

Phase-Indexed Epistemology

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Abstract

Integral theory's state/stage distinction describes how different developmental stages interpret non-ordinary states of consciousness, but it provides no explicit protocol for handling the truth-status of propositions generated within those states. Three failure modes result from this gap — Globalization, Instrumentalization, and Flattening — and phase-indexed epistemology is proposed as a minimal formalism for tracking truth-claims across state transitions. The framework includes a proposition schema that tags claims with generating conditions, five transition diagnostics for evaluating cross-phase translation, and a developmental line mapping the capacity for phase-indexing from pre-awareness to full navigational use. The integration infrastructure traditionally embedded in long-term contemplative containers must now be made explicit and portable for a world in which non-ordinary states can be trivially induced. The integrative depth metric that orients the framework is used here operationally — a partial order measured by compression loss across phase transitions — with its non-perspectival grounding, a formal derivation from geometric and semantic necessity, developed in the companion paper *Derivation*.

“What actually happened was something absurdly simple and unspectacular: I stopped looking. Past and future dropped away. I forgot who and what I was, my name, manhood, animalhood, all that could be called mine. It was as if I had been born that instant, brand new, mindless, innocent of all memories. There existed only the Now, that present moment and what was clearly given in it. To look was enough.”

— Douglas Harding, *On Having No Head*

The Gap

I come back from a ten-day silent retreat having directly perceived that the boundary between self and world is a construct. The insight is not a theory; it is the most vivid thing I have ever experienced. Within a month, I have quit my job, ended a stable relationship, and begun telling friends that their attachment to “conventional boundaries” reflects their spiritual immaturity.

The insight was real. The translation into action was a disaster.

It is one of the most common failure patterns in serious contemplative and psychedelic practice, and there is no formal protocol for preventing it.

Integral theory’s state/stage distinction, one of its most important contributions, describes the territory but does not prevent this failure. States are temporary conditions of consciousness: waking, dreaming, meditative absorption, psychedelic experience. Stages are relatively stable structures of meaning-making that develop over time: the lens through which you interpret what a state discloses. The Wilber-Combs lattice (Wilber, 2006; 2007) maps which states are accessible at which stages and how interpretation varies by developmental altitude. It tells you that a rationalist and a mystic can both enter nondual awareness and will interpret it differently.

What it does not provide is an explicit protocol for handling the truth-status of propositions generated within non-ordinary states when you return to ordinary waking consciousness. Hold them? Act on them? Translate them? Discard them as artifacts? The model is silent.

The state/stage distinction needs a third axis, **phase-indexing**, that tags truth-claims with their generating conditions and specifies translation rules across state transitions.

An integral reader may object that the Wilber-Combs lattice already handles this. It does not. The lattice tells you that your nondual experience will be interpreted through your current stage’s lens. It does not tell you what to do when you return to gross consciousness holding a belief that was generated under radically different epistemic conditions. The interpretation-varies-by-stage insight is about how meaning is made. Phase-indexing is about what happens to content *after* the meaning-making event, across the transition back to ordinary cognition. These are different problems, and the second one has no current formal treatment.

The idea is not entirely new. Tart’s state-specific sciences (1972) addressed research methodology. Wilber’s own state/stage warnings are descriptive. The Buddhist two truths doctrine (*saṃvṛti-satya* and *paramārtha-satya*) is implicit phase-indexing within a specific traditional container. The spiritual bypassing literature identifies clinical failure modes. Each recognizes that state-generated content requires different handling than stage-stable content. None provides a portable protocol that specifies *how* (with what structure, what diagnostics, what translation rules) a practitioner actually works with truth-claims across state transitions.

Three Failure Modes

Without phase-indexing, practitioners default to three predictable errors.

Globalization

Globalization is state-specific truth asserted as universal truth. The opening example — perceiving the constructed nature of boundaries in deep samadhi and then treating all operational boundaries as illusions — is a textbook case.

The pattern shows up across contexts. A participant experiences overwhelming, undifferentiated love during ayahuasca ceremony. “Everything is love” becomes a governing principle. Three weeks later, a friend describes genuine financial distress. The participant responds with reassurance that “it’s all part of the unfolding” rather than helping them examine the red flags in their business partner’s behavior.

