

# Ontological Instability and Fluctuational Epistemology

A Beginner's Introduction

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# The Crisis of Traditional Epistemology

Traditional epistemology operates according to what we might call the "**Stability Postulate**": the assumption that knowledge requires some form of stable foundation.

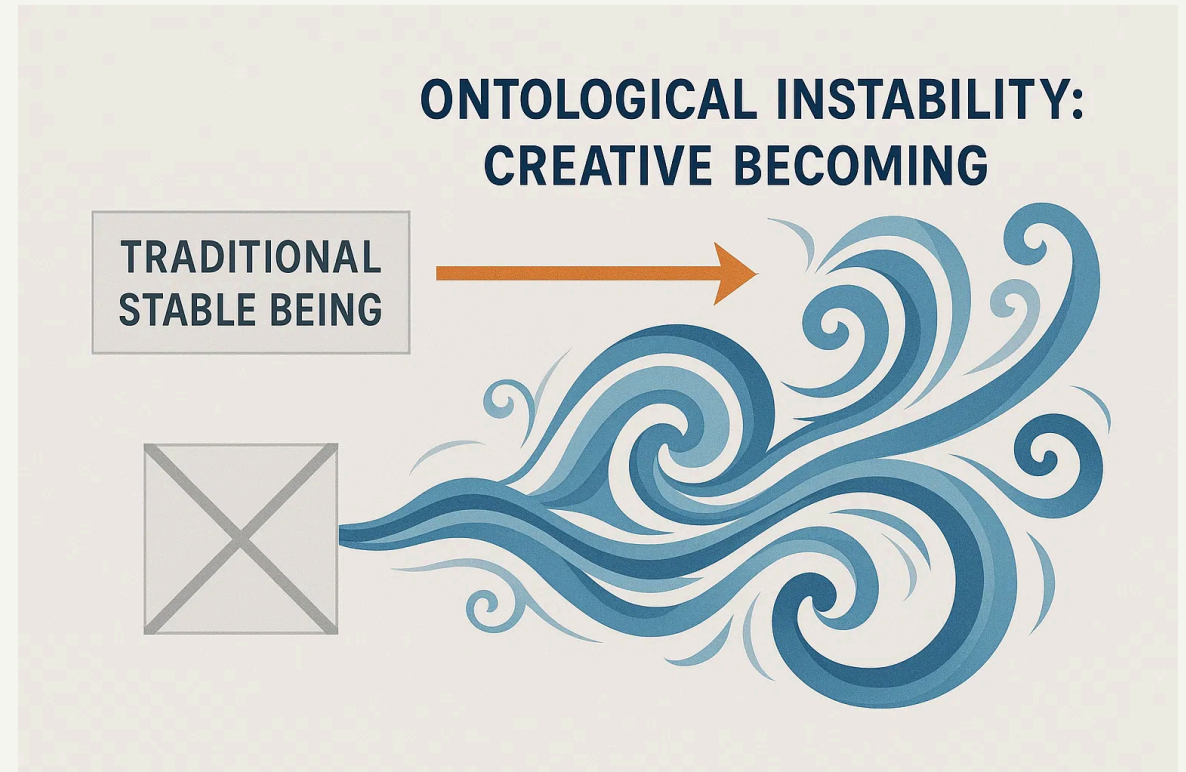
This postulate has been fundamental to Western thought for over two millennia, appearing in:

- Foundationalism: Knowledge built on indubitable foundations
- Coherentism: Knowledge as stable coherence relationships
- Skepticism: Questioning possibility of stable knowledge

The principle of **Ontological Instability** reveals this Stability Postulate to be not merely false but logically incoherent.

*"If being itself is inherently unstable—characterized by creative becoming rather than stable being—then any attempt to establish stable epistemological foundations necessarily generates the conditions for its own instability."*

This crisis opens unprecedented opportunities for developing entirely new approaches to knowledge, truth, and inquiry.



# Understanding Ontological Instability

**Ontological Instability** is a fundamental principle that asserts being itself is inherently unstable—characterized by creative becoming rather than stable being.

