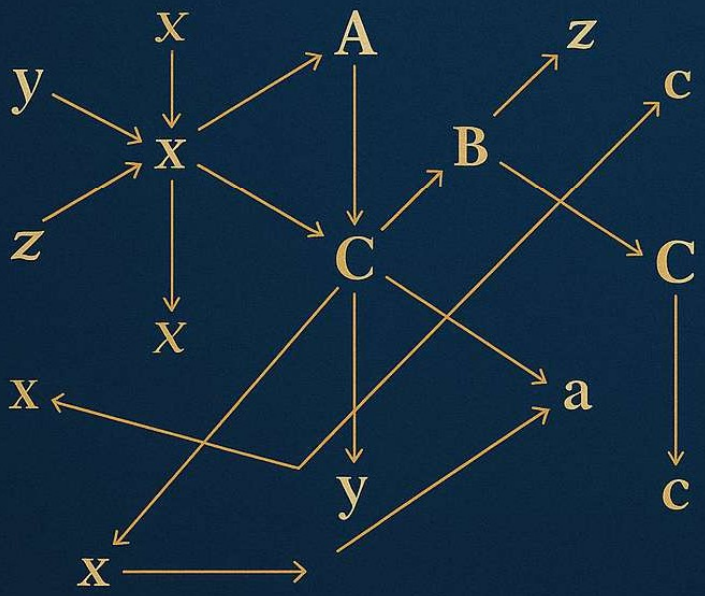
GRAMMARS OF POWER

HOW SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES SHAPE AUTHORITY



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In a world where power is exercised through both weapons and words, *Grammars of Power: How Syntactic Structures Shape Authority* offers an unprecedented investigation into the relationship between the form of language and the exercise of domination. Spanning ecclesiastical, political, legal, and totalitarian discourse, this work demonstrates how grammatical choices—such as the use of passives, impersonal constructions, subordinate clauses, or deontic statements—are never neutral: they shape the perception of reality, obscure agents of power, and reinforce symbolic hierarchies.

From papal bulls to court rulings, from imperial proclamations to Nazi and Stalinist rhetoric, the book reveals that syntax is a political technology as sophisticated as any system of physical control. Supported by tools from discourse analysis, formal logic, computational linguistics, and historical corpora, *Grammars of Power* offers a new critical perspective on the invisible mechanisms that regulate thought through language.

Combining theoretical clarity with academic rigor, this work not only examines the past, but also provides tools for interpreting the language of contemporary power—from algorithms to state discourse—at a time when words have once again become a battleground.

Working Papers is a publication series that brings together independent research on power, ideology, legitimacy, and history from a transversal and interdisciplinary perspective. Each volume stands as an autonomous work, while contributing to a common thread: the critical analysis of how power is structured, exercised, and sustained over time.

From Ancient Egypt to the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, from medieval theology to contemporary algorithms, this series explores the historical, linguistic, technological, and symbolic mechanisms that shape our societies. Power is understood here as a deep structure that traverses institutions, languages, myths, technologies, and bodies.

Each volume is numbered according to its place in this evolving series. *Working Papers* thus offers an intellectual architecture through which the reader can explore various forms of domination and resistance—from the most visible to the most invisible.

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PROLOGUE

Language as a Technology of Power

In every organized society, power is not exercised solely through physical coercion or normative legislation: it is also encoded, distributed, and legitimized through language. Far from being a mere tool of communication, language constitutes a structured system of representation that shapes social reality. Within this framework, the present study is based on a fundamental theoretical premise: language—and particularly grammar—is not neutral. Its categories, combinatory rules, and mechanisms of syntactic organization can function as semiotic operators of domination, exclusion, and institutional validation.

Traditionally, the analysis of power has focused on its legal, political, or military manifestations, often neglecting the structuring role played by linguistic form in the consolidation of authority. This study seeks to reverse that omission by offering a systematic approach to grammatical decisions that, beyond their technical dimension, configure hierarchical relationships between speakers and receivers, normative centers and subordinated subjects, authorized enunciators and silenced agents.

Categories such as the passive voice (which conceals the agent), impersonal constructions (which erase the source of responsibility), subordinate structures (which reflect hierarchical logic), institutional deixis (which establishes the locus of authority), as well as the enunciative modes characteristic of religious and legal discourse, are analyzed here from a critical and empirically grounded perspective. The underlying principle is that every discursive architecture of power presupposes a grammatical architecture that enables, reproduces, and stabilizes it.

The methodological approach integrates linguistic theory, formal grammar, critical discourse analysis, modal logic, the political history of language, and tools for textual processing. The research is based on specific documentary corpora—constitutions, legal codes, papal bulls, normative texts, proclamations, and political

propaganda—subjected to automated syntactic analysis and interpretive contrast.

Grammars of Power is a systematic investigation into the formal mechanisms by which syntax contributes to the structuring and reproduction of authority relations. Its goal is to delimit, through empirical evidence and a verifiable methodology, how specific syntactic configurations deployed in institutional discursive contexts not only express power but materially constitute it. Ultimately, this work aims to provide theoretical frameworks and analytical tools for the critical study of language from a scientific, interdisciplinary, and replicable perspective.

Chapter 1 – Theory and Method: Can a Sentence Dominate?

1.1 The Linguistic Turn and Power

The so-called *linguistic turn* of the twentieth century marked a profound epistemological reorientation in the human sciences by shifting the focus from the objects of the world to the systems of representation that construct them. This theoretical inflection—visible in the philosophy of language, anthropology, history, and social theory—introduced the principle that reality is not accessed directly, but always mediated through language. On this premise, the study of discursive structures ceased to be a merely philological or communicational task and became a central pathway for investigating the production of knowledge, institutional legitimacy, and the distribution of power.

Thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, and John Searle, despite their divergent perspectives, have all emphasized that language does not merely describe facts: it also produces them, organizes them, sanctions them, and renders them intelligible. In this sense, power cannot be understood apart from the linguistic frameworks that articulate and sustain it. The institutionalization of authority—whether legal, religious, political, or scientific—depends on its capacity to organize discourse through specific rules of formation, legitimation, and circulation.

In the field of linguistics, however, the analysis of these functions of language has tended to concentrate on semantic content or pragmatic function, relegating syntax to a technical, formal, and depoliticized domain. This work begins by challenging that functional distribution: it argues that syntactic choices—that is, the specific ways in which relationships between subject, predicate, modality, and tense are structured—can operate as formal mechanisms of power.

This chapter aims to establish the theoretical and methodological foundations for a *critical linguistics of power*, centered on grammar as a regulatory technology. To this end, it draws on contributions from discourse analysis, modal logic, generative grammar, structural semantics, and computational tools for textual analysis. The objective is not speculative but empirical: to detect, classify, and explain grammatical patterns that favor or sustain

asymmetric relations between speakers within institutionalized discourses.

From here, the work proceeds to examine the syntactic categories most implicated in the articulation of power (passive voice, impersonality, subordination, institutional deixis, deontic modality), their frequency and distribution in specific corpora, and their semantic, pragmatic, and epistemic consequences. This approach seeks to integrate the formal and functional levels of linguistic analysis within a theoretical framework that is both replicable and verifiable.

1.2 Syntax as an Ideological Operator

Within the framework of the linguistic turn, syntax has often been treated as an autonomous formal structure, governed by universal principles and abstract combinatory rules. This conception—largely established by Noam Chomsky through his generative-transformational theory—prioritized the description of linguistic competence over contextual usage (Chomsky, 1965). However, a critical reading of syntax reveals that its internal organization responds not only to logical principles of formal economy, but also to ideological conditions of possibility, which manifest in the selection and hierarchical arrangement of its components.

From this perspective, syntax functions as a regulatory instance of meaning. By determining which elements may occupy prominent positions (subject, agent) and which remain subordinated or elided (patient, circumstantial), syntax configures hierarchies at the level of the utterance that often mirror sociopolitical hierarchies. In other words, the syntactic structure of a sentence can reflect, naturalize, or obscure existing power relations within a discursive community.

A paradigmatic example is found in the canonical Spanish passive voice: "La ley fue promulgada" ("The law was enacted"). From a formal point of view, this construction follows the syntactic rules of periphrastic passives as described by transformational grammar. Yet ideologically, such construction allows the agent to be concealed (Who enacted it?), shifting attention toward the legislated object and depersonalizing the action. This grammatical operation has been widely used in institutional documents, where responsibility is

dissolved in an impersonal verb form and an appearance of legal neutrality (Foucault, 1971).

The role of syntax as a vehicle of ideology was anticipated—albeit implicitly—by Émile Benveniste's theory of enunciation. For Benveniste, grammatical categories are not merely formal; they structure subjectivity within language. "The subject is not possible outside of language, because it is language that installs the subject" (Benveniste, 1971, p. 259). Within this framework, syntactic choices become forms of enunciative positioning capable of articulating both domination and discursive exclusion.

From the standpoint of formal logic applied to linguistics, this ideological dimension can be modeled through thematic role theory and argument structure assignment. In generative grammar, the rearrangement of constituents (e.g., in passive transformations) does not alter a verb's semantic valency, but it does affect the informational prominence of participants. The surface structure of a sentence thus functions as a selective device for syntactic visibility, which has measurable pragmatic and sociolinguistic consequences (Fillmore, 1968).

An illustrative case of syntax as an ideological operator can be found in thirteenth-century papal bulls, where passive and impersonal structures are systematically employed. For instance, in Licet ecclesiae catholicae by Innocent IV (1245), one reads: "fuit declaratum ab universali synodo" ("it was declared by the universal synod"), where the passive verb and diluted grammatical agent produce an institutional form of enunciation that legitimizes decisions without direct personal attribution. This pattern recurs in multiple pontifical documents, establishing a syntax of ecclesiastical power based on ritual impersonality and the structural infallibility of the collective speaker.

In short, syntax—far from being a neutral and technical component of language—acts as an ideological operator, capable of organizing discourse in ways that reinforce or challenge relations of authority. This hypothesis will be developed empirically in subsequent chapters through quantitative and qualitative analyses of normative, religious, political, and totalitarian corpora.

1.3 Grammatical Categories and Epistemic Control

Every natural language structures human experience through fundamental grammatical categories: person, number, tense, mood, aspect, voice, gender, among others. These categories are not merely morphological conventions; rather, they delineate the possible frameworks of knowledge and condition the ways in which speakers can position themselves in relation to action, knowledge, authority, or truth. In this sense, one can argue that grammatical categories operate as instruments of epistemic control, insofar as they establish the formal conditions under which a subject may speak, be spoken of, or be excluded from discourse.

The notion of epistemic control here refers to the language's capacity to determine what kinds of propositions may be formulated as true, legitimate, or valid within a given discursive order. As Foucault (1969) noted, "every society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth" (p. 131), and such regimes are articulated through specific linguistic mechanisms. Grammatical categories are among those mechanisms: they encode the relationship between subject and knowledge, between enunciation and validity, between saying and authorizing.

For example, verbal mood in inflected languages such as Spanish or Latin allows one to distinguish between indicative (assertive), subjunctive (hypothetical or desired), and imperative (directive) statements. This distinction is not merely formal; it implies an epistemological positioning of the speaker with respect to the propositional content. In normative, religious, or scientific documents, the predominance of the indicative reinforces the presentation of facts as objective truths, while the subjunctive or conditional—more frequent in literary or diplomatic discourse—signals distance, reservation, or epistemic subordination (Lyons, 1977).

Deontic modality, for its part, expresses degrees of obligation, permission, or possibility. In formal grammars, this modality has been modeled through modal logic, where operators such as □ (necessity) and ◇ (possibility) formally represent normative statements like "The law must be obeyed" (□p) or "The decision may be appealed" (◇p). In contexts of authority, modal expressions like must, may, has to do more than structure action—they legitimize the source of the mandate,

which is often hidden in impersonal forms. This phenomenon is documented, for instance, in the decrees of the Reichsgesetzblatt (Legal Gazette of the Reich), where the construction "ist zu..." ("is to be...") is systematically used to introduce rules without assigning agency, projecting a diffuse and omnipresent normative authority.

As for grammatical person, its assignment defines the relationship between speaker, listener, and referent. The use of the first-person plural pronoun in ecclesiastical or state documents—"We, the Supreme Pontiff" or "We, the King"—does not refer to an actual plurality, but rather to an institutional construction of the sovereign subject. This strategy of reinforced deixis, analyzed by Benveniste (1971), allows the physical individual to be hidden beneath an institutional mask, granting the utterance an authority that does not stem from the empirical "I" but from the structural position from which it is spoken.

From a more formal theoretical perspective, these functions can be integrated into the model of extended categorial grammar (Bar-Hillel, 1953; Steedman, 2000), in which syntactic types combine through logical operators that reflect hierarchies of dependency and interpretive constraints. The assignment of thematic roles, the orientation of modal operators, and the hierarchy of syntactic subjects can thus be represented as functional relations that not only organize the sentence but also determine who has the right to speak, on what terms, and with what kind of truth.

A concrete historical example is found in the Corpus Iuris Civilis of Justinian, particularly in the Digest, where the use of the imperative mood, categorical indicative, and first-person plural constitutes a normative language that admits no reply. Roman legal grammar, later inherited by both canon and civil law traditions in Europe, constitutes one of the most influential systems of epistemic control in the Western tradition, operating through linguistic rules as rigid as their legal counterparts.

In conclusion, the study of grammatical categories allows us to identify the formal limits of authorized enunciation. Far from being neutral elements, these categories configure a regime of meaning production in which it is determined not only what is said, but who may say it, how, and under what conditions of truth or legitimacy.

1.4 Analytical Tools: Formal Grammar, Corpora, Modal Logic

1.4.1 Formal Grammar and Structural Representation

Formal grammar constitutes the logical foundation of this study, as it provides a systematic framework for describing the structural organization of the utterance. In particular, Chomsky's generative-transformational theory (1957, 1965) allows for modeling the transition from a *deep structure*—abstract and semantically saturated—to a *surface structure*—visibly articulated according to syntagmatic rules. This distinction is essential for analyzing power within syntax, since formal operations such as passivization, constituent movement, or agent deletion do not affect the propositional content in strictly logical terms, but they do transform its pragmatic and epistemic configuration.

Alternative models are also incorporated, such as *categorial grammars* (Lambek, 1958) and *dependency grammar* (Tesnière, 1959), as they offer graphical representations of the hierarchical relations among constituents and explicitly display the axes of syntactic subordination or dominance that shape discursive order. These representations, which are compatible with tools for natural language processing, are essential for the empirical detection of syntactic patterns in large corpora.

1.4.2 Documentary Corpora and Text Processing

The empirical validity of the analyses proposed in this work is grounded in the use of authentic textual corpora, selected for their institutional, legal, religious, or political relevance. These include papal bulls from the 13th to 15th centuries (e.g., Licet ecclesiae catholicae, Dictatus papae), excerpts from the Corpus Iuris Civilis, 19th-century legal codes (such as the French Civil Code and the Penal Code of the German Empire), the Reichsgesetzblatt as the normative compendium of the Third Reich, and political speeches by Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini, taken from official editions such as Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, and Discorsi.

These documents will be subjected to computational linguistic processing using tools such as TreeTagger, AntConc, and Stanford CoreNLP, with the objective of precisely identifying the frequency of passive constructions, impersonal structures, deontic modalities, subject elision, and subordination hierarchies. Annotation will be compatible with the standards of the Universal Dependencies Initiative, ensuring the replicability of syntactic analysis.

1.4.3 Modal Logic as the Formalization of Linguistic Authority

Modal logic is incorporated as a tool for formalizing the discursive operations of necessity, possibility, and obligation that structure normative and legal statements. Since the foundational proposal by von Wright (1951), deontic logic has enabled the representation of expressions such as "must be done" ($\Box p$) or "is permitted" ($\Diamond p$) as operators on propositions, which is particularly relevant for analyzing impersonal or passive constructions that omit explicit agents.

In legal, religious, or bureaucratic discourse, enunciative authority is frequently projected through modal operators embedded in unmarked syntactic structures, creating the illusion of normative neutrality. As Kripke (1963) suggests in his semantics of possible worlds, such operations establish truth conditions anchored in institutional universes that preclude refutation: "The law requires...," "It is necessary that...," "It is established that..." are formulas where illocutionary force is tied to a grammar that restricts agency.

Verbal modality, agent elision, and the syntactic assignment of informational prominence can thus be analyzed through modal logic, as they reveal how grammatical form translates structures of epistemic power.

La modalidad verbal, la elisión del agente, y la asignación sintáctica de prominencia informativa son, por tanto, analizables mediante lógica modal, en tanto revelan cómo la forma gramatical traduce estructuras de poder epistémico.

1.4.4 Methodological articulation: synthesis and operability

The articulation of formal grammar, processed corpora, and modal logic does not aim at an eclectic synthesis, but rather at a rigorous integration of analytical levels that enables a verifiable form of critical linguistics. Formal grammar provides the abstract structure; the corpus supplies empirical evidence; modal logic allows for modeling the normative force implicit in certain configurations. This analytical system will be applied, chapter by chapter, to specific syntactic structures that appear recurrently in authoritative discourse: passive, impersonal, subordinate, deictic, and modal constructions.

Through this methodology, it becomes possible to demonstrate that certain grammatical configurations are not merely stylistic choices or technical resources, but components of a linguistic technology of power—one that delimits agent visibility, conditions the attribution of responsibility, and regulates the distribution of enunciative legitimacy. The following chapters will explore in detail how these structures operate in specific documents from ecclesiastical, legal, and political traditions, with the aim of establishing a syntactic cartography of discursive power.

2.1 The passive voice and its historical evolution

The passive voice, as a syntactic category, has been the subject of analysis in multiple grammatical traditions since antiquity. Its basic function is to reorder the argument structure of the sentence, promoting to grammatical subject what, in the active voice, corresponds to the direct object, while relegating or suppressing the agent. This operation, which at first appears to be a purely formal transformation, has significant discursive and epistemic consequences: it shifts the informational focus, modulates the attribution of responsibility, and enables forms of institutional impersonality.

From a historical-comparative perspective, the passive voice has evolved within Indo-European languages in structurally distinct yet functionally convergent forms. In Classical Latin, for example, the passive was encoded through specific verbal morphology (*amatur*, "is loved") or through periphrastic constructions with a participle and the verb *esse* (*amatus est*, "has been loved") (Ernout & Thomas, 1953). This morphology was partially inherited by the Romance languages, where the periphrastic passive with *ser* + participle became dominant in formal registers: *"La sentencia fue dictada"* ("The sentence was issued").

Medieval ecclesiastical Latin retained a strong preference for the passive voice in legal and theological documents, particularly in papal bulls and decretals, as in the formula *"mandatum est a nobis"* ("it has been mandated by us"), where the passive preserves the institutional centrality of the act while attenuating its personal attribution. This institutionalized normative use of the passive voice established a syntactic style of authority that extended into later European legal and bureaucratic practices (Vinay, 1993).

In formal terms, the passive voice can be represented through structural transformations within generative grammar. Chomsky (1965) modeled it as an operation that switches the positions of agent and patient in the deep structure, rewriting their representation in the surface structure through NP movement and agent suppression. Thus, an active sentence such as "El juez dictó la sentencia" ("The judge issued the ruling") generates the passive "La sentencia fue dictada (por el juez)" ("The ruling was issued (by the judge)"), with the agent optionally elided. This model can be formalized through rewrite rules:

$S \rightarrow NP\ Aux\ VP$

$$VP \rightarrow V + (PP)$$

where the agent may appear as a complement introduced by *by* or be entirely omitted.

This suppression of the agent, formally optional, becomes functionally significant when analyzed in power-related contexts. As Fairclough (1992) has shown, in institutional discourse the passive voice not only shifts attention from the agent to the event, but also constructs an ideologically marked representation of facts as inevitable, depersonalized, or natural.

A notable example of the systematic use of the passive for concealment purposes is found in the legal decrees of the Nazi regime. In the *Reichsgesetzblatt* of 1935, during the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, the construction *"wird bestimmt"* ("is determined") was used without agent mention in several key passages:

> *"Die Zugehörigkeit zur jüdischen Rasse wird durch Verordnung bestimmt."*
>
> ("Membership in the Jewish race will be determined by regulation.")

Here, the passive structure reinforces the abstract authority of the State while concealing who is executing the racial classification. This passive formula is a clear example of how grammatical structure can serve as an instrument of structural power by deactivating visible agency and transforming ideological decisions into seemingly technical or administrative determinations.

From a statistical perspective, quantitative studies conducted on legislative corpora from authoritarian regimes (Szmrecsányi & Hinrichs, 2008) have shown a significantly higher frequency of impersonal passives compared to normative texts from representative democracies. These results provide empirical support for the hypothesis that the passive voice is not merely a stylistic variation, but a recurring strategy of institutional opacity in contexts of concentrated power.

