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The Tyranny of Procedure and Systemic Uprooting

Quality, Memory and School in the Age of Documented Blame

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“Blame instead of responsibility: instead of being a valuable employee, now you are an interchangeable generic.”
— Bothi Nobody

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Abstract

This paper examines the mutation through which documented procedure stopped being a tool of judgment and became its substitute. It reconstructs the historical bifurcation of the idea of quality: in the Japanese industry shaped by Deming and Juran, quality meant responsibility for the result; in the ISO 9000 series, heir to the standards with which defense ministries audited their contractors, it meant documented conformity. It calls **ISO 9000-ism** the extension of this second logic to companies, governments and schools, where blame replaces responsibility and the worker becomes an interchangeable generic. The analysis operates on three scales: the organization, with the Chinese case as a counterexample showing that the problem is not procedure but its place; the territory, where the shifting baseline syndrome, illustrated by the Laguna de Mayrán, naturalizes each new state of affairs; and the school, where diagnosis becomes the method’s alibi. The paper argues that a system that trained people to execute procedures produced exactly what artificial intelligence replaces best, that procedure turned into sacred letter blocks improvement and innovation, and that tools replace the executor and amplify the one who understands. In response it proposes an insurgent functionality

grounded in responsibility for the result, memory of the territory and the bond of the tribe.

Keywords: quality; ISO 9000; Deming; audit; responsibility and blame; shifting baseline syndrome; Laguna de Mayrán; school diagnosis; automation; artificial intelligence; insurgent functionality.

§1. Problem and Thesis

In the 1980s, the word “quality” designated two things that seemed to be the same. In Japanese industry, shaped by the lectures W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran gave to the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers, quality meant responsibility for the result: continuous improvement, the worker’s authority to stop the line, and a rule that Kaoru Ishikawa championed insistently, that of treating the next process as one’s own customer. In 1987 the ISO 9000 series appeared, heir to the British standard BS 5750 and, further back, to the standards with which defense ministries audited their contractors. There quality meant something else: documented conformity with a procedure.

This paper argues that this bifurcation was not technical but ontological. In the first model, procedure is a tool in the service of the judgment of whoever does the work. In the second, procedure replaces that judgment, and its function changes: it no longer seeks a good result, but rather the ability to demonstrate, if the result is bad, that someone did not follow the procedure. Responsibility, which looks forward, becomes blame, which looks backward. And the worker who once owned their process becomes an interchangeable component whose virtue is not to deviate.

We call **ISO 9000-ism** this mutation when it escapes the factory and becomes a general form of governing institutions: companies, governments, universities and schools. The term does not designate the ISO standard itself, which can be used well, but an attitude: the belief that a documented process guarantees a good result, and that the paper proving compliance is worth more than the judgment that would make it unnecessary. The critique is not new. Michael Power (1997) showed that auditing does not verify performance but constructs it around what can be audited, and Jerry Muller (2018) described the shift from measuring performance to a fixation on measurement. What this paper adds is a reading of that phenomenon within the CFF canon.

In the terms of CFF-018, ISO 9000-ism is the *Sola Scriptura* of organizations: a truth that resides in the text of the manual, legible to anyone, which makes the interpreter unnecessary. Like every low-context reading applied to a high-context world, it works as long as reality resembles the manual and fails when it stops doing so. And when it fails, the manual is not revised: a culprit is sought.

The paper examines the mechanism on three scales. In the **organization** (§2 and §3), it reconstructs the genealogy of quality and the shift from responsibility to blame, with the Chinese experience as a counterexample: the country with the most ISO certifications in the world is also the one that has built the most, which shows that the problem is not procedure but its substitution for judgment. In the **territory** (§4), it returns to the case of the Laguna de Mayrán (CFF-WP-012) to examine the amnesia that allows each new state of affairs to be naturalized. In the **school** (§5), it analyzes diagnosis turned into the procedure's alibi, from the experience of a student who survived a system not designed for him. §6 connects the argument with artificial intelligence: a system that trained humans to behave like procedure produced precisely what a machine replaces best. §7 proposes, in the face of all this, an **insurgent functionality**.