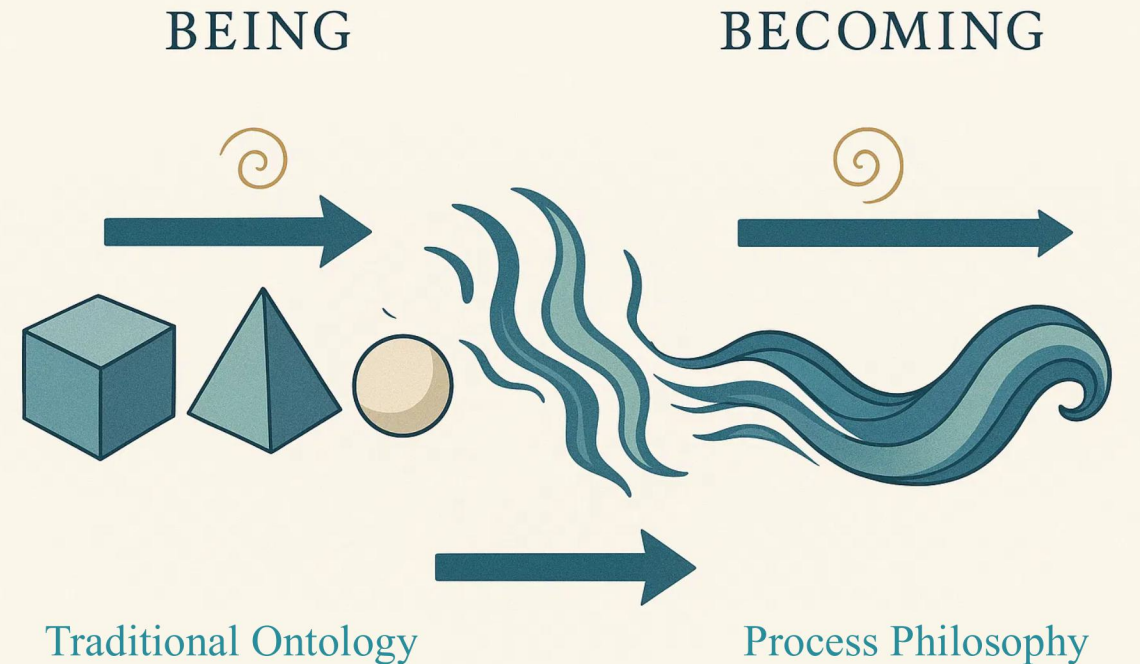
## Core Principle:

Reality is not composed of stable entities with fixed properties but dynamic processes of creative becoming.

This principle represents a shift from:

- **Being:** Static, fixed, unchanging substances
- To **Becoming:** Dynamic, creative, transformative processes

If reality itself is unstable, then knowledge must embrace process, temporality, and relationality, with uncertainty as a creative resource rather than a limitation.



# The Stability Postulate in Western Epistemology

The **Stability Postulate** operates across different epistemological traditions, each assuming that knowledge requires some form of stability:

## Foundationalism:

Knowledge must rest on indubitable foundations that are stable and certain (Descartes, Locke)