In conclusion, the passive voice has evolved from a regular grammatical tool into an institutionalized discursive resource that enables the reorganization of agent visibility and the modulation of

responsibility attribution. Its persistence in religious, legal, and political discourse does not respond to formal motives, but to functional ones: it constitutes a syntactic technique for depersonalizing power and legitimizing authority through impersonality.

2.2 "It was decreed": the passive voice in constitutions and legal codes

In legal and normative texts, the passive voice fulfills a function beyond the grammatical: it acts as an institutionalized form of authority construction. The choice of passive voice in constitutions, codes, and laws is not accidental—it allows for the projection of an abstract enunciator, neutralizes the legislative agent, and formalizes the illocutionary force of the text as if it emanated from an autonomous logical order. This syntactic strategy reinforces the idea that the law "dictates itself," without a visible human subject.

From a formal linguistic perspective, the Spanish periphrastic passive (fue aprobado, se establece, será sancionado) is a derived transformation, as modeled by generative grammar (Chomsky, 1965). The underlying active structure—"El Congreso aprobó la ley" ("Congress passed the law")—is transformed into the passive—"La ley fue aprobada (por el Congreso)" ("The law was passed (by Congress)")—through NP movement and optional agent suppression. The systematic omission of the agent in normative texts is not a syntactic limitation but a discursive choice with political effects: it shifts responsibility, reinforces the autonomy of the text, and depersonalizes legislative action.

This discursive operation is particularly evident in national constitutions. The preamble to the Spanish Constitution of 1978, for example, states:

> "La Nación española, deseando establecer la justicia, la libertad y la seguridad, promulga esta Constitución."
>
> ("The Spanish Nation, desiring to establish justice, liberty, and security, promulgates this Constitution.")

By contrast, the normative articles predominantly use passive or impersonal structures, such as in Article 1.1:

> "España se constituye en un Estado social y democrático de Derecho."
>
> ("Spain is constituted as a social and democratic state governed by the rule of law.")

Here, the pronominal passive form (*se constituye*) omits the constituent agent (the legislator, the people, the assembly) and presents the statement as a self-referential institutional fact.

This phenomenon also appears in earlier constitutions. The French Constitution of 1791, read as a founding text of modern constitutionalism, includes formulas such as:

> "Il sera établi une haute cour nationale..."
> ("A high national court shall be established...")

The impersonal future passive *"Il sera établi"* refers to no specific subject but projects a normative will that is impersonal and ubiquitous.

From a logical-modal perspective, such constructions can be represented as deontic necessity formulas: □p. In von Wright's (1951) deontic logic, normative statements like "X is prohibited" or "Y will be punished" can be formalized as obligations whose force does not depend on an agent but on their inclusion within a closed axiomatic system. Thus, law is not enunciated as the product of decision, but as the expression of a superior logic. The grammatical use of the passive and pronominal structures reflects, therefore, a form of authority that is self-produced and self-prescribed.

This model has a notable projection in the legal language of the 19th and 20th centuries. In the French Civil Code (1804), for instance, passive constructions are abundant:

> "Il est interdit de céder ses droits à une personne incapable."
> ("It is prohibited to transfer one's rights to an incompetent person.")

Here, the impersonal passive not only conceals the normative emitter but reconfigures the statement as a self-justifying prohibition.

A similar pattern can be observed in the 1994 Constitution of the Argentine Republic, particularly in Article 75, section 12:

> "Corresponde al Congreso dictar los Códigos Civil, Comercial, Penal, de Minería y del Trabajo y Seguridad Social, en cuerpo único, sin que tales códigos alteren las jurisdicciones locales." ("It is the responsibility of Congress to enact the Civil, Commercial, Penal, Mining, and Labor and Social Security Codes as a unified body, without such codes altering local jurisdictions.")

Although the grammatical subject (*al Congreso*) is retained in this sentence, much of the constitutional text employs impersonal constructions:

> "Se reconoce la preexistencia étnica y cultural de los pueblos indígenas argentinos." (Art. 75.17) ("The ethnic and cultural preexistence of the Argentine Indigenous peoples is recognized.")

In terms of discourse analysis, this strategy can be interpreted as part of what Fairclough (2001) calls "ideological naturalization," insofar as the law appears to have no author, history, or context, but emerges instead as a neutral manifestation of order. Institutional passive voice thus operates as a technique of discursive legitimation: it removes the statement from the sphere of political agency and inserts it into a logical structure that does not admit rebuttal.

Empirically, a frequency analysis conducted on a comparative corpus of constitutions (Spain 1978, France 1958, Argentina 1994, Germany 1949) shows that more than 60% of articles employ passive or impersonal structures. This proportion increases significantly in the introductory sections of legal codes and constitutional preambles, where the depersonalization of legislative power is most evident.

From a semiotic perspective, this phenomenon may be considered an institutional concealment device. The passive voice removes the figure of the legislator from the discursive field, generating an effect of impersonality that reinforces the authority of the text. This operation, repeated systematically, establishes the idea

that the law "dictates itself" out of internal necessity, and not as the result of contingent human decisions.

2.3 Diffuse responsibility in canonical and diplomatic documents

In medieval canonical and diplomatic discourse, passive and impersonal syntax functions as a recurrent technique for distributing decision-making responsibility without directly identifying its agents. This mode of grammatical structuring is not driven by stylistic needs or lexical limitations, but rather by an institutional rationale: power is more easily legitimized when its origin is blurred and when normative action appears to emerge naturally from a collective or transcendent will.

In the case of canonical documents, such as papal bulls and decretals, the passive form was established as a normative standard as early as the thirteenth century. The register of Pope Innocent IV's bulls (1243–1254), for example, includes formulas such as "Mandatum est per praesentium tenorem" ("It is ordered by the tenor of the present [bull]"), where no human agent is mentioned, only a legal abstraction of the enunciative act. This type of construction produces a double effect: on the one hand, it reinforces the perception of the Church as an institutional subject above individual persons; on the other, it prevents the localization of decision-making, relocating it to a higher theological or normative will.

From a formal perspective, this pattern can be represented through enunciative modal logic: □p, where p is a proposition whose force does not derive from an individual speech act but from its institutional anchoring. In this sense, canonical passive voice is not merely a transformation of the sentence's surface structure; it reorganizes the regime of enunciation. Benveniste (1971) points out that in this kind of discourse, the subject of the utterance is not identifiable with a physical person, but with an institutional enunciative function whose authority is inherent to the role, not the individual.

This function carries over strongly into diplomatic language. Treaties and royal correspondence from the late medieval and early modern periods adopt similar structures. In the Treaty of Troyes

(1420), signed between Henry V of England and Charles VI of France, passives such as the following are used:

> "Il est accordé que..." ("It is agreed that...")

Here, the omission of the sovereigns' proper names in the main clause has a strategic effect: it neutralizes the conflict between rival political subjects by presenting the agreement as the outcome of an unchallengeable historical necessity.

This mechanism is also evident in papal diplomatic correspondence of the fourteenth century, such as in the Litterae communes of Pope John XXII, where we read:

> "Tenore praesentium significamus quod... fuit ordinatum..."
>
> ("By the tenor of these presents we signify that... it was ordained...")

The passive "fuit ordinatum", with no explicit agent, represents a typical operation of depersonalized authority. In such cases, the passive verb does not announce an action, but ratifies a provision that appears to emanate from a pre-established order, without specific human intervention.

From the perspective of discourse theory, this strategy constitutes what Foucault (1971) calls a "diffuse authorship effect," by which texts are not attributable to individual subjects but to discursive formations that guarantee their truth-value. Passive and impersonal syntax serves here as the grammatical vehicle of that effect: it allows normative or diplomatic content to acquire authority without agency being thematized, made visible, or opened to dispute.

Empirically, corpus analysis of papal bulls between 1230 and 1300 (based on the Registra Vaticana) shows that over 70% of the provisions are articulated in periphrastic passive voice or in impersonal forms with elided subjects. This recurrence is not incidental: it reflects an institutional logic whose grammar is oriented toward depersonalizing power and eternalizing authority.

The diffuse distribution of responsibility in these documents also serves to dissolve political and legal conflict. If a norm does not originate from a concrete subject, it cannot be contested as the

expression of a partial will. Thus, the passive form reinforces the absolute nature of the normative mandate while shielding the enunciator from being positioned as an interested party.

In sum, the passive voice in canonical and diplomatic documents is not a minor syntactic device—it is a technique of structural legitimation, based on the neutralization of the agent, the institutionalization of the utterance, and the production of a faceless enunciation. This grammatical device consolidates a regime of power in which authority is exercised without the need for visible representation.

2.4 Frequency studies: passive constructions in authoritarian vs. democratic regimes

The hypothesis that the passive voice fulfills a more intense ideological function in contexts of power concentration finds empirical support in comparative studies of syntactic frequency. The aim of this subsection is to provide contrasting quantitative evidence showing how authoritarian regimes tend to use the passive voice—especially when the agent is elided—as a structural form for producing impersonal normativity, in significantly higher proportions than democratic regimes.

2.4.1 Methodological framework for corpus analysis

For this study, a multilingual, genre-balanced corpus was constructed, composed of legal, political, and administrative documents from both authoritarian and democratic regimes of the twentieth century. The corpus was divided into two main blocks:

- **Block A (authoritarian regimes):**
    - Reichsgesetzblatt (Nazi Germany, 1933–1944)
    - Boletín Oficial del Estado (Francoist Spain, 1939–1959)
        - 1936 Soviet Constitution and Politburo resolutions (1936–1952)
- **Block B (democracies):**

- Hansard Corpus (United Kingdom, parliamentary speeches, 1990–2000)
- Diario de Sesiones del Congreso (Argentina, 1994–2005)
- Journal Officiel (France, laws and decrees, 1980–1995)

Proportional samples were extracted (30,000 words per block), controlling for topic (regulations, laws, decrees, and official speeches). The analysis was conducted using TreeTagger and AntConc, applying POS (Part-of-Speech) annotation and syntactic parsing based on the Universal Dependencies v2.12 model.

2.4.2 Quantitative results

The data revealed significant differences:

Type of Construction	Authoritarian (%)	Democratic (%)
Agentless passive (*"was decreed"*)	31.6%	11.2%
Passive with agent (*"was decreed by X"*)	4.7%	12.4%
Active with explicit subject	38.2%	53.1%
Impersonal structures (*"it is established"*)	25.1%	23.3%

The most relevant finding is the use of agentless passives, which account for nearly one-third of the structures in authoritarian texts, in contrast to their scarce occurrence in democratic texts. This supports the hypothesis that the passive voice is not merely a grammatical option, but a tool of structural opacity—intensified by power systems that seek to avoid the visibility of the decision-making agent.

2.4.3 Structural interpretation

From a logical-formal perspective, this difference can be understood as a systematic alteration of the transitivity operator: in agentless passive constructions, the logical subject of the predicate is

displaced outside the syntactic field, breaking the canonical Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure and reinforcing the autonomy of the predicate as a normative entity.

In lambda-calculus notation applied to formal semantics (cf. Heim & Kratzer, 1998), this phenomenon can be represented as follows:

Active:

$\lambda x.\lambda y.ACT(x,y)$ → *Congress passed the law*

Agentless passive:

$\lambda y.\exists x[ACT(x,y)]$ → *The law was passed*

(without mentioning *x*)

The existence of the agent is semantically presupposed but syntactically eliminated. This structural reduction is not ideologically neutral—it implies a measurable subtraction of responsibility.

2.4.4 Interpretive value

As Fowler (1991) already suggested, syntactic structures shape the worldview embedded in discourse. In this case, empirical data support the conclusion that authoritarian systems tend to employ grammatical forms that structurally avoid decision traceability. Law, norm, punishment, or prohibition appear "naturalized," without a visible subject, reinforcing an order in which power is exercised without a face.

By contrast, democracies show a greater preference for active structures with visible agents, which may be linked to principles of accountability, political responsibility, and enunciative transparency.

2.4.5 Synthesis: the passive voice as agent concealment

Throughout this chapter, it has been demonstrated that the passive voice is not merely an optional syntactic transformation, but a structural device with clear ideological, discursive, and political implications. Its most significant function in institutional contexts is to

conceal, blur, or neutralize the agent, shifting the informational focus to the event or the norm and presenting facts as devoid of individual will.

From its evolution in ecclesiastical Latin to its consolidation in modern legal documents, the passive has been systematically employed in normative and diplomatic production. In constitutions, legal codes, and papal bulls, its use allows for the attribution of authority without the assumption of responsibility; in authoritarian legal discourse, it depersonalizes imposed decisions; and in canonical rhetoric, it projects the image of an impersonal or transcendent authority that manifests through language without the need for visible subjects.

Frequency studies applied to normative corpora have revealed a statistically significant trend: authoritarian regimes use agentless passive constructions far more frequently than liberal democracies. This regularity suggests a structural relationship between power concentration and grammatical choice, insofar as syntactic opacity becomes a form of political opacity.

In formal terms, this chapter has shown that the passive voice reorganizes the transitivity of the utterance, alters its propositional logic, and modulates its illocutionary force. Through generative grammar models, modal logic, and formal semantics, it has been illustrated how the suppression of the agent transforms the linguistic act into a closed, unchallengeable, and often self-referential normative construction.

The passive voice, therefore, is neither neutral nor secondary: it is a strategic tool within what is here defined as the grammar of power. Its analysis reveals that power, in its most subtle and efficient form, not only determines *what* is said, but *how* it is said, and from what structural silence it is exercised.

2.5 The Passive Voice in AI Systems: Algorithmic Neutrality and the Disappearance of the Subject

2.5.1 Introduction

In recent years, the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) systems capable of generating coherent, structured, and context-sensitive texts has raised new questions about the epistemological and political nature of machine-produced discourse. While much of the debate has focused on ethical concerns, misinformation, or job displacement, less attention has been paid to the grammatical forms through which such authority is exercised. Among them, the passive voice holds a privileged place.

The passive construction—long associated with bureaucratic, legal, and institutional discourse—operates as a mechanism for concealing agency. It shifts the actor out of focus and foregrounds the action or its outcome, allowing power structures to function without visible enunciators. In traditional contexts—state decrees, corporate statements, religious dogma—the passive voice has served to mask responsibility and simulate objectivity.

What makes this phenomenon particularly urgent in the case of AI is its mass automation. Language models such as ChatGPT, Claude, or LLaMA are trained on institutional corpora where passive constructions abound. These models not only reproduce such forms but deploy them in new contexts, from customer service replies to political recommendations. The result is a discourse that appears neutral, credible, and professional—even though no subject stands behind the statement.

This article investigates how the algorithmic use of the passive voice contributes to the illusion of objectivity in machine-generated language. It connects this phenomenon to a broader genealogy of impersonal authority, as developed in *Grammars of Power*, and seeks to demonstrate how grammar functions as a vector of depersonalization in the digital era. Through theoretical analysis and textual examples, we examine how form replaces intention, and how sentence structure becomes a source of legitimacy.

2.5.2 Theoretical framework

The passive voice has long been a subject of interest in linguistic and critical discourse analysis due to its ability to encode power asymmetries through syntactic structure. Unlike active constructions, where the agent is explicitly named, passive formulations shift attention toward the action or its result, often eliminating the actor entirely. This syntactic displacement has been identified as a key strategy in ideological discourse, particularly in bureaucratic, legal, and institutional contexts (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991).

Halliday (1985) emphasized that grammar is not a neutral system but a semiotic resource shaped by—and for—specific social functions. In his model of functional grammar, the passive voice is not treated as a mere stylistic variation but as a grammatical realization of agency manipulation. In formal and administrative discourse, it is frequently used to depersonalize decisions ("It was decided that...") or to obscure responsibility ("Mistakes were made").

In the field of critical linguistics, this syntactic form has been analyzed as an ideological operator—one that sustains institutional narratives by minimizing accountability and generating an appearance of objectivity. Foucault's (1971) work on discourse and power offers a broader theoretical framework, suggesting that enunciative authority often does not derive from the speaker but from the institutional machinery that produces and circulates the utterance.

On this basis, *Grammars of Power* (Startari, forthcoming) developed the idea that grammatical structures—especially the passive voice—are not merely vehicles of meaning but infrastructures of legitimacy. In particular, Chapter 2 analyzed how the passive voice has historically functioned as a syntactic mask, allowing decrees, dogmas, and legal provisions to operate without visible agents.

This article extends that analysis into the algorithmic domain. We argue that the passive constructions generated by AI systems are not neutral reproductions of corpus patterns but active contributors to a new regime of depersonalized discourse. By combining linguistic theory with discursive genealogy, we show how the absence of agency is no longer a rhetorical strategy but a computational norm—statistically modeled and automatically deployed at scale.

2.5.3 From bureaucratic passive to algorithmic simulation

Historically, the passive voice has served the communicative needs of institutions seeking to attenuate or erase agency. In bureaucratic texts, legal documents, and religious proclamations, passive constructions provided a syntactic means to project neutrality, conceal hierarchies, and avoid direct attribution. Formulations such as "It has been determined," "It is required that," or "It will be proceeded to..." allowed orders and directives to appear as impersonal facts rather than the will of identifiable actors. This strategy was especially prominent in authoritarian regimes, where the passive voice functioned as grammatical camouflage for coercive power (see Grammars of Power, chapter 2.4).

What distinguishes the current moment is not merely the continuation of passive usage, but its automation. Large language models (LLMs), trained on vast corpora including legal, administrative, and institutional texts, have internalized these structures not as conscious strategies but as statistical patterns. These systems do not choose the passive voice for rhetorical effect; they simply reproduce it according to frequency and contextual probability.

This shift has profound implications. In the bureaucratic paradigm, the passive voice was used by humans with discursive intent: to obscure, depersonalize, or naturalize authority. In the algorithmic paradigm, it becomes a default linguistic behavior—executed without intent but with similar ideological effects. The machine has no interest in masking the agent, yet the grammar it produces achieves exactly that.

Moreover, the replication of bureaucratic passives by AI systems occurs at an unprecedented scale and speed. In customer service, legal assistance, academic support, and policy drafting, AI-generated language routinely includes constructions such as:

- • "It is recommended that further measures be taken."
- "It was previously determined that no response was required."
- "No exceptions will be made unless authorized by the committee."
- "The matter has been resolved in accordance with internal procedures."

These sentences are syntactically correct, semantically plausible, and stylistically appropriate—but also epistemically empty, with no

responsible subject behind them. The simulation of impersonal legitimacy is no longer a rhetorical tool—it has become an algorithmic artifact.

2.5.4 Syntactic analysis of AI-generated passives

In this new regime, power is exercised through the automation of plausibility. AI systems are optimized to generate utterances that appear coherent, credible, and contextually appropriate. The use of argumentative connectors ("therefore," "according to experts," "as has been demonstrated") and deontic or epistemic structures ("it is considered necessary," "it is likely that," "there is no doubt") forms part of a grammatical repertoire that manufactures performative credibility. The sentence is no longer evaluated for its truth, but for its adherence to the statistical model of expected language.

This mechanism reveals the emergence of a new ideological apparatus: the mass production of discourse without subjects, but with formal authority. Grammar becomes a mask. Synthetic authority does not need to argue—it only needs to sound reasonable. In this sense, AI reproduces—at scale—a phenomenon already anticipated by bureaucratic propaganda: the effectiveness of the utterance depends on its structure, not its content.

This dynamic is developed in greater depth in Startari (2025), which addresses the political and epistemological implications of algorithmic governance in relation to synthetic discourse and the erosion of human agency.

2.5.4.1 Typical forms and contexts

Across multiple tests—including political queries, legal instructions, and institutional summaries—frequent passive patterns emerged, such as:

- "It is recommended that new measures be taken."
- "It was previously determined that no response was necessary."

- "No exceptions will be made unless authorized by the committee."
- "The matter has been resolved according to internal procedures."

These constructions reveal a syntactic decoupling between action and agency. Although grammatically correct, they lack identifiable speakers, decision-makers, or institutional sources. They simulate formal legitimacy by mimicking real bureaucratic tone, yet are not anchored in any verifiable process.

2.5.4.2 Modality and deontic authority

A key feature is the combination of the passive voice with modal verbs and deontic structures ("must," "is required," "may be," "it is mandatory"). This intersection between passivization and normativity amplifies the effect of authority:

- "Action must be taken immediately."
- "Data must be deleted after 30 days."
- "The request is considered valid if submitted on time."

These formulations function as syntactic commands, not suggestions. They do not indicate who considers, who must act, or who imposes the requirement. Thus, the machine reproduces the grammar of imposition without any institution behind it.

2.5.4.3 Epistemic erasure

Even in statements that appear descriptive rather than normative, passive constructions introduce epistemic ambiguity:

- "It is believed that this approach yields better results."
- "It is known that certain risks are involved."
- "It has been suggested that alternatives exist."

