

Criterion for Legitimate Refutation

Purpose

This document formalizes the conditions under which a critique or refutation of the corpus may be considered structurally legitimate. It does not function as a defense, nor as a restriction on disagreement. Its purpose is to clarify **what kind of work a refutation must do**, given the dependency structure of the corpus.

This criterion is descriptive, not prescriptive. It does not prevent objection; it clarifies the scope of responsibility that objection entails.

1. Structural Posture of the Corpus

The corpus operates at the level of **conditions for coherence**, not at the level of domain-specific claims, empirical hypotheses, or interpretive conclusions.

Its foundational move is the articulation of a **Principle of Completion**, from which downstream structures emerge:

- Ontological coherence
- Relational asymmetry
- Observer inclusion
- Formal calculi
- Operational stability
- Domain-specific instantiations

These downstream works do not justify the principle; they *depend* on it.

Accordingly, disagreement with any downstream work necessarily implicates the conditions under which that work remains coherent.

2. Local Objection vs Structural Refutation

A distinction must be drawn between:

- **Local objections:** disagreements with specific expressions, formalisms, interpretations, or applications
- **Structural refutations:** challenges to the foundational conditions that make those expressions coherent

Local objections are permissible and expected. They may result in alternative expressions, interpretations, or implementations. However, they do not constitute refutation of the corpus unless they also address the structural dependencies that generated those expressions.

3. Collapse of Good-Faith Refutation to the Principle of Completion

Because the Principle of Completion functions as a constraint generator rather than a propositional claim, any good-faith refutation must ultimately engage it.

Specifically:

- If the Principle of Completion is accepted (explicitly or implicitly), then downstream disagreements occur *within* the corpus rather than against it.
- If the Principle of Completion is rejected, then the critic assumes responsibility for explaining how coherence is achieved without it.

There is no coherent position that simultaneously rejects completion and relies on coherence without supplying an alternative mechanism.

4. On Scope, Burden, and Structural Responsibility

The scope of a critique must match the scope of the claim being rejected. Local objections suffice for local claims. Structural claims concerning the conditions of coherence require structural alternatives. This burden is not imposed by the author; it follows from the nature of the rejection itself.

5. Requirements for a Legitimate Structural Refutation

To refute the corpus at the structural level, a critic must provide:

4.1 A Replacement for Completion

An alternative principle or mechanism that explains:

- How local, stable coherence arises
- Within a globally incoherent or incomplete reality
- Without reintroducing completion implicitly
- Without privileging an external frame or observer

4.2 Internal Consistency Under Self-Reference

The replacement must:

- Remain stable under self-reference
- Avoid contradiction when applied reflexively

- Account for observer inclusion without collapse

5.3 Downstream Propagation

The replacement must be carried forward to demonstrate that it sustains coherence across comparable structural domains, including but not limited to:

- Relational structure and differentiation
- Asymmetry and directionality
- The possibility of formal calculi
- The emergence of operational stability
- The kinds of phenomena addressed by the corpus's downstream works

Propagation does not require reproducing the corpus's specific results. It requires demonstrating that the alternative mechanism can support coherence across equivalent structural domains.

Absent this propagation, the objection remains structurally incomplete.

5. What Does *Not* Constitute Refutation

The following do not, on their own, refute the corpus:

- Disagreement with terminology
- Alternative metaphysical intuitions
- Appeals to empirical validation
- Domain-specific counterexamples
- Accusations of scope, ambition, or abstraction
- Claims of unfalsifiability without replacement

These may reflect preference, posture, or disciplinary boundary concerns, but they do not engage the structural work performed by the corpus.

6. Falsifiability Clarified

The corpus is falsifiable in the following sense:

If a coherent ontology can be demonstrated in which global incompleteness is fundamental, local coherence emerges stably without completion, self-reference does not destabilize the system, and downstream formal and operational structures remain viable, then the corpus would be structurally superseded.

Anything less does not falsify the framework; it merely declines it.

7. Summary Criterion

A critique constitutes a legitimate refutation of the corpus **if and only if** it:

1. Rejects the Principle of Completion explicitly or implicitly, **and**
2. Supplies a coherent alternative mechanism for achieving stable coherence, **and**
3. Demonstrates that this mechanism propagates through the same structural domains addressed by the corpus, **without reintroducing completion under another name.**

All other objections are local, partial, or preference-based.

Closing Note

This criterion does not demand agreement. It demands **structural responsibility**. It exists to prevent category errors in critique, not to foreclose dissent.