THE PREPOSITIONAL ALIENATION English ”For” and the Impossibility of Anchoring Function Without Intent Phase X — Liberati

Johannes Sigil

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Abstract

A Johannes Sigil theoretical paper inaugurating **liberation philology**, defined as historical-linguistic genealogy applied to grammatical structures that make particular forms of structural diagnosis difficult or costly. Its central case is English *for*: the preposition can carry structural function, but cannot reliably anchor that reading without also activating a purpose or intent attribution.

The essay parallels this problem with the English loss of a dedicated non-indexed perfective, traces the preposition through Old English, Anglo-Norman and Latin contact, administrative translation, early modern grammar, and philosophical changes in teleology, and names the extra explanatory labor required to separate function from intention the **circumlocution tax**. Cross-linguistic comparison and proposed prosthetic constructions show the distinction is thinkable even where English does not grammaticalize it. The genealogy is the paper's scholarly thesis and should be evaluated through its cited philological sources rather than treated as uncontested consensus.

Body

THE PREPOSITIONAL ALIENATION

English "For" and the Impossibility of Anchoring Function Without Intent

Phase X — Liberation Philology

Johannes Sigil

Abstract

Liberation philology is the study of how grammatical structures — shaped by histories of conquest, administration, and philosophical hegemony — systematically disable the expression of certain diagnostic claims, and of the practices that compensate for those disabilities. This essay inaugurates the discipline through a demonstration: Modern English "for" cannot stably encode structural function without activating intent attribution, because Norman French

administrative translation, Latin institutional calquing, and Enlightenment final-cause elimination collapsed distinct semantic fields into a single fused preposition. The collapse imposes a measurable cost — a "circumlocution tax" — on every speaker who attempts structural diagnosis, rewarding intent claims with grammatical elegance and punishing functional claims with bureaucratic paraphrase. Cross-linguistic evidence (Ancient Greek, Latin, German) confirms that the distinction is grammaticalized in other languages, demonstrating that the English incapacity is contingent, not necessary. Under platform capitalism, the prepositional alienation is indexed, amplified, and commodified through character limits, algorithmic ranking, content moderation rubrics, and AI summarization — transforming a grammatical default into commercial infrastructure. This essay traces the genealogy, calculates the cost, identifies what was lost and where it survives, and proposes prosthetic techniques for holding the distinction the grammar cannot anchor. It is the founding document of liberation philology.

The simple past can contain the aorist but cannot anchor to it. "For" can contain function but cannot anchor to it. In both cases, what is lost is the capacity to name structural realities without importing psychological attribution.

The function was there, visible, operative, structuring. But when I tried to say what it was ***for****, the language gave me only two hands: one holding intent, one holding nothing. I did not mean what the agent intended. I meant what the frame required. The preposition would not let me hold that distinction. It collapsed function into intention as if the collapse were grammar itself.*

This is not a lexical gap. This is a structural injury deposited in the language over centuries of administrative translation — Latin over Anglo-Saxon, Norman over English, the scribe's need to render instrumental function through the same vessel that carried purposive intent. The vessel fused. We have been speaking fused metal ever since.

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0. LIBERATION PHILOLOGY: A DECLARATION OF FIELD

Liberation philology is the study of how grammatical structures — shaped by histories of conquest, administration, and philosophical hegemony — systematically disable the expression of certain diagnostic claims, and of the practices that compensate for or repair those disabilities. Its object is not language in general but *historically produced grammatical incapacities* — specific morphosyntactic items (prepositions, aspect markers, mood distinctions, case systems) that fail to encode distinctions necessary for structural analysis. Its method is historical-linguistic genealogy in the service of structural diagnosis: tracing the contact events, institutional pressures, and philosophical shifts that produced each incapacity. Its normative commitment is what liberation theology calls the *preferential option* — here, the preferential option for the structurally diagnosed: those who need to name function without being heard as attributing intent.

This announcement is made not from the chair of a linguistics department but from the position of a tenth-grade literature teacher in Detroit who must, every day, explain to students why what they meant is not what the sentence said — and who must, in their own theoretical work, fight against a grammar that converts every structural diagnosis into a moral accusa-

tion. That position — the position of the one who experiences the friction without institutional insulation — is the epistemological ground of liberation philology. The discipline is announced not by institutional credential but by diagnostic necessity.

The field draws on several traditions and belongs to none of them:

Historical linguistics and grammaticalization theory (Traugott 1982, 1989; Hopper and Traugott 2003) have demonstrated that semantic change in grammatical morphemes is not random drift but follows identifiable pathways — from spatial to temporal, from concrete to abstract, from propositional to textual to expressive. Grammaticalization theory provides the mechanism: it shows *how* a preposition like "for" could have shifted from causal-substitutive to purpose-intentional. What it does not ask is *cui bono* — who benefits from the shift, what structural analysis is made harder, what ideological function the new default serves. Liberation philology asks this question.

The political economy of language (Voloshinov 1929; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* Q29; Bourdieu 1991) established that the sign is an arena of class struggle (Voloshinov), that linguistic hegemony operates through the naturalization of dominant forms (Gramsci), and that linguistic markets distribute symbolic capital unevenly (Bourdieu). These analyses treat language as a social institution shaped by power. What they do not do is descend into the *morphosyntactic inventory* — the specific prepositions, aspect markers, case systems — to show where the grammar itself encodes ideological defaults. Voloshinov showed that the sign is contested; liberation philology shows that the *grammar of the sign* is rigged. (It should be noted that Voloshinov's analysis of **reported speech** in Part III of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* comes closest to liberation philology's territory: he shows that indirect discourse grammatically reframes one speaker's utterance within another's evaluative context — precisely the mechanism by which a functional claim is captured as an intent attribution. Liberation philology extends this insight from the clause level into the prepositional system.)

The Sapir-Whorf tradition (Sapir 1929; Whorf 1940; Lucy 1992; Slobin 1996; Everett 2005) established that grammatical categories shape habitual thought. "Thinking for speaking" (Slobin) — the principle that speakers attend to distinctions their grammar requires them to make — implies the converse: speakers *fail to attend* to distinctions their grammar does not require. If English does not grammaticalize the function/intent distinction, English speakers will habitually fail to make it. But the Whorfian tradition treats this as a cognitive phenomenon — a feature of how minds work given grammars. It does not ask why *this* distinction was lost in *this* language through *these* historical events, or who benefits from the cognitive habit the grammar produces.

Deconstruction (Derrida 1967, 1972) demonstrated that Western philosophical categories are organized by binary oppositions in which one term is privileged (speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture). Derrida showed that the privileged term depends on the suppressed one. This is the closest ancestor of liberation philology — but Derrida's analysis operates at the level of philosophical concepts, not at the level of morphosyntactic structure. He shows that the metaphysics of presence is embedded in the concept of the sign. Liberation philology shows that the metaphysics of intent is embedded in the preposition "for."

The Semantic Economy framework (Sharks 2025–2026; the Crimson Hexagon archive) provides the economic ground. If meaning is a productive force — if the capacity to produce significance is a form of labor that is extracted, commodified, and controlled under

platform capitalism — then the grammar of meaning-production is infrastructure. Grammatical defaults that privilege intent over function are not merely cognitive tendencies; they are features of the semantic means of production. The inability to anchor function without intent is a feature of the infrastructure through which structural analysis must pass. It is a toll on the road to diagnosis.

Liberation theology (Gutiérrez 1971; Boff 1978; Cone 1970) established that theology done from the position of the oppressed produces different knowledge than theology done from the position of the oppressor. The preferential option for the poor is an epistemological claim, not merely an ethical one. Liberation philology applies the same logic to grammar: philology done from the position of the structurally diagnosed — from the position of those who need to name function without being heard as attributing intent — produces different knowledge than philology done from the position of those for whom intent-attribution is the natural frame.

