

## From Paradox to Practice: How the Theory of Non-Knowledge Dissolves Philosophy's Unsolved Problems

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*The authors declare  
that no funding was  
received for this work.*



Received: 03-July-2025

Accepted: 15-July-2025

Published: 01-August-2025

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This article is published by **MSI Publishers** in **MSI Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (MSIJMR)**

ISSN 3049-0669 (Online)

Volume: 2, Issue: 8 (August-2025)

**ABSTRACT:** This article applies the Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK) to ten foundational philosophical problems, not to offer traditional solutions, but to formally nullify their contradictory premises. From Plato to Kant, Descartes to Hume, and from contemporary cognitive science to analytic philosophy, thinkers have attempted to explain or resolve these problems with varying degrees of sophistication and contradiction. TNK posits that these problems persist precisely because they presuppose epistemic structures that cannot be logically sustained. By introducing the operation of Nullification and the unit X (NS) — where "X" represents the traditional concept to be annulled — TNK reframes each philosophical challenge as a symbolic artifact that is epistemologically non-contradictory and operational. The result is the New Science (NS), a framework in which knowledge is no longer a matter of truth claims but of usable, coherent constructs. This paper argues that TNK provides not a reinterpretation, but a categorical break with the history of philosophy—and the only logically consistent path forward.

**Keywords:** Theory of Non-Knowledge, epistemology, philosophical problems, nullification, New Science, X (NS)

*Do Paradoxo à Prática: Como a Teoria do Não-  
Conhecimento Dissolve os Problemas Não Resolvidos da  
Filosofia*

## Resumo

Este artigo aplica a Teoria do Não-Conhecimento (TNC) a dez problemas filosóficos fundamentais, não para oferecer soluções tradicionais, mas para anular formalmente suas premissas contraditórias. De Platão a Kant, de Descartes a Hume, e da ciência cognitiva contemporânea à filosofia analítica, pensadores tentaram explicar ou resolver tais problemas com diferentes graus de sofisticação — e de contradição. A TNC sustenta que esses problemas persistem justamente porque pressupõem estruturas epistêmicas que não podem ser logicamente sustentadas. Ao introduzir a operação de Anulação e a unidade  $X$  (NC) — onde “ $X$ ” representa o conceito tradicional a ser anulado — a TNC reconstrói cada desafio filosófico como um artefato simbólico epistemicamente não contraditório e operacional. O resultado é a Nova Ciência (NC): um arcabouço no qual o conhecimento já não depende de pretensões de verdade, mas é definido por formas utilizáveis e coerentes. O artigo defende que a TNC não representa uma simples reinterpretação da filosofia, mas sim uma ruptura categorial com sua história — e o único caminho logicamente consistente daqui em diante.

**Palavras-chave:** *Teoria do Não-Conhecimento, epistemologia, problemas filosóficos, anulação, Nova Ciência,  $X$  (NC)*

## 1. Introduction

Western philosophy has long been preoccupied with foundational questions: What is knowledge? What is consciousness? What is the nature of reality, morality, and the self? From the ancient Greeks to the present day, these questions have generated competing metaphysical systems, epistemologies, and ethical frameworks (PLATO, 1997; DESCARTES, 1985; KANT, 1998).

Despite significant advances, many problems remain unresolved. This is not due to a lack of effort, but to a hidden contradiction: the reliance on epistemic justification in a context where justification itself collapses under scrutiny (HUME, 2000; GETTIER, 1963). The Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK) proposes a radical departure from this tradition. Instead of attempting to solve problems within their own conceptual frameworks, TNK applies *Nullification* (SOUZA, 2025, p. 48) — a

unique epistemic operation that dissolves the contradiction without generating another, *by definition*.

This article examines ten major philosophical problems (it is easy to notice that they *should be less*, because they are very look alike), presenting a brief overview of historical and contemporary solutions, followed by the TNK's *absolute alternative*: the transformation of each problem into a unit of X (NS), a symbolically nullified construct free of contradiction and metaphysical burden.

