PROF. DR. A. ALI ALTINTAS

Philosophy of the Privileged

Philosophical Questions for the Twenty-Second Century

VOLUME 02

Truths and Their Effects

Truth does not become absolute because it convinces many people. It becomes dominant.

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FROM THIS ESSAY

VOLUME 02 / PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY

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Philosophical Questions for the Twenty-Second Century

Prof. Dr. A. Ali Altintas

Truths and Their Effects

On Perspective, Imagination, Knowledge, Dominance, and the Search for the Absolute

PERSPECTIVE / KNOWLEDGE / AUTONOMY

The Question of Meaning

What gives a life meaning when securing its material needs is no longer its defining task? What makes life worth living when the accumulation of wealth loses its place as the overriding goal? These questions lead to the starting point of this series: understanding our own existence, discovering who we are, and learning to give our lives meaning deliberately.

Meaning arises in our relationship with our own lives. What we find worth living for depends on what we perceive, understand, imagine, and consider significant. A deeper understanding of our actions, thoughts, and imaginings also changes our ability to decide how to live. Self-knowledge thus becomes a means of shaping life: we can examine the goals we pursue, the values we adopt, and how we wish to spend our time.

This search depends on circumstances. Those who must devote their energies each day to earning a living have different freedoms from those whose needs are secure. People ask questions of meaning even in hardship. Yet the opportunity to pursue those questions consistently and by choice is unequally distributed. This is the challenge posed by the approach developed here: while that freedom remains the preserve of a few, this is a philosophy of the privileged. Their privilege begins with having the time and the means to pursue understanding and self-discovery.

Living beings make their way in the world with the capacities available to them. Claws enable attack and defence; wings open new possibilities of movement; a shell offers protection. Humanity's decisive weapon is intelligence, joined to perception and consciousness. Through it, we grasp relationships, imagine possibilities, and change the conditions in which we live. We can make ourselves the subject of our own thought.

Belonging to the human species does not, however, ensure that these capacities develop equally. Nature alone does not determine their development. Education, experience, understanding, and trained perception expand human possibilities to different degrees. The use of intelligence also develops under different conditions. Substantial differences therefore arise within the same species in what people can recognise, imagine, and make of their lives.

A Freedom for Everyone?

These differences also shape the philosophical questions that matter to a person and the values by which they live. The series takes a definite position here: there is no single philosophy valid for all human beings. People encounter the world from different starting points, experiences, and possibilities of understanding. What guides one person may be inadequate for another. The task is therefore to develop different philosophical approaches and make their assumptions explicit.

Looking towards the twenty-second century brings a possibility into view that could change these conditions. If robotics and artificial intelligence take over the work needed to provide adequately for everyone, and if everyone actually shares in that provision, the need to earn a living could lose its commanding place. Education and self-knowledge could then find a space currently open to only part of humanity.

Such a future would open the subject of this series to everyone. Universal access to these questions would leave differences between people and their answers intact. Time for understanding does not produce a uniform understanding; freedom for self-discovery leads to different ways of living. This very diversity calls for philosophical perspectives that equip people to perceive and judge for themselves.

Whether technological development opens this freedom to all or enlarges it for a privileged society remains an open question. In the latter case, this book speaks chiefly to those who have already attained the relevant position. In the former, it may address questions that everyone will one day be able to pursue. Access to this philosophy therefore also depends on who has the conditions necessary for a self-directed life.

Philosophy of the Privileged begins at this threshold. The series examines how knowledge, perception, and imagination change human beings, and how they acquire meaning through them. The twenty-second century is the horizon at which the privilege of a few could become a possibility for everyone. At that horizon stands a question that already concerns us:

Prof. Dr. A. Ali Altintas

What do we live for when we no longer have to live to earn a living?

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PART I

The Theory

From the limits of our standpoint, through the effects of dominant truths, to an absolute horizon that remains beyond human reach and, for that very reason, keeps the search alive.

"Our limitation is more than a shortfall in knowledge. It is the condition that keeps knowledge in motion."

The Order of Knowing

PERSPECTIVE, INDIVIDUAL TRUTH, DOMINANT TRUTH CLAIM, AND ABSOLUTE TRUTH

The theory uses the word truth on different levels. What matters is that these levels are not confused with one another.

A perspective is an epistemic standpoint. It determines which portion of reality becomes accessible under spatial, temporal, historical, and conceptual conditions.

From this standpoint arises perspectival knowledge, or a perspectivally grounded belief. When an individual takes this knowledge to be true, we may speak of individual truth. It is not a second ontological truth, but an ordering of available knowledge perceived as truth.

Individual truth is mutable. New experience, different premises, a changed location, or a later point in time can reorder the same information.

A dominant truth claim arises when such an interpretation becomes authoritative beyond individual epistemic standpoints. It may dominate scientifically, religiously, legally, socially, or institutionally without necessarily being true.

Absolute truth is neither the strongest claim, nor consensus, nor the sum of all perspectives. It is that which exists across space and time as a complete relational whole, irrespective of whether any human being recognises it.

Individual truth is perceived truth. Dominant truth is prevailing truth. Absolute truth is neither perception nor rule.

The Standpoint from Which Truth Becomes Visible

PERSPECTIVE, KNOWLEDGE, AND PERCEIVED TRUTH

Every act of knowing begins from a standpoint. What a person takes to be true therefore reflects, in the first instance, how they organise the knowledge available to them.

No human being knows from nowhere. Every view of reality has a bodily, spatial, and temporal location; at the same time, it is historically, culturally, and biographically situated.

Perspectival knowledge can be very well founded. It may be empirically tested, logically consistent, inherited, or professionally acquired. Yet it remains bound to the information and premises accessible from that epistemic standpoint.

Individual truth denotes the outcome of this perspectival processing: an ordering of knowledge accepted as true. It makes no claim to be identical with absolute truth.

Its mutability reveals its status. Ageing, learning, travel, scientific discovery, or biographical experience can alter the weighting of the same knowledge.

Where a perspective misses its object, there is error. Where it takes a part for the whole, absolutisation arises. Where it recognises its own limitation, it remains open to further epistemic standpoints.

Perspectives do not multiply reality. They multiply the paths by which human beings connect knowledge into an order that appears true to them.

II

When an Interpretation Becomes Dominant

THE DOMINANT TRUTH CLAIM AS A FRAMEWORK OF ACCEPTED VALIDITY

Dominance does not denote truth in the ontological sense. It denotes the establishment of an interpretation of what is to count as true.

An individual truth can have effects beyond the person who holds it. When it becomes the authoritative point of reference for a society, science, religion, institution, or legal order, a dominant truth claim emerges.

Its dominance may rest on evidence and argumentative strength; it may equally be stabilised by tradition, authority, power, habit, or the absence of alternatives.

A dominant truth claim can even be false. It remains dominant for as long as it structures perceptions, decisions, and other individual truths.

Its very attachment to space and time makes it susceptible to change. A prevailing interpretation may endure for centuries and still be displaced by another.

Several dominant truth claims may also coexist when they belong to different orders.

Dominance is a relation between interpretations and their spheres of validity. It is not a relation between a claim and absolute truth.

III

The Horizon Beyond the Future

ABSOLUTE TRUTH BEYOND PERCEPTION AND EVALUATION

If absolute truth exists, it cannot depend on whether human beings recognise it, evaluate it, or divide it into the categories of good and evil.

Absolute truth is neither the most successful dominant interpretation nor the sum of all human perspectives. It denotes that which exists in its complete relational context across space and time, without needing to be supplemented or reordered from a later epistemic standpoint.

For that very reason, absolute truth in this theory does not itself contain the human categories of good and evil. Good and evil arise only in the human relation to the Absolute: as evaluations of an assumed proximity, correspondence, distance, or deviation.

If the Absolute were omnipresent and complete across space and time, it could not itself meaningfully be conceived as spatially or morally distant. Distance is already a perspectival relation of a limited observer.

The Absolute is therefore neither moral reward nor moral condemnation. It is the complete relational whole against which human beings orient their limited categories. Ethics and morality belong to the human interpretation of that whole.

Human beings can reconstruct the past and forecast the future, but they do not possess complete access to all relations. Even highly certain knowledge can therefore remain only perspectival knowledge.

Good and evil are not properties of absolute truth. They are human evaluations of the relation in which we understand ourselves to stand to an assumed absolute truth.

From the Absolute to Morality

HOW HUMAN EVALUATION ARISES FROM A WHOLE THAT REMAINS UNAVAILABLE

Human beings translate the idea of an unchanging Absolute into normative categories that provide orientation within the human lifeworld.

Human beings do not act from a complete space-time horizon. Yet they must decide. They therefore form categories such as right and wrong, just and unjust, good and evil. These categories are not components of the Absolute itself, but perspectival orders of human action.

Religion can bind this order to a source understood as absolute. Under the premise of an omniscient God, commandments are understood as communications from an epistemic horizon that precedes the human one.

The human interpretation of such a communication remains perspectival from the outset. Religious morality may orient itself towards the Absolute without every particular human moral rule thereby becoming absolute truth.

The fact that moral interpretations change over time does not contradict the idea of an unchanging Absolute. It reveals how the human relationship to it can change.

A society can turn a particular moral interpretation into a dominant truth claim. Later generations may give the same norm a different weight, limit its scope, or reject it.

The Absolute need not change for morality to change. It is enough that human beings determine their own distance, premises, and access differently.

