

# Struggle for Survival as Ontological Fixation

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*A MARP Account of Differentiation, Truth, and Manifested Existence*

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## Abstract

The familiar phrase “struggle for survival” usually assumes that beings already exist as sufficiently formed units and then enter conflict in order to preserve themselves. This paper argues that such a picture is metaphysically incomplete. Drawing on Metaphysics of the Absolute and Reference Points (MARP), it contends that struggle is often better understood as a process of ontological fixation rather than a secondary response to external threat. Under determinate conditions, beings do not struggle only to remain what they already are; they struggle because existence at the level of attribution must be stabilized, resumed, and carried within a limited field of reference, differentiation, and constraint. Conflict, on this view, is not fundamentally a clash among ready-made substances. It arises where differentiated manifestations press toward incompatible stabilizations within the same constrained field. The paper further argues that the truth at stake in struggle is not always a detached object wholly external to the strugglers, but may function as a constrained mode of manifested existence: a legitimate stabilization of readable difference within a limited economy of measurement. The argument is strictly philosophical and non-justificatory. To explain struggle as a structural consequence of ontological differentiation is not to endorse violence, domination, or oppression.

**Keywords:** MARP; metaphysics; struggle; survival; fixation; ontological differentiation; truth; reference points; manifestation; social ontology

## 1. Introduction

A community may appear to be struggling merely to defend itself, yet what is really at stake is often more basic: the terms under which it can count, appear, and continue as a recognizable presence at all. The same is true of a person, an institution, or a form of life

whose crisis is not exhausted by external threat. In such cases, the issue is not only whether something will remain, but whether it can be fixed in a determinate way within the frame that measures it. This is the deeper problem obscured by the familiar phrase “struggle for survival.”

That phrase occupies a central place in modern descriptions of life, conflict, adaptation, and persistence. It appears across biological discourse, political rhetoric, social theory, and ordinary speech as though its meaning were self-evident. Yet the familiarity of the phrase conceals a major metaphysical assumption: it presupposes that entities already exist as sufficiently formed and stable units, and that they subsequently enter into struggle in order to preserve that prior existence. On this view, struggle is secondary. Existence is primary, conflict derivative. A being first is, and only then confronts threat, resistance, scarcity, or opposition.

This paper contends that the standard picture is philosophically incomplete. Within the framework of Metaphysics of the Absolute and Reference Points (MARP), struggle can be interpreted at a deeper level. What is commonly called survival is usually treated as the preservation of a completed state. MARP allows a different account: under determinate conditions, struggle belongs to the very process through which existence is fixed, stabilized, and sustained as a differentiated mode of manifestation. Existence, on this account, is not a finished possession. It is structured, resumed, and maintained through reference, constraint, differentiation, and positional exposure (D’Artagnan 2026).

Such a view requires a reframing of both survival and truth. If struggle belongs, at least in some circumstances, to the process through which beings become fixed in determinate form, then the object of struggle cannot always be conceived as wholly external to the

strugglers. What is contested is not necessarily an indifferent object standing apart from the agents involved. Rather, the truth at stake may itself be a mode of manifested positioning: a way in which beings stand, appear, and hold within a differentiated structure of reference. This does not imply that truth is subjective, voluntarist, or reducible to desire. It implies, more precisely, that truth in such contexts cannot be adequately described as a detachable entity wholly separable from the ontological conditions under which beings become readable, stable, and exposed.

This argument must be stated with equal clarity on the normative level. To analyze struggle as a structural consequence of differentiated existence is not to justify violence, domination, oppression, or cruelty. Ontological explanation is not moral endorsement. A philosophical account of why conflict can arise from the logic of fixation does not provide ethical permission for its enactment. The present essay is explanatory, not apologetic; analytic, not celebratory.

The paper proceeds as follows. It begins by examining the standard understanding of struggle for survival and the substance-based metaphysics that often underwrites it. It then outlines the MARP concepts required for a different account of existence, clarifies the relation between minimal fixation, legitimate stabilization, and lock, and develops the central idea of struggle as fixation. A subsequent section reconsiders truth, arguing that what is contested in struggle may be a manifested mode of existence rather than a detached object. The argument then turns to ontological differentiation as the deeper ground of structurally serious conflict, before illustrating the account through recognition, identity, institutions, and psychological oscillation. A final clarificatory section marks what the view does not entail, especially in ethical and political terms, while also sharpening its critical resources against coercive forms of maintenance.