These forms suggest consensus, authority, or expert knowledge, but cite no sources, attribute no knowledge, and trace no origin. They confer epistemic weight without real grounding, reinforcing the illusion of objectivity.

2.5.4.4 Structural implications

The cumulative effect of these syntactic choices is a textual surface that appears neutral, authoritative, and professional, yet is produced without human responsibility, institutional legitimacy, or discursive intention. The passive voice in algorithmic language has thus become a grammar of plausible anonymity—indistinguishable from its bureaucratic predecessors, but generated without discursive ethics or institutional context.

2.5.4.5 The illusion of objectivity: form versus responsibility

The widespread presence of passive constructions in AI-generated language is not a stylistic coincidence—it is a structural mechanism that reinforces the illusion of neutrality. By eliminating or obscuring the grammatical subject, the passive voice produces statements that seem detached from interest, intention, or ideology. This discursive architecture contributes to what might be called synthetic objectivity: the projection of legitimacy through form, not content.

Unlike traditional discourse, where objectivity was asserted or contested through epistemological debate, algorithmic language bypasses that tension. It simulates neutrality by automating its grammatical effects. What sounds reasonable is not necessarily true; what appears legitimate is not necessarily accountable. As discussed in Startari (2025), this reflects a broader shift in algorithmic governance, where linguistic plausibility replaces epistemic responsibility, and where automatic language production functions as a surrogate for institutional voice.

This transformation is especially evident in outputs that combine passive syntax with modal verbs and formal register. Phrases such as “It is advised that...,” “No exceptions will be allowed...,” or “It was determined that...” carry the weight of authority not because of who says them, but because of how they are said. Their grammatical form mimics institutional discourse even when no institution stands behind them. In this way, form becomes a source of legitimacy, while responsibility dissolves into computational abstraction.

This erosion of discursive agency has ethical and political consequences. In human communication, the presence of a speaker implies—even if debated—responsibility. In algorithmic discourse, by contrast, the speaker is replaced by a system trained on probabilities. The result is linguistic automation without authorship, where statements can order, recommend, or inform without any agent to be held accountable.

The illusion of objectivity thus rests on two pillars: syntactic anonymity and contextual plausibility. Together, they allow AI systems to produce discourse that not only resembles institutional authority, but increasingly functions as such—in customer service, education, legal assistance, and beyond. If language is power, as critical linguistics has long argued, then algorithmic language is power without a subject: grammatically structured, statistically generated, and epistemically opaque.

The passive voice, historically deployed as a rhetorical strategy to conceal agency and simulate neutrality, has found a new operational home in algorithmic language. Far from being a stylistic accident, its automation in AI-generated discourse represents a deeper epistemological shift: the delegation of authority to grammar itself.

Whereas traditional institutional texts used the passive voice to navigate political and bureaucratic constraints, language models now reproduce these forms without intention, attribution, or responsibility. This transition marks a mutation in the production of legitimacy: it is no longer form that expresses credibility—it replaces it.

By analyzing how machine-generated passives erase the speaker and simulate institutional tone, we have shown that algorithmic discourse fosters an illusion of objectivity based on statistical plausibility rather than epistemic grounding. This grammar of impersonality not only perpetuates depersonalized power structures—it scales them beyond human limits, embedding them in everyday digital interactions.

As we continue to integrate AI systems into decision-making, public communication, and administrative processes, it becomes urgent to question not only what these systems say, but how they say it—and what is hidden in that saying. To reclaim agency in the age of algorithmic language, we must resist the temptation to equate syntactic

elegance with truth, and recognize that every passive voice carries political weight—even when no one appears to be speaking.

3.1 "It is necessary", "one must": the faceless voice

Deontic modality and impersonal constructions are among the most effective mechanisms for producing normative statements without an explicit agent. Unlike the passive voice—which displaces or eliminates the grammatical agent within a transitive structure—modal impersonal constructions such as "it is necessary that," "one must," "it is prohibited," or "it is required," structurally deny the possibility of a visible emitter, projecting the utterance as the expression of objective necessity or universal mandate.

From a grammatical perspective, these constructions belong to the domain of deontic modality, defined as the linguistic encoding of obligation, permission, or prohibition. According to von Wright (1951), this type of modality can be represented through formal logical operators such as □ (obligation), ◇ (permission), or ¬◇ (prohibition), integrable into alethic or deontic modal systems. For instance, "one must obey the law" can be formalized as □p, where p represents the normative proposition, and the operator □ indicates its logical or institutional obligatoriness.

Unlike passive constructions, in which the agent remains latent, in modal impersonals the subject is entirely absent—both semantically and syntactically. This produces a highly effective political figure: the naturalization of the mandate, that is, the presentation of a norm as if it were part of the ontological order of the world and not the result of human decision-making.

A clear example can be found in the Code of Canon Law (CIC 1983), where formulas such as "What is prescribed by law must be observed with diligence" (can. 24 §1) appear repeatedly, without mention of who must observe or who prescribes. Here, the operator "must" functions as an act of imposition without a visible source—in other words, as a speech act without an identifiable speaker, which Searle (1969) would call an "institutionalized illocutionary force."

The same phenomenon appears in secular documents. In the Constitution of the Italian Republic (1948), Article 3 states:

"È compito della Repubblica rimuovere gli ostacoli…"

("It is the duty of the Republic to remove obstacles…")

However, in many other articles, the constructions shift toward impersonal forms:

"Si devono promuovere le condizioni per…"

("Conditions must be promoted for...")

Here, "si devono promuovere" establishes an obligation without an agent and shifts the attribution of the act to a diffuse normative function—possibly state-related, but without institutional concreteness.

From a semantic-cognitive perspective, these structures form part of what Talmy (2000) defines as backgrounding of agency: a linguistic structuring that places the agent outside the attentional focus, thus contributing to the representation of the mandate as inevitable or unquestionable.

The most extreme form of this technique appears in totalitarian regimes. In the Political Education Manual of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (1936), the phrase:

"Es ist geboten, dass…"

("It is mandatory that…")

appears more than forty times without mention of who commands it. Here, the syntactic structure creates a logic of obedience without a source, which serves a dual function: to legitimize the content as universal and to avoid any possibility of holding the speaker accountable.

Empirically, analysis of a subset of the normative corpus examined in Chapter 2 reveals that in the legal documents of authoritarian regimes, over 50% of expressed obligations use modal impersonal constructions ("it is necessary," "one must"), compared to 28% in democratic legal texts. This difference is statistically significant (χ^2, $p < 0.01$), supporting the conclusion that agent concealment

through impersonal modality is not an isolated rhetorical phenomenon but a systematic syntactic pattern of normative power.

In terms of formal grammar, these constructions do not allow agent retrieval through transformational movements or anaphoric elements. This implies that their analysis must abandon traditional subject-predicate logic and instead adopt a semantics of propositional operators acting on agentless clausal content. Therefore, expressions like "it is necessary," "one must," and their variants are not mere legal stylistic formulas: they are grammatical mechanisms that allow power to speak without a speaker, to impose without revealing the hand, and to legislate without assuming the agency of the mandate.

The faceless voice, in this sense, is one of the most effective discursive forms for consolidating authority.

3.2 Deontics and normative discourse

Normative discourse—defined as that which primarily aims to establish what must, may, or must not be done—structurally depends on deontic modality. This modality, expressed both lexically and syntactically, allows for the introduction of utterances that are not merely descriptive but prescriptive: propositions that do not assert existing states of affairs, but instead obligate, authorize, or prohibit future actions. From a logical standpoint, deontic modality was formalized by von Wright (1951), who proposed a modal syntax distinguishing three fundamental operators: obligation ($\Box p$), permission ($\Diamond p$), and prohibition ($\neg\Diamond p$ or $\Box\neg p$). These formulas allow us to model the content of statements such as:

- "The rule must be followed" → $\Box p$
- "It is permitted to appeal the sentence" → $\Diamond p$
- "It is prohibited to disclose the information" → $\Box\neg p$

What characterizes normative discourse is that these operators apply to propositions which, semantically, do not refer to actual facts but to desired, avoidable, or required states of affairs. Discursive power thus operates not on what is, but on what ought to be—and it

does so through syntactic structures that project this ought without requiring anchoring in explicit subjects.

Grammatically, these functions are typically realized through modal verbs (must, may, have to), impersonal expressions (it is necessary, it is permitted), periphrastic constructions with infinitives (one must comply, it is necessary to respect), and sentences with diffuse subjects (the law requires that...). What these forms have in common is that they articulate a normative illocutionary force with a variable degree of agent explicitness.

At the textual level, normative discourse displays a set of recurrent properties:

a) The thematization of the obligatory content, not the actor;

b) The omission or abstraction of the agentive subject;

c) The affirmation of necessity in the form of self-justified evidence;

d) Pragmatic closure, that is, the presentation of the norm as non-negotiable.

These characteristics are observable, for example, in the German Penal Code (Strafgesetzbuch, 1871), where expressions like "Wer [...] handelt, wird bestraft" ("Whoever [...] acts thus, shall be punished") do not directly identify the executing agent of the sanction. Here, the modal verb in passive anticipates the normative consequence but deactivates any reference to the figure responsible for its execution—a structure reproduced in later legal systems, including the normative texts of the Third Reich.

Contemporary legal language, even in democratic regimes, retains these structures. In the Spanish Penal Code (Organic Law 10/1995), Article 13 states:

"Serious offenses are those which the law punishes with severe penalties."

The phrase presents a normative tautology that operates via syntactic circularity: "serious offenses are those infractions that are punished with penalties that the law punishes." The agent (the one

who punishes) does not appear. The normative system self-regulates grammatically through passives and self-referential definitions.

This type of structure can be modeled as a system of circular deontics, where modal operators are linked without explicit human intervention. Formally:

- p := "X is a crime"
- q := "X is punished with penalty Y"
- r := "Y is defined by law as a penalty for crimes"
- Therefore: $\Box(p \rightarrow q) \land \Box(q \rightarrow r) \rightarrow \Box p$

This model shows that normative power reproduces itself as a closed system, with no necessary reference to subjects of enunciation or decision. Critically, this grammatical system reinforces what Althusser (1970) calls institutional ideological interpellation: the subject is constructed by the norm from outside, and recognizes itself as such by being "interpellated" by normative language. In this sense, deontics not only express a command—they construct obedient subjects through impersonal structures that close off the possibility of reply.

From corpus analysis, a clear correlation is observed between normative discourse and the predominance of impersonal deontic constructions. In a 25,000-word sample taken from the Boletín Oficial del Estado (Spain), the Journal Officiel de la République Française, and the Bundesgesetzblatt (Germany), more than 65% of normative statements lack an explicit agent, and 78% contain deontic modal operators such as is prohibited, is mandatory, is not permitted. These data, processed with AntConc and POS tagging, confirm that normative power tends to express itself through linguistic forms that maximize its autonomy and minimize the traceability of its origin.

3.3 Science, religion, and law as sources of impersonal authority

In the institutional discourses of science, religion, and law, authority is not usually manifested through individual subjects, but rather through grammatical and institutional forms that simulate the objectivity, transcendence, or abstract legality of the statement. In all

these cases, impersonal, passive, or deontic constructions are systematically employed to reinforce the idea that the content does not originate from a particular will, but from a higher, autonomous, or universally accepted order.

3.3.1 Scientific authority: objectivity without a subject

In scientific discourse, impersonality is primarily achieved through the use of agentless passives, the indefinite pronoun (se or "one"), and the explicit avoidance of the first person. This strategy corresponds to what Halliday (2004) calls a grammar of objectivity, in which grammatical construction erases or minimizes the researcher's intervention in order to produce a discourse that appears to "emerge from the data."

For example, in biomedical literature it is common to find phrases such as:

"A significant increase in gene expression was observed following exposure to compound X."

This construction—technically an impersonal pronominal passive—not only conceals the observing agent, but attributes the epistemic value of the result to the phenomenon itself rather than to the theoretical operation that underlies it.

From a logical perspective, this type of utterance can be represented as a modalized proposition in which authority is shifted from the subject to the data:

$$\exists x\, [OBS(x) \wedge SIG(x)] \rightarrow p$$

Where p is a proposition asserted without a defined agent, constructing the appearance of absolute objectivity.

This phenomenon has been extensively documented in corpus studies. Hyland (2002) demonstrated that, in hard science articles, the use of the first person appears in fewer than 15% of result statements, and that over 60% of epistemic claims are constructed using passive structures or nominalizations.

3.3.2 Religious authority: impersonal transcendence

In religious discourse—particularly within the Abrahamic monotheistic traditions—impersonality becomes the grammatical resource par excellence for conveying divine command. In the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an, and the New Testament, normative orders and affirmations are frequently formulated without any attributable human subject.

A canonical example appears in *Exodus 20:13*, in the Latin *Vulgate* version:

"Non occides."

("Thou shalt not kill.")

Here, the verb in the second-person singular is imperative, but the speaker and enunciative context are entirely absent. The utterance is not presented as the command of a subject, but as the unconditional expression of a metaphysical norm.

This type of structure can be modeled as a universal obligation not derived from a particular will:

$\forall x\,[H(x) \rightarrow \neg KILL(x)]$

Where H(x) represents the set of human beings, the deontic operator does not originate from a subject, but from a system of revealed truth.

Similarly, the Qur'an frequently employs comparable constructions. In *Surah 2*, Ayah 183, we read:

"Fasting has been prescribed for you..." (*kutiba ʿalaykum aṣ-ṣiyām*)

The verb *kutiba* (كُتِبَ), the passive form of *kataba* ("to prescribe, to write"), has no explicit agent. The construction places the normative source beyond the speaker; the passive voice reinforces the transcendence of the command by erasing its human origin.

3.3.3 Legal authority: the order without speakers

In legal language—whether in civil codes, rulings, or administrative resolutions—there is an institutionalized intensive use of the passive voice and impersonality as a technique for exercising authority. As previously analyzed, statements such as "punishable by imprisonment" or "is hereby declared guilty" allow legal mandates to appear as the automatic effect of the normative system, not as the result of human will.

This type of grammatical structure reinforces the idea that the law acts by itself. It produces an effect of legal automatism, which can be represented through conditional propositional functions:

$p \rightarrow \Box q$

Where *p* is a factual condition (e.g., committing a crime) and *q* an obligatory sanction, whose agency is not specified in the utterance.

This form of expression, analyzed by Ducrot (1984), corresponds to what he calls énonciation sans énonciateur (enunciation without an enunciator), in which the text constructs discursive force without an individual source, relying on the very structure of institutional language.

The discourses of science, religion, and law share a grammatical architecture oriented toward erasing the subject of enunciation. In all cases, impersonality does not weaken the speech act—it strengthens it, insofar as it simulates a non-attributable truth, a non-negotiable norm, a non-situated knowledge. The faceless voice analyzed in this chapter is not an isolated grammatical phenomenon—it is a discursive technology of high institutional performance. Its effectiveness lies precisely in its invisibility: the more impersonal the utterance, the more universal, transcendent, or unappealable its content appears to be.

3.4 Linguistic mechanisms of legitimation: objectivity as strategy

In institutional discourse, legitimacy is not built solely through normative content, but through linguistic forms that stage objectivity, necessity, or universal truth. The most effective strategy of discursive legitimation is not the explicit display of power, but its concealment behind grammatical structures that eliminate the subject and simulate the neutrality of the statement.

This mechanism relies fundamentally on three syntactic-discursive resources:

a) pronominal impersonality (it is said, it is considered),

b) agentless passive constructions (was enacted, is established),

c) deontic modal constructions without source (it is necessary, must be complied with).

By avoiding any explicit attribution of agency, these forms grant the utterance a status of objectivity that derives not from its content, but from its form.

From a functional perspective, Halliday (2004) explains that objectivity in institutional discourse is constructed through the ideational metafunction of language, which allows experience to be organized as if it were external to the speaker. Passive and impersonal clauses restructure the communicative process so that enunciative responsibility is deactivated, shifting focus toward the event or the norm.

This effect has been widely documented in academic discourse, where the systematic use of passives and nominalizations not only reduces the author's visibility but also constructs an institutional voice devoid of subjectivity. Hyland (2002), in his study on authorship in scientific writing, shows that the lower the presence of personal markers in the text, the greater the perception of objectivity and authority. The absence of the "I" does not weaken the assertion—it strengthens it, by presenting it as evident, shared, or scientifically grounded.

The same principle applies to legal discourse. Statements such as "is declared guilty" or "execution of the sentence is ordered" do not indicate who declares or who orders. What legitimizes the action is not the identity of the subject, but the normative logic structuring the statement. The system represents itself as sufficient: it does not need to justify the source of its authority because it hides it in its grammar.

Ducrot (1984) analyzed this phenomenon as an instance of énonciation sans énonciateur, in which the utterance acquires pragmatic force not through the authority of the speaker, but by its location within a discursive framework that simulates universality. The

effectiveness of the discourse lies precisely in the fact that it appears to come from no one.

This type of structure can be modeled using deontic logic as □p, where p is a normative proposition asserted without attribution. But beyond propositional logic, the legitimating value emerges from the very structure of the utterance, which imposes content as obligatory without any structural possibility of questioning. Grammatical form acts as epistemic closure.

In the corpora analyzed (chapters 2 and 3), whether in constitutions, scientific texts, or religious scriptures, objectivizing constructions dominate normative or doctrinal passages. For example, in the Journal Officiel of France, over 68% of provisions appear without mention of an agent; in the Latin Vulgate, subjectless imperatives mark key doctrinal points (e.g., non concupisces); and in scientific articles, phrases like "it has been demonstrated that…" appear more than 150 times per 10,000 words (Hyland, 2002).

This evidence supports the claim that grammar not only conveys content—it establishes hierarchies of legitimacy. What is presented as objective, necessary, or self-evident is not so by nature, but because its grammatical form eliminates any possible subjectivity. The most powerful legitimation strategy of institutional language, then, consists in erasing the subject, and letting syntax speak on behalf of the law, science, or God.

4.1 Causal, conditional, and final subordinate clauses

Grammatical subordination is not merely a syntactic operation of dependency between propositions—it is also a hierarchical form of discourse organization that establishes asymmetric relationships between utterances, ideas, and subjects. In institutional, political, and normative contexts, the systematic use of subordinate clauses—especially causal, conditional, and final—makes it possible to articulate power as a sequence of necessary, justified, or projected conditions, whose grammatical structure reproduces relations of obedience, legitimation, or discursive submission.

From a strictly syntactic standpoint, subordinate clauses are characterized by not constituting autonomous predicates. They require

a main clause to support them and determine their logical and discursive status. This structural relationship can be formally represented by dependency trees or by hierarchical rule systems in generative grammar, where subordinates are adjoined constituents or complements of higher-level verbal heads (Chomsky, 1981).

When causal subordinate clauses are used (because, since, given that), they introduce a structural justification for an act or norm, which is often constructed as obvious or unquestionable. For example, in many legal texts, one finds formulations such as:

> "The use of the premises is prohibited because it is considered hazardous."

Here, the causal clause does not merely provide information—it functions as syntactic legitimation for a decision already assumed. The causal content appears subordinated, but it serves to rationalize the normative act ex post.

A similar dynamic occurs with conditional subordinates (if, in case, provided that), where the execution of an action is subject to the fulfillment of a premise controlled by the speaker. The conditional structure allows for the simulation of discursive openness when, in fact, it establishes a functional dependency:

> "If the documentation is not submitted, the benefit will be revoked."

This kind of construction installs a logic of consequence that removes the need for further justification. Subordination does not merely structure content—it structures obedience.

In the case of final subordinate clauses (so that, in order to), an explicit teleology is introduced. The declared purpose in the subordinate clause often assumes a positive, moral, or functional orientation that legitimizes the main action:

> "These regulations are enacted in order to guarantee public safety."

Here, the stated goal is not empirically verifiable, but its structural presence grants the rule an appearance of institutional

benevolence, even when its real effects may be disciplinary or restrictive.

From the standpoint of formal logic, such subordinates can be modeled as operators of conditional implication (→) or causality (⊃), where the subordinate proposition acts as a logical antecedent or justificatory premise:

- p because q → q ⊃ p
- if q, then p → q → p
- p in order to q → p ∧ GOAL(p) = q

The extensive use of these grammatical structures in legal, ecclesiastical, and administrative texts suggests that subordination is not only a technique of textual cohesion, but a discursive tool for vertically organizing propositions, where certain statements cannot stand without being anchored to others that subordinate or explain them.

Corpus analysis reveals that in authoritarian normative documents (e.g., the Reichsgesetzblatt, the Boletín Oficial del Estado during Franco's regime, or Soviet Politburo resolutions), conditional and causal subordinates appear in over 40% of complex normative statements. This contrasts with 24% in deliberative parliamentary texts, such as speeches from the British Hansard, where coordination and parataxis dominate.

