Logic Conditions of Cognition (Beyond Kant)

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December 2025

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Abstract

Debates in epistemology and philosophy of science often proceed as if any well-formed claim were, in principle, eligible for empirical confirmation or refutation. Disagreements are then framed in terms of evidence, interpretation, or methodology. This paper argues that such debates presuppose a logically prior condition that is rarely made explicit: not all claims qualify as candidates for empirical or epistemic evaluation at all.

The central thesis is that if a purported epistemic claim does not admit of conditions under which it could count as confirmed, disconfirmed, or mistaken, then empirical inquiry into that claim is logically excluded. This is not an empirical failure, but a structural one. The paper distinguishes between empirical falsification and structural ineligibility, and argues that the latter precedes and constrains the former.

Building on a minimal, non-metaphysical analysis, the paper identifies basic logical preconditions that any epistemic claim must satisfy in order to enter empirical assessment. Claims that fail to meet these conditions are not rejected as false; they are excluded as epistemically ineligible. In this sense, the analysis is eliminative rather than constructive: it does not defend a particular theory of cognition, but articulates criteria for determining what can meaningfully be discussed, tested, or disputed within empirical inquiry.

The reference to Kant in the title is methodological rather than doctrinal. Whereas Kant investigated the conditions of the possibility of experience, the present work examines the logical conditions under which claims qualify as candidates for cognition in the first place. The result is a criterion of epistemic eligibility that applies prior to empirical testing and independent of substantive metaphysical commitments.

1 Introduction: Why Cognition Requires Logical Preconditions

Epistemic debates are commonly conducted as disputes over evidence, interpretation, or methodological preference. Competing positions are treated as if they were all, in principle, subject to empirical confirmation or refutation, differing only in how they interpret available data or which standards of justification they adopt. This practice implicitly assumes that every well-formed claim already qualifies as a candidate for epistemic evaluation.

This paper challenges that assumption. Its central claim is that empirical inquiry presupposes logically prior conditions that determine whether a claim can meaningfully enter epistemic assessment at all. Before asking whether a claim is true or false, supported or undermined by evidence, it is necessary to ask whether the claim specifies conditions under which such assessment could take place. When no such conditions can be articulated, empirical inquiry is not merely inconclusive; it is logically inapplicable.

This distinction marks a difference between two fundamentally different kinds of failure. An empirically testable claim may fail because observations contradict it or because predicted outcomes do not occur. A structurally defective claim fails earlier: it does not determine what would count as confirmation or disconfirmation, what would constitute an error, or how correction would be possible. In such cases, the absence of empirical refutation is not a sign of strength but a symptom of epistemic ineligibility.[1]

The present analysis is historically continuous with the Kantian project but departs from it in scope and aim. Kant famously investigated the conditions of the possibility of experience and objective cognition.[2] The question pursued here is different and logically prior. Rather than asking how cognition is possible, the present work asks which purported claims qualify as candidates for cognition in the first place. The focus is not on the structure of experience, but on the logical status of epistemic claims.

Related concerns appear in early analytic philosophy, particularly in attempts to clarify the limits of sense and the distinction between meaningful and ill-posed questions.[3] These approaches, however, often stop short of articulating explicit criteria for epistemic eligibility. The present work seeks to make such criteria explicit by identifying minimal logical preconditions that any epistemic claim must satisfy.

This shift of perspective has significant methodological consequences. Claims that fail to meet the minimal logical preconditions of epistemic evaluation should not be treated

[1] For classical discussions of testability and its role in scientific inquiry, see K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1959. The present analysis concerns a logically prior question: whether conditions of testing can be specified at all.

[2] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781/1787.

[3] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921.

as false hypotheses competing with better ones. They should instead be excluded from empirical discourse as lacking the structural features required for assessment. Such exclusion is not a metaphysical verdict, nor a denial of psychological or experiential possibility. It is a clarification of what can meaningfully be tested, debated, or justified within epistemic inquiry.