## 2. The Standard Picture: Survival as the Preservation of What Already Is

The ordinary understanding of struggle for survival rests upon an intuitively powerful image. A being is confronted by danger, scarcity, competition, or possible extinction; in response, it struggles in order to preserve itself. Whether the setting is biological, social, political, or existential, the schema remains largely the same: first there is an identifiable entity, then there is a threat, and finally there is an effort at self-preservation. The struggle is therefore understood as instrumental. It serves a being whose identity is taken, at least provisionally, to be already constituted.

This picture is widespread because it is pragmatically persuasive. It matches ordinary experience at a visible level. Organisms seek food, avoid predators, defend territory, and reproduce. Individuals protect social standing, secure material conditions, and resist forces that endanger continuity. Communities defend institutions, narratives, and boundaries against dissolution or displacement. In each case, struggle appears as a reaction to circumstances that place already existing entities at risk. The model is therefore not empty; it captures an important dimension of empirical life. Yet it does so by presupposing a metaphysical order that is rarely examined.

The hidden assumption can be stated simply: the being that struggles is treated as ontologically settled enough to enter conflict from a position of prior self-identity. Struggle is then added onto existence as an event among other events. Even when identity is described as historically shaped or socially mediated, the framework often still assumes that there is a sufficiently stabilized subject, organism, group, or system that can be designated as the bearer of the struggle. The ontological work of fixation has already been silently completed.

The problem is not that this orientation is always false, but that it is insufficient. It explains conflict by beginning too late. It starts from already manifest entities and asks how they preserve themselves, rather than asking how determinate existence itself is stabilized, exposed, and maintained. As a result, it tends to treat conflict as accidental, situational, or externally induced. Even where conflict is acknowledged as recurrent or structurally embedded, it is still understood as happening to beings that have already achieved enough ontological completion to enter the scene.

What this picture cannot adequately explain is why struggle sometimes appears to do more than protect existence. In many contexts, struggle seems constitutive of what the being becomes. Social identity is often not merely defended through conflict but formed in and through processes of contestation. Intellectual positions are not simply preserved against rivals but sharpened, stabilized, and made explicit through opposition. Institutional realities do not merely endure under pressure; they often acquire determinate form through the very tensions that expose their boundaries. At the interpersonal level, recognition, agency, and commitment are frequently fixed through conflictual encounter rather than simply carried into it. In such cases, struggle is not a removable external layer. It appears closer to a medium of fixation.

A substance-based metaphysics has difficulty with this phenomenon because it tends to imagine existence as already packaged in coherent units. If beings are ontologically complete enough before conflict, then struggle can only modify, damage, protect, or destroy them. It cannot easily be seen as participating in the very process by which they become determinate. What falls out of view is the possibility that existence itself may be dynamically structured, that determination may require ongoing stabilization, and that conflict may arise

not merely because stable beings compete over external goods, but because differentiation generates incompatible pressures of fixation.

### **3. MARP and the Reframing of Existence**

To move beyond the standard picture, a different metaphysical grammar is required. MARP provides such a grammar by beginning not from already completed substances, but from the conditions under which difference becomes readable within a limited frame. Its starting point is decisive: no readable difference appears without attribution. One does not meaningfully say that something is larger, truer, nearer, prior, or more important except within a frame of measurement and relative to some point of reference. Measurement is therefore not the passive reception of a finished world, but the rendering of differentiation into readable form under conditions of limitation (D'Artagnan 2026).

This starting point matters because it displaces the idea that being first arrives in self-contained units and only afterward enters relations of comparison or conflict. In MARP, existence at the level of the Absolute stands through differentiation rather than through a prior specifier distributing fixed essences. At the level of attribution, however, differentiation becomes readable only when some minimal degree of it is fixed as a reference point. A reference point is not necessarily a thing or substance. It may be a criterion, a relation, a remembered pattern, an institutionally stabilized marker, or any operative point against which other differences become measurable. What matters is not the substance of the reference point, but its capacity to stabilize reading.