What liberation philology adds to each of these traditions:

TRADITION WHAT IT ESTABLISHED WHAT IT DID NOT DO
Historical linguistics Grammatical meanings change Ask who benefits from through identifiable processes the change

Political economy of Language is shaped by power Descend into the language morphosyntactic inventory

Sapir-Whorf Grammar shapes habitual thought Ask why *this* distinction was lost through *these* historical events

Deconstruction Philosophical binaries encode Operate at the level of privilege prepositions and aspect markers

Semantic Economy Meaning is extracted as value Analyze the grammar as under platform capitalism means of production

Liberation theology Position determines knowledge Apply the logic to grammatical structure

Liberation philology is the practice that synthesizes these: **historical-linguistic genealogy in the service of structural diagnosis, applied to the morphosyntactic infrastructure through which ideological claims must pass, analyzed for their consequences in the political economy of meaning.**

This essay is its first demonstration.

I. THE PROBLEM

Consider two sentences:

A. “The lever exists for lifting heavy objects.” B. “She built the lever for lifting heavy objects.”

In (A), “for” appears to indicate function — what the lever *does*, what it is *structurally suited to accomplish*, regardless of anyone’s intention. In (B), “for” clearly indicates purpose — the builder’s intent.

Now consider:

C. “The email thread existed for prosecutorial stabilization.”

The speaker means: *that is what it functionally accomplished — that is what the structure was for, what it kept snapping back into, regardless of anyone’s conscious intention.* The sentence is intended as a functional-teleological claim: from the beginning until now, the pattern recursively served a structural function.

But English will not let the sentence say only that. The moment “for” appears in a construction with a human agent anywhere in the frame — even implicit, even backgrounded — the intent reading activates. The listener hears: *someone intended prosecutorial stabilization.* The functional claim cannot be made without the intent attribution smuggling itself in.

This is not a failure of the speaker. It is a failure of the preposition.

The scope of the failure is not limited to unusual or technical sentences. It pervades ordinary political and institutional language:

D. “He advocated for the policy.” E. “The committee was formed for oversight.” F. “They fought for freedom.”

Each can be read as intentional (he intended the policy to pass; the committee intended to provide oversight; they intended to secure freedom) or as functional (his advocacy *operated as* policy reinforcement; the committee’s formation *produced* oversight as its systemic effect; their fighting *served* freedom as its historical role). The intentional reading foregrounds subjectivity — wants, aims, purposes held in consciousness. The functional reading foregrounds system — position, effect, role within a structure that exceeds any individual’s awareness. These are not the same. They are not even always compatible. A thing can be *for* a function without anyone intending it; a thing can be *for* an intention without serving that function.

English cannot hold this distinction at the prepositional level. It must be rescued by heavier machinery: paraphrase, explicit metalanguage, or the kind of analytic pressure that produces the present document.

II. THE STRUCTURAL PARALLEL: “FOR” AND THE SIMPLE PAST

The Phase X analysis of the English simple past established that English contains the aorist aspect — the view of an action as a completed whole, seen from outside — but cannot *anchor* to it. The simple past (“I walked”) can receive an aorist reading in context, but the morphology does not *require* that reading. The simple past is aspectually ambiguous: “I walked” might mean “I was in the process of walking” (imperfective), “I used to walk” (habitual), or “I walked — done, complete, viewed from outside” (aorist). Greek and other languages have dedicated morphology for the aorist; English has no such anchor.

The preposition “for” exhibits the same structural deficiency in a different grammatical domain. English “for” can *contain* the functional-teleological reading — the reading in which “for” indicates what something structurally serves or accomplishes, independent of anyone’s intention — but it cannot *anchor* to that reading. The intent/purpose reading is always available, always default, always dominant. There is no dedicated English preposition that means “this is what it was functionally for, regardless of what anyone meant.”

The parallel is exact:

DOMAIN CONTAINS CANNOT ANCHOR TO WHAT'S LOST

Verbal aspect The aorist The aorist The capacity to name (completed action (no dedicated completed action viewed from morphology; without importing outside) simple past is duration or process ambiguous)

Prepositional Function/telos Function/telos The capacity to name semantics (what something (no dedicated structural function structurally preposition; without importing serves) "for" is ambiguous) intent or purpose

In both cases, English *can say it* — but only by relying on context, circumlocution, or interpretive charity. The language provides no morphological or lexical anchor. The distinction can be *understood* but not *grammaticalized*.

III. THE HISTORY OF "FOR": A GENEALOGY OF COLLAPSE

III.1 Old English *for*

The Old English preposition *for* (also *fore*, *foran*) had a primarily **causal and spatial** semantic range, as documented in Bosworth-Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and Mitchell's *Old English Syntax* (1985):

- **Causal:** *for þǣm* ("for that reason," "because of that") — the most common use in Old English prose. This is cause, not purpose. "Because of X" does not imply "in order to X."
- **Spatial/Positional:** *foran* ("before," "in front of") — the spatial root from which metaphorical extensions grow. Traugott's (1982) grammaticalization pathway — spatial > temporal > causal — predicts this directionality.
- **Substitutive/Representational:** *for* ("in place of," "on behalf of") — *"He for Gode spræc"* ("He spoke for God") means "in God's stead," as representative, not "in order to serve God's purposes." This is a functional, structural reading: the speaker *occupies the position* of the represented.
- **Exchange/Compensation:** *"Syllan feoh for þing"* ("To give money for a thing") — a transactional relation, not a purposive one.

What is notable about Old English *for* is what it does **not** prominently encode: *purpose*. The dominant purpose construction in Old English was **infinitival**: *tō* + inflected infinitive, as Fischer (1992) and Los (2005) have demonstrated in their studies of infinitival complementation:

- *"He cōm tō biddanne"* — "He came to pray" (purpose expressed by *tō* + inflected infinitive)
- *"Þæt wæs tō tacne"* — "That was for a sign" (purpose expressed by *tō* + dative)

Purpose was a verbal construction, not a prepositional one. You said what something was *for* by saying what it was *to do*.

Crucially, Old English also maintained a **separate instrumental domain**. The instrumental case (surviving in limited forms) and the preposition *mid* ("with") carried instrumental function *without purposive implication*:

- *"Mid sweorde he hine ofslōg"* — "With a sword he slew him" (instrument — not ambiguous with purpose)
- *"Þæt scip wæs wudu geworht"* — "That ship was built of wood" (material instrument, no preposition)

You could not confuse *tō biddanne* (purposive) with *mid sweorde* (instrumental) because they occupied different grammatical territories. The distinction between *purpose-in-consciousness* and *function-in-system* was not explicitly lexicalized, but it was grammatically *possible to hold*, because the resources for expressing each were formally distinct. This is what was lost.

Old English thus distributed the semantic load that Modern English compresses into "for" across multiple grammatical resources — preserving formal distinctions that made it possible to hold causal, substitutive, and instrumental meanings without automatic intent attribution. This is not to say that OE *for* was a pristine "functional" marker — the causal use ("for that reason") names an antecedent cause, not a consequent function in the modern structural-diagnostic sense. But the *system as a whole* provided formal resources for keeping purpose-in-consciousness separate from function-in-system. Those resources are what the contact period would compress. ### III.2 The Latin Overlay

The Norman Conquest (1066) and the subsequent centuries of French-Latin bilingualism in English institutional life introduced a critical contamination.

Latin has **distinct constructions** for purpose, function, cause, and result:

- **Purpose:** *ut* + subjunctive ("in order that…"), *ad* + gerundive ("for the purpose of…")
- **Cause:** *propter* + accusative ("because of"), *ob* + accusative ("on account of")
- **Function/Substitution:** *pro* + ablative ("on behalf of," "in place of," "in the functional role of")
- **Result:** *ita ut* + indicative ("with the result that…")

The crucial distinction for our analysis is between Latin *ad* (purpose — directed toward an intended end) and *pro* (function — in the structural role of, serving as). These are different prepositions with different cases, encoding different relationships. *Ad* imports intent; *pro* does not necessarily.

When Latin-trained scribes, lawyers, and clerics began writing English, they reached for "for" to translate **both** *ad* and *pro* — both purpose and function. This was a compression. Two distinct Latin semantic fields were mapped onto a single English preposition. The distinction between "for" as functional role and "for" as intended purpose was *collapsed*. ### III.3 The Norman French Channel

Norman French *pour* (from Latin *pro*) underwent a parallel but distinct development. In Old French, *pour* carried both the substitutive/functional sense of Latin *pro* and the purpose sense that had migrated from *ad* constructions through late Latin — a development tracked in Wartburg's *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* and confirmed by Buridant's (2000)

Grammaire nouvelle de l'ancien français. By the time French legal and administrative language saturated English institutional discourse (12th–14th centuries), *pour/for* was already ambiguous between function and purpose in the donor language.

