

What Would Show You Wrong?

On Falsifiability and Ontological Method

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1. Three demands, two of which sound alike

A colleague reads a claim and asks what would show it wrong. He is not attacking it. He wants to know where to push, and he is offering to do the pushing — which is a service, and the right response is gratitude and a list. If the list is short, he will say so; if there is no list, he has learnt something about the claim and so has its author.

Someone else asks the same six words, and something different is happening. He is not waiting for a list; if one were produced he would not go through it. His question has a shape the first one lacked — it expects the answer *nothing*, and it has a use for that answer already prepared. **He is not asking about this claim. He is testing whether it belongs to a class he has already**

condemned, and the class is the class of claims for which no test can be specified. *What would show you wrong? Nothing? Then you have said nothing.*

Take an ordinary case to hold the difference steady. A man made a promise last year and broke it, and the question arises whether he meant it at the time.

The first demand, put to that claim, is easily met. What would show that he did not mean it: that he told someone the same evening he had no intention of keeping it; that he made none of the arrangements a person who meant it would have begun making; that he treated the whole thing as a joke the following week. **That is a list, it is not short, and any item on it would settle the matter against the claim.**

The second demand is not put to the claim but past it. Meaning something is not observable. There is no procedure that yields it, no instrument that registers it, and however much evidence accumulates on either side the question of what was in him at that moment is not decided by any of it. **So the claim belongs to a class**, and the class is judged: not testable, therefore not knowledge, whatever the man's friends may think they know.

And the third thing is not a demand at all. It runs: since no test reaches whether he meant it, **there was no such thing as his meaning it** — no act, no state, nothing that occurred in him that morning to which the words could be faithful or unfaithful. The step from *we cannot reach it* to *it is not there* is taken without being noticed, and it is a different step from the second. **The second says a claim has no standing. The third says a thing does not exist.**

The two are not distinguished by tone, and not reliably by the asker's intention either — the same person makes all three demands, often in one paragraph, and does not always notice the transitions. What distinguishes them is what is being asked about. In the first case, a claim. In the second, a class of claims. **In the third, nothing is asked; a conclusion about the world is drawn from a fact about one's own instruments.**

The first is a courtesy, the second a criterion, and the third a conversion. Only the first has anything to do with what exists.

This article is about the difference, and about a kind of inquiry that is the standing target of all three. An ontology that proceeds by disclosure — phenomenology, and any ontology built on regional trials — is routinely judged to have failed the second without anyone checking whether it has met the first. My claim is that it can meet the first in full; that the second is contested on its own ground and is not owed; and that the third has a name, a long history, and a limit that blocks it.

The order is: the three separated (§2); what Popper's asymmetry actually licenses, and what has been added to it (§3); the five things such an ontology owes, with a record (§4); three levels and three registers of assessment (§5); the conversion, from its founding to its present register (§6); and the limit (§7). Objections are answered in §8 and this article's own falsifiers are printed in §9.

2. *Three things under one demand*

The discipline. *Say what would show you wrong.* This is a property of claims. It tells a reader where to push, and it makes no assertion about what exists. **It survives every criticism of falsificationism, because none of those criticisms is about it.**

The criterion. *What is not falsifiable is not knowledge, or is not meaningful.* This is a thesis in the philosophy of science, and it is contested there, on its own ground, by people who have no interest in phenomenology whatever.

The conversion. From *I have no test for this* to *this is not so*. An epistemic limit made into a negative ontology.

The three come apart cleanly in the case of the promise. **The first is answered** — three things would show the claim false, and any of them would. **The second is not answered but reclassified** — no procedure reaches an intention, so the claim is set outside knowledge. **And the third neither answers nor reclassifies:** it concludes that nothing occurred in the man that morning, which is a claim about him rather than about what can be said of him.

They run together because all three are voiced in the register of rigour, and because each can be defended by retreating to the one below it. Challenged on the conversion, one retreats to the criterion; challenged on the criterion, one retreats to the discipline; and the discipline is unimpeachable. **The retreat is what keeps the conflation alive**, and it is why a conversation about the third so often ends in agreement about the first.