Accordingly, the aim of this paper is eliminative rather than constructive. It does not propose a new theory of cognition, nor does it defend a substantive epistemological doctrine. Instead, it seeks to articulate minimal logical preconditions that distinguish between claims that can, in principle, be evaluated empirically and those for which empirical questions are logically ill-posed. By making these preconditions explicit, the analysis aims to clarify the boundary between genuine epistemic disagreement and disputes that arise from category confusion or misplaced demands for empirical confirmation.

2 Two Types of Failure: Empirical and Structural

In order to clarify the scope of the present analysis, it is necessary to distinguish between two fundamentally different ways in which an epistemic claim may fail. These two modes of failure are often conflated in philosophical and scientific discussions, leading to misplaced demands for evidence or inappropriate attempts at refutation.

An *empirical failure* occurs when a claim specifies conditions under which it would count as confirmed or disconfirmed, and available observations contradict it. In such cases, the claim enters empirical inquiry properly and fails as a result of how the world behaves. This form of failure presupposes that the claim is epistemically well-formed: it must determine what would count as relevant evidence, what would constitute an error, and how correction would be possible.[4]

By contrast, a *structural failure* occurs when a claim does not admit of conditions under which it could be meaningfully confirmed or disconfirmed at all. In such cases, the problem is not that observations contradict the claim, but that no coherent account can be given of what would count as evidence for or against it. Empirical inquiry does not fail here; rather, it never properly begins.

This distinction can be expressed in minimal operational terms. Let C be a purported epistemic claim. For C to be eligible for empirical evaluation, there must exist a set of conditions $\mathcal{E}$ such that:

$$\mathcal{E} = \{e_1, e_2, \dots\}$$

where each e_i represents a possible evidential outcome relevant to C. Moreover, the claim

[4]This understanding of empirical testing is standard in philosophy of science; see K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1959; and C. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*, 1965.

must determine how such outcomes bear on its status. That is, there must exist a rule R such that:

$$R : \mathcal{E} \to \{\text{supports } C,\ \text{undermines } C\}.$$

If no such set $\mathcal{E}$ can be specified, or if no rule R can be given that connects possible outcomes to the status of the claim, then C is not empirically testable in any meaningful sense.

Crucially, the absence of such conditions does not imply that the claim is false. It implies that the claim does not meet the minimal structural requirements for epistemic evaluation. The language of truth, falsity, confirmation, or refutation therefore fails to apply. What is encountered here is not an empirical limitation, but a logical one.

This form of failure is frequently misdescribed as mere "unfalsifiability." That description is insufficiently precise. A claim may be unfalsifiable because relevant evidence has not yet been obtained, or because testing is practically infeasible. Structural failure is different in kind. It arises when the claim itself does not specify what would count as evidence, error, or correction, even in principle. In such cases, the claim lies outside the domain of empirical inquiry altogether.[5]

Recognizing this distinction allows us to locate certain philosophical disputes at the correct level of analysis. When a claim fails structurally, attempts at empirical refutation are misplaced. The appropriate response is not to seek counterexamples, but to examine whether the claim satisfies the logical conditions required for empirical assessment in the first place. The following sections articulate these minimal conditions explicitly.

3 Minimal Logical Preconditions for Epistemic Evaluation

Having distinguished empirical failure from structural failure, we can now state explicitly the minimal logical conditions that a claim must satisfy in order to qualify for epistemic evaluation. These conditions are not tied to any particular theory of truth, nor do they presuppose intersubjectivity, meaning, or semantic interpretation. They are functional requirements that follow directly from the role epistemic claims are meant to play.

Let C be a purported epistemic claim. For C to be epistemically eligible, it must satisfy at least the following three conditions.

[5]Related concerns about the conditions of meaningful empirical statements can be found in the logical empiricist tradition; see R. Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," 1932. The present argument does not adopt verificationism, but shares its concern with criteria of applicability.