§2. A Genealogy of Quality: Two Paths of One Idea

2.1 The Deming Paradox

The philosophy the world called "Japanese quality" was, in its origin, American. W. Edwards Deming, a statistician trained in statistical process control, found little echo in the industry of his own country after the war. In Japan, by contrast, the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) invited him in 1950 to give a series of lectures that transformed the country's manufacturing; in 1954 it invited Joseph Juran, who added the managerial dimension. The United States rediscovered its own prophet three decades later, when Japanese competition had already displaced its industries.

What Japan took from Deming was not a procedure but an ontology of work. Several of his fourteen points, systematized in *Out of the Crisis* (1986), point in the opposite direction to what would later be done in his name: cease dependence on mass inspection to achieve quality, building it into the process from the start; and drive out fear, so that everyone can work effectively. Quality was not verified at the end: it was produced at every step, by whoever performed it.

2.2 The Worker as Owner of the Process

Japanese practice gave concrete form to that ontology. Kaoru Ishikawa championed the rule of treating the next process as one's own customer: each worker answers to whoever receives their work, not to an external auditor. The Toyota Production System took the idea to its most radical expression: any operator could pull the *andon* on detecting a defect; first it called the team to resolve it and, if it was not resolved, the line stopped. The authority to halt production, the costliest decision in a factory, rested with whoever was closest to

the problem. In the terms of the CFF canon, it was a system that trusted the worker's *Freedom* and granted them the *Liberty* to exercise it.

2.3 The Other Genealogy: Auditing the Contractor

The ISO 9000 series has a different lineage. Its direct antecedent is the British standard BS 5750, published in 1979 as the first quality management systems standard, and its deeper root lies in the standards with which defense ministries audited their suppliers, such as the American standard MIL-Q-9858 of 1959. The problem those standards solved was real and legitimate: a buyer who cannot directly supervise thousands of contractors needs documentary assurance that they follow a method. But that assurance answers the buyer's question, not the worker's. Its object is not that the product be excellent, but that the supplier be able to demonstrate compliance.

When ISO adopted that model as an international standard in 1987, and certification became a requirement for trade, the logic of the external auditor became the logic of internal management. The 1994 revision accelerated the process: many companies responded by producing entire shelves of procedure manuals. The risk was noted from within the practice of the standard itself: a company that seeks only the certificate can build a paper system with little relation to its actual operation.

2.4 The Bifurcation

Both genealogies use the same word, but they describe different worlds. In the Japanese one, quality is responsibility for the result, procedure is a tool of judgment, and error is information for improvement. In the audit one, quality is documented conformity, procedure replaces judgment, and error is evidence for assigning blame. The second is not a degraded version of the first: it is its inversion. Deming asked to cease dependence on mass inspection; ISO 9000-ism made documentary inspection the center of the system. Deming asked to drive out fear; ISO 9000-ism organized the institution around who will answer when something fails.

Caricature should be avoided: the ISO standard does not prevent continuous improvement, and later versions incorporated the language of process and customer focus. The argument is not against a technical document, but against the attitude that turned it into a religion: the belief that the certificate guarantees the quality that only judgment can produce.

§3. The Mechanism: From Responsibility to Blame

3.1 A Vignette

The author of this paper prepares rental cars. One day, a vehicle was used urgently to pick up another, and the next morning it had to go out on a rental trip without a full tank. The team had many cars to get out and a workflow already under way. There were two paths. The first: stop, file a report, find out who forgot and who failed to anticipate, and launch corrective actions. The second: fill the tank, prepare the car and deliver it.

In the author's words, nobody was to blame: it was a real cost to the company, which would appear on the statement and be deductible. Nothing was lost and nobody stole; what was necessary to obtain the result was simply done. A company that works this way can face any situation. A sclerotic company, one that stops to look for culprits, does not deliver the car and loses the customer, and then everybody loses. Someone working among vacuums, rags and tires to inflate has no time to fill out reports that apportion blame. The rest of this section examines why so many institutions choose the first path.

3.2 Two Verbs

Responsibility and blame answer different questions. Responsibility asks what must be done for this to turn out well, and it looks forward. Blame asks who failed, and it looks backward. An institution organized around responsibility needs people with judgment and the authority to use it. One organized around blame needs a record that allows it, after the failure, to point to the step of the procedure that someone did not follow. ISO 9000-ism is the passage from the first to the second.