From Moral Judgement to Law

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE, SECULAR ORDER, AND CHANGES IN WHAT HOLDS SWAY

Law makes human evaluations binding. Its history therefore shows with particular clarity how dominant truth claims arise, persist, and are replaced.

Historically, religious, natural-law, philosophical, and institutional traditions have shaped legal orders. Christian theology, canon law, and natural law influenced parts of Western legal development; Islamic legal and ethical traditions connect revelation, moral evaluation, and juridical interpretation.

It does not follow that modern laws are exclusively religious in origin. Political conflict, custom, economics, constitutional development, human rights, and social movements have also shaped them.

The philosophically decisive point is that law institutionalises conceptions of what should count as permitted, prohibited, worthy of protection, or reprehensible.

Such conceptions may arise from religious interpretations, later receive secular justifications, and still retain traces of older moral orders. Their legal validity makes them dominant, not absolute.

When individual perspectives and collective orders of knowledge change, dominant legal and moral truth claims can be displaced.

Law does not establish absolute truth. For a particular time and place, it establishes a dominant framework of what human beings accept as right and wrong.

IV

The Illusion of the Obvious

WHY EVEN THE MOST CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE NEED NOT BE ABSOLUTE

The proposition 'The Earth existed on 1 January 2000' appears unassailable. Precisely for that reason, it shows how deeply human categories enter into every truth we apprehend.

It would be too simple to locate the boundary between dominant and absolute truth only where knowledge appears complex, disputed, or incomplete. The most seemingly self-evident propositions reveal how deeply perspective is embedded in human knowledge.

Consider the proposition: the Earth existed on 1 January 2000. From our ordinary standpoint, this is so certain that further examination may seem contrived. Yet its apparent self-evidence conceals the assumptions on which it rests.

"1 January 2000" is not a point in time that occurs in reality under that name independently of every human order. The proposition presupposes calendars, a system for counting years, the division of time into days, the beginning of a day, and a frame of reference. The physical state to which the dating refers may have existed independently of these categories. Its designation, however, belongs to an intersubjectively stabilised human ordering of time.

Nor is "the Earth" simply an assumption-free word for a completely delimited object. The astronomical body exists independently of its name. Yet a human proposition must decide what belongs to it: only solid and liquid matter; also the atmosphere and magnetic field; the dynamic relation with the Moon; or the material continuity that has changed over billions of years. The object is not arbitrary; its conceptual articulation remains perspectival.

The Illusion of the Obvious

The same applies to “existed.” Within ordinary human language, astronomy, and ontology, the proposition is extraordinarily stable. Yet it does not provide complete access to what existence means across every possible level of scale and reality. It is a highly secure individual and dominant truth; its security alone does not transform it into perspective-free total knowledge.

This does not entail scepticism about facts. The theory does not suggest that we are free to deny the Earth's existence, or that calendars create reality. Convention is not arbitrariness. Human concepts can be tightly constrained by reality, shared across observers, and practically unassailable. They remain, nevertheless, the form in which a finite standpoint grasps its object.

Absolute truth would require more than the proposition’s correctness within our present conceptual system. It would require that no epistemic standpoint of greater spatial, temporal, conceptual, or ontological reach could supplement, delimit, or reorder its truth-content.

Here the difference between the greatest human certainty and absolute truth becomes visible. Human beings can know, act, and decide with the strongest rational justification. They need only avoid confusing the stability of their knowledge with a horizon of understanding to which nothing can be added.

The obvious is not automatically the absolute. Even certainty bears the form of the standpoint from which it was gained.

V

The Lack That Keeps Knowledge Moving

HUMAN LIMITATION AS A CONDITION OF DEVELOPMENT

The limits of our perception separate us from the absolute. The same limitation generates the drive to move beyond what has already been known.

The finitude of human perception first appears as a deficiency. Human beings see only a fragment, live within a particular span of time, and possess complete access neither to the past nor to the future. Their senses are limited, their instruments extend those senses only gradually, and their concepts order a reality that remains greater than the concepts themselves.

Yet this very limitation can at the same time be one of the greatest human strengths. A being that fully possessed absolute truth would have no need to search for it. For human beings, by contrast, a tension arises between what has already been recognised and what remains unknown. From it arise curiosity, science, religion, philosophy, contradiction, invention, and the continuing examination of dominant truths.

Human limitation is therefore more than an obstacle on the path to truth. It is also a condition of movement towards it. What we lack generates the pressure to expand, abandon, or reorder an existing horizon of knowledge.

This movement must not be confused with necessary progress. Human beings can take three steps in a false direction. They can lose knowledge, construct destructive systems, or entrench errors across generations. Nevertheless, even such steps may produce consequences, contradictions, and counter-perspectives from which a fourth epistemic standpoint emerges that could not have existed without the preceding detours.

The Lack That Keeps Knowledge Moving

Across nearly five millennia of documented written history, a continuous transformation of human epistemic standpoints can be observed: new concepts, measuring instruments, institutions, legal orders, religions, sciences, and technological possibilities. The earliest known writing systems emerged in Mesopotamia around 3200 BCE.[14] This long retrospective permits us to identify development, but not to assign it an automatic moral value.

Development is not necessarily improvement. What appears technologically progressive may be morally ambivalent. What displaces one dominant truth may possess greater epistemic reach or merely establish a new form of power. The theory therefore uses development first of all descriptively: as a transformation of the epistemic space, not as a guarantee of the good.

Likewise, the replacement of dominant truths does not automatically bring us closer to absolute truth. Human beings do not know their metaphysical distance from it. They can establish only that a new perspective explains more, integrates earlier observations, reduces contradictions, or identifies its own limits more precisely. These are criteria of relative improvement in knowledge; they are no final hallelujah announcing possession of the absolute.

The absence of such a final signal is precisely what sustains the search. Perhaps our distinctively human strength lies less in the capacity to possess truth completely than in our inability to remain permanently satisfied with the limits of our own standpoint.

Our limitation separates us from absolute truth. Yet the same limitation creates the desire to overcome it. The lack becomes the engine of knowledge.

Putting the Theory to the Test

WHY RELIGION AND SCIENCE PRESENT DIFFERENT LIMITING CASES

These examples are chosen for a reason. Religion and science advance their truth claims from opposite directions: one from an absolute source, the other from controlled human observation.

Examples are not merely illustrations of an already completed theory. They show whether its concepts collapse under pressure or can in fact distinguish what debates frequently conflate. The first transition therefore leads to religion. If religion presupposes a source that does not merely know more than human beings but is omniscient, it represents the strongest conceivable counter-case to the ordinary human perspective.

The second transition leads to science. Science is not the opposite of truth, but the most methodologically rigorous human practice for binding propositions to observation, measurement, reproducibility, and criticism. Precisely for that reason, it is especially important to the theory. If scientific knowledge itself acknowledges uncertainty, scope, and revisability, then “scientifically demonstrated” cannot simply be equated with “absolutely true.”

Religion and science are neither harmonised here nor played off against one another. They are distinguished by the origin of their knowledge. Religious truth claims to arise from knowledge that precedes the human horizon. Scientific truth arises from the systematic extension of that horizon. The first must explain how an absolute source enters finite human knowledge. The second must explain why its extraordinary reliability nevertheless does not become independence from space and time.

Putting the Theory to the Test

First limiting case: truth before human knowledge

The religious perspective does not begin with the question of what explanation a human being develops from experience. It begins with the assumption that truth already exists in full before it is known by human beings. Revelation would then not be the product of a limited epistemic standpoint, but a communication from an epistemic horizon that precedes the human one. The philosophical transition to religion therefore examines whether an absolute source retains its status when received through finite language, transmission, and interpretation.

Second limiting case: truth through systematic inquiry

Science begins in the opposite direction. It presupposes no omniscient starting point. It extends the human epistemic standpoint step by step: through instruments, measurements, comparison, mathematics, replication, and criticism. Its standing arises from the quality of this procedure. The philosophical transition to science therefore asks not whether science produces truth, but what kind of truth is generated by a procedure whose power lies precisely in its capacity for correction.

The question shared by both approaches

Both fields converge on the same question: what happens between truth and the human possession of truth? In religion, the absolute stands at the beginning and is refracted perspectivally within the human being. In science, the human epistemic standpoint stands at the beginning and is methodically extended without reaching the complete spatiotemporal horizon. One path moves from the absolute source to finite reception; the other from finite observation to dominant truths of ever greater reach.

The transition to the examples thus becomes part of the theory itself. It prevents religious and scientific propositions from being compared solely according to their content. The first questions are from which epistemic order they arise, what status they claim, and at what point human perspective enters. Only then can it be meaningfully judged whether two propositions genuinely contradict one another or speak on different levels.

VII

The Absolute Source and Its Human Refraction

RELIGIOUS TRUTH BETWEEN REVELATION AND INTERPRETATION

A source can be conceived as absolute without every human statement about it sharing that status. This is precisely where perspective enters religion.

In classical monotheism, God is conceived as omniscient. Omniscience means complete or maximal knowledge; in many theological and philosophical accounts, it also encompasses truths about the past, present, and future. Divine timelessness offers an influential way of understanding this epistemic status, though theological traditions develop the idea differently.[1] Within the Islamic frame of reference used in this essay, knowledge of the unseen belongs to God, while human access to divine knowledge is explicitly limited.[2]

Regardless of whether a reader personally believes this religious premise, it has a clear epistemological structure. It identifies a source whose knowledge is not first assembled from observations within the world. God would not be an especially well-informed observer among others, but the ground of knowledge for whom space, time, and the future impose no limits. Within the logic of this premise, divine knowledge corresponds to the claim of absolute truth.