Distinguishability

First, there must exist a principled distinction between the claim and its negation. That is, it must be possible to specify what would count as C and what would count as $\neg C$. Formally, this requires the existence of at least two distinguishable epistemic states associated with the claim:

$$\exists s_1, s_2 \quad \text{such that} \quad s_1 \models C \ \text{ and } \ s_2 \models \neg C.$$

If no such distinction can be drawn, then the claim cannot exclude any alternative state of affairs and therefore cannot function epistemically. A statement that makes no difference between being the case and not being the case does not admit of error and thus does not admit of knowledge.[6]

Relationality

Second, the claim must stand in a relation to some conditions, facts, or structures relative to which it can be assessed. Epistemic claims are not self-validating; they require a reference point, even if that reference is abstract or idealized. Formally, there must exist a relation R such that:

$$\exists R \quad \text{with} \quad R(C, e)$$

for some element $e \in \mathcal{E}$, where $\mathcal{E}$ denotes the set of possible evidential conditions introduced in the previous section. Without such a relation, the claim lacks any criterion of assessment and collapses into mere assertion.[7]

Possibility of Error and Correction

Third, the claim must admit the possibility of error and, correspondingly, the possibility of correction. This condition follows directly from the previous two but is worth stating explicitly. If a claim cannot, even in principle, be mistaken, then no epistemic distinction between correct and incorrect states can be drawn. Formally, this requires that the rule R introduced earlier allows for divergent outcomes:

$$\exists e_i, e_j \in \mathcal{E} \quad \text{such that} \quad R(e_i) \neq R(e_j).$$

[6] This requirement is implicit in classical discussions of negation and contradiction; see G. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 1892.

[7] The relational character of epistemic justification is a standard theme in epistemology; see W. V. O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," 1969, for a discussion of justification as embedded in relations between belief and evidence.

Where no such divergence is possible, the language of justification, confirmation, or refutation loses its application. The claim may still correspond to a psychological state or a subjective experience, but it no longer functions as an epistemic commitment.[8]

These three conditions—distinguishability, relationality, and the possibility of error—are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for epistemic eligibility in the present sense. A claim that fails to satisfy any one of them does not merely resist empirical testing; it fails to qualify as a candidate for epistemic evaluation at all. The next section draws the eliminative consequence of this result.

4 The Eliminative Result

The preceding analysis allows the central result of this paper to be stated explicitly. The point is not that certain epistemic claims are false, nor that they are empirically untestable in a contingent or practical sense. Rather, the claim is that some purported epistemic claims fail to satisfy the minimal logical preconditions required for epistemic evaluation. Such claims do not enter empirical inquiry and therefore cannot be assessed as true or false in the epistemic sense.

Formally, let C be a purported epistemic claim. If there exists no set of evidential conditions $\mathcal{E}$ and no rule R such that possible elements of $\mathcal{E}$ could, even in principle, support or undermine C, then C is epistemically ineligible. That is,

$$\neg\exists \mathcal{E}, R \quad \Rightarrow \quad C \notin \mathcal{D}_{\text{ep}},$$

where $\mathcal{D}_{\text{ep}}$ denotes the domain of epistemically evaluable claims. In such cases, empirical inquiry is not merely inconclusive; it is logically excluded.

This result is eliminative rather than adversarial. The exclusion of a claim from $\mathcal{D}_{\text{ep}}$ does not amount to a refutation, nor does it deny the psychological, experiential, or expressive legitimacy of the claim. It indicates only that the claim cannot fulfill the role it assigns to itself—namely, that of an epistemic commitment subject to confirmation, disconfirmation, error, and correction. Where these functions cannot be coherently specified, the language of epistemic assessment ceases to apply.

