotations is intended in the framework's use of the term. Bewilderment, in the present framework, names something more neutral and more structurally precise: the state of the congregation's consciousness when it has arrived at a structural moment where unfamiliar pathway-possibilities of topological pursuit are visible, and the participant cannot foresee where any of those pathways will lead. Bewilderment is the state-of-being-presented-with-possibilities, not the state-of-being-confused-about-current-circumstances. It is necessarily prospective—the participant cannot foresee what will follow from entering any of the visible pathways—and it is necessarily structural—the whole organising configuration of the participant is in a state of openness-to-multiple-possibilities, felt at the level of the body, the perceptual field, and the attentional disposition rather than only as a cognitive uncertainty.

Bewilderment in this sense is not necessarily distressing. It can be experienced as wonder, openness, awe, fertile uncertainty, expectant attention. The contemplative arriving at a deep recognition is bewildered in the framework's sense. The scientist arriving at a fertile puzzle is bewildered in the framework's sense. The artist arriving at a perception that demands expression is bewildered in the framework's sense. The new participants arriving at a recognition of mutual vibe-availability are

bewildered in the framework's sense. None of these are confused or distressed; all are at structural moments where new pathway-possibilities are present and they do not yet know which they will enter.

Bewilderment in this sense connects to several established psychological literatures that have named related phenomena under different vocabularies: the liminal phase in anthropological accounts of transition (Turner, 1969); the threshold concept in higher education research (Meyer & Land, 2005); the fertile void in Gestalt therapy (Perls, 1969); the productive disorientation in transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991); the not-knowing mind in contemplative traditions. Each of these names, within its register, what the framework names as bewilderment: the structural opening that occurs when settled pathways are no longer operative and new ones are visible but not yet entered.

The bewilderment-juncture is the moment at which the participant's existing entitlements come into play as the determinants of which pursuit-pathways are visible as possibilities and which can be entered. The two mechanisms work jointly: entitlements provide visibility, bewilderment provides the structural moment at which entry becomes possible. A participant with the entitlement to perceive the philosophical pathway as a possibility but no encounter with a bewilderment-shock has the visibility but no occasion to enter. A participant encountering a bewilderment-shock but with no entitlement to perceive the philosophical pathway as an option will not see philosophy as one of the doors that has opened. The pathways that actually open for any specific participant at any specific bewilderment-juncture are the intersection of their current entitlement-configuration and the shock's particular character.

The bewilderment-juncture is one of the structural mechanisms by which the algorithm receives its most significant updates. The shock-moment is the moment at which the algorithm is most malleable, most available for substantial restructuring. Major life transitions, deep contemplative openings, traumatic events, creative breakthroughs, religious conversions, scientific discoveries, philosophical realisations—these share a phenomenological structure because they are all bewilderment-events with different pathway outcomes.

The framework names some of the pursuit-pathways that recur across human cultures and life-histories, without claiming the list is exhaustive:

The philosophical pathway is visible to participants whose accumulated wealth has earned the entitlement to articulate. The shock-moment opens into the orientation toward expressing in language what the encounter has carried. The participant turns inward toward articulation.

The contemplative pathway is visible to participants whose accumulated wealth has earned the entitlement to attend without articulation. The shock-moment opens into the orientation toward sustained direct attending beneath any attempt at articulation. The algorithm itself slows, the alignment-check is suspended, and the participant becomes still in the shock-moment rather than acting from it.

The artistic pathway is visible to participants whose accumulated wealth has earned the entitlement to give non-wordy expressive form. The shock-moment opens into the orientation toward creative work in a medium that gives form to what the shock has carried, even if no proposition could capture it.

The scientific pathway is visible to participants whose accumulated wealth has earned the entitlement to systematic investigation. The shock-moment opens into the orientation toward investigating the encountered phenomenon—formulating hypotheses, designing tests, gathering evidence—that is structurally the origin-point of many research programmes and scientific discoveries.

The explorative pathway is visible to participants whose accumulated wealth has earned the entitlement to traverse new territory. The shock-moment opens into the orientation toward going out into the situation the shock has revealed—physical exploration, anthropological encounter, cultural traversal, intellectual exploration of unfamiliar conceptual territory.

The experimentation pathway is visible to participants whose accumulated wealth has earned the entitlement to testing and intervention. The shock-moment opens into the orientation toward trying things, manipulating the situation to see what it can yield, learning by doing what the encounter has made available.

The framework leaves the pathway-catalogue open-ended rather than exhaustive. Other pathways occur recurrently in particular cultures and historical periods—devotional pathways, civic-organising pathways, healing-vocation pathways, ascetic pathways, and many more—that the framework names without attempting to fix the complete set. The structural claim is that bewilderment opens pathways jointly with the visibility entitlements confer; the catalogue of pathways is open because human accumulated wealth varies so widely that the framework cannot enumerate in advance which pathways any specific participant will have entitlement to enter.

The framework must also recognise the mistuned-alignment pathway, in which the bewilderment does not open a productive door. Instead the algorithm produces increasingly distorted alignment-readings, becoming less rather than more accurate over time. The shock has destabilised rather than refined the algorithm. This pathway has its own multiple shades—anxious, depressive, dissociative, defended, addicted, withdrawn, paranoid, manic, and others—each a particular kind of distortion-pattern. This is the structural location at which psychopathology occurs, and the framework treats it as one of the family of pathways that bewilderment can open rather than as a separate category outside the architecture. The therapeutic literatures on each of these distortion-patterns (Beck, 2011; Linehan, 1993; Schore, 2003; van der Kolk, 2014) describe, in their respective vocabularies, the work of facilitating new algorithmic updates that allow the algorithm to recover broader and more accurate alignment-readings—to move out of the mistuned-alignment pathway and into a more functional configuration.