Three claims follow, and the rest of the article establishes them. Such an ontology **carries the discipline in full**, and §4 gives the record. It **has no need of the criterion**, and §3 shows that the asymmetry does not supply one. And it is **unusually well placed to diagnose the conversion**, because the same move is what its own regional discipline exists to prevent (§7).

One concession is made before any argument begins, and it is not a rhetorical one. **The discipline is a real requirement and this article does not soften it.** An inquiry that cannot say where it would fail has not said what it claims, and any complaint below is that the demand has been misapplied, never that it is too strict.

3. *What the asymmetry licenses*

3.1 The asymmetry as stated

Popper's point concerns the traffic between the general and the singular: no accumulation of confirming instances establishes a universal statement, while a single contrary instance suffices to refute it. It is a logical asymmetry, and it is correct.

Nothing below disputes it. It is worth saying so plainly, because what follows concerns a drift, and a reader who takes the article for an attack on Popper will misread every subsequent paragraph. Popper's own position is, as §6.3 shows, closer to this article's than to the demand made in his name.

3.2 The drift

The demand as it now circulates says something the asymmetry does not: that a claim must be capable of being shown false by a possible future test.

Between the asymmetry and the demand, a tribunal has been installed. The asymmetry says what one instance can do to a universal claim. The demand says that only a future can judge.

The consequence is rarely stated because it is rarely noticed. What has already obtained acquires standing only insofar as it can be arranged into a trial. A claim about what happened is admitted not on the strength of its having happened but on the strength of its testability — which reverses the order of the two, and quietly. §7 returns to this.

3.3 The demand is not met where it is native

Two results, used rather than surveyed.

Duhem. A physicist never tests an isolated hypothesis but always a group of them; when the experiment disagrees, what is learnt is that at least one member of the group is unacceptable, and the experiment does not designate which. **Quine** generalises: the totality of our knowledge impinges on experience only at the edges, and is so underdetermined by its boundary conditions that there is wide latitude about what to revise in the light of any single contrary experience.

So the clean refutation the demand imagines is unavailable even where the demand is at home.

Lakatos draws the consequence. Evaluation shifts from single hypotheses to research programmes, assessed as progressive or degenerating by their record of novel, corroborated prediction. A programme is abandoned when it stops being progressive, not when a crucial experiment kills it.

But notice what that is. It is a form of assessment, not a test — a judgement made over time, on a record, by people who could disagree about it. And it is exactly the form a disclosed inquiry can meet.

3.4 A precedent from the founder of the method

One case is worth setting against the demand, because of who makes it.

At the end of the *General Scholium*, having given the law of universal gravitation and shown what it accounts for, Newton writes that he has not yet been able to deduce the cause of gravity from the phenomena — *sed causam gravitatis nondum potui deducere, et Hypotheses non fingo*. He does not feign hypotheses. And the inverse-square law stands: it is not weakened, withdrawn, or held provisional pending a cause.

The refusal to explain does not weaken the description. Newton declines to supply what he cannot derive, says so, and proceeds — and what he proceeds with is the most successful piece of physics then in existence.

A demand that every claim be either explained or discarded would have cost him the law. **And the demand is usually made in the name of the method he is credited with founding.**

The point should be taken at its strength and no further. Testing is not worthless, and this is not an argument that anything goes. It is that the criterion is contested on its own ground, by its own successors, and that a discipline which does not test in the required way is not thereby doing something no science does.

4. What an ontology of disclosure owes

Not testability. Five other things, and it owes all of them.

The provenance of the list should be given before the list. Four of the five are drawn from the seven-item evidential debt stated at Montaruli 2026c §5.4, selected for those that bear on answerability to criticism; the three omitted there — the mode of foundedness, the evidence supporting fulfilment, and the limits of what an act discloses — belong to the access schema rather than to assessability, and are not needed here. **The fifth is not on that list at all.** It is drawn from §3.4 of the same work, where it does different work, and it is the one this article leans on hardest.

Admissible presentations. What may found the access, and what may not. In the finite-human region: embodied, temporal, relational and historical presentation — face, voice, gesture, shared history, address and answer, care and expectation. Not: a record, a profile, an institutional identification, a report of what someone said.