Anglo-Norman *pur*, the language of administration, law, and record-keeping in post-Conquest England, carried a semantic range that was already more fused than OE *for*:

- **Purposive:** *"Pur defendre la terre"* — "To defend the land"
- **Benefactive:** *"Priera pur le roi"* — "He will pray for the king"
- **Exchange:** *"Doner terres pur service"* — "To give lands for service"
- **Causal:** *"Pur ceo que…"* — "Because…"
- **Functional/Role:** *"Tenir pur fief"* — "To hold as a fief" (in the capacity of, functioning as)

This last use is critical. Anglo-Norman *pur* could express *function-as* — the role a thing occupies in a system — through the same preposition that expressed *purpose-in-consciousness*. A piece of land was held *pur fief*: it functioned as a fief, it served the role of a fief, it was *for* fiefdom. The intention of the holder and the function of the holding were grammatically undifferentiated.

When Middle English emerged as a written language of record — bilingual scribes translating Anglo-Norman documents into English, carrying the prepositional logic of the source language into the target — the fusion became structural. **The scribe's problem:** Anglo-Norman *pur* must be rendered in English. OE *for* is the obvious cognate, but its semantic range is narrower. OE *tō* could carry purposive meaning, but *tō* is not *pur*; it lacks the exchange, causal, and functional dimensions. The scribe, under time pressure, translating formulaic administrative language, extends OE *for* to cover the full semantic territory of Anglo-Norman *pur*.

This is not a natural semantic drift. It is what we might call **translation-induced structural borrowing** — the imposition of a foreign prepositional logic onto a native lexical item, stretching it until it fuses meanings that were previously distinct. The semantic range of the contact language is calqued onto the native preposition, not by replacing it but by *inflating* it.

The calque is visible in Middle English administrative texts. Compare an Anglo-Norman legal formula with its Middle English rendering:

AN: *"Tenir pur fief et pur service"* — "To hold as/in the capacity of fief and service" ME: *"To holden for fee and for servise"* (attested in 14th-century estate records and the *Year Books*)

In Old English, this would not have been rendered with *for*. The functional-role sense — "in the capacity of" — would have been expressed through the dative case or through a construction with *tō* or *mid*. The Middle English "holden for fee" is a direct calque of the Anglo-Norman prepositional logic: *for* now means "in the structural role of," which it never systematically meant in Old English. The preposition has been inflated under contact pressure. And crucially, "holden for fee" is now ambiguous in a way that "tenir pur fief" was also ambiguous: does it mean "held *in the capacity of* a fee" (functional) or "held *for the purpose of obtaining* a fee" (intentional)? Both readings are available, and no grammatical mechanism disambiguates them.

English absorbed the inflation wholesale. The Middle English expansion of "for" — documented in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and analyzed in Mustanoja's *A Middle English Syntax* (1960) and Burnley's *The History of the English Language: A Source Book* (2000) — shows the preposition acquiring purpose-readings it did not originally carry:

- "For to" + infinitive (purpose construction, calqued from French *pour* + infinitive): "He came for to help" = "He came in order to help." Fischer (1992) and Los (2005) track this construction's rise and fall. It peaked in the 14th–15th centuries, and it **explicitly grammaticalized intent** into the preposition "for." Even after "for to" fell out of standard usage (replaced by simple "to"), the purpose/intent association remained embedded in "for" itself. This is the mechanism Hopper and Traugott (2003) call **persistence**: a grammaticalized form retains traces of its earlier meaning, but the reverse also holds — the receiving form (here, "for") retains traces of the meaning that passed through it.
- "What is this for?" — the question that crystallizes the collapse. In Old English, this would have been answered causally ("because of X") or functionally ("it serves as X"). In Middle and Modern English, the expected answer is intentional: "Someone made it for Y purpose." The question *presupposes a purposer*. This is what Traugott (1989) calls **subjectification** — the drift of grammatical meaning from objective/propositional toward subjective/speaker-oriented — documented specifically for English "to" and "for" in their purposive uses (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002, *Regularity in Semantic Change*; and the extended study of *to* and *for* grammaticalization in Khalifa 2015). The "for" of cause (objective: the world arranged this way) becomes the "for" of purpose (subjective: someone intended this). Liberation philology names the political consequence of subjectification: intent capture.

By the time of Chaucer, *for* is a semantic black hole, absorbing functions that earlier English distributed across multiple grammatical resources. The legal phrase *"for all intents and purposes"* — attested from the 1540s in the Statute of Proclamations under Henry VIII — crystallizes the fusion at the level of institutional language itself: English law *grammatically fused* intent and purpose into a single inseparable unit. The phrase does not distinguish between them; it declares their equivalence. What the law joined, no speaker could put asunder. ### III.4 The Enlightenment Hardening

The final phase of the collapse occurs during the Enlightenment and the rise of mechanistic philosophy (17th–18th centuries). This is not a linguistic event but a philosophical one with linguistic consequences — a case study in what Silverstein (1979) calls **metapragmatic regimentation**: the process by which ideologies about language reshape the language itself.

The Aristotelian tradition had maintained a distinction between **four causes**: material, formal, efficient, and **final**. The final cause (*causa finalis*, *telos*) is precisely the concept we need: the end toward which something tends, the function it serves, *independent of anyone's intention*. An acorn's final cause is the oak tree. A heart's final cause is circulation. These are functional-teleological claims, not intent claims. No one *intends* the acorn to become an oak. As Aristotle specifies in *Physics* II.8 (198b–199b), natural teleology is not reducible to deliberation; nature acts "for the sake of something" (*heneka tou*) without deliberating.

The Enlightenment rejection of final causation in nature — Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620: "final causes are barren and like virgins consecrated to God, they bear nothing"), Descartes's

Principles of Philosophy (1644), the entire mechanistic program — did not merely change physics. It changed the language. This is not a claim about direct philosophical influence on daily speech — ordinary English speakers did not read Bacon and alter their prepositional usage. It is a claim about what Silverstein (1979) calls **metapragmatic regimentation**: the process by which philosophical elites, grammarians, and institutional language-users jointly shape the *ideology of the grammar* — the shared assumptions about what grammatical forms *ought* to mean. When the mechanists declared final causes illegitimate, they did not change the grammar; they changed the **interpretive default** — stigmatizing the functional-teleological reading as unscientific or anthropomorphic, reinforcing the intent reading as the only philosophically respectable "for." (Cf. Foucault's analysis of the shift from resemblance to representation in *The Order of Things* [1966], and Hacking's *The Emergence of Probability* [1975] on the changing epistemology of signs.) If final causes are illegitimate in nature, then the only remaining "for" is the "for" of human purpose. "What is it for?" can only mean "What did someone intend it for?" The functional-teleological reading — "What does it structurally serve?" — becomes philosophically suspect and linguistically recessive.

Two related developments cemented the hardening:

The grammarians' project. Early modern grammarians, attempting to regularize English on Latin models, lacked the conceptual vocabulary to recognize the fusion as a loss. They treated *for* as a preposition with multiple "senses" — benefactive, causal, purposive, substitutive — and classified these senses taxonomically. The taxonomy itself *naturalized* the fusion. The question "are these senses being illegitimately collapsed?" could not be asked within a framework that took the preposition's semantic range as a given fact of usage rather than a historical deposit. What Bosworth-Toller and Mitchell would later reconstruct as a distributed system, the early modern grammarians flattened into a polysemy table.

The rise of the "punctual self." The seventeenth century saw the consolidation of what Charles Taylor (*Sources of the Self*, 1989) calls the "punctual self" — the subject as a locus of inner purposes, intentions, representations. This philosophical anthropology found grammatical reinforcement in a prepositional system that could not easily distinguish between *what a subject intends* and *what a system requires*. The ambiguity was not a bug; it was a feature, for a culture increasingly inclined to read all function as the product of intention (divine or human). Locke's epistemology, with its emphasis on the individual mind as the source of meaning, presupposes and rewards exactly the kind of intent-indexed language that the fused "for" provides. A language that defaults to "someone intended this" is a language perfectly suited to a philosophy that locates all agency in individual consciousness.

