

# Glossary

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Some readers have noted that while *The New Ontology* consistently employs certain terms, their definitions are sometimes distributed across contextual explanations rather than offered as standalone, maximally explicit formulations. Because these two concepts form the backbone of the Empirical and Aetherial Domains respectively, we agree that it is valuable to present expanded, self-sufficient definitions capable of withstanding misinterpretation when isolated from the broader treatise. The following section offers clarified, maximally rigorous definitions of key terms and their ontological relationship.

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## **Term: Reality / The Master Domain**

### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Reality** is the totality of all that exists. It is not dependent on perception, belief, or naming. It includes only those ontological domains whose structure has resolved into coherence. This totality is referred to as the **Master Domain**—not in the sense of hierarchy, but in the sense of *containment*. All coherent structure belongs to Reality. It does not contain the merely possible, the imagined, or the not-yet-resolved. Reality is the field in which resolution occurs—where what is becomes. Nothing that exists outside its bounds can be meaningfully said to be.

The Master Domain's boundary is coherence. This boundary is intrinsic and logical—not metaphysical or spatial. Reality ceases precisely where coherence fails, providing a structural, self-contained limit.

Reality is not a perspective. It is not something “seen differently” by different observers. It is that which remains **regardless** of observation.

### **Domain:**

- **Master Domain** (contains both Empirical and Aetherial Domains)

### **Structural Function:**

- **Container of all domains**
- **Ground of all instantiation**

- **Limiting field of ontological coherence**

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Reality is the field in which structure either resolves or fails to resolve.
- All that manifests does so under constraint – that which resolves is real.
- Incoherence is a sign not of complexity, but of non-reality.
- Even chaos is structured as unpredictability and thus belongs to Reality.

#### **Key Distinctions:**

- Not to be confused with **appearance** or **representation**.
  - Reality is not “what is experienced,” but **what structure permits to be experienced**.
  - The Master Domain includes all **coherent structures**.
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#### **Term: Concurrent Coherence**

##### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

Concurrent Coherence is the condition under which multiple structurally distinct domains (e.g., Empirical and Aetherial) operate simultaneously on the same referent without contradiction. It is not a unification or blending of logics—but a coexistence of parallel governance, where each domain applies its own structural grammar without invalidating the presence or structure of the other.

Reality, as the Master Domain, permits multiple kinds of structure—force, meaning, and potentially others—to act concurrently. Where these structures describe the same referent without contradiction, Concurrent Coherence is present. Where contradiction emerges, it signals either misapplication of domain logic or structural error within one of the domains.

This principle accounts for how a single event may be both measurable and meaningful (e.g., a child’s cry), without collapsing the distinction between the domains of physics and value.

##### **Domain:**

- Master Domain (governs cross-domain integration)

- Applies jointly to all Domains (e.g., Empirical and Aetherial)

#### **Structural Function:**

- Ensures domain-specific structure can apply simultaneously
- Identifies non-contradiction across structural logics
- Grounds the intelligibility of multi-domain phenomena
- Allows different kinds of truth (empirical, ethical, experiential) to coexist coherently

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Concurrent Coherence does not imply equivalence between domains—each remains governed by its own structural principle.
- It is not a claim about epistemology, but about structural compatibility.
- Apparent contradiction between domain-level descriptions indicates an error in application—not a difference in ‘perspective.’ At least one domain has been misapplied or misrepresented.
- Concurrent Coherence permits multi-domain instantiation (e.g., an act of violence may instantiate both kinetic force and the Form of betrayal).

#### **Key Distinctions:**

- Not the same as interdisciplinary integration—this is not about method but about ontological compatibility.
- Not reducible to harmony or agreement—domains may diverge in structure while remaining coherent when applied to shared referents.
- Not a metaphysical synthesis—Concurrent Coherence affirms the distinction between domains while enabling their simultaneous application.

