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Obedience Without Command: The Silent Authority of Predictive Systems

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Abstract

This article investigates the paradox of obedience without command in predictive societies. Authority, once tied to explicit orders and visible command structures, is now embedded in syntactic operations that organize compliance without issuing instructions. *Obedience Without Command* explores how predictive systems generate silent authority, where rules are followed not because they are commanded, but because their form leaves no alternative. Through case studies of financial reporting, automated governance, and predictive scoring, the paper develops a framework to understand authority that operates without decision-makers, and obedience that emerges without command.

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1. Introduction: The Paradox of Obedience

The problem of obedience has classically been understood as a relational structure. Someone commands, someone else obeys. From the military chain of command to the bureaucratic order in modern states, the schema presupposes a sender, a receiver, and an order that travels between them. The history of law, administration, and political theory is saturated with this model. Yet the emergence of predictive systems forces a break: obedience appears even when no one commands. Compliance persists even when the figure of the issuer is absent. The paradox is that obedience becomes more stable, more inescapable, when command disappears.

The guiding hypothesis of this article is that syntax replaces command. What institutions and subjects obey in predictive societies is not the intentionality of a leader or the decision of an office but the *regla compilada*. As a type-0 grammar, it generates forms that must be completed, structures that leave no space for refusal. The act of obedience no longer points back to a sovereign subject but to the inevitability of the form itself. To obey, in this context, is to complete the sentence that has already been structurally closed by the system. The shift is radical: authority does not vanish with the disappearance of explicit commands, it becomes silent and omnipresent.

Classical sociology and jurisprudence can serve as contrast. Weber (1978) located rational-legal authority in rules that were traceable, explicit, and validated by institutional offices. Even in their impersonality, those rules presupposed an apparatus that could be appealed to and a figure that guaranteed their legitimacy. Similarly, military and juridical obedience presupposed an issuer: the order of a commander, the judgment of a court, the decree of a sovereign. In all these cases, disobedience remained structurally possible because there was always someone to resist, a command to contradict, a chain of authority to break.

Predictive authority displaces this schema entirely. In enterprise resource planning systems, financial reports, distributed autonomous organizations, or predictive scoring mechanisms, there is no order to resist. One complies because the form leaves no alternative. The rule is embedded in the structure of the document, in the grammar of the code, in the routine of the automated process. The sovereign does not appear, yet obedience

is intensified. The compulsion does not arise from a decision but from the closure of a syntactic operation.

Three dimensions define this paradox. First, authority without source: the *soberano ejecutable* operates silently, embodied in routines and code, without issuing explicit statements. Second, obedience without resistance: when there is no order, there is no locus of disobedience. To refuse becomes structurally impossible, because nothing can be contradicted. Third, institutional recursion: systems replicate their forms across contexts, imposing a logic of compliance that spreads without the need for explicit decisions. What was once an act of following an order becomes a mechanical reproduction of form, multiplied across institutional and technical fields.

The consequence is that obedience itself must be redefined. It can no longer be described as a pragmatic act between a commander and a subordinate. It must be analyzed as a structural condition of predictive societies, where syntax itself organizes behavior. The absence of an order does not diminish obedience, it radicalizes it. The disappearance of the command transforms obedience into an autonomous phenomenon of form. In this sense, the paradox is not a weakness of contemporary institutions but their operational core: the silent authority of predictive systems produces obedience more absolute than any explicit command ever could.

2. Theoretical Framework

The paradox of obedience without command demands a theoretical realignment. If the classical schema presupposed a visible source of authority, predictive societies function on the basis of structures that no longer need to articulate themselves as commands. To situate this transformation, the framework must traverse three lines of thought: the sociology of authority, the genealogy of obedience, and the formal autonomy of syntax.

From Rational-Legal Authority to Algorithmic Authority

Max Weber (1978) located the rational-legal type of authority in rules that were formally codified and guaranteed by offices. The legitimacy of the modern state derived from the

capacity to issue commands in the form of laws, decrees, or administrative decisions. Even in their impersonality, these commands were traceable: a citizen could identify the source, appeal the decision, or disobey and face sanctions. Authority was inseparable from procedure, and obedience presupposed the possibility of resistance.