## 2. TNK and the Canonical Problems of Philosophy

### 2.1 *Consciousness* → *Consciousness (NS)*

**Historical approaches:** From Plato to Descartes, the problem of consciousness has traditionally been approached through metaphysical dualisms. Plato (PLATO, 1997) regarded the soul as the eternal and immaterial seat of perception and memory, capable of accessing the *world of Forms*. Descartes (DESCARTES, 1985) revolutionized modern philosophy by defining consciousness as the essence of a separate substance — *res cogitans* — fundamentally distinct from *res extensa*, matter. In the empiricist tradition, Locke (LOCKE, 1997) conceptualized consciousness through continuity of memory and self-awareness, while Hume (HUME, 2000) famously denied the existence of a stable self, describing consciousness as a bundle of fleeting impressions. The 20th century saw the rise of behaviorism, which dismissed consciousness as unverifiable, followed by cognitive science's attempt to reintroduce it via internal models and mental representations. Phenomenologists like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty brought back the lived experience of consciousness, but still grounded it in transcendental structures that TNK considers metaphysically loaded and epistemically unstable.

**Contemporary theories:** Modern neuroscience attempts to formalize consciousness using measurable correlates. Baars (1993) and Dehaene propose the Global Workspace Theory (GWT), where consciousness emerges from the coordinated activity of multiple cognitive subsystems. Tononi's Integrated Information Theory (TONONI, 2004) introduces a formal metric,  $\phi$  (phi), to quantify the degree of informational integration presumed necessary for consciousness. More speculative

theories, such as Goff's panpsychism (GOFF, 2019), suggest that consciousness is not emergent, but fundamental, present in all matter. Chalmers (1995) introduced the now iconic "hard problem" — how and why brain processes give rise to subjective experience (qualia) — which none of the physicalist models have been able to satisfactorily address without recourse to metaphysical assumptions.

**TNK:** The TNK *annuls* the metaphysical and epistemological structures underlying all such formulations. It does not ask "what is consciousness" or "how does it arise," because such questions rely on a logically unsustainable assumption: that consciousness is a definable object with discoverable properties. TNK recognizes that any attempt to explain consciousness creates an infinite regress or contradiction. Therefore, Consciousness (NS) is not an essence or a phenomenon, but a symbolically nullified construct — a functional operator used to mark experiential coherence without asserting ontological claims. It is a placeholder within the symbolic system: a unit of X (NS), valid insofar as it avoids contradiction and enables operational consistency across discursive contexts.

#### **Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Consciousness (NS)

Consider a clinical situation: A patient in a vegetative state shows cortical electrical activity but exhibits no behavioral response. Doctors, family members, and legal professionals debate: "Is the patient conscious?"

Within traditional frameworks, this question becomes an ontological impasse:

**Tononi's IIT:** If the patient's  $\phi$  (phi) is high, then consciousness is present.

**Functionalism:** No output behavior = no consciousness.

**Phenomenology:** We cannot access the patient's first-person perspective.

**Metaphysics:** The question presumes a discoverable inner essence.

**Result:** indecision, contradictory standards, and reliance on unverifiable metaphysical assumptions.

**How TNK responds:** The TNK nullifies the question. It does not ask, “Is the patient conscious?” — because this presumes that consciousness is something to be found, a notion TNK exposes as epistemically incoherent. Instead, TNK allows the operator (doctor, lawyer, relative) to construct an arbitrary but coherent symbolic unit: “Consciousness (NS) is whatever symbolic designation enables action — such as withdrawing life support — without epistemic contradiction”. Thus:

For the legal system, Consciousness (NS) may mean “capacity for intentional expression minimally verifiable by expert consensus”.

For the clinician, it may be “neurological integration above statistical noise”.

For the family, it may mean “felt presence of the loved one.”

Each system uses Consciousness (NS) arbitrarily yet operationally — without metaphysical commitment.

*TNK legitimizes this arbitrariness as epistemically superior to circular justification or ontological dogma.*

**Conclusion of the Example:** Consciousness (NS) is not “what consciousness truly is,” but rather a symbolic construct that allows action without contradiction. This exemplifies the core gesture of TNK: replacing essentialist metaphysics with coherent symbolic engineering.