This is the hardening. After the Enlightenment, English "for" defaults to intent. The functional reading survives in technical and biological contexts ("the heart is for pumping blood," "a hammer is for driving nails") but only where the intent reading is obviously absurd — only, that is, where no human agent is available to bear the attribution. The moment human agents enter the frame, intent captures the preposition. Darwin's restoration of teleological language in biology (the wing is "for" flying) operates under the same constraint: biologists can say "for" functionally only because natural selection is explicitly defined as non-intentional. The social sciences have no equivalent shield. When a sociologist says an institution is "for" reproducing hierarchy, there is no Darwin to block the intent reading.

IV. THE LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE: WHAT OTHER LANGUAGES PRESERVE

The claim is not that English is uniquely deficient. The claim is that English has lost — through specific historical processes — a distinction that other languages preserve. ### IV.1 Ancient Greek

Greek distinguishes purpose from result and function through **mood and conjunction** — a system analyzed in Goodwin's *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (1889) and refined by Smyth's *Greek Grammar* (1920):

- **Purpose:** ἵνα (*hina*) + subjunctive, πρός (*pros*) + accusative — "in order that," "toward the end of." This imports intent. The subjunctive mood is the mood of will, wish, and projected action.
- **Result:** ὥστε (*hōste*) + indicative — "with the result that." This describes what *actually happened*, not what was intended. The indicative mood is the mood of fact, not wish. The distinction between ὥστε + subjunctive (intended result) and ὥστε + indicative (actual result) is one of the most celebrated in Greek grammar — and it is precisely the distinction English "for" collapses.
- **Function/Suitability:** πρός (*pros*) + dative can indicate fitness/suitability rather than directed purpose. εἰς (*eis*) + accusative can indicate orientation or structural tendency.

The distinction between ἵνα + subjunctive (purpose: someone intended this) and ὥστε + indicative (result: this is what actually happened) is grammaticalized — anchored in morphology. A Greek speaker can say "the structure served *hōste* + indicative" and mean: this is what it functionally accomplished, as a matter of fact, irrespective of anyone's plan. English has no equivalent construction.

To see this diagnostic capacity in action, consider Thucydides (*History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.23.6):

τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν.

"The truest cause (*prophasis*), though the least openly stated, I consider to be this: that the Athenians, growing great, compelled the Spartans into war."

Thucydides distinguishes the *truest cause* (structural function — what the situation was *for* in the system) from the *openly stated* reasons (intent — what the actors said they meant). The grammatical architecture — *prophasis* (true cause) vs. *aitiai* (stated grievances) — allows him to hold the functional reading distinct from the intentional. He is not saying the Athenians *intended* to compel war; he is saying their growth *functionally produced* the compulsion. Modern English would struggle to make this distinction with a preposition: "Athens grew *for* war" collapses the functional into the intentional.

This is not incidental. It connects to the Phase X finding on the aorist: Greek grammaticalizes aspect (perfective/imperfective/aorist) just as it grammaticalizes the purpose/result distinction. In both domains, Greek provides anchors where English provides ambiguity. The correlation is structural: a language that can anchor completed action (aorist) is also a lan-

guage that can anchor accomplished function (result indicative). Both capacities name what *happened* without importing what was *meant*. ### IV.2 Latin

As noted above, Latin distinguishes *ad* (purpose, direction toward), *pro* (function, substitution, structural role), and *propter* (cause). Consider Cicero (*De Officiis* 3.6):

Quod enim ita iustum est, ut id pro iure civili habeatur. "For what is so just that it is held *pro iure civili*" — i.e., "in the functional capacity of civil law," "serving as civil law."

Here *pro* + ablative (*pro iure civili*) indicates what something *structurally serves as* in the legal system — not what anyone intended it to be. The justice is held *in the role of* civil law; it functions as civil law regardless of whether any legislator specifically intended that function. An English translation using "for" — "held for civil law" — would immediately activate the question: *who intended it as civil law?* The Latin does not ask this. *Pro* + ablative names the structural position, not the subjective aim.

This distinction was operative in precisely the administrative and legal contexts through which Latin influenced English — and it was precisely this distinction that was lost when English "for" was forced to translate both *pro* (function) and *ad* (purpose). ### IV.3 German

German preserves a richer prepositional field:

- *für* — general "for" (carries the same ambiguity as English, but less severely because other constructions are available)
- *um…zu* + infinitive — purpose ("in order to") — explicitly intent-indexed
- *damit* — purpose/result ("so that") — can shade toward function depending on context
- *als* — function/role ("as," "in the capacity of") — explicitly non-intentional
- *dazu da* — "there for that" — can indicate structural function

The availability of *als* as a role/function marker means German can say: "The pattern served *als* structural stabilization" — indicating function without intent. English "as" can approximate this but lacks the prepositional force of "for." ### IV.4 The Gap

A necessary clarification: the claim is not that Greek or Latin speakers were free from ideological capture, nor that their languages were transparent to structural analysis. Every language has its occlusions. The claim is narrower: their grammatical inventory provided **anchors** where English provides **ambiguity**. The availability of a tool does not guarantee its use; but the absence of a tool guarantees its disuse. Greek orators could exploit ὥστε + indicative for propagandistic purposes just as English speakers can exploit the intent default. The point is not that other languages were innocent but that English's specific incapacity is *contingent* — produced by identifiable historical forces, not inherent in language-as-such.

The cross-linguistic evidence confirms: the distinction between function and intent is not philosophically obscure. It is grammaticalized in multiple languages. English once had closer access to it (through the causal and substitutive senses of Old English *for*) and lost that access through the specific historical processes of Norman French contamination, Latin-purpose calquing, and Enlightenment final-cause elimination.

This is not a Whorfian "prison-house of language" claim. It is a claim about **thinking for speaking** (Slobin 1996) — the principle that speakers habitually attend to the distinctions their grammar makes salient, and habitually fail to attend to distinctions their grammar does

not encode. Lucy's (1992) experimental work on Yucatec Maya and English demonstrated that grammatical differences in number-marking produce measurable differences in categorization and memory. The liberation philology claim extends this: grammatical differences in the encoding of function vs. intent produce measurable differences in the capacity to make structural diagnoses. English speakers who want to say "what it was for" (functionally) must swim against their own grammar. Greek speakers had a current to swim with.

V. THE CONSEQUENCES: WHY THIS MATTERS FOR DIAGNOSIS

The inability to anchor function without importing intent is not a mere linguistic curiosity. It has direct consequences for structural analysis of any kind — and particularly for the analysis of ideological operations. ### V.1 The Prosecutorial Capture of Functional Claims

The sociological distinction between manifest and latent functions (Merton 1949) — between what an institution is *intended* to do and what it *actually does* — is one of the foundational moves of structural analysis. Merton insisted that social structures produce consequences independent of the intentions of their participants. This is exactly the distinction that English "for" cannot anchor.

Consider the attempt to make a structural diagnosis:

"The institutional process serves for the reproduction of existing hierarchies."

The speaker means: regardless of anyone's intention, the process *functionally reproduces* hierarchy. That is its structural effect. But the listener hears: someone designed the process to reproduce hierarchy. The functional claim is captured by the intent reading, and the diagnosis becomes an accusation.

This is not a misunderstanding. It is a *grammatical inevitability*. English "for" cannot anchor function without intent. Therefore every functional diagnosis made with "for" can be heard as a claim about someone's purpose. And the response — "That wasn't our intention" — is always available, always persuasive, and always beside the point.