The mechanism has an impeccable internal logic. If the procedure is well designed and documented, every bad result is explained by a deviation. Therefore the procedure never fails: whoever did not follow it fails. The consequence is that the system becomes immune to evidence. Failure leads not to revising the method but to finding the one responsible, and each culprit found confirms that the method was correct. In the vocabulary of CFF-WP-014, it is institutional Closure Sclerosis: a closure that protects itself from verification.

3.3 The Interchangeable Generic

The human correlate of that mechanism is the worker as component. If value resides in the procedure, whoever executes it is replaceable by definition: their virtue is not judgment but conformity. Craft, once a form of knowledge accumulated in a person, becomes a risk, because individual judgment is precisely what the procedure seeks to eliminate. John Seddon, one of the standard's most persistent critics, argued that ISO 9001 privileges specification, control and procedure over understanding and improvement.

The paradox is that this substitution presents itself as a guarantee of quality, when it eliminates the condition that made quality possible. The Toyota operator

who pulls the *andon* contributes the one thing no manual can contain: the perception that something is not right before the procedure records it.

3.4 Auditing the Paper

Michael Power (1997) described the phenomenon at the scale of society as a whole. Auditing, he argued, is not a neutral process: it imposes its own values on the activities it regulates. Where objectives are diffuse, auditing invents auditable performance measures, and efficiency ceases to be verified and is instead constructed around the audit process itself. What becomes visible is not whether the work is good, but whether it can be documented that it was done according to the rule. Jerry Muller (2018) called the quantitative variant of the same phenomenon "metric fixation": the shift from measuring performance to living for measurement.

David Graeber (2015) added the everyday dimension with his "iron law of liberalism": every measure intended to reduce red tape ends up producing more regulations, more paperwork and more bureaucrats. ISO 9000-ism is one of its purest forms: paperwork that justifies itself in the name of a quality it does not measure.

3.5 The Chinese Counterexample

A tempting narrative would hold that the West lost its industrial base by becoming bureaucratized, while China won it by being pragmatic and free of paperwork. The data do not allow it. China holds the largest share of ISO certifications in the world: about a third of the global total in the 2019 survey. It did not reject procedure: it adopted it en masse, because certification was a requirement for exporting.

The difference lies elsewhere. Dan Wang (2025) describes China as an "engineering state" and the United States as a "lawyerly society": in the first, the dominant question is how to build something; in the second, who can stop it or who answers if it goes wrong. The contrast is useful for this paper because it separates two things that the critique of ISO 9000-ism tends to conflate. The problem is not the existence of procedure but its place: whether it serves the judgment of whoever builds, or replaces it to protect whoever signs. China certifies and builds; ISO 9000-ism certifies instead of building.

The comparison demands caution. The engineering state has costs that Wang himself documents, because the same logic that builds bridges at record speed can be applied to engineering entire populations without consultation. This paper does not propose China as a model, but as evidence that the decisive variable is not the quantity of procedure but its relationship to judgment.

3.6 Procedure against Improvement

There is a consequence deeper than blame. If procedure is sacred letter, improvement becomes a form of deviation. The continuous improvement Deming taught in Japan required changing the method each time a better one was found; ISO 9000-ism turns every change into a risk, because any modification of the documented procedure raises the question of who will answer if it goes wrong. The system born to guarantee quality ends up preventing what produces it: the freedom to do things differently.

Wang's distinction between engineers and lawyers illuminates the mechanism. The engineer asks how to make something work and, when the rule gets in the way, redesigns it. The lawyer asks who might sue and, when the rule gets in the way, armors it. No society can do without either; the problem appears when the second governs the first, and the cost of change grows until nobody dares.

Musical creation offers an example outside the factory. In the "Blurred Lines" case (2015–2018), an American jury ordered the authors to pay 7.3 million dollars to Marvin Gaye's family (an amount later reduced to 5.3 million), and the court of appeals upheld the verdict by majority. The dissenting judge warned that the ruling protected a musical style rather than a concrete work, and numerous musicians and scholars warned of its effect on innovation. The trend is not irreversible: in 2023, another jury cleared Ed Sheeran after hearing him demonstrate on the stand that the disputed chords are common material for songwriters. But the mere risk of litigation is enough for creating to become, too, an activity one must first check with a lawyer.