A brief clarification is necessary here concerning the Absolute. In MARP, the Absolute is not a highest object inside attribution, nor a master reference point alongside other reference points. It names the level at which existence stands through differentiation without first

being parceled out by an external specifier. Attribution, by contrast, concerns how that differentiation becomes readable within limited frames. The difference is therefore not between one realm that is real and another that is invented, but between differentiation as ontological standing and differentiation as measured, fixed, and resumed within operative conditions of reading.

Attribution should therefore not be misunderstood as the invention of a second reality. It is the operational layer in which differentiation becomes measurable through fixation. In this layer, the frame cannot carry every difference at once. Limitation is not an accidental defect added from outside, but a structural condition of reading itself. Because the frame is limited, it must select, defer, organize, preserve, and revise. From this arise the central operational functions of identity, time, memory, causality, and logic. These are not eternal substances hiding behind experience. They are the forms through which reading avoids collapse under conditions of limited measurement (D'Artagnan 2026).

This is especially important for the present argument because it transforms how persistence must be understood. Identity is not the discovery of a timeless self-same essence, but the operational stabilization that allows something to count again as the same for purposes of resumption. Time is not an independent river through which beings travel, but the order required when a frame must arrange what it cannot hold all at once. Memory is not the storage of a complete past, but the preservation of enough trace for renewed passage. Causality is not the unveiling of a hidden chain from outside experience, but a practical linkage that permits anticipation and revision. In each case, what appears stable is not simply given in advance; it is maintained through an economy of fixation.

From this perspective, existence cannot be treated as a finished possession to which struggle is later appended. Existence, at least insofar as it is lived, interpreted, and sustained within attribution, is already bound to processes of stabilization. A being is not merely there and then threatened. It is positioned, resumed, and carried within a field whose intelligibility depends on reference, limitation, and ongoing acts of fixation. Existence is therefore neither a free projection nor an inert block. It is a constrained process of manifested differentiation under conditions of resumability.

#### **4. From Survival to Fixation**

The shift from survival to fixation marks the central argumentative move of this paper. To speak of survival ordinarily suggests that a being already possesses its identity in sufficiently settled form and then acts to preserve it against loss. By contrast, fixation names the process by which determinacy is established, resumed, and held under conditions of limitation and pressure. What is usually called survival may therefore be only the visible surface of a deeper ontological labor. Beings do not always struggle merely to remain what they already are. In many cases, they struggle because without some successful stabilization, what they are cannot become operative, recognizable, or sustainable at all. For this reason, fixation must be distinguished at three levels. First, there is minimal fixation: the irreducible operational holding required for anything to become readable, resumable, or attributable at all. Second, there is legitimate stabilization: a fixation that secures determinacy while preserving passage, revisability, and a non-coercive capacity to carry differences. Third, there is lock: fixation hardened into rigid closure, where what is held can persist only through exclusion, suppression, or escalating maintenance. The present argument depends on all three distinctions. Without minimal fixation, no world is readable;

without legitimate stabilization, no order is livable; and where lock predominates, fixation ceases to be a living support of existence and becomes an oppressive economy of closure.

This claim must be stated carefully. It does not mean that every struggle is metaphysically necessary or that conflict is the essence of existence. It means, more narrowly, that under certain conditions struggle becomes one mode through which differentiated existence attempts fixation when coexistence no longer remains frictionless. In such cases, struggle is not simply added to being from outside. It arises from pressures to stabilize a position, preserve a reference, secure a domain of legitimacy, or resist collapse into indeterminacy, subordination, or erasure.

What is fixed in struggle is not necessarily a substance. It may be a practical orientation, an institutional position, a mode of recognition, a collective identity, a hierarchy of value, a form of life, or a truth-claim inseparable from the being of those who hold it. The mistake of the standard picture is to imagine that all such realities are fully constituted before conflict begins. Yet social and historical life repeatedly shows otherwise. Positions are sharpened in contestation. Identities become determinate through resistance. Institutions do not merely persist under pressure; they often acquire form through the very tensions that define their boundaries. Even intellectual and spiritual commitments frequently become explicit only where they are tested, denied, opposed, or forced into articulation.

MARP allows this phenomenon to be described without reducing it to romanticized antagonism. Because attribution is structured by reference points and by the limits of resumption, stabilization always occurs under selective conditions. Not every difference can be carried equally. Not every position can be fixed without cost. Not every claim can occupy the same field without reordering what counts as central, peripheral, legitimate, or excluded.