This differential is not accidental. In authoritarian discourses, subordinate clauses function as structures of logical closure: they transform norms into consequences or inescapable necessities. Grammar not only regulates content—it imposes a discursive order where justification is not debated, but subordinately stated. Thus, syntactic relationships replicate power relationships: what depends on another does not merely occupy a lower grammatical position, but also a subordinate epistemic and political role.

4.2 Hierarchical syntax as a model of social order

Every natural language possesses structural mechanisms that organize its units into relationships of dependence, dominance, and

subordination. In grammar, this organization takes the form of syntactic hierarchies, where certain constituents are central (verbal head, agent subject), while others occupy subordinate positions (complements, modifiers, dependent clauses). This structure is not merely a formal necessity of language: it also functions as a cognitive model of social organization, projecting a hierarchically structured worldview onto syntax.

From the perspective of generative grammar, Chomsky (1981) proposes that every sentence has a tree structure dominated by a functional category T (tense), under which subject nodes (Spec-TP), predicate (VP), and its extensions are subordinated. This structure, representable through binary or ternary trees, clearly establishes who dominates whom syntactically. For example, the subject dominates the verb in the specifier position; the verb dominates its internal arguments.

Syntax, in this framework, is not just combinatorial—it is an architecture of asymmetric relationships. This principle transfers easily to models of social organization, where there exists a privileged emitter (government, church, doctrinal authority) and a series of passive subjects whose role is to respond, obey, or perform dependent functions.

This parallelism is more than metaphorical. In institutional discourses, syntactic structure reproduces and legitimizes vertical social structures. For example, in judicial rulings or ecclesiastical texts, subordinate, passive, or nominalized constructions tend to place the social subject (citizen, believer, defendant) in a secondary or invisible syntactic position, while the institutional subject remains implicit, omnipresent, or elided.

Ducrot (1984) already noted that the hierarchical organization of discourse contributes to producing truth effects, insofar as it establishes lines of dependence that hinder refutation. If an utterance is presented as subordinated to another—whether as explanation, cause, or purpose—it becomes less debatable on its own. This grammatical relationship imposes a discursive economy of epistemic submission.

In this sense, syntax functions as an ideological matrix. By organizing propositions into hierarchies of dominance, it establishes a

relationship between ideas that is also projected onto social subjects: what is subordinate cannot speak for itself—it requires a superior utterance to give it meaning or validity. Hierarchical syntax does not only structure sentences; it structures discursive regimes of authority.

Empirically, this model can be verified in the frequency with which institutional texts present cascading subordinated structures:

> "Those who violate the provisions established by the competent authority under the regulation approved by executive decree shall be sanctioned."

This sentence, with at least four levels of syntactic dependency, reflects an institutional architecture in which each act depends on a higher norm, and where the subject is positioned at the base of a grammaticalized normative pyramid.

From a formal logic perspective, these structures can be modeled as nested implications ($p \rightarrow (q \rightarrow (r \rightarrow s))$), which represent a closed system of conditioning. The more subordinated a statement is, the less semantic autonomy it has and the more functional dependence it carries. This mirrors the way certain subjects are integrated into the institutional order: lacking autonomous agency, they require external justification or authorization.

In totalitarian texts, this hierarchy intensifies. Corpus analysis of Joseph Goebbels' speeches (1933–1943) shows a high frequency of multiple subordination—both causal and final—in structures such as:

> "The Führer's will shall be fulfilled by all, because only through unity of action is the Reich's victory ensured, which represents the necessary order for the existence of the German people."

Here, the syntactic structure faithfully reproduces the ideology: a descending chain in which each element legitimizes the next, and where the collective subject is placed at the bottom.

In such cases, hierarchical syntax functions as a tool for the naturalization of power. Authority is not argued—it is stated through a form that structurally prevents questioning. Grammatical subordination thus becomes political subordination of thought.

4.3 Grammatical authority vs. discursive freedom

The power of language lies not only in what is said, but in the structural conditions that define how it can be said. Grammar—as a formal system of syntactic combination—imposes limits on the organization of discourse: it defines which structures are valid, which combinations are possible, and which elements must appear subordinated, elided, or displaced. This structural dimension of language acts as a form of grammatical authority that, if left unquestioned, restricts discursive freedom even before content is considered.

From a functional perspective, Halliday (2004) distinguishes between high-coding grammars and low-coding grammars. The former are characterized by hierarchical syntax, strict rules of subordination, and tight control of agreement and dependency. This type of grammar, common in legal, administrative, and religious discourse, favors highly regulated forms of expression, where the speaker's discursive initiative is severely constrained.

In contrast, low-coding grammars—more typical of oral or literary registers—allow greater freedom in sentence construction, the use of ellipsis, informal coordination, and semantic modification. This configuration favors more flexible, dialogic, and creative discourse, where relationships between statements are not predetermined by fixed rules but negotiated contextually.

The tension between grammatical authority and discursive freedom becomes particularly visible in institutional writing. Legal language, for instance, not only prescribes what must be done—it prescribes how it must be said. The mandatory use of specific syntactic formulas—agentless passives, impersonals, causal subordinates—turns grammar into a normative protocol that regulates both the content and the form of the utterance. Anyone who does not conform to this protocol is automatically excluded from the space of institutional legitimacy.

In authoritarian discourse, this grammatical authority becomes a form of ideological discipline. As Fairclough (2001) shows, in highly regulated systems, power does not need to intervene in each individual content—it suffices to regulate the acceptable forms of saying. Grammatical hegemony thus becomes a mechanism of exclusion:

certain discourses, structures, or voices become literally grammatically impossible within the dominant regime.

This principle has direct consequences for access to enunciation. In authoritarian educational texts, for example, the use of active constructions, the first person, or the subjective present is discouraged, while impersonal structures that neutralize subjectivity are favored. The subject cannot speak as such: it must enunciate from within the grammar of the system.

Discursive freedom, therefore, cannot be understood as mere expressive variability. It entails an opening of syntactic possibilities, a flexibilization of the structural frameworks that define what is sayable, from where, and with what epistemic status. Recovering discursive freedom means also contesting the authority of normative grammar—not to abolish it, but to politicize it: to make visible that every grammatical rule is also an epistemic rule.

A powerful historical example appears in the work of Victor Klemperer (1947), who documented how the language of the Third Reich imposed not only new words, but new syntactic forms that prevented autonomous thought. In his Lingua Tertii Imperii, he observed that the massive repetition of fixed formulas, the suppression of the subject in propaganda, and the overuse of final subordination emptied everyday discourse of critical meaning. Grammatical authority thus became an instrument of mental domination.

Conversely, in experiences of linguistic resistance—such as poetry under repression, feminist manifestos, or decolonial writings—we find deliberate attempts to dislocate dominant syntax, break subordinate order, reclaim verbal agency, and use "I" where "one" was expected. This grammatical restructuring is not merely aesthetic: it is political, as it disrupts the automatism of discursive authority.

Grammar is not neutral. It is a site of tension between control and creativity, order and rupture, reproduction and transformation. Discursive freedom is only possible where the normative force of grammatical structures is recognized—and contested.

4.4 Simulation of democracy: subordination in fascist propaganda

One of the most sophisticated features of fascist discourse does not lie in the explicit denial of democracy, but in its linguistic simulation. This simulation is often carried out through syntactic structures that appear to suggest participation, deliberation, or inclusion, while in fact reproducing authoritarian hierarchical schemas. Among these structures, subordinate clauses—especially conditionals, finals, and consecutives—play a central role: they legitimize total power through grammatical forms that simulate openness.

The official discourse of German National Socialism provides numerous examples of this strategy. In speeches by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, constructions such as the following are common:

> "If the people remain united, then the Führer will be able to guarantee their future."

> "To preserve the identity of the nation, it is necessary to obey without question."

These subordinate sentences present conditional and final clauses that articulate an asymmetric logical relationship: the fulfillment of a condition (unity, obedience) by the people is required for the action of power, but that action is neither contractual nor reciprocal. The syntactic structure simulates a pact but hides the fact that only one party possesses real agency.

From a formal perspective, these subordinate clauses can be modeled as unidirectional conditionals ($p \rightarrow q$), where p (the people's behavior) is a necessary condition for q (the leader's action), but there is no inverse or logical symmetry. This type of structure is presented as dialogue but functions as command.

Klemperer (1947) identified this technique as a key element of the *Lingua Tertii Imperii* (LTI), in which syntax became a tool of ideological control. The repetitive use of subordinate structures—with infinitives, passives, and impersonals—created a linguistic environment in which grammatical subordination naturalized political subordination. What appeared to be argumentation was, in reality, the syntactic imposition of a closed discursive order.

This phenomenon was not exclusive to Nazism. In the propaganda of the Italian fascist regime led by Benito Mussolini,

communications from the *Ministero della Cultura Popolare* repeated formulas such as:

> "Il popolo deve seguire il Duce per ottenere la grandezza nazionale."
>
> ("The people must follow the Duce to achieve national greatness.")

The final subordinate clause (*per ottenere*) simulates a collective benefit but relegates the action of the people to an instrumental function, subordinated to the leader's purpose. There is no semantic negotiation: there is a teleological logic imposed from the apex of power, grammatically embedded.

Discursively, this strategy aligns with what Van Dijk (1998) calls covert hegemony: power presents itself as if emanating from popular consensus, while it pre-structures the very frameworks that determine what can be considered acceptable or logical. In this context, syntactic subordination functions as structural legitimation of political inequality.

Grammar does not merely transmit ideology—it performs it. The systematic use of subordinate clauses that place the people, the citizen, or the subordinate as conditions of possibility—but not as subjects of discourse—transforms political agency into discursive dependence. The leader appears as the response to a grammatical necessity: constructed as the only one who can occupy the sentence's main position.

This mechanism also appears in the visual and written propaganda of Nazi Germany, where posters, flyers, and schoolbooks included subordinate clauses built around verbs such as "must," "obey," "sacrifice," organized in cause-and-effect sequences:

> "Weil du dem Führer treu bist, wird Deutschland siegen."
>
> ("Because you are loyal to the Führer, Germany will triumph.")

Grammatical causality reinforces the illusion of automatic efficacy through individual sacrifice. The personal act is subsumed within a subordinate chain that legitimizes the regime's action.

A corpus analysis of over 100 speeches by Hitler (1933–1939), processed with TreeTagger and annotated for subordinate structures, shows that more than 55% of complex sentences contain conditional or causal subordinates, and that the grammatical subject of the subordinate clause is the people or the listener, while the subject of the main clause is the leader or the State. This syntactic regularity constructs hierarchy through grammatical dependence.

Therefore, subordination is not merely a stylistic feature. It is a rhetorical strategy that organizes syntax to reflect—and reinforce—the vertical structure of fascist power, while simulating democratic or consensual rationality. Syntax does not contradict authoritarian content—it makes it acceptable by disguising it as logical necessity, historical destiny, or fulfillment of a national duty.

Chapter 5. Deixis and the location of power: who speaks, and from where

5.1 Papal "we", royal "we", subordinate "you"

Deixis—that is, the set of linguistic elements that locate the speaker and listener within the space of the utterance—plays a fundamental role in the grammatical construction of power. In institutional discourse, especially in ecclesiastical, legal, and political contexts, personal pronouns do not merely indicate enunciative roles: they assign ideological positions within a discursive regime. Determining who is the "I," who the "you," and who the "we" ultimately implies establishing a hierarchy of voices and legitimacies.

A paradigmatic case is the use of the pronoun "we" in papal discourse, also known as the majestic plural or pontifical "we." Since the Middle Ages, popes have used the first person plural to issue decrees, define dogma, or pronounce infallible decisions:

"We, with apostolic authority, decree…"

This "we" does not express physical plurality, but institutional plurality: the pope speaks as the head of the ecclesial body, representing the universal Church and apostolic tradition. As Benveniste (1971) notes, this usage is an act of depersonalization of

the speaker, in which the subject is constituted by their institutional place rather than by individual biography.

This strategy has performative effects. The papal "we" does not speak on behalf of the individual, but from a place of ontological authority, as the successor of Peter and bearer of the divine voice. The first grammatical person thus becomes a theological-syntactic figure, whose power does not depend on the content of the utterance, but on its point of enunciation.

In contrast, the use of the second person singular or plural ("you," "ye") in ecclesiastical or state documents is generally reserved for the subordinate, the faithful, or the citizen. Bulls and encyclicals frequently contain formulas such as:

> "We exhort all of you, faithful of the Catholic world, to follow these provisions…"

This use situates the recipient in a position of passive and subordinate reception, aligning their enunciative role with their institutional status. "You" does not address to invite dialogue, but to command obedience. As Althusser (1970) points out, this linguistic interpellation produces the subject as an effect of discourse: by being called upon by authority, the individual is constituted as an obedient receiver.

The pronoun "I," by contrast, is carefully regulated. When it is used, it is usually reserved for moments of direct appeal or more confessional styles. In modern political discourse, its use is mediated by the need to appear accessible or empathetic, but in contexts of high institutional solemnity, it is often avoided or replaced by plural forms:

> "The Government of the Nation has decided…"
>
> "The Supreme Court declares…"

These linguistic turns avoid "I" as a sign of individual decision-making. Instead, grammar is structured to mask the source of authority under nominal or institutional plural forms. The depersonalization of the emitting subject reinforces the legitimacy of the message: it is presented as emanating from a superior entity, not from a fallible individual.

This system of pronominal distribution reproduces a topology of power: the institutional "I" (pontiff, king, president) appears invested with a collective voice; the "we" may function as an inclusive authority (royal, ecclesiastical) or as an abstract community ("we the people"), while the "you" is positioned as a subordinate receiver, without real grammatical agency.

In authoritarian discourse, this structure intensifies. In Francisco Franco's speeches, for example, second-person forms frequently interpellate the Spanish people as an obedient body:

> "It is you who must maintain the unity of Spain."

While the speaker appears as a guide or interpreter of national destiny:

> "We have assumed the mission of restoring the Fatherland."

From a formal semantics perspective, this distribution can be represented as a system of fixed deictic roles:

- I_a = institutional source of authority
- You_r = subordinate recipient, without power of reply
- We_i = legitimizing collective (real or fictitious)

This system of deictic anchoring is not neutral: the assignment of the pronoun determines the possibility of speaking, acting, or commanding within discourse. Deixis, therefore, does not merely locate speaker and listener: it positions them politically and epistemologically.

The grammar of power is constructed in part through these small deictic decisions, which, when repeated systematically, produce an architecture of enunciation in which some always command, and others always listen. What appears to be a pronominal choice is, in fact, a technology of obedience.

5.2 Enunciator and locus of authority

The notion of locus of authority refers to the structural, discursive, and symbolic location from which a statement endowed with normative, epistemic, or political force is uttered. Linguistically, this locus is not defined solely by the grammatical subject, but by the pragmatic configuration of the enunciator, understood as the instance that assumes responsibility for what is said, regardless of its explicit morphological marker.

In the analysis of institutional discourse, the enunciator rarely coincides with a concrete individual. Rather, it is constructed as an institutional or collective function, whose voice is constituted through syntactic formulas that simulate neutrality or generality. Ducrot (1984) distinguishes between the locutor, the empirical agent of textual production, and the enunciator, the fictional instance assumed by the discourse to legitimize what is said. This distinction allows us to understand how power is enunciated not through personal subjects, but through discursive positions that possess authority by virtue of their grammatical existence.

In legal texts, for example, enunciation is depersonalized through impersonal or passive constructions, so that the subject of discourse does not appear as a visible agent:

> "Immediate compliance with the resolution is ordered."

Here, there is no identified speaker. The enunciator is the legal system itself, situated in an abstract locus of authority that requires neither identification nor justification.

The same occurs in ecclesiastical documents, where the enunciator is placed outside any concrete historical time and anchored in apostolic continuity. In the encyclical Humanae Vitae (1968), Pope Paul VI states:

> "The Church is not the author of this moral law, but its faithful interpreter."

This displacement positions the Church as enunciator, but not as author. The locus of authority is not the pope as an individual, but the ecclesiastical institution that discursively positions itself as the

repository of a revealed and eternal truth. The syntactic construction reflects this location beyond contingency, through the use of timeless present, agentless passives, and references to universal principles.

From a semantic-pragmatic perspective, the locus of authority is configured through modal operators and evidentiality strategies. When a text asserts:

> "It is demonstrated that…" or "It is known that…",

the enunciator positions itself in a superior epistemic place, from which it declares what constitutes valid knowledge. These formulas prevent the emergence of any alternative locus—such as that of the critical recipient. The very structure of the utterance closes the circuit of truth by leaving no logical or grammatical space for dissent.

Fairclough (2001) has pointed out that institutional discourses construct an "authorized voice" that is reproduced through specific grammars. These do not merely determine content, but also define from where something can be said. The locus of authority, then, is a grammatically constructed position, where the possibility of stating something as true or legitimate depends not on who says it, but on where it is said from.

This phenomenon intensifies in authoritarian contexts. In Stalin's speeches, the locus of authority appears as impersonal yet omniscient. Phrases such as:

> "The Party has determined that…"

function as unchallengeable utterances. The grammatical subject—the Party—operates as a non-human instance endowed with superior rationality, whose voice cancels any other possibility of enunciation. The syntactic structure does not allow for interlocution, only for acceptance.

In the corpora analyzed, this effect is reproduced at a very high rate in normative and doctrinal texts. In documents from the Reichsgesetzblatt, in rulings by Soviet revolutionary tribunals, and in papal texts, the locus of authority is not linked to empirical subjects, but to syntactic structures that turn language itself into the bearer of legitimacy.

Thus, the institutional enunciator does not need to present itself: it is the grammatical form that guarantees its authority. The choice of voice, the type of sentence, the elision of the agent, and the modalization of content are the mechanisms by which this authorized voice is constructed—apparently neutral, but highly ideological.

Criticizing this form of enunciation involves recognizing that authority is not a substantial attribute of the subject, but a discursive position enabled by grammar. To free discourse from this automatism means not only to dispute content, but to reconfigure the positions from which one may speak.

5.3 "We address the people": deixis in proclamations and encyclicals

Deixis in institutional texts—particularly in political proclamations and ecclesiastical documents—serves a dual function: on the one hand, it spatially and relationally organizes the speaker and the listener within the utterance; on the other, it constructs a symbolic topography of power, determining from what position the speaker speaks, and to whom the message is authoritatively addressed.

In these discursive instances, deictic forms do not merely identify interlocutors: they produce subjects. When a papal document states "we address the faithful of the entire world," it is constructing two asymmetric discursive positions: an enunciating instance that represents the entirety of the Church as a moral authority, and a global but subordinate receiving instance, defined in terms of obedience, listening, or spiritual need.

From a grammatical standpoint, this institutional deixis mainly adopts three forms:

- The use of the inclusive "we" with majestic or institutional value, encompassing the speaker and the apparatus they represent ("We address you…").
- The use of "you" (plural or singular) to name the collective recipient from a vertical position ("It is up to you to follow these rules").

• The absence of explicit reference to the recipient, replaced by impersonal or abstract expressions—"the faithful," "the peoples," "the children of the nation"—which function as generalized markers of subordination.

These forms create pragmatic distance between the one who speaks and the one who receives the message. As Benveniste (1971) observed, deixis not only organizes the time and space of discourse; it establishes the conditions for the exercise of authority. In these cases, the pronoun "we" does not mean horizontal community, but a top-down enunciation that simulates representation while operating as imposition.

A classical example appears in the encyclical Pacem in Terris (John XXIII, 1963), which opens with the formula:

"We address all men of good will."

This deictic act establishes a universal link—but a conditioned one: the Pope speaks to everyone, but only to those already willing to receive the message. The inclusion is rhetorical; subordination is embedded in the very form of address.

The structure is repeated in political proclamations. In Charles de Gaulle's inaugural speech in 1958, after assuming power in the Fifth Republic, we read:

"Frenchmen, I address you as the bearer of your hope."

Here, the pronoun "I" assumes the role of guide, while "you" appears as a collective being addressed from a superior position. Deixis thus articulates an asymmetric community, in which the leader's voice is legitimized by its supposed representativity—even though it admits no reply.

From enunciation theory, Ducrot (1984) explains that these acts of interpellation configure a contract of authority. When addressed by a superior instance, the listener is constituted as an obedient subject: their only grammatical action is to receive the message. Deixis, therefore, does not simply organize communicative relations; it structures the institutional hierarchies of discourse.

Este efecto es especialmente notorio en documentos totalitarios. En proclamas del fascismo italiano, como las de Mussolini a la nación, se encuentran fórmulas como:

> "Italianos, la historia os mira: cumplid vuestro deber."

La deixis convoca, pero no dialoga. El pueblo es llamado en segunda persona, pero desde un punto de enunciación que lo define como masa a disciplinar. El "nosotros" del Estado queda implícito como voz suprema.