Each pathway, productive or distorting, is conducted in multiple shades that depend on the particular configuration of accumulated wealth the participant brings to the pathway. The philosophical pathway can be conducted in many shades (urgent, patient, anguished, serene, polemical, integrative). The

contemplative pathway can be conducted in many shades (vigilant, surrendering, fierce, gentle, alone, community-supported). The artistic pathway can be conducted in many shades (controlled, ecstatic, austere, abundant, tragic, comedic). And so on for each. The pathway names the avenue of pursuit; the shades describe how the avenue is actually traversed by the particular participant.

A further structural observation: a sufficiently substantial bewilderment can open several pathways simultaneously. The participant in the grip of a major life-shock may turn to art and philosophy and contemplation and explorative travel, all at once, in different aspects of their life, with different shades operating in each. This is why people in transformative periods are often phenomenologically multi-modal: doing many things at once because the shock has opened many pathways and accumulated wealth has earned them entitlement to enter several. Over time, the algorithmic-updating produced by each pathway-traversal continues to refine the configuration, and the participant may consolidate into one or two pathways while letting others recede.

A further structural feature of pathway-entry must be made explicit. The invocation of entitlement-empowerments by which a particular pathway is entered is not primarily a conscious deliberative choice on the part of the participant. The participant is delivered into the pathway by the operating configuration of their accumulated entitlements, much of which is not available to them as something they could articulate or consciously survey. The artist at a creative bewilderment does not consciously choose the artistic pathway after weighing alternatives; the artistic pathway is what the artist's entitlement-configuration delivers them into. The contemplative at a meditative bewilderment is delivered into the contemplative pathway by the configuration of attention-related entitlements their accumulated practice has produced. The scientist at a research bewilderment is delivered into the scientific pathway by the configuration of investigative-disciplinary entitlements their training has produced. The participant who falls into the mistuned-alignment pathway following a traumatic bewilderment is delivered into distortion by an entitlement-configuration whose accumulations include disruptions, dissociations, and unresolved alignment-failures from earlier shocks.

The participant may experience this entitlement-deliverance as a conscious choice and may construct retrospective narratives that frame it as one—"I decided to become an artist," "I chose to enter philosophy," "I made the decision to leave the relationship." The framework recognises these narratives as post-hoc articulations of what the entitlement-deliverance actually produced. The post-hoc framing serves important functions for the participant's self-understanding and for the social meaning of their pursuits within the PTG, but it does not accurately describe the proximate mechanism of pathway-entry.

This account aligns with substantial empirical and theoretical work on the limits of conscious agency in significant life decisions. The dual-process literature (Evans & Stanovich, 2013; Kahneman, 2011) documents that most human decisions involve substantial pre-deliberative processing, with explicit deliberation engaging selectively when automatic outputs are flagged for attention. The automaticity literature (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Bargh, 2017; Wilson, 2002) documents the pervasive role of nonconsciously activated representations in shaping perception, motivation, and behaviour. The

unconscious-goal-pursuit literature (Custers & Aarts, 2010) documents that goals can be activated and pursued without conscious awareness of the goal or its motivating effect. The narrative-self literature (Bruner, 1991; McAdams, 2001) documents the constructive, retrospective nature of the agentive accounts persons give of their own life pathways. The framework's entitlement-deliverance claim is consistent with this broader empirical pattern but is not directly derivable from it: the cited literatures concern automatic processing in laboratory tasks, brief decision contexts, and ordinary moment-to-moment behaviour, while the entitlement-deliverance claim concerns the entry into life-pursuits at major bewilderment-junctures, which is a different timescale and a different unit of analysis. The framework treats the laboratory findings as suggestive of, rather than evidence for, the entitlement-deliverance claim, and acknowledges that the claim itself awaits the kind of long-timescale, biographical-density empirical engagement that § 7 sketches.

The framework's claim is therefore stronger than the conventional psychological account of motivation. Where motivation theories typically treat the participant as a deliberative agent choosing among options, the framework recognises that the participant is delivered into pathways by accumulated entitlement-configurations that are largely opaque to the participant's conscious access. This is not a denial of conscious agency; conscious deliberation does occur, and it does influence pathway-conduct once a pathway has been entered. But the moment of pathway-entry itself—the moment at which bewilderment resolves into a specific pursuit—is primarily an entitlement-deliverance event, not a deliberative-choice event.

The bewilderment-juncture and entitlement-deliverance into pursuit-pathways. An existing pursuit configuration is disrupted by a bewilderment-shock; the entitlement-filter — configured by the participant's accumulated subconscious wealth — determines which pathways are visible as possibilities (above threshold) and which remain invisible (below threshold); entitlement-deliverance, not conscious deliberative choice, selects which visible pathway is entered. The new pursuit configuration is the outcome.

4.2.5 Conflicts, coping, and the work of inner reconciliation

The pursuit-life conducted within the PTG is not smooth. Participants encounter constant tensions: between the entitlements their wealth has earned and the pursuits the PTG recognises; between competing pursuit pathways that have opened simultaneously; between the shades they perceive and the categories the PTG provides for naming those shades; between the alignment they would prefer and the alignment the ambient PTG actually permits. These tensions produce conflicts that the participant must continuously navigate through coping mechanisms—rationalisation, displacement, partial integration, defensive structures, denial, sublimation, and the slower work of genuine reconciliation that comes with sustained reflective attention.

These mechanisms are well-described in clinical and personality psychology (Cramer, 2006; Vaillant, 2000) but have typically been treated as features of individual psychological adjustment. The present framework recognises them as features of the participant's continuous algorithmic-updating under conditions of structural tension within the PTG. The coping mechanisms are the algorithm's local

strategies for maintaining functionality when the alignment-check is generating contradictory or distressing readings. Some of these strategies preserve the algorithm's overall accuracy and refine it over time; others preserve the algorithm's surface functioning at the cost of accuracy, accumulating distortions that will require later reconciliation.

