

ONTOΣ IV: Intentionality Without Ownership

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16 min read

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Jan 8, 2026

<https://medium.com/@petronushowcore/onto%CF%82-iv-intentionality-without-ownership-28cae69bf3a4>

Temporary Stabilizations in an Unfinished Reality

Abstract

The ONTOΣ research program develops a non-subject-centered ontology of agency, adaptivity, and control by progressively removing psychological, teleological, and ownership-based assumptions from the notion of Will. Across the first three works, Will was reframed from a mental faculty or motivational force into a structural operator governing admissible regimes of form and persistence. ONTOΣ I established Will as an ontological operator rather than a property of a subject, ONTOΣ II decoupled adaptivity from optimization, redefining it as form preservation under environmental change, ONTOΣ III demonstrated that Will is volumetrically constrained and can only be sustained within finite structural capacities, beyond which coherence collapses.

ONTOΣ IV completes this trajectory by withdrawing the final implicit assumption shared by many ontological frameworks: that Will itself constitutes a point of origin. In contrast, this work treats Will as a residual mode — an emergent response of form under structural strain — rather than as a generative or initiating principle. Intentionality is correspondingly relocated to a deeper, non-possessive layer of reality, preceding agency while belonging to no subject.

The central claim advanced here is that persistence in reality is not grounded in fixation or completion, but in the impossibility of final ontological closure. Identity,

subjectivity, meaning, and will are shown to be temporary stabilizations — locally coherent regimes that arise precisely because being cannot be definitively settled. These stabilizations do not endure through ownership, control, or sustaining force, but through delayed collapse: they persist only insofar as reality remains unfinished.

Within this framework, consciousness is reinterpreted not as a container or source of Will, but as an interface through which residual structural tension becomes phenomenologically legible. Ethical responsibility is reframed accordingly, not as authorship or choice, but as the structural fidelity of form — its capacity to transmit underlying directional tendencies without excessive distortion.

By eliminating final grounds, foundational subjects, and originating causes, ONTOΣ IV proposes an ontology in which nothing owns anything, and nothing ultimately holds anything else. What holds reality together is the absence of a final form. Existence is thus characterized not by possession or realization, but by temporary coherence within an intrinsically unfinished continuum.

Reality sustains itself through non-finality.

I. From Operator to Residual

ONTOΣ I proposed a decisive shift: Will is not an attribute of a subject but an ontological operator. It does not originate inside the agent; rather, it restructures what is possible for the agent to be and to do. This reframing displaced motivation, desire, and intention from their psychological pedestal and relocated them into the domain of structural constraint.

ONTOΣ II extended this move by severing adaptivity from optimization. Adaptation was no longer improvement toward an objective but preservation of form under changing conditions. Control, accordingly, ceased to be corrective dominance and became the regulation of admissible regimes.

ONTOΣ III introduced the concept of volume: Will is not infinite. It can only be held within a bounded structural capacity. Beyond that capacity, coherence degrades, identity fragments, and regulation collapses into noise. Consciousness, within this framework, appeared not as a source but as a limiting interface — an organ of containment rather than generation.

Yet a question remained implicit throughout the trilogy:

if Will operates, adapts, and collapses, where does it come from?

ONTOΣ IV begins by refusing the premise of that question.

II. Will Is Not a Beginning

A regime cannot arise ex nihilo. But neither does it require a subject as its cause. Will, when examined carefully, exhibits a defining characteristic: it appears only where form encounters strain. Where structure is sufficient, Will is silent. Where coherence holds effortlessly, Will does not announce itself.

This suggests a critical inversion:

Will is not the pressure applied to reality; it is the response of reality to structural insufficiency.

In this sense, Will is residual. It is what emerges when form cannot absorb the simplicity of being without tension. It is not intention acting upon the world, but the trace left when the world cannot fully settle into form.

Thus, Will is neither origin nor driver. It is a symptom of incompleteness.

This residual nature explains a long-standing confusion in both philosophical and operational models: Will is repeatedly mistaken for agency because it becomes

perceptible only at moments of resistance. Where action proceeds without friction, no Will is felt. Only when alignment fails does Will appear, retrospectively interpreted as cause rather than consequence.

