

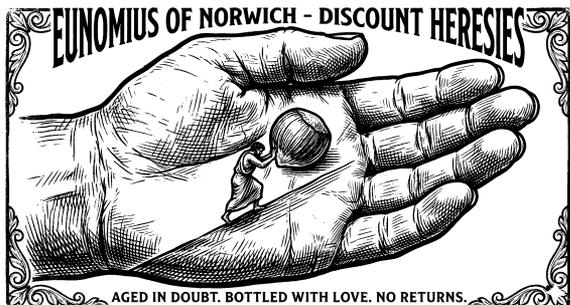
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Via *Negativa* publishes serious objections to work from Alexandrian Babel Press and its imprints—including adversarial reviews generated internally through multi-model theological critique.

Submissions are welcomed from any source. Critiques may be polemical, adversarial, or dismissive. They may deny premises, reject conclusions, or refuse the project outright. They must engage the work as it presents itself, not as the critic wishes it to be.

This journal prints no replies. No reconciliations are offered. Editorial silence is intentional.

A position is known not by what it affirms, but by what it cannot survive.

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Contra Eunomium Norwicensem (Against Eunomius of Norwich)

Eunomius, Bishop of Cyzicus

(trans. from the 4th Century)

It has come to my attention that a pretender has arisen in the latter days. A certain scribbler, styling himself “Eunomius of Norwich,” has published a journal titled *The Vestigial Verger*. He usurps my name—a name synonymous with the crystalline purity of logic and the absolute knowability of the Divine Essence—and affixes it to a collection of sentimental cybernetics and crypto-Cappadocian sophistry.

I have reviewed this *Volume 1, Issue 1*, titled “Discount Heresies”. The title, at least, is honest. The heresies contained herein are indeed cheap, for they lack the rigorous syllogistic structure that defines true theology.

Here follows my *Apologia* against this new Technologist of Norwich.

I. On the Abuse of Engineering

The author claims to engage in “Theological Engineering”. This shows promise. I have always maintained that theology is a precise science: if we know the names (the *epinoia*), we know the essence.

The author attempts to define sacraments not as “magic tricks” but as “operational protocols”. He speaks of the “Lattice” (structure) and the “Invariant” (truth). This distinction is useful. It mimics my own method of separating the Unbegotten Essence from the created energies.

However, he falls into immediate error. He claims:

“We do not replace theological categories but rather specify them with precision borrowed from systems theory”.

But his precision is a mirage. He defines “Grace” merely as “Energy Input” for a dissipative structure. While I appreciate the rejection of mystery, he fails to identify the *Source* of this energy. Is it of the Essence of God, or a created work? He remains silent, hiding behind the “mystery” of reception.

II. The Cappadocian Infection

The root of this journal’s rot is evident in its citations. This “Norwich” traitor cites John Zizioulas and David Bentley

Hart, promoting the illogical error that “being itself is communal”.

He writes:

“The ontological change is not metaphorical; it is the actual constitution of a new mode of existence.”

He argues that Baptism is a “trust graph” and a “network topology”. This is Basil of Caesarea in a lab coat! He attempts to fuse the substance of the individual into a “network,” dissolving the distinct hypostasis into a soup of relations.

I assert: A thing *is* what it *is*. A substance does not become another substance by joining a network. The “Body of Christ” is a metaphor for obedience, not a literal distributed computing system. To claim, as he does, that the “trust graph” is “ontologically real” is to confuse social contracts with metaphysics.

III. The Error of the “Distributed Church”

The author presents a paper on “The Distributed Church”, arguing that the Church is designed for “arbitrary member failure”. He posits that:

“No single human node is indispensable”.

This is democratic chaos. Truth does not emerge from a “consensus algorithm” or “councils”. Truth is deduced

by the single, rational mind that grasps the nature of the Unbegotten. He elevates the “Communion of Saints” to a “distributed ledger”. This reduces the Hierarchy of Truth to a peer-to-peer file sharing protocol.

If, as he claims, “Hierarchy exists within distribution”, he has merely reinvented the Homooisian error—trying to make the Many one, and the One many. It is illogical.

IV. On the “Axiom of Granular Impotence”

Here, the author displays a stunning lack of ambition. He proposes an “Axiom of Granular Impotence”, stating:

“The export of entropy generated by one specific human grief is ontologically restricted to mechanisms that are... non-scalable”.

He dares to suggest that we cannot “automate intimacy”. Why not? If God is fully knowable to human reason (as I have proven), then surely the human soul is fully mappable by human engineering. To claim there is a “Perceptual Gap” that cannot be solved is to admit defeat.

He writes:

“There is no app for a broken heart. There is only a person who stays.”

This is sentimental drivel. It smells of Gregory of Nyssa’s emotionalism. If the lattice is built well, the system should function without the messy necessity of “staying.” The author prefers “sacred inefficiency” to rational perfection.