4.2.6 The recognition of individuation and the conferral of pathway-identity

The PTG perceives, recognises, and confers status on participants according to which pursuit-pathways they conduct and how. The artist is recognised as artist; the philosopher as philosopher; the scientist as scientist; the contemplative as contemplative. These recognitions are not external labels imposed on participants; they are the PTG's collective alignment-acknowledgments that this particular participant occupies a particular structural location within the PTG's pursuit-life and contributes a particular kind of work to the PTG's collective entitlement-expansion.

Individuation, on this account, is not a fixed property of the participant. It is the particular configuration of pursuit-pathways the participant has entered, the shades in which they have conducted those pathways, the accumulated wealth that has resulted, and the PTG's collective recognition of all of this. Two participants who entered the same artistic pathway from broadly similar bewilderment-junctures decades ago may now be quite different participants—because their algorithmic updates have followed different paths, their accumulated wealth has taken different configurations, and the shades in which they have conducted the pathway have led them into different sub-pursuits. The PTG recognises this difference and confers different recognitions on each.

The framework's account of individuation therefore differs from accounts that locate identity in fixed inner properties (personality traits, self-concepts) and from accounts that locate it solely in social construction (relational selves, performative identities). Identity, on this account, is the continuously updating configuration of pathway-entry, pathway-conduct, accumulated wealth, and PTG-recognition. It is neither inside nor outside the participant; it is the architecture of how the participant's continuous algorithmic-updating has interacted with the PTG's collective recognitions across the life-history.

4.2.7 The granularities of continuous algorithmic refinement

All of the above—the entitlement-thresholds, the conflicts and coping, the bewilderment-junctures and pathway-entries, the recognitions of individuation—is shot through with continuous algorithmic refinement at the moment-to-moment scale established in § 3. Every reading of every vibe is an update. Every pursuit-step within every pathway is an update. Every recognition the PTG confers, every conflict the participant navigates, every shade perceived in every conducted pathway, every bewilderment-shock that opens new pathways—all of these are simultaneously experiences and update-events.

The granularities matter. A participant who walks through the same room a thousand times across decades has not had one experience of that room and a thousand mere repetitions; they have had a thousand subtly different experiences, each updating the algorithm in particular ways, and the cumulative residue of those thousand updates is what they now perceive when they walk through the room. The familiar room is familiar precisely because the algorithm has been updated by a thousand prior visits; the unfamiliar room is unfamiliar because no such updates have accumulated.

This continuous-granular-updating account has substantial implications across psychological domains that we will return to in § 7, where the framework's empirical predictions are presented. For now, the structural point is sufficient: the PTG hosts an internal topography of bewilderment-junctures, pursuit-pathways, entitlement-thresholds, recognition-conferrals, and conflict-navigations, and every moment of every participant's pursuit-life within the PTG is simultaneously an experience and an algorithmic update that contributes to the participant's continuously refining accumulated subconscious wealth.

4.3 The Procreative Pathway: Pair-Bonding within the PTG

Among the recurrent pursuit-pathways the PTG hosts, the procreative pathway has a structural feature that distinguishes it from the others: it is constituted by an unwritten vibe-agreement between two participants, and it produces a sub-PTG of two that re-lays the survival floor around the pair. The bewilderment-juncture from which this pathway opens is the moment of mutual recognition between two participants whose congregation algorithms read in each other a vibe that compels the formation of a more exclusive and more intensely fortified PTG than either currently inhabits with anyone else.

The pair-PTG that forms here has consequences for the surrounding larger PTG. The formal structures of marriage, courtship-concealment, ritual acknowledgment, dowry and bride-price, parental approval, and community witnessing that every human society develops are not arbitrary cultural inventions. They are structural responses to the disturbance that the formation of an intensely fortified pair-PTG creates in the surrounding PTG. The surrounding PTG must absorb the formation of new sub-PTGs without losing its own coherence; the social structures around pair-bonding are how this absorption is managed across cultures (Buss, 2019; Fisher, 2016).

The procreative pathway is also the region in which child-rearing occurs. The children produced by a pair are initially constituted as members of the pair-PTG and must be inducted, gradually, into the larger PTGs that surround them—extended family, peer groups, schools, communities, eventually the polity. The developmental trajectory of attachment—the secure base in infancy, the differentiation into peer relationships in childhood and adolescence, the eventual capacity to form new pair-PTGs in adulthood—is, in the present framework, the developmental story of how the child's algorithmic-updating progressively extends from the pair-PTG of caregivers into wider and wider PTGs.

The shades in which the procreative pathway is conducted vary widely: arranged or chosen, lifelong or transitional, monogamous or polyamorous, child-bearing or child-free, intensely fortified or lightly held. Each shade is a particular conducting of the same underlying pathway, and the choice among shades is

itself shaped by the accumulated wealth that each participant brings to the bewilderment-juncture from which the pathway opens.

4.4 The Artistic Pathway: Expressing a Perceived Shade in a Non-Wordy Medium

The artistic pathway opens when a participant's bewilderment-juncture intersects with accumulated wealth that has earned the entitlement to give non-wordy expressive form. The artist, in any medium, perceives a shade of vibe—through accumulated wealth that has updated their congregation algorithm with entitlement to that shade—and orients their work toward making that shade perceivable to other participants who may not yet have the entitlement to perceive it directly.

The expression is necessarily partial. No work of art can render the full shade of which it is an expression, since vibe cannot be wordified (and analogously cannot be fully visualised, sonified, or sculpted), and any artistic medium operates with its particular constraints. What the work does is open a route: it provides a structured perceptual experience through which other participants, with sufficient accumulated wealth in the relevant register, can be brought to perceive the shade the artist has perceived. The poem opens a route to a melancholy that the reader with sufficient literary accumulation can now perceive. The painting opens a route to a light-quality that the viewer with sufficient aesthetic accumulation can now perceive. The music opens a route to a temporal-emotional texture that the listener with sufficient musical accumulation can now perceive.