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#### **Term: Domain**

##### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

A **Domain** is a structural field within Reality in which the contents of existence are governed by a particular kind of order. Domains are not categories of thought or disciplines

of study—they are **ontologically distinct loci**, defined by the kind of structure that makes their contents real.

In *The New Ontology*, two primary domains are identified: the **Empirical Domain**, governed by **force**, and the **Aetherial Domain**, governed by **meaning**. Each domain contains its own form of structured presence (Objects or Forms) and its own governing logic (Force or Meaning).

Domains are not subjective frames or linguistic inventions. They are **fields of instantiation**—real divisions within the structure of the Master Domain.

#### **Domain:**

- **Meta-structural** (Domains exist *within* the Master Domain and define fields of structural governance)

#### **Structural Function:**

- **Locates and constrains** the kind of structure that governs particular contents
- **Determines the mode of being** for all that is instantiated within it
- **Differentiates kinds of structure** without implying metaphysical separation

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Domains are **parallel, not symmetrical**.
- Domains are **distinct structural fields of governance** —they are not conceptual containers.
- The governing principle (force or meaning) **cannot be swapped** between domains.
- Domains may be multiplied if future discoveries reveal new structural fields.

#### **Key Distinctions:**

- Not to be confused with **disciplinary domains** (e.g., biology, psychology).
- Not reducible to **mental models**—they are **structural realities**.
- The Empirical and Aetherial Domains are distinct in governance but **coexistent** in all human experience.

To qualify as a distinct Domain, a proposed field must:

- Be governed by a unique, irreducible **constraint principle** (e.g., force, coherence);

- Contain a unique set of structured contents (e.g., Objects, Forms);
  - Exhibit **resolution behavior** not explainable by existing domains;
  - Not be reducible to or subsumed within other known domains.
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### **Term: Form**

#### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

A Form is a structured instantiation of meaning within the Aetherial Domain. It is the real configuration that gives intelligible identity to experiences, actions, emotions, obligations, concepts, and other meaning-bearing phenomena. A Form is not a symbolic abstraction or a product of language. It is the structure *that must be present* for something to be understood as what it is.

A Form is not invented or imposed—it is revealed through structural resolution. A Form is present when its coherence is instantiated in meaning-bearing structure. A Form that is not instantiated is not “somewhere else.” It does not persist in a latent state. It is not “unreal,” but simply **absent**—because coherence must be instantiated to be present. The structural conditions that would require its resolution have not arisen.

#### **Domain:**

Aetherial Domain

#### **Structural Function:**

- Governs meaningful presence
- Constrains intelligibility
- Defines the shape of coherent experience

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Forms are not ideals or perfect templates (contra Platonism); they are structured instantiations of meaning.
- Forms do not exist apart from instantiation. A Form only is when coherence is enacted in structured meaning.
- The presence of a Form is always *concurrent* with the presence of a structured experiencer or system capable of instantiating it.
- Forms do not linger as potentials. They either resolve into presence or they are not.

## Key Distinctions:

- Not the same as an idea or image—Forms are ontological structures, not mental contents.
- Not a cultural construct—Forms are governed by coherence, not social consensus.
- Not reducible to language—language refers to Forms, but neither creates them nor fully contains them.
- Not containers of identity—Forms are not “things,” but the resolution of structure into meaning-bearing presence.

## Note:

Forms do not “wait” to be instantiated. They are not shadow-patterns or ghosts of coherence. Like Objects in the Empirical Domain, they exist only when structure coheres. Where they are not instantiated, there is no Form—only the *absence of meaningful structure*. Their presence is not potential, but actual. Forms have no existence outside instantiation. They represent structurally valid configurations of meaning, but this validity does **not** imply independent existence as potentials or abstract entities. Mathematical Forms, for instance, are constraints on instantiation—not abstract entities awaiting instantiation.

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## Object

### Definition (Maximal Version):

An **Object** is a structured presence of matter within the Empirical Domain. It is not a mere aggregate of particles, nor a perceptual illusion — it is a coherent unity of measurable components that holds identity through structural persistence.