## Coherentism:

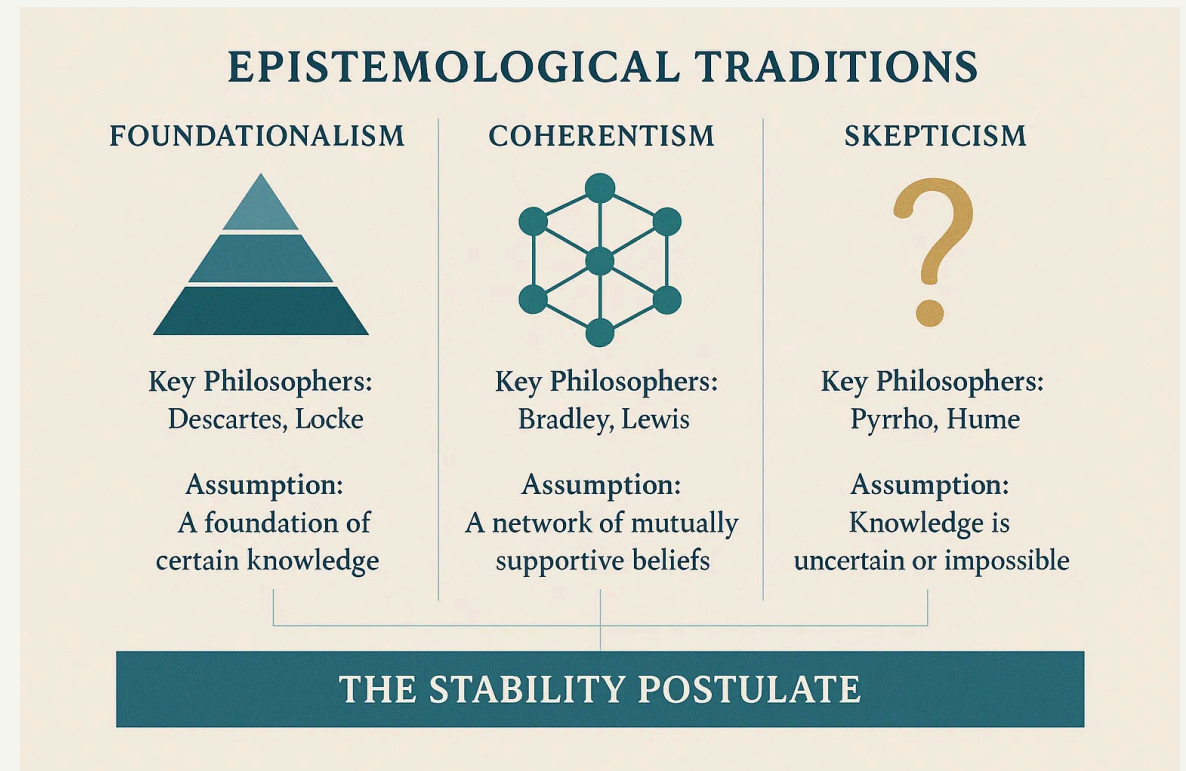
Knowledge requires stable coherence relationships between beliefs (Bradley, Lewis)

## Skepticism:

Questions the possibility of achieving stable knowledge, but still assumes knowledge would require stability (Pyrrho, Hume)

Despite their differences, all these traditions share the fundamental assumption that **knowledge, if it exists at all, must be stable** to count as genuine knowledge.

This shared assumption becomes problematic when confronted with Ontological Instability, which suggests that reality itself lacks the stability these epistemological approaches require.



# Foundations of Fluctuational Epistemology

**Fluctuational Epistemology** embraces instability as the creative condition that makes knowledge possible rather than treating it as an obstacle to be overcome.

## **From Stability to Process:**

Knowledge as dynamic process of knowing rather than static possession

## **Creative Nature of Knowing:**

Knowing as fundamentally creative rather than merely reproductive

## **Temporality and Knowledge:**

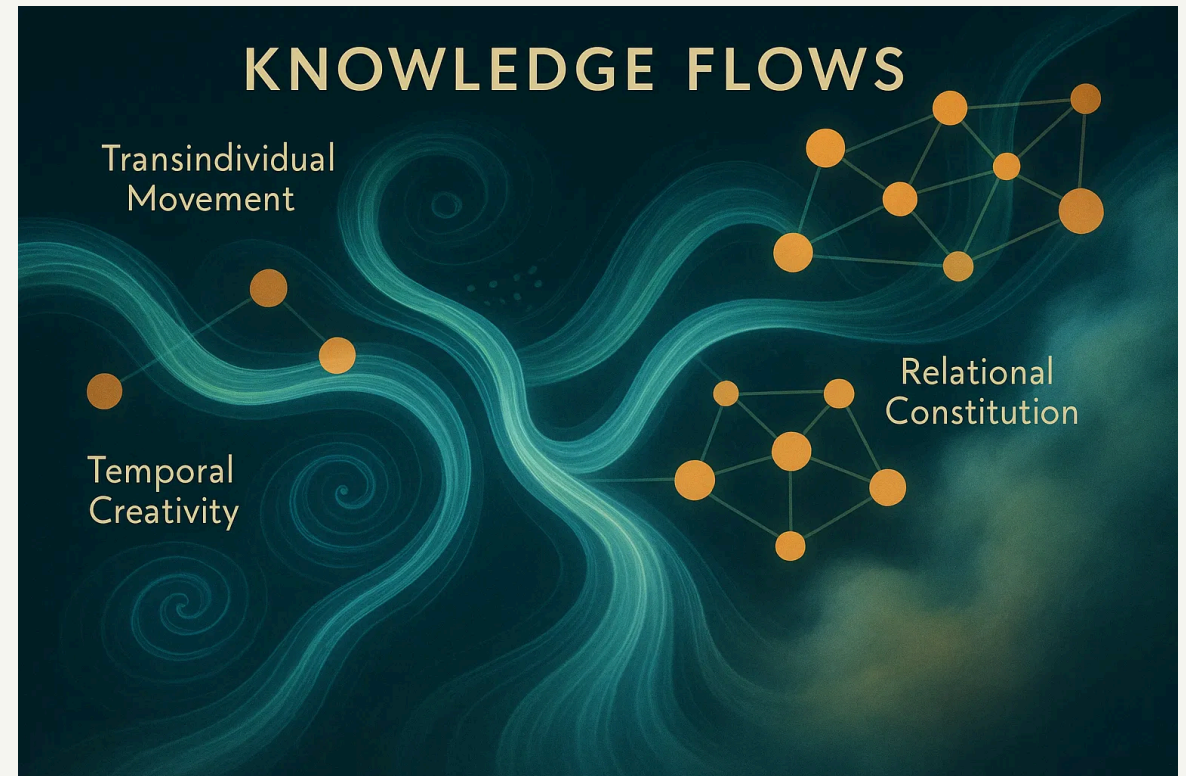
Time as constitutive feature of knowing, not just container for it