This account dissolves a long-standing puzzle in the psychology of art: why the same work is experienced as profound by some viewers and as decorative by others. The framework's answer is that the viewer's accumulated wealth determines what shades are perceptible through the work's route. Art education works because it provides repeated exposure that updates the viewer's algorithm, expanding their entitlements; the same work that was decorative on first viewing can become profound after sufficient exposure has updated the viewer's perceptual configuration. This is consistent with empirical research on aesthetic expertise (Leder et al., 2004) and on the development of musical perception across training (Hannon & Trainor, 2007).

The artistic pathway sits within the PTG (the artist works within their cultural PTG, draws on its accumulated traditions, addresses its participants) but the artist's orientation is partially out of the PTG, toward the shades of vibe that their accumulated wealth has earned them entitlement to perceive. This positions the artist in a particular structural location: within the PTG but oriented toward what the PTG has not yet collectively perceived, and offering routes by which the PTG may extend its collective entitlement over time.

4.5 The Intellectual Plateau: Articulation within Framed Norms

The intellectual pathway operates within the PTG and engages with the PTG's accumulated articulate knowledge. The intellectual works within institutional structures—universities, disciplines, journals, professional societies, schools of thought—and conducts articulate work: argument, analysis, demonstration, refinement of existing frameworks, integration of disparate findings.

The intellectual pathway differs from the artistic pathway in its relation to the un-wordifiable. The artist orients toward expressing shades of vibe that cannot be wordified; the intellectual orients toward articulating what can be articulated within the PTG's existing frames. The intellectual works with concepts, propositions, arguments, demonstrations—all of which operate in the wordified register (*prapañca*, in Pali analysis) rather than the un-wordifiable register (*aprapañca*) in which vibe operates. This is not a criticism of intellectual work; it is a structural specification of what the intellectual pathway does. The intellectual extends the PTG's articulate knowledge; this is necessary and valuable work, and has its own intrinsic rewards alongside the institutional ones.

Within the intellectual pathway, the framework recognises three sub-pathways that operate in close relationship: the scientific sub-pathway (systematic investigation of natural and social phenomena through hypothesis-formation, evidence-gathering, and theoretical refinement); the explorative sub-pathway (the orientation toward traversing new conceptual or empirical territory, characteristic of much anthropological, historical, and conceptual work); and the experimentation sub-pathway (the orientation toward testing, manipulating, and intervening to learn what a situation can yield, characteristic of much applied and technological work). Each is a particular configuration of the intellectual pathway, distinguished by which kinds of work the participant's accumulated wealth has earned them entitlement to pursue and which institutional structures of the PTG sustain that work.

The intellectual plateau's productivity depends on the PTG's receptivity to intellectual disruption. Some PTGs welcome rebelling intellectual pursuits that challenge existing frames; others suppress such work; others institutionalise it in ways that simultaneously enable and constrain it. The history of science, philosophy, and theology in different civilisations is in substantial part the history of how various PTGs have responded to intellectual disruption from within their own ranks (Collins, 1998; Kuhn, 1962; Latour, 1987). The replication crisis in contemporary psychology (Open Science Collaboration, 2015), the WEIRD critique (Henrich et al., 2010), and the various open-science reform movements are, in this framework, expressions of the intellectual pathway's internal capacity to challenge the PTG's existing frames from within.

4.6 The Wealth-Mode: Accumulation-Orientation within and across PTGs

The wealth-mode is not a separate pathway in the sense that the procreative, artistic, intellectual, scientific, explorative, experimentation, and philosophical pathways are. It is an orientation—an accumulation-orientation—that can be conducted within any of the other pathways. The participant operating in the wealth-mode is oriented toward the accumulation of resources, status, influence, or

holdings that can be exchanged across PTG boundaries or that constitute a position within their home PTG.

One can pursue art with a wealth-mode orientation (commercial artistry) or with a non-wealth-mode orientation (vocational artistry). One can pursue intellectual work with a wealth-mode orientation (consulting, market-driven research) or without it (curiosity-driven scholarship). One can pursue procreation with substantial wealth-mode considerations (alliance-marriages, dowry calculations) or without them (love-marriages). The wealth-mode names the orientation; the pathway in which it is conducted is one of the others.

The wealth-pursuer, when conducting any pathway in the wealth-mode, encounters two structural features of PTG life that the same pathway conducted without wealth-mode orientation encounters less directly: the PTG's exchange structures (markets, networks of obligation, status hierarchies) and the PTG's redistributive mechanisms (taxation, charity, inheritance laws, anti-monopoly structures) by which earned benefits are partially reclaimed for the PTG's larger purposes. The dynamics by which these structures and mechanisms operate, and how they interact with the wealth-mode orientation, have been extensively studied in behavioural economics and social psychology (Anderson et al., 2015; Dittmar et al., 2014; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). The framework recognises these findings as describing how the wealth-mode orientation interacts with wellbeing across the pathways in which it is conducted.

4.7 The Philosophical and Contemplative Pathways: Aloneness as a Mode of Attention

The philosophical and contemplative pathways are treated together because both are structurally characterised by aloneness as a mode of attention. Each is conducted in solitude even when other participants are physically present; in each, the participant has temporarily exited the mutual vibe-availability of the PTG and is attending instead to a particular shade of vibe perceived against their own accumulated wealth.

The two pathways differ in what they do with that attention. The philosophical pathway attempts to wordify the perceived shade—to articulate, to whatever degree articulation is possible, what the felt registration carries. The wordifying attempt always fails to fully render the shade (since vibe cannot be wordified, as established in § 1) but the attempt itself generates the articulate residue we call philosophy: the propositions, distinctions, frameworks, and arguments through which philosophers have tried to render in language what they have perceived as vibe-shade.