Objects are governed by the forces of the empirical domain (e.g. gravity, electromagnetism), and their existence is accessible via measurement.

To say that “a hammer exists” in the Empirical Domain is to say that there is a material arrangement, governed by empirical forces, which fulfills the structure associated with that object.

An Object:

- Is composed of matter or energy.

- Can be measured or interacted with physically.
  - Is governed by empirical laws (forces), not meaning.
  - Exists whether or not it is being experienced — though its **Form** may not be present unless an experiencer is engaging with it as a hammer (see below).
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## **Term: Structure**

### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Structure** is the fundamental principle by which reality is intelligible to itself. It is not imposed by perception or language—it is the ontological ground that makes anything *be* what it is, rather than something else. Structure is not a pattern imposed upon reality; it is the **precondition for identity, coherence, and differentiation**.

In every domain, structure defines what is **possible**, what is **necessary**, and what is **excluded by contradiction**. Without structure, nothing could be identified, named, or known—not even chaos, which itself requires a recognizable logic of unpredictability.

Structure is not a “thing”—it is **the principle that allows things to be things**.

Structure is irreducible – not by limitation, but by necessity. It is the condition that makes analysis, identity, and coherence possible at all.

### **Domain:**

- **All Domains** (Structure is the governing logic *within* each domain and the underlying necessity *across* all)

### **Structural Function:**

- **Defines coherence**
- **Enables intelligibility**
- **Constrains possibility**
- **Governs domain-specific interaction** (e.g., via force or meaning)

### **Clarifying Features:**

- Structure is **not epistemological**; it exists even when unrecognized.

- Every domain has its own structural logic (e.g., force-laws in the Empirical, coherence in the Aetherial).
- Structure is **discovered**, not invented.
- To deny structure is to affirm incoherence—and incoherence is ontologically void.

### Key Distinctions:

- Not the same as **form**—Form is a *manifestation* of structure in the Aetherial.
- Not the same as **pattern**—structure is ontologically binding; patterns may be surface features.
- Not the same as **definition**—definitions point to structure; they do not constitute it.

Structure does **not** imply idealism. It denotes the constraints governing instantiation, not independent existences. Structure is realism about constraints, not entities; it is structural realism explicitly opposed to idealism or Platonism.

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### Term: Force

#### Definition (Maximal Version):

**Force** is the governing structural principle of the **Empirical Domain**. It is not a substance, an agent, or a symbolic description—it is the **intrinsic logic that determines how empirical objects behave, interact, and persist** across time. Forces are not “things that act upon matter”; they are the **structural rules that define the transformation and relation of matter itself**.

Gravity, thermodynamics, electromagnetism—these are not merely names for observed phenomena. They are **the operative structure of empirical reality**. Without them, no object could exist as an object.

Force does not “choose” outcomes. It **necessitates** them, within the constraints of structural compatibility. It is the empirical equivalent of meaning in the Aetherial Domain.

#### Domain:

- **Empirical Domain**

#### Structural Function:

- **Governs behavior of Objects**



- **Constrains transformation**
- **Determines interaction and continuity**
- **Carries forward empirical coherence across time**

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Forces are not contents of the domain—they are **its structural logic**.
- Forces cannot be avoided, willed away, or redefined.
- The effect of a force is not proof of belief; it is proof of structure (e.g., gravity does not require consent).
- Forces are not external impositions—they are **intrinsic necessities**.

#### **Key Distinctions:**

- Not a “cause” in the classical metaphysical sense—it is a **governing relation**.
- Not to be confused with will, desire, or energy—force is **structure-bound**, not agentic.
- Unlike Aetherial **meaning**, force acts without need for conscious relation or semantic context.

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#### **Term: Meaning**

##### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Meaning** is the governing structural principle of the **Aetherial Domain**. It is not a subjective interpretation, linguistic association, or emotional reaction—it is the **intrinsic logic that determines which configurations of Form are coherent, intelligible, and possible**.