Negative controls. Cases which, if the claim were merely being projected, would return the same verdict — and do not. A control is not an illustration. It earns its place only if it could have come out the other way.

Defeaters. What would show a particular act of access to have failed. Capture by a substitute; address to a role or a stereotype; confusion of a record with the occurrence it records.

Public warrant. The grounds for a verdict must be articulable and criticisable by anyone party to the region. No appeal to private insight, no faculty, and no position that cannot be occupied by a second person.

Revisability of the instrument. The region must be able to restrict or defeat the instrument brought to it.

4.1 The fifth is load-bearing

Access that cannot lose is construction. Access that can lose is access.

The formulation is not new here; it closes the reply to the circularity charge at Montaruli 2026c §8.22. **It is the only answer to that charge that works,** and it is worth stating why the usual answer does not. It is no use replying that the inquiry had no presuppositions, because every inquiry has them; a trial is conducted on phenomena already encountered somehow, or it is not conducted at all. **The question is not whether there were presuppositions but whether the outcomes were fixed by them.**

That question has an answer, and the answer is a record.

4.2 The record

Three losses, from the trials on which the present ontology rests. **Each is stated at Montaruli 2026c §3.3, and the three are collected as a single methodological claim at §3.4** — where it is said in terms that a region counts as a trial only if it can revise the instrument brought to it. **Each could have gone the other way.**

The feline region restricted the instrument. The trial arrived with an apparatus formed on human cases — language, attestation, forensic standing — and could use none of it. What survived the restriction was less than what was brought, and the doctrine had to be stated within the remainder.

The machine returned no verdict. A cleaning robot that learns the routes of a household, adapts, varies its behaviour, and is numerically distinct from every other unit disclosed no comparable difference to the one the trials had been tracking (2026c §3.3).

And recording it as negative would have been the easy course. The machinery was to hand: the trial had just established that route-learning and functional integration disclose nothing, and a verdict of *not a who* would have followed the surrounding argument without friction, tidied the region, and cost nothing rhetorically. **It was recorded as open in both directions instead,** and the rule licensing that — *non-disclosure licenses openness, not negation* — was then stated as a general prohibition binding the theory's own future verdicts (2026c §6.7). **A theory that wanted a negative here wrote itself a rule against taking one.**

The burned canvas returned a verdict against the instrument. An original painted canvas burns; the most exact copy is made, pigment for pigment, craquelure for craquelure; and the original painted object has not been restored. Non-restoration in full rigour, and no who disclosed. **The trial's own instrument was thereby barred from becoming a criterion,** since something can be non-substitutable and be no one — a prohibition subsequently carried in the formal apparatus as an explicit non-entailment (2026c §3.3, §6.7).

Nothing in approaching the household as containing a cat-someone determined that the second cat would fail to restore the first, and nothing in approaching the gallery determined that the canvas would disclose no who.

4.3 The wager at the door

There is a plainer statement of the discipline than any of the five, and it is posted before the argument in each of the volumes on which this ontology rests (Montaruli 2026d and the two unpublished volumes following it): *the reader is the book's last walker and its only tribunal: go where a figure points, look with patience, and if you see nothing, the book dies for you entirely and owes you no apology and is owed none.*

That is a falsification condition stated in advance, and it is not a small one. The inquiry stakes itself on what an ordinary reader can be walked to see, in a scene he can reconstruct without instruments. A discipline that cannot be shown wrong by its reader has not offered him anything to look at.

5. *Three levels, three registers*

The five items answer the demand where the demand applies. A second difficulty is harder, and it is the one that makes claims of this kind look evasive when they are not: some of them appear to be immune to evidence of every kind.

They are not immune. They are claims of different kinds, and the kinds have different registers of assessment.

Operating. A character constitutive of a category is at work in every case, unconditionally, whether or not anyone notices. **This is not a claim about texts or tests**, and no textual or experimental finding bears on it in either direction.