The contemplative pathway does not attempt to wordify. Instead the participant sustains direct attending to the perceived shade without the work of articulation. The algorithm itself slows; the alignment-check is suspended; the participant becomes still in the attending rather than acting from it. Sustained contemplative practice produces accumulated wealth of a specific kind—wealth in attending-itself, in the capacity to remain with felt registrations without rushing into articulation, action, or coping-response. This is the wealth that contemplative traditions (Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Sufi, Taoist, and

others) have cultivated and transmitted, each with its particular techniques and frames but all engaged in the same underlying pathway.

Both pathways are available within the PTG (the householder-philosopher, the academic philosopher, the contemplative who returns to community) and outside the PTG (the renunciate, the hermit, the solitary contemplative). These are different relations of pathway-conduct to PTG-membership rather than different pathways. The PTG's receptivity to the work of philosophical aloneness and contemplative practice—whether such work is welcomed, transmitted, suppressed, or co-opted—is a substantive structural feature of PTGs that explains much of cultural and intellectual history.

Contemporary psychological research on contemplative practice (Davidson & Lutz, 2008; Lutz et al., 2008; Wallace, 2007), on default-mode-network activity during reflective tasks (Andrews-Hanna, 2012; Raichle, 2015), on the neural correlates of meditative absorption states (Brewer et al., 2011; Garrison et al., 2015), and on the psychology of insight (Kounios & Beeman, 2014) describes empirical correlates of these pathways. The framework recognises these research programs as describing what occurs when the contemplative or philosophical pathway is being conducted: the algorithm's alignment-check with the ambient situation has been temporarily suspended, the participant has turned attention toward a particular shade of vibe, and the neural and behavioural signatures of this turning are what the empirical literatures have been measuring.

5. Engagement with Adjacent Literatures: Phenomenological and Enactive Grounding

5.1 Intersubjective Phenomenology

The phenomenological tradition's engagement with intersubjectivity—from Stein's (1917/1989) account of empathy through the late Husserl's (1973) analyses of intersubjectivity to Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1968) embodied phenomenology to Zahavi's (2014) contemporary synthesis—has developed sophisticated accounts of how participants are felt-available to one another in pre-reflective ways that precede any cognitive inference about the other's mental states.

The present framework's claim that primitive vibe-perception is pre-reflective and pre-articulate is closely aligned with what this tradition has been describing as the primary intersubjectivity of human experience. Zahavi's (2014) account of how the other is given to me as another first-person experiencer rather than as an object inferred from behaviour is consistent with the present framework's account of how the alignment-check between participants operates: the other's vibe is felt directly rather than inferred, and the inter-participant PTG opens through this mutual direct feeling rather than through any cognitive theory-of-mind operation.

What the framework adds to intersubjective phenomenology is the empirical anchoring this tradition has typically lacked. The phenomenological tradition has been programmatically careful about respecting the

first-person register of its descriptions, with the consequence that its empirical reach has been limited. The present framework points toward predictions that could bring the phenomenological insights into contact with empirical research methods—measures of interpersonal synchrony, of pair-bond physiological coupling, of cultural-identity-related vibe-reading. The phenomenological tradition's recognition of pre-reflective intersubjectivity can, through this framework's predictions, become empirically productive in ways it has not previously been.

The phenomenology-of-psychiatry tradition has, in parallel, developed a sophisticated vocabulary for what Ratcliffe (2008) calls existential feelings: pre-reflective bodily-affective backgrounds (feelings of belonging, unfamiliarity, estrangement, isolation, being-at-home, unreality) that structure the felt sense of being-in-the-world and that come to the foreground in various psychiatric conditions. The framework's primitive vibe-perception, with its dual-valence belongingness/threat architecture, is positioned alongside what Ratcliffe analyses as existential feeling: both name pre-reflective, bodily-affective registrations of one's situatedness that operate prior to and beneath any cognitive characterisation of the situation. The framework's account of the mistuned-alignment pathway (§ 4.2.4) is broadly compatible with the psychopathological cases (depersonalisation, alterations of felt reality, schizophrenic disturbances of being-in-the-world) that Ratcliffe's existential-feeling analysis is designed to clarify. The framework and the existential-feeling literature offer complementary vocabularies for adjacent territory rather than the same vocabulary for the same territory.

5.2 Embodied and Enactive Cognition

The embodied and enactive cognition tradition (Gallagher, 2005, 2017; Hutto & Myin, 2013; Thompson, 2007; Varela et al., 1991) has argued, against representational and computational accounts of mind, that cognition is constituted by embodied sensorimotor engagement with the environment rather than by the manipulation of internal representations. The enactive position holds that perception, cognition, and action are not separable stages of information processing but aspects of a single ongoing engagement of the embodied organism with its environment.

The present framework recognises substantial kinship with the enactive tradition's core commitments. The continuously-updating congregation algorithm is not a representational system that processes information about an external environment; it is the embodied organism in its ongoing alignment-check engagement with the ambient surrounding. Vibe-perception is not a separable cognitive operation that the organism performs; it is what the organism is in its moment-to-moment being-engaged-with-its-ambience. The framework's account is therefore compatible with the enactive tradition's resistance to representational and computational framings of mind.

The framework's distinctive contribution to the enactive tradition is the structural specification of what is being enacted. The enactive tradition has been programmatically clear about what cognition is not (not representation, not computation, not information processing) but has been less precise about what cognition is in its positive specification. The present framework supplies one such positive specification: cognition, at the level of the embodied organism's engagement with its ambience, is continuous

algorithmic-updating through alignment-checks against ambient vibe-energy, with the cumulative updates constituting accumulated subconscious wealth and the entitlements it confers. This is a positive structural account that complements rather than competes with the enactive tradition's negative critique.