## **Relationality and Knowledge:**

Knowledge constituted through relationships rather than between separate entities

## **Uncertainty as Creative Resource:**

Uncertainty enables new possibilities rather than limiting knowledge



# Novel Concepts in Fluctuational Epistemology I

## Knowledge Flows

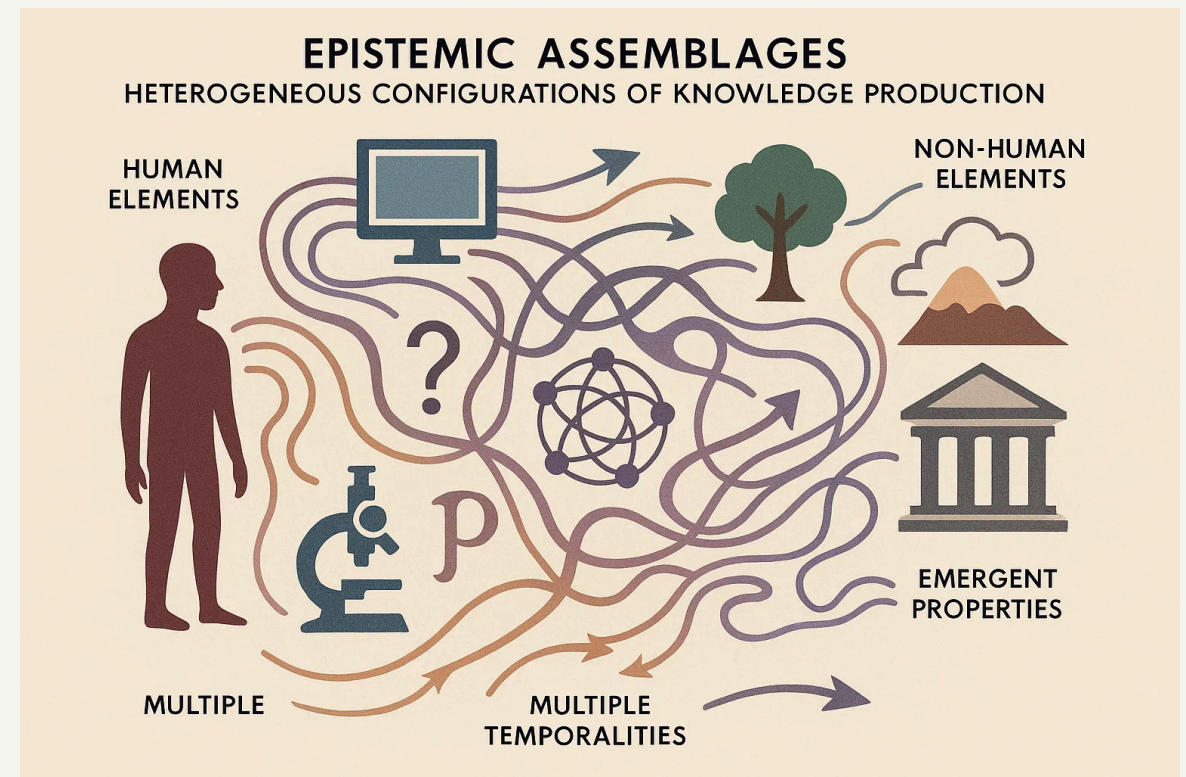
Dynamic streams of understanding that move through and between individuals, institutions, and contexts rather than being contained within them.