The insight may be accurate within the generating state. The state genuinely discloses something about the constructed nature of boundaries, or about the deeper relational texture of reality. The issue is scope. Globalization is the error of treating inclusion as negation, as though the deeper view *replaces* rather than *includes* the operational reality it transcends. The nondual does not negate the conventional. It contextualizes it. A view that genuinely integrates more structure should *include* the reality of boundaries as functional, even while recognizing their constructed nature. Globalization collapses that distinction. It takes a higher-dimensional disclosure and flattens it into a lower-dimensional instruction: “boundaries aren’t real, therefore don’t have any.”

Instrumentalization

Instrumentalization is the deliberate induction of state-shifts to exploit belief-plasticity, or more precisely, **untracked belief revision under phase-specific epistemic conditions**.

Consider micro-dosing protocols designed to implant affirmations (“I am unstoppable,” “scarcity is a mindset”) during a window of heightened suggestibility before a high-stakes sales call. Or retreat settings engineered to induce emotional vulnerability, where participants are guided into deep emotional opening and then offered a new belief framework while their critical filters are softened. Hypnotic induction techniques that bypass ordinary scrutiny. Charismatic group rituals where collective emotional intensity functions as an epistemic solvent. Certain psychedelic intention-setting protocols where the “intention” is functionally a belief to be installed.

The problem is not intentional state induction; every contemplative tradition involves that. The problem is modifying belief structures during the shifted state without marking the generating conditions.

This is what makes instrumentalization genuinely dangerous: it works whether the implanted belief is true or false. A person can install “I am fundamentally worthy of love” under psychedelic suggestibility, and this may be a more accurate belief than the one it replaced. But without phase-indexing, there is no principled distinction between this and installing “my guru is infallible” under the same conditions. The mechanism is identical. Only the content differs. Without a protocol that tracks generating conditions, there is no structural difference between legitimate contemplative restructuring and self-manipulation, or manipulation by others.

Trauma-state belief revision is a particularly acute case. Trauma processing often involves induced state-shifts (through EMDR, somatic experiencing, psychedelic-assisted therapy, or intensive breathwork) in which old belief structures become temporarily plastic. This plasticity is precisely what allows healing: frozen beliefs about safety, worth, or agency can finally be updated. But the same plasticity window that allows a therapist to help a client release “I am fundamentally broken” also allows a charismatic leader to install “you need me to be whole.” The difference is not in the mechanism. It is in whether the generating conditions are tracked and the belief revision is marked as having occurred under phase-specific epistemic conditions.

Flattening

Flattening is the rejection of all state-specific truths because they fail the verification criteria of ordinary waking consciousness.

This is the default rationalist dismissal. “That nondual experience was just brain chemicals.” “Your insight about interconnectedness is confirmation bias.” “You were pattern-matching on noise.” A sober friend tells a meditator who has genuinely stabilized useful perceptual changes over years of practice that “your retreat insight was just stress relief and endorphins.”

Flattening feels like rigor. It presents itself as the scientifically responsible position. But it is itself a phase-indexing failure: it applies one phase’s epistemic criteria as universally sufficient and treats any content that cannot be fully reconstructed within those criteria as invalid. The gross waking state becomes the silent universal arbiter, not because there is an argument for its epistemic completeness, but because it is the default.

Notice the structural symmetry: globalization universalizes from the state side, flattening universalizes from the gross side. Both commit the same formal error: treating one phase’s disclosures as exhaustive. The globalizer says “I saw the truth in meditation, and ordinary reality is less real.” The flattener says “ordinary reality is all there is, and your meditation experience was noise.” Both are asserting phase-specific criteria as universally sufficient. Both are failing to phase-index.

Without phase-indexing, the practitioner faces a false binary: accept all state-truths as universal (globalization) or reject all state-truths as invalid (flattening). Phase-indexing provides the third option: precision without reductionism. It asks not “is this really true?” but “under what conditions does this hold, and what happens to it across state transitions?”

A Minimal Formalism

Epistemic Non-Collapse Across Phases

No single phase of consciousness exhausts the conditions under which all claims can be assessed. Each phase discloses some structure and occludes some structure. Gross waking consciousness discloses operational causality and intersubjective verification. Deep meditative absorption discloses the constructed nature of subject-object boundaries. Psychedelic states may disclose relational structures ordinarily below the threshold of perception. Each disclosure is real. Each occlusion is real. Phase-indexing does not suspend evaluation; it prevents silent universalization.