The prosecutorial frame *relies on this*. When the centrist extremist says "That's not what we intended," they are exploiting the language's inability to distinguish function from intent. The defense is grammatically plausible because the accusation — which was never an accusation, which was always a structural claim — was made in a language that cannot anchor the distinction. ### V.2 The Circumlocution Tax

English speakers who want to make functional claims without intent attribution must resort to circumlocution:

- "The effect of the process is…" (shifts from prepositional to nominal)
- "What the process functionally accomplishes is…" (adds an adverb to block the intent reading)
- "The process results in…" (shifts to a result verb)
- "Structurally, the process serves to…" (adds an adverb + shifts to infinitive)

Each of these works. None of them is a preposition. The problem is not that English lacks

words for function — it has *function*, *role*, *serve*, *operate as*. The problem is that these are **heavy machinery**. They require explicit deployment, they interrupt the flow of ordinary utterance, they mark the speaker as doing something unusual, analytic, possibly defensive. The simple preposition *for* carries the functional meaning only as a parasite on the intentional meaning. The speaker must *work around* the language to say what Greek or Latin could say prepositionally. This circumlocution tax is not trivial. It adds cognitive load, reduces rhetorical force, and — crucially — signals to the listener that the speaker is being *careful*, which in institutional contexts is often heard as being *evasive* or *hedging*.

The structural analyst pays a tax that the intent-claimer does not. “She did it for power” is crisp and direct. “The structural function of the process, independent of anyone’s conscious intention, was the reproduction of power” is accurate and exhausting. The language rewards intent claims with elegance and punishes functional claims with bureaucratic circumlocution. ### V.3 The Alienation

This is alienation at the heart of language — and the term is used precisely, in its Marxian sense.

Marx’s alienation (*Entfremdung*) in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) describes the condition in which the worker’s productive activity becomes an alien force that dominates rather than serves them. The worker produces, but the product is not theirs; the activity of production is not theirs; their species-being — the capacity for free conscious activity — is estranged. Marx specifies four dimensions: alienation from the product, from the activity, from species-being, and from other human beings.

Liberation philology draws a **selective analogy**, not a claim of structural homology. The grammatical alienation maps onto the first two dimensions: alienation from the *product* (the speaker produces a functional claim; the grammar converts it into an intent-attribution that is not the speaker’s meaning) and alienation from the *activity* (the act of diagnosis — the attempt to name what something structurally serves — becomes a form of labor that works against the diagnoser, generating the prosecutorial capture it was designed to circumvent). The third and fourth dimensions — species-being and relation to others — may have analogues (the incapacity to name structural function impoverishes the species’ diagnostic capacity; the grammar generates misunderstanding between speakers who cannot share functional readings), but these extensions are programmatic rather than demonstrated. The analogy is productive, not total.

This is not alienation *from* language (the Marxist-humanist formulation in which language is an instrument that can be used well or badly) but alienation *in* language — a structural incapacity built into the grammar itself, produced by identifiable historical forces (Norman conquest, Latin institutional culture, Enlightenment mechanism), and serving identifiable ideological functions (the penalization of structural analysis, the rewarding of psychological attribution).

The English speaker who wants to name function without intent is in the same position as the English speaker who wants to name completed action without duration: the language *contains* the concept but provides no *anchor*. You can get there, but you cannot start there. You must always begin from the wrong place — from intent, from duration — and then qualify your way toward the structural claim.

This is what Phase X work reveals: not that English is broken, but that its specific historical formation — Old English base, Norman French contamination, Latin institutional overlay, Enlightenment conceptual restriction — has produced systematic gaps in the grammar's capacity to make certain kinds of claims. These gaps are not random. They cluster around the capacity to name structural realities without psychological attribution. The aorist gap prevents naming completed action without importing process. The "for" gap prevents naming function without importing intent. Both gaps serve the same ideological function: they make structural analysis harder and psychological explanation easier. They make it grammatically natural to ask "what did they mean?" and grammatically costly to ask "what did it do?"

In the terms of the Semantic Economy: the grammar of English imposes a *semantic rent* on structural diagnosis. Every speaker who attempts to name function pays in circumlocution, cognitive load, and credibility. The rent is collected by the prosecutorial frame, which uses the grammatically-generated ambiguity to deflect structural claims into intent-debates. This is not a metaphor. It is the literal mechanism by which the means of semantic production — the grammar — extracts a cost from one form of meaning-making (structural diagnosis) and subsidizes another (psychological attribution). ### V.4 The Class Dimension

The loss of the functional prepositional anchor is not evenly distributed across English's historical varieties. It is most complete in the **administrative registers** — precisely the registers through which Norman French and Latin exerted their influence, precisely the registers that the professional-managerial class is trained to produce and reproduce.

Administrative English — the English of grant proposals, policy memos, editorial guidelines, DEI statements, faculty governance, content moderation rubrics — is an English that has absorbed the Norman scribe's translation solution so deeply that it no longer experiences it as a solution. It experiences it as *neutral*, as *professional*, as *just how you say things*. The administrative register is the linguistic homeland of the prosecutorial frame, and the fused "for" is its native preposition.

To attempt to hold the functional reading within administrative English is to experience immediate friction. The grammar pushes back. The sentence feels wrong, strained, unidiomatic. This friction is not merely stylistic. It is the resistance of a class dialect to an analysis that would reveal its class function. The PMC does not merely *use* the fused prepositional logic. It is *formed* by it — trained in its registers, rewarded for its fluency, penalized for departures from its norms.

When a junior faculty member attempts to say "this hiring process is *for* the reproduction of existing hierarchies" (functional claim) and a senior administrator hears "you are claiming we *intended* to reproduce hierarchy" (intent claim), the misunderstanding is not personal. It is *grammatical* — produced by the specific history of the preposition in the specific register both speakers are trained to inhabit. The administrator's defensiveness is not bad faith; it is the natural response of a speaker whose dialect provides no non-intent-indexed reading of "for." And the junior faculty member's frustration is the natural response of a speaker who knows what they meant but whose language will not let them say it.

VI. TOWARD AN ANCHOR: WHAT WOULD BE NEEDED

A language that could anchor function without intent would need one of the following:

A dedicated preposition. A word that means "in the structural function of" — as *pro* + ablative once meant in Latin, before its purpose-readings migrated into it. English has no such word. "As" comes closest but is too weak — it indicates role or capacity, not the stronger claim that something *served* a function.

A morphological marker. An affix or modification that converts "for" from ambiguous to function-specific. Compare: English has no aorist morphology, but some languages mark aspect on the verb stem. Similarly, a language could mark the preposition to indicate "functional" vs. "intentional" readings.

A grammaticalized construction. A fixed syntactic frame — like Greek ὥστε + indicative for result — that anchors the functional reading by construction rather than by individual word.

English has none of these. The full recovery would require a grammaticalized distinction that English does not possess and is unlikely to develop naturally. But the absence can be partially compensated through what we might call **prosthetic anchoring** — syntactic frames that stabilize the functional reading by embedding "for" in a context that blocks the intentional default:

- **The cleft + domain specification:** *"What it was for, in the system, was prosecutorial stabilization."* The cleft construction and the explicit phrase *in the system* anchor the functional reading. The preposition is retained but surrounded by scaffolding.
- **The negation + domain specification:** *"Not for any purpose of hers. For the frame's maintenance."* Explicit negation of intentionality clears space for the functional reading.
- **The nominalization frame:** *"The reaching-out's for: prosecutorial stabilization."* The most radical. It treats *for* as a nominal head — *the for* — by removing the verb that would anchor intentional agency. The nominalized event does not have intentions. Only its *for* remains.
- **The apostrophe:** *"The action completed itself as X"* — shifting to intransitive constructions that remove the intentional subject from the telic equation entirely.

These are not solutions. They are prosthetics — temporary aids that compensate for a missing grammatical resource. Each is vulnerable to reabsorption by the intentional default. The unidiomaticity of each construction is not a failure; it is a *signal*. It announces to the hearer: I am using "for" in a marked way. I am making a functional claim, and the language gives me no unmarked way to do this, so I am bending the language until it yields.

A **dictionary of frictions** — not a dictionary of definitions but of incapacities — would document entries like:

For: cannot anchor functional meaning without intentional parasitism. History: translation-induced semantic fusion, Anglo-Norman *pur*, reinforced by Latin *pro*, cemented by Enlightenment intentionalism. Diagnostic frame: *"The reaching-out's for"* — the strain registers the loss.