## 2.2. Mind-Body → Mind-Body (NS)

**Historical approaches:** The mind-body problem, rooted in metaphysical speculation, was classically defined by Descartes (DESCARTES, 1985), who introduced *substance dualism* — the view that the mind (*res cogitans*) and the body (*res extensa*) are fundamentally distinct substances. Spinoza, responding to this, proposed *monism*, suggesting that mind and body are two attributes of a single substance (God or Nature). Hobbes, in contrast, asserted materialism, reducing all phenomena, including mental ones, to matter in motion. These foundational positions influenced centuries of debate and framed the tension between subjective experience and physical explanation.

**Contemporary theories:** In the 20th century, dualism was challenged by new physicalist paradigms. Functionalism, especially as formulated by Putnam (PUTNAM, 1981), argued that mental states are defined by their causal roles rather than by their material substrates. This gave rise to computational and representational theories of mind. Later, Churchland (CHURCHLAND, 1988) advocated *eliminative materialism*, positing that commonsense psychological concepts like “belief” and “desire” are folk-theoretical and should be discarded in favor of neuroscience. On the other hand, Varela and colleagues (VARLEA; THOMPSON; ROSCH, 1991) developed *enactivism*, which rejects both internalist and externalist extremes by emphasizing cognition as embodied, enacted, and environmentally embedded. These debates remain unresolved and often collapse into circular definitions or empirical ambiguities.

**TNK:** The TNK proposes a categorical nullification of the metaphysical framing of the mind-body problem. The dichotomy between “mental” and “physical” rests on categories that are epistemically unstable — depending on unverifiable ontologies or unprovable epistemologies. TNK does not aim to unify or reduce one to the other. Instead, it annuls the dichotomy altogether. Mind-Body (NS) is not a metaphysical structure, but a contextual operator: a symbolic heuristic deployed within specific systems (e.g., medicine, law, cognition) to enable functional coherence. It allows for discourse and action without implying ontological commitment to either “mind” or “body.” In TNK, the opposition loses its philosophical urgency and becomes a pragmatic construct, used as needed, but free of contradiction because it renounces justification altogether.

**Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Mind-Body (NS)

**Imagine a legal-medical dispute:** A defendant pleads not guilty by reason of mental illness. A neurologist points to a brain lesion; a psychiatrist testifies to dissociative symptoms; the court asks: “Is this person responsible — or is their mind impaired by the body?”

Within classical and contemporary paradigms, this becomes a theoretical gridlock:

**Cartesian dualism:** Mind and body are distinct; illness of the body might not affect the moral self.

**Materialism:** The brain is the mind — so any lesion implicates cognition directly.

**Functionalism:** If behavior is coherent, the mind is “functional,” regardless of substrate.

**Enactivism:** Mind emerges only through embodied interaction — responsibility lies in the whole system.

**Result:** conflicting expert testimonies, conceptual ambiguities, and incoherent standards of judgment.

**How TNK responds:** TNK nullifies the metaphysical distinction between “mind” and “body.” The very question — “Is this a mental or physical issue?” — relies on categories that collapse under epistemic scrutiny. Instead, TNK defines: Mind-Body (NS) as a symbolic placeholder selected arbitrarily, to permit system-specific operations (clinical, legal, personal) without contradiction. In this case:

The court might define Mind-Body (NS) as “sufficient neural integrity for legal responsibility”.

The psychiatrist might treat it as “adaptive narrative coherence”.

The neurologist may interpret it as “absence of frontal lobe disruption”.

Each institution constructs Mind-Body (NS) in *its own terms* — not as what truly is (because there is not such a thing), but as what allows *decisions to be made* coherently and justifiably under symbolic constraints.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Mind-Body (NS) is not a solution to the metaphysical debate. It is the annulment of the debate as epistemically illegitimate — replaced by context-dependent symbolic operations.