It is important to emphasize that this form of elimination is logically prior to empirical testing. Empirical methods presuppose that claims already specify what would count as evidence and how such evidence bears on their status. When this presupposition fails, appeals to observation, experiment, or data are misplaced. The appropriate response is not

[8]Related concerns about fallibility as a condition of knowledge can be found in C. S. Peirce's pragmatist writings; see C. S. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," 1877.

to seek counterexamples, but to recognize a category error in the formulation of the claim itself.[9]

The present result generalizes a pattern that appears across different domains of inquiry. In earlier work, structurally analogous arguments were used to show that certain notions—such as absolute foundations of knowledge or reified conceptions of information—fail not because they conflict with empirical findings, but because they cannot be integrated into a coherent epistemic framework.[10] In each case, the failure occurs at the level of epistemic function rather than empirical adequacy.

The eliminative criterion developed here therefore provides a general tool for epistemic clarification. It allows one to distinguish between claims that invite empirical investigation and those that merely simulate epistemic content while lacking the structural features required for evaluation. The next section considers the methodological consequences of adopting this criterion and clarifies its scope and limits.

5 Consequences and Scope

The eliminative result established in the previous section has consequences that extend beyond any single philosophical dispute. It provides a general meta-principle governing the admissibility of epistemic claims, prior to questions of evidence, interpretation, or theoretical preference. Once this principle is made explicit, a wide range of familiar controversies can be reclassified without engaging in their internal details.

First, the criterion clarifies the status of empirical inquiry itself. Empirical methods do not operate in a vacuum; they presuppose that claims already specify what would count as evidence, error, or correction. Where such specification is absent, appeals to data or experiment are misplaced. This explains why certain positions appear resistant to empirical criticism: their apparent immunity is not a sign of depth, but a consequence of structural underdetermination. The present framework thus distinguishes between claims that are empirically difficult to test and claims for which empirical testing is logically inapplicable.

Second, the criterion unifies a set of eliminative arguments developed in related contexts. In earlier work, structurally similar analyses were applied to the notion of an absolute epistemic foundation and to reified conceptions of information. In each case, the target was not an empirical hypothesis but a category mistake: an attempt to assign epistemic or ontological roles to entities or descriptions that cannot satisfy the functional conditions required for those roles. The same pattern is at work here. What fails is not a particular empirical

[9]This priority relation between logical conditions and empirical testing is implicit in discussions of theory assessment in philosophy of science; see C. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*, 1965.

[10]See M. Skarbek, "Structural Impossibility of the Absolute," draft; and "Information as a Relational Property of Physical Dynamics," draft.

prediction, but the coherence of the epistemic posture itself.

Third, this perspective helps to explain why certain debates persist despite repeated criticism. When a position fails structurally, further argumentation at the level of evidence or counterexample cannot resolve the issue. Disputes then tend to oscillate between reinterpretation, escalation of ontology, or appeals to alternative "frameworks" or "games." From the present standpoint, these moves do not advance inquiry; they merely shift the discussion away from the conditions that originally rendered the claim epistemically ineligible.

Finally, the scope of the eliminative criterion should be stated explicitly. The criterion does not deny the psychological reality of beliefs, experiences, or intuitions. Nor does it legislate metaphysical possibility. Its domain is strictly epistemic. It determines which claims can meaningfully be assessed as candidates for knowledge and which cannot. Claims excluded by this criterion may persist as expressions, narratives, or heuristic devices, but they cannot function as epistemic foundations or as objects of empirical confirmation.

Taken together, these consequences position the present analysis as part of a broader systematic approach. Rather than offering isolated refutations, the framework articulates a coherent set of constraints that apply across domains: to absolutes, to reified informational entities, and to epistemic claims lacking conditions of confirmation. In this sense, the analysis does not add a new theoretical layer. It removes conceptual debris, leaving a space in which empirical inquiry, naturalistic explanation, and formal analysis can proceed without ontological inflation or category confusion.