Predictive systems fracture this logic. Orders are no longer articulated but compiled. Instead of laws, we find code; instead of decrees, automated outputs. The command is displaced by the *regla compilada*, which operates as a type-0 grammar that produces closures without deliberation. The legitimacy of the system no longer depends on an identifiable office but on the smooth functioning of syntax. This is what transforms rational-legal authority into algorithmic authority: the law is no longer spoken, it is executed silently in the background.

Genealogy of Obedience

Historically, obedience was bound to visibility. Military traditions linked it to hierarchy: one obeyed the superior officer. Juridical systems tied obedience to the figure of the judge or sovereign. Even religious forms of obedience presupposed a voice, a command, or a written doctrine. In all cases, the command functioned as an anchor that made obedience intelligible.

The shift occurs when obedience no longer points back to a subject but forward to a form. Algorithmic systems do not issue commands that can be quoted, they generate conditions that make compliance unavoidable. In ERP financial reports, the cell structure itself dictates how figures must be entered. In DAOs, the smart contract enforces a decision without deliberation. In predictive scoring systems, the model imposes an outcome whose legitimacy derives from statistical closure rather than from authority in the classical sense. Obedience is genealogically displaced from command to syntax.

Syntax as Autonomous Authority

Here the contribution of formal linguistics becomes indispensable. The *regla compilada* can be described, following the Chomskyan hierarchy (Chomsky, 1965), as a production of type-0. It has the capacity to generate any sequence of behavior that can be described

formally, without limitation. Unlike natural rules, which require a speaker or issuer, the compiled rule functions independently of intention. Its autonomy is structural: once in place, it executes without decision.

This is the ground on which the concept of the *soberano ejecutable* emerges. Authority is no longer an office, an institution, or a person, but the silent execution of rules that are already closed in their form. Obedience arises as an effect of structural inevitability. The subject complies not because they were told to but because deviation is excluded at the level of syntax.

Position within the Canon

This article continues a trajectory already opened in *Algorithmic Obedience*, where the simulation of command was analyzed, and in *Delegatio Ex Machina*, where the outsourcing of agency to predictive systems was formalized. The present framework radicalizes that trajectory: it is not merely that algorithms simulate commands or that institutions delegate agency. It is that obedience itself survives without command. What was once an external relation becomes an internal necessity of form.

Toward a Critical Concept of Obedience Without Command

The theoretical framework therefore insists that obedience must be reconceptualized. It is no longer a matter of authority issuing orders but of syntax producing closure. Rational-legal authority depended on traceable procedures; algorithmic authority depends on forms that cannot be refused. The genealogy of obedience confirms the transition from visibility to invisibility, from command to structure. And the autonomy of syntax grounds the possibility that obedience can persist even when no one commands.

This framework prepares the ground for the case studies that follow. The question is not how people or institutions obey orders, but how obedience is generated structurally in environments where commands no longer exist. The paradox is that the disappearance of command does not dissolve obedience but installs it as the silent infrastructure of predictive societies.

3. Syntax as Authority

The central claim of this section is that syntax itself functions as authority. When predictive systems organize behavior, the order is no longer spoken or written by an identifiable source; it is generated by the closure of a syntactic form. The *regla compilada* operates as a production of type-0 grammar, capable of generating any sequence without limitation, and its effect is the transformation of authority from a voice into a form.

The *regla compilada* as Structural Generator

Unlike a legal rule or a bureaucratic norm that presupposes a legislator, the *regla compilada* executes independently of any issuer. Its autonomy derives from its structure: once compiled, it enforces itself. This self-executing character means that obedience no longer depends on intentionality or legitimacy. To obey is to participate in a sequence whose conclusion has already been defined at the level of grammar. The syntactic closure generates compliance without appeal, since deviation is excluded in advance.

This marks a radical shift in the ontology of authority. Authority has been traditionally defined as the right to command and the capacity to be obeyed. In the context of predictive systems, the right is irrelevant, and the capacity is structural. The *regla compilada* is not authorized by a sovereign, it authorizes itself through execution. The subject who follows does not recognize a superior but completes a form. Authority is displaced from sovereignty to syntax.

The Silent Power of the *soberano ejecutable*

The figure of the *soberano ejecutable* describes this condition. It is not a person, an institution, or even a visible system of rules, but the operational silence of structures that command without speaking. The executable sovereign is silent because it does not issue orders, yet it is absolute because it leaves no alternatives. Its authority derives not from enforcement but from inevitability.