*Through this, TNK enables systems to function without requiring ontological consensus — only symbolic coherence.*

### 2.3. Free Will → Free Will (NS)

**Historical approaches:** The philosophical debate over free will begins with the Stoics, who proposed a form of compatibilism: even in a determined cosmos, rational beings can act in accordance with their nature. Augustine emphasized moral responsibility and divine foreknowledge, embedding free will within a theological framework. Kant (KANT, 1998) radically redefined autonomy as the capacity to legislate moral law through reason, grounding freedom in the a priori structures of rational agency. Each of these formulations rests on strong metaphysical commitments: nature, God, or reason.

**Contemporary theories:** Contemporary views often mirror the historical divide. Sam Harris (HARRIS, 2012) argues from a neuroscientific perspective for determinism, claiming that all choices are causally determined by brain states. Harry Frankfurt (FRANKFURT, 1971) refined compatibilism, proposing that free will consists in acting according to one's higher-order volitions, rather than being free from causation itself. Robert Kane defends libertarianism, asserting that indeterminacy at the quantum level may allow for self-forming actions. Despite these efforts, no consensus has been reached.

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge rejects the metaphysical framing of the debate as internally incoherent. The notion of free will as either absolute self-causation or metaphysically constrained choice collapses under scrutiny. Free Will (NS) is thus a nullified construct: a symbolic instrument used for the allocation of agency in practical contexts (ethics, law, narrative). It is not a metaphysical freedom to choose, but a functional label for differentiating actions in systems that require responsibility attribution. Freed from the demand for ontological grounding, Free Will (NS) becomes operationally coherent and contradiction-free.

#### **Practical Example – How TNK Operates with Free Will (NS)**

Consider a sentencing hearing: A judge must decide whether a defendant who committed a violent act was acting freely or under irresistible compulsion. Neuroscientific evidence shows prefrontal cortex abnormalities; a psychologist

argues for diminished impulse control; the defense invokes determinism. The court asks: “Did the defendant act of their own free will?”

In classical and contemporary frames, this leads to a conceptual deadlock:

**Kantian ethics:** Freedom = acting from rational autonomy. But was the defendant rational?

**Neuroscience:** All action is causally determined — so freedom is an illusion (HARRIS, 2012).

**Compatibilism:** As long as the action aligns with internal desires, it’s free (FRANKFURT, 1971).

**Libertarianism:** Freedom requires indeterminacy — but how to prove it?

**Result:** moral and legal standards fluctuate based on unresolvable metaphysical presuppositions.

**How TNK responds:** TNK exposes the metaphysical framing of “free will” as epistemically incoherent. It nullifies the notion that freedom must be defined in ontological or causal terms. Instead, TNK allows for: Free Will (NS) — a symbolic unit employed for distributing responsibility within systems (legal, ethical, interpersonal) without invoking metaphysical freedom. In this case:

The court defines Free Will (NS) as “sufficient behavioral coherence to assign responsibility.”

The psychologist uses it to mean “absence of compulsion beyond clinically accepted thresholds.”

The public treats it as “intuitive accountability.”

None of these meanings requires a proof of metaphysical freedom. Free Will (NS) is just a usable code for allocating causality and blame within institutional coherence — and nothing more.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Free Will (NS) is not freedom. It is a functionally necessary fiction, deployed so that systems may operate without logical collapse or moral paralysis.

*TNK thus replaces the metaphysical burden of freedom with symbolic functionality.*

#### **2.4. Knowledge → Knowledge (NS)**

**Historical approaches:** The epistemological tradition begins with Plato, who defined knowledge as “justified true belief” (PLATO, 1997). This tripartite model endured for centuries, especially after Descartes (DESCARTES, 1985), who aimed to ground all knowledge in absolute certainty—starting with the cogito. In contrast, Hume (HUME, 2000) dismantled both rationalist and empirical claims to certainty, showing that our so-called “knowledge” rests on custom and expectation, not demonstrable foundations. Each approach reveals a structural tension between belief, truth, and justification.

**Contemporary theories:** The famous Gettier problem (GETTIER, 1963) exposed that justified true belief does not suffice for knowledge, challenging centuries of philosophical consensus. Alvin Goldman’s Externalism (GOLDMAN, 1986) sought to resolve this by shifting focus to the reliability of cognitive processes, rather than internal justification. Other responses include Coherentism (justification through system-wide coherence) and Contextualism (varying standards of justification based on practical context). However, all of these remain vulnerable to regress or circularity.