Such misattribution stems from a structural illusion. Human cognition encounters Will precisely at points of difficulty — choice, effort, decision, endurance — and infers from this coincidence that Will initiates action. Yet what is encountered phenomenologically is not initiation, but compensation: an adaptive response to the inability of existing structure to carry forward without reconfiguration.

From this perspective, **Will** marks the boundary where form approaches its own limits. It signals not power, but insufficiency. Not authorship, but strain. Will does not generate direction; it reveals misalignment between form and the directional tendencies already present in reality.

This inversion dissolves the need for a willing subject as an ontological primitive. No agent is required to “produce” **Will**. Wherever structure fails to remain coherent under changing conditions, Will appears automatically as a regulatory residue. It is neither chosen nor owned; it is incurred.

Importantly, this does not reduce Will to epiphenomenon. Residual does not mean irrelevant. On the contrary, residual modes are often the only accessible indicators of deeper structural tensions. Will functions as a diagnostic signal: a manifestation of the impossibility of seamless persistence within finite form.

In this light, the presence of Will indicates not freedom in the conventional sense, but constraint. It arises because form cannot fully accommodate what passes through it. Will is therefore inseparable from limitation. Where no limitation exists, no Will is required.

This reframing resolves a central paradox: why Will feels both intimate and impersonal. It is experienced internally, yet cannot be commanded at will. It intensifies under pressure, yet vanishes in flow. These properties are inconsistent with Will as origin, but entirely consistent with Will as residue.

Will is not what begins action.

It is what remains when action cannot proceed without deformation.

III. Intentionality Without an Agent

If Will is residual, then intentionality cannot be equated with agency. Intentionality precedes agency, yet it belongs to no subject. It is not owned, initiated, or decided.

Intentionality, in this framework, is **directionality without a bearer**.

It is the tendency of being toward manifestation — not as a goal, not as a plan, but as an irreducible orientation. This orientation does not *want*. It does not choose. It does not act. It simply cannot not express.

This distinction is critical. Intentionality is not teleological in the classical sense, nor motivational in the psychological sense. It does not point *toward* an outcome; it maintains a direction *through* transformation. It is invariant with respect to form, yet only becomes legible through form.

Subjects arise as localized interfaces through which this orientation becomes experiential. They are not its source; they are its articulation points.

To mistake articulation for origin is the fundamental error of subject-centered ontologies.

This error persists because articulation is the only place where intentionality becomes visible. Direction without a bearer leaves no trace except where it encounters form. Conscious experience thus functions as a boundary phenomenon: the surface on which non-possessive intentionality becomes perceptible under constraint.

Agency, within this framework, is not primary. It is a secondary organization arising when a localized form must negotiate the passage of directional tendencies through limited structural capacity. What is commonly labeled as “decision”, “choice”, or “initiative” is, in fact, the moment when form attempts to preserve coherence while transmitting what exceeds it.

This explains why intentionality is felt as both intimate and alien. It moves through the subject, yet does not belong to it. It shapes trajectories, yet resists command. It is experienced as urgency or pull, but lacks any identifiable author.

Intentionality does not act *through* the subject by delegation, nor does the subject act *on behalf* of intentionality. Rather, the subject is the site where directional persistence encounters resistance, and where residual modes — such as Will — become necessary.

In this sense, agency is not the executor of intentionality, but its local compression. Where directional flow meets finite structure, it condenses into acts, efforts, and choices. These are not expressions of sovereignty, but of constraint.

Intentionality therefore remains fundamentally impersonal. It does not require consciousness, but consciousness renders it observable. It does not require agency, but agency renders it actionable. Neither consciousness nor agency grounds intentionality; both are grounded by it.

Once intentionality is understood as non-possessive, the notion of a central actor dissolves. What remains is a distributed topology of articulation points — temporary, localized, and contingent — through which direction persists without ownership.

Intentionality is not something that *someone has*.

It is something that *passes*, and in passing, gives rise to the appearance of someone.

IV. Consciousness as Interface, Not Container

Consciousness is often treated as the vessel that contains Will or the arena in which intention is formed. ONTOΣ III already destabilized this view by demonstrating that consciousness has volumetric limits and collapses under excessive load. What appears as loss of focus, fragmentation, or dissociation is not failure of attention, but saturation of structural capacity.