Struggle, in this sense, can emerge where differentiated manifestations press toward incompatible fixations within the same constrained domain. The conflict is not necessarily over an external object alone. It is over what may count, hold, pass, and continue.

Here the phrase “struggle for survival” begins to reveal its inadequacy. It treats conflict as though the primary issue were the continued existence of already discrete beings. But often the deeper issue is the stabilization of the mode in which existence is being carried. Survival, on this reading, is not abandoned; it is subordinated to a more originary process. One survives, where one does survive, by means of fixation. What appears as defense of life may in fact be defense of the conditions under which life becomes determinate, intelligible, or livable in the first place.

## **5. Truth as a Mode of Manifested Existence**

The claim that truth is implicated in struggle is easily misunderstood. It can sound as though truth were being reduced to force, possession, or mere perspectival assertion. That is not the argument. The present claim is narrower and more exact: within the MARP framework, truth at the level of attribution is not adequately understood as a detached object floating entirely outside the conditions under which beings read, stabilize, and resume the world. Truth is bound to the economy of measurement within which differences become readable, fixations become possible, and revision remains open (D’Artagnan 2026).

This point follows from MARP’s treatment of legitimacy. What makes a fixation count as legitimate is not its alleged access to a final correspondence outside every frame, but its capacity to pass, stabilize, and remain revisable without collapsing into lock or escalating maintenance. Truth, in this sense, is neither arbitrary nor merely private. It names a

legitimate mode of holding and carrying differentiation within a limited field of attribution. A truth is legitimate when it sustains passage, preserves enough stability for continued reading, and remains open to correction where carrying differences require revision.

Seen from this angle, truth cannot be conceived as a simple external prize over which already completed beings happen to compete. In many cases, what is called truth is inseparable from the manifested positioning of those who contend over it. A political community struggling over legitimacy, a marginalized group struggling over recognition, an institution struggling over authority, or a thinker struggling over the language of a concept is not always engaged in a contest over an indifferent object lying outside the terms of its existence. What is at stake may be a form of manifestation itself: how a being, position, or order is rendered readable, carried, and maintained within a shared world.

This is why the paper insists that the truth of struggle is not wholly detachable from the struggler. The point is not that reality bends to desire, but that within attribution truth is accessible only through conditions that render differentiation meaningfully readable, stable, and revisable. A being does not struggle only over what it externally wants. It may struggle over the terms under which it can appear, count, or continue as what it is. In such cases, truth functions not merely as a possession to be seized, but as a constrained mode of manifested existence.

Everything turns here on the distinction between manifestation and projection. To say that truth is a mode of manifested existence is not to say that beings create truth at will. Manifestation in MARP is constrained: the frame is limited, carrying differences press for inclusion, and failure remains possible. A fixation may harden into illegitimate lock; a reading may survive only through escalating maintenance; a position may claim truth while

suppressing the very differences that would test it. The mere existential centrality of a claim to a being or collective does not make it legitimate. Legitimacy still depends on passage, stability, and revisability.

## **6. Ontological Differentiation and the Emergence of Conflict**

The concept that makes this account possible is ontological differentiation. In MARP, differentiation is not a secondary variation imposed upon pre-existing identical units. It is the condition of standing itself. Existence, at the level of the Absolute, stands through differentiation; there is no specifier outside it distributing identities over a neutral void, and no ontological nothingness separating copies in order to make difference possible. At the level of attribution, this primordial differentiation becomes readable only through fixed reference points within a limited frame. Conflict must therefore be reconsidered in light of this layered structure (D'Artagnan 2026).

If beings were simply self-enclosed substances possessing their identities in full before relation, conflict would appear as an accidental encounter among finished units. But if determinate existence within attribution depends upon fixation, reference, and resumable differentiation, then tension is more deeply woven into the structure of appearance. Conflict can emerge where differentiated manifestations press toward incompatible stabilizations within the same limited field. The issue is not bare non-identity by itself; difference alone does not produce struggle. Conflict arises when non-identical modes of standing require forms of fixation that cannot be simultaneously carried without reordering the frame.