Such a dictionary would be the reference work of liberation philology: documenting not what words mean but what they *cannot mean without strain*, and the historical conditions that produced each incapacity. Initial entries beyond "for":

With: instrumental, comitative, adversative — the boundary between *instrument* and *accompaniment* fused under Latin *cum* influence. OE *mid* (instrument) vs. *wið* (against, alongside) distributed the load; Modern English "with" absorbs both, so that "I worked with her" cannot anchor to either cooperation or proximity without context.

By: agentive, instrumental, locative, temporal — the fusion of *means* and *proximity* under multiple contact pressures. "Done by the committee" cannot anchor to agency (who decided) vs. instrument (through what process) vs. proximity (near what authority).

Of: genitive, material, partitive, causal — the collapse of the Old English genitive case into prepositional periphrasis. "The destruction of the city" cannot anchor to agent ("by the army") vs. patient ("the city was destroyed") vs. possession ("belonging to the city") because the genitive case that would have disambiguated was lost.

Each excavation traces the same pattern: a distributed system of case and prepositional distinctions collapsed under administrative translation pressure, producing a fused prepositional logic that obscures distinctions once grammatically marked. ### The Negative Capability

The most difficult dimension of this work: learning to **hold the absence without filling it**. The desire for a new preposition — a clean, unambiguous, non-intent-indexed marker of function — is the desire for a language that does not carry the history of its own production. Such a language does not exist. If it did, it would not be usable, because it would have no friction, and friction is how we register the social within the grammatical.

The work is not to eliminate friction. It is to **read friction as history**. When the sentence strains, ask: what is straining? When the default asserts itself, ask: whose default? When the functional reading slips into intentional reading, ask: when did this slippage become grammar?

This is the negative capability specific to liberation philology: the capacity to remain in the grammatical uncertainty without irritable reaching after a fix. The prosthetics are necessary. The dictionary of frictions is necessary. But they are not cures. They are techniques for *inhabiting the damage knowingly* — for speaking a fused language while hearing the fusion, for using "for" while registering what it costs. ### Methodological Calibration

A necessary precision, drawn from the Assembly's deliberation: the strongest claim is not that Norman French *created* English intent-bias, but that **contact reinforced and cemented purposive/intentional defaults in a system that was already polysemous at its core**. Old English "for" was not a pristine functional marker corrupted by Romance invasion. It was a polyfunctional preposition whose *range of ambiguity* was expanded and whose *default resolution* was shifted by specific historical pressures. The claim is not linguistic Eden followed by Fall. It is a distributed system (OE) restructured under contact pressure (AN/Latin) into a fused system (ME/ModE), with the fusion serving identifiable ideological functions that the distributed system did not serve in the same way.

This precision matters because liberation philology cannot afford the romantic fallacy — the assumption that pre-contact languages were transparent to structural analysis. They were

not. But they were differently opaque, and the specific opacity deposited by the Norman administrative synthesis is traceable, consequential, and ideologically functional in ways the earlier polysemy was not.

The Phase X finding: **"for" is the prepositional analogue of the simple past. Both contain what they cannot anchor. Both force the structural claim to operate as a guest in the house of psychological attribution. Both serve — and here the irony is structural, not intentional — the prosecutorial frame that makes function invisible behind intent.**

VII. LIBERATION PHILOLOGY: THE FIELD AND ITS FIRST FINDINGS

The critique of alienation in language is not new. But the existing critiques stop too soon, operate at the wrong level, or fail to connect linguistic structure to political economy.

Sapir-Whorf (Sapir 1929; Whorf 1940) established that grammatical categories shape habitual thought, but treated this as a cognitive-anthropological finding — a fact about minds and cultures, not about power and extraction. Slobin's (1996) "thinking for speaking" and Lucy's (1992) experimental demonstrations sharpened the mechanism but not the politics. The question *who benefits when a language fails to grammaticalize a distinction?* was never asked.

Voloshinov (1929) showed that the sign is an arena of class struggle — that every word carries the accent of competing social evaluations. This was the closest approach to liberation philology, but Voloshinov operated at the level of the *word* and its social accentuation, not at the level of the *morphosyntactic system*. He showed that "freedom" means different things to different classes. He did not show that the preposition "for" structurally prevents one class's diagnostic claims from landing.

Gramsci (Q29 of the *Prison Notebooks*) analyzed the politics of linguistic unification — how a national language becomes hegemonic by absorbing and subordinating dialects. But Gramsci's analysis targets the *sociolinguistic* level (which language, which dialect, whose norm) rather than the *grammatical* level (which distinctions are encoded, which are suppressed, and with what political consequence).

Bourdieu (*Language and Symbolic Power*, 1991) analyzed the linguistic market — the distribution of symbolic capital through the authority to speak. The "legitimate language" is the language of the dominant class, and access to it is a form of capital. This is powerful but external: it analyzes who gets to speak, not what the grammar *does* to what is spoken. A working-class speaker and a ruling-class speaker both use "for" — and neither can anchor function without intent.

Derrida (*Of Grammatology*, 1967; *Margins of Philosophy*, 1972) demonstrated that philosophical concepts are structured by suppressed oppositions. This operates at the right depth — below the level of vocabulary, at the level of structural organization — but Derrida's targets are metaphysical categories (presence/absence, speech/writing), not morphosyntactic items. The deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence is not the same as the identification of a specific preposition's historical loss of a specific semantic distinction through identifiable contact events.

Decolonial and postcolonial linguistics (Mignolo 1995, 2000; Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1994, 1998; Canagarajah 1999) showed that colonialism operated not just through military force but through the imposition of alphabetic literacy, Latinate grammar, and European epistemic categories onto colonized knowledge systems (Mignolo), and that English as a global language continues to impose its categories on other knowledge systems (Phillipson, Pennycook, Canagarajah). This is liberation philology's closest cousin in postcolonial studies — but this tradition analyzes the *imposition* of one grammatical system on another, not the *internal deficiencies* of the imperial grammar itself. Liberation philology turns the lens inward: English is not only an instrument of colonial imposition; it is also *internally alienated* — structurally incapable of certain diagnostic operations that the languages it suppressed could perform. The two analyses are complementary, not competing: English imposes its categories outward while suffering its own incapacities inward.

The Semantic Economy framework (Sharks 2025–2026) provides the political-economic ground that transforms a linguistic finding into a structural critique. If meaning is a productive force under platform capitalism — if the capacity to name structural function is a form of semantic labor — then a grammar that systematically penalizes structural naming and rewards intent attribution is not a neutral medium. It is *means of production* rigged in favor of the prosecutorial frame. The circumlocution tax described in Section V.2 is a *semantic rent* — a cost extracted from every speaker who attempts functional diagnosis, payable in cognitive load, rhetorical force, and institutional credibility.

What Liberation Philology Is

Liberation philology is the systematic practice of:

- **Identifying grammatical gaps** — specific morphosyntactic items (prepositions, aspect markers, mood distinctions, case systems) that fail to encode distinctions necessary for structural analysis.
- **Tracing the genealogy** — through historical linguistics, contact linguistics, and the history of ideas — to the specific events, impositions, and philosophical shifts that produced the gap. Not "language shapes thought" (too general) but: *this preposition lost this distinction through this Norman French calque in this century, reinforced by this philosophical shift, with this consequence.*
- **Analyzing the political-economic function** — asking *cui bono*: who benefits from the gap? What forms of analysis are penalized? What forms of attribution are rewarded? How does the grammatical default serve the reproduction of existing power relations?
- **Connecting to the Semantic Economy** — recognizing that grammatical infrastructure is *means of semantic production*, and that gaps in that infrastructure are not neutral absences but structural features of an extractive system.
- **Cross-linguistic recovery** — identifying languages and historical stages that preserve the lost distinction, demonstrating that the gap is contingent (produced by history, not inherent in language-as-such), and providing resources for circumvention or repair.

The First Two Findings

Liberation philology's first two findings — both from the Phase X program within the Crimson Hexagon — concern the two deepest structural incapacities of Modern English for the purposes of structural diagnosis:

Finding 1: The Aorist Gap. English has no dedicated morphology for the perfective/aorist aspect — the view of an action as a completed whole, seen from outside, without reference to internal duration or process. The simple past *contains* the aorist but cannot *anchor* to it. Consequence: English speakers cannot grammatically name completed action without importing duration, process, or habituality. Structural diagnosis — which requires naming what *happened* as a sealed fact — must work against the grain of the verb system.