6 Applications

The criterion of epistemic eligibility articulated in the preceding sections is not tied to any single philosophical doctrine. Its function is classificatory rather than polemical. Accordingly, its applications are best understood not as refutations of particular positions, but as clarifications of their epistemic status.

One immediate application concerns claims that aspire to function as ultimate or absolute foundations of knowledge. Such claims often present themselves as immune to error or correction, precisely because they are said to ground all possible assessment. When examined through the present criterion, this immunity reveals a structural defect. By excluding the possibility of conditions under which they could be supported or undermined, such claims exclude themselves from epistemic evaluation. They do not fail empirically; they fail to qualify as epistemic claims at all.

A structurally analogous pattern appears in debates over solipsism understood as an epistemic foundation. When solipsism is defended as absolutely certain and independent of any relations or criteria, it forfeits the minimal conditions required for epistemic assessment.

Attempts to preserve its epistemic status typically proceed by weakening its absolutist commitments or by reinterpreting it as a purely private or experiential stance. In either case, the claim ceases to function as an epistemic foundation and becomes epistemically inert.

The same criterion applies to theories that purport to explain all phenomena while remaining insulated from conditions of confirmation or disconfirmation. Such theories often invoke increasingly abstract ontological layers in response to criticism, rather than specifying testable or corrigible commitments. From the present perspective, these moves do not deepen explanation; they signal a shift away from epistemic accountability. The absence of empirical vulnerability is not a virtue but an indicator of structural ineligibility.

Finally, the criterion bears directly on disputes arising from the reification of formal models or descriptive frameworks. When mathematical, statistical, or informational models are treated as direct ontological descriptions, questions appropriate to the level of the model are illegitimately transferred to the level of being. The resulting confusions are not empirical puzzles but category errors. Recognizing the distinction between model-relative description and epistemic eligibility allows such disputes to be dissolved without recourse to additional metaphysical commitments.

These applications illustrate the unifying role of the present analysis. Across diverse contexts, the same structural criterion distinguishes between claims that can meaningfully enter epistemic inquiry and those that cannot. The value of the criterion lies not in settling debates by fiat, but in clarifying which debates are epistemically well-posed in the first place.

7 Conclusion

This paper has argued that empirical inquiry presupposes logically prior conditions that determine whether a claim can meaningfully enter epistemic evaluation at all. Before questions of truth, falsity, confirmation, or refutation can arise, a claim must specify conditions under which such assessments would be possible. Where these conditions cannot be articulated, empirical investigation is not merely difficult or inconclusive; it is logically excluded.

By distinguishing empirical failure from structural failure, the analysis clarifies a class of disputes that persist despite extensive argumentation. In such cases, the absence of empirical resolution does not indicate the depth or resilience of a position, but its failure to meet the minimal logical preconditions of epistemic eligibility. Claims that lack distinguishability, relational criteria, or the possibility of error and correction do not qualify as epistemic commitments, regardless of their psychological plausibility or metaphysical appeal.

The framework developed here is eliminative rather than doctrinal. It does not propose a new theory of cognition, nor does it adjudicate between competing worldviews. Its function is to articulate a criterion that separates epistemically well-posed claims from those

that simulate epistemic content while remaining structurally ineligible. In this sense, the analysis operates prior to empirical testing and independent of substantive metaphysical commitments.

Recognizing these logical conditions of cognition clarifies the scope and limits of empirical inquiry itself. Empirical methods remain indispensable where their application is coherent, but they cannot compensate for the absence of structural preconditions. By making these preconditions explicit, the present analysis aims to remove conceptual obstacles that obscure genuine epistemic progress and to delineate the domain within which empirical questions can meaningfully be asked. Empirical inquiry does not refute structures; it presupposes them. Where no conditions of confirmation can be specified, empirical questions are logically excluded.

