The Dissertation as Orthopraxy

Examination, Citation, and the Legal Form of Access

Abstract and statement of method

Pissarro, Paul-Alexander Arthur
ORCID iD 0009-0000-0830-8438

Publisher Church of Conceptual Art
Year 2026
Version v0.1
Licence CC BY 4.0 International. Applies to the text of this work only.
Canonical address https://paulpissarro.com/thesis/
Propositions https://paulpissarro.com/thesis/propositions/
Citation ledger https://paulpissarro.com/thesis/ledger/ · opened empty 2026-10-23
DOI 10.17613/433nb-8gb18

The identifier above was reserved before this document was built, so that the deposited file could state its own DOI rather than point at nothing. It resolves from the moment the deposit is published. The citation ledger was opened empty and dated before any deposit existed, and independently timestamped the same day by the Internet Archive. Nothing in this document is a claim about work already done.

Abstract

Scholarship registers contribution by citation. A dissertation is examined before it can be cited. What is certified at examination is therefore a forecast of contribution rather than contribution itself. This study sets that proposition against three bodies of evidence, historical, experimental and procedural, and then acts on the result.

The first is historical. The European degree ladder is a transposed craft-guild structure in which master and doctor were originally synonymous, both naming the *licentia docendi*, the licence to teach, neither certifying an original contribution to knowledge. The definition of the doctorate as certifying new knowledge is a modern retrofit, as the historiography of the German university has established: Humboldt's memorandum of 1810, the document usually credited with the research ideal, was left a fragment, went unpublished in his lifetime, and first appeared in print in 1903, and the attribution of the ideal to Humboldt is itself a twentieth-century invention. What has not been drawn from that record is its general form: a legitimating origin can be composed long after the fact, and the institution it explains runs unchanged either way.

The second is experimental. A hypnotic induction is the ritual preamble, ordinarily relaxation and fixed attention, held to produce the state in which suggestion works. When identical suggestions are administered with and without one, the induction contributes little to measured response, on the order of one and a half suggestions in ten. What governs the account the subject gives is not the procedure but its name: a

conventional induction introduced as a control produces less than half the depth it produces under its own name, while white noise introduced as hypnosis produces as much as the real thing. The ceremony does not produce the capacity. It relocates its authorship.

The third is procedural. Entry to the principal scholarly indexes is conditioned on the legal form of the depositor rather than on the assessed quality of the work. The index of record for dissertations accepts them only from institutions it recognises as accredited. The principal humanities archive states that it does not publish what it hosts. The registry through which citations are counted admits organisations and not individuals, and an unaffiliated author reaches them only from inside a repository that supplies the standing they lack. The exclusion of unaffiliated scholars is well documented; what follows from it is not. A gate set on legal form rather than merit is satisfied by incorporation rather than by better work, and a gate that cheap screens for nothing it claims to screen for.

The argument is not that examination is worthless. Pre-circulation scrutiny catches error before it propagates, which no citation count can do. Rather, two functions, quality assurance and the registration of contribution, have been fused in one instrument and can be separated. Drawing on the history of the university, on artistic precedents for the self-constituted institution, on Adorno on theory as praxis, and on the performative utterance, it asks what it would mean to register a contribution without certifying it in advance. What emerges is an account of the doctorate as a forecast, and a demonstration of the alternative: a work constituted rather than petitioned, deposited under a persistent identifier, and submitted to a citation record published openly and dated before the first deposit.

Keywords

orthopraxy; credentialism; doctoral education; history of universities; Humboldt myth; suggestion and response expectancy; scholarly indexing; independent scholars; institutional repositories; open access; artistic research

Scope of this deposit

This deposit is the abstract and nothing further. The argument it summarises rests on a registry of labelled propositions, each stating the source it rests on and the claim it serves, which is published openly at https://paulpissarro.com/thesis/propositions/ and is deposited separately. Where a reader wants the evidence behind a sentence here, that registry is where it is held. A record of the infrastructure through which this work was deposited, including the applications made and refused, is also deposited separately.

Depositing the abstract alone is deliberate rather than provisional. The abstract has been read and cleared; the registry had not been at the time of this deposit. Publishing the two together would have extended one reader's approval to material they had not seen.

How to cite this work

Cite the proposition label rather than the page. Labels are permanent and pages are not. The form is the author, the year and the label, for example **Pissarro 2026, C13**. Every proposition carries a permanent anchor on the propositions page, so C13 resolves at https://paulpissarro.com/thesis/propositions/#C13 and will continue to. A proposition later found to be wrong keeps its number and is marked withdrawn with the reason given; it is never renumbered or reused.