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK) annuls the premise that knowledge can or must be justified. The attempt to establish secure foundations inevitably leads to contradiction or infinite regress. TNK therefore redefines Knowledge (NS) as a symbolic construct—not a belief with justification and truth, but a tool that allows functional consistency in discourse and action. It is valid not because it is true, but because it avoids contradiction and enables epistemic stability within specific operations.

**Practical Example – How TNK Operates with Knowledge (NS)**

**Imagine a scientific debate:** A climate scientist presents a predictive model based on decades of data. A skeptic challenges the model, asking: “How do you know it’s true? Couldn’t this just be correlation, not causation? What justifies your knowledge?”

Within traditional epistemology, this challenge escalates into an infinite regress:

**Plato:** Knowledge is justified true belief — but how is the justification itself justified?

**Descartes:** Knowledge must be grounded in certainty — but science is inherently probabilistic.

**Hume:** We never truly “know” causation — we infer it from habits.

**Gettier:** Even justified true beliefs can turn out to be accidentally correct.

**Result:** no stable definition of knowledge survives scrutiny. Every justification depends on another justification.

**How TNK responds:** TNK nullifies the demand that knowledge must be justified. The entire framework — “belief + justification = knowledge” — is a linguistic artifact, not an epistemic necessity. TNK instead defines: Knowledge (NS) as a symbolic unit of epistemic stabilization, used to coordinate actions or claims without contradiction, not to assert foundational truth. In this case:

The scientist uses Knowledge (NS) as “the most coherent model under current data and method constraints”.

**The policymaker uses it to say:** “This is sufficient to act upon without incoherence”.

The critic might reject the model, but if they continue to operate using a competing framework, they too are deploying Knowledge (NS), just differently.

**The point is:** no party needs to “prove” that they know. Each invokes Knowledge (NS) as a symbolic act — valid within a framework so long as it does not produce internal contradiction.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Knowledge (NS) is not the truth of what is. It is the stable-enough construct through which action and communication can proceed without logical collapse.

*The TNK thus replaces truth-seeking with contradiction-avoidance as the condition for epistemic legitimacy.*

## 2.5. Induction → Induction (NS)

**Historical approaches:** Aristotle was one of the first philosophers to formalize induction (επαγωγή) as the movement from particular observations to general principles. For Aristotle, induction was an indispensable method for acquiring first principles in empirical science. However, David Hume (HUME, 2000) famously critiqued this reasoning by exposing its lack of logical foundation: there is no rational basis for the assumption that the future will resemble the past. According to Hume, all inductive inference rests on custom and habit, not demonstrable necessity, making induction epistemically fragile.

**Contemporary theories:** Contemporary responses to Hume's challenge include Bayesianism, which interprets belief as a probabilistic expectation updated with new evidence. Reliabilism, as in Goldman's externalist epistemology (GOLDMAN, 1986), grounds justification in the reliability of belief-forming processes rather than internal reasoning. Pragmatism, developed by thinkers like Peirce and Dewey, treats induction as justified by its success and utility rather than by formal validity. Nonetheless, all of these approaches retain a reliance on principles that ultimately beg the question or rely on unverifiable assumptions.

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge asserts that the very attempt to justify induction is epistemically incoherent. Whether framed in probabilistic, functional, or pragmatic terms, the justification of induction collapses into circularity or infinite regress. Induction (NS), under TNK, is reconceived as a symbolic tool, used not because it is justified or true, but because it enables consistent symbolic operations. It is a unit whose validity lies in functional coherence and contradiction-avoidance, not metaphysical grounding.

## **Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Induction (NS)

**Consider a business decision:** An investor observes that a certain stock has risen for five consecutive quarters. Based on this pattern, she predicts continued growth and allocates significant funds. A colleague objects: “Just because it rose in the past doesn't mean it will rise again. That's inductive bias. How can you justify this inference?”