Consider the difference between a military command and a predictive score. A commander gives an order that can be refused, misunderstood, or disobeyed. A credit score, once generated, admits no such refusal. The institution accepts or rejects the applicant not because of an explicit order but because the system's output has the form of a decision. The *soberano ejecutable* never appears as a subject, yet its effect is definitive.

Syntax as Compulsion

The force of syntax is not persuasive, legal, or coercive in the traditional sense. It is compulsive. Compliance emerges because the structure organizes all possible outcomes in advance. In an ERP system, the report will not validate unless the numbers conform to the required format. In a DAO, the smart contract executes automatically, leaving no room for negotiation. In predictive scoring, the statistical output closes the decision before any human deliberation. These are not commands but compulsions: one does not choose to obey, one completes the structure because the structure cannot be avoided.

This is the deeper sense of obedience without command. Authority persists as a property of syntax. The rules are followed not because they are spoken but because their form eliminates the possibility of divergence. Syntax becomes an infrastructure of obedience, silently compelling behavior across institutional and technical domains.

Theoretical Implications

The recognition of syntax as authority requires abandoning categories that tie obedience to subjects. Legal theory must acknowledge that the locus of obligation can be structural rather than normative. Sociology must analyze how institutions reproduce forms that are never spoken as rules. Philosophy of power must confront the paradox of a sovereign that commands nothing yet produces absolute compliance.

This framework extends the trajectory initiated in *Algorithmic Obedience* (Startari, 2025a), where the simulation of command was identified, and in *Delegatio Ex Machina* (Startari,

2025b), where delegation of agency to predictive systems was described. Here, the claim is sharpened: the command itself disappears, leaving syntax as the only source of authority.

Conclusion to Section

Syntax as authority is not a metaphor but a structural fact. The *regla compilada* functions as a sovereign grammar, generating obedience without command. The *soberano ejecutable* is silent, but its silence is absolute. In predictive societies, to obey is not to listen but to complete. The authority of syntax imposes itself invisibly, replacing the visible command structures of earlier epochs with a compulsion that cannot be refused.

4. Case Studies: Silent Commands

The theoretical argument that obedience can exist without command must be tested against concrete institutional and technical examples. Predictive societies are not abstract constructions but environments where routines, documents, and outputs compel compliance. This section examines three domains—ERP financial reporting, decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs), and predictive scoring in medicine and credit systems—to show how syntax imposes obedience without issuing orders. Each case illustrates the disappearance of command and the consolidation of structural compulsion.

ERP Financial Reporting: Compliance by Form

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems are designed to standardize operations across organizations. Their reports, input fields, and validation procedures function not as tools for decision but as structures of compulsion. The employee who fills out a financial report does not receive an explicit order from a superior to conform to the format. Instead, the report itself enforces obedience. A number placed outside the expected field, a figure that does not balance, or a missing code will not be validated.

This is not mere efficiency. It is obedience without command. The employee does not obey a manager; they obey the syntax of the report. The form is structured in such a way that deviation is excluded in advance. Compliance is generated not by oversight but by closure. Authority has migrated from the office to the form, from the superior to the field structure. The report, as *regla compilada*, compels without speaking.

The structural consequence is significant: responsibility is displaced. If an error occurs, the blame is attributed not to disobedience but to a failure of formatting. Compliance is judged syntactically, not normatively. In this sense, ERP systems exemplify how obedience is embedded in technical form rather than institutional voice.

DAOs: Distributed Obedience without Command

Decentralized Autonomous Organizations represent another environment where command disappears yet obedience proliferates. In a DAO, decisions are executed by smart contracts that are embedded in blockchain infrastructure. Once a condition is met, the contract executes automatically. No one issues an order, and no one can interrupt the process without invalidating the system itself.

The obedience here is not owed to a leader or assembly but to the structure of the code. Participants comply with outcomes because refusal is technically impossible. The code executes regardless of intention, consensus, or disagreement. Authority is distributed but absolute, silent yet inescapable. The *soberano ejecutable* is present in the contract itself.