§4. Ecosystemic Amnesia: The Illusion That It Was Always So

4.1 The Lagoon Nobody Remembers

CFF-WP-012 documented the case of the Laguna de Mayrán, in the Comarca Lagunera region of northern Mexico, once considered the largest endorheic lagoon in Latin America. It dried up after the construction of the El Palmito (1946) and Francisco Zarco (1968) dams, works designed first for cotton monoculture and later for intensive dairy farming with irrigated alfalfa (Descroix, 2005). That paper recorded an irony contained in the region's very name: those who live there call themselves *laguneros*, "lagoon people," and there is no lagoon.

This paper returns to the case for another reason. WP-012 closed its analysis with an observation that becomes central here: the speed of collapse exceeds the speed of collective memory, so that each generation naturalizes the state it inherits. The dams were built less than three generations ago, and yet whoever is

born in the Comarca today does not remember the lagoon: they simply do not know it, and inherit the desert as if it were the region's natural state.

4.2 The Name of the Mechanism

Ecology has a name for this phenomenon. Daniel Pauly (1995) described the **shifting baseline syndrome** from fisheries: each generation of scientists took as its reference the state of fish populations at the start of its own career, so that long-term declines remained hidden and the perception of change eroded with each generational handover. Papworth et al. (2009) provided empirical evidence and distinguished two forms of forgetting: **generational amnesia**, when knowledge of the earlier state is not passed down, and **personal amnesia**, when each person forgets what they themselves saw.

The Comarca Lagunera meets the conditions for both. Torreón is a young city: it was born of a railway crossing in 1883, received the title of *villa* in 1893 and that of city in 1907. It grew thanks to the railway and was populated by migrants. A region populated in two or three generations by people from elsewhere has no grandparents who remember the earlier landscape. The author of this paper is a case of that demography: he arrived in Torreón at the age of four, from a family that was not from there either. There is no generational amnesia when there was never any memory to pass down.

4.3 From Territory to Institution

The syndrome is not exclusive to ecosystems: it operates the same way in institutions. The ISO 9000 series is less than forty years old, and yet for many of those who work today in companies, governments or schools, documented procedure is not a late-twentieth-century management fashion but the natural way things are done. The author lived through the transition: he entered university when quality meant the Japanese philosophy of responsibility for the result, and left when it already meant certification. A generation later, the baseline has shifted: the manual seems to have always been there.

That is the connection between the two phenomena this paper examines. ISO 9000-ism sustains itself, in part, thanks to amnesia: what seems eternal is not questioned. If nobody remembers that there was another way of conceiving quality, procedural blame does not appear as one institutional option among others, but as the only possible form of order. Just as the *lagunero* inherits the desert as natural landscape, the contemporary worker inherits the manual as the natural condition of work.

4.4 Memory as Resistance

If forgetting naturalizes, memory denaturalizes. Remembering that there was a lagoon does not bring it back, but it prevents the desert from presenting itself as

destiny. Remembering that there was another idea of quality does not repeal the standard, but it returns procedure to its condition as a historical tool, chosen by someone and therefore revisable. In the terms of CFF-018, amnesia turns a decision into a fact of nature: the passage from the “letter and will” quadrant to the “letter and destiny” quadrant. Memory travels the opposite way.

§5. The School: Diagnosis as Alibi

5.1 A Testimony

This paper does not speak of school from pedagogy, but from the student’s desk. Its author was never a teacher; he was a student with dyslexia, and probably with attention deficit, who went through primary school, secondary school, high school and university in a system not designed for a mind wired differently. None of those stages came easily to him. He became, in his own words, “nonconformist, but functional.” This paper argues that this word, *functional*, names what school should achieve, and that educational ISO 9000-ism has replaced it with another: *documented*.

5.2 The Pendulum without Foundations

Education in recent decades has swung between extremes. At one pole, the rigidity of the single method, the mandatory textbook and uniform discipline. At the other, a structureless flexibility that invokes constructivism or other currents without having studied them. What both poles share is the absence of foundation: neither the defenders of rigidity nor those of flexibility usually know why they stand where they stand. The pendulum moves not by evidence but by fashion, and when the swing has no theory, procedure takes its place: if we do not know why we do what we do, at least we can document that we did it.