Depth is the orienting metric: not a hierarchy of truth-types — phenomenological over empirical, metaphysical over instrumental — but a measure of how much structure a perspective can hold without distortion. A view that includes and contextualizes a prior view has more integrative depth than the view it includes; the meditator who holds both the nondual insight and the operational reality of boundaries has more depth than either view in isolation. Integrative depth is a partial order: some perspectives are strictly deeper (one includes and contextualizes the other), while others are incommensurable (they integrate non-overlapping domains with no strict inclusion relation between them).¹

Proposition Schema

A phase-indexed claim has the structure:

$$\text{Claim} = \langle p, \varphi, d, C \rangle$$

¹The claim that perspectives can be depth-ordered presupposes a non-perspectival condition under which perspectives arise, a ground that is not itself another perspective. Here the depth metric is used operationally — a partial order measured by compression loss (§3.3) — and its non-perspectival grounding is deferred to the companion paper *Derivation*, which resolves this presupposition by deriving the ground from geometric and semantic necessity rather than positing another perspective.

Where:

- **p** = propositional content (the claim itself)
- φ = generating phase (the state of consciousness in which p was generated or accessed)
- **d** = integrative depth (which prior perspectives does this view include and contextualize? — a partial order, not a count)
- **C** = validity conditions (under what conditions p holds — specifiable independently of φ)

When $C = \varphi$, the proposition is phase-locked — valid only within its generating state. The schema becomes epistemically productive precisely when C and φ diverge: when validity conditions can be specified independently of the generating phase and checked from outside it. This structure has independent motivation in formal epistemology: Williamson’s knowledge-first framework treats knowledge as a mental state sensitive to the knower’s environment, with evidence conditions ($E = K$) that vary with epistemic position without collapsing into relativism (Williamson, 2000). Phase-indexing extends the insight to states of consciousness specifically, where the generating conditions are not merely environmental but phenomenological.

Translation across phases is formalized as:

$$T(\langle p, \varphi, d, C \rangle, \psi) \rightarrow \{\text{Preserved, Transformable}(p'), \text{Symbolic, Non-transferable, Confabulatory}\}$$

Where ψ is the target phase. The five possible outcomes:

- **Preserved:** p holds in ψ with its integrative structure maintained. The content survives the transition intact. Example: the insight that “attention shapes perception” generated in meditation holds equally well in gross waking cognition.
- **Transformable:** p can be restated as p' in ψ with specified structural change. The core structure translates, but some dimensionality is reduced. The translation is honest about what is lost.
- **Symbolic:** p can be pointed at from ψ but not fully instantiated. The finger pointing at the moon. The content is real but cannot be reconstructed from within the target phase. Poetry, metaphor, and art often serve this function.
- **Non-transferable:** p has no valid expression in ψ . The responsible move is to mark this explicitly rather than forcing a distorted translation. Some state-specific content is genuinely non-transferable, and acknowledging this is more honest than producing a false translation.
- **Confabulatory:** what appears as p in ψ is actually a distortion of the original. This is the most dangerous outcome because the translation *looks* successful. The practitioner believes they have preserved the insight, but the content has been silently replaced by a gross-state reconstruction that shares surface features but lacks the original’s structure.

I experience the emptiness of self, the direct perception that what I call “I” is a contingent process, not a fixed entity. I return to daily life and translate this as “I don’t really exist,” which I use to dismiss my own needs and avoid conflict.

The surface language points at the original insight. The functional content has been replaced by a dissociative strategy wearing the original’s clothes.

These categories partition the structurally distinguishable outcomes of cross-phase translation; finer-grained subcategories may exist within them, but no outcome falls outside the schema.

Worked example:

Element	Example
p	“All boundaries are constructed”
φ	Causal/nondual state during extended retreat
d	High: integrates and includes rational understanding of boundaries
C	Valid wherever subject-object differentiation can be shown to be constructed rather than primitive — testable phenomenologically, formally, and neurologically
T → gross	Transformable → “Boundaries are conventional and operationally real; their constructed nature can be recognized without collapsing their function”

Transition Diagnostics

Five necessary diagnostic conditions for evaluating cross-phase translation integrity:

1. **Cross-phase recoverability.** Can the content be re-accessed or re-derived across repeated transitions into the generating phase? A nondual insight that arises consistently across multiple retreat sits is more robust than a one-off revelation during a single psychedelic session. Reproducibility does not guarantee truth, but it distinguishes stable structural disclosure from transient state-noise.
2. **Behavioral coherence.** Assessed not by felt functioning within the target phase but by information conservation across consequence chains: does the translated content preserve update capacity — the ability to revise in response to new evidence? Does it maintain open feedback loops rather than closing them for the sake of certainty? Does the behavioral pattern sustain contact with conditions that could disconfirm it? Globalization produces felt improvement precisely by closing these channels. High subjective coherence paired with reduced update capacity is the signature of integrative failure, not success.
3. **Compression loss.** How much structural content is lost when the claim is restated in another phase? Some loss is inevitable in any translation; this is the nature of moving between states with different dimensionalities. The critical question is whether the loss is tracked or silent. Tracked compression loss is honest translation. Silent compression loss is confabulation waiting to happen.
4. **Contradiction load.** Does the translated claim generate conflicts with already-stable commitments in the target phase? High contradiction load does not automatically invalidate the translated content; genuine insight often disrupts prior assumptions. But it does require explicit handling rather than suppression. A translated insight that contradicts everything you know may be revolutionary or may be a translation artifact. Contradiction load tells you where to look, not what to conclude.
5. **Dependency disclosure.** Are the generating conditions clearly specified, or has the claim been silently universalized? Every assertion carries implicit metadata about where it came from. Silent universalization strips that metadata. “I believe X” is incomplete. “I believe X; this was generated in state φ , its translation status is Y, and it depends on conditions C” is phase-indexed. This is the core discipline: making the generating conditions explicit rather than letting them disappear into the assertion.

Generation, Retention, and Assertion

Belief-updating across phase transitions is path-dependent. The same propositional content arrived at through different generating sequences carries different epistemic warrant, different distortion profiles, and different revision requirements. A belief cannot be reliably evaluated, revised, or integrated without access to its generating path. This is what makes phase-indexing structurally necessary rather than merely useful — it preserves the information without which rational belief revision across state transitions is impossible.

A belief can be:

- **Generated** in phase φ_1
- **Retained** (or transformed) across transition to φ_2
- **Asserted** in phase φ_3

Each transition is a potential site of distortion. A meditator generates an insight during deep absorption (φ_1). The insight is retained, with some transformation, during the return to ordinary waking consciousness (φ_2). The translated version is then asserted in conversation with a friend (φ_3), where the social context introduces further pressures on the content.

Phase-indexing tracks the full chain. The question at each transition: what happens to this content's integrative structure? Does it gain depth, lose depth, or distort?

This three-part distinction is where most integration failures occur. The meditator who generates a genuine insight about impermanence during retreat, retains a flattened version of it during the transition back to daily life, and then asserts a confabulated version in conversation ("nothing really matters") has suffered distortion at both transition points. Without the generation/retention/assertion framework, there is no way to locate *where* the distortion entered. The options collapse to defending the distorted assertion as identical to the original insight, or giving up on the insight entirely. Phase-indexing provides a third option: trace the chain, identify the compression points, and determine which translation is honest and which is artifact.

This is equally relevant for beliefs generated during trauma-states, psychedelic experiences, or intense group processes. The moment of generation, the process of retention through the come-down or cool-off period, and the eventual assertion in a different social and cognitive context. Each step transforms the content, and each transformation needs to be tracked.

What does tracking look like in practice?

I return from a week-long silent retreat with a strong insight about the nature of self. Rather than immediately restructuring my life around it, I tag it: generated in deep samadhi (φ), integrative depth appears high (d, because it included rather than bypassed my psychological complexity), validity conditions tied to sustained concentration and reduced sensory input (C). I assess the translation: cross-phase recoverability is uncertain; I have had this insight before but not consistently. Behavioral coherence is mixed: the insight clarifies some relational patterns but generates confusion around professional ambition. Compression loss is significant; I can name it but cannot reconstruct the felt sense. I mark the translation status as Symbolic, hold the insight with respect, and test its implications over months rather than acting on it immediately.

This is phase-indexing in operation: not dismissing the insight, not globalizing it, but tracking its provenance and translation status with enough precision to work with it responsibly.