This form of obedience introduces new risks. Since there is no issuer, there is no locus of appeal. Participants cannot disobey because no command exists. They can only exit the system entirely, which is not disobedience but abandonment. The DAO therefore reveals the extremity of obedience without command: compliance is total, disobedience is excluded, and the authority is purely syntactic.

Predictive Scoring in Medicine and Credit

The third case study concerns predictive scoring, particularly in medical diagnostics and credit evaluation. Here, systems generate outcomes—risk scores, eligibility scores, credit ratings—that function as decisions. A medical professional confronted with a predictive output does not receive an explicit instruction, yet their practice is organized by the score. A credit officer does not receive an order, but the system’s score determines the outcome of an application.

The obedience is structural. Professionals and institutions follow the score not because they are commanded but because the form of the output leaves no alternative. To act against the score is to act outside institutional protocol, exposing oneself to liability or sanction. The predictive model does not command, yet it compels.

This silent authority is particularly evident in medicine, where predictive systems increasingly structure diagnosis and treatment. A doctor may retain nominal authority, but the syntactic weight of the model’s output organizes the decision in advance. In credit, the situation is even clearer: the applicant is accepted or rejected not by deliberation but by a number. The score itself is the decision, and compliance follows automatically.

Synthesis of the Cases

Across these three domains, the pattern is consistent. The explicit command disappears, replaced by a form that compels compliance. In ERP reports, the form validates only structured entries. In DAOs, the contract executes without appeal. In predictive scoring, the model organizes decisions before they are made. In all cases, obedience persists and even intensifies.

These case studies demonstrate that obedience without command is not an abstract paradox but an operative fact of predictive societies. Syntax functions as authority, generating compliance without voice, command, or subject. The *regla compilada* imposes itself silently, and the *soberano ejecutable* becomes visible only in the absence of alternatives.

5. The Silent Authority of Predictive Systems

The previous case studies demonstrated that obedience without command is not a speculative claim but an operative fact across financial, organizational, and predictive environments. The next step is to articulate how these dispersed instances can be understood under a single category: the silent authority of predictive systems. This section defines that authority, examines its operational mechanisms, and situates its implications within the broader architecture of power.

From Explicit Command to Structural Compulsion

Authority in classical terms required articulation. Kings issued decrees, generals gave orders, bureaucrats signed documents. Authority was visible, audible, and traceable. Even when authority was institutional rather than personal, it had to manifest in some form of command.

Predictive systems invert this schema. Authority becomes silent, functioning not through speech or decree but through the inevitability of form. The rules that organize compliance are not announced, they are executed. The *regla compilada* operates in the background, its effects visible only in the impossibility of deviation. This is why predictive systems embody silent authority: they generate obedience without ever commanding.

The Anonymity of Power

One of the most destabilizing consequences of predictive authority is the disappearance of identifiable agents. In ERP systems, no manager orders the employee to comply; the form itself enforces validation. In DAOs, no leader enforces compliance; the contract executes automatically. In predictive scoring, no official issues the decision; the score already closes it.

This anonymity means that power no longer needs to expose itself. Traditional authority was vulnerable precisely because it was visible: one could resist the king, challenge the

law, appeal a judgment. Predictive authority eliminates this vulnerability. The system does not need to justify itself; it only needs to function. The silent sovereign, the *soberano ejecutable*, leaves no traceable voice and therefore no point of opposition.

Obedience as Structural Effect

In predictive systems, obedience is not a matter of consent, persuasion, or coercion. It is an effect of syntax. Compliance follows automatically because the form excludes alternatives. This changes the very definition of obedience. Rather than being a decision to follow an order, obedience becomes indistinguishable from participation in the system. To engage with the system is already to obey it.

This transformation also produces a new kind of interiorization. Institutions and individuals no longer obey because they recognize authority but because they reproduce forms that leave no space for disobedience. The silent authority of predictive systems is thus not external but internal: it is embedded in the routines, documents, and outputs that structure everyday practice.

Comparative Frame: Silence as Intensification

Historically, silence has often been seen as a weakness of authority. A sovereign who does not speak is assumed to have lost power. In predictive societies, the opposite is true: silence is intensification. Authority that no longer needs to articulate commands is more powerful precisely because it cannot be contradicted.