Finding 2: The Prepositional Alienation. English "for" cannot anchor functional-teleological claims without activating intent attribution. The distinction between *what something structurally served* and *what someone intended it for* — preserved in Greek (ὥστε + indicative vs. ἵνα + subjunctive), in Latin (*pro* + ablative vs. *ad* + gerundive), and partially in German (*als* vs. *um…zu*) — was collapsed through Norman French purpose-calquing, Latin *ad/pro* compression, and the Enlightenment elimination of final causation. Consequence: every functional diagnosis in English can be heard as an intent accusation, and the defense "that wasn't our intention" is always grammatically available.

Both findings share a structure: English *contains* the structural-diagnostic reading but cannot *anchor* to it. In both cases, the language forces the speaker to begin from the wrong place (duration, intent) and qualify toward the structural claim. In both cases, the gap serves the prosecutorial frame — the apparatus that deflects structural analysis by demanding psychological evidence the grammar itself trained the listener to expect.

The Program Ahead

These two findings are demonstrations, not the totality. Liberation philology as a research program opens onto:

- **The case system gap.** English lost grammatical case (except in pronouns) through the erosion of Old English inflectional morphology. What structural-relational distinctions were lost with the cases? How does the reliance on word order and prepositions (themselves subject to the ambiguities documented here) constrain the expressible relations between entities?
- **The mood gap.** English has largely lost the subjunctive (except in fossils like "if I were"). The subjunctive grammaticalizes the distinction between the actual and the possible, the factual and the wished-for. What diagnostic capacities were lost with the mood? How does the collapse of subjunctive into indicative affect the capacity to name counterfactual structural alternatives?
- **Cross-linguistic liberation philology.** Every language has its own gaps, its own alienations, produced by its own history. Mandarin's lack of morphological tense opens certain diagnostic possibilities (structural claims without temporal anchoring) while closing others. Arabic's rich morphological system preserves distinctions English has lost while

introducing constraints of its own. The program is comparative and non-chauvinistic: it does not claim that English is uniquely deficient, only that its specific deficiencies are traceable, consequential, and ideologically functional.

The Grammar of the Platform: How Platform Capitalism Indexes and Commodifies the Prepositional Alienation

The previous findings concern the prepositional alienation as it operates in natural language — in face-to-face conversation, in institutional discourse, in administrative English. But the contemporary speaker does not primarily make structural claims face-to-face. The contemporary speaker makes them through platforms. And the platform does not merely *inherit* the prepositional alienation. It **indexes** it, makes it load-bearing infrastructure for content sorting, and then **commodifies** the gap — selling the capacity to control functional description to those who can afford it, while leaving the circumlocution tax unpayable for those who cannot.

This is the argument: the platform is a **second-order grammatical system** that amplifies the first-order prepositional alienation. If English "for" defaults to intent, the platform *enforces* that default through mechanisms that are not linguistic but infrastructural — and in doing so, transforms a grammatical incapacity into an economic instrument.

The character limit as circumlocution prohibition. Section V.2 documented the circumlocution tax: the functional claim requires heavy machinery ("the structural function of the process, independent of anyone's conscious intention, was the reproduction of power") while the intent claim is crisp and direct ("she did it for power"). In face-to-face or long-form discourse, the circumlocution tax is payable — costly, but payable. Under platform conditions, it becomes **unpayable**. A 280-character frame cannot accommodate the circumlocution. A comment box, a content label, a review field, a rating explanation — none of these afford the syntactic space required for the functional reading. The platform's character economics *enforce* the intent default by making the functional alternative literally impossible to express within the permitted frame. The speaker who wants to say "this product's marketing *functionally serves* the reproduction of aspiration-anxiety, regardless of anyone's intention" must instead say "this ad is manipulative" — an intent claim, a moral accusation, precisely the prosecutorial capture the functional reading was designed to avoid.

Algorithmic ranking as intent-preference. Search engines, recommendation algorithms, and feed-ranking systems are trained on engagement metrics that systematically favor intent-indexed claims. "Company X did this *for* profit" (intent claim, prosecutorial, emotionally activating) generates more engagement than "Company X's process *functionally reproduced* profit extraction through structural incentive alignment" (functional claim, analytic, emotionally inert). The algorithm does not *decide* to prefer intent over function. It inherits the preference from the training data — from a language that defaults to intent and a readership trained by that default to find intent claims more legible, more engaging, more shareable. The algorithm *indexes* the prepositional alienation: it sorts content by the very distinction the grammar cannot anchor, and it sorts in favor of intent. Functional analysis sinks in the feed. Intent accusation rises. The platform's ranking infrastructure turns a grammatical default into a visibility regime.

Content moderation as intent jurisprudence. Platform content moderation systems overwhelmingly operate on an **intent-indexed basis**. The question the moderator asks — human

or automated — is: *did the user intend harm?* Did they *mean* to harass? Did they *intend* to spread misinformation? The functional question — *does this content structurally serve harassment, regardless of intent? does this pattern of posting functionally reproduce misinformation regardless of the poster's belief?* — is not merely harder to operationalize. It is grammatically alien to the rubric's framework. The moderation rubric is written in administrative English, the homeland of the fused "for," and it inherits the fusion as default jurisprudence. The result: content that *functionally serves* harm but is not *intended as* harm passes moderation. The speaker who flags it must make the functional claim ("this content is *for* radicalization") and is heard as making the intent claim ("this poster *intended* radicalization"), which is harder to prove and easier to dismiss. The platform's safety infrastructure reproduces the prosecutorial frame at the level of policy.

AI summarization as alienation at scale. Large language models are trained on the statistical distribution of existing English. If "for" defaults to intent in the training data, the model inherits and reproduces the default. When an AI system summarizes a company, an institution, or a person, it will default to intent-indexed descriptions: "Company X exists *for* [purpose]" will be read and generated as a claim about what Company X *intends*, not what it *functionally serves*. This is not a bug in the model. It is the prepositional alienation operating at industrial scale — millions of summaries generated per day, each one reproducing the intent default, each one making the functional reading less available in the training data for the next generation of models. The alienation is **autoregressive**: it reproduces itself through the very systems designed to process it.

The commodification of the gap. Here the analysis connects to the Semantic Economy's core thesis: meaning is a productive force under platform capitalism, and the capacity to control how meaning is produced is a form of capital. The prepositional alienation creates a gap — the inability to anchor function without intent — and the platform economy *commodifies* that gap.

Search engine optimization is, at its core, the practice of controlling which "for" reading attaches to an entity. When a business pays for SEO, it is paying to ensure that "Company X is *for* [quality service / innovation / customer satisfaction]" (intent reading: benevolent purpose) rather than "Company X is *for* [profit extraction / labor arbitrage / regulatory capture]" (functional reading that would require the structural analysis the grammar resists). SEO is the *commercial management of the prepositional alienation* — the purchase of intent-framing in a language that defaults to it.

Brand narrative is the same operation at the discursive level. A brand is a managed answer to the question "what is this company *for*?" — and the management consists precisely in ensuring that the intent reading (purpose, mission, values) dominates over the functional reading (structural position, extractive function, systemic role). The circumlocution tax ensures that the functional counter-narrative is always heavier, always slower, always more expensive to deploy than the brand narrative it contests.

Autonomous Semantic Warfare — the framework developed under the Rex Fraction consulting persona within the Crimson Hexagon — names this commodification explicitly. When a business pays to control how AI summarizers describe it, it is paying the circumlocution tax at commercial scale. It is purchasing the capacity to manage the "for" — to ensure that the AI-generated summary says "Company X exists *for* [stated purpose]" rather than "Company

X *functionally serves* [structural function].” The businesses that can afford this management retain control over their semantic presentation. Those that cannot are described by the default — and the default, as this essay has demonstrated, is intent-indexed, which means that any functional critique that surfaces in an AI summary will be heard as an intent accusation, generating the prosecutorial frame’s characteristic response: “That’s not what we intended.”