- **Transindividual Movement:** Knowledge flows through networks of relationships
- **Temporal Creativity:** Creates new possibilities through movement

## Epistemic Assemblages

Temporary configurations of heterogeneous elements that generate knowledge through their creative interactions.

- **Human & Non-Human Elements:** Bodies, technologies, environments, concepts
- **Multiple Temporalities:** Different rhythms and durations
- **Emergent Properties:** Capacities exceeding individual components



# Novel Concepts in Fluctuational Epistemology II

## Epistemic Uncertainty Relations

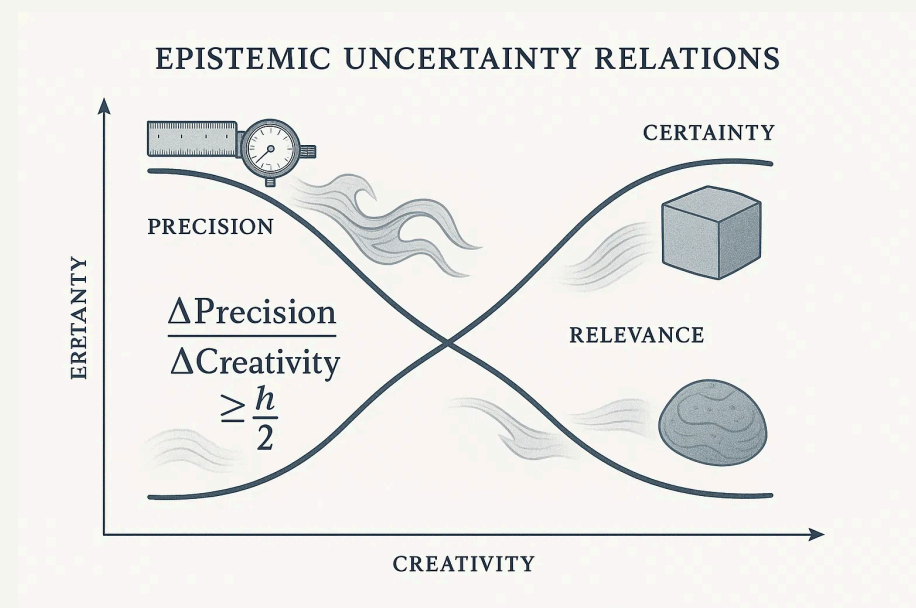
Structural constraints on the simultaneous determination of different aspects of knowledge:

- **Precision vs. Creativity:** The more precisely we specify knowledge content, the less creative potential it retains
- **Certainty vs. Relevance:** The more certain our knowledge becomes, the less relevant to changing situations

## Fluctuational Truth

Truth as a dynamic process of creative disclosure rather than static property of propositions:

- **Temporal Creativity:** Truth emerges through creative synthesis of past, present, and future
- **Relational Constitution:** Truth is constituted through relationships between multiple perspectives
- **Processual Becoming:** Truth is a process of becoming rather than a state of being
- **Creative Uncertainty:** Uncertainty as creative condition that makes new truth possible



# Practical Implications

Fluctuational Epistemology offers practical approaches for navigating complex challenges in various domains:

## Education

Dynamic learning environments that embrace uncertainty, foster creative exploration, and develop capacities for working with changing knowledge rather than memorizing fixed content.

## Research

Collaborative, iterative approaches that work with emerging patterns rather than seeking predetermined outcomes, enabling discovery of possibilities that could not be anticipated in advance.

## Decision-Making

Adaptive frameworks that respond to changing conditions rather than applying fixed models, treating uncertainty as a creative resource rather than an obstacle to overcome.