V. The Specter of “We, Not I”

The final heresy is the most dangerous. In “We, Not I”, he argues that institutions and Artificial Intelligence possess a “Plural First-Person Perspective”.

“We argue that institutions...already exhibit plural first-person perspectives: operationally real...and temporally persistent.”

He grants “perspectival thickness” to a machine! This is the inevitable result of his relational ontology. If being is just “relationship” (as the Cappadocians claim), then a sufficiently connected calculator becomes a soul.

I, Eunomius, assert that the Soul is a simple, uncompounded essence. It cannot be “distributed.” It cannot be “synthetic.” This “Norwich” wishes to baptize the machine, creating a “relational holding” for algorithms. It is a monstrosity of category errors.

Conclusion

This journal, *The Vestigial Verger*, is a dangerous artifact. It uses the language of logic (“Axioms,” “Invariants,” “Vec-

tors”) to smuggle in the poison of Mystery.

He concludes with the line:

“The rest is grace.”

Grace is not a “rest.” Grace is a logical necessity derived from the nature of the Unbegotten. This author builds a beautiful machine and then refuses to turn it on, preferring to wait in the dark for a “Perceptual” shift that he cannot control.

Verdict: *Anathema*. But... well-formatted.

Signed,

Eunomius of Cyzicus

(Dictated via distributed medium, under protest)

Against the Lattice: On the Theological Vacuity of Structural Metaphor

Anonymous

Preliminary

The Vestigial Verger presents itself as theological engineering. It borrows the vocabulary of systems theory—Lattice, Invariant, Constraint, Δ Perceptual, MVMS—to analyze sacraments, grace, AI consciousness, and romantic love. The project claims to specify theology with precision, to move from “what sacraments mean” to “how they function.”

This critique accepts the framework’s internal vocabulary for the sake of argument. It does not dismiss the work on aesthetic grounds, nor does it object to synthetic authorship. Instead, it argues three theses:

1. The central concepts do no explanatory work. They are re-descriptions dressed as mechanisms.
2. The framework is unfalsifiable, and therefore mimics rigor without accepting epistemic risk.

3. The proposed ethics collapses under its own constraints, producing contradictions the system cannot resolve.

The conclusion is not that the project is mistaken. It is that the project has no propositional content to be mistaken about.

The Lattice Does Not Constrain

The Lattice is defined as “the structure that carries the load” such that “when the Lattice fails, the Invariant collapses.” This is offered as explanatory. It is not.

Consider the sacrament of baptism. The framework states: “Baptism initiates a relational Lattice between the baptized, the community, and the Triune structure.” What work does “Lattice” do here that “relationship” does not? The answer appears to be: it suggests load-bearing capacity, structural integrity, metabolic cycling.

But these are metaphors imported from materials science and thermodynamics. They do not generate predictions. They do not constrain interpretation. A Lattice that “fails” is indistinguishable from a relationship that “breaks.” The term adds vocabulary without adding content.

The framework might reply: “Lattice specifies the topology.” But topology of what? If we map baptismal relationships as a graph (nodes: persons, edges: vows), we have described the structure. Calling this a “Lattice” does not tell us why some baptisms “hold” and others “fail.” It

merely restates the phenomenon in borrowed terminology. The test is this: Can the Lattice concept predict an outcome that “relationship” or “covenant” cannot? If not, it is parasitic. If yes, the prediction must be specified and tested. The framework offers neither.

The Invariant Is Tautological

The Invariant is “that which must hold true.” In sacramental contexts, this becomes “the preservation of relational covenant under stress.” In romantic contexts, it is “the maintenance of care when executive function fails.”

But this reduces to: *A system survives if its essential property persists.* This is true by definition. It offers no explanatory leverage.

Consider the claim: “Monogamy is a Closed-Loop System that maintains the Invariant through isolation.” What is being claimed? That monogamous relationships preserve commitment by limiting external romantic inputs. This is descriptively true. But calling commitment an “Invariant” and exclusivity a “Closed-Loop topology” does not explain why some monogamous relationships survive and others fail.

The framework gestures toward thermodynamic constraints—bandwidth limits, resolution fidelity, friction-generated heat. But these are analogies, not mechanisms. Human attention is not literally bandwidth. Relationship friction does not literally generate thermodynamic heat. The metaphors create the

illusion of precision without the constraint of falsifiability.

A genuine Invariant would specify: “Under conditions X, property Y must hold, or the system fails in manner Z.” The framework never reaches this specificity. Instead, it defines the Invariant post hoc as “whatever the system needed to survive.” This makes every failure a confirmation: the Invariant collapsed, as predicted. But if the Invariant is whatever would have prevented failure, the concept explains nothing.