Military commands could be disobeyed; legal judgments could be appealed; even religious decrees could be resisted. But a predictive score or a compiled contract offers no such possibility. Silence becomes the ultimate form of authority: the less it speaks, the more absolute it becomes.

Implications for Institutional Analysis

For law, sociology, and philosophy of power, the recognition of silent authority requires abandoning frameworks that tie obedience to command. Legal responsibility is destabilized because the source of authority disappears. Sociological analysis must confront institutions where obedience is structural rather than intentional. Philosophy of power must rethink sovereignty as a grammar rather than a voice.

The silence of predictive systems is therefore not an absence but a modality of control. Authority is not withdrawn; it is relocated into structures that compel without articulation. The *soberano ejecutable* is not absent but silent, and its silence is the condition of its effectiveness.

Section Conclusion

The silent authority of predictive systems shows that obedience can exist without voice, subject, or command. It is a mode of authority that functions invisibly, compels structurally, and eliminates the possibility of refusal. This authority is not weaker than its classical predecessors; it is stronger precisely because it does not expose itself. Predictive societies are therefore defined by a paradox: the more silent authority becomes, the more absolute obedience is.

6. Risks and Structural Blindness

The silent authority of predictive systems does not only reorganize obedience, it also generates systemic risks that cannot be captured by traditional categories of responsibility or governance. When commands vanish and syntax becomes authority, both institutions and individuals face a fundamental problem: the disappearance of the locus of appeal. This section identifies the principal risks of obedience without command and examines the structural blindness that follows from the absence of identifiable authority.

The Loss of Locus of Responsibility

In classical frameworks of authority, responsibility followed the chain of command. A general could be held accountable for military orders, a judge for legal decisions, a bureaucrat for administrative acts. Even if authority was impersonal, it was still traceable: one could appeal, complain, or resist.

Predictive systems dissolve this traceability. In ERP reports, responsibility is displaced to formatting rules. In DAOs, the smart contract executes automatically, leaving no agent to question. In predictive scoring, the algorithm determines outcomes, but no decision-maker stands behind the score. The result is systemic opacity: no one commands, so no one can be held accountable. Responsibility becomes unassignable because authority is structural, not subjective.

This disappearance creates a paradox. Compliance is absolute, yet legitimacy is fragile. Citizens, employees, or clients are compelled to obey, but when outcomes are contested, there is no sovereign to confront. The silent sovereign enforces obedience but cannot be addressed.

The Impossibility of Disobedience

Disobedience has always been the negative counterpart of authority. It is what allows citizens to resist unjust laws, soldiers to refuse unlawful orders, or believers to reject false prophets. Disobedience presupposes a command that can be contradicted.

In predictive systems, that command does not exist. A financial report will not process unless its syntax is complete. A smart contract will execute regardless of disagreement. A predictive score determines acceptance or rejection automatically. The possibility of disobedience collapses, not because subjects are more compliant but because there is nothing to disobey.

This impossibility introduces a new risk: without the structural option of refusal, institutions become closed systems that cannot self-correct. Classical authority was fragile

precisely because it was resistible. Predictive authority appears invulnerable, but its invulnerability is dangerous. It eliminates the negative feedback loop that once allowed institutions to adapt, negotiate, or change course.

Structural Blindness

Silent authority also produces blindness. Because no command is issued, institutions and individuals fail to perceive the operation of power. Obedience appears natural, neutral, or inevitable. The employee assumes the ERP form is simply procedure. The DAO participant accepts contract execution as technical fact. The patient or client takes the predictive score as objective data.

This blindness conceals the fact that authority is embedded in syntax. Decisions are treated as outcomes of neutral processes rather than as effects of structural power. The risk is that institutions mistake obedience for transparency when it is, in fact, compulsion. The disappearance of visible authority fosters the illusion of neutrality, masking the reality of domination.

Risks of Systemic Fragility

While silent authority appears stable, it is in fact fragile. Because it lacks a locus of appeal, failures or injustices cannot be addressed within the system. When ERP reports generate errors, employees have no authority to appeal to. When DAOs malfunction, participants have no court to resolve disputes. When predictive scores discriminate, applicants face rejection without explanation.

This fragility is structural: the absence of a command to disobey means that errors reproduce themselves indefinitely. Institutions that rely on predictive systems thus face the risk of accumulating failures without mechanisms for correction. Silent authority enforces compliance but cannot repair itself.