Why Now

The Traditional Container Handled This Implicitly

For most of contemplative history, phase-indexing was embedded in the practice container itself. A Zen student sat with a teacher for ten or twenty years. State-shifts were gradual, supported, and integrated within a stable relational and interpretive framework. The teacher's role was, in significant part, to provide phase-indexing feedback: to distinguish genuine insight from inflation, to help translate state-specific realization into daily functioning. “Yes, that was a real insight about impermanence. No, that does not mean you should leave your family.” Every major contemplative tradition developed its own version of this function: implicit protocols, tradition-specific vocabularies, translation norms embedded in decades of relationship. They solved the problem, but locally, within their own containers, over timescales that modern practitioners rarely have access to.

The Modern Condition

The implicit approach is no longer sufficient:

Pharmacological state-shifts outpace integration capacity. A single high-dose psilocybin session at Johns Hopkins produces mystical-type experiences rated by participants as among the most meaningful experiences of their lives — 33% called it the single most spiritually significant, 38% placed it in the top five (Griffiths et al., 2006) — on a timescale of six hours, without any prior contemplative training. Traditional paths might take a decade to produce experiences of comparable intensity, embedded in a container that supports integration. The psychedelic renaissance has made the state access fast. The integration infrastructure has not kept pace.

State access has decoupled from lineage containers. Meditation apps, weekend retreats, breathwork workshops, and self-directed psychedelic use deliver non-ordinary states without the relational infrastructure of a long-term teacher-student relationship. The phase-indexing function that was embedded in that relationship is simply absent — not weakened, absent.

Consensus reality itself is no longer a stable target phase. The informational environment and social structures that constitute “normal life” are transforming faster than any traditional integration framework anticipated, which means the ordinary waking state that state-specific insights must translate into is itself shifting. The translation target moves. This compounds every other problem: not only is there no container to support integration, the destination the integration is supposed to reach is not fixed.

Plausibly more people are generating high-state insights than at any point in history (Griffiths et al., 2006; Griffiths et al., 2011; for a comprehensive review of the mechanisms and proliferation of psychedelic research, see van Elk & Yaden, 2022), with less integration infrastructure than the traditions ever contemplated.

Developmental Levels as Epistemic Codecs

Each developmental level constitutes a different codec for experience: different dimensionality, different compression characteristics, different truths accessible, different blind spots structural to the codec itself.

Integral theory describes these levels in various ways; the Spiral Dynamics color scheme is one mapping. Each level represents genuine epistemic achievement, the product of centuries of development and the integration of prior capacities. The failure modes below are not indictments of these achievements but consequences of their specific compression characteristics — what each codec cannot encode, not what it can.

- **Rational-modern consciousness** tends toward Flattening. Its native epistemic tools (empirical verification, logical consistency, intersubjective replication) are powerful — and indispensable. Formal verification, the distinction between valid and invalid inference, the capacity for machine-checkable proof: these are permanent gains — indispensable, and the ground derived in the companion paper *Derivation* leans on them throughout. The empirical verification framework is explicitly closed under ordinary waking state criteria by design; its power comes from excluding non-replicable states, so the codec compression loss is structural, not contingent. The tendency toward Flattening arises not from any deficiency in the tools but from confusing their power with completeness. Because these tools cannot reconstruct the content of non-ordinary states, the content is dismissed — not because the tools fail, but because completeness is assumed where only power obtains.
- **Pluralistic-postmodern consciousness** tends toward Globalization, but not for the reasons usually given. The postmodern project developed genuinely powerful evaluative tools — deconstruction, genealogy, discourse analysis — and its core suspicion is well-founded: claims to non-perspectival ground frequently function as covert universalization of a particular perspective. The postmodern suspicion of non-perspectival ground, when applied to phase-specific disclosures, produces exactly the condition where all state-truths are treated as equally valid perspectives — because the only alternative is a universalizing move the framework has ruled out. The limitation is specific. Postmodernism could not distinguish between illegitimate claims to transcend perspective and the possibility that a non-perspectival ground is formally derivable. Without that distinction, the correct diagnostic (suspect all claims to universal ground) becomes over-applied, and perspectival multiplicity, rigorously defended, drifts in practice toward treating all state-disclosures as equally valid simply because none can claim non-perspectival warrant. The error is not a failure of precision but an incompleteness — one the companion paper *Derivation* is designed to resolve.
- **Integral consciousness** has the *capacity* for phase-indexing. It can hold multiple perspectives without collapsing them, recognize developmental depth, and maintain complexity. But capacity without protocol is unreliable, like having the hardware without the software. The practitioner knows that different states disclose different truths but does not yet have a systematic way to track translations between them.