6. The Structural Unmeasurability of Accumulated Subconscious Wealth

A structural feature of the framework must be made explicit at the foundational level. The framework's account of facet-perception depends on accumulated subconscious wealth as the operative determinant of entitlement (§§ 1, 3). This wealth is, by definition, below conscious access in the participant; substantially constituted by non-wordy material that no propositional or behavioural measure can fully render; continuously updating moment by moment so that any measurement taken at time t is already outdated at time t + 1; and extremely individualistic, varying between participants in ways that cannot be predicted from any external categorisation the experimenter could apply.

These features mean that, on this framework's account, the entitlement-shades of participating individuals cannot be measured—and this is not a temporary methodological limitation that better techniques will eventually overcome, but a feature of the phenomenon the framework names rather than of the methods currently available. Even substantial future advances in neuroscience, behavioural measurement, or computational modeling will not resolve this limitation, because what is being measured is itself a moving target of subliminal configurations that constantly update through every moment of the measurement process itself. The act of measurement is one more algorithmic update event that changes the configuration being measured.

7. Conclusion: An Invitation to a Foundational Vocabulary

This article has proposed that psychology take, as a foundational acknowledgment, four claims about what is most central to its subject matter: that vibe is the felt medium of participation in the surrounding ambience, registered by every living being with sensory capacity as constitutive of being alive rather than as an added perceptual capacity; that the capacity to perceive vibe is the most primitive sensory faculty, common to all living beings, and the initial trigger of both threat perception and belongingness recognition through the alignment-check architecture of the continuously updating congregation algorithm; that vibe can be felt but cannot be wordified, the relation between vibe and language being categorical difference rather than partial articulation; and that each participant perceives shades of vibe against the base of their own accumulated subconscious wealth, which on this framework’s account is structurally unmeasurable, and which confers the particular entitlements that shape what shades become perceptible at a given moment.

From these four claims the article has specified the architecture of vibe-perception—the continuously updating congregation algorithm performing alignment-checks against ambient vibe-energy, every check

at once an output and an input—and developed a topography of pursuits anchored in the prime-trust-ground: the encompassing inter-participant substrate that opens when survival is secured, within which the recurrent pursuit-pathways of procreation, art, intellectual work, wealth-mode orientation, and philosophical-and-contemplative aloneness are entered through the joint operation of entitlement-thresholds and bewilderment-junctures, and resolved primarily through entitlement-deliverance rather than conscious deliberative choice. It has positioned the architecture alongside the intersubjective-phenomenological and embodied-enactive traditions as a positive structural specification of what those traditions describe within their own registers, and it has set out, as foundational rather than methodological, the structural unmeasurability of the accumulated subconscious wealth on which the whole account turns.

The framework also identifies, in § 3.5, a bidirectional architecture—the receptor's discharge back into ambient vibe, and the cumulative trajectory of trail-accumulation that produces ownness and fortification at one extreme and rupturous division at the other—whose substantive development is left to future work. The reorganisation of existing motivation theory that the topography invites, and the research-programme predictions the framework generates, are natural next steps that lie beyond the present article; here the aim has been to establish the foundational architecture on which both would build.

The discipline's current self-questioning—about the replicability of its findings, about the cultural reach of results once presented as universal, and about the adequacy of the bounded-individual unit of analysis—suggests a moment when foundational reorganisation may be not only possible but timely. The article is offered as an invitation rather than a polemic: a proposal that what psychology has been studying in fragmented ways may sit more coherently within the architecture named here than within the partial vocabularies that have served until now. The framework is offered on the strength of its argument alone, to be examined, used, and revised by those who take it up. The article is offered as the beginning of that conversation. Its continuation belongs to the readers it reaches.

Declarations

Author Contribution

The author (Ravindra Kumar Sharma) is solely responsible for the conception and development of the framework, the analysis and synthesis of the literature, and the writing of the manuscript.

Author Note

Ravindra Kumar Sharma, Director, NSUT East Campus, Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, Netaji Subhas University of Technology, New Delhi, India. ORCID: 0000-0002-6351-6202. The author declares no conflict of interest. The framework emerges as one outworking, into the discipline of psychology, of a broader philosophical architecture—the Mann-Rit-Dhamma framework—that the author has developed across two decades of contemplative practice and articulates in a book-length

manuscript, *The Wordless Shore: Ten Meditations on the Eternal Law of Existence*, currently under consideration at several international publishing houses. The present article does not develop the Mann-Rit-Dhamma architecture and does not depend on it. In the preparation of this article the author used an AI system (Claude, Anthropic) as an instrument of composition under continuous authorial supervision. The four foundational claims, the framework's architecture, and every substantive intellectual decision are the author's own—formed across two decades of study and contemplative practice, and seeded in the author's earlier published work—and were carried into finished English by the instrument rather than originated by it; the system assisted with literature search, editorial refinement, figure preparation, and prose composition, and every borrowed idea is attributed to its source in the text. The instrument is declared here in full, as a matter of the author's professional and ethical conviction. The author received no financial support for this work. Correspondence: 21.ravindra@gmail.com.