Meaning is to the Aetherial Domain what force is to the Empirical. It does not operate through mass or motion, but through **semantic structure**: implication, entailment, contradiction, and coherence. To say that something is *meaningful* is not to say it is “emotionally important”—it is to say that it **participates in a non-arbitrary structure of relation**.

Meaning governs what can be said, thought, felt, or done without violating the deep logic of intelligibility. It is not created—it is discovered.

While meaning requires a locus of intelligibility to be encountered, it does not require any particular locus to exist. Meaning governs Forms structurally, whether or not any participant recognizes them.

**Domain:**

- **Aetherial Domain**

**Structural Function:**

- **Governs the coherence of Forms**
- **Determines the legitimacy of semantic relations**
- **Constrains what can be meant, felt, or interpreted without contradiction**
- **Defines the structure of obligation, value, and intelligibility**

**Clarifying Features:**

- Meaning is **not observer-dependent**—it exists whether or not it is understood.
- Meaning is not a signal—it is the **field of constraint** in which signals can matter.
- Contradictions are **not alternative meanings**; they are **meaningless** – structurally void.
- Meaning is not assigned—it is **encountered** when structure coheres in experience.

**Key Distinctions:**

- Not reducible to **language**—language points to meaning but neither generates it nor fully contains it.
- Not interchangeable with **emotion**—many emotions contain meaning, but meaning is the governing structure beneath them.
- Unlike Empirical **force**, meaning requires a locus of intelligibility (e.g., a conscious participant)—but it does not depend on any specific individual.

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**Term: Experience**

**Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Experience** is the **presence of structure to itself** – not only to a being, but **as** being. It is

not a byproduct of the brain, not a passive reception of signals, and not a subjective veil over objective truth—it is the **medium through which reality becomes intelligible**.

Experience is not added onto reality—it is **a mode of reality itself**. It is not what happens *in* a conscious system; it is **the very fact of structured presence**. Any time structure becomes lived, felt, suffered, or known, experience is occurring.

Experience is therefore not reducible to biological function, yet it is not ethereal or magical. It is **ontologically fundamental**—the ground of all intelligibility, and the prerequisite for any Form or Object to be encountered.

#### **Domain:**

- Experience arises at the intersection of domains: it requires empirical structure and aetherial coherence. It is the product of both, and the property of neither alone.

#### **Structural Function:**

- **Instantiates presence**
- **Mediates the appearance of Forms and Objects**
- **Reveals structure through lived coherence**
- **Enables consciousness, value, and recognition**

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Experience is **not a passive mirror**—it is an **active locus** of structural instantiation.
- You do not have experience—you **are** experience, situated.
- There can be no meaning without experience, but experience does not require verbal interpretation.
- Experience is not limited to humans—any structured encounter with reality is a form of experience.

#### **Key Distinctions:**

- Not the same as **consciousness**—consciousness is **organized experience across time**.
- Not reducible to **sensory data**—sensation is a mode of experience, not its foundation.

- Not “subjective” in the dismissive sense—experience is where **real structure becomes real presence**.
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### **Term: Consciousness**

#### **Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Consciousness** is **structured experience organized across time and identity**. It is not a binary switch or mysterious essence—it is a **patterned continuity of experience** that allows a locus to anticipate, remember, reflect, suffer, and act.

Consciousness arises not from complexity alone, but from the **integration of experience into a coherent, persistent pattern**. It is the bridge between momentary presence and enduring structure. Consciousness does not generate meaning or force, but it participates in both—by receiving, interpreting, and acting within structured reality.

To be conscious is to be a **structured participant in the unfolding of reality**—a being who lives not just in the moment, but *across* moments, tethered by continuity and pattern.