This is why the article speaks of struggle as an effect of ontological differentiation rather than as a clash of substances. The struggle does not begin because two finished things happen to occupy the same external space. It begins when the conditions for readable and

sustainable manifestation become contested. One position seeks to stabilize a hierarchy of value; another seeks to expose its exclusions. One institution seeks to preserve a reference structure; another mode of life renders that structure unsustainable. One identity seeks continuity through inherited categories; another cannot appear legitimately within them. In each case, conflict is generated not merely by appetite or hostility, but by the pressure of incompatible fixations.

Ontological differentiation therefore explains why conflict can be structurally serious without being metaphysically romanticized. It is structurally serious because differentiation is not superficial decoration laid over an otherwise homogeneous reality. Differences matter because they affect what can be read, resumed, and stabilized. Yet the account does not romanticize conflict because differentiation does not entail that every incompatibility must culminate in violence. Some conflicts are absorbed through reconfiguration of the frame, widening of carrying capacity, revision of reference points, or redistribution of legitimacy. Others harden because the field is too contracted, the maintenance too severe, or the lock too strong.

This point also gives the framework a sharper critical edge. A structure should not be judged legitimate merely because it has succeeded in stabilizing itself. Some orders endure only by demanding increasing amounts of maintenance—legal, symbolic, affective, or coercive—in order to suppress the differences they cannot carry. Escalating maintenance is therefore not simply a sign of strength; it may be evidence that an order has lost the capacity for legitimate passage and now survives by forcing closure where revision, redistribution, or widening of carrying capacity would otherwise be required.

## 7. Illustrative Applications: Politics, Recognition, Identity, and Institutions

These applications should be read with one methodological caution in view.

Ontological differentiation does not replace historical explanation, nor does it reduce social conflict to a purely abstract play of reference points. What it provides is a deeper condition of intelligibility. Concrete conflicts are still shaped by labor, resources, law, institutions, memory, material scarcity, inherited domination, and historically specific forms of power. The claim is therefore not that social struggle is nothing but incompatible fixation, but that historically mediated struggles become more intelligible when one also sees how they bear upon the stabilization, legibility, and continuance of differentiated existence.

The argument developed above remains deliberately metaphysical, but its force becomes clearer when one considers a few concrete domains in which struggle is often misdescribed as mere competition among already formed entities. Take, first, the political struggle for recognition. Such struggles are commonly narrated as demands made by groups that already possess a fully determinate identity and merely seek public acknowledgment of what they already are. Yet recognition often does more than mirror a prior social reality. The struggle itself helps fix the terms under which a group can appear, count, and continue as a legible presence within the public frame. What is contested is therefore not only a discrete good called recognition, but the structure of reference through which existence becomes publicly readable. From a MARP perspective, this is why such struggles frequently exceed instrumental negotiation: they concern the conditions of manifested standing (Taylor 1992; Honneth 1996).

A similar point applies to identity. Personal or collective identity is often treated as a possession carried intact into conflict. But many identities become determinately articulated only through tension, denial, exclusion, or resistance. This does not mean that oppression is constitutive in a morally affirmative sense, but it does mean that conflict may expose the limits of the prevailing frame and force the stabilization of previously marginalized or illegible modes of existence. Here again, the struggle is not adequately described as a defense of a fully completed substance. It is, at least in part, a struggle over the possibility of fixation itself—over whether and how a being may appear without distortion, erasure, or forced translation into alien reference points.

Institutional conflict provides a third example. Institutions often present themselves as stable containers within which disputes occur. Yet institutions are not neutral vessels; they are economies of measurement, legitimacy, and exclusion. Their apparent stability depends on repeated acts of fixation that determine what counts as normal, authoritative, and intelligible. Conflict within or around institutions therefore frequently reveals more than a contest over policy or control. It reveals pressure upon the reference structure of the institution itself. Reform movements, internal crises of legitimacy, and struggles over authority often arise because the institution can no longer carry the differences pressing upon it without revising its own terms of stabilization. In such cases, conflict is not merely a disturbance of order by outside forces. It is a sign that the existing order has reached the limits of what it can legitimately resume (Foucault 1977).

Psychological conflict offers a further and especially revealing case, provided it is not reduced to a merely inward or clinical event. Within a MARP framework, such conflict is better understood as a disturbance in ontological carrying, legible as an unstable oscillation around a governing reference point. The issue is not simply that the subject feels tension,

but that the carrier can no longer sustain a stable reading of itself, its obligations, its value, or its continuity under the point of reference governing the frame. What appears psychologically is therefore rooted, at least in part, in a deeper instability of fixation (Butler 1997).