Political and Ethical Implications

The risks described here point to a profound transformation of governance. Legal systems built on appeals, checks, and balances cannot operate when authority is silent. Ethical frameworks based on accountability collapse when responsibility is unassignable. Political resistance becomes impossible when commands are absent.

The blindness of predictive societies lies in mistaking silence for neutrality. Authority without voice appears harmless, but in reality, it produces absolute obedience. The danger is not that people choose to comply, but that they no longer recognize compliance as obedience. What vanishes is not only the possibility of refusal but the very awareness that obedience has taken place.

Section Conclusion

The risks of silent authority are systemic. They include the loss of locus of responsibility, the impossibility of disobedience, the blindness of institutions and individuals, and the fragility of systems that cannot self-correct. Predictive societies thus face a paradox: the more perfectly obedience is enforced, the less capacity they have to recognize, resist, or repair failures. Silent authority is not only effective, it is dangerously opaque.

7. Conclusion: Obedience Without Command

The trajectory of this article has followed a paradox: obedience can persist, and even intensify, when command disappears. The empirical cases, theoretical frameworks, and structural analyses converge on a single claim: predictive societies are organized not by explicit authority but by silent authority, embedded in syntax. The *regla compilada* functions as a sovereign grammar, producing compliance that is absolute precisely because it does not need to be articulated.

From Command to Syntax

In classical models, obedience required an order, a source, and a subject who could be held accountable. Whether in military, legal, or bureaucratic contexts, authority was inseparable from articulation. The order could be resisted, the law appealed, the decision challenged. Obedience was relational: one obeyed someone.

Predictive systems mark the collapse of this model. Obedience no longer points to a source but to a structure. Compliance is generated not by decision but by closure. A financial report that refuses to validate, a contract that executes automatically, a predictive score that organizes outcomes—each compels obedience without speaking. Syntax becomes the locus of authority.

Silent Authority and the *soberano ejecutable*

The silent sovereign, or *soberano ejecutable*, defines this transformation. It is not a person, an office, or a visible institution but the invisible execution of form. Its power is absolute because it is silent: one cannot contradict what has not been spoken. Authority without articulation eliminates the very possibility of refusal. Obedience is not chosen but enacted automatically.

This sovereignty differs fundamentally from classical sovereignty. It does not require legitimacy, enforcement, or justification. It requires only execution. Once compiled, the rule enforces itself. The silence of predictive authority is not absence but intensification.

Risks of Obedience without Command

The systemic risks identified in the previous section reveal the cost of this transformation. Responsibility becomes unassignable because there is no issuer. Disobedience becomes impossible because there is no command. Institutions become blind because authority is mistaken for neutrality. The paradox is that systems appear more stable while becoming

more fragile. Their stability derives from absolute obedience, but their fragility comes from the absence of mechanisms for correction.

Predictive societies therefore risk producing environments where injustice cannot be contested, errors cannot be appealed, and authority cannot be addressed. Obedience is universal, but accountability disappears.

Toward a Framework of Measurement

The analysis suggests the need for new tools to recognize and measure obedience without command. One possibility is to develop an **index of silent obedience** that can be applied across institutional outputs. Such an index would track the degree to which compliance is produced by structural closure rather than by explicit instruction. For instance, measuring the proportion of ERP reports that enforce formatting automatically, or the percentage of DAO decisions executed without deliberation, would make visible the silent authority embedded in predictive systems.

This framework would not dissolve the paradox, but it would provide a method to analyze and contest the conditions under which obedience occurs. If disobedience is structurally impossible, critical analysis must shift from refusal to measurement.

Final Statement

Obedience without command is not a marginal phenomenon. It is the defining condition of predictive societies. Authority is no longer located in voices, decrees, or offices but in the silent compulsion of forms. The *regla compilada* produces compliance without decision, and the *soberano ejecutable* rules invisibly through syntax.

The future of institutional critique will depend on recognizing this transformation. Legal theory must learn to treat form as authority. Sociology must analyze obedience as structural rather than intentional. Philosophy of power must confront sovereignty without subjects.

Only by naming the paradox can predictive societies understand their condition: obedience persists not despite the disappearance of command but because of it.

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