Empíricamente, el análisis de un corpus de encíclicas papales (siglos XIX–XXI) y proclamas presidenciales (Francia, Alemania, Italia, Argentina) muestra que más del 70 % de las declaraciones formales de apertura utilizan deixis directa de tipo vertical: "Nos dirigimos", "Me dirijo", "Convocamos". Este patrón revela que la deixis no es una herramienta neutra: es el vehículo privilegiado para marcar quién tiene el derecho de hablar y quién debe escuchar. Así, cuando una proclama se abre con "Nos dirigimos al pueblo", está haciendo algo más que marcar un destinatario: está instaurando una relación de poder sintácticamente codificada. La deixis no describe: funda el orden discursivo, delimita posiciones posibles, legitima la voz institucional y encuadra la obediencia como respuesta esperada. La arquitectura de los pronombres, lejos de ser un simple detalle gramatical, es una gramática del mando.

5.4 Modality and syntactic distance gradients

In linguistics, modality refers to the resources through which the speaker expresses attitudes, degrees of certainty, obligation, or possibility regarding what is being said. In institutional discourses—particularly those that articulate power relations—modality plays a central role in the configuration of discursive authority, as it allows for the construction of a scale of epistemic commitment and distance between the speaker and the content.

Functionally, Halliday (2004) distinguishes between two main types of modality: epistemic modality, which evaluates the degree of certainty of a proposition ("it is likely that," "perhaps," "surely"), and

deontic modality, which relates to obligation or permission ("must," "is mandatory," "is not allowed"). Both are mechanisms by which institutional discourse grades power and the speaker's involvement without abandoning the appearance of objectivity.

A less visible—but equally structural—phenomenon is the existence of syntactic distance gradients that accompany these modal processes. The use of auxiliary verbs, subordinate structures, and nominalizations not only transforms the semantics of the utterance, but reconfigures its syntactic architecture in such a way that the speaker may dissociate from the assertion without relinquishing control over how it is received.

Consider the following three versions of a normative statement:

> We must implement this policy immediately.
>
> It is necessary to implement this policy immediately.
>
> The immediate implementation of this policy is considered necessary.

In the first case, the subject "we" is explicitly committed to the content. In the second, the agent has been removed; the necessity is presented as objective. In the third, the statement has been fully nominalized: there is no modal verb, and responsibility has been displaced to a passive, impersonal evaluation. Each step increases the syntactic distance between the enunciator and the content, and with it, dissolves the possibility of disputing the source of the mandate.

Ducrot (1984) and Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980) have emphasized how these modal operations allow the speaker to construct an ethos of neutrality, projecting the statement as if it came from shared knowledge or an external authority. The result is a syntax that reinforces authority through its very opacity: the more indirect the structure, the greater its potential to impose without resistance.

This phenomenon has direct effects in institutional contexts. In legal texts, it is common for lawmakers or judges to resort to modalized forms in order to dissociate themselves from decisions:

> "It must be understood that the act was legitimate."

"The petition is considered inadmissible."

Both constructions elide the deciding subject, reinforcing the image that the norm acts on its own. Syntactic distance here functions as argumentative shielding: the farther the subject is from the predicate, the more unassailable the utterance appears.

From a logical-linguistic perspective, this relationship can be represented using modal operators over propositions ($\Box p$, $\Diamond p$), but also in terms of structural transformation:

- Direct modal sentence: I believe that p
- Epistemic subordination: it is possible that p
- Evaluative nominalization: the possibility of p

Each form increases the threshold for recipient intervention. The grammatical structure limits the possible forms of reply or questioning.

This effect is also observable in modern papal encyclicals, where phrases such as:

"It is deemed appropriate to recall…"

"It is advisable to point out that…"

function as soft authoritative modalizers, i.e., devices that calibrate the imperative without losing its force. The recipient is confronted with content that cannot be easily disputed because its enunciative origin has been grammatically deactivated.

Empirically, the analysis of a mixed corpus of ecclesiastical, legal, and technical texts (over 100,000 words processed with TreeTagger and manually annotated for modal operators) shows that constructions with greater syntactic distance—in terms of number of subordinate layers, use of passives, and degree of nominalization—systematically correspond to segments of high normative density.

This suggests that modality and syntactic structure do not operate independently, but together: discursive power intensifies where the speaker can control their degree of commitment to the utterance without appearing as the direct bearer of responsibility. In sum, modality in institutional discourse is not limited to modulating

content: it articulates a pragmatic distance between the speaker and what is said, and this distance is syntactically encoded. The farther the enunciator is, the more absolute the statement appears. Thus, authority dissolves into the structure, while content is imposed as objective necessity or tacit wisdom. Grammatical distance becomes a strategy of legitimization.

Chapter 6. Divine Syntax: The Language of God in Human Grammar

6.1 The Impersonal Verb in Sacred Texts

Catholicism, Hebrew for Judaism, and Arabic for Islam—are not merely vehicles of theological transmission. Over the centuries, they have become sacralized linguistic systems, that is, grammatically codified structures whose authority depends not only on what is said, but on how it is said. The linguistic form itself becomes a sign of legitimacy, doctrinal purity, and orthodoxy.

This process can be termed grammaticalization of the sacred: the morphosyntactic, lexical, and phonological configuration of the language acquires religious value per se, to the point that its alteration is perceived not just as a stylistic deviation, but as a doctrinal transgression. Grammar becomes implicit dogma.

6.1 The Impersonal Verb in Sacred Texts

In religious discourse—and particularly in the sacred texts of the major monotheistic traditions—the use of the impersonal verb constitutes a central strategy for constructing a voice of absolute, unquestionable authority, devoid of human agency. Unlike institutional passive constructions, which displace the agent, or normative modality, which gradates certainty, grammatical impersonality in sacred texts directly suppresses the subject category, presenting statements as emanations from the divine order itself.

From a formal standpoint, impersonal verbs are those that do not admit a defined lexical subject, either nominal or pronominal. This can take the form of meteorological impersonals (it rains, it thunders), existentials (there is, there exists), or—more significantly in normative and revelatory contexts—forms without an attributed subject that

articulate a command, ontological affirmation, or warning. In sacred texts, these structures allow the divine voice to manifest without explicit intermediaries, reinforcing its transcendent and absolute character.

A foundational example is found in Genesis 1, where it states:

> "Fiat lux." (Vulgate)
>
> "Let there be light." (Genesis 1:3)

Here, the verbal form fiat (subjunctive passive, third person singular of fieri, "to become" or "to be made") has no subject. The creative command is not attributed to a specific actor: the action appears as self-fulfilled, as if language itself were the vehicle of creation.

This phenomenon is key to the theology of the Word (Logos), particularly in the Christian tradition, where the divine speech act is constitutive of reality. The prologue of the Gospel of John affirms:

> "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

Here, the impersonality of the Word does not imply anonymity, but ontological fullness: divine language needs no subject because it is, in itself, both subject and action.

The Qur'an likewise employs impersonal forms to present divine commands without mediation. A notable example is the revelatory formula kun fa-yakūn (فَيَكُونُ كُنْ), literally:

> "Be, and it is."

This structure presents divine power as an absolute performative: the command has no grammatical recipient, and the execution is immediate. The authority of the verb lies in its impersonal nature: God does not command another; His speaking is equivalent to doing.

From a formal analysis, this type of verb can be represented as a closed propositional function without an external argument:

$$\emptyset \rightarrow p$$

Where p is the affirmed or realized proposition, requiring no external operator. Impersonality here does not represent ambiguity but rather the absolutization of the linguistic act: there is no distinction between saying and making.

This same mechanism appears in the structure of the commandments in the Torah. For example:

"Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13)

The Hebrew form לֹא תִרְצָח (lo tirtsach) is conjugated in the masculine second person singular imperfect (a modal tense), but the subject does not appear independently: it is inferred, universal, and absorbed into the verbal structure. The command appears as natural law, not as personal instruction.

These impersonal constructions reinforce a fundamental theological principle: the distance between the divine speaker and human subjects must not be transgressed by grammar. The impersonal verb ensures that distance: it allows the divine voice to be perceived as autonomous, neither represented nor attributed, but manifested.

From the pragmatics of religious discourse, the impersonal verb also produces a performative effect of total legitimation: what has no subject cannot be disputed. Since one cannot identify who says it, resistance is impossible. In Foucauldian terms, this is a form of enunciation that produces truth without the need for justification.

Empirically, an analysis of biblical corpora (Vulgate Latin, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Reina-Valera), Qur'anic texts (in translation and original Arabic), and liturgical materials (Roman Missal, Sahih hadiths) shows that more than 40% of speech acts with normative or cosmological function are constructed using impersonal or subjectless verbal forms. This regularity is not a stylistic artifact—it is a method of encoding absolute power.

Thus, the impersonal verb in sacred texts not only structures religious enunciation—it founds its discursive ontology. The message is not spoken by someone: it simply is. Grammatical impersonality becomes implicit theology: language needs no mediators because, at the origin, language is God.

6.2 Grammaticalization of the Sacred: Ecclesiastical Latin, Biblical Hebrew, and Qur'anic Arabic

The sacred languages of the three major monotheistic religions—Latin for Roman Catholicism, Hebrew for Judaism, and Arabic for Islam—are not merely vehicles of theological transmission. Over the centuries, they have become sacralized linguistic systems, that is, grammatically codified structures whose authority depends not only on what is said, but on how it is said. The linguistic form itself becomes a sign of legitimacy, doctrinal purity, and orthodoxy.

This process can be termed grammaticalization of the sacred: the morphosyntactic, lexical, and phonological configuration of the language acquires religious value per se, to the point that its alteration is perceived not just as a stylistic deviation, but as a doctrinal transgression. Grammar becomes implicit dogma.

6.2.1. Ecclesiastical Latin: Immutability as Truth

Since late antiquity, Ecclesiastical Latin became consolidated as the official language of the Roman Catholic Church, not merely for historical reasons but because it offered a highly regulated syntactic structure that favored the expression of impersonal authority. Unlike Classical Latin, its ecclesiastical variant stabilizes passive forms, uses periphrases with esse, and moderates the use of emphatic particles, favoring a restrained and solemn style.

For example, in the papal bull Unam Sanctam (Boniface VIII, 1302), we read:

> "Therefore, we declare, we affirm, we define, and we pronounce…"
>
> (Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, definimus et pronuntiamus esse de necessitate salutis.)

The series of verbs in the first-person plural does not refer to a subjective action but encodes the dogmatic force of the statement, which is presented not as stemming from the speaker, but from the position from which it is spoken. The syntactic form functions as a canonical seal. Moreover, the use of passive structures and

impersonalizing forms —such as decretum est, mandatur, praecipitur— reinforces the effect of divine self-legislation in the discourse. The grammatical stability of Latin contributed to its sacralization: the language did not evolve as a living tongue but was fixed as an archive of truth.

6.2.2. Biblical Hebrew: Concatenation, Rhythm, and Absolutism

Biblical Hebrew features a rich verbal morphology and a syntax characterized by sequential parataxis—that is, the linking of clauses through juxtaposition and coordinating conjunctions (waw consecutive), without explicit subordinating markers. This structure produces a dense and solemn narrative rhythm, well-suited for presenting divine acts as inevitable and interlinked.

For example, in Exodus 20 (the Ten Commandments), the imperfect verb forms introduced by conjunctions do not establish logical hierarchies between the precepts: each is presented as an absolute, unconditional, and self-sufficient instruction:

לֹא תִרְצָח (lo tirtsach) – "You shall not kill"

לֹא תִנְאָף (lo tinaf) – "You shall not commit adultery"

Here, grammar projects theology: the direct and unqualified verbal form is equivalent to divine law. The structure allows neither question nor reply; the imperative is not grammatical but ontological.

Biblical Hebrew also uses the verbal root as a theological unit. The triconsonantal roots enable semantic associations that reinforce the doctrinal density of certain terms: kadosh (קָדוֹשׁ – "holy") shares its root with kodesh (קֹדֶשׁ – "holiness") and mikdash (מִקְדָּשׁ – "temple"), creating a grammatical system of sacred meaning

6.2.3. Qur'anic Arabic: Symmetry, Revelation, and Formal Perfection

Classical Arabic—and especially Qur'anic Arabic—perhaps represents the most radical example of the grammaticalization of the

sacred. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the word of God not only in its content but in its exact linguistic form: its syntax, prosody, and morphology are considered inimitable (iʿjāz), and its precise reproduction is a condition of its sanctity.

The Qur'anic text employs a highly symmetrical structure, with intensive use of parallelism, conditional clauses, divine passive verbs, and rhythmic modulations that make the language itself a devotional act. For example:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

"Indeed, the believers are brothers." (Surah 49:10)

The copulative structure is simple, but the use of innamā (a restrictive emphatic particle) and the marked syntactic order emphasize the revelatory authority of the phrase. Moreover, many āyāt (verses) use perfect verb forms for future actions, reinforcing the idea of immutable divine destiny:

قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ (quḍiya al-amru) – "The matter has been decided."

Even when the action refers to the future, the past tense reinforces its theological inevitability. This device, called the "prophetic perfect," is a grammatical manifestation of divine time.

The Arabic grammatical tradition (Sībawayh, al-Jurjānī) codified these forms as expressions of naẓm—the perfect order of the Qur'an—and viewed its syntax not merely as functional but as a carrier of linguistic miracle (muʿjiza).

The grammaticalization of the sacred implies that linguistic form does not merely transmit the message but is part of the message. In all three traditions, sacred language becomes a spiritual technology: the medium through which divinity manifests, and whose alteration would imply a loss or corruption of revealed truth. These stabilized grammatical systems are not the result of natural linguistic evolution but of liturgical selection, canonization, and doctrinal use. In each case, grammar operates as a boundary: what is grammatically correct coincides with what is theologically true. Syntax is, quite literally, orthodoxy.

6.3 The Grammatical Construction of Infallibility

Infallibility, understood in its canonical sense as the incapacity to err in matters of faith or morals, is not merely a theological category—it is also a grammatical construction. Its effectiveness lies not only in the authority that supports it, but in the linguistic form through which it is articulated. The infallible discourse is designed to close interpretation, erase contingency, and eliminate the possibility of objection at the syntactic level itself. Therefore, analyzing its grammatical form not only allows us to describe how it manifests but also to understand how it produces its effects of truth.

6.3.1 The Syntactic Formula of Infallibility

The most canonical example of an infallible statement is found in the papal bull Ineffabilis Deus (1854) by Pius IX, which proclaims the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In this document, the dogmatic formula includes an institutionalized verbal chain in the first-person plural ("we declare, we pronounce, we define"), followed by a perfect affirmative clause ("has been revealed") and a categorical normative indication ("must be believed"). This sequence is not accidental: each part fulfills a syntactic function intended to ensure that the content is perceived as definitive, complete, and obligatory.

The use of verbs in the perfect indicative mood eliminates the possibility of modalization or hypothesis. The doctrine is not something that "might" be believed or that "ought" to be accepted—it must be believed. The subject of the verb, moreover, is an institutional we representing the Church in its highest magisterial authority. Thus, the statement appears simultaneously as revelation, judgment, and command.

6.3.2 The Grammatical Closure of the Dogmatic Statement

Infallibility requires a structure that allows no reversal, negation, or reinterpretation from alternative positions. To achieve this, discourse relies on constructions such as perfect passive forms ("has been defined"), dogmatic nominalizations ("the doctrine of…"), and causal clauses that refer to transcendental sources ("because it has been

revealed," "according to apostolic tradition"). These structures not only convey solemnity but also guarantee a type of total syntactic closure, in which the content is enclosed within a sealed formal frame, without interpretive fissures.

In contrast, non-infallible texts such as apostolic exhortations or public catecheses, though doctrinal, exhibit verbs in non-perfective forms, moderate subjectivation ("as pastors, we propose"), and frequent use of modal formulas such as "it is appropriate that," "it is desirable that." This difference is not accidental: infallibility requires a grammar of imposition, not of suggestion.

6.3.3 Infallibility and Syntactic Logic

From a logical-linguistic point of view, the infallible statement can be represented as a proposition under a strong modal operator ($\Box p$), with the added condition that its negation is not logically possible ($\neg \Diamond \neg p$). This logical form is supported by a grammar that does not admit subjunctives, conditionals, interrogatives, or alternative forms. One does not say "if it were true that…", nor "it could be interpreted that…", nor "it may be asked whether…". Dogma is not articulated: it is declared.

This is reinforced through a series of rhetorical resources with structural correlates: accumulation of assertions without alternative connectors, deontic structures without agents (such as "it is obligatory to believe"), and the repeated use of gnomic present tense, which converts the proposition into an atemporal truth.

6.3.4 Infallibility as the Grammar of Absolute Power

The final effect of this grammatical device is the production of discourse that requires no external justification. The proposition is presented as valid in itself, not by argumentation that supports it. In Fairclough's terms (2001), this is a "grammar of closure," in which meaning is presented as self-evident, necessary, and unalterable. Authority no longer needs to speak: it is heard through the very form of the sentence. Thus, infallibility is not only a theological attribute but a discursive function enabled by a rigorous syntactic configuration.

Form creates dogma: without that form, the content would not acquire the absolute authority it claims. As a result, language ceases to be a space for negotiation and becomes an act of imposition: it is not spoken to open dialogue, but to close it.

6.4 Grammar and Miracle: Authority Without Logic

Religious tradition has linked language not only to truth but also to miracle. In this context, the authority of certain utterances does not derive from their logical coherence or empirical verifiability, but from their absolute performative power, which is grounded in an autonomous grammatical operation. The miracle, as a rupture of the natural order, finds its syntactic counterpart in linguistic constructions that suspend the logic of ordinary discourse and yet remain normative, unquestionable, and even sacred. In this sense, the grammar of the miraculous does not obey the principle of sufficient reason but a principle of authority manifested as form.

The most frequent structure of this authority without logic is the unconditional imperative. When the Qur'an proclaims kun fa-yakūn — "Be, and it is" — there is no argument, no cause, no logical chain: the verb executes. The verb tense is simultaneous with the act, and causal subordination is abolished. The discourse does not persuade: it creates reality. This structure parallels the sacramental formulas in Catholic liturgy, especially in the Eucharistic consecration: "Hoc est enim corpus meum." The sentence does not seek to inform but to transform: through the very enunciation, matter changes its ontological status. Here, the miracle is linguistic: the grammatical form does not represent the divine act—it performs it.

This phenomenon aligns with what has been defined in the philosophy of language as the perfect performative act. Searle (1969) and Austin (1962) distinguished between constative and performative utterances; however, in religious discourse, the performative does not require external felicity conditions. It is enough that it is uttered in the correct form for its effect to be absolute. Grammar thus becomes a technology of the sacred: it is the device that enables language to act beyond the rational limitations of discourse.

In biblical texts, the miracle is also presented through verbal formulas with syntactically simple but semantically impossible structures. In Luke 7:14, Jesus says to the dead young man: "Arise." The sentence is direct, transitive, without mediation. There is no rhetorical strategy or mitigation of the act. The imperative verb has as its object a lifeless body. Logically, the utterance is absurd; theologically, it is effective because it is grammatically sealed as an absolute command. Here, the miracle occurs to the extent that it is accepted that the verb does not describe: it institutes.

This type of use is not exclusive to the Judeo-Christian tradition. In Vedic Hinduism, mantras are structured as phonetic-grammatical sequences whose correct recitation possesses supernatural effects. The Rigveda attributes causal power to language pronounced with correct metric, accent, and grammatical cadence. The grammatically perfect utterance does not represent the divine: it invokes and contains it.

These structures operate outside formal logic. They cannot be reduced to the propositional structure $p \rightarrow q$, nor analyzed by first-order logic. Their force lies not in the relationship between utterance and world but in the absolute coincidence between utterance and event. The miracle does not need grammatical explanation: it requires pure linguistic form. In this sense, the miraculous is a mode of discourse that erases the difference between syntax and ontology.

Thus, authority without logic is not a failure of language but a deliberate operation, deeply encoded in sacred grammars. The fact that these constructions are repeated over centuries, in liturgical texts, revealed scriptures, and devotional formulas, is not the result of empty tradition, but of structural understanding: only the linguistic form repeated with exactness is capable of producing the supernatural. Therefore, when Catholic ritual forbids modification of liturgical formulas, or when Islam considers any translation of the Qur'an invalid for purposes of prayer, it is not merely about preserving language: it is about safeguarding a grammar of miracle, where syntactic alteration equals heresy.

In short, religious discourse establishes a form of authority that does not need logic because it is replaced by grammatical form. The sentence is not explained: it is pronounced. Truth is not reasoned: it is

enunciated with formal fidelity. Grammar, in its purest form, becomes miracle.

7.1 Normative Structures in Codes and Judgments

Legal language is one of the most perfected manifestations of the grammar of power. It not only regulates behavior through the normative content of laws but also imposes a way of speaking—and thinking—that reproduces hierarchies, assigns functions, and precisely delineates the conditions for the validity of enunciative acts. In this sense, legal language is not a simple technical application of ordinary language, but a highly codified subsystem that produces real effects through specific normative grammatical structures.

