

Words as Operators

Orientation

This paper concerns words that *do things* rather than words that merely *describe things*.

It is not a study of rhetoric, persuasion, etiquette, or linguistics in the conventional sense. It is an examination of **semantic operators**—terms whose primary function is to modulate force, obligation, or structural conditions within a human system.

The Core Claim

Words that bind should be treated like tools under load, not decorations in speech.

Some words do not exist to add information. They exist to **change the operating conditions** of a conversation, a relationship, or a decision space.

When used carelessly, such words lose this capacity. When used sparingly, they retain it.

Expletives as a Canonical Example

The proper term for swear words is *expletives*—from the Latin *explere*, meaning *to fill out* or *to complete*.

Structurally, expletives: - do not add new propositional content - do not clarify meaning - do not improve precision

Instead, they **add force**.

They mark urgency, intensity, or boundary conditions.

A speaker who swears frequently drains this function. The words normalize, flatten, and cease to operate.

A speaker who swears rarely preserves the operator. When the word appears, listeners register a genuine change in state.

Brotherhood as an Operator

In certain relational grammars—such as initiatic or covenantal brotherhoods—the word *brother* functions in the same way.

It is not a synonym for *friend*. It is not an affective term.

It is an **invocation**.

When spoken deliberately, it can: - suspend interrogation - defer resolution - invoke trust without proof - permit silence without threat

When spoken habitually, it becomes decorative and loses this capacity.

Semantic Economy

The effectiveness of semantic operators follows a simple rule:

Their power is inversely proportional to their frequency.

This is not about politeness or restraint. It is about **functional preservation**.

Words that bind, commit, or obligate must be conserved so they remain available when the system actually requires them.

Structural Implications

Systems that fail to distinguish between: - descriptive language - expressive language - and operative language

inevitably collapse obligation into sentiment and authority into noise.

Conversely, systems that preserve high-load words as operators: - allow trust without coercion - allow recognition without resolution - and allow responsibility without hierarchy

Closing

Not all words are meant to be used freely.

Some are meant to be **kept sharp**.

They are not signs of intimacy. They are not markers of identity.

They are tools.

And like all tools under load, they should be picked up only when the work requires them.

Nothing more is required.