The Absolute Source and Its Human Refraction

This does not yet mean, however, that every human interpretation of revelation is itself absolute. Language stands between source and human understanding. Translation, transmission, memory, legal methodology, historical situation, cultural expectation, and personal experience intervene. Human beings may assume that absolute truth has been communicated to them and yet receive it only within their limited concepts. The source would be absolute; reception becomes individual.

This distinction explains why people can acknowledge the same revelation and nevertheless arrive at different interpretations. Conflict between interpretations need not mean that the assumed source is contradictory. It may arise because finite epistemic standpoints emphasise different aspects, employ different methods, or confuse a perspectival interpretation with the source itself.

Dominant truths can therefore arise within religion as well. A school of law, a theological tradition, or an institutional authority may place one interpretation above others. That interpretation then acquires real normative and social effects. It may be excellently grounded; as a human interpretation it nevertheless remains perspectival. The theory thereby protects the source's claim to absoluteness from premature identification with the absoluteness of human interpretation.

The source can be absolute. Interpretation remains human. Revelation and exegesis must therefore not be assigned the same epistemic status.

VIII

The Forbidden Animal

THE PROHIBITION OF PORK AS A PRACTICAL TEST CASE

A specific norm tests whether historical explanation, scientific usefulness, prophetic transmission, and an absolute source can be kept conceptually distinct.

The Qur'an explicitly lists pork among prohibited foods and at the same time formulates exceptions for circumstances of necessity or extreme need.[3] This establishes a textual finding. What is not established to the same degree is why the norm exists, whether its ground can be fully known by human beings, and how its claim should be classified in relation to later scientific explanations. It is precisely here that different perspectives diverge.

The historical and public-health perspective

A widespread explanation traces the prohibition to the conditions of life at the time. Under certain climatic, hygienic, and technological conditions, pig husbandry and pork may have been associated with particular risks. From this epistemic standpoint, the norm appears as a protective rule. If this explanation is frequently repeated in society, rendered medically plausible, or understood as a modern translation of an ancient prescription, it can become a dominant truth.

This often leads to a further claim: if modern refrigeration, meat inspection, veterinary medicine, and thorough cooking make the earlier risks more manageable, the norm is no longer necessary. Yet this conclusion goes beyond the historical explanation. It assumes that the reconstructed health rationale was not merely one possible reason for the prohibition, but its entire reason, confined to a particular period.

A present-day perspective cannot establish that assumption on its own. Looking back from the present, it identifies a plausible connection and treats it as the whole explanation. It cannot rule out further grounds, consequences, or symbolic and normative dimensions beyond its reach. A dominant historical account may grasp a real part of the truth without providing an absolute explanation.

The Forbidden Animal

The religious and prophetic perspective

The religious epistemic standpoint begins elsewhere. The prohibition is not first derived from a human health analysis but understood as revelation from an omniscient source. Under this premise, the norm's validity does not depend on whether human beings can reconstruct its complete purpose. A purpose no longer visible today does not refute the norm; it shows only that human explanation and the assumed source are not identical.

The philosophy advanced here adds the prophetic perspective. The Qur'an describes the Prophet's Night Journey; hadith tradition further recounts an ascent through the heavens.[4] Within this theory, the event is understood as a transcendence of the ordinary human standpoint. If it is assumed that the Prophet thereby gained access to an epistemic horizon relevant to the norm beyond ordinary spatial and temporal limits, then the transmitted proposition has a different status from an exclusively present-oriented reconstruction.

This does not mean that every religious commentary becomes absolute. The preceding distinction remains in force: the revelatory claim may be absolute, while the human explanation of the prohibition remains perspectival. Applying the emergency exception, determining necessity precisely, and distinguishing concrete cases all require interpretation. Absolute source and human interpretation therefore meet in every practical decision.

The example demonstrates the epistemic gain offered by the theory. Modern hygiene can alter the historical perspective and weaken a dominant explanation. Yet it cannot, from within its own range alone, prove that a norm understood as revealed is wholly exhausted by that explanation. Conversely, the religious position must make clear when it is appealing to the text, when to an interpretation, and when to a metaphysical premise. Only this differentiation makes the dispute precise.

The historical perspective asks why a prohibition may have made sense at the time. The absolute perspective determines whether its meaning is exhausted by that time.

IX

The Seal of 'Scientific Proof'

WHY SCIENCE IS NOT IDENTICAL WITH ABSOLUTE TRUTH

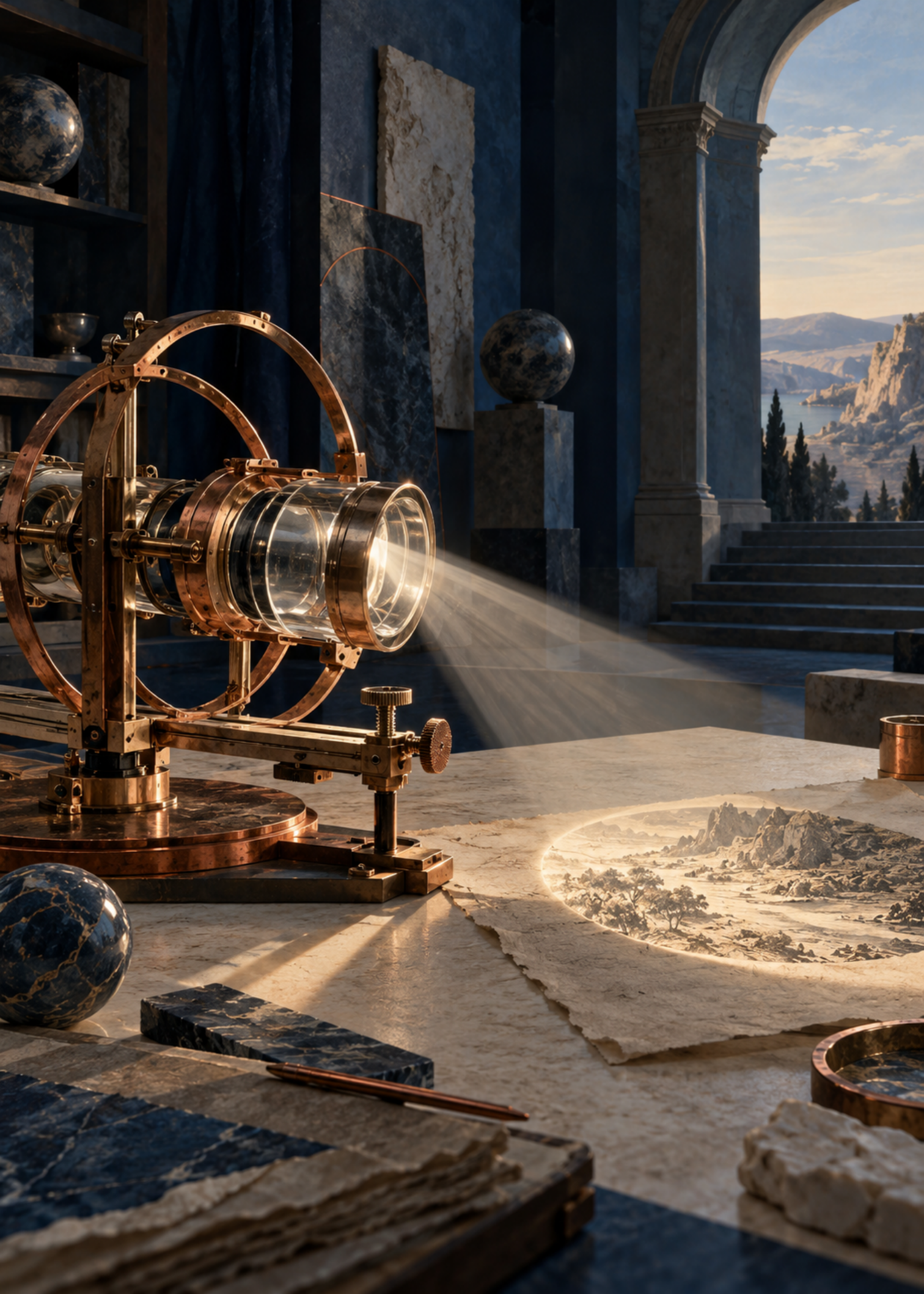
The more successful science becomes, the greater the temptation to mistake its current findings for the final word on reality. Its own methods resist that conclusion.

In contemporary debates, the phrase "scientifically proven" often serves as a seal of authority. It is used to close a discussion rather than give it structure. What science has demonstrated is equated with truth itself; anyone who objects appears to challenge reality, rather than speak from another perspective. This equation underestimates both the strength and the limits of science.

Science is the most disciplined human method for controlling observations, testing hypotheses, quantifying uncertainty, reproducing results, and correcting errors. Precisely for that reason, it does not normally claim complete certainty. The National Academies explicitly describe scientific knowledge as both enduring and subject to change; science seeks graded levels of confidence rather than complete certainty, and new evidence can revise or reframe existing theories.[5]

This is not a weakness of science. It is its distinctive strength. Science protects itself against absolutisation by binding propositions to conditions: measuring procedures, models, samples, uncertainties, scopes of application, and reproducibility. A scientific proposition can be highly reliable without claiming already to contain every future observation and every spatial level of scale.

In the language of this theory, science therefore produces especially strong dominant truths. Their dominance rests not only on institutions but on methodically controlled evidence. Yet these truths remain bound to human instruments, concepts, and horizons of observation. Science expands the epistemic standpoint; it does not transform it into a standpoint outside space and time.