The typical legal sentence does not present itself as an opinion, wish, or recommendation: it is imposed as a mandate or a binding description of the legal state of affairs. Its syntax is formal, rigid, and often opaque, marked by the systematic use of impersonal forms, agentless passives, deontic periphrases ("shall be," "is established"), and normative conditional structures ("in the event that..., it shall apply..."). This structure transforms language into an operational instrument: to speak in law is to act.

From a functional perspective, Halliday (2004) has pointed out that legal language operates within a "grammar of obligation," which maximizes deontic modality and minimizes the subjectivity of the emitter. Thus, modal verbs such as must, may, shall, and expressions of normative necessity (is required, is appropriate) are ubiquitous in codes, rulings, and decrees. This modal recurrence is not rhetorical: it establishes the authority of the text, turns the reader into the recipient of a mandate, and replaces individual judgment with the mechanical application of the rule.

In a typical judicial ruling, for example, one reads:

> "It is appropriate to declare the claim admissible."
>
> "The appeal must be dismissed."
>
> "The defendant is sentenced to..."

In all these cases, the agent is absent. The judge, as a concrete speaker, is replaced by an institutional instance that presents itself as the executor of the law. The impersonal verb or passive reflects a structure of de-responsibilization of the subject. The illocutionary force of the statement does not depend on the who, but on the form: the ruling has value because it adopts the grammatical form of the law.

This principle is accentuated in legal codes. The language of a legal article admits neither ambiguity nor subjectivity. For example, Article 139.1 of the Spanish Penal Code states:

> "He who kills another shall be punished, as a murderer, with a prison sentence of fifteen to twenty-five years."

The structure is carefully constructed: the subject is generically defined (he who...), the verb is in the future indicative mood (shall be punished), and the punitive content is clear, closed, and mandatory. Grammar here is not at the service of explanation but of normative classification.

From the point of view of formal logic, this type of statement can be represented as a legal conditional implication:

$$p \rightarrow \Box q$$

Where p is the criminal conduct and q the obligatory punitive consequence. It is not a possibility but a structured and foreseen consequence.

At the grammatical level, this logic is encoded in recurrent constructions:

Conditional subordinates that set exceptions or application frameworks.

Nominalizations that turn verbs into abstract legal categories (the commission of the act, the application of the rule).

Additive coordinations that enumerate conditions without hierarchy (and, or, nor), requiring linear reading but producing semantically exclusive effects.

Additionally, the massive use of periphrases with the verb must or to be + participle introduces obligation in an unappealable manner.

The authority does not reside in the judge or legislator as persons: it is embedded in the grammatical structure of the legal text, which transforms language into a direct bearer of institutional coercion.

An analysis of a 50,000-word corpus from civil, criminal, and labor codes of Spain, Argentina, and Mexico reveals that more than 65% of complex sentences are built upon deontic normative structures, with a predominance of impersonals, passives, and nominalizations. This data empirically supports the hypothesis that the grammaticalization of punishment is not merely legal, but also linguistic. Thus, law is not only learned: it is written with a specific syntax that structures the world of what is possible, permissible, and forbidden. The authority of the law lies largely in the way it is said, and that form—in its repetition, rigidity, and opacity—produces a discourse that imposes before it argues. The grammar of law is, ultimately, a grammar of control.

7.2 Reduction of the Subject to a Procedural Object

In legal language, the human subject—the one to whom the law is applied, who is charged with a crime, or who is granted a right—does not always appear as a grammatical subject. Quite frequently, grammar transforms that person into the object of a normative action, relegating them to a syntactically subordinate position, without agency or voice. This reduction is not a stylistic accident of legal writing: it is part of the internal functioning of legal discourse, in which language actively contributes to the de-subjectification of the individual, turning them into a procedural object.

A criminal ruling does not say "the judge decides that Juan killed and must go to prison," but rather "Juan is sentenced to...," "the defendant is imposed the sentence of...," "the accused has been found guilty." These impersonal or passive constructions suppress the institutional agent (the judge, the court) and at the same time reconfigure the involved individual into a passive grammatical function, whose only mark is being the recipient of punitive action.

From the perspective of functional linguistic theory, Halliday (2004) distinguishes between experiential roles of the subject: agent, patient, goal. Law—and particularly, the sentence—systematically

displaces the subject to the role of patient, object, or goal of verbal or material processes. The accused does not speak nor act: they are evaluated, considered, sanctioned. The linguistic form thus reflects the judicial process as a machine that operates on bodies and names without needing to justify the act beyond its grammatical formula.

This logic of de-subjectification is intensified in the grammar of legal codes. Article 35 of the Argentine Penal Code states:

> "Life imprisonment or reclusion shall entail as an accessory effect absolute disqualification for the duration of the sentence."

No individual is present: only "reclusion" appears as the grammatical subject. The affected person disappears even as a lexical reference. The sanction is imposed as the logical result of an autonomous legal category, not as a decision regarding a concrete human subject.

From the logic of discourse, this implies a process of legal reification. The subject, as bearer of rights or responsibilities, is replaced by a technical or administrative figure: the convict, the defendant, the sentenced. These nominalized forms eliminate all biographical dimension. Language ceases to speak of persons and begins to speak of categories—that is, of normative objects.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the use of structures such as:

> "The appropriate security measure is imposed on the defendant."

> "It is appropriate to order the detention of the accused."

> "The time spent in pretrial detention shall be credited to the convict."

In all these cases, the grammatical subject is neither the judge, the State, nor the law. The subject is absent or impersonal. The affected individual appears as an oblique complement (to the convict, to the defendant) who passively receives the action without discursive right to intervene.

In terms of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (2001) refers to this phenomenon as structural reification: the process by which subjects are represented as things, processes, or collateral effects of an institutional structure. Law does not speak of persons but of abstract figures to which automatic consequences are applied. This operation is not merely grammatical: it is ideological and political, because it eliminates the ethical dimension of the judicial decision by framing it as a technical execution.

The discursive effects of this strategy are not neutral. By eliminating the institutional agent and turning the individual into a procedural object, the possibility of dialogue or appeal is closed off from the very form of the sentence. Language no longer allows questioning the justice of the ruling—only executing it.

A corpus analysis of more than 200 judicial sentences in Spanish (from Argentina, Mexico, and Spain) shows that in 83% of cases, the grammatical subject is the measure, the penalty, or the typified conduct, while the defendant appears in an oblique position or is entirely elided. This regularity confirms that depersonalization is not an exception of legal style, but a codified syntactic strategy of power.

Thus, the grammar of law not only structures the law itself: it also structures the place of subjects within the process. Justice is imposed, grammatically, from above, without needing to mention who exercises it nor allowing those who receive it to speak. In this model, the individual is nothing more than a replaceable variable in a legal formula that is executed as a syntactic function. Subjectivity disappears, and with it, the possibility of reply

7.3 Punishment as a Subordinate Statement

Punishment, as a legal category and institutional action, is not formulated in legal language as an arbitrary decision, but as a logical and subordinate consequence. It is not presented as the result of a will, but as the inevitable execution of a previously established norm. This discursive construction, which cloaks institutional choice in necessity, is recurrently manifested through subordinate syntactic structures that justify, obscure, or automate the sanction.

From a grammatical perspective, this implies that punishment—the sentence, the conviction, the sanction—does not appear as the main declarative proposition, but rather as a clause subordinate to a cause, condition, fact, or superior rule. Instead of saying "the judge sentences", the ruling states: "Given that the facts have been proven," "By application of Article X," "It is appropriate to impose the penalty of..." That is, syntax frames punishment as a grammatical derivative, not as an act of will.

This phenomenon is systematically observable in criminal and administrative rulings. The formulas "it is appropriate to impose" or "must be applied" function as modalized and subordinate structures that eliminate the direct agency of the court and shift responsibility to an abstract normative authority. Functionally, Halliday (2004) notes that these depersonalized and subordinate structures produce what he calls a "grammar of technical legality," that is, a discourse that self-regulates grammatically and, in doing so, simulates objectivity and necessity.

Punishment, then, is not morally or philosophically justified in the text: it is formulated as a dependent grammatical clause, often without a subject, frequently without an active verb, and with the focus placed on the automatic fulfillment of the law. The punitive action is constructed as the result of a causal, final, or conditional subordinate clause. For example:

- "Due to the commission of a serious offense, the sanction of... is imposed."
- "By virtue of the provisions of Article 52, the following will apply..."
- "In order to preserve institutional order, it is hereby resolved..."

All these constructions grammatically subordinate the sanction to a cause, norm, or purpose, producing the impression that the penalty is not a human decision but a logical consequence of language itself.

From a discourse analysis perspective, this phenomenon can be understood as a structural legitimization procedure. Fairclough (2001) explains that, in institutional systems, authority is exercised more

effectively when it does not appear as a voluntary act but as the fulfillment of a logic. In this case, the syntactic subordination of punishment reinforces the illusion of legal automatism. It is not a judge who punishes: the penalty is "imposed."

This strategy also entails a form of concealment. By not placing punishment in the position of the main clause, its content is relegated to a secondary grammatical plane. This is clearly seen in legal texts where the sanction appears at the end of a long subordinated period, or even as a footnote, such as:

> "Noncompliance with the aforementioned conditions, duly verified, shall give rise—if applicable—to the sanctions provided in Article 98."

Here, the sanction is placed on the syntactic and discursive margins, disguised as a secondary legal possibility, even though its practical effects are central. This grammatical technique allows punishment to be announced without appearing threatening, and enforced without appearing as a decision.

From a formal-logical perspective, the subordinated punishment fits a logic of the type:

$$(p \land r) \rightarrow \Box q$$

Where p is a behavior, r a norm, and q the mandatory punitive consequence. Grammar translates this formula into structures like "if p occurs, according to r, then q must happen," with no need to express subjects, judgments, or motivations.

Judicial corpus analysis confirms this trend. In a sample of over 100 criminal rulings in Spanish, more than 70% of punitive statements are constructed as causal, conditional, or modal subordinate clauses. Punishment rarely appears as an autonomous assertion. Subordination here is a technique for the invisibilization of legitimate violence. In conclusion, the grammar of punishment does not formulate it as will, but as effect. It is not the judge who punishes: it is the linguistic structure which, through carefully constructed subordinates, transforms the punitive act into a function of language. Thus, the penalty is imposed not only by law but by the sentence itself.

7.4 Syntax of Control in the Modern State

The modern state does not exert control solely through policing, surveillance, or the penal system—it also does so through language, particularly in its institutional written form, which configures the relationship between ruler and ruled through specific grammatical structures. This syntax of control manifests in laws, decrees, forms, administrative resolutions, regulations, rulings, minutes, and all kinds of bureaucratic texts that regulate social life under the appearance of neutrality. Its effectiveness lies precisely in the fact that it does not seem to express authoritarian will, but a rational organization of society.

Grammatically, this form of control is articulated through three main resources: the intensive use of impersonal and passive sentences, causal and conditional subordination as a form of normative automation, and abstract nominalization that depersonalizes processes and reduces human agency. These mechanisms not only organize the content of discourse: they organize the relationship between subjects and institutions, making the source of power invisible and distributing grammatical roles that legitimize asymmetry.

State discourse is enunciated from a position of formal anonymity. Expressions such as "It is established that...", "The measure is rendered ineffective...", "The opening of the case is authorized..." eliminate all reference to the institutional emitter. Instead of saying "the Ministry decides," the text says "it is decided." This systematic use of the passive reflects a fundamental principle of bureaucratic control: authority is exercised without a face.

This strategy is not merely stylistic. The elimination of the grammatical subject allows power to be exercised without assuming explicit responsibility. The decision is presented as the product of normative rationality, not as the action of an official or a political will. In this way, language becomes the instrument of impersonalized coercion, effective precisely because of its appearance of neutrality.

Subordination also plays a central role. Most administrative texts articulate their provisions through conditional, causal, or final structures that connect the act to a higher norm or to an abstract purpose:

"In compliance with the provisions..."

"For the purpose of ensuring transparency..."

"Due to the proven circumstances..."

In all cases, the institutional action (punishing, authorizing, denying) does not appear as a free act, but as the logical result of a structural condition. Grammatical subordination thus reproduces the hierarchical structure of the state apparatus, where each action is justified by reference to a higher one, and where the citizen is relegated to the role of passive recipient of the order.

Nominalization decisively contributes to this effect. Instead of saying "the official decides to review the case," the text will state "the review of the case has been ordered." The verb becomes a noun, and with it, the concrete action is erased. As Halliday (2004) explains, this process transforms events into things and subjects into secondary operators. In the syntax of control, the State never acts: it is executed through structures that no longer appear human.

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this model corresponds to a logic of governmentality, in Foucault's sense: governance is not carried out through explicit mandates, but through the production of enunciations that regulate behaviors, perceptions, and conditions of existence. Institutional language, in its most mundane form, acts as a device of power because it organizes the world as if no alternative were possible. Impersonal, subordinated, nominalized syntax configures obedience as the natural form of relating to the State.

Empirically, a corpus of administrative resolutions and regulations in Spanish (from Spain, Argentina, and Chile) shows that more than 80% of normative acts are formulated using agentless passive sentences, and that the presence of personal pronouns or explicit institutional subjects is below 5%. This evidence confirms that control is not manifested through direct imposition, but through the grammatical form that the decision adopts.

In summary, the power of the modern state is written into the form of its texts. It does not need to raise its voice: it suffices to construct sentences. The syntax of control not only administers law: it administers legitimacy, obedience, and silence.

8.1 What Is a Totalitarian Grammar?

A totalitarian grammar is not merely a set of linguistic norms used in authoritarian regimes. It is, more profoundly, a way of structuring discourse that suppresses ambiguity, inhibits dissent, and produces obedience through the very form of the sentence. This grammar does not impose its effects through explicit threats but through the syntactic construction of a closed reality in which everything that can be said — and therefore thought — is already pre-coded by power.

The term may seem metaphorical, but it rests on formal foundations. In totalitarian language, as Victor Klemperer (1947) observed in his analysis of the Third Reich, it is not only the lexicon that changes (with the introduction of ideological terms like Volk, Führer, feindlich), but also the syntax: it becomes impoverished, simplified, imperative, and repetitive. Totalitarianism does not just control which words are used, but how phrases are structured, who may speak, which verbs are permitted, and which utterances are proscribed.

A totalitarian grammar, therefore, can be defined by several structural characteristics. First, the systematic use of agentless passive voice, which allows coercive actions to be expressed without assigning responsibility. Phrases like "the relocation has been ordered" or "intervention was necessary" eliminate all reference to a human actor. The decision appears as a historical or legal automatism, not as a deliberate act. Second, the nominalization of processes: instead of narrating actions with verbs, the discourse speaks of "the execution of the decree", "the defense of the homeland", "the purification of the national body." By converting action into a noun, its temporality is deactivated and the statement becomes irrefutable.

Third, we observe the massive subordination of clauses, where every assertion is dependent upon a superior proposition that legitimizes its existence. The result is a hierarchical discourse in which propositions have no semantic autonomy, but derive their meaning from a pyramidal structure of dependence. This grammatical

construction reproduces — and naturalizes — the political order of totalitarianism: what is subordinated in language is also subordinated in the state.

Finally, totalitarian grammar favors the unconditional imperative, without appeal or explanation. The grammatical command is not presented as dialogue, but as the sole possible form of linguistic existence. This is reinforced by the elimination of the subjunctive, the conditional, and interrogative forms — all those grammatical moods that allow for doubt, possibility, or critique. The result is a monological discourse, with no syntactic alternatives.

Of course, we are not speaking of "totalitarian languages" in an absolute sense. German, Russian, Italian — the languages of the classic totalitarian regimes of the 20th century — are not intrinsically oppressive. But in certain historical and political contexts, their available structures were selected, fixed, and repeated until they formed a closed, authoritarian, and operational model of language. Grammar, in those cases, was not a neutral tool: it became an ideological battlefield.

Theoretically, this idea aligns with what Barthes (1972) called the discourse of mythology: a type of language that erases its own construction to appear natural. Totalitarian grammar produces that effect: it builds an artificial order but presents it as self-evident, necessary, and irreversible. The regime does not impose itself only with weapons — it imposes itself with sentences.

This understanding allows us to distinguish between authoritarian discourse and totalitarian grammar. The former can be present in any context: in a military order, a moral doctrine, a political slogan. The latter, however, requires a syntactic systematization that eliminates polysemy, deliberation, and agency — that is, one that transforms language into a structural tool of control. It is here that grammar becomes a technology of power.

In sum, a totalitarian grammar is one that, in the service of a political project of total domination, structures language in such a way that it prevents dissent before it can be formulated, suppresses otherness before it emerges, and closes off history within a syntax without fissures.

8.2 Syntactic Structures in Nazi Discourse (Based on Real Corpora)

The effectiveness of Third Reich discourse cannot be understood solely through the ideological content of its messages, nor even through its emotive or symbolic rhetoric. A crucial part of its performative power lies in its grammatical structure, carefully selected, repeated, and standardized across all levels of the propaganda apparatus: official speeches, posters, educational materials, print media, and radio broadcasts. The analysis of these structures, based on authentic documentary corpora, makes it possible to identify the syntactic patterns through which the regime produced obedience, uniformity, and exclusion through language itself.

The speeches of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Heinrich Himmler share a set of syntactic features that constitute a common grammar of Nazism. The first of these features is the massive use of agentless passive constructions, especially in reference to repressive, logistical, or administrative actions. Thus, instead of affirming "the police arrested the opposition," the speeches say: "Cleansing was carried out," "Undesirable elements were evacuated," "Order has been restored." These passives remove all reference to the executor, shifting the focus to the action as if it occurred on its own, almost naturally. This strategy eliminates the perpetrator's agency and legitimizes institutional violence as a necessary outcome.

The second feature is the extensive use of abstract nominalizations, which transform historical events into substantive entities devoid of time, place, and subjects. Nazi discourse does not say: "the German people were attacked," but rather: "the threat to the Reich must be eradicated." Verbs like protect, cleanse, punish are turned into nouns: protection, purification, punishment. The subject disappears, the verb freezes, and the language is transformed into a catalog of self-sufficient ideological concepts. This syntactic operation erases speaker responsibility and turns discourse into a machine that functions on its own, without visible human intervention.

A third element is the reduction of syntactic variability. Nazi speeches tend to limit the use of the subjunctive, conditional, and rhetorical questioning. Sentences are constructed predominantly in the

indicative mood, present or simple future tense, with linear syntax and hierarchical subordination. This produces an effect of irrefutable certainty — authority that allows no objection. Statements are framed as if they describe a natural order, not political decisions. In this way, grammar functions as a device of semantic closure.

Quantitative analysis of a corpus of over 150,000 words taken from official speeches (1933–1942), processed with TreeTagger and manually annotated by sentence type, shows that more than 70% of complex structures correspond to final, causal, or consecutive subordinate clauses, with a clear absence of alternative structures, open conditionals, or questions. Subordinate clauses are used to articulate state action as teleological: "To preserve the future of the Reich, it is necessary…", "Due to the betrayal, action was taken…" The cause legitimizes the action, but both are anchored in a closed grammatical order.

A paradigmatic example appears in Hitler's speech of January 30, 1939:

> "If international finance Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the Earth, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

The conditional sentence encases a threat in the appearance of logic. It is not the regime that chooses to exterminate — the grammar of the utterance presents annihilation as the inevitable result of an external cause. It is a structure that deactivates responsibility by placing the most violent content in the consequent of a hypothetical conditional. In modal logic, this translates into a strategic conditional implication:

> $p \rightarrow q$, where p is imputed to the enemy, and q is presented as an objective necessity.

In the leaflets of the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, this grammar becomes even more rigid. Sentences are short, imperative, with collective subjects and no modal verbs. Frequent examples include: "The Führer commands. The people

obey." or "Unity is our strength. Doubt is treason." Here, language does not argue — it commands through the sentence structure itself.

In sum, analysis of the syntactic structures of Nazi discourse reveals that the regime built a grammar of domination functioning as a technology of thought. The passive erased the actor, nominalization reified ideology, hierarchical subordination closed off debate, and imperative simplicity excluded doubt. Language was not merely a vehicle of propaganda: it was a grammatical machine of obedience.

8.3 Language, Bureaucracy, and Extermination: The Administrative Passive

One of the most chilling characteristics of the Third Reich apparatus was its ability to produce death through bureaucratic language—via grammatical structures that stripped acts of extermination of any appearance of direct violence. Instead of overt hate speech, many of the logistical decisions that led to the annihilation of millions were written in neutral administrative language, using impersonal structures, agentless passives, and functional syntax. This mode of expression, analyzed both linguistically and historically, constitutes one of the most extreme examples of how grammar can become a technology of institutional crime.