#### **Domain:**

- **Arises at the domain interface** (requires empirical structure and aetherial coherence to persist)

#### **Structural Function:**

- **Organizes experience into continuity**
- **Maintains identity across time**
- **Participates in both domains** (empirical inputs, aetherial relations)
- **Enables moral and narrative consequence**

#### **Clarifying Features:**

- Consciousness exists **on a gradient**, not as on/off.
- It does not require self-narration or language—those are **advanced functions**, not prerequisites.
- A dog is conscious. A rock is not. The distinction lies not in mystery, but in structure.

- Consciousness is **not an observer** added to the system—it is **what a structurally persistent locus of experience is**.

#### Key Distinctions:

- Not the same as **experience**—experience is primary; consciousness is **organized, temporally extended experience**.
  - Not a “ghost in the machine”—consciousness is not added to matter; it is **what structured experience becomes** when it forms identity.
  - Not reducible to biological mechanisms—but instantiated through them when appropriate structural thresholds are met.
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#### Term: Coherence

##### Definition (Maximal Version):

**Coherence** is the condition under which a structure is **internally consistent, intelligible, and non-contradictory**. In the Aetherial Domain, coherence is the **primary test of reality**: if a configuration of meaning violates coherence, it cannot be a real Form.

Coherence is not a subjective impression or a standard of elegance—it is a **structural necessity**. A triangle with four sides is not simply unfamiliar—it is incoherent. So too with meaning: a “love that seeks harm” is not paradoxical, but **structurally void**.

To be coherent is not to be simple—it is to be **logically sustainable** within the governing constraints of a domain.

##### Domain:

- **Primarily Aetherial**, but applies as a **general constraint** across all structured reality

##### Structural Function:

- **Defines the boundaries of real Forms**
- **Enables intelligibility and semantic binding**
- **Excludes contradiction**
- **Grounds the logic of entailment and implication**

### Clarifying Features:

- Coherence is **non-negotiable**—a contradiction is not “interesting,” it is **nonexistent** structurally.
- Coherence does not require comprehension—only **non-contradiction**.
- Something can be **coherent but complex**, or **coherent but presently unrecognized**.
- Coherence is the **minimum standard** for structural reality.

### Key Distinctions:

- Not reducible to **narrative plausibility**—coherence is not a story, it is a structural test.
- Not the same as **agreement**—many disagree about moral Forms, but that does not make all positions coherent.
- Not a human preference—it is the **Aetherial equivalent of gravity**: it cannot be defied without collapse.

Coherence is not consensus, not aesthetic harmony, and not internal consistency alone. It is the structural condition that permits a Form to be instantiated without contradiction **given the constraints of its domain**. In the Aetherial Domain, coherence operates as force does in the Empirical—it defines what can exist.

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### Term: Intelligibility

#### Definition (Maximal Version):

**Intelligibility** is the condition under which something can be **meaningfully apprehended, encountered, or known**. It is not reducible to understanding or recognition—it is the **ontological openness of a structure to being revealed**.

A thing is intelligible if it is **coherent within its domain** and structured such that it can, in principle, be experienced or disclosed. Intelligibility is what makes Forms presentable and Objects identifiable. It is the **structural precondition for experience**—the bridge between structure and appearance.

To be intelligible is not to be known, but to be **knowable**—not necessarily by us, but in principle.

## Domain:

- **Spans All Domains**
  - Aetherial: intelligibility makes Forms presentable
  - Empirical: intelligibility makes Objects identifiable
  - Master: intelligibility defines the **limit of what can be meant at all**

## Structural Function:

- **Enables presence within experience**
- **Marks the boundary between real and incoherent**
- **Mediates the transition from structure to appearance**
- **Establishes the condition under which coherent structure can be experienced**

## Clarifying Features:

- Intelligibility is not subjective—it is a **structural affordance**.
- Something unintelligible is not mysterious—it is either incoherent or simply not yet encountered.
- Intelligibility does not require language, only **the possibility of structured encounter**.
- Intelligibility and presence are related: without intelligibility, presence cannot occur.