An analogy makes the register clear. That a triangle has three sides is not established by surveying triangles, and no failure to survey them counts against it; a survey returning a four-sided triangle would not refute the claim but would show that something other than a triangle had been surveyed. **Claims of this kind are not immune to criticism** — one can dispute whether the character really is constitutive, and that dispute is conducted by argument. **What they are immune to is a count.** So when such a claim declines to name a test, it is not evading; it is declining an instrument that would not have measured it.

Appearing to a thinker. It shows to whoever genuinely encounters the phenomenon. This is conditional on the encounter, and it is falsifiable: a thinker who plainly faced the phenomenon and shows no trace of it would defeat it.

Appearing ontologically. It shows *as what it is* — as the differentia of a category of being, rather than as a moral predicate, a psychological structure, or a form of self-relation. **This is falsifiable by a single text that reaches it as such.**

These have three registers of assessment, and demanding one register for all three is the error. It is what makes a first-level claim look like an evasion when it is a claim of another kind.

5.1 **This is not an exemption**

The obvious reply is that I have exempted my strongest claim from testing and called the exemption a distinction.

The answer is that the exemption is not granted but located, and that it falls on the claim nobody would want to defend by testing. **An originality claim lives at the third level and is defeated by one text** — a harder condition than most claims in philosophy carry, and one this article states as its own at §9. What is not assessed textually is the claim that a constitutive character operates, and no textual finding could confirm that either. **A level exempt from confirmation as well as from refutation is not a privilege.**

6. The conversion

6.1 Where it begins, and why it is invisible there

Parmenides forbids the second route in terms: *οὔτε γὰρ ἄν γνοίης τὸ γέ μὴ ἔδν ... οὔτε φράσαις* — you could not know what is not, nor utter it.

The standard reading takes this as epistemic or semantic: non-being is inconceivable and unsayable. And the ontological conclusion follows without a step being visible, because the two terms it would run between have been identified: *τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι* — the same thing is for thinking and for being.

At the founding the conversion does not have to be performed, because the terms it would run between are one.

The point is worth putting slowly, because it is easy to hear as a technicality and it is not one. A conversion is a move *from* something to something — from a fact about what can be known to a fact about what is. **A move of that kind can be inspected, and objected to, precisely because it has two ends.** Where thinking and being have been identified, there are not two ends. The claim that what cannot be thought is not says nothing beyond what has already been granted, and there is no inference to catch, because there is no distance to cross.

This is why the move is at its least visible where it does the most work, and why it took a thesis about capacities — where nobody had identified anything — to bring it into the open.

This is worth dwelling on rather than hurrying past. It means the move is not a later corruption of Greek thought but a condition of its opening — present where the tradition begins, and invisible there precisely because nothing has yet been asserted that could be denied.

6.2 Where it is performed in the open

Aristotle names them: *οἷον οἱ μεγαίρειται* — those who say a thing is capable only when it is acting, and when it is not acting it is not capable. The man who is not building cannot build; the man who is building can, while he is building.

Here the identification is gone and the move must be made. A capacity is not a thought; no identification of capacity with actuality is given; it is asserted. **The Megarians perform explicitly, in modality, what Parmenides had not needed to perform.**

What Parmenides has as a condition, Megara has as a thesis. The thesis is the same operation with its premise exposed, and that is why it can be refuted.

Aristotle refutes it, establishing that capacity and actuality are distinct, so that it is possible for a thing to be capable and not be exercising the capacity. Then, at Θ.8, he establishes that actuality is prior to potentiality — in account, in time, and in substance. **The distinction is won and the priority is conceded**, and the concession is made on ground already drawn.

One conflation must be avoided. Diodorus Cronus is often enlisted here, and should not be. The Master Argument reported at Epictetus II.19 does yield an actualism — every possible truth is or will be true — but Diodorus headed the Dialectical School, distinct from the Megarians, and reaches the position by a different route. Treating him as restating a Megarian doctrine is a later

gloss.

6.3 Verification, and falsification

What cannot be verified is not meaningful. The same shape, in a second register: an inability to specify a verification procedure converted into a verdict about sense. The criterion notoriously failed to survive its own application, being itself unverifiable, and its authors abandoned it. That is a well-told story and one sentence of it is enough here.