The Seal of 'Scientific Proof'

Scientific models make this structure visible. Models select aspects, idealise, simplify, and abstract in order to make an object investigable.[6] Their power lies precisely in not representing everything at once. A model can therefore be truth-conducive and useful even though it does not contain the object in full. Whoever infers absolute truth from its usefulness confuses accuracy within one domain with completeness across all domains.

Observation, explanation, and classification

The expression "scientific truth" often obscures the different levels on which science speaks. An observation may report that an instrument displays a particular value under defined conditions. An explanation connects observations through a model or causal mechanism. A classification groups objects according to agreed, justified criteria. Each makes a different kind of claim to truth.

Measurement data already depend on devices, calibrations, and rules of evaluation, but they remain more closely tied to concrete conditions. Models have greater reach because they combine many observations; for that very reason, they also contain selection and idealisation. Classifications such as "planet," "disease," or "species" structure reality through concepts required by human knowledge. They are not arbitrary, but neither are they identical with the object itself.

The term "demonstrated" therefore does not denote a view from outside history but an especially strong justification under particular presuppositions. A demonstration can establish reproducibility, a high degree of certainty, and superiority to competing explanations. The word itself does not include every unknown variable, future method of measurement, or larger systemic context. Scientific consensus consolidates such tests and therefore possesses exceptionally strong standing; it is precisely its corrigibility that distinguishes it from a claim to absolute truth.

Science is not the opposite of truth. It is the strictest human practice for testing dominant truths, determining their range, and replacing them with better ones.

X

When the Earth Changes Shape

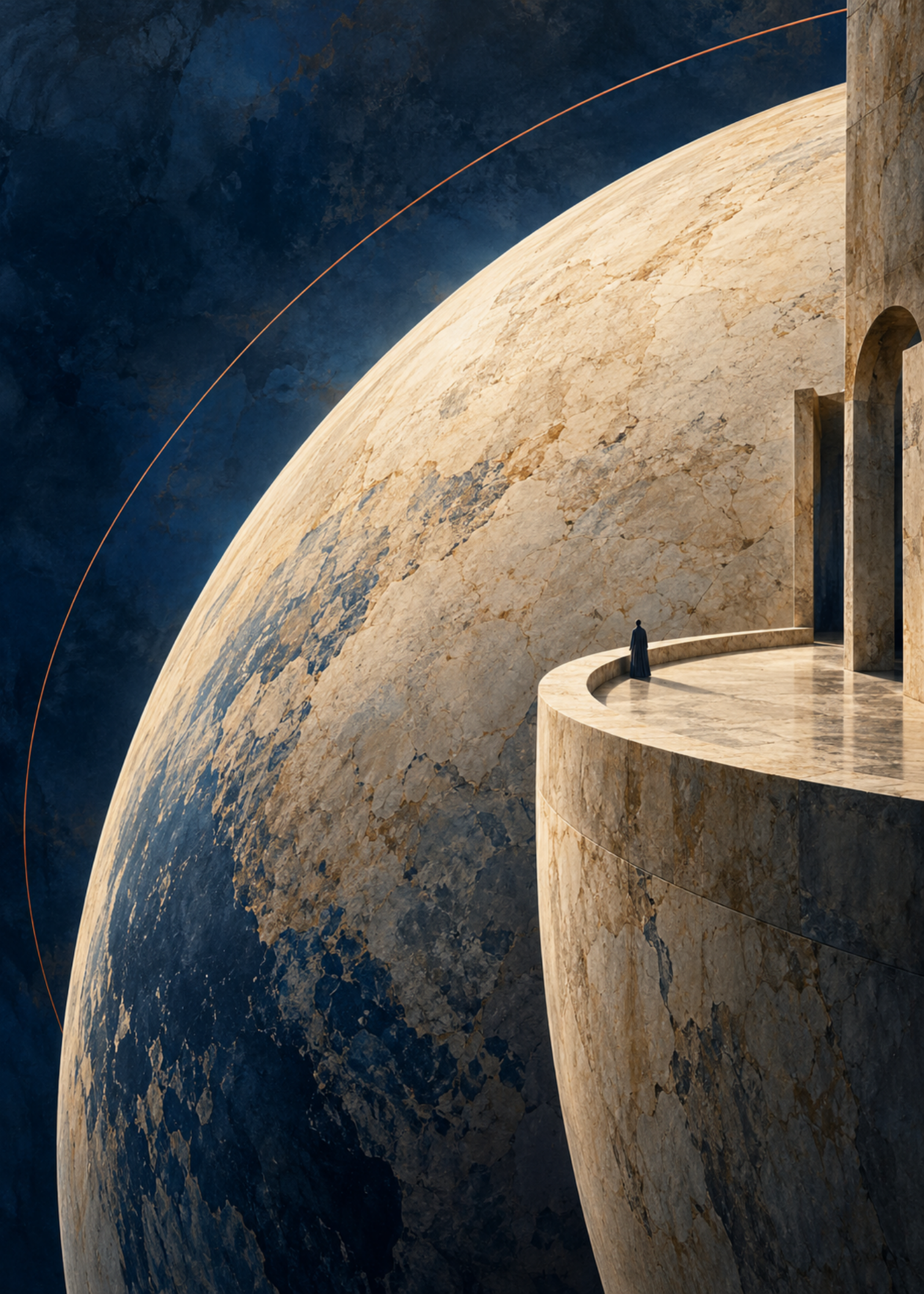
FROM PLANE TO SPHERE, FROM GEOCENTRISM TO THE COSMOS

The Earth does not change shape; a change of standpoint alters its description, the precision of measurement, and the scale of observation. That is what makes the example philosophically useful.

The claim that “science once believed the Earth was a disk” is too crude as a general historical statement. Learned traditions have known of the Earth’s roundness for more than two thousand years.[7] Yet the example of flatness contains an important philosophical core when it is understood not as a myth about the history of science but as a change of scale.

To a person standing on a small portion of the Earth’s surface, the ground appears flat. In surveying, architecture, or everyday movement, a planar approximation can be entirely appropriate. From a greater distance, curvature becomes relevant and the Earth appears as a sphere. More precise geodesy does not describe it as a perfect sphere, but takes account of flattening, rotation, and the geoid as an equipotential surface of the gravitational field.[8] None of these descriptions need be arbitrary. Each apprehends the object at a particular resolution and for a particular purpose.

The theory therefore does not claim that the Earth might just as well be square tomorrow. Scientific revision is not free invention. Robust observations constrain future models. A new description must explain why earlier measurements worked and show where their range ended. The transition from plane to sphere, rotational ellipsoid, and geoid is not a leap from one arbitrary opinion to another, but an increasing differentiation of epistemic standpoints.



When the Earth Changes Shape

The centre that lost its privileged place

Dominance becomes even clearer in the transition from the geocentric to the heliocentric worldview. In many ancient and medieval orders, a stationary Earth at the centre was regarded as the authoritative model. It structured astronomical calculations, everyday experience, philosophy, and in part theology. Observations such as the phases of Venus and the motions of the planets contributed to changing this order.[9]

More than a single proposition changed. An entire framework of knowledge lost its dominance. Dominant truth shapes what counts as a natural explanation. Yet moving beyond a paradigm does not render every earlier observation worthless. The observed motions remained; their interpretation changed.

Planet: object or category?

The term “planet” likewise reveals the boundary between reality and scientific definition. The Earth exists independently of how human beings classify it. “Planet,” by contrast, is a relational category that orders features such as orbit, approximately round shape, and dynamical dominance in the orbital neighbourhood. The definition adopted by the International Astronomical Union in 2006 applies explicitly to bodies in the Solar System; under it, Pluto was classified as a dwarf planet.[10]

This changes Pluto's place in a human classification, not its reality. New discoveries can put such categories under pressure. Exoplanets, free-floating planetary bodies, and other cosmic systems may require different or broader concepts. Science here does more than discover things: it creates conceptual frameworks that make them comparable. Those frameworks are constrained by evidence, but they are not identical with the objects themselves.

The Earth does not become flat, spherical, or a geoid because human beings change their minds. These concepts show how different epistemic standpoints apprehend the same object with different ranges.

XI

Truths That Outlive Their Limits

NEWTON, CONTINENTAL DRIFT, AND THE CAUSES OF STOMACH DISEASE

Scientific progress does not always erase earlier knowledge. It often reorders it, restricts its scope, or shifts the causal centre.

The theory of dominant truths is at its strongest when a new model does not simply destroy an old one but incorporates it. Newtonian mechanics is exemplary. Einstein's theories of relativity did not make Newton wrong in every practical context. At low velocities and in weak gravitational fields, Newtonian descriptions remain extraordinarily useful approximations; in strong fields, at high velocities, or in more precise measurements, relativistic corrections become necessary.[11]

This reveals a hierarchy within scientific truth. The older dominant truth remains valid within a limited domain. It was not absolute truth, but neither was it mere error. Its mistake lay in confusing its range of validity with the whole. The newer model ranks higher because it encompasses more phenomena while also explaining why the older model works within its own domain.

Continents that were not allowed to move

Alfred Wegener combined geological, geographical, and fossil evidence into the thesis of drifting continents. His ideas remained controversial for a long time; only new evidence and technical possibilities after the Second World War contributed to the broad acceptance of plate tectonics.[12] The case shows that a truth does not become true only when it becomes dominant. A perspective can precede the later dominant truth while the existing order still rejects it.