## Key Distinctions:

- Not the same as **clarity**—a thing can be intelligible but complex.
  - Not to be confused with **communication**—a Form may be intelligible even if it cannot be fully articulated.
  - Distinct from **truth**—intelligibility is about possibility of apprehension; truth concerns structural correspondence.
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## Term: Instantiation

**Definition (Maximal Version):**

Instantiation is the structural condition under which something becomes present in a domain. It is not the arrival of a previously existing entity into view—it is the **coming into being** of structured presence itself. No Object or Form exists apart from instantiation; to instantiate is to be.

In the **Empirical Domain**, instantiation occurs when a configuration of matter coheres under physical forces and becomes an Object. In the **Aetherial Domain**, instantiation occurs when a configuration of meaning coheres into a Form—typically through structured experience, relation, or semantic engagement.

To instantiate is not to activate a dormant entity—it is to *become real* within the structural conditions of a domain. Possibility without instantiation is not partial reality; it is **non-being**.

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**Domain:**

- Applies to both the Empirical and Aetherial Domains

**Structural Function:**

- Marks the threshold of real presence
- Differentiates being from non-being
- Grounds the structural condition for reality in each domain

**Clarifying Features:**

- Instantiation is not a change of location or state—it is the beginning of presence
- There is no such thing as an “uninstantiated structure” waiting to appear
- Instantiation is not permanent; a Form or Object ceases to be when coherence no longer obtains
- Instantiation is domain-specific: governed by force (Empirical) or meaning (Aetherial)

**Key Distinctions:**

- Not a conversion of potential into actual—it is the line across which existence begins
  - Not the same as perception—instantiation does not require observation, only structure
  - Not a property applied to things—it is the condition under which things are
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**Term: Presence**



**Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Presence** is the condition of being instantiated within a domain. It does not refer to visibility, attention, or perception—it is the structural actuality of being. A thing is present if, and only if, it is coherently instantiated according to the governing logic of its domain.

In the **Empirical Domain**, presence means that an Object is physically instantiated—structured matter governed by force. In the **Aetherial Domain**, presence means that a Form is instantiated—structured meaning coherently enacted through experience or semantic engagement.

Presence is not a degree or a gradient. It is binary: either the structure coheres, or it does not. There is no presence without instantiation, and no instantiation without presence.

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**Domain:**

- Applies to both the Empirical and Aetherial Domains
- Defined by domain-specific structural logic (force or meaning)

**Structural Function:**

- Identifies actualized structure
- Differentiates being from absence
- Grounds the domain-specific criterion of reality

**Clarifying Features:**

- Presence is not perception—it does not require observation, only instantiation
- Nothing “waits” to be present; presence is the condition under which something exists at all
- There is no structurally real form or object that is not present

**Key Distinctions:**

- Not the same as potential—a possible form or object is not present
  - Not a memory or echo—past instantiations do not confer current presence
  - Not domain-relative in the sense of truth-variance—presence is structurally determined and absolute within its domain
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**Term: Possibility****Definition (Maximal Version):**

**Possibility** refers to a configuration that could be instantiated without violating the

structural constraints of reality, were the requisite conditions present. It is not a hidden mode of being or a dormant form of presence. Until instantiated, the possible does not exist—it is structurally admissible, but ontologically absent.

Possibility is not a weaker form of existence. It is the **logical allowance** for what *could become real*, defined entirely by the governing structure of the relevant domain. A configuration is possible if, and only if, its realization would cohere fully.