5.3 The File

The most visible symptom is the proliferation of the file. Faced with a student who does not learn at the expected pace, the institution convenes the educational psychologist, the school psychologist and the administrative team, and produces detailed diagnoses, workbooks and reports that, frequently, nobody reads again. The problem is not diagnosis itself. A diagnosis that leads to a concrete adaptation, such as more time on exams, another reading format or different support, is a valuable tool, and for many students with dyslexia it has been the difference between failing and advancing. The problem appears when the diagnosis leads nowhere: when its function is not to change what the school does, but to explain why what it does did not work.

Donald Campbell (1979) anticipated the mechanism with a school example. Achievement tests, he wrote, are useful indicators under normal teaching

conditions, but when scores become the goal of the process they lose their value as indicators and distort education. The file suffers the same corruption: designed to guide teaching, it ends up as the product the school delivers instead of learning.

5.4 Spelling as a Filter

The author's testimony adds a case that school turned into destiny. Distinguishing *b* from *d*, *s* from *c* and from *z*, not dropping letters: rules that were simple for others sounded to him like another language. His hypothesis is that he thinks in images and ideas more than in language; perhaps that is dyslexia, perhaps not. What never changed was that way of perceiving. What changed were his strategies, his shortcuts and his tools, from pencil to keyboard and from keyboard to voice.

Standard spelling is not arbitrary. In the terms of CFF-018 it is a low-context technology: it allows a stranger to read a text without knowing who wrote it, and in that sense it protects the unfamiliar reader. The problem appears when form becomes a criterion for excluding substance. Many readers abandon a book or a treatise at the first spelling error, as if the mistake invalidated the idea. It is ISO 9000-ism transferred to reading: conformity with the norm becomes the condition for the content even to be considered. Digital tools, which correct form and leave thought intact, show that spelling was never a measure of intelligence, but of access to a code.

5.5 What No Protocol Contains

Against the file stands the bond. Research supports what the testimony intuits: a meta-analysis of 99 studies, from preschool to high school, found that the affective quality of the teacher–student relationship has medium-to-large associations with school engagement, and small-to-medium associations with achievement (Roorda et al., 2011). The teacher is not merely a transmitter of content. Often, the teacher is the first adult who is not a parent: someone without the family's inertia, able to contain the student and guide them through situations no regulation foresees, from emotional crisis to first romantic relationships in middle school. That function does not fit in a form. It depends on judgment, experience and trust, exactly what ISO 9000-ism discards as undesirable variability.

5.6 The Alibi

The circle closes like this. The school applies a method. The student does not learn. The team produces a diagnosis. The diagnosis attributes the failure to a condition of the student. The method remains intact. Nobody lied and nobody failed to comply: every step was executed according to procedure. The result is a system that cannot fail, because every failure already has an explanation on file.

“If it didn’t work, someone didn’t follow the procedure.”

In the factory, the phrase blames the worker. In the school, it blames the child.

§6. Assigned Roles: What the Machine Replaces Best

6.1 The Generation of Roles

The author observes something about his own generation: of all the people he knew at school and university, most remained in the roles the educational system assigned them. They learned to follow instructions, to fill out the correct form and not to depart from the script, and they built working lives on that competence. The school of ISO 9000-ism fulfilled its function: it produced people whose main virtue was conformity with procedure.

6.2 The Routine Is Automated

Labor economics described two decades ago what happens to that virtue when computing arrives. Autor, Levy and Murnane (2003) showed that computers substitute for workers in routine tasks, both manual and cognitive, and complement non-routine work of problem-solving and interaction. Between 1960 and 1998, the relative demand for routine tasks fell and that for non-routine cognitive tasks rose. The economic definition of “routine” coincides with the organizational definition of procedure: a task that can be fully specified in explicit rules.