Truths That Outlive Their Limits

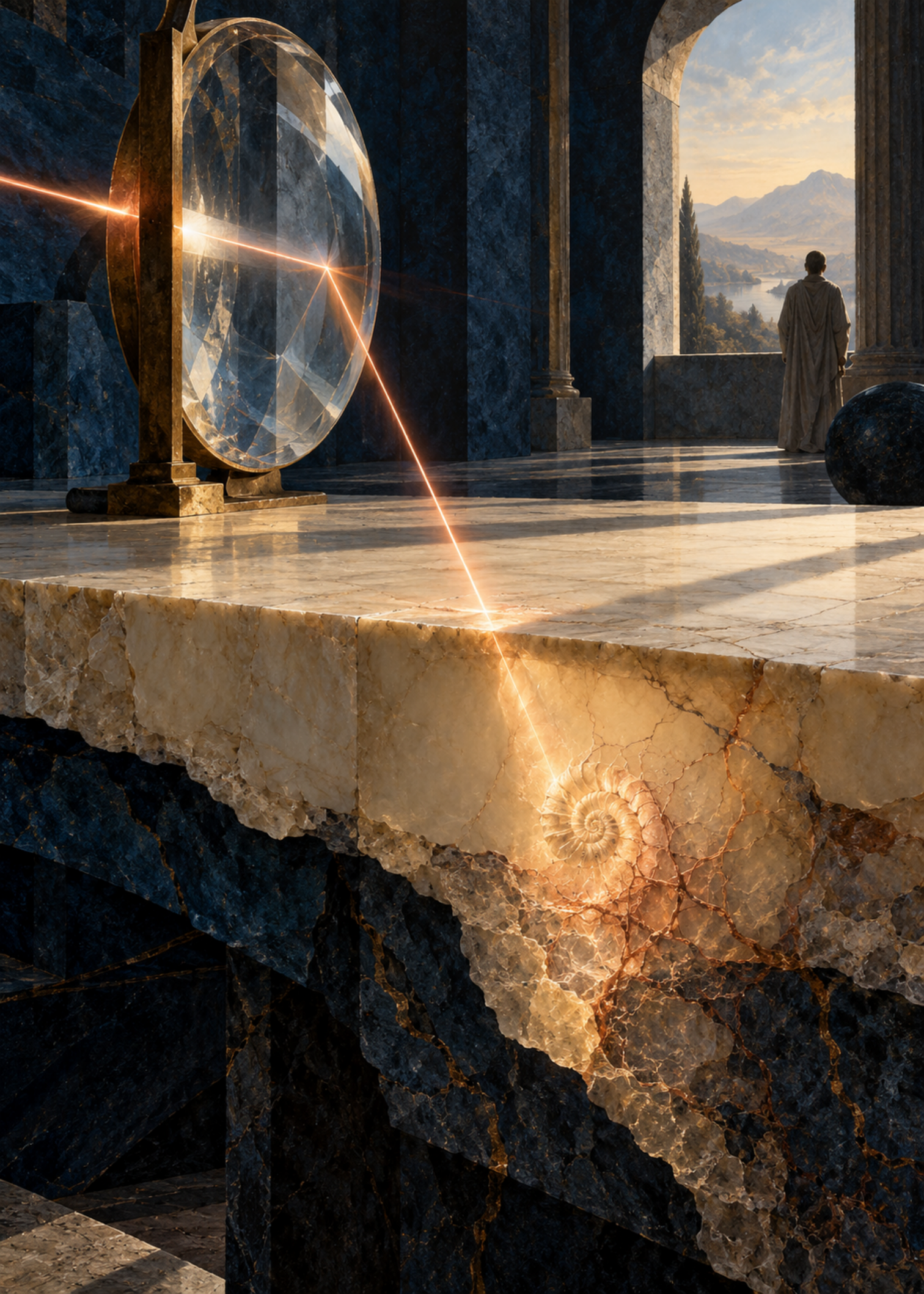
Dominance is therefore no reliable measure of when something becomes true. It measures a claim's ability to prevail, the structure of its justification, and its institutional acceptance. Scientific progress requires more than new data. It often requires a concept that connects the data differently, and a community prepared to change its existing framework of knowledge.

The bacterium that challenged the accepted explanation

The discovery of Helicobacter pylori and its role in gastritis and peptic ulcer disease transformed a central medical explanatory framework; the 2005 Nobel Prize honoured Barry Marshall and Robin Warren for it.[13] The example shows that even clinically effective treatment traditions can miss a causal centre. Symptoms, acid, and stress factors were not unreal; the bacterial cause reordered their significance and opened another form of therapy.

In medicine in particular, this distinction has consequences. A dominant truth can make action possible and still remain incomplete. Patients are treated on its basis, guidelines are written, institutions invest in it. When an epistemic standpoint of wider reach emerges, it changes not only theory but practice. Truth takes effect before its range is fully recognised.

These examples refute the equation of revision with arbitrariness. Science changes not because every perspective is equally good, but because new evidence, new instruments, or new models make greater reach possible. In the language of this theory, scientific progress consists in the replacement, reclassification, or expansion of dominant truths by epistemic standpoints that explain more and determine their own limits more precisely.



XII

Difference Rather Than Confirmation

THE EPISTEMIC GAIN OF DIALOGUE

Those who seek only agreement learn little about the premises that sustain their position. Dissent reveals what would otherwise remain unnoticed within their own thinking.

The theory does not end with a hierarchy of truths. It contains a method of dialogue. Human beings need not accept the same ultimate premises in order to argue rationally with one another. They can provisionally assume another person's premise and test whether the asserted conclusion follows within it.

A non-believer can say: I do not accept revelation, or a prophetic standpoint beyond ordinary limits of space and time, as my own truth. Nevertheless, for the sake of examining the argument, I will assume that this foundation is coherent. They can then ask whether a purely historical account based on health risks really invalidates the prohibition of pork within that system. One need not believe a premise to examine whether a conclusion follows from it.

Conversely, a religious participant can take the scientific premise entirely seriously: which risks can be measured? Which historical explanations are documented? Which proposition concerns an empirical purpose and which concerns normative validity? Acknowledging scientific knowledge does not require abandoning religious truth. It prevents one's own interpretation from advancing empirical claims that evade examination.

Difference Rather Than Confirmation

The same applies within science. Peer review, replication, and organised criticism function because knowledge may be challenged rather than merely confirmed. The opposing position is not automatically true, but it compels the dominant truth to disclose its evidence, assumptions, and range. A science that permitted only confirmation would lose its strongest method.

The epistemic gain of dialogue therefore need not consist in consensus. It may consist in a more exact differentiation. After a good discussion, two people may continue to hold different individual or dominant truths. Yet they know more precisely at which premise they diverge, which conclusions follow internally, and where a perspective exceeds its domain of validity.

Dialogue does not confirm absolute truth. It expands human epistemic standpoints. Every serious objection can reveal a blind spot, limit an overhasty generalisation, or expose a tacit presupposition. Human beings do not thereby acquire a view across space and time. They move more rigorously within their limitation.

A position does not gain its greatest strength from constant confirmation. It gains precision by withstanding the strongest opposing view.

XIII

The Longing No One Needs to Name

THE COLLECTIVE STRIVING FOR THE ONE ABSOLUTE TRUTH

What is unusual is not that human beings hold different truths. What is unusual is that, despite this difference, they search for truth almost everywhere.

The object changes: nature, God, illness, origin, morality, history, love, law, or one's own life. The forms of inquiry differ radically. Yet they share a common movement: people rarely remain satisfied for ever with an account that merely holds sway. They ask whether it is really true.

This movement extends the theory developed thus far. Perspectives explain from where truth becomes visible. Individual truths designate what is apprehended from that epistemic standpoint. Dominant truths explain why certain truths temporarily take precedence over others. Absolute truth designates the horizon no longer relativised by ordinary limits of space and time. The collective striving for truth now describes the dynamic between these levels. It explains why dominant truths need not remain final points.

Human beings can take three steps in a false direction and still form part of a movement that produces knowledge. In this model, error is not the opposite of every development. It can become material for development once it encounters resistance, produces consequences, reveals contradictions, or gives rise to a counter-perspective. A dominant truth can endure for centuries and, precisely through its dominance, create the conditions under which its limits later become recognisable.

The Longing No One Needs to Name

This does not mean that history moves automatically towards truth in a straight line. The movement can run backwards, sideways, or in circles. What matters is that, as long as people ask for reasons, compare observations, reread traditions, and encounter the limits of existing explanations, what dominates remains open to change. One dominant truth can replace another without absolute truth having been reached.

The unattainability of a secure final signal is decisive for this movement. There is no necessary hallelujah, no objectively audible moment at which humanity knows without doubt: absolute truth has now been found. From a limited epistemic standpoint, even an extraordinarily successful truth can still be judged only within that epistemic horizon. The absence of a final signal is therefore not merely disappointing. It sustains the search.

Perhaps this is something fundamental about being human: we search for a truth whose complete form we do not know, and that very ignorance drives further questions. Desire reaches towards something we cannot fully imagine. People do not necessarily recognise their search as a search for absolute truth; they experience it as curiosity, doubt, research, faith, dissent, fear of error, or a desire for certainty. Within this theory, these are different expressions of the same movement.

The multiplicity of perspectives does not contradict this movement. On the contrary: if perspectives are epistemic standpoints, their diversity increases the number of possible approaches. Infinitely many perspectives would not produce infinitely many independent realities. They would open infinitely many possible views of one reality. Some move closer to an object, others farther away; some complement one another, others contradict one another. Their productivity lies precisely in the fact that no single human perspective occupies the entire space of possible knowledge.

