GOT-V1-3c-0

0. Part 3c: Prelude

The Epistemic Method

Reader introduction • Non-canonical. The Part 3c papers govern technical definitions, arguments and evidence.

1. A Change in the Work

At this point, the nature of the papers changes. Up to the end of Part 3b, the work has developed concepts, applied them through demonstrations and examined their boundaries through edge cases. Where application required more than conceptual explanation, it has supplied processes and extended technical measuring tools, giving the proposed investigations explicit conditions and means of assessment.

Part 3c begins from a conditional conclusion: if this work constitutes a functioning first version of The Epistemic Method (TEM), the responsibilities that follow must be acknowledged from the outset.

Grounding Knowledge, Intelligence, Observation, the Unknown, Power, Responsibility and Trust would have consequences for the world in which these words operate. They help determine whose account is accepted, whose decisions carry authority and who bears what follows. Making their grounds measurable and auditable changes what can legitimately be claimed through them.

Recognition of these implications preceded the formalisation and governance proposals presented here. Those proposals give practical expression to responsibilities already recognised. This part begins by acknowledging their gravity, including the responsibility of those proposing the framework.

2. A World That Is Not Built This Way

Our world is not consistently organised around preserving the grounds of consequential decisions. A decision may arrive as an explanation, a classification or an official record while the uncertainty, alternatives and judgement behind it have become difficult to recover.

This leaves room for an account to become cleaner than the circumstances it describes. A provisional judgement becomes an established fact. A warning disappears from the explanation. Responsibility settles on the person who delivered the outcome while other contributions remain unexamined.

Where the relevant relations can be recovered and tested, a preferred narrative must answer to more than its own plausibility. The question becomes what was available, what was done with it and what difference that made. Taking this seriously could disturb familiar ways of protecting decisions, distributing responsibility and maintaining authority.

3. Agency and Claimed Ignorance

We retain the ability to choose. We can disagree about priorities, accept risks and act before every uncertainty is resolved. Greater accuracy constrains the account we can honestly give of those choices.

Genuine ignorance remains possible. Knowledge discovered later cannot simply be assigned to an earlier decision-maker. But where a relevant warning, alternative or correction route was available or recoverable under the conditions of the decision, a subsequent claim of ignorance must answer to that history.

The same applies to residual: what remains unresolved after our present understanding has done its work. Once a relevant limit is available, proceeding despite it and proceeding without access to it are different situations. The limit belongs in the account of what followed.

We may still judge that action is necessary. We must then preserve why it was justified, what uncertainty remained, who was exposed and what would require reconsideration. Our agency continues; the room to narrate away its known conditions diminishes.

4. What This Part Inherits

The earlier parts provide the basis for this demand. Part 1 examines how organisation makes consequences depend on distinctions. Part 2a grounds the pathways through which signals preserve and abstract causal history into available relation. Part 2b distinguishes registration, retention and application. Part 3a addresses finite understanding and the unknown; Part 3b develops Power, Responsibility and Trust.

Part 3c inherits those concepts, their procedures and their limits. Together, they propose ways to examine how information becomes consequential and how reliance on it can be justified. The task here is to acknowledge and govern what follows when those capacities become usable.

5. Why Three Papers Follow

The Case for Formalisation asks what must remain recoverable when language becomes consequential. A claim may travel through records, institutions and machines, gaining authority while losing the conditions that supported it. Formalisation preserves enough of those conditions for its use to remain examinable, with a burden proportionate to consequence.

The Constitutional Governance of Formalisation addresses the responsibility created when the method itself becomes something others rely upon. Its authors, custodians and institutional users must remain open to challenge. The paper proposes how formulations can remain stable enough for use while preserving correction, dissent and comparison with alternatives.

The Epistemic Method consolidates the inherited architecture into a common discipline for examining claims and reliance under finite conditions. It connects what an account can support with the uses to which it may reasonably be put, retaining uncertainty, safeguards and conditions for revision.

6. Responsibility for the Framework

We acknowledge responsibility for the formulations of TEM and for our attributable contribution to their downstream consequences. The definitions we propose, the scope we claim, the limitations we preserve and the correction routes we make available can all shape what others subsequently do.

That responsibility requires us to examine how our work enters consequential pathways, including where its language or authority helps sustain an error. A failure cannot be dismissed as misuse without examining whether the formulation, its presentation or its governance contributed to it. The framework must remain capable of exposing a burden on its own authors.

Attribution must also remain proportionate to the relations demonstrated. An upstream contribution does not absorb every later decision, and a later decision does not erase its upstream conditions. Causal contribution and the allocation of moral, legal or institutional duties require distinct grounds. Measurement does not turn them into a universal blame score.

The responsibility to expose unsupported excuses carries an equal responsibility to avoid unsupported accusations. Both demands apply to the work presented here.

7. What the Framework Must Be Able to Face

These commitments require empirical examination. Consider two decision histories with the same adverse outcome. In one, the relevant warning was unavailable under the conditions in which the decision was made. In the other, it was registered, a corrective response was available and the warning was disregarded.

An audit must be able to recover that difference without treating the shared outcome as proof of equal responsibility. It must also examine whether the available response could materially have changed the consequential pathway. The presence of a warning alone does not complete the attribution.

This is an illustrative comparison. It states a burden the framework must meet: distinguish histories that matter, preserve uncertainty where recovery fails and resist attributing more than the evidence supports.

The same examination must reach TEM itself. If a completed audit conceals a known limitation, excludes relevant evidence or prevents a demonstrated failure from changing the account, completion cannot defend it. Correction must reach the implementation, the formulation or its proposed governing principles wherever the failure is located.

8. The Obligation That Follows

TEM proposes an empirical, testable system for managing substrate-agnostic information processing. Its common basis is the recoverable relation through which distinctions become available and consequential, whether carried by biological, technical or institutional systems. Each application must establish its own grounds.

If this first version works as proposed, its consequences extend beyond better descriptions. It could make decisions, reliance and responsibility more open to examination, while making the omission of available uncertainty harder to defend. Intelligent machines increase the reach of this problem wherever language and retained records become instructions, classifications and action.

Finite observation remains our condition. Choice, disagreement and error remain possible. What changes is the obligation to carry forward what we can establish, account for what we leave unresolved and respond when the grounds of our action fail.

The authors of this framework accept that obligation as part of proposing it. The papers that follow set out how it is to remain open to examination and correction.

Canonical source note

Canonical basis: The Case for Formalisation (GOT-V1-3c-6), The Constitutional Governance of Formalisation (GOT-V1-3c-7) and The Epistemic Method (GOT-V1-3c-8), all Issue 1. Attribution also follows On the Origin of Responsibility (GOT-V1-3b-4), Issue 1.

Prepared under GOT-SD-PRELUDE-01, Issue 2, with the Part 3 Issue 1 support documents as secondary checks. The book and issued preludes supply orientation and editorial continuity; the author supplies the account of the work's development. The decision comparison is illustrative.