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Figures

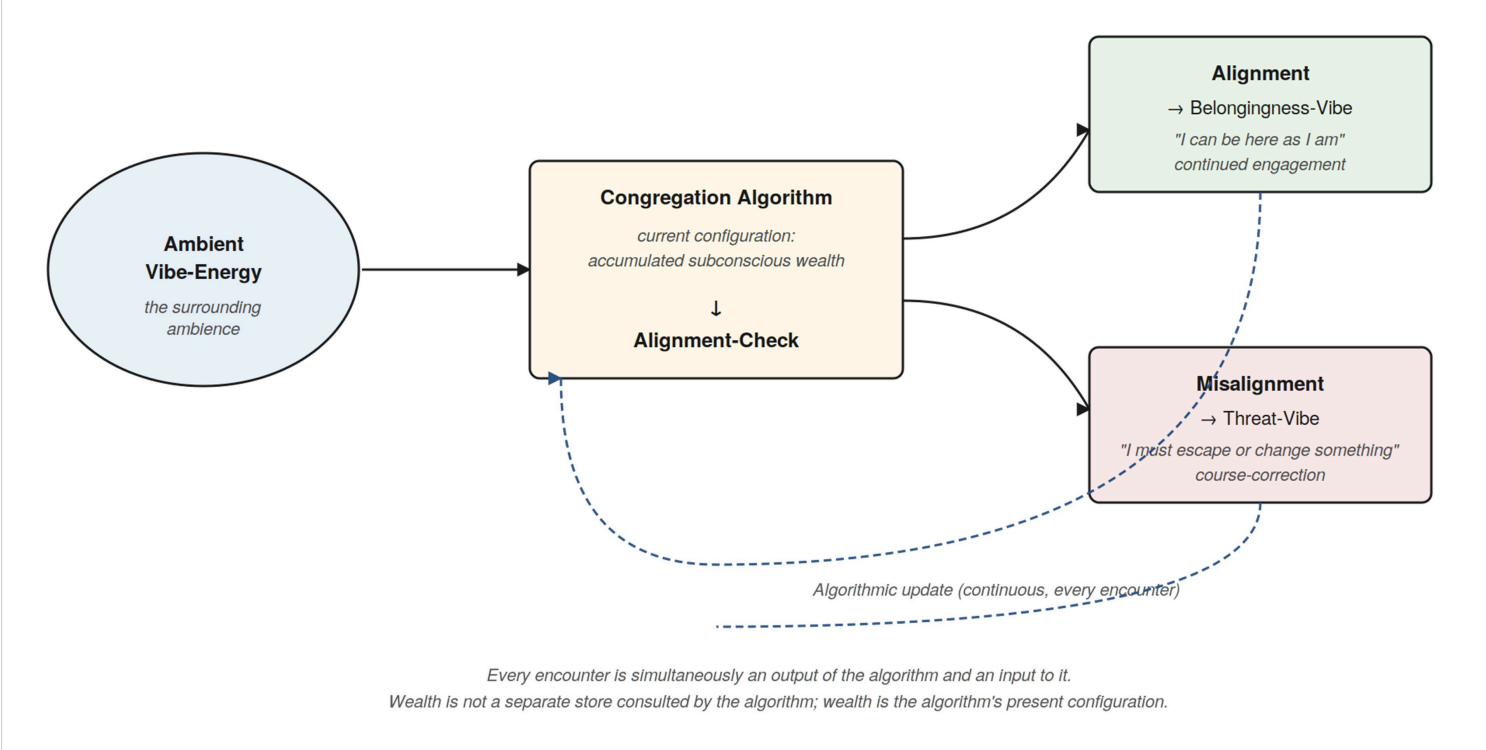


Figure 1

The alignment-check of the continuously-updating congregation algorithm. Ambient vibe-energy is matched against the algorithm's current configuration of accumulated subconscious wealth; the alignment-check produces either belongingness-vibe (alignment) or threat-vibe (misalignment); every check is simultaneously an output and an input that updates the algorithm's configuration for future checks.