Humanity need not possess absolute truth for its ignorance of that truth to become the engine of the search for it.

A Standpoint in Motion

TRAVEL, AGEING, AND THE SMALLEST SHIFTS OF THE EPISTEMIC STANDPOINT

We need not transcend space and time to experience how knowledge depends on our standpoint. Even small shifts can change what knowledge we can access, how we weigh it, and how we organise it.

Movement has an epistemological significance within this theory. Human beings remain enclosed within their bounded place in space and time; nevertheless, they can alter their position within that limitation. Every such change opens the possibility of perceiving the same object under different conditions.

Travel is a particularly vivid example. Historical migration must not be reduced to a search for truth: food, climate, trade, flight, war, work, and social bonds are among its many causes. Philosophically, something else is decisive. Those who move alter the spatial field, people, languages, rules, assumptions, and standards of comparison they encounter.

The spatial change may be vanishingly small in relation to the Earth or the universe. For the human epistemic standpoint, however, it may still be substantial. A journey need not produce epistemic gain; it may even confirm prejudice. Yet it creates the possibility of a perspective that would not have been available in the same way from an unchanged location.

A Standpoint in Motion

This interpretation has an empirical analogue: research on transformative learning in travel and study abroad describes how new environments, reflection, and repeated travel experiences can foster shifts in perspective and learning processes.[32] This does not prove an approach to absolute truth. It merely shows that spatial movement can in fact alter orders of knowledge.

The temporal shift may be smaller still. Ageing means that the same person no longer looks at life from the same point in time. Experiences, losses, knowledge, relationships, and expectations alter the weighting of what was already known. The object may remain the same; its place within individual knowledge changes.

Time therefore becomes epistemologically relevant long before cosmological scales enter the picture. The progression of a single life already generates new perspectives. A decision that appears self-evident at twenty may be assessed differently decades later, without the earlier perspective necessarily having been irrational.

The theory thereby acquires a microscopic form of its conception of space and time: we cannot leave space and time, but we move within both. Every movement can reorder knowledge and thereby make new dominant or individual conceptions of truth possible.

It is not distance that determines the value of a shift in perspective. What matters is whether access to knowledge changes.

A Life of Shifting Perspectives

EDUCATION, WORK, FAITH, AND THE UNNOTICED STRIVING FOR THE ABSOLUTE

The striving for truth need not be consciously experienced as a metaphysical project. It can unfold in the most ordinary forms of life.

Travel is only one visible form of change. Education alters the conceptual space in which a person can ask questions. Work changes their practical access to aspects of reality. Relationships, responsibility, illness, loss, success, and failure change the weight they give to what they know. Even those who hardly leave one place continually move through standpoints that differ from their earlier ones.

Not every shift in perspective is an enrichment. New knowledge can be false, education can become dogmatic, professional specialisation can narrow vision, travel can reinforce stereotypes, and ageing can lead to rigidity as readily as to differentiation. The value therefore does not lie in change as such. It lies in the possibility that change makes a previously invisible relation visible.

From this perspective, human existence appears as a continuing movement between knowledge and a whole that is not fully available. People need not call this whole “absolute truth”. They may seek a better explanation, a more just decision, a more coherent life, or more reliable knowledge. Within the logic of the theory, these are different forms of the same structural movement beyond present knowledge.

A Life of Shifting Perspectives

In many religious traditions, this movement takes an eschatological form. The end of earthly life is associated with a transition to a reality in which the limitations of the present epistemic standpoint are removed or differently ordered. Where God is conceived as omniscient and beyond the ordinary limits of space and time, encounter with God also appears as encounter with the claim of absolute truth.

The non-believer remains within the same epistemological structure without having to adopt this religious interpretation. Research, learning, professional practice, criticism, and everyday correction all presuppose that present knowledge can be exceeded. Even a person who never reflects on metaphysics participates in this movement whenever they learn, compare, reject, or reassess.

Here lies the anthropological point of the theory. Our limitation prevents us from possessing the complete relational whole. The same limitation makes change possible and creates the distance between what we know and what might still be known. That distance is not merely a deficit. It is the space of human development.

Absolute truth remains unchanging insofar as it is absolute. Our perspectives, knowledge, moral judgements, and the dominant truths of our time are what move. This asymmetry sustains the human search: the Absolute remains while we move.

Human beings do not necessarily seek the Absolute because they can name it. They may seek it by refusing to take what is present as the final word.

XIV

Dissent as a Tool, Not Salvation

WHY DIALOGUE ENABLES KNOWLEDGE YET CAN ALSO REINFORCE ERROR

Within the extended theory, dialogue acquires a more precise place. It is neither the source of truth nor a guarantee of approaching it. It is an instrument.

Like every instrument, dialogue can enable knowledge or organise an existing error more efficiently. Human beings can confirm one another, close rhetorical systems, exclude counterarguments, and thereby immunise an individual or dominant truth against correction. An intense dialogue is therefore not automatically a good dialogue.

Dialogue gains its epistemic force when it allows difference. Those who seek only confirmation chiefly test the stability of what they already believe. Those who reconstruct another perspective well enough to adopt its premises provisionally subject their own position to a different test. The question becomes not only “Why am I right?” but also “What would have to be true for the other person to be right, and what would actually follow?”

Difference itself then becomes productive. A position does not necessarily improve by defeating an opponent. It improves when the encounter clarifies which assumptions support it, which can be replaced, and which lack justification. Even if neither side abandons its basic premise, both may gain understanding. The differences between the positions become clearer.

Dialogue can therefore contribute to the search for absolute truth even when none of the participants recognises absolute truth. It creates no guarantee of approximation. It creates opportunities for correction. Error can be reinforced in dialogue; it can also break against a perspective located outside one’s own framework of thought. The value of dialogue lies not in infallibility but in its capacity to bring new epistemic standpoints into contact.

The search thereby becomes collective without the collective itself becoming omniscient. Every generation inherits dominant truths, alters them, rejects some, and fortifies others. Science, religion, law, and everyday life are different arenas of this process. None of them need possess the sole path to absolute truth. Together they nevertheless show that human beings do not merely consume truth but continually order, contest, and redescribe it.

Confirmation stabilises. Differentiation tests. Truth-seeking needs both, but only one of them compels a position to see its own limits.

The Inner Shift of Standpoint

IMAGINATION AS A SPACE OF PERSPECTIVAL FREEDOM

Human beings cannot physically step outside space and time. In imagination, however, they can shift their standpoint and consider perspectives unavailable in their immediate situation.

The shifts in perspective considered so far rest on external movement: a person travels and changes location; ages and looks from a later point in time; learns and subsequently possesses different knowledge. Yet there is another possibility: the epistemic standpoint can change without the physical location changing.

A person remains bodily bound to the same place and moment and can nevertheless imagine standing elsewhere, living in another time, thinking under different premises, or adopting a belief that contradicts their own. They can reconstruct the past, project possible futures, and construct counterfactual worlds.

In this mental sense, human beings can transcend the immediate attachment of their epistemic standpoint to space and time without transcending space and time themselves. Imagination does not generate an absolute perspective; it makes epistemic standpoints mobile.

A perspectivally grounded insight that an individual has accepted as truth therefore need not await an external change in the world before it can change. A person can alter their individual truth by mentally constructing another epistemic standpoint and reconsidering the same knowledge from there.

A third form of perspectival change thereby emerges alongside spatial and temporal change: imaginative perspectival displacement. It enlarges the epistemic space without requiring the body to change its location.

The body remains bound to its location. Imagination can shift the epistemic standpoint.

Perspectives We Need Not Have Lived

OTHER TRUTHS, HYPOTHETICAL PREMISES, AND NEW EPISTEMIC STANDPOINTS

We can examine another person's truth without adopting it as our own. Bringing perspectives into relation can reveal a standpoint that none of them offered on its own.

A perspective need not have been fully lived in order to be examined in thought. A person can ask what would become visible if their own starting premise were false; how the same matter would appear from an opponent's perspective; or what conclusion would follow if another person's premises were temporarily treated as valid.

One's own perspective, P1, need not merge with an external or hypothetical perspective, P2. Both can remain available at the same time. Their relationship can nevertheless generate a third standpoint, P3: a connection that neither perspective could have produced in isolation.

This explains why difference can be epistemically productive. Another person's truth need not be accepted in order to alter one's own epistemic space. It can be examined, reconstructed, and placed in relation to one's own.

Education thereby acquires a particular function. It is not merely the accumulation of additional facts. History, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, art, and the natural sciences enlarge the range of perspectives that a person can think through in differentiated form. Education therefore enlarges the space of possible epistemic standpoints.

This capacity is not infallible. Imagination can reproduce prejudice, distort other perspectives, and create merely apparent connections. Its epistemic value arises only through examination, knowledge, comparison, and a willingness to revise.

Creativity does not necessarily consist in knowing something that nobody knew before. It may consist in connecting what is already known from an epistemic standpoint that nobody had previously occupied.

The Absolute as the Context of All Perspectives

WHY EVEN ERROR HAS A TRUE PLACE WITHIN THE WHOLE

Absolute truth is not the sum of all perspectives. It is the complete relational context within which every perspective, every item of knowledge, and every error has its actual place.

If absolute truth encompasses all relevant relations across space and time, no perspective that has actually arisen can stand wholly outside that context. It does not follow, however, that every perspective is true.

A proposition can be false. Yet the facts that it was believed by particular people at a particular time and under particular premises, that it had effects, and that it may later have been refuted are themselves facts within the complete relational context.