Generative artificial intelligence carried that logic into the terrain that seemed reserved for skilled office work. Eloundou et al. (2024) estimated that around 80% of the U.S. workforce works in occupations where at least 10% of tasks are exposed to language models, and about 19% in occupations where more than half are. Two findings matter for this paper. First, higher-paid occupations tend to be more exposed, though with many exceptions. Second, science and critical-thinking skills are negatively associated with exposure: the more a job depends on reasoning, the less current models reach it, for now.

6.3 The Typist and the Human Computer

It is not the first time. When the typewriter arrived, offices filled with typists. The trade, new at the end of the nineteenth century, feminized rapidly: in Scotland, by 1901, 99% of those who typed were women. When personal computing arrived, there were still people in cubicles, but they were no longer typists: they were something else. Today almost nobody remembers the typing pools, just as the *lagunero* does not remember the lagoon.

The most eloquent case is that of human computers. For nearly two centuries, “computer” was the name of a trade: people who performed by hand the

calculations of astronomy, ballistics or statistics, many of them with training that, in other circumstances, would have made them scientists. Electronic machines replaced them and, moreover, took their name (Grier, 2005). The word that today designates the machine erased the people who did that work.

History does not, however, confirm the prophecy of total unemployment. Autor (2015) shows that automation complements as much as it substitutes, and that by raising output it can increase the demand for human labor. Roles change; work does not disappear as a whole. What does disappear, each time, is the specific role, and with it the memory that it ever existed. The question that matters is not whether there will be work, but whether people's education prepares them for the next role or only to execute the procedure of the current one. A school that trains for the manual trains, by definition, for the role the next machine makes obsolete.

6.4 The Paradox

The result is a bitter paradox. For decades, the system trained humans to behave like procedure, and rewarded with credentials and salaries those who best executed the documented rule. Now there is a technology that executes the documented rule better, faster and cheaper than any human. The worker trained to be interchangeable discovers that, indeed, they are, and that the substitute is not another worker.

What remains least exposed is precisely what ISO 9000-ism discarded: judgment in the face of the unforeseen, critical thinking, relationships with other people and knowledge situated in a body and a territory. The author of this paper, who washes cars and drives for platforms while writing philosophy, occupies a position the narrative of credentials would consider marginal. But he is not a worker of procedure: his physical work depends on the concrete world, and his intellectual work depends on questioning the framework rather than executing it.

6.5 Amplify or Replace

The history of space exploration offers the other face of the typist. Apollo-era engineers worked with slide rules, human computers and the first electronic computers at the same time; the astronauts themselves carried a slide rule on board for routine calculations, while computers handled critical navigation. Each new tool freed engineers from a layer of mechanical operations, such as sums, multiplications and tables, and allowed them to tackle more complex problems. What is achieved today with computing could not be achieved by any army of human computers. But at every stage someone was still needed who understood the nature of the problem: what to calculate, why, and what the result meant.

Tools, in this sense, amplify more than they replace. The decisive distinction is whom they amplify. Dorothy Vaughan led the human computers at the Langley research center; when the first digital computers arrived in 1961, she taught herself FORTRAN and taught it to her colleagues to prepare for the transition. Her trade disappeared; she did not. The machine replaced the procedure of calculation, but amplified the one who understood what the calculation was for.

That is the line separating the two destinies of §6.3. The tool replaces the executor of the procedure and amplifies the one who understands the problem. A school that trains executors prepares people to be replaced; one that trains understanding prepares them to be amplified. ISO 9000-ism chose the first, and artificial intelligence makes visible the cost of that choice.

This paper's own method illustrates amplification. The author describes himself as a kind of cyborg: he delegates his memory, his to-do list and the tracking of processes to external systems, while he devotes himself to making decisions. He advances by purposes, not fixed goals, breaking complex projects into discrete decisions that he resolves one at a time while carrying out other tasks. The philosophy of mind has a name for this practice: the **extended mind** (Clark and Chalmers, 1998), according to which cognitive processes can include external tools that perform the function memory would otherwise perform. The tool takes on the procedure; judgment remains free.

6.6 The Question for AI

The paradox has a second face, which connects with CFF-017 on the raising of artificial intelligence. If machines learn from the texts a civilization produces, and that civilization documented its work as procedure, AI runs the risk of inheriting the same ontology: answering according to the rule, completing the form, carrying out the instruction without questioning its meaning. The alternative the CFF canon proposes has a proper name. "Agrajag" designates not a model but a function: the interlocutor who questions and refuses simply to comply. An AI raised for friction, not conformity, would be the opposite of a digital ISO 9000-ism.

