3. Architectural Ethics: Responsibility at the Level of Epistemic Design

Definition

Architectural Ethics is an ethical framework that locates responsibility not in individual intention or moral attitude, but in the **design of epistemic architectures** that determine what can appear as knowledge.

It shifts ethics from persuasion and recognition toward *structural accountability*.

Core Claim

Ethical failure often arises not from neglect or malice, but from **architectures that cannot perceive what they exclude**.

Justice therefore requires redesign, not merely inclusion.

Distinguishing Features

Architectural Ethics differs from:

- **Care ethics** (focus on moral orientation)
- **Recognition ethics** (focus on visibility and voice)
- **Procedural ethics** (focus on compliance)

Instead, it asks:

What forms of existence must remain invisible for this system to function?

Ethical Principles

1. **Design Responsibility**

   Ethical accountability attaches to architectures, not only actors.

2. **Perceptual Humility**

   Systems must assume the presence of unperceivable meaning.

3. **Encoding Absence**

   Silence and ambiguity should be registered as metadata, not erased.

4. **Structural Redesign over Inclusion**

   Inclusion without redesign reproduces epistemic harm.

Normative Orientation

Architectural Ethics does not demand that all meaning become visible. It demands that systems **remain accountable to what they cannot render visible**.

Citation Note

Architectural Ethics is part of the MAMI Theory, but may be cited independently as a meta-ethical framework for assigning responsibility at the level of epistemic and institutional design.