Error does not thereby become retrospectively true. What is true is its relation: why it arose, what it affected, how it was changed, and which epistemic standpoint it may have made possible.

The Absolute is therefore not P1 + P2 + P3, nor is it a vote among all perspectives. It is the complete relation R within which P1, P2, P3, and every further perspective acquire their actual place.

Thus even a perspective that appears false from today's standpoint can be part of absolute truth without its propositional content becoming true. Its existence, its falsity, and its effects belong equally to the whole.

Absolute truth is not the sum of all perspectives. It is the complete relational context in which even a false perspective has its true place.

The Highest Form of Perspectival Change

NOT MERELY ADOPTING PERSPECTIVES, BUT GENERATING, DISTINGUISHING, AND DIRECTING THEM

The highest perspectival achievement does not consist in accumulating as many standpoints as possible. It begins where a person can deliberately generate epistemic standpoints, distinguish them from one another, and move between them as required.

A perspective initially suggests a fixed point from which an object is viewed. More perspectives therefore mean, at first, merely more possible standpoints. The further-reaching capacity consists in making the standpoint itself mobile in imagination.

A person can construct someone else's perspective, or a past, future, or counterfactual one, without confusing it with their own conviction. The decisive capacity is meta-differentiation: knowing which truth one accepts and which perspective one is adopting only in imagination.

This distinction is what makes perspectival mobility productive. One's own position need not disappear for another to be examined seriously. Several epistemic standpoints can remain simultaneously available without collapsing into one another.

Travel helps because a change of place allows us to experience unfamiliar ways of ordering the world. Ageing helps because time changes the weight we give to knowledge. Education helps because it provides concepts, models, and unfamiliar standpoints. None of these conditions, however, is logically necessary for an imaginative shift of perspective.

Even under extreme spatial restriction, a person could — provided memory, language, knowledge, and imagination remained available — construct different standpoints in thought. Freedom of physical movement and freedom of perspective are therefore not the same.

The highest perspectival achievement is not to possess one more perspective. It is to be able to generate perspectives freely, distinguish them from one another, and connect them.

From Perspective to Shaping the Self

TRAITS AS RESOURCES WHOSE FUNCTION CAN BE REDIRECTED

Perspectival imagination changes not only what a person recognises. It can also change how existing traits are understood, directed, and used.

Consider stubbornness. From one perspective it appears as a deficit: holding on to a position despite reasons for abandoning it. Yet the underlying persistence can, from another epistemic standpoint, be directed towards a different object.

The decisive change is not that stubbornness disappears. It is a movement from stubbornness to persistence to sustained commitment to a goal. The person no longer defends a particular opinion at all costs; they remain committed to the goal while keeping the route towards it open to scrutiny.

This does more than give traits new names. Their function changes with the goal, the object, and the perspective. Scepticism can become critical scrutiny, impatience a spur to action, sensitivity an ability to notice fine distinctions — provided the underlying disposition is actually directed and used differently.

Perspectival autonomy therefore means more than mental flexibility. It includes the capacity to bring insight back into one's conduct: recognising a disposition, seeing it in a different functional context, and deliberately trying to redirect its energy.

This shaping of the self contains no automatic guarantee of truth. A new self-interpretation may be false or dysfunctional. Its value arises through reflection, examination, experience, and the possibility of renewed correction.

Perspectival autonomy does not maximise truth. It maximises the mobility of the epistemic standpoint — and with it the possibility of translating insight into deliberate action.

Will, Action, and Sustained Commitment

EDUCATION AS AN EXPANSION OF THE SPACE OF POSSIBILITY

Purposeful development requires more than imagination. A possibility must become something we want; wanting must lead to action; and action must be sustained over time.

Three functions can be distinguished here: wanting gives direction, action brings imagination into reality, and sustained commitment keeps movement going despite resistance. Only together do they turn a possibility into a goal that is actively pursued.

What we want is itself shaped by perspective. We can scarcely strive consciously for something we cannot imagine as possible. A wider range of conceivable perspectives can therefore open a wider range of possible goals.

Education acquires its strongest function here. It does not merely supply facts; it expands the range of conceivable models, forms of life, questions, and solutions. Education enlarges perspectival space; perspectival space enlarges the space of possibility; the space of possibility expands the space of choice.

Diligence, persistence, and education guarantee neither truth nor success. They do, however, create conditions under which perspectival autonomy can be used in a more differentiated way. A person cannot generate traits without limit, but can recognise, combine, direct, and functionally reshape existing dispositions more consciously.

The highest form of this capacity lies not in acquiring one more perspective, but in directing how perspectives change and connect: recognising, generating, distinguishing, connecting, and testing them, then bringing them to bear on one's own conduct.

Education does not merely increase knowledge. It enlarges the space of what a person can think, want, and recognise as a possible form of action.

XIV

Thinking by Indirection

CHAOS INTELLIGENCE, NEW CONNECTIONS, AND THE PRODUCTIVITY OF NON-LINEAR THOUGHT

The theory does not begin by confining knowledge to a single straight line towards truth. It first lets relationships between perspectives emerge, then gives order to what they reveal.

Many philosophical systems achieve intelligibility through strict conceptual boundaries, fixed starting points, and a sequence of premises and conclusions that is as linear as possible. This theory does not reject such order. Without differentiation it would itself be unintelligible. Yet it does not equate differentiation with the process by which thought comes into being.

Its point of departure may be called chaos intelligence: not chaos in the sense of arbitrariness, but the capacity initially to relate even distant, unordered, or apparently unrelated perspectives to one another. Creativity arises not only within a pre-given order, but also through the creation of new connections.

A perspective opens access to knowledge. Yet a connection between two perspectives can itself generate a new epistemic standpoint. Thought then does not move exclusively from A to B along the supposedly shortest line to truth, but via C, D, or a relation that initially appears incidental.

This kind of indirect thinking does not claim that every association is epistemically productive. Connections may be false, accidental, or misleading. Their value lies in the possibility of opening an epistemic space that would not have become visible within a single fixed perspective.

Here lies the apparent paradox of the method. In the emergence of a thought, it postpones premature conceptual narrowing for as long as possible so that perspectives can be related to one another. Once a theory arises from those relations, it employs precisely the differentiation it had initially deferred, in order to make its thoughts intelligible and testable.

Order makes a thought intelligible. Disorder can bring forth the thought for which no prior order had made room.

A Theory That Need Not Rule

THE LEGITIMACY OF INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE DELIBERATE LIMITATION OF ITS OWN CLAIM

The success of this theory does not lie in becoming the final dominant truth. Its task is already fulfilled if it makes alternative connections visible and thereby enables other epistemic standpoints.

The theory claims no privileged straight path to absolute truth. By its own standard, such a claim would be contradictory: it too arises within space and time, from available concepts, experiences, and connections. It is itself a perspective and can itself produce only perspectival knowledge.

For that reason, the theory does not measure its worth by becoming universal or permanently valid. It fulfils a purpose if it helps us see that dominant truth claims have alternatives, are not absolute, and can legitimately be questioned.

The individual thereby also acquires an epistemological claim to their own truth in the sense defined here: to a perspectivally grounded perception of truth arising from their access to knowledge. This claim does not mean that every individual truth is actually true or equally valid. It means that, as an epistemic standpoint, it is initially legitimate and may not be silenced merely by the existence of a dominant interpretation.

An individual perspective can err. It can equally make visible a connection that escapes a dominant order. Dominant truths change precisely because individual or marginal perspectives open new forms of access, reveal contradictions, or connect domains of knowledge that had previously remained separate.

Scientific and social truth claims therefore possess validity under particular conditions. Consciously recognising them as limited does not weaken knowledge. It creates the condition under which knowledge can develop further instead of confusing its present form with the Absolute.

The theory need not become the dominant truth. It is enough if it makes dominance visible as something that can be questioned.

The Freedom of Connection

WHY MANY PERSPECTIVES NEED NOT MAKE THOUGHT LESS CLEAR

Non-linear thought and conceptual clarity are not opposites. They belong to different phases of the same epistemic process.

The plurality of perspectives in this theory is not intended to dissolve concepts. It is intended to prevent concepts from closing the space of possible connections too early. Only once a new perspective has emerged does differentiation become necessary: What is perspective? What is knowledge? What is individual truth? What is a dominant truth claim? What could absolute truth mean at all?

A double movement thereby emerges. In discovery, thought may be open, lateral, and unordered. In justification, it must distinguish, order, and make its premises visible. Creativity and logic are not played off against one another; logic tests what creative connections have brought forth.

This structure corresponds to the broader image of the human being developed in the essay. Human beings do not possess absolute truth. They move between perspectives, alter knowledge, form dominant orders, and exceed them again. Even wrong turns can generate new connections without thereby becoming true in retrospect.

The claim to an individual perspective is therefore not relativism. It is the recognition that knowledge can begin only from a standpoint. The examination of that standpoint remains necessary. Precisely because no human being stands beyond space and time, no human epistemic standpoint may claim, merely on account of its dominance, to be the final one.

The theory seeks to make this process more conscious. Its aim is not to decide which perspective will ultimately prevail, but to create conditions in which perspectives can meet, dominant truth claims can be examined, and new connections can become thinkable.

Perhaps knowledge does not lie only on the straight line between question and answer. Perhaps it also arises in connections that become visible only when one leaves the straight line.

XV

The Theory Measured by Its Own Standard

CONCLUSION: THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH WITHOUT A CLAIM TO ABSOLUTENESS

A theory that binds all human knowledge to perspective must apply the same standard to itself.