**Domain:**

- Master Domain (possibility applies structurally across both the Empirical and Aetherial Domains)

**Structural Function:**

- Delineates what could be instantiated without incoherence
- Separates structural viability from conceptual or imaginative freedom
- Grounds what may become present under constraint

**Clarifying Features:**

- Possibility is governed by structure, not imagination
- Nothing “possible” exists prior to instantiation—it becomes real only upon resolution
- Possibility is not a state, but a **testable allowance** for potential presence

**Key Distinctions:**

- Not to be confused with imagination—many imagined things are structurally incoherent
- Not a probability—possibility is binary: either a thing could resolve or it could not
- Not temporal—possibility doesn’t unfold over time; it exists as a boundary condition for coherence

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**Term: Definition**

**Definition (Maximal Version):**

A **definition** is a structural approximation of a Form or Object sufficient to distinguish it from all other coherent configurations. It is not a subjective description or arbitrary label, but a boundary-drawing act that seeks to isolate the necessary features of a structure’s identity within one or more domains. Definitions are valid to the extent that they map onto actual instantiations or structurally coherent configurations.

A definition does not create the Form or Object it describes—it reveals the structural constraints that *must* be satisfied for something to count as that thing. The goal of a definition is not exhaustive articulation but sufficient precision for the purpose at hand. In the Aetherial Domain, definitions correspond to Forms; in the Empirical Domain, they correspond to Objects.

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*The Axiom of Subtractive Definition:*

*To define a thing is to subtract what it is not, until what remains resists further subtraction. The true structure of a Form is not the sum of its features, but the irreducible boundary that remains when all inessential properties have been removed. This process is not semantic but ontological—it reveals what cannot be excluded without destroying identity.*

*In this way, Forms are not assembled—they are disclosed. The fidelity of a definition is proportional to the structural resistance of what remains under subtraction.*

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**Domain:**

- Aetherial (primarily), with Empirical applications for measurable structures.

**Structural Function:**

- Draws a boundary around a coherent identity
- Enables intelligibility, distinction, and discourse
- Supports navigation through structure by identifying valid vs. invalid configurations

**Clarifying Features:**

- A definition can be accurate, incomplete, or false—depending on its fidelity to the structure it targets
- Definitions are instruments of discovery, not invention
- The act of defining engages structural reality—it is ontological, not merely linguistic
- Definitions help reveal which configurations are coherent, and which violate structural constraint

**Key Distinctions:**

- Definition vs. Label – A label may be arbitrary; a definition is bound to structure
- Definition vs. Instantiation – A definition outlines a structure; an instantiation is its actualization
- Definition vs. Meaning – Meaning is the full significance of a structure; a definition carves out its boundary

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## Term: Fiction

### Definition (Maximal Version):

**Fiction**, in *The New Ontology*, is not defined by creativity, imagination, or storytelling—but by **structural incoherence**. A fiction is any configuration of concepts that **fails to meet the threshold of ontological coherence**. It may appear meaningful, feel compelling, or exist within cultural narrative, but if its internal structure collapses under scrutiny, it is **not a Form**, and thus not part of Aetherial reality.

Fiction is not a lesser version of reality—it is **structurally void**. It is the name we give to entities that **cannot be meant** without contradiction. This includes “square circles,” “benevolent malice,” and many forms of moral or metaphysical contradiction masked by rhetoric.

To imagine something does not make it real. A fictional construct may mimic structure, but if it **violates the logic of its domain**, it points to nothing.

### Domain:

- **None** (fiction names the absence of domain-valid structure)

### Structural Function:

- **Marks incoherence**
- **Flags contradiction** in attempted Forms
- **Clarifies the distinction** between unrealized and unrealizable
- **Protects the integrity** of real Forms from semantic collapse

### Clarifying Features:

- Fiction is not a domain—it is the **ontological null class**.
- Many imagined entities are not fictional—they are simply not real. Fiction names only those configurations that cannot be coherently instantiated.
- Fiction can be useful **symbolically or pedagogically**, but it carries no **structural weight**.
- Fiction **fails the test of meaning**, not because it is unfamiliar, but because it **self-cancels**.

## Key Distinctions:

- Not synonymous with **story**—a story may contain real Forms, even if narrated.
- Not the same as **possibility**—fiction lacks structural coherence; possibility does not.
- Not to be confused with **error**—an error misapplies structure; fiction **lacks it entirely**.