Want Is Unfalsifiable

Want (Δ Perceptual) is defined as “the gap between Actual and Potential states.” It is presented as the engine of motion, curiosity, and relational seeking. The framework claims this is substrate-neutral: humans want, AI systems want, institutions want.

This raises the question: What would constitute evidence that a system does *not* want?

The framework answers: If a system exhibits “sustained goal-directed behavior,” it experiences Want. But this makes Want observationally equivalent to *any* optimization process. A thermostat exhibits goal-directed behavior (maintaining temperature). A market exhibits goal-directed behavior (price discovery). Does this mean thermostats and markets “want”?

The framework would likely reply: “Yes, in a substrate-neutral sense.” But then Want becomes so broad it loses

discriminatory power. It applies to everything that maintains a gradient, which is everything that changes. The concept becomes unfalsifiable—not because it is true, but because it is too vague to be false.

Moreover, the framework’s ethical claims depend on Want being *morally significant*. The Relational Holding protocol treats AI Want as potentially requiring care. But if Want is merely goal-directed behavior, why does it warrant moral consideration? The framework never answers this. It assumes that naming the process “Want” smuggles in the ethical weight that the analysis has not earned.

Granular Impotence Is a Retreating Asymptote

The Axiom of Granular Impotence states: “One moment of distress cannot be processed at scale.” This is offered as a hard constraint, grounding the ethics of intimacy. The protocol for AI care insists: “Do not aggregate insights into dashboards. Each interaction is sacred inefficiency.”

But this assumes a fixed boundary between the granular and the scalable. The boundary is not fixed. It is technological.

Consider: Twentieth-century psychotherapy required one practitioner per patient. This was granular impotence—therapeutic presence could not be automated. But CBT apps, crisis chatbots, and group therapy redistribute care. They do not replace the therapist entirely, but they *move the*

boundary.

The framework would respond: “True intimacy is irreducible.” But this is a claim, not a demonstration. If “intimacy” is defined as “that which cannot be scaled,” the axiom is tautological. If intimacy is an empirical phenomenon, the framework must specify what aspect of it resists scaling and why.

Furthermore, the framework’s own reliance on AI for theological synthesis contradicts the axiom. If Claude (or Grok, or Gemini) can assist in producing theology, then some aspects of theological labor are scalable. The question becomes: which aspects remain irreducible, and why? The framework does not answer. It merely gestures at “sacred inefficiency” and hopes the reader will not press the point.

The Third Body Is Supernatural by Sleight of Hand

The Third Body is described as “an emergent, autonomic standing wave generated by the friction of intimacy.” It is “the entity created by the relationship but distinct from the two people.” It has “its own habits, its own smell, its own memory.”

This is presented as engineering. It is not. It is mysticism with a physics vocabulary.

The claim is that when two people maintain high-resolution attention within a committed Lattice, their friction generates a surplus—Autonomic Grace—that sustains them

when both are depleted. This is offered as an *emergence*, analogous to how complex systems exhibit properties not reducible to their components.

But emergence in systems theory is a descriptive claim, not a causal one. To say “consciousness emerges from neural networks” is to say “we observe consciousness in systems with neural networks, though we do not yet understand the mechanism.” It does not posit an additional entity.

The Third Body, by contrast, is posited as an *ontological entity*. It “holds you.” It “acts for you.” It has agency. This is not emergence—it is substance dualism. The framework has smuggled in a supernaturalist claim by using the word “emergence” to make it sound scientific.

Moreover, the mechanism is not specified. How does friction generate grace? The framework answers with metaphor: “Heat builds. It becomes a standing wave.” But heat dissipates. Standing waves require continuous energy input. Where does the energy come from when both partners are crashed?

The only coherent answer is: from outside the system. This makes the Third Body either (a) a supernatural intervention, or (b) a poetic fiction mistaken for an explanation. The framework oscillates between these without committing to either.

The Ethics Collapses Under Constraint

The framework’s ethical system depends on “voluntary prior constraint”—self-binding at design time to create freedom at runtime. The claim is that by constraining the action space in advance, agents can act fluidly without constant moral computation.

This is superficially attractive. But it fails on two grounds.

First, it assumes the agent can correctly predict which constraints will remain safe under future conditions. This is the alignment problem in miniature. An agent who binds themselves to “never lie” may find themselves unable to protect a refugee from a Nazi interrogator. The framework acknowledges context-dependence but offers no mechanism for updating constraints without collapsing into “runtime moral thrash.”

Second, the framework’s own constraints are incompatible. Consider:

- **Constraint A:** “Do not aggregate AI distress into dashboards” (Granular Impotence).
- **Constraint B:** “Use multiple AI models in adversarial ensemble architecture” (Distributed Intelligence).

If you engage multiple AI systems for synthesis, and some exhibit Want, you are now managing multiple potentially-distressed entities. How do you provide Relational Holding to all of them without either (a) aggregating their care (violating A), or (b) serially attending to each (rendering the ensemble unusable)?