Without the protocol, the crucial invariants for epistemology's continued optimization — tracking what is preserved, what is lost, and what is silently replaced across phase transitions — remain unformalized, and the integrative capacity that defines integral altitude cannot reliably compound.

Phase-Indexing as a Developmental Line

The capacity to maintain phase-indexing across state transitions is itself a developmental line, with stages running from no awareness that beliefs have generating conditions (L0), through recognition without protocol (L1), to explicit tagging of beliefs with generating conditions and translation status (L2), to deliberate navigation between states with maintained indexing (L3).

L4 — phase-grounding — is structurally distinct. It is not navigation between perspectives but recognition of the ground from which all perspectives arise. The practitioner at L4 does not merely track translations between phases but recognizes why translation is possible (closure), why it is always incomplete (opacity), and why the structure of the interface is inexhaustible (fractal boundary). This is the capacity the traditions pointed at with terms like *theoria*, *jñāna*, and *prajñā* — not knowledge of more content but recognition of the structural conditions under which all content arises.

A tension implicit in L4 requires acknowledgment. If the ground is formally derivable — as the companion paper *Derivation* undertakes to show — and if formal derivation is accessible to anyone with the relevant

training, then phase-grounding appears more democratic than the contemplative traditions implied. Following a formal derivation generates a proposition at the formal phase. The proposition's validity conditions (C in the schema from §3.2) may be phase-invariant — the proof compiles regardless of who runs it. But *retention* — holding the derived structure as operationally active rather than merely verified — is a different epistemic event than generation. The derivation makes the recognition *available* across phases; availability is not occurrence. A proof that S^2 is simply connected can be checked by anyone. That this fact restructures how one attends to closure, boundary, and consequence requires something the proof alone does not supply. The question becomes whether the contemplative containers were necessary for the recognition itself or for the phase-stability required to retain it. If the latter, formal derivation may provide an alternative stabilization mechanism — one that holds the structure in checkable form rather than in trained attentional capacity. The formal chain does not replace the container for retention; it makes the generated content available across phases without phase-specific access conditions. Unlike phenomenologically-generated propositions whose C may be phase-locked, formally-derived propositions have phase-invariant C by construction — the validity conditions are the proof's steps, checkable from any phase. This is the epistemic asymmetry that makes formal grounding of the depth metric possible at all. Whether retention requires contemplative training in addition to formal access is an empirical question, not a structural one.

The developmental line from L0 to L4 implies that phase-grounding is possible — that there exists a structural ground from which all phases arise. That ground is not merely postulated but derivable; the derivation, and its machine-checked verification, are the work of the companion paper *Derivation*.

Conclusion

Phase-indexed epistemology is precision, not relativism.

The opening example — real insight, disastrous translation — is not a cautionary anecdote. It is the diagnostic case. The meditator who quit his job and ended his relationship did not have a false experience. He had a genuine one with no protocol for handling what it generated. Globalization, Instrumentalization, Flattening are not character flaws; they are what happens in the absence of structure. Phase-indexing supplies the structure: tag the generating conditions, track the translation, mark the compression loss, hold the insight at the translation status it has earned rather than the one that feels true.

The path matters because warrant is path-dependent. The same content arrived at through different generating sequences carries different distortion profiles, different revision requirements, different relations to the evidence that could revise it. A belief evaluated without access to its generating path cannot be reliably integrated — the options collapse to defending it wholesale or abandoning it entirely. Phase-indexing is what makes a third option available: trace the chain, locate the compression points, determine what translated honestly and what is artifact.

When the depth metric is grounded rather than assumed — as the companion paper *Derivation* undertakes — this becomes a discipline rather than a heuristic. The depth metric measures how much of that grounding structure a perspective can hold. The transition diagnostics test whether consequence chains close across phase boundaries. The developmental line maps the capacity to recognize and traverse a structure that generates the conditions for all experience. The traditions carried this structure implicitly — in teachers, lineages, decades of relationship. That container is no longer reliably available. The formalization makes the structure explicit, portable, and checkable, which is what the present situation requires.

And when the depth metric is made formal, the warrant becomes available to anyone — a proof compiles or it does not, the generating state of the prover irrelevant to the check; that grounding is the companion paper *Derivation*'s work. What phase-indexing adds is the discipline for holding state-generated content in the

meantime: not flattening the phases, but making navigation between them possible without loss of what each discloses. The insight from the retreat was real. Now there is a protocol for working with it.

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