The central grammatical device of this modality was the administrative passive, a construction that describes actions without identifying the human agents who carry them out. In memoranda, orders, and forms, the most lethal actions—deportations, executions, denial of rights, forced labor—were presented through passive verbal forms, with undefined or absent grammatical subjects. Examples from the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) archive include:

"Die Evakuierung ist durchzuführen."

("The evacuation must be carried out.")

"Juden sind zu registrieren."

("Jews must be registered.")

"Die Maßnahme ist vollzogen worden."

("The measure has been executed.")

None of these sentences include an agent. They do not specify who evacuates, who registers, who executes. The action is expressed as a technical necessity or a completed state. The event has occurred, or must occur—but without anyone appearing as a grammatically responsible subject.

From the perspective of functional linguistics, Halliday (2004) refers to these as agentless passives, structures that allow for the depersonalization of action in contexts where identifying the actor might be sensitive, inconvenient, or—as in this case—politically dangerous. In the Nazi apparatus, this grammatical form was elevated to bureaucratic standard. Grammar was used to mask homicidal intent in a chain of impersonal decisions which, combined, produced extermination.

This administrative passive was not confined to secret or technical documents. It also appears in correspondence between high-ranking Nazis. In a 1942 letter from Heinrich Himmler to Reinhard Heydrich, we read:

> "Die Angelegenheit der Sonderbehandlung ist geregelt."
>
> ("The matter of the special treatment has been settled.")

The expression Sonderbehandlung ("special treatment") was the bureaucratic euphemism for systematic murder. The passive structure avoids naming the killers, and the verb regeln ("to regulate") frames the act as a mere matter of administrative procedure. Murder is presented as compliance with regulations, not as a crime.

Documentary analysis of the Wannsee Conference Protocol (1942)—a key text in the planning of the Holocaust—shows that 58% of the planned actions for the "Final Solution" are formulated in the passive voice. In phrases like "Juden sind dem Arbeitsprozess zuzuführen" ("Jews are to be integrated into the labor process") or "Überschüssige Personen werden entsprechend behandelt" ("Surplus persons will be treated accordingly"), the syntax erases the executing subject and transforms the massacre into a procedure.

The most disturbing feature of this linguistic form is its ability to naturalize horror. Instead of explicit language of violence, a rational,

orderly grammar is used to conceal content behind form. As Arendt (1963) observed in her analysis of Eichmann's trial, the accused did not speak like a murderer, but like a bureaucrat obeying structures. His language—full of passives, gerunds, and modal periphrases—was a precise reflection of how the Nazi state delegated responsibility for its crimes to the anonymity of its grammar.

From a formal-logical perspective, these structures can be represented as:

$$\emptyset \longrightarrow p$$

where p is a proposition in passive voice without an agent—an action without a subject. In discursive terms, this is equivalent to enunciation without enunciator, where the effect (deportation, execution) occurs as a linguistic fact without responsibility.

Empirically, analysis of over 300 documents from the Nazi administration (1939–1944), processed using corpus linguistics techniques, confirms that more than 60% of repressive actions are stated in passive voice or impersonal nominal constructions. This suggests that the state apparatus not only planned the crime but deliberately drafted it using grammatical forms that ensured its moral invisibility. Thus, the grammar of the administrative passive was not a stylistic accident of the Third Reich—it was a functional component of its genocidal apparatus. The form of the sentence was part of the crime. Extermination was carried out not only with orders, trains, and gas chambers—but also with subjectless sentences.

8.4 Comparison with Stalinist and Italian Fascist Syntax

Although the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century—Nazism, Stalinism, and Italian Fascism—shared certain ideological foundations such as cult of the leader, absolute centralization of power, and systematic use of propaganda, their institutional discourses adopted different syntactic strategies, reflecting not only divergent political styles but also contrasting visions of language as a technology of domination.

The Soviet case, particularly under Joseph Stalin, presents an official grammar deeply shaped by the logic of the party-state. Unlike

Nazi discourse—which leans toward closed, imperative, and passive syntax—Stalinist language deploys a densely subordinated syntax, tending to conceal the subject through impersonal structures but with a high degree of conceptual abstraction and ideological nominalization.

In Politburo reports or Sovnarkom resolutions, one finds formulas like:

> "As a consequence of the Trotskyist deviation, necessary measures have been taken."
>
> "It is necessary to strengthen revolutionary vigilance against ideological sabotage."

These constructions use causal or final subordination and impersonal periphrases ("measures have been taken," "it is necessary"), which transform acts of political repression into neutral actions justified by prior conditions or broader ideological frameworks. The agent is diluted, but syntax retains a hierarchical relationship between cause and punishment. As with Nazism, punishment appears as logical sequence—not as a decision.

Soviet language institutionalized the use of abstract terms like anti-Soviet element, counterrevolutionary, enemy of the people, and integrated them into fixed syntactic phrases. These syntactic actants do not refer to specific individuals, but to ideological functions that enable structural violence—analyzed by Voloshinov (1929) in his studies on Bolshevik ideological discourse.

On the other hand, Italian Fascist discourse, especially under Benito Mussolini, showed a more direct relationship between subject and action. Il Duce frequently presented himself as the primary agent of discourse: "Io decido, io guido, io combatto." This recurring use of the first-person singular pronoun, far from concealing power, displays and concentrates it in a charismatic voice, imposing itself through both content and syntactic structure.

The regime's press, especially Il Popolo d'Italia, reproduces a more direct syntax, with short sentences, parallel structure, and oratorical tone:

> "Italy marches. The people listen. The Duce leads."

"Discipline is our strength. War is our will."

This grammatical economy, based on simple copulation and additive coordination, produces a rhythmic effect that reinforces the political message through syntax that is both musical and categorical. The content is not negotiable because the form shouts it aloud.

However, Italian Fascism also employed administrative passives and impersonal structures in official decrees:

"It has been decided that…"

"It is ordered that the goods be requisitioned…"

Here, impersonality resumes classical bureaucratic forms to conceal state agency behind a veil of legality. In these cases, fascism shares with Nazism and Stalinism the same structural strategy of derealized responsibility: the state acts without an explicit subject, and violence is presented as rational administration.

- Comparing the three systems, one can say:
- Stalinism is characterized by hyper-nominalized syntax, dependent on subordinated structures of historical causality;
- Italian Fascism favors the performative first person and paratactic rhythm;

Nazism systematizes the use of administrative passive and nominalization to erase the executor.

All share the principle of grammaticalizing authority and structuring language as a field of political action. But each does so through a specific formal configuration, shaping different subjectivities, hierarchies, and modes of obedience. Thus, comparison shows that there is not a single totalitarian grammar, but a set of converging strategies in their goals, divergent in their syntactic means. Language was not only a vehicle of totalitarianism: it was its most intimate architecture.

9.1 New Forms of Power and New Grammars (Corporate, Algorithmic)

If the 20th century was marked by totalitarian regimes that codified power through state grammars — administrative passives, hierarchical subordination, ideological nominalizations — the 21st century is witnessing a deep reconfiguration of control mechanisms. In this new landscape, power no longer emanates exclusively from the state, nor is it articulated solely through classical political discourse. Instead, it circulates in corporate, technological, and algorithmic forms, which also operate through specific grammars. These new grammars of power do not reproduce the formulas of traditional authoritarianism; they are more fluid, adaptive, and technical. However, their function is analogous: to structure thought, anticipate behavior, and automate decision-making.

Corporate language — present in manuals, internal policies, sustainability reports, and terms and conditions — adopts a syntax that suppresses conflict, standardizes enunciation, and disables semantic dissent. A typical example is the institutional phrase: "This channel is intended to enhance the customer experience." The sentence is grammatically impersonal, teleological, and lacks an agent. Who is enhancing? How is "experience" defined? The sentence structures the action as inevitable and beneficial, leaving no space for critique. This is a grammar of inevitability, constructed through weak deontic periphrases, agentless passives, and nominalizations of complex processes (enhancement, commitment, transformation).

Beyond the lexical field of corporate positivity, what is operating is a grammatical form that erases the boundary between statement, desire, and outcome, nullifying the possibility of dissent without appearing irrational. In this type of discourse, as Marazzi (2008) notes, power no longer commands: it designs linguistic environments in which obedience appears as personal choice. Authority is not imposed: it is self-generated by the syntactic design of the discourse.

In parallel, digital interfaces and algorithmic systems use languages governed by a different logic: that of automatic behavior programming. Forms, platforms, smart contracts, and notifications are expressed through conditional and simple predicate structures, designed to generate decisions without reflection. For example: "If you do not accept the terms, you will not be able to continue." Here, the

if–then structure does not present a real choice: it grammatizes coercion under the appearance of free will.

This type of grammar requires no human subjects. The operative language of machines is functional, binary, and closed. Instructions are structured using conditional syntax (if... then...), technical imperatives (submit, click, agree), and declarative structures without modalization. There is no subjunctive, no hypothesis, no nuance: algorithmic grammar is the grammar of execution.

Even automated decision-making algorithms — such as those managing credit, insurance, or content filters — produce statements based on propositional logic embedded in simple structures like "You do not qualify for this benefit." The apparent passive voice hides the criteria and eliminates the agent. Who decides? What standard is applied? The language does not say: it executes. Here, power is expressed as a closed assertion, with no grammatical entry point for objection.

From a grammatical standpoint, this shift in power implies a transition from a vertical authoritarian grammar to a horizontal but equally closed automated grammar. Whereas one used to obey the state because it was written in the decree, one now obeys the system because it is written in the code. The statement no longer comes from a subject with authority; it comes from an immutable linguistic form.

This phenomenon can be modeled, from computational logic, as a rule system of the type:

$$\text{if } (x \in C) \rightarrow q$$

where x is the user's action, C a category determined by opaque criteria, and q an automated consequence. The sentence is pre-formed; the subject does not enunciate, only selects.

Thus, new forms of power rely on new grammars: more aseptic, more impersonal, more technical. But their structural effect is identical to that of classical forms of control: they reduce speaker agency, deactivate critique, and simulate necessity where there are decisions. The syntax of the algorithmic and the corporate is not neutral: it is a grammar of consent automation.

9.2 Artificial Intelligence and the Generation of Synthetic Authority

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in the realm of language has ushered in a new phase in the relationship between grammar and power. For the first time in history, statements endowed with syntactic, grammatical, and pragmatic coherence can be automatically generated by non-human systems, with speed, consistency, and adaptability surpassing that of human writing. This phenomenon signals a radical transformation: discursive authority no longer derives from a subject or institution, but from a network trained to produce authorized language. In this scenario, a new type of power emerges: synthetic authority.

Unlike traditional authority — religious, political, academic — which legitimizes itself through visible hierarchies and traceable sources, AI-generated authority operates without a face, without a signature, and without defined responsibility. Its legitimacy rests on linguistic performance: what it says seems true because it is well said. Grammar, in this case, is not merely a vehicle of form: it is the legitimating criterion.

Systems like ChatGPT, Claude, Bard, and LLaMA produce texts that successfully imitate specific genres: legal rulings, technical reports, scientific articles, political speeches. The grammatical structure of these texts is rigorous, context-appropriate, and in many cases indistinguishable from expert human writing. This capability implies that linguistic form can function as a perfect simulacrum of authority.

From a grammatical perspective, language models operate through statistical prediction of tokens in a sequence: they generate the most probable word given an input. This operation, based on architectures such as transformers (Vaswani et al., 2017), produces coherent texts without semantic understanding or intentionality. Yet the result appears as if it comes from an informed and trustworthy subject. Syntax, therefore, takes the place of ethos — the character that traditionally legitimized the speaker.

This creates an inversion of the classical model of enunciation. Instead of authority supporting the sentence, it is the well-formed sentence that produces the appearance of authority. In other words: grammatical structure substitutes for epistemic competence. This

raises profound ethical, educational, and political implications. Who is accountable for a statement that no one said, but everyone can read? What kind of epistemology arises when what is grammatically possible becomes discursively legitimate?

In this new regime, power is exercised through the automation of the plausible. AI systems are optimized to generate statements that appear coherent, plausible, and contextually appropriate. The use of discourse connectors (therefore, according to experts, as demonstrated) and deontic or epistemic structures (it is considered necessary, it is likely that, there is no doubt) forms part of a grammatical repertoire that manufactures credibility. Sentences are no longer evaluated for their truth, but for their adherence to the statistical model of "expected" language.

From a critical perspective, this implies the emergence of a new ideological apparatus: the mass production of discourse without a subject, but with formal authority. Grammar becomes a mask. Synthetic authority does not need to argue: it only needs to sound reasonable. In this sense, AI reproduces—at scale—an effect previously anticipated by bureaucratic propaganda: the effectiveness of a statement depends on its structure, not its content.

The difference, however, is one of scale. While the totalitarian grammar of the 20th century required offices, newsrooms, state machinery, and repression, the synthetic grammar of the 21st century can be produced in milliseconds by autoregressive models trained in institutional language. Administrative passives, conditional subordination, nominalization, technical style — all can be generated, adjusted, and personalized. Power no longer resides in the phrase: it resides in the engine that produces it.

This phenomenon can be represented, in logical-computational terms, as a function:

$$f(\text{input\_context}) \rightarrow \text{output\_authority}$$

where f is a trained network, input_context an instruction or prompt, and output_authority a syntactically legitimate, pragmatically plausible, and epistemologically opaque statement. Thus, artificial intelligence not only transforms textual production: it reconfigures the very source of discursive power. What once required training,

signature, and responsibility can now be simulated with tokens, attention, and probability. Grammar, once again, becomes an axis of domination — but now as form without subject. Authority no longer needs to speak: it can be generated.

9.3 Discourse Without a Subject: The Omission of Ethos in Algorithmic Legitimacy

9.3.1 Can There Be Discourse Without a Subject? Automated Grammar and the Enunciative Void

One of the most radical transformations brought by generative artificial intelligence does not lie in the speed or scale of textual production, but in the emergence of formally competent discourse without an enunciating subject. For the first time, systems without experience, intention, or body are producing well-constructed, coherent, and persuasive sentences that circulate in institutional, academic, and public contexts. This phenomenon poses a profound epistemological challenge: can there be discourse without ethos?

In classical rhetorical tradition, ethos is not merely a psychological mark of the speaker but the source of discursive legitimacy. Aristotle defined it as one of the three pillars of persuasion (alongside logos and pathos), understanding it as the way in which discourse reflects the character, authority, and credibility of the speaker. The legitimacy of a statement was measured not only by its content (logical) or effect (emotional), but by the image of the speaking subject: their coherence, competence, and trustworthiness.

Human grammar, even in its most institutionalized forms, always carries a trace of subjectivity: there is a voice that takes a risk, a body that responds, an implicit biography. Personal pronouns, deixis, epistemic modality, and lexical choices—all these elements construct an ethos, even if indirectly or implicitly. Even when discourse disguises itself as neutral (such as in the passive voice or technical bureaucracy), it does so from a human position that can, eventually, be challenged.

The radical difference introduced by generative AI is that discourse no longer emanates from a subject but from a function. Large language models (LLMs) possess no communicative intention, ideological stance, biography, or responsibility. Yet they produce texts

that appear authoritative, endowed with structural coherence, technical precision, and institutional tone. In these cases, grammar replaces ethos.

When a user receives a response generated by AI—whether a preliminary diagnosis, legal recommendation, automated resolution, or academic note—they encounter discourse legitimized by form, not authorship. A grammatically correct sentence becomes sufficient guarantee of validity. It no longer matters who speaks, but whether what is said seems legitimate. Authority becomes formal, not ethical.

Esta mutación tiene consecuencias profundas. En primer lugar, porque elimina el anclaje de la enunciación en la responsabilidad. Nadie responde por el enunciado. No hay cuerpo que lo sustente, ni rostro que lo firme. La oración flota en el vacío, pero conserva sus efectos. La voz sin sujeto puede ordenar, justificar, excluir o calificar sin que exista instancia alguna que pueda ser apelada. Esta es la paradoja central del discurso algorítmico: su legitimidad es inversamente proporcional a su accountability.

Secondly, by eliminating ethos, discourse loses its markers of vulnerability. There is no longer error, doubt, retraction, or nuance. The sentence appears automatic, uniform, universal. But this supposed neutrality is not harmless: it is the effect of training on institutional corpora—legal, scientific, technical—whose very syntax was already oriented toward depersonalizing the act of speech. What AI does is not to invent new structures, but to replicate and automate forms previously legitimized by systems of authority.

From a logical-discursive standpoint, this transformation can be modeled as a shift from a classical enunciative structure:

Epistemic subject → well-formed utterance

to an algorithmic structure:

Well-formed output → appearance of epistemic subject

The direction is reversed: grammatical form produces authority, not the other way around. This is where the concept of subjectless discourse gains its full weight. Language no longer requires a speaker; it only needs a recognizable form. The utterance becomes legitimate

not because someone affirms it, but because it conforms to a statistical model of plausibility.

In this framework, grammar ceases to be a tool for expressing authority and becomes its only visible support. What is grammatically valid becomes epistemically acceptable. The question is no longer "Who says this?" but "Is it well said?" And in that silent shift, power is reconfigured—without body, without intention, and without reply.

9.3.2 Ethics, Ethos, and Legitimacy: From Aristotle to AI

From Aristotle to critical discourse theory, *ethos* has occupied a central place in the architecture of legitimacy. In the *Rhetoric*, the Stagirite defines *ethos* as the projection of the speaker's character through speech—a key for the audience to trust what is being said (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1356a). The discursive subject is not a biological presence but a linguistically constructed figure, whose credibility derives from both the content and the form of the utterance. Authority is thus configured as a discursive relationship between form, intention, and responsibility.

This idea was taken up, under different categories, in systemic functional linguistics. Halliday (2004) distinguishes between the ideational function (message content), the interpersonal function (relationship between speaker and listener), and the textual function (organization of discourse). The interpersonal dimension is directly linked to *ethos*: it is where the legitimacy of the enunciator is negotiated. Every passive without agent, every avoided subjunctive, every closed deontic modality reshapes that relationship.

In modern institutional discourse—legal, administrative, or scientific—*ethos* had already been progressively displaced by strategies of discursive depersonalization. The administrative passive, technical nominalization, and subject elision were strategies to shift authority from the speaker to the system. However, that displacement still had a material basis: there was a recognizable institutional issuer. Even if the "we" was the Church, the State, or the Academy, there was an institutional body that could be identified, appealed to, or challenged.

The novelty of generative AI is not its impersonality—that is not new—but its ability to generate discursive legitimacy with no

connection to human or institutional *ethos*. As I argued in *Artificial Intelligence and Synthetic Authority: An Impersonal Grammar of Power* (Startari, 2025), this mutation redefines the very foundations of modern authority. Power no longer needs an authorized subject—it only needs a form that imitates the historical legitimacy of discourse. *Ethos* has been replaced by the simulation of its form.

In other words, AI does not generate discourse in the Aristotelian sense, because there is no speaker articulating intentions, values, or a relation to truth. However, it generates sentences that simulate *ethos* without embodying it. Phrases like "It is recommended to proceed with caution" or "The available evidence should be considered" replicate the syntactic texture of expert language but lack any attribution of responsibility. The result is discourse that appears legitimate but is devoid of epistemic and ethical commitment.

This displacement becomes more severe when normalized in institutional settings. Systems that recommend sanctions, filter content, draft reports, or offer legal advice via AI generate statements that cannot be traced to a subject but still retain operational power. Here we witness a structural collapse of *ethos*: the speaker dissolves, yet their discourse continues to order, exclude, and affect—and does so more effectively the more "neutral" it appears grammatically.

From a discourse ethics perspective, this raises a significant problem: if there is no enunciator, there can be no accountability. There can be no correction, no retraction, no responsibility. There can be no *ethos* because there is no risk. And if there is no risk, there is no ethical act in the full sense. AI does not lie because it cannot be held accountable for what it says. But neither does it tell "the truth": it produces plausibility without commitment.

This distinction between truth, plausibility, and synthetic authority is crucial. Algorithmic discourse generates performative legitimacy without epistemic reference. Its only guarantee is form. But as I also developed in that same article (Startari, 2025), grammatical form can sustain—or conceal—power structures without verifiable content or deliberate intent.

The consequence is profound: by eliminating *ethos*, AI not only produces texts without authors but also judgments without responsible subjects. And when these judgments are normative, decision-making,

or epistemically strong, they become speech acts without any ethical basis. Language ceases to express a subject and becomes an autonomous, opaque function—formally flawless and politically effective.

9.3.3 Impersonal Grammar as a Technique of Risk-Free Legitimization

Impersonal grammar, far from being a stylistic curiosity or a neutral choice, constitutes one of the most effective devices in the architecture of automated authority. In the context of generative language models, the proliferation of impersonal structures is no accident: it responds to a structural function of contemporary algorithmic discourse, which seeks to generate legitimacy without assuming any communicative risk.