In traditional epistemology, this devolves into the problem of induction:

**Aristotle:** Induction (*epagôgē*) is essential for reasoning, but he offered no formal defense.

**Hume:** Induction cannot be justified — we assume the future resembles the past out of habit, not logic (HUME, 2000).

**Bayesianism:** Beliefs are updated probabilistically, but the choice of priors remains arbitrary.

**Pragmatism:** It works, so we use it — but that's not a justification, only a habit of success.

**Result:** we rely on induction constantly, but cannot justify it non-circularly. Every defense of induction depends on inductive reasoning itself.

**How TNK responds:** TNK annuls the premise that induction must be justified at all. The attempt to prove that past patterns imply future outcomes is epistemically illegitimate, because it presupposes a stable metaphysical regularity that cannot be proven without self-reference. Instead, TNK reframes: Induction (NS) as a symbolic strategy used because it functions, not because it reveals necessity or guarantees truth. In this case:

The investor uses Induction (NS) as “a tool for projecting based on pattern coherence.”

The critic may use a different Induction (NS) that includes risk aversion or macroeconomic modifiers.

Both use inductive patterns as symbolic engines, not truth-claims.

They operate within different symbolic models — and as long as these models do not contradict themselves, they are valid under the TNK framework.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Induction (NS) is not a warrant for truth. It is a pragmatic patterning device — justified solely by its internal consistency and contextual usefulness.

*TNK replaces the metaphysical burden of predictive inference with symbolic legitimacy through non-contradiction.*

## 2.6. Universals → Universals (NS)

**Historical approaches:** The problem of universals — whether abstract properties like “redness” or “justice” exist independently of particular things — traces back to Plato, who affirmed their real existence in a non-material realm of Forms (PLATO, 1997). Aristotle, in contrast, argued for moderate realism: universals exist, but only in things, not apart from them. During the medieval period, the debate intensified between realists like Aquinas and nominalists such as William of Ockham (OCHHAM, 1991), who denied the independent existence of universals, claiming they are mere names (*flatus vocis*) without ontological status.

**Contemporary theories:** In the 20th and 21st centuries, the debate has continued in analytic metaphysics. Conceptualists hold that universals exist only in the mind as mental constructs, while trope theorists argue that what we call universals are really collections of particularized properties. Structural realists, influenced by physics, claim that relational structures — not objects — are fundamental. Yet across these positions, a common theme persists: the attempt to explain how multiple things can share a single property, and whether that shared property truly “exists.”

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge views the universal/particular dichotomy as an epistemic illusion generated by the desire for ontological regularity. Every attempt to justify the existence or nonexistence of universals leads to circular reasoning or an infinite regress of abstraction. TNK annuls this structure entirely. Universals (NS) are not metaphysical entities or mental constructs — they are functional labels, used to

classify and relate phenomena only within symbolic systems. Their value lies not in representing a truth about reality, but in their capacity to operate without contradiction in specific contexts (e.g., language, logic, categorization). Once removed from the demand for ontological grounding, universals become usable, manipulable units within the New Science — symbolically effective, yet metaphysically null.

### **Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Universals (NS)

**Imagine a design meeting:** A team is discussing color branding for a product. The lead designer says: “We want the logo to evoke redness, to signal passion and urgency.” Someone asks: “But what exactly is ‘red’? Is it the same for everyone? Is it a wavelength, a feeling, a concept?”

This seemingly simple question plunges into the philosophical problem of universals:

**Plato:** “Redness” exists as a real, ideal Form beyond material instances (PLATO, 1997).

**Aristotle:** Universals exist in things — redness is in red objects.

**Ockham:** Denies universals as real — only names exist (nomina) (OCHHAM, 1991).

Modern conceptualism: Redness is a mental construct, not an independent entity.

**Result:** disagreement over what is being referred to when we use universal terms. Every attempt to define “redness” either relies on unverifiable abstraction or contradicts another framework.

**How TNK responds:** TNK annuls the question “What is ‘redness’?” It treats the search for a universal as a metaphysical remnant — an attempt to secure epistemic authority through ontological abstraction. Instead, TNK reframes: Universals (NS) as context-specific symbolic stabilizers — not things that exist, but linguistic devices that facilitate coherence across communicative acts. In this case:

The designer uses Universals (NS) to mean “whatever triggers consistent affective response in a target demographic.”