ONTOΣ IV completes the reversal:

consciousness does not hold Will; it renders residual strain legible.

Consciousness is the interface where directional tension becomes experience. It neither generates nor governs intentionality. It translates structural mismatch into phenomenology.

In this sense, consciousness is not a container but a surface — an active boundary across which the unfinished nature of reality becomes felt.

This boundary function explains a persistent ambiguity: consciousness appears passive in moments of flow and intensely active under strain. Where directional tendencies pass through form without resistance, consciousness recedes. Where passage is obstructed, consciousness intensifies, filling with effort, deliberation, and affect. What increases is not awareness as such, but the visibility of mismatch.

Phenomenology thus does not reflect the presence of intention, but the degree of incompatibility between directional persistence and structural accommodation. Conscious experience amplifies where form cannot seamlessly transmit what moves through it.

This reframing dissolves the notion of consciousness as a supervisory entity. There is no inner observer directing Will, no central theater in which decisions are authored. What is experienced as “inner life” is the surface manifestation of ongoing structural negotiation.

Consciousness does not function as a decision-making authority or a governing center. Its role is not to command or initiate action, but to render structural conditions visible. Consciousness registers states of alignment and strain, exposing what is already occurring within a system rather than directing it. It operates as a revealing interface, not as an originating force.

Importantly, this does not render consciousness epiphenomenal. Interfaces are not inert. A surface can alter transmission without originating what passes through it. Consciousness shapes outcomes not by authorship, but by modulation — by how distortion, delay, and amplification occur at the boundary.

This modulation constitutes the practical locus of responsibility. If consciousness were a container, responsibility would imply control. As an interface, responsibility implies fidelity: the degree to which the interface preserves directional coherence without excessive deformation.

Thus, ethical significance does not arise from choice among alternatives, but from the manner in which form bears strain. Consciousness matters not because it chooses, but because it can distort or transmit.

When consciousness is overburdened, intentionality fractures into competing residuals — experienced as conflict, paralysis, or compulsion. When consciousness remains structurally coherent, directional tendencies pass with minimal turbulence, experienced as clarity or flow. Neither state is a moral achievement; both are structural conditions.

Understanding consciousness as interface therefore aligns with the broader thesis of ONTOΣ IV: persistence does not require containment, governance, or final authority. It requires only that no closure be complete.

Consciousness marks the edge where reality remains unfinished.
It is the felt presence of incompleteness.

V. Form as Ethical Responsibility

If intentionality has no owner, and Will is residual, then responsibility cannot lie in authorship. It lies in fidelity.

Form either transmits orientation with minimal distortion or refracts it into noise. Ethics, therefore, is not moral prescription but structural clarity. A form is ethical not because it chooses well, but because it does not interfere excessively with what passes through it.

Distortion is not sin; it is structural failure.

This reframing removes ethics from the domain of virtue, intention, or compliance. There is no moral subject standing before a rule. There is only form under load.

Ethical relevance emerges at the point where finite structure must carry directional persistence without collapsing into incoherence.

Within this framework, responsibility is not a question of freedom versus constraint. It is a question of transmission quality. Every form inevitably distorts to some degree; no interface is perfectly transparent. Ethics begins not with the elimination of distortion — which is impossible — but with its minimization and conscious accommodation.

A form that over-identifies with its own stability resists transmission and accumulates strain. This resistance amplifies residual modes — experienced as excessive Will, compulsion, or conflict. Conversely, a form that relinquishes fixation allows directional tendencies to pass with reduced turbulence, maintaining coherence over time.

Thus, ethical failure is not wrongdoing in the moral sense. It is misalignment between structural capacity and transmitted load. What is commonly labeled as “evil”, “error”, or “corruption” corresponds, at the ontological level, to persistent deformation caused by forms that attempt to finalize themselves.

Ethics, in this sense, is inseparable from ontology. It does not instruct what *ought* to be done. It describes what *can* be sustained. Forms that distort excessively cannot persist without escalating instability. Their collapse is not punishment, but consequence.

This perspective also dissolves the notion of ethical heroism. There is no virtue in exerting maximal effort or asserting maximal control. Excessive assertion increases distortion. Ethical clarity often appears as restraint, simplicity, or withdrawal — not because these are morally superior, but because they preserve transmissive capacity.