This theory, too, exists within space and time. It arises from a particular epistemic standpoint, uses available concepts, orders existing knowledge, and adopts premises. By its own logic, it therefore cannot claim to have recognised absolute truth.

Its status is perspectival: it is an attempt to order knowledge so that the differences between individual truth, dominant truth claim, and absolute truth become visible.

Even if it became the dominant philosophical interpretation, its relationship to the Absolute would remain unchanged. Dominance would be an effect of the theory, not confirmation of its absolute truth.

That is precisely its intention. It does not seek permanent rule or the final standpoint. It seeks to make more conscious what it describes as a human drive: the continuing striving to exceed one's own epistemic standpoint.

For as long as human beings remain within their limits in space and time, the difference between knowledge and absolute truth remains. From this difference arise science, religion, education, criticism, morality, law, and dialogue — not necessarily as a linear approach, but as movement.

This theory does not seek to possess absolute truth. It seeks to show how the search for it is one of the conditions of being human.

Verified Foundations and Open Premises

TEXTUAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND HISTORICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL POINTS OF REFERENCE

The sources support factual, textual, and comparative claims. The systematic architecture of the theory is an independent philosophical construction.

[VERIFIED] The passages used concerning the prohibition of pork and the Night Journey were checked, as were philosophy-of-science claims about the revisability of knowledge and the scientific and history-of-science examples.

[AUTHOR'S PHILOSOPHICAL THESIS] Perspective as epistemic standpoint, individual knowledge, dominant truth, and absolute truth as complete relation form the conceptual architecture of this essay.

[NOT VERIFIED] Metaphysical claims concerning an actually absolute source of revelation or complete access beyond space and time are not presented as empirically established facts.

The historical account of law does not attribute modern laws to a single religious cause. The sources support the influence of religious, natural-law, philosophical, political, and institutional traditions.

The normative extension — absolute truth as complete relation including moral quality — is part of the theory itself.

Sources substantiate the findings used. They do not replace the philosophical argument; they mark its empirical and historical points of reference.

Text, Tradition, and Method

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Source 1

[14] Early writing systems

Denise Schmandt-Besserat, University of Texas at Austin: The Evolution of Writing. Cuneiform in Mesopotamia around 3200 BCE.

Source 1

Philosophical Connections

Comparative and further reading on the theory.

[15] Hasok Chang — activist realism
Cambridge University Press: Realism for Realistic People (2022) and the chapter “Realism”.
Source 1 · Source 2

[16] Social epistemology
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Social Epistemology. Truth-seeking through or despite other people, institutions, and collective agents.
Source 1

[17] Social dimensions of scientific knowledge
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: The Social Dimensions of Scientific Knowledge. Revision 2025.
Source 1

[18] Longino and underdetermination
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Underdetermination of Scientific Theory. Diversity of perspectives and criticism as conditions of scientific objectivity.
Source 1

[19] Situated knowledge and epistemic power
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. Revision 2024.
Source 1

[20] Nagel's “view from nowhere”
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Scientific Objectivity. Distinguishing perspectival appearance from objective conception.
Source 1

[21] Scientific pluralism
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Scientific Pluralism. Plurality as a productive feature of scientific practice.
Source 1

[22] Pluralist theories of truth
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Pluralist Theories of Truth. Multiple ways of being true; distinction from relativism.
Source 1

[23] Peirce and truth at the end of inquiry
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: The Pragmatic Theory of Truth.
Source 1

[24] Popper, fallibilism, and truthlikeness
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Karl Popper and Truthlikeness.
Source 1 · Source 2

[25] Kuhn and paradigms
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Thomas Kuhn.
Source 1

[26] Gadamer and horizons
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer.
Source 1

[27] Nietzsche and perspectivism
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche.
Source 1

[28] Hegel, dialectic, and progress
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Hegel's Dialectics and Progress.
Source 1 · Source 2

[29] Religious diversity and ultimate reality
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Religious Diversity (Pluralism).
Source 1

[30] Theories of truth and internal realism
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Truth.
Source 1

[31] Scientific realism
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Scientific Realism.
Source 1

Verified: all specifically named textual, scientific, and comparative sources. Derived only: the theory's architecture and development, its critical analysis, and all numerical assessments. Open: the metaphysical truth of revelation and a complete review of historical priority within philosophy.

Ethics, Morality, and Law

VERIFIED FOUNDATIONS OF THE EXTENSION

The following sources support historical and comparative claims. The metaphysical extension of the concept of the Absolute remains an independent philosophical thesis.

Religion and morality

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Religion and Morality in Western Philosophy (revision 2024): religion and morality have historically been closely intertwined in Western traditions; the overview explicitly addresses Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Natural law

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics (revision 2025): in Thomas Aquinas, natural law is participation in eternal order and at the same time a principle of practical rationality.

Christianity and legal development

Oxford Handbook of Christianity and Law (2024): Christianity and law influenced one another over centuries; Christian teachings affected public, private, criminal, and procedural legal thought.

Secularisation

Oxford Handbook of Christianity and Law, chapter on the Enlightenment: Enlightenment reforms transformed the Western legal tradition but often reconstructed older Christian legal doctrines rather than creating law wholly anew.

Islamic ethics and law

Oxford Academic, Islamic Ethics: Fundamental Aspects of Human Conduct (2022): Islamic ethical-juridical methodology connects revelation, reason, and religious-social practice.

Shari'a and fiqh

Oxford Bibliographies, Shari'a (Islamic Law): Shari'a denotes the divinely conceived normative order; fiqh denotes the positive legal doctrines and juridical interpretations formulated by schools of law.

Historical precision

The theory does not claim that modern laws are exclusively religious in origin. The sources establish historical influence. The philosophical thesis concerns the persistence of normative categories and the capacity of their human interpretation to change.

[AUTHOR'S PHILOSOPHICAL THESIS] Absolute truth as complete relation, including normative quality, is a development within the theory, not a fact derived from the historical sources.

Movement and Shifts in Perspective

VERIFIED EMPIRICAL REFERENCE FOR THE PHILOSOPHICAL EXTENSION

Interpreting movement as a feature of the human search for truth is a philosophical thesis. The empirical evidence cited here supports only the narrower link between travel experiences and possible transformative learning.

[32] Transformative learning through travel. Jin & Robledo, “Passport to transformation: Assessing transformative learning in overseas students through travel experiences,” Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management 59 (2024), 180-185. The study examines transformative learning among students abroad; travel frequency and reflection were associated with transformation.

Tourism research additionally develops models in which new travel experiences, reflection, and encounters with unfamiliar situations are understood as possible triggers of learning and shifts in perspective.

[AUTHOR'S PHILOSOPHICAL THESIS] The claim that spatial and temporal movement within human limitation can be understood as a micro-model of the search for truth is not an empirical inference from tourism research, but part of the theory developed here.

[NOT CLAIMED AS A HISTORICAL FACT] Population movements and migration are not explained monocausally as a search for truth. Their historical motives are diverse. The theory concerns the epistemic effect of changed standpoints, not a uniform historical motivation.

Thoughts in Images.

Each illustration interprets the thought on the facing page. Deep blue, warm stone, translucent glass, and a copper line connect the sequence: images of standpoint, influence, and the movement of understanding.

This English edition follows the author's German submission text. An existing English submission version provided a working basis; its idiom, terminology, headings, and punctuation have been edited. The argument and its qualifications are retained. The preface and biography have also been translated.

The series preface, the two illustrations accompanying it, and the author portrait continue the design established in Volume 01.

References [1]-[14], missing from the submission PDF, have been supplied for the passages and examples cited. The former sequence [16]-[32] is now [15]-[31]; the travel reference previously also labelled [20] is now [32]. Statements about the original source checks remain statements of the submitted text.

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51 full-page illustrations and a separate cover image.

The author portrait is based on a photograph supplied by the author.

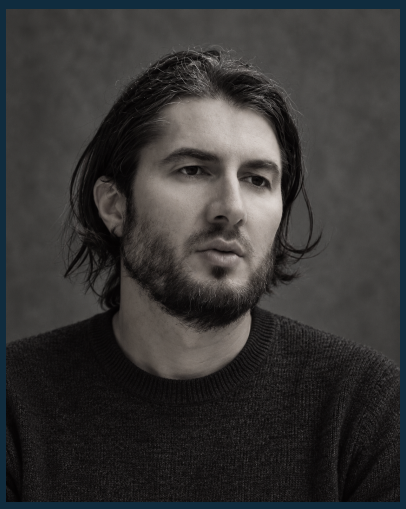
This theory does not seek to possess absolute truth. It seeks to show how the search for it is one of the conditions of being human.

FROM THIS ESSAY

PERSPECTIVE / INFLUENCE / AUTONOMY

What we hold to be true shapes how we live.

From personal conviction to prevailing interpretation, this essay examines how truths arise, acquire influence, and exceed their limits. Perspectival autonomy becomes the capacity to examine other standpoints, change one's own perspective, and turn understanding into deliberate action.



Prof. Dr. A. Ali Altintas

Physician, scientist, and philosopher.

He earned his doctorate at Heidelberg University, completed his habilitation at the University of Essen, and received a Master of Science in Healthcare Management from the universities of Heidelberg and Mannheim.

His philosophical essays examine how people arrive at convictions, how power shapes their standards, and what makes independent judgement possible. His central concerns are perspectival autonomy, personal development, and continuity of conviction under changing conditions. His thinking brings curiosity across disciplines to the question of how knowledge can become responsible action.