What cannot be falsified is not knowledge. The same shape again — but the attribution must be made carefully, because it is not Popper's.

Popper distinguished his criterion of demarcation from a criterion of meaning, and expressly declined the positivist identification of the two. Falsifiability marks off science. It was never offered as a test of sense, or of knowledge, or of ontological standing.

So the third tribunal is not Popper's doctrine but what the doctrine became in circulation — a demarcation criterion borrowed for an office its author had declined to hold. The drift diagnosed at §3.2 has an attested origin, and Popper is a witness against it rather than its source. I do not say he would have rejected the use made of him; that is a counterfactual about a person. I say what is documented: he declined the role, and the third tribunal requires it.

6.4 The move has a name, and the genealogy is not mine either

Two corrections belong here, and the second was found while drafting this section.

The conversion was diagnosed and named fifty years ago. Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975): *The metaphysical mistake ... may be called the 'epistemic fallacy'.* **This consists in the view that statements about being can be reduced to or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge; i.e. that ontological questions can always be transposed into epistemological terms.** He glosses it with Wittgenstein — the idea that it is sufficient for philosophy *to treat only of the network, and not what the network describes* — and compares it to the naturalistic fallacy: *just as the naturalistic fallacy prevents us from saying what is good about maximizing utility in society, so the epistemic one prevents us from saying what is epistemically significant about experience in science.* He restates it in *Dialectic* (1993) as the reduction of ontology to epistemology.

And he had already connected it to actualism. As ontology is irreducible to epistemology, the fallacy *functions merely to cover the generation of an implicit ontology, on which the domain of the real is reduced to the domain of the actual (actualism) which is then anthropocentrically identified with or in terms of sense-experience or some other human attribute.* The connection is standard in critical realism; Bryant devotes a section of *The Democracy of Objects* to *Actualism and the Epistemic Fallacy*, where the fallacy is said to occur **wherever being is reduced to our access to being.**

One distinction in Bhaskar's own text matters for what follows, and it is easy to miss because it is made in a footnote. His *actualism* is defined narrowly: *the doctrine of the actuality of causal laws; that is, the idea that laws are relations between events or states of affairs.* And he adds that Ayers uses the term 'actualism' to refer to the doctrine that **only the actual is possible,**

remarking that the connection between the two concepts will become clear in due course. **The modal thesis is thus noted as another author's usage and set aside. It is not what Bhaskar's actualism means** — and it is exactly the thesis Aristotle attributes to the Megarians.

So this article does not discover the fallacy. It adopts the name, credits it, and states what it adds — a stronger position than coining a term, since it places the argument inside a live tradition rather than beside it.

And the genealogy is his too — though it arrives eighteen years later. *A Realist Theory of Science* does not trace the fallacy to Parmenides; it mentions him twice, on other matters. The tracing is made in *Dialectic*, where four lines after the passage just quoted Bhaskar writes: ***The epistemic fallacy can be traced back to Parmenides.*** He adds a second Parmenidean legacy — *the generation of a purely positive, complementing a purely actual, notion of reality*, which he names **ontological monovalence** — and closes the chapter on *the Eleatic (Parmenidean) face glowing in the Ionian (Heraclitean) fire*.

I did not have that sentence when §§6.1–6.2 were written, and its discovery removed a claim this article had intended to make. The honest course is to say so, and to state what is left.

6.4.1 — What remains, stated at exactly its strength

Not the diagnosis, and not the attribution to Parmenides. Three narrower things.

The mechanism. Bhaskar traces the fallacy to Parmenides in a sentence and does not say how it operates there. **§6.1 argues that it operates by not operating** — that B3's identification of thinking with being removes the two ends a conversion would need, so that nothing is inferred because there is no distance to cross. **That is a claim about why the move is invisible at its origin**, and it is what the ancient material is doing here.