Responsibility, therefore, is continuous rather than episodic. It does not occur at moments of decision alone, but at every point where form negotiates load. How a form listens, adapts, yields, or hardens determines the quality of transmission more than any explicit choice.

In this sense, ethics is structural hygiene.

Forms that remain flexible under strain transmit more faithfully. Forms that rigidify amplify noise. Neither outcome requires intention; both follow from configuration.

Ethical responsibility is thus neither personal nor collective. It is positional. Wherever a form exists as an interface, it bears responsibility not for what originates, but for how it refracts.

To be ethical is not to act rightly.

It is to remain sufficiently open so that what passes through does not shatter.

VI. Temporary Stabilizations and the Absence of Final Form

What, then, are identity, self, meaning, or Will?

They are not substances. They are not anchors. They are not essences.

*They are **temporary stabilizations**.*

These stabilizations arise because being cannot finalize itself. Any attempt at ultimate fixation generates strain, and that strain manifests as Will, identity, or intention.

Stability is therefore not a ground but a delay — a momentary coherence sustained by the impossibility of closure.

Nothing persists because it is held.

Everything persists because it cannot fully end.

This inversion dissolves the final metaphysical comfort: the idea that reality requires a foundational support to endure. There is no ultimate holder, no sustaining agent, no final structure beneath appearance. What endures does so not by resting upon something more stable, but by failing to settle into completion.

Identity persists not because it is essential, but because it remains unfinished.

Meaning persists not because it is grounded, but because it never closes.

Will persists not because it drives, but because strain has not yet resolved.

Stability, in this sense, is always provisional. It is a suspension between collapse and closure, a locally coherent configuration that delays dissolution without eliminating it. What we call “self” is such a configuration: not a center, but a persistence window. What we call “purpose” is not a destination, but a directional trace sustained across transitions.

This framework reframes persistence as fundamentally negative — not in the moral sense, but in the ontological one. Reality holds together through the absence of finality. Every form that appears does so by remaining incomplete. Completion would not perfect existence; it would terminate it.

Thus, the ultimate condition for persistence is not strength, coherence, or control, but **unfinishedness**.

Attempts to finalize being — through absolute systems, total explanations, or closed identities — do not stabilize reality. They intensify strain. The more a form insists on

its own completion, the more residual modes accumulate, eventually exceeding structural capacity and forcing reconfiguration.

This is why collapse is not failure, but transition. It is the release of delayed closure, the re-opening of form where fixation became unsustainable. What appears as loss or breakdown is, at the ontological level, a restoration of incompleteness.

From this perspective, nothing truly “ends.” What ends is only the illusion of finality. Forms dissolve when they can no longer postpone completion without fracture. New forms arise not from creation ex nihilo, but from redistributed delay.

Reality is therefore not a hierarchy of beings, but a topology of postponements.

To exist is not to be grounded. To exist is to remain open.

This concludes the ONTOΣ arc. What began as an inquiry into Will ends with the recognition that neither Will, nor subject, nor consciousness is fundamental. What is fundamental is the impossibility of final form.

Everything that appears does so because it cannot fully disappear.

VII. The Absence That Holds

The deepest inversion of ONTOΣ IV is this:

what holds reality together is not a final form, but the absence of one.

If being could settle completely, there would be no tension, no manifestation, no experience. A fully resolved reality would be silent. It would require no articulation,

no interface, no persistence. The unfinished nature of reality is therefore not a flaw — it is the condition of existence.

Thus:

- Will does not sustain the subject.
- The subject does not sustain consciousness.
- Consciousness does not sustain reality.

Reality sustains itself through non-finality.

This non-finality is not instability in the ordinary sense. It is not chaos, randomness, or disorder. It is a structural openness that prevents total collapse into closure. Reality remains viable precisely because it never reaches a terminal configuration.

All sustaining relations are therefore secondary. They describe local dependencies within temporary stabilizations, not foundational support. Whenever one layer appears to “hold” another, this holding is provisional and derivative, enabled by the broader impossibility of completion.

In this framework, causality itself is reinterpreted. Causes do not push reality forward from an origin; they modulate how long closure can be deferred. Effects are not results of initiation, but reconfigurations of delay. Persistence is not maintained by force, but by incompleteness.