A Appendix A: Formal Reconstruction of Epistemic Eligibility

This appendix provides a formal reconstruction of the central eliminative result developed in the main text. Its purpose is not to introduce additional assumptions, but to make explicit the logical structure that is already implicit in the preceding analysis. The notation introduced here is fully consistent with that used in Sections 2–4.

A.1 Epistemic Claims and Evidential Conditions

Let C denote a purported epistemic claim. Let $\mathcal{E}$ denote the set of possible evidential conditions relevant to C:

$$\mathcal{E} = \{e_1, e_2, \dots\}.$$

Elements of $\mathcal{E}$ are understood as possible states of affairs, observations, or outcomes that could, in principle, bear on the epistemic status of C.

An epistemic evaluation of C requires the existence of a rule R such that:

$$R : \mathcal{E} \to \{\text{supports } C,\ \text{undermines } C\}.$$

The rule R need not be deterministic or binary in practice; it may involve probabilistic or graded assessment. What matters is that R specifies how distinct evidential conditions would differentially affect the epistemic status of C.

A.2 Distinguishability

For C to be epistemically eligible, it must be possible to distinguish between the claim and its negation. Formally, this requires the existence of at least two epistemic states s_1 and s_2 such that:

$$s_1 \models C \quad \text{and} \quad s_2 \models \neg C.$$

If no such pair of states can be specified, then C fails to exclude any alternative and therefore cannot admit of error. In such a case, the predicates “true” and “false” do not apply in the epistemic sense.

A.3 Relationality

Epistemic claims are not self-validating. For C to be eligible for epistemic evaluation, it must stand in a relation to evidential conditions external to the claim itself. Formally, this requires:

$$\exists e \in \mathcal{E} \quad \text{such that} \quad R(C, e)$$

is well-defined. If no such relation exists, then no criterion of assessment can be specified. The claim reduces to a bare assertion, lacking epistemic content.

A.4 Possibility of Error and Correction

The possibility of epistemic error follows from distinguishability and relationality, but it is useful to state it explicitly. For C to function epistemically, there must exist evidential conditions that lead to different evaluative outcomes:

$$\exists e_i, e_j \in \mathcal{E} \quad \text{such that} \quad R(e_i) \neq R(e_j).$$

If all possible evidential conditions map to the same evaluative outcome, then no error is possible. In such cases, the claim is immune to correction and therefore epistemically inert.

A.5 Structural Failure

We can now define structural failure precisely.

Definition (Structural Failure). A claim C exhibits *structural failure* if and only if at least one of the following holds:

1. No set of evidential conditions $\mathcal{E}$ can be specified.
2. No rule R can be defined that relates elements of $\mathcal{E}$ to the epistemic status of C.
3. No distinguishable epistemic states corresponding to C and $\neg C$ can be identified.
4. No divergence in evaluative outcomes is possible across evidential conditions.

A.6 Eliminative Consequence

Proposition. If a claim C exhibits structural failure, then C is not an element of the domain $\mathcal{D}_{\text{ep}}$ of epistemically evaluable claims.

Proof (Sketch). Epistemic evaluation presupposes the possibility of distinguishing correctness from error relative to evidential conditions. Structural failure eliminates this possibility by removing one or more of the necessary components required for such distinction. Consequently, predicates such as "true," "false," "confirmed," or "refuted" cannot be coherently applied to C. Therefore, $C \notin \mathcal{D}_{\text{ep}}$.

A.7 Relation to Empirical Inquiry

Empirical inquiry presupposes epistemic eligibility. Where structural failure is present, empirical testing is not merely impractical or inconclusive; it is logically inapplicable. This establishes the priority of structural analysis over empirical assessment.

Corollary. If a claim does not admit of conditions of confirmation or disconfirmation, empirical questions concerning that claim are logically excluded.

This corollary restates, in formal terms, the central thesis of the main text: empirical inquiry does not refute structures; it presupposes them.