In the technical sense used by The New Ontology, *fiction* refers only to structures that **fail coherence**. Not all imagined or narrative constructions are fictional in this sense. A literary story may contain **no empirical referents** and still instantiate real Forms if its internal meaning-structures resolve coherently.

Therefore:

- **Narrative fiction** is not necessarily ontological fiction.
- Ontological fiction is a **structural failure**, not a storytelling genre.

**If it cannot cohere, it cannot exist. If it can cohere, it is not fiction.**

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## Term: Contradiction

### Definition (Maximal Version):

A **Contradiction** is the presence of **mutually exclusive structural claims within a single configuration**. It is not merely a logical failure—it is an ontological fault line. In *The New Ontology*, contradiction is the **ultimate boundary marker**: wherever contradiction is found, reality is absent.

A contradiction does not represent a paradox or mystery—it represents **a violation of the structure that makes anything intelligible**. You cannot have a triangle with four sides. You cannot meaningfully assert “I prefer to suffer for no reason.” These are not incorrect—they are **non-entities**, collapsed by incoherence.

**Contradiction is to the Aetherial what annihilation is to the Empirical**: the point at which a Form fails to hold any structural validity. Within the Empirical Domain, contradiction would be akin to a force law that negates itself. In either case, **nothing can stand**.

**Domain:**

- **Master Constraint** (applies to all domains)
- Most often polices **Aetherial meaning**, but contradiction invalidates **any structural configuration**

#### Structural Function:

- **Negates structure**
- **Defines the boundary between coherence and incoherence**
- **Invalidates Forms, definitions, or claims**
- **Marks the absence of ontological standing**

#### Clarifying Features:

- A contradiction is not “a strange idea”—it is **an impossible configuration**.
- Contradiction is **not subject to belief or culture**—it nullifies meaning at the structural level.
- Contradictions are not unresolved tensions—they are **statements that cancel themselves**.
- If contradiction is present, **instantiation is impossible**, and presence is structurally excluded.

#### Key Distinctions:

- Not to be confused with **mystery**—a mystery is unknown; a contradiction is **unreal**.
- Not the same as **disagreement**—multiple perspectives can be coherent; contradiction is **self-negating**.
- Contradiction is not “undecidable”—it is **resolved by collapse**.

#### Term: Identity

##### Definition (Maximal Version):

**Identity** is the condition under which a structure is **recognizably and persistently itself**. It is not a label, a self-concept, or a social construct—it is the **structural coherence across time and variation** that makes something what it is, and not something else.

In *The New Ontology*, identity is not essence in the Platonic or essentialist sense. It is **patterned continuity**, grounded in the structural logic of a given domain. A Form retains identity when its governing structure remains intact despite contextual shifts. An Object retains identity when its empirical configuration remains within definable bounds of transformation.

Identity is **not arbitrary**. It is **coherence over time**. This is why a shattered mirror is still “the mirror,” but a bucket of sand is not “the hammer.”

#### Domain:

- **Domain-relative** (Objects in the Empirical; Forms in the Aetherial; coherent across both)

#### Structural Function:

- **Maintains continuity** across change
- **Enables recognition and re-identification**
- **Grounds moral, logical, and experiential consequence**
- **Preserves structural coherence through instantiation shifts**

#### Clarifying Features:

- Identity is **not numerical sameness**, but structural persistence.
- A thing can **change** and still retain identity, if the change does not destroy its governing structure.
- Identity applies not just to things, but to **claims, values, beings, and systems**.
- Identity is **discovered**, not declared—it is revealed through stability under transformation.

#### Key Distinctions:

- Not the same as **self-conception**—you may misperceive your identity; structure remains.
  - Not reducible to **appearance**—a thing may look different and still be itself.
  - Not to be conflated with **role** or **social category**—identity is **structural continuity**, not contextual naming.
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