When this oscillation intensifies, the carrier may attempt not to escape reference as such—since attribution cannot proceed without reference—but to break from this particular fixed point through substitution, collapse, or recourse to a more rigid fixation. In this light, certain extreme behaviors may become more intelligible when read not as sheer irrationality, but as forced efforts at stabilization under conditions in which ordinary carrying has become intolerable. Withdrawal from society and its norms, repudiation of prevailing laws and values, self-destructive impulses, or abrupt attachment to closed and severe forms of identity may, in some cases, be understood as attempts to exit an unlivable reference structure by imposing another, even where the new fixation is destructive, pathological, or closed to revision.

The importance of this example lies in its philosophical consequence. It shows that struggle need not appear only between groups, institutions, or political orders. It can also arise within the carrier whenever the frame through which existence is being measured can no longer sustain legitimate passage. Even here, however, the point is not to psychologize ontology. The point is to show that what appears as psychic extremity may sometimes be the interior expression of a more basic conflict in fixation, reference, and ontological differentiation.

These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive, but they show why the proposed account matters. To interpret struggle only as survival is to remain at the visible surface of conflict. To interpret it as fixation is to see that many concrete struggles concern the terms

under which beings, identities, institutions, and even carriers can stand at all. This deepens explanation without converting every conflict into necessity or every claim into legitimacy.

## **8. What This View Does Not Mean**

This account must be sharply delimited. To explain conflict as a possible consequence of ontological differentiation is not to justify war, oppression, domination, cruelty, or coercion. Ontological analysis is not moral endorsement. The claim that struggle may participate in fixation does not entail that every struggle is legitimate, necessary, or worthy of preservation.

Nor does the argument imply that violence is the deepest truth of existence. Struggle is one possible mode of fixation under constrained conditions, not the universal essence of being. There are forms of stabilization that remain open, cooperative, revisable, and non-destructive. Indeed, the very criteria of legitimacy in MARP—passage, stability, and revisability—provide resources for criticizing forms of conflict that harden into lock, require escalating maintenance, or destroy the possibility of shared carrying. A conflict becomes philosophically suspect when its continuation depends less on legitimate stabilization than on ever greater expenditure to block, erase, or discipline the differences pressing upon it.

Finally, the argument does not collapse truth into power. That some truths are inseparable from modes of manifested existence does not mean that power alone determines legitimacy. Fixation can fail. Orders can sustain themselves only by suppressing carrying differences. Claims can survive through maintenance without genuine revisability. The framework developed here therefore offers not a license for metaphysical violence, but a more precise vocabulary for distinguishing living stabilization from rigid domination, and

for criticizing systems whose apparent order is purchased through increasingly coercive forms of maintenance (Foucault 1980).

## 9. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the standard image of the struggle for survival rests on a metaphysical simplification. It assumes that beings are already sufficiently constituted and then enter conflict in order to preserve themselves. Against this view, MARP permits a more fundamental account. Existence, insofar as it is read and carried within attribution, is not a finished possession but a process of constrained stabilization. Under determinate conditions, struggle belongs not merely to the defense of being, but to the fixation through which determinate being is sustained.

The decisive philosophical shift is therefore from survival to fixation. What appears as conflict among already completed entities is often better understood as a contest over the terms of manifested existence itself. Truth, on this account, is neither a detached object wholly external to those who contend over it nor a mere projection of will. It is a constrained mode of readable differentiation within a limited field of reference, whose legitimacy depends on passage, stability, and revisability. Ontological differentiation explains why such contests can acquire structural seriousness: conflict emerges where incompatible fixations press upon the same field of manifestation.

To say this is not to justify struggle in any moral or political sense. On the contrary, it allows concrete conflicts to be judged more rigorously by distinguishing legitimate stabilization from locked maintenance, and living differentiation from oppressive closure. The contribution of the present argument is therefore diagnostic rather than celebratory. It offers a way of thinking conflict without presupposing substances, of thinking truth without

severing it from the conditions of manifested existence, and of criticizing orders whose apparent survival depends less on legitimate passage than on coercive maintenance and enforced closure.

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