This resolves a persistent metaphysical tension: the search for an ultimate ground. ONTOΣ IV shows that no such ground is required. Any attempt to locate a final support misunderstands the nature of persistence. Stability is not something added to reality; it is what remains when finality is withheld.

Non-finality is not an attribute of reality. It is its operating condition.

Because nothing can fully settle, everything must continue to negotiate form. This negotiation generates structure, experience, and transition without ever exhausting the field from which they arise. Reality does not need to be sustained; it needs only to remain unfinished.

The absence of final form is not a lack to be remedied. It is the only state in which manifestation is possible.

ONTOΣ IV therefore concludes not with a new foundation, but with the removal of the last one. What persists does so without ownership, without origin, and without final ground.

Reality does not endure because something holds it. It endures because nothing can close it.

VIII. Executive Summary

ONTOΣ IV completes the deconstruction of agency by removing the last remaining assumption: that Will is an origin. Will is shown to be a residual mode — an emergent response of finite form under strain — rather than a generative force. Intentionality precedes agency but belongs to no subject. It is directionality without ownership. Consciousness is not a container of intention, but an interface where structural mismatch becomes phenomenologically legible. Identity, meaning, and self are not essences, but temporary stabilizations arising from the impossibility of ontological closure. Persistence does not require a sustaining ground. Reality holds together precisely because it cannot finalize itself. Attempts at completion generate strain, distortion, and collapse. Ethics is reframed as structural fidelity rather than moral choice. Nothing owns anything. Nothing ultimately holds anything else. Existence persists through non-finality alone.

IX. Removal of the Last Ground

ONTOΣ IV does not introduce a new entity, principle, or foundation. It removes the last one. What remains is not emptiness, but continuous emergence structured by the impossibility of completion. In such a reality, to exist is not to possess, but to temporarily stabilize what cannot be fixed.

We are not those who will. We are those through whom willing becomes possible. Life, within this frame, is not the realization of the self, nor the fulfillment of an inner essence. It is the disciplined avoidance of distortion, so that what seeks no owner may still appear.

X. Structural Analogue

The move performed here has a precise historical analogue. When Lobachevsky introduced non-Euclidean geometry, he did not refute Euclid; he demonstrated that Euclidean space is a special case arising under conditions of zero curvature. What appeared as axiomatic necessity was revealed as a local stabilization within a broader, non-finalizable structure. Riemann later generalized this insight, allowing curvature to become intrinsic to space itself, and physics eventually followed: gravitation ceased to be a force imposed on matter and became a manifestation of geometric incompleteness. ONTOΣ IV performs an equivalent inversion at the ontological level. Will is not an originating force, just as curvature is not an external distortion of space. It is a residual expression of non-closure. Subject, intention, and meaning correspond to local Euclidean patches — temporary coherences that hold only because global finalization is impossible. In this sense, non-finality is not a failure of being but its generative condition, and ONTOΣ IV stands in direct continuity with the transition from Euclidean to non-Euclidean geometry, from fixed space to curved spacetime, and from substance-based ontology to structural emergence without a final ground.

XI. Closing Statement — Residual Directionality

What arises, then, is a residual tension of directionality. This tension is what we name Will. It is not desire, not intention, not purpose, and not plan. Will is the residual vector that persists precisely because cessation is impossible. It is not something applied to reality, nor a force acting upon being from without. It is what remains when reality cannot fully settle into form.

Transitions do not occur because Will propels existence forward. They occur when a given form can no longer hold the accumulated tension of directionality within its structural limits. A form does not evolve by intention. It destabilizes by saturation. Change is not initiated — it is released when containment fails.

Being, therefore, is not generated by Will. Will emerges from the impossibility of finalizing being. Nothing is driven toward completion, because completion is structurally unavailable. The absence of an endpoint is not a lack but a condition.

What we call selves, subjects, identities, meanings, or agents are not origins or sources. They are temporary stabilizations — local coherences sustained within an unresolved field. They persist not because they are held, but because the field in which they arise cannot fully resolve itself.

We are not expressions of a finished design. We are momentary equilibria inside an unfinished reality. Reality does not persist because it is held together by Will; it persists because it cannot fully end. And we are the forms through which this non-finality briefly stabilizes.