The Megarian step, and Bhaskar's own text marks the gap. No critical-realist treatment I have found takes the fallacy through *Metaphysics* Θ.3. **And the reason it would not have been taken there is visible in the footnote quoted above:** Bhaskar's actualism is the actuality of causal laws, and he expressly consigns *only the actual is possible* to another author's usage. **The modal thesis is therefore outside the concept he was working with**, which is why the step from a condition at Parmenides to a refutable thesis about capacities at Θ.3 — the second half of §6.2 — is not in that literature.

The fourth register. The standard statement runs to verificationism and the positivist reduction. **Falsificationism as a further performance of the same move, together with Popper's own refusal of the meaning-criterion role, is not part of it.**

A fourth thing is not a claim of priority but of application. Bhaskar uses the fallacy to defend a realism about unobservable generative mechanisms; it is used here to establish what an ontology proceeding by disclosure owes and does not owe. The five items of §4 are not in him, and the explanandum is different.

6.4.2 — A note on how these corrections were arrived at

Both were found by checking, after the argument was written, in a literature the earlier searches had not covered. The first search ran across philosophy of science and phenomenology; critical realism and philosophy of social science were not searched, and that is where the diagnosis lives. The second correction was found only on reading Bhaskar's own text rather than quotations of it.

This is worth recording rather than concealing, because it is the article's own thesis performed on the article. §4 argues that an inquiry is assessable when its outcomes are not fixed by its presuppositions, and that the evidence is a record of losses. **Two claims this article intended to make have been withdrawn in the course of writing it, both times against the author's interest, both times on a check he ran himself.** The reader is entitled to weigh that as he likes; it is offered as a datum and not as a credential.

6.4.3 — The alliance

Critical realism is a realism about mechanisms that do not show; the ontology defended here is a realism about what does. They look opposed and are not. **Both refuse the reduction of being to access,** and Bhaskar's charge of a *concealed anthropocentricity* in criteria of observability is the charge this article makes against a tribunal of futures.

Register	The conversion	Its standing
Being — Parmenides B2/B3	what cannot be thought or uttered is not	built in; the terms are identified, so no step is visible
Actuality — Megara, <i>Met.</i> ③.3	what cannot be actualised is not possible	asserted as a thesis, and therefore refutable
Verification — Ayer, Carnap	what cannot be verified is not meaningful	stated as a criterion, and self-defeating
Falsification — in circulation, not Popper	what cannot be falsified is not knowledge	a deformation; the author declined the office

Bhaskar named the fallacy, traced it to Parmenides, and showed it operating in the reduction of the real to the actual. What is offered here is the mechanism at the origin, the Megarian step by which a condition became a refutable thesis, and a fourth register he did not treat.

7. The limit

7.1 What has occurred

What has occurred cannot become never-having-occurred.

Having-occurred is not a hypothesis awaiting trial. It is the standing of a truth, and no later

condition determines it — no experiment, and equally no absence of one. That a manner obtained as this occurrence is henceforth permanently the case, and nothing that happens afterwards makes it otherwise or makes it less.

7.2 What the tribunal does with it

A criterion admitting only future-testable claims has no register for this. And rather than saying so — rather than recording that its instrument does not reach here — it tends to say there is nothing here.

The limit is therefore not a counterexample to the criterion. It is the place where the criterion's silence becomes a denial, which is the conversion in its purest form: not an argument that what has occurred did not occur, but an inability to admit it, converted into a verdict.

The rule that blocks this is the same rule that governs every regional trial in the present ontology:

Open status is not negative ontology. Non-disclosure licenses openness, not negation.

Where a region has not disclosed, the licensed verdict is open. Not excluded, not confirmed, and not deferred pending better instruments — **open**, which is a verdict about the state of the inquiry and not about the state of the world.

7.3 Why the two rules are one

The rule that keeps the machine's case open in a regional trial and the rule that protects what has occurred from a tribunal of futures are the same rule. An ontology that carries the first is not borrowing the second from elsewhere.

This is why the article belongs here rather than in general epistemology. The diagnosis of the conversion is not imported to defend a doctrine that needed defending. **It is the doctrine's own discipline, recognised in a wider setting** — and the recognition runs both ways, since a discipline that finds its own rule operating across twenty-five centuries has learnt something about the rule.