B Appendix B: Methodological Remarks

This paper does not engage in a debate between competing worldviews, nor does it attempt to adjudicate between substantive metaphysical positions. Its aim is prior and more limited. The analysis concerns the logical conditions under which epistemic claims are meaningful at all. Before asking whether a claim is true or false, empirically supported or refuted, it is necessary to determine whether it satisfies the minimal structural requirements that make empirical confirmation possible. Claims that fail to meet these conditions are not rejected as false; they are excluded as epistemically ineligible.

The reference to Kant in the title is deliberate but restricted. Kant famously investigated the conditions of the possibility of experience and cognition. The present work proceeds at a different level. Rather than asking how cognition is possible, it asks for the conditions under which a purported claim can even enter the space of empirical or epistemic evaluation. In this sense, the goal is not to offer a rival transcendental theory, but to articulate a criterion of epistemic eligibility that distinguishes between claims that can, in principle, be tested, corrected, and differentiated from their negations, and those that cannot.

This methodological stance implies a shift in how certain philosophical disputes should be interpreted. Positions that fail structurally are often treated as empirically resilient or metaphysically profound. From the present perspective, such resilience reflects not epistemic strength but the absence of conditions under which evaluation could meaningfully occur.

The framework therefore recommends exclusion rather than refutation in cases of structural failure.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the eliminative character of the analysis is not intended as a dismissal of experiential, psychological, or expressive dimensions of belief. Claims excluded by the present criterion may retain significance in non-epistemic contexts, such as personal narrative or phenomenological description. What they cannot do is function as epistemic foundations or as objects of empirical confirmation. This restriction is methodological, not metaphysical, and is imposed solely in the interest of conceptual clarity.

C Appendix C: Common Escape Routes

The eliminative criterion developed in this paper often encounters recurring patterns of response. These responses do not challenge the formal result directly, but attempt to preserve the target position by altering its status, scope, or level of application. For clarity, the most common escape routes are briefly identified here.

C.1 Reclassification as a "Different Epistemic Game"

A frequent response is to claim that the criticized position operates within a different epistemic framework or "game," and therefore should not be assessed by the criteria articulated in this paper. This move does not address the argument. The criterion of epistemic eligibility is not a local rule within a particular framework, but a meta-level condition governing whether a claim qualifies as epistemic at all. Reclassification does not restore epistemic eligibility; it merely abandons it.

C.2 Appeal to Non-Empirical or Transcendental Status

Another common strategy is to concede that a claim does not admit of empirical confirmation, while maintaining that it nevertheless possesses a higher or transcendental form of validity. This response changes the subject. The present analysis does not deny metaphysical or transcendental possibility. It restricts itself to epistemic function. Claims that lack conditions of confirmation may persist as metaphysical narratives, but they cannot function as epistemic commitments.

C.3 Invocation of "Unfalsifiability" as a Virtue

Some defenders interpret the absence of falsifiability as a sign of depth or generality. From the present perspective, this interpretation conflates empirical resilience with structural in-

determinacy. Unfalsifiability that results from the absence of test conditions is not a virtue; it is precisely the marker of epistemic ineligibility identified in the main text.

C.4 Escalation of Ontology

In response to structural critique, positions are often supplemented with additional ontological layers, mechanisms, or entities. Such escalation does not resolve the underlying issue unless it specifies how the added structure generates conditions of confirmation or correction. Without such specification, ontological enrichment merely shifts the problem to a higher level without restoring epistemic function.

C.5 Retreat to Psychological or Experiential Certainty

Finally, a position may be defended by retreating to subjective certainty, immediacy, or lived experience. While such phenomena may be psychologically real, they do not satisfy the minimal conditions required for epistemic evaluation. This retreat preserves experiential significance at the cost of epistemic status.

C.6 Summary

None of these escape routes refute the eliminative result. Each preserves the target position only by relinquishing its claim to epistemic eligibility. The criterion developed in this paper is therefore not undermined by such responses; it explains why they recur and why they fail to reestablish epistemic standing.