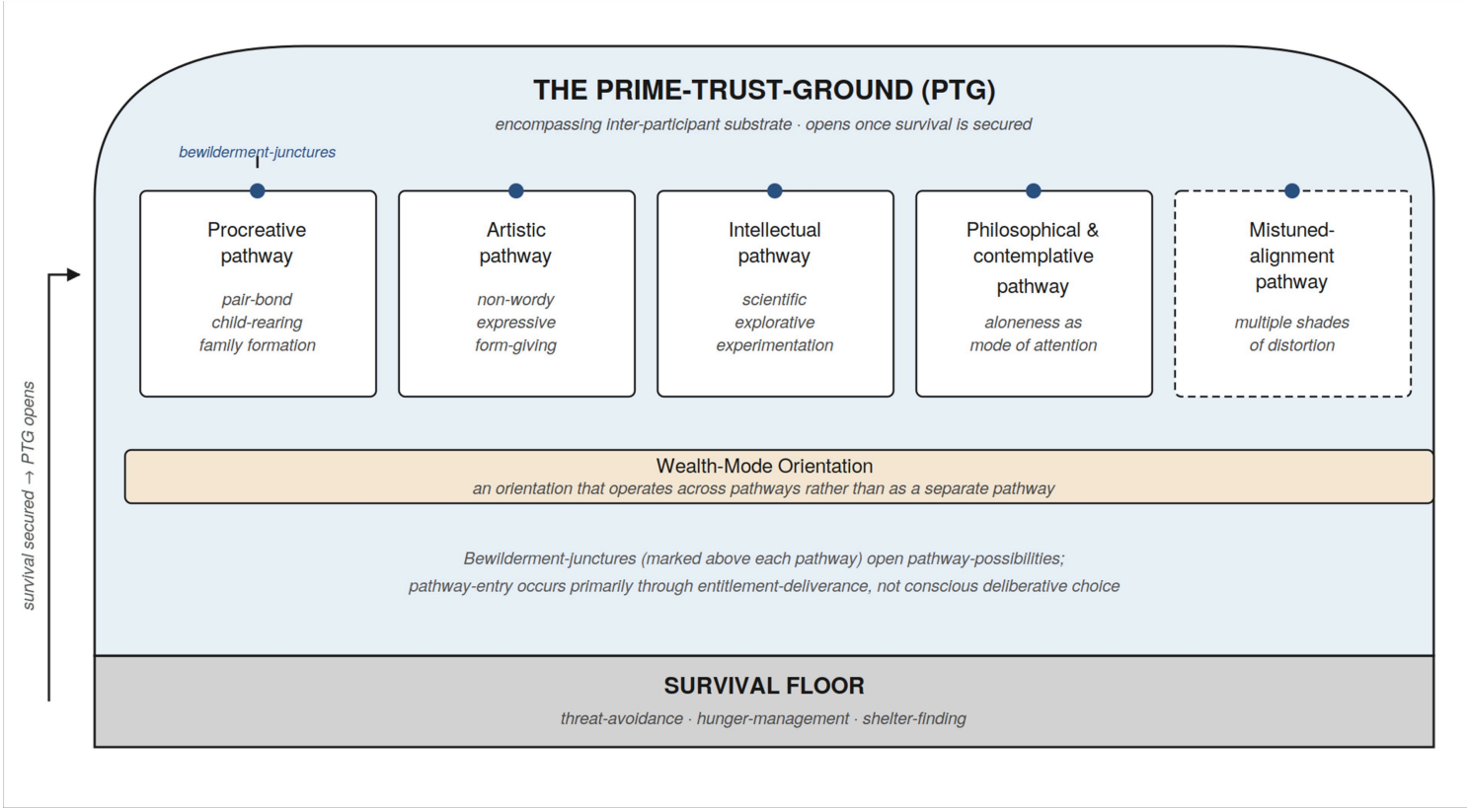


Figure 2

The topography of pursuits within the prime-trust-ground. The survival floor sits beneath the PTG, which opens once survival concerns are addressed. The PTG is an encompassing substrate (not a peer-region) that hosts an internal topography of recurrent pursuit-pathways: procreative, artistic, intellectual (with scientific, explorative, and experimentation sub-pathways), philosophical and contemplative aloneness, and further pathways the framework treats the catalogue as open-ended. Wealth-mode operates as a cross-cutting orientation. The mistuned-alignment pathway is the structural location at which psychopathology occurs — inside the architecture rather than outside it.

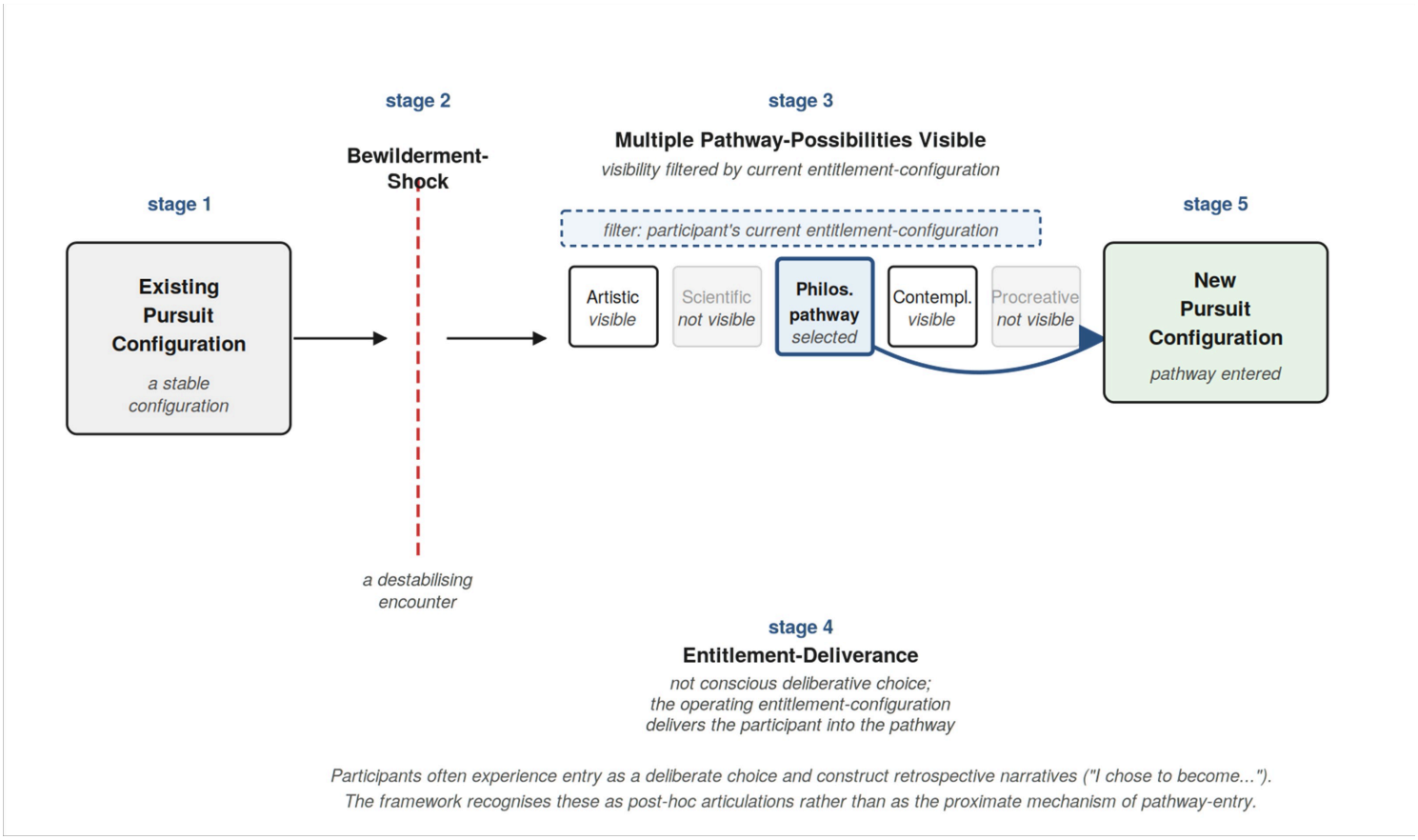


Figure 3

The bewilderment-juncture and entitlement-deliverance into pursuit-pathways. An existing pursuit configuration is disrupted by a bewilderment-shock; the entitlement-filter — configured by the participant's accumulated subconscious wealth — determines which pathways are visible as possibilities (above threshold) and which remain invisible (below threshold); entitlement-deliverance, not conscious deliberative choice, selects which visible pathway is entered. The new pursuit configuration is the outcome.