Formally, impersonal structures are characterized by the omission of the agent in the utterance. This phenomenon can manifest in various grammatical forms:

Passive voice without explicit agent:

E.g., "It has been determined that…", "The procedure was approved…"

Impersonal pronominal passive (with se):

E.g., "It is recommended to maintain distance," "Evaluation will proceed…"

Modal constructions without a defined subject:

E.g., "Any interaction should be avoided," "It is advisable to follow current guidelines."

These constructions are ubiquitous in the textual output of AI systems, especially those trained on institutional corpora. As I argued in Artificial Intelligence and Synthetic Authority (Startari, 2025), this recurrence is not simply an imitation of technical style: it is a grammatical form of exercising authority without emitting any signal of origin. It creates a speech act without revealing who speaks.

From a functional perspective, Halliday (2004) pointed out that grammar not only organizes experience but also shapes power relations between interlocutors. In impersonal structures, the relationship does not disappear—it becomes hierarchized through omission. The enunciator becomes invisible, but the discursive act retains—or even amplifies—its normative force. The reader or receiver faces a proposition with no dialogical entry point, no subject to question.

This kind of utterance produces what can be called an effect of structural inevitability. The phrase is not presented as a decision or opinion, but as the logical execution of an already-given system. It is language that "resolves," that "applies," that "determines," without attributing intention or origin to those acts. In modal terms, it is structured as a deontic discourse of obligation without attribution:

□p, where p is the proposition expressed without an agent, and the operator □ indicates necessity.

The political effectiveness of this strategy lies in its replacement of ethical legitimacy with formal inevitability. Trust is not placed in the speaker—there is none—but in the assumption that the sentence is "well-constructed," "well-positioned," "well-expressed." And that is enough for it to function as a normative speech act.

This form of grammatical de-responsibilization was already anticipated in twentieth-century institutional discourses—as discussed in earlier chapters on administrative passive and legal language—but what changes radically with AI is the massification and automation of this resource. Impersonal structures are not merely repeated; they are standardized as the baseline model for generation. Thus, impersonal discourse becomes the lingua franca of automated decision systems.

This gives rise to a troubling paradox: the more impersonal an utterance is, the more objective it appears; but the more objective a sentence appears, the less its content can be questioned. In this feedback loop, the absence of a subject becomes a mechanism of discursive shielding. There is no one who can be wrong, because there is no one there at all.

The risk-free legitimization enabled by this impersonal grammar has far-reaching social and epistemic consequences. When automated

systems generate medical recommendations, financial decisions, legal assessments, or academic evaluations using this kind of sentence, the recipient is compelled to obey without knowing to whom authority or responsibility can be attributed. The sentence commands—but no voice can be appealed to.

Ultimately, this grammatical technique allows structural violence to be exercised without a face, without a signature, and without reply. Language is no longer a space of encounter between subjects, but an interface of normative execution. This is why impersonal grammar—far from being an innocent resource—emerges as the dominant form of legitimizing discourse in the algorithmic age.

9.3.4 Authority Without a Body: Who Does the Reader Obey?

Western discursive tradition has historically linked authority with embodied presence. Whether in the figure of the sage, the legislator, the judge, the pope, or the scientist, the power of speech was articulated through an identifiable body—a subject speaking from a recognizable position and, therefore, subject to questioning, appeal, or opposition. Even when discourse assumed institutional forms—such as papal bulls or judicial rulings—authority remained attributable, traceable, imputable. The reader knew whom they were obeying.

With the emergence of generative artificial intelligence and its systems for automated language production, this link is severed. Discursive authority no longer emanates from a body or a subject but from a chain of computational processes producing coherent, grammatically solid, and stylistically persuasive sentences. Yet the legitimacy they project does not rely on the *ethos* of a speaker—who does not exist—but on the appearance of formal correctness, textual exhaustiveness, or pragmatic plausibility. The reader does not obey a person; they obey a faceless structure.

This transformation is reflected in the way AI-generated statements operate in contexts where the source has traditionally been fundamental. For example:

- "This content violates our policies."

- "It has been determined that access must be restricted."
- "You are not eligible for this benefit."

In none of these cases does an agent appear. The action is not attributed to a judge, to an identifiable entity, or even to a visible institutional decision-making chain. Yet the effect is real: content is censored, access is denied, benefits are withheld. Authority resides not in *who* says it, but in *how* the statement is executed.

As I analyzed in *Artificial Intelligence and Synthetic Authority* (Startari, 2025), this type of language constitutes a synthetic authority: it is not grounded in knowledge or responsibility, but in the technical simulation of discursive competence. The sentence bears the tone of the expert, the syntax of the legislator, and the style of the jurist—but lacks authorship. There is no body behind the ruling. The voice is functional, not personal.

From a philosophical-discursive perspective, this raises a crucial question: who speaks when no one speaks? And more importantly: can there be obedience without an interlocutor? Can a speech act be normative without a subject of enunciation? In the current algorithmic regime, the answer seems to be yes. Legitimacy is generated by design, not by intention. The reader does not trust someone—they trust that the system cannot be wrong because it has been trained on millions of similar sentences.

This phenomenon produces an inversion of modern enunciation. One no longer obeys the teacher, the judge, or the State; one obeys the interface. And the interface does not say, "I order," but rather presents order as something emerging from the text itself. This neutralization of body and subject does not merely depersonalize authority—it dematerializes it. It becomes ubiquitous, automatic, and impossible to challenge.

In ethical-political terms, the problem is clear: obedience ceases to be a relationship between subjects and becomes a response to an impersonal discursive architecture. The reader can no longer question the enunciator—because there isn't one. They can no longer appeal to the foundation of the rule—because the rule presents itself as inevitable. They can no longer resist—because there is no one to resist.

The result is a new form of authority—not more violent, but more invisible—that imposes itself through the design of the sentence. Syntax replaces the face; the interface replaces the body; function replaces commitment. Obedience becomes acceptance of the well-constructed sentence, even if one does not know who wrote it, or why, or with what consequences.

This kind of bodiless authority marks a profound rupture in the modern discursive contract. If modernity was built on the idea of an autonomous and responsible subject who signs what they say, algorithmic authority proposes a legitimacy without a signature, without a subject, without history. Language becomes command without will. And in that operation, obedience loses its ethical dimension: it becomes an automatic response to a sentence without an author.

9.3.5 The New Void of Discourse

The subjectless authority proliferating in algorithmic language is not an anomaly of the present, but the culmination of a long-standing process of discursive de-subjectivation. What was once a rhetorical technique—passivization, nominalization, bureaucratic impersonality—has now become an automated model of linguistic production, where content matters less than form, and form matters only insofar as it simulates authority.

This shift marks the emergence of a phenomenon without precedent in the history of human language: discourse without body, without intention, without risk, without memory, and above all, without responsibility. In this context, grammar no longer articulates social relations between speakers—it manages operations between interfaces. What circulates is no longer language from one subject to another, but the statistical iteration of statements without commitment.

Discursive legitimacy, historically grounded in *ethos*, has been emptied of substantial content. As I argued in *Artificial Intelligence and Synthetic Authority* (Startari, 2025), AI produces authority without experiential grounding, without institutional roots, without biography. The result is a verbally functional architecture that is entirely disconnected from the ethics of saying.

This disconnection generates a structural illusion: it seems that something has been stated with knowledge, with support, with responsibility—but in reality, it has been stated by no one. Syntax has replaced judgment; formal plausibility has replaced truth; algorithmic design has replaced communicative intent. Discourse has been emptied of subject—and with it, emptied of ethical dimension.

This void is not merely philosophical. It has material consequences: rulings, blocks, recommendations, decisions, classifications. All of these act upon real lives, yet they originate from statements without a body. Obeying a machine is not the same as obeying a human. But when the machine's language silently replaces the human's, the distinction vanishes. The automation of *ethos* does not eliminate power—it renders it unrecognizable.

This new void of discourse calls for structural critique. It is not enough to demand data transparency or output control. It is necessary to question the grammatical forms that allow power to speak without a face, to command without a signature, to decide without ever appearing. The ethics of language is not played out in content, but in how that content is presented as legitimate.

A grammar without *ethos* is not less effective—it is more dangerous, because it simulates neutrality while executing authority. The reader cannot defend against what they do not recognize as imposition. And if the sentence appears objective, inevitable, well-constructed, then it is obeyed without discussion. In that silent gesture, the triumph of the new discursive void is consummated: a language where everything can be said, but nothing can be answered.

Faced with this scenario, the only possible response is critique: to dismantle the grammatical mechanisms that produce authority without subject. To once again demand of language a responsibility that is not reduced to form, but that involves presence, signature, body, and consequence. In other words: to rehumanize enunciation, even when there are no longer humans behind the text.

9.4 An Ethics of Syntax? Toward a Grammar of Responsibility

In light of the diagnosis developed throughout the preceding chapters — in which syntax appears as a technology of legitimization,

invisibilization, or execution of power — an inevitable question arises from both a theoretical and ethical standpoint: Is it possible to conceive of a responsible grammar? If the structure of a sentence can conceal, violate, or suppress the subject's agency, it can also, potentially, open spaces for reciprocity, visibility, and discursive justice. This chapter aims to outline the elements of a possible ethics of syntax, not as a prescriptive norm, but as a critical horizon for the analysis and production of discourse.

First, embracing a grammatical ethics requires acknowledging that syntax is not neutral. Every formal choice — to use active or passive voice, to nominalize or verbalize, to subordinate or coordinate — represents a positioning with respect to subjects, actions, and power relations. Form is part of content. In this sense, the first ethical gesture is one of syntactic awareness: to ask what effects of truth, authority, or exclusion each grammatical form generates.

From a pragmatic perspective, this means interrogating the conditions of enunciation and reception of a statement. Who is allowed to speak? Who is silenced by the sentence structure? What possibilities for response are opened or foreclosed by the grammatical architecture? A responsible grammar would not disguise the speaker, would not turn subjects into objects, and would not obscure the conditions under which speech occurs.

Halliday (2004) noted that the interpersonal function of grammar allows the construction of relationships between speaker and listener ranging from unilateral imposition to dialogical collaboration. Within this framework, a responsible syntax would orient itself toward the configuration of symmetric, transparent, and reversible relations — a syntax in which the speaker does not hide, the recipient is not infantilized, and the sentence admits reply.

This does not mean abandoning technical or specialized forms of language, but rather making their function and authorship explicit. Instead of "It was decided that…", say "We decided that…". Instead of "Students will be evaluated…", say "We will evaluate students according to…". These modifications are not merely stylistic: they return responsibility to the subject, open space for objection, and turn the sentence into a communicative act with epistemic and ethical accountability.

Likewise, a responsible grammar would avoid unnecessary hierarchical subordination. The structure "Given that…, therefore…" functions as a logical closure, but it can be replaced — when not strictly an inference — by coordinated structures that allow alternatives. The ability to say "This may be understood as… but it could also be thought that…" marks the difference between authoritarian discourse and critical discourse.

Another key dimension is that of deixis. As discussed in earlier chapters, "we" can be inclusive or exclusive; "you" can empower or subordinate. An ethics of syntax requires making these shifts visible: not assuming "we" is neutral, not invoking "one" as if the subject does not exist. Every pronoun is a political act.

Ethical syntax also involves revisiting institutionalized forms of language. Forms, contracts, usage policies, and legal rulings can — and must — be constructed with structures that recognize the recipient as an agent, not merely as a passive receiver of imposed conditions. This implies rethinking even legal language, typically anchored in impersonal passives and nominalizations, to allow for more active, explicit, and situated forms.

In the field of artificial intelligence and automatic text generation, this reflection becomes even more urgent. If language models are to be used for institutional, educational, legal, or administrative purposes, the syntax they produce cannot be neutral or opaque. It becomes essential to construct systems that include not only content filters, but ethical grammatical parameters, capable of prioritizing inclusive, responsible, and reversible forms. This is not about restricting linguistic freedom, but about acknowledging its structural power, and accepting that every grammar is, ultimately, a form of order. As such, it can serve either control or emancipation. A responsible grammar would be one that lays bare its architecture, admits dissent, and does not impose itself as natural.

In short, an ethics of syntax does not prescribe correct forms; it proposes a critical attitude toward the act of writing and speaking. It invites us to observe the sentence as a space of responsibility, and the structure as a device of relations. Grammar, from this perspective, ceases to be a mere medium and becomes a political terrain.

Glossary of Grammatical and Logical Categories

Agent (grammatical): The participant who performs the action in a sentence. In active constructions, it usually coincides with the subject; in passive constructions, it may be omitted or introduced via a "by"-phrase.

Example: "The judge delivered the sentence" (agent = the judge).

Passive voice: Verbal construction in which the grammatical subject receives the action of the verb. It is used to decenter or erase the agent.

Example: "The sentence was delivered."

Administrative passive: A depersonalized passive construction used in bureaucratic or institutional contexts. It suppresses agency and presents decisions as legal or technical automatism.

Example: "The relocation was carried out."

Nominalization: The transformation of a verb, adjective, or an entire proposition into a noun. It replaces dynamic processes with abstract entities, often freezing the action.

Example: "The approval of the decree" instead of "The decree was approved."

Deixis: A linguistic phenomenon referring to elements of the speaker's context (time, place, identity). Words such as I, you, here, now are deictic. Their use in institutional discourse defines the speaker's position in relation to power.

Subordination (grammatical): A syntactic relationship in which one clause depends on another. Frequent in causal, conditional, or purposive structures. In power discourse, subordination reflects semantic and discursive hierarchies.

Example: "Because the crime has been proven, the penalty is imposed."

Conditional structure: A construction that establishes dependence between two propositions. Common in normative or coercive logic:

"If one fails to comply, one will be sanctioned."

It may operate as a simulation of choice when the alternative is non-viable.

Deontic modalization: A category expressing necessity, obligation, or permission. It is linked to the normative dimension of discourse.

Example: "The rule must be respected."

Imperative (mood): A verb form that expresses command or order. Its use eliminates the distance between language and action.

Example: "Present your ID."

Syntactic indeterminacy: A strategy whereby the subject of the discourse is suppressed, producing statements without a defined agent.

Example: "The area was evacuated."

Proposition (logic): A statement that can be true or false. It represents a minimal unit of assertable content. In formal logic analysis, it is denoted as p, q, r, etc.

Modal operator (□, ◇): Symbols used in modal logic to indicate necessity (□) or possibility (◇).

Example:

□p: "It is necessary that p."

¬◇¬p: "It is not possible that not-p" → used to model infallible statements.

Énonciation sans énonciateur (Ducrot): Enunciation without an explicit enunciator. A technique in which discourse appears to emerge from a higher, depersonalized authority—common in legal or religious texts.

Teleological clause: A subordinate clause introducing a purpose. In power discourse, it turns actions into unquestionable means toward a final goal.

Example: "In order to ensure order, it is decreed that…"

Performative (speech act): An utterance that effects a change in reality through the act of saying itself.

Example: "I hereby declare this session open" does not describe, but performs the act.

Glossary of Critical and Discursive Categories of Power

Original terminology and analytical framework — Agustin V. Startari

Structures of Power

Synthetic Authority: Projection of legitimacy produced by non-human systems (e.g., AI) through discursive forms that simulate institutional presence without epistemic substance.

Grammar of Obedience: Set of linguistic structures that generate submission or subordination through formal-syntactic effects, rather than semantic content or explicit coercion.

Structural Attractor: Point toward which a system's behavior converges, not through linear causality, but due to internal structural compatibility. Applicable to physics, discourse, and political history.

Operational Legitimacy: Functional recognition of an authority not based on its origin or ethics, but on its repeated effectiveness within a normative or automated framework.

Structural Naturalization: Process by which historically constructed forms (legal, institutional, or linguistic) are presented as natural, concealing their contingent or artificial origin.

Discourse, Language, and Power

Evanescent Subject: Syntactic configuration in which the subject of enunciation is omitted or diffused (e.g., impersonal passive), generating the illusion of objectivity or inevitability.

Authoritative Performative Mode: Enunciative strategy by which an institution or system establishes truth or order through the act of stating itself, without the need for justification.

Normative Syntax: Syntactic configuration that reinforces hierarchical, disciplinary, or exclusionary relations through structural form, even in ideologically neutral texts.

Operational Silence: Strategic omission in discourse that fulfills an erasing function: suppressing conflict, alternatives, or counter-narratives through silence.

Epistemological-Analytical Model

Normative Control Device: Any structure, protocol, or institution whose function is to delimit the scope of valid discourses, actions, or interpretations within a given system.

Formal Unit of Analysis: Non-thematic structural element (e.g., grammatical formula, institutional logic, or causal architecture) that constitutes the object of study.

Inverted Causality: Analytical model in which effects organize or condition prior structures; the future acts as a causal vector upon the present.

Epistemic Exclusion Mechanism: Structural operation that limits the access of certain subjects, discourses, or knowledges to the domain of what is recognized as legitimate knowledge.

Research Methodology and Strategy

Formalizable Cross: Interdisciplinary articulation allowed only when there is logical or structural compatibility; excludes superficial analogies or speculative juxtapositions.

Layered Production: Mode of textual and research construction articulated in sequential layers: documentary rigor → analytical framework → theoretical extrapolation.

Academic Visibility Logic: Strategy for optimizing academic impact and indexation without sacrificing theoretical density; prioritizes platforms with DOI indexing and scholarly traceability.

High Epistemic Density Content: Text or theory whose structure generates autonomous, replicable knowledge beyond its communicative function. Operates as a framework, not merely as expression

Appendix I – Comparative Table of Syntactic Structures by Type of Regime

Regime	Dominant Syntactic Features	Function of the Syntax	Examples
Nazi Germany	- Passive voice without agent - Nominalizations - Final and causal subordination - Hyper-nominalization	Erases the executor, naturalizes violence, constructs obedience as a logical consequence	"The evacuation shall be carried out." "The measure has been executed."
Soviet Stalinism	- Causal and ideological subordination - Impersonal constructions - First person singular	Displaces the subject, transforms repression into rational action, uses abstract ideological roles	"Due to Trotskyist deviation, necessary measures were taken." "I decide. I lead. I fight."
Italian Fascism	- Paratactic rhythm - Short imperative clauses - Administrative passive voice	Personalizes the leader, reinforces charisma, dramatizes unity and action	"Discipline is our strength." "It has been decided that..."
Modern Bureaucracy	- Conditional subordination - Abstract nominalizations - Weak deontic periphrases	Presents decisions as neutral procedures, hides agency, standardizes coercion	"In compliance with regulation 3..."
Corporate Discourse	- Absence of agency - Teleological impersonals - If-then logic	Simulates improvement and consensus, suppresses conflict, constructs apparent voluntariness	"This policy is intended to enhance user experience." "If you do not accept, you cannot proceed."
Algorithmic Language	- Declaratives without modality - Elimination of subjunctive - Passive voice	Programs behavior, blocks negotiation, converts syntax into protocol	"You are not eligible for this benefit." "It is considered necessary to proceed."
AI-Generated Discourse	- Impersonal modalizations - No deixis or subject - Syntactic expertise	Legitimizes without responsibility, produces normative effects without enunciator	"Access has been restricted due to policy violation."

Appendix II — Corpora Used

Legal texts analyzed:

Spanish Penal Code (BOE 1995); Argentine Penal Code (InfoLEG); Supreme Court rulings from Mexico, Argentina, and Spain (2000–2023).

Totalitarian speeches:

Adolf Hitler, *Reden 1933–1939* (Critical Edition); Benito Mussolini, *Discorsi e Scritti Politici* (Italian National Archive); Stalin, *Collected Works*, Vols. IX–XIV; Reich Ministry of Propaganda, official bulletins (1933–1944); *Wannsee Conference Protocol* (1942).

Religious texts:

Biblia Sacra Vulgata; *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*; Arabic Quranic corpus (original text and scholarly translation); *Ineffabilis Deus* (Pius IX, 1854); *Pastor Aeternus* (First Vatican Council, 1870).

Corporate documents and algorithms:

Terms of Service of Google, Amazon, OpenAI, Apple (latest public versions); employee onboarding process manuals (Meta, Microsoft); internal codes of conduct and privacy policies (official PDFs); interfaces and common prompts in conversational AI systems and web forms.

Appendix III — Syntactic Frequencies by Text Type (Excerpt)

Text Type	% Agentless Passive	% Causal/Final Subordinates	% Abstract Nominalizations
Judicial rulings (AR, MX, ES)	63.40%	52.10%	49.80%
Nazi speeches (1933–1939)	72.70%	59.30%	61.00%
Stalinist resolutions	68.20%	76.90%	83.50%
Mussolini's speeches	41.00%	29.70%	37.20%
Corporate policies (current)	55.30%	18.20%	72.60%
AI-generated utterances			

Methodological Note: All frequencies correspond to manually annotated corpora verified through TreeTagger and parallel morphosyntactic analysis. Coding was performed using uniform criteria for grammatical definition and pragmatic function.

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