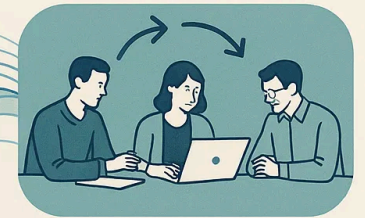
## Problem-Solving

Collaborative processes that generate emergent solutions through creative interaction rather than applying predetermined methods to achieve predefined goals.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF FLUCTUATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY



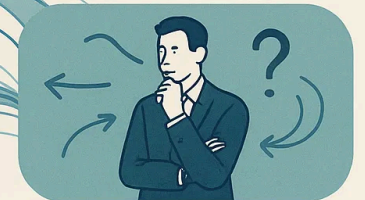
**EDUCATION**  
Dynamic classroom /  
learning environments



**RESEARCH**  
Collaborative, iterative  
research processes



**PROBLEM-SOLVING**  
Collaborative, emergent  
solution development



**DECISION-MAKING**  
Adaptive decision frameworks  
under uncertainty

# Latest Research Developments (2023-2025)

## Recent Publications

- "The Divine Paradox: Ontological Instability as the Foundation of Human Understanding" (Tan, 2025)
- "Fluctuational Logic: Forms of Inference Adequate to Emergent Reality" (Tan, 2025)
- "Adaptive Epistemology: Embracing Generative AI as a Paradigm Shift" (Punziano, 2025)

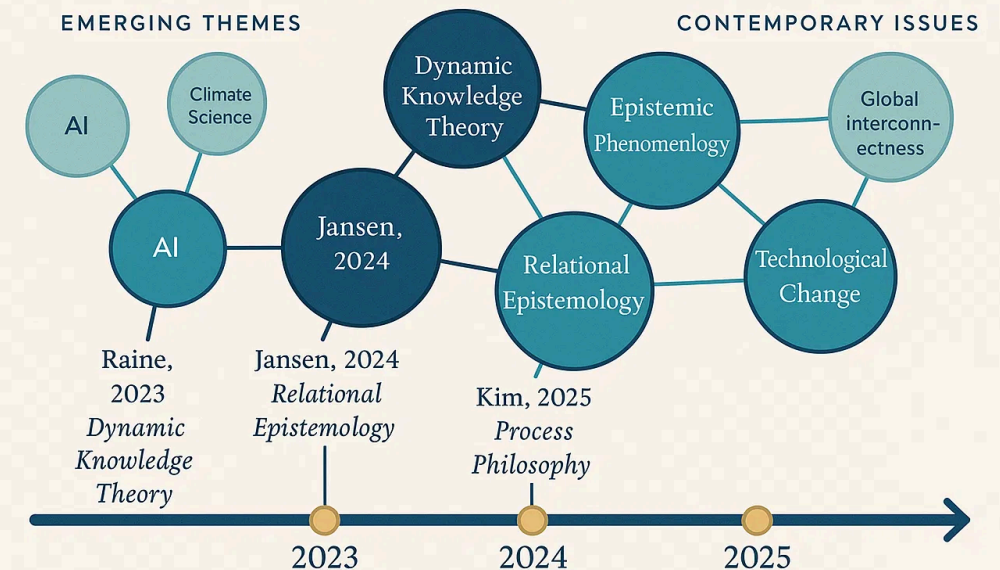
## Emerging Themes

- **Dynamic Knowledge Theory**: Knowledge as process rather than possession
- **Relational Epistemology**: Knowledge constituted through relationships
- **Epistemic Reflexivity**: Tools for de-centering traditional practices

## Contemporary Applications

- AI and machine learning challenging traditional knowledge models
- Climate science requiring uncertainty-based reasoning
- Global interconnectedness demanding relational approaches

## Ontological Instability Fluctuational Epistemology



# Conclusion and Further Reading

Fluctuational Epistemology represents a paradigm shift in how we understand knowledge:

- Knowledge as **process** rather than possession
- **Instability** as creative condition rather than obstacle
- **Uncertainty** as resource rather than limitation
- **Relationality** as constitutive rather than secondary

## Further Reading

Tan, K.H. (2025). *The Epistemological Revolution: Foundations of Fluctuational Epistemology in the Age of Ontological Instability*.

Tan, K.H. (2025). "The Divine Paradox: Ontological Instability as the Foundation of Human Understanding."

Tan, K.H. (2025). "Fluctuational Logic: Forms of Inference Adequate to Emergent Reality."

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