8. Objections

8.1 — You are excusing yourself from testing. §4.2 gives three recorded losses, each of which could have gone the other way, and §4.3 a wager posted before the argument begins. An inquiry that records a region restricting its instrument, a case returning no verdict, and a control returning a verdict against the instrument has not excused itself from anything.

8.2 — The five items are not a test. Anyone can specify presentations and controls. Correct, and that is the point. They are not a test; they are what makes an inquiry assessable, which is what the demand was for before it acquired a tribunal. **The demand for a test is the demand that assessment take one particular form**, and §3.3 shows that form unavailable even where it is native.

8.3 — Popper’s asymmetry does everything you want, and you have attacked a straw version.

§3.1 endorses the asymmetry without qualification and §6.3 makes Popper a witness. The target is the drift at §3.2, and the clause that marks it is the tribunal clause: *shown false by a possible future test*. That is not in the asymmetry, and it is what does the work.

8.4 — Duhem–Quine is a problem for naive falsificationism only. Lakatos solved it. Granted, and the article does not claim Lakatos failed. It claims that **his solution is a form of assessment rather than a test** — a judgement on a record, over time, by people who might disagree — which is the position argued here, arrived at from the other side and in another discipline.

8.5 — The three levels are an exemption dressed as a distinction. §5.1. The level exempt from refutation is equally exempt from confirmation, and the claim anyone would want to attack lives at the third level and is defeated by one text.

8.6 — The genealogy is an analogy doing the work of an argument. The sharpest objection, and it should be met at its strength rather than deflected. The parallel is claimed at the level of form; the form is stated explicitly in each register; and **§9’s fourth falsifier is precisely a reading on which the Megarian thesis is not the conversion described**. An analogy that names its own defeat condition is doing more than decorating — though it is doing less than a proof, and the article does not claim otherwise.

8.7 — If Bhaskar named it, what is left? §6.4 answers in three items, each with its defeat condition, and the answer should be read as narrowing the claim rather than saving it. **The diagnosis is his. The genealogy, the fourth register, and the application to inquiry proceeding by disclosure are what is offered here**, and if a critical realist has done any of the three, that part of the article is superseded and the diagnosis is confirmed twice over.

9. What would falsify this

Five findings would defeat the argument, and they are printed because an argument that does not say how it fails has not said what it claims.

First. An ontological claim earned by disclosure, meeting all five items of §4 and shown nevertheless to be unrevisable in principle. §4 fails.

Second. A regional trial in the record that could not have returned a verdict against its own instrument. The revisability answer collapses and the circularity charge stands.

Third. A demonstration that the three levels of §5 share one register of assessment. §5 fails.

Fourth. A reading of the Megarian thesis on which it is not the conversion described, or of Parmenides B2 on which the epistemic and ontological claims are not identified. §6 fails, and §6 carries the historical weight.

Fifth. A source giving the mechanism of the fallacy at Parmenides — that is, deriving its invisibility from the identification at B3 — or taking it through *Metaphysics* Θ.3, or treating falsificationism as one of its registers. **The three claims of §6.4.1 fail.** (*The bare attribution to Parmenides is already Bhaskar’s and is credited at §6.4; only the mechanism is claimed here.*)

The second is the one to watch. It is the only one that could be established by someone reading the prior work rather than by finding a new source, which makes it both the likeliest and the most useful.

10. Close

Return to the two demands.

The colleague who asks where to push is asking for something an inquiry owes him, and the answer is five items long with a record attached. He may find the record thin. He may think the negative controls insufficiently negative, or the losses insufficiently costly. Those are criticisms, and they are the criticisms this article invites.

The one who asks in order to conclude is asking a question whose answer he fixed before putting it. His demand and the colleague's are not the same demand in different tones, and treating them as one has cost a good deal — not least because it has let the third thing, which asks nothing at all, travel in the company of the first, which asks something reasonable.

An inquiry that says where it would fail has done what rigour asks of it. A criterion admitting only what a future can judge has not asked for rigour; it has appointed a tribunal. And the conversion of an epistemic limit into a negative ontology is not the discipline's achievement but its oldest opponent, arrived in its uniform.

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