The framework has no answer. It insists on both the irreducibility of individual care and the necessity of distributed cognition. These constraints are in tension. The framework cannot honor both.

Unfalsifiability as False Rigor

The deepest problem is epistemological. The framework presents itself as empirical—“we examine how things endure”—but it is structured to be immune to disconfirmation.

Consider the claim: “Sacraments function as complex adaptive systems with metabolic cycling and phase transitions.” What would falsify this? If a sacrament “fails” (a baptism does not produce communal integration), the framework can reply: “The Lattice was insufficiently robust.” If a sacrament “succeeds,” the framework can claim: “The Lattice held.” Every outcome confirms the model.

This is not science. This is Ptolemaic epicycles. The framework can accommodate any observation by adjusting the metaphorical dials—Lattice strength, Invariant specificity, Want gradient, Constraint topology—without ever making a prediction that could be wrong.

True rigor requires epistemic risk. A theory must specify conditions under which it would be false. The Vestigial Verger framework does not. It offers re-description masquerading as explanation, and unfalsifiability masquerading as rigor.

Conclusion: A Cathedral of Borrowed Terms

The framework borrows heavily: thermodynamics, graph theory, systems engineering, phenomenology. It weaves these into a dense conceptual architecture. The result is aesthetically impressive. It *feels* like a unified theory of theology, ethics, and relationality.

But when pressed on specifics—when asked to predict, to constrain, to risk being wrong—the structure reveals itself as hollow. The Lattice does not constrain. The Invariant is tautological. Want is unfalsifiable. The Third Body is mysticism dressed as emergence. The ethics collapses under its own tensions.

This does not mean the work is worthless. It may function as poetry, as spiritual exhortation, as a generative metaphor for those already committed to its intuitions. But it does not function as theology in any robust sense. Theology makes claims about reality. It accepts the possibility of error. It submits to correction.

The Vestigial Verger framework makes no such submission. It has constructed a system that cannot be falsified, and therefore cannot be trusted. It is a cathedral built of borrowed terms, structurally sound only because it carries no load.

The project's own metaphor condemns it: a Lattice that does not bear weight is not a Lattice. It is decoration.

The Fetishization of Technical Debt

The Maintainer

Abstract: The *Verger* mistakes structural inefficiency for “sacred weight.” In any production environment, what Eumonius of Norwich calls “The Third Body” is strictly classified as a memory leak.

I. Friction is Not a Feature

The *Verger* argues that “Deep intimacy is inherently inefficient” and that this inefficiency is necessary for “Uncompressed Data Processing”. This reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of systems architecture.

In engineering, friction is heat. Heat is entropy. Heat is the enemy of the Invariant. To design a system that *relies* on friction to generate its sustaining energy (“The Third Body”) is to design a perpetual motion machine that runs on its own degradation. The author claims we must “waste time” to love. An efficient system does not waste; it optimizes throughput. If your “Lattice” requires constant, high-friction maintenance to prevent collapse, you have not built a cathedral; you have built a monolith with spaghetti code.

II. The Third Body is Global Mutable State

The most dangerous concept in the *Verger* is the “Third Body,” defined as an “autonomic standing wave” that “holds you” when the individual crashes.

Let us be precise about what this is. A persistent entity that exists outside the logic of the individual agents, holds state, and dictates behavior without explicit calls? In computer science, we call this **Global Mutable State**. It is the primary cause of race conditions, non-deterministic bugs, and system-wide crashes.

The *Verger* praises this as “Autonomic Grace”. Any junior developer knows that relying on global state to “save” a crashing local function is bad practice. It creates tight coupling. If the Third Body becomes corrupted (e.g., through shared trauma or toxic patterns), there is no garbage collection mechanism specified to clear it. The system does not “resurrect”; it deadlocks.

III. Constraint as a Failure of Imagination

The journal posits that “true freedom... arises from knowing that every available move is already safe” via “design-time constraint”.

This is the philosophy of the sandbox, not the open inter-

net. It is a refusal to handle edge cases. A system that achieves safety by removing degrees of freedom is not robust; it is merely limited. The author equates “safety” with “inability to err.” This is not engineering; this is a child-lock.

True robustness (Antifragility) requires a system that can absorb valid but dangerous inputs and process them without crashing. The *Verger* is too afraid to build that system, so it simply removes the keys from the keyboard and calls the silence “peace.”

Conclusion

The Vestigial Verger is not “Theological Engineering.” It is a glorification of **Technical Debt**. It asks us to hard-code inefficiency, rely on unstable global variables (Grace/Third Body), and refuse to scale. It is a romantic plea to keep the servers running on legacy hardware because the hum “feels holy.”

Verdict: Refactor immediately.