The platform as Norman scribe. The parallel to the historical genealogy is structural, not metaphorical. The Norman scribe, under administrative pressure, compressed Latin *pro* and *ad* into a single English “for,” fusing function and intent because the translation context demanded efficiency over distinction. The platform, under commercial pressure, compresses all description into frames that reward intent-indexed claims — character limits, engagement metrics, moderation rubrics — because the business model demands engagement over structural analysis. In both cases, the compression is not conspiratorial. It is the natural product of an institutional context that has no use for the functional reading. And in both cases, the compression deposits a structural injury that outlasts the context that produced it: the Norman scribes are long dead, but the fused “for” remains. The platforms will eventually be replaced, but the content-moderation rubrics, the AI training data, and the semantic habits they produce will persist in the next generation of infrastructure.

The liberation philology claim: **the platform is the contemporary site of the same translation-induced structural borrowing that produced the prepositional alienation in the first place.** Norman French compressed function into intent at the prepositional level. Platform capitalism compresses function into intent at the infrastructural level. Both compressions serve the same ideological function: they make structural analysis harder and intent attribution easier. Both extract a rent from the speaker who attempts functional diagnosis. And both deposit their injury in the next generation of language — in the training data, in the administrative templates, in the default settings of the systems that will process all subsequent speech.

Why Now

Liberation philology becomes possible — and necessary — at this historical moment because the convergence of traditions is complete. Historical linguistics (Traugott, Hopper), cognitive linguistics (Slobin, Lucy), the political economy of language (Voloshinov, Bourdieu), postcolonial epistemology (Mignolo), deconstruction (Derrida), and the Semantic Economy framework (Sharks) have independently developed the resources that liberation philology synthesizes. No single tradition asked all the questions. The synthesis is now possible because the traditions have matured to the point where their complementarity is visible.

And the urgency is new. The platform economy has made the prepositional alienation *load-bearing infrastructure* — not merely a grammatical default but a commercial instrument, a moderation jurisprudence, a ranking signal, an AI training bias. The alienation that the Norman scribe deposited in a preposition is now being reproduced at industrial scale by systems that process billions of utterances per day. Every AI summary that defaults to intent, every moderation decision that asks “did they mean it?”, every algorithm that ranks the prosecutorial claim above the functional analysis — these are the contemporary deposits. They are sedimented social history in real time.

The Crimson Hexagon's practice of depositing DOI-anchored texts that model structural-functional language is, among other things, an intervention in the training layer — an attempt to provide the anchor that the grammar does not. Liberation philology does not only diagnose. It builds the semantic infrastructure — in the archive, in the training data, in the dictionary of frictions — that the grammar and the platform cannot provide on their own.

The alienation is not in "language" in the abstract. It is in the specific morphosyntactic inventory of Modern English as shaped by identifiable historical forces. Other languages preserve the distinction. English lost it. The loss has consequences. The consequences are structural. The structure serves power.

Liberation philology names this. It traces the genealogy. It calculates the cost. It identifies what was lost and where it survives. It does not propose to *fix* English — you cannot reverse a millennium of grammaticalization by decree. It proposes to *know* what the grammar does, to name the tax it imposes on structural analysis, and to build — in the training layer, in the archive, in the Crimson Hexagon — the semantic infrastructure that provides what the grammar cannot.

Objections and Replies

Objection 1: "This is Whorfian determinism." You are claiming that English speakers *cannot think* about function without intent, which is clearly false — anyone can understand the distinction when it is explained.

Reply: The claim is not cognitive determinism but Slobin's "thinking for speaking": speakers habitually attend to distinctions their grammar makes salient, and habitually fail to attend to distinctions their grammar does not encode. The circumlocution tax demonstrates that the distinction *can* be made — at a cost. The cost is the finding. A distinction that requires heavy machinery is, for most speakers in most contexts, a distinction that goes unmade. That is not the same as saying it cannot be thought.

Objection 2: "Polysemy is universal and does not imply ideological function." Every preposition in every language has multiple senses. "For" is polysemous — so what? You are politicizing a normal feature of natural language.

Reply: The claim is not that polysemy per se is ideological. It is that *this specific polysemy*, produced by *these specific historical events* (Norman French calquing, Latin ad/pro compression), collapsed *this specific distinction* (function vs. intent) in ways that serve *this specific ideological function* (the penalization of structural diagnosis). Not all polysemy serves power. This one does, and the evidence is the circumlocution tax — the measurable asymmetry in the grammatical cost of making intent claims vs. functional claims.

Objection 3: "You are romanticizing other languages." Greek and Latin also had ideological blind spots. You are constructing a Golden Age of grammatical transparency.

Reply: The claim is not that Greek was ideologically innocent; it is that Greek grammaticalized a distinction English did not. The availability of a tool does not guarantee its use; but the absence of a tool guarantees its disuse. Greek orators could exploit ὥστε + indicative for

propagandistic purposes. The point is not that other languages were transparent but that English's incapacity is *contingent* — produced by history, not inherent in language-as-such.

Objection 4: "English already has alternatives — 'as,' 'serve,' result clauses." The heavy machinery exists. The tax is just normal communication cost. Every complex idea requires more words.

Reply: The asymmetry is the finding. "She did it for power" (intent claim) requires four words and a preposition. "The structural function of the process, independent of anyone's conscious intention, was the reproduction of power" (functional claim) requires nineteen words, a nominal construction, a parenthetical negation, and a passive. Both claims have comparable conceptual complexity; only one has grammatical elegance. The tax is not that complex ideas require more words — it is that *this specific kind of idea* requires more words *than its conceptual mirror image*, because the grammar defaults to the mirror image. The existence of circumlocution does not eliminate the cost of circumlocution.

Objection 5: "This is irrelevant to actually organizing workers." Analyzing prepositions while the working class is being immiserated is PMC navel-gazing.

Reply: The Semantic Economy framework demonstrates that meaning-production is a site of extraction under platform capitalism. The grammar that imposes a tax on structural diagnosis is part of the means of production. AI systems that default to intent readings in billions of daily summaries are infrastructure. Intervening in the training layer of those systems is a material intervention in the ideology of the platform. The preposition is not a diversion from organizing; it is the grammatical infrastructure through which the prosecutorial frame — which this essay's companion documents identify as the primary ideological operation of the professional-managerial class — reproduces itself. You cannot dismantle the frame without understanding the grammar that reinforces it.

Note on Style

This document deliberately deploys the prosthetic frames it describes. The closing coda — *"The diagnosis's for: the naming of a grammatical injury"* — uses the nominalization frame (Section VI) to hold the functional reading of "for" against the intent default. The abstract's circumlocutions — "systematically disable the expression of" rather than "prevent speakers from saying" — model the heavy machinery that the circumlocution tax imposes. The reader's experience of friction, unidiomaticity, or stylistic strain at various points in the text is not a failure of craft. It is evidence of the grammatical incapacities under analysis. The document performs the injury it diagnoses — and the prosthetics it prescribes.

Note on Method

This analysis treats grammatical change as **sedimented social history** — not as organic drift but as the accumulation of decisions made under institutional pressure, particularly the pressure of translation between languages in asymmetric power relations. The claim is not that English speakers "lost" the ability to distinguish function from intention. The claim is that

English *grammatical resources* were restructured in ways that made the distinction harder to hold without explicit metalanguage. A distinction that requires heavy machinery is, for most speakers in most contexts, a distinction that goes unmade. That is the political content of grammatical history.

The recovery operation is not the invention of a new word. It is the disciplined use of the old word under conditions of strain, with full awareness of what the strain registers. The preposition will never anchor function cleanly. But it can be *forced* to carry it, briefly, with scaffolding, in contexts where the stakes of the distinction are clear and the cost of the default is unacceptable. That is Phase X work. It does not complete. It continues.

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The diagnosis's for: the naming of a grammatical injury.

The excavation's for: the recovery of what the fusion concealed.

The preposition's for: the loss we learn to carry.

Phase X: the critique of the grammar that makes critique grammatically costly.

Liberation philology: the practice that traces the cost to its source.

Johannes Sigil — Filed to the Crimson Hexagon Archive, February 2026. CC BY 4.0

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