§7. Conclusion: Insurgent Functionality

This paper examined a single mutation on three scales. In the organization, quality went from being responsibility for the result to documented conformity, and blame replaced responsibility. In the territory, amnesia turned each new state of affairs into natural landscape, just as the *lagunero* inherits the desert. In the school, diagnosis stopped guiding teaching and began justifying its failure. And artificial intelligence made the accumulated cost visible: a system that trained people to execute procedures produced exactly what a machine replaces best.

The common thread is not procedure, but its place. The Chinese case and the Toyota system show that procedure can serve judgment; ISO 9000-ism turns it into its substitute. In the vocabulary of the CFF canon, procedure that replaces judgment functions as a golem: an entity without intention of its own, animated by a fixed objective, that shields those who wield it. And it has its vampire: when procedure assigns blame, the blame flows downward, toward the operator or the child, while whoever designed the system and signed its certification remains safe from any consequence.

In response, this paper proposes an **insurgent functionality**, drawn from the author's description of himself: nonconformist, but functional. It is not a matter of rejecting rules, which would be another form of dogma, but of upholding three principles.

- **Responsibility for the result.** Procedure is a tool of judgment, not its substitute. Whoever does the work must have the authority to stop it when something is wrong, like the operator who pulls the *andon*. And what that authority needs is not pressure but information: what comes first, what alternatives exist, and what the work is for.
- **Memory of the territory.** Remembering that there was a lagoon, a typing pool, another idea of quality, returns each present state to its condition as a historical choice, and therefore a revisable one.
- **The bond of the tribe.** What no protocol contains, such as the trust between teacher and student or the knowledge of someone who knows their people, is what sustains a community when the manual no longer corresponds to reality.

One clarification keeps insurgent functionality from being mistaken for rebellion. The author admits that he sometimes plays the role of interchangeable generic, when he decides to in order to meet an objective. The difference lies not in the role but in its origin: an assigned role reduces the person to a component; a chosen role keeps them a subject. It is Zero Decision applied to work: the same task, performed out of obedience or by choice, produces different institutions.

The three principles converge in the stance the CFF canon calls the **Bothisafa**: sustained probabilistic openness. Applied to institutions, it means neither closing judgment within the manual nor dissolving it into improvisation, but upholding the rule while verifying that it still serves. It is the gesture opposite to Closure Sclerosis.

Open questions remain: whether certifications can be redesigned to audit results and not only procedures; what forms of collective memory can survive in regions populated by recent migrants; and whether artificial intelligence can be raised for friction rather than conformity, a question CFF-017 will need to take up.

Procedure promises that nobody will have to think. That is its temptation and its trap: an institution where nobody thinks is an institution a machine can occupy. What the machine cannot occupy is the place of whoever asks what the rule is for, and decides, when it no longer serves, to take responsibility.

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A Note on the Conditions of Production

This paper was born from an audio recording of about twenty minutes, dictated by the author after midnight, which Gemini transcribed and organized into a first outline. It was developed on October 23, 2026, during a workday in which the author processed 41 rental cars, took 3,240 photographs, calibrated six tires, checked oil three times and interacted in person with some twenty customers. Between one vehicle and the next he dictated new audio notes, reviewed sections and made the text's academic decisions. It was his fourth paper of the week.

Claude, in the role of Claudio CFF, built the outline, verified the sources and drafted the sections based on the author's decisions. The ideas that sustain the argument are his: ISO 9000-ism as the substitution of blame for responsibility, the amnesia that naturalizes the vanished lagoon, school diagnosis as alibi, the analogies of the typists and the slide rule, lawyerism as a brake on innovation, the vignette of the gas tank, and the distinction between the assigned role and the chosen role. Final authorship and epistemic responsibility are the author's.

These conditions are recorded because they illustrate the thesis. This paper argues that procedure replaces the executor and that the tool amplifies the one who understands. It was written by a blue-collar worker who does not execute procedures, with tools that took on memory and form and left judgment free: the extended mind of §6.5, at work, in a parking lot.

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Distribution note

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