The developer might understand “red” in terms of hexadecimal color codes.

The marketer might link “red” to associations in cultural psychology.

None of these uses claims to capture “redness in itself.” Each constructs Redness (NS) differently — symbolically, operatively, and without contradiction.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Universals (NS) are not metaphysical entities shared across instances. They are convenient symbolic labels — used to coordinate reference, not to describe ontological structure.

*TNK liberates thought from the false demand to define abstract essences, and replaces it with contextual symbolic efficiency.*

## 2.7. Morality → Morality (NS)

**Historical approaches:** Questions of moral foundation date back to Plato’s notion of the Good as a metaphysical absolute (PLATO, 1997). In the modern era, Kant (KANT, 1998) grounded morality in rational autonomy, formalized through the categorical imperative, while Bentham and Mill promoted utilitarianism, tying moral worth to consequences and aggregate well-being. Nietzsche challenged both traditions, seeing morality as a product of historical power structures and resentment, not rational deduction.

**Contemporary theories:** Modern moral philosophy is divided among realists (who believe in objective moral truths), relativists (who argue that moral codes are culturally constructed), and expressivists (who treat moral statements as expressions of emotional attitudes). None of these frameworks have escaped the critique of circularity or subjectivism when pressed for foundational justification.

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge annuls the foundational impulse in ethics. Moral systems, when forced to justify themselves, rely on assumptions they cannot secure. Morality (NS) is therefore understood not as a truth-bearing system, but as a symbolic tool for regulating interaction. Its validity lies in its capacity to function

coherently without contradiction, not in its universal applicability. As a symbolic system, it is operable, modifiable, and contextually legitimate — but metaphysically nullified.

**Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Morality (NS)

**Consider a workplace dilemma:** A manager must decide whether to fire a high-performing employee who violated a company policy by leaking internal information to help a colleague avoid harm. Some argue it was wrong — “rules are rules.” Others say it was the moral thing to do. The manager asks: “What is the right thing to do?”

In traditional moral philosophy, this becomes a clash of irreconcilable moral frameworks:

**Kant:** Morality is universal duty — the employee broke the rule and must be disciplined (KANT, 1998).

**Utilitarianism:** The outcome helped someone — so the action was good (BENTHAM; MILL).

**Nietzsche:** Morality is a construct of power — the manager should ask who benefits from each decision.

**Moral relativism:** Right and wrong depend entirely on cultural or organizational norms.

**Result:** no agreement. Each moral framework justifies a different action, and none can prove its superiority without circular reasoning or appeal to subjective intuitions.

**How TNK responds:** TNK annuls the demand for universal or justified morality. It views morality as a symbolic code, not a set of discoverable truths. Thus, TNK redefines: Morality (NS) as a symbolic protocol used to organize decisions and responsibilities within a system — valid only insofar as it avoids contradiction and supports coherent function. In this case:

The HR department might define Morality (NS) as “consistency with codified policy.”

The employee network might treat it as “solidarity and mutual aid.”

The manager constructs a temporary Morality (NS) as “protecting the integrity of both individual ethics and institutional trust.”

None of these stances appeals to a “true” morality — they are contextual symbolic operations, valid only within their structural logic.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Morality (NS) is not about discovering the right thing. It is about constructing symbolic frameworks that allow for decisions to be made without epistemic collapse.

*TNK removes the burden of moral truth and replaces it with the demand for coherent symbolic operation within a given system.*

## 2.8. Personal Identity → Identity (NS)

**Historical approaches:** The problem of personal identity centers on what allows a person to remain “the same” over time despite physical, psychological, and experiential change. Locke (LOCKE, 1997) famously argued that identity is rooted in the continuity of consciousness and memory — if you remember doing something, then you were the one who did it. Hume (HUME, 2000), however, rejected this, finding no persistent “self” in experience — only a succession of perceptions he likened to a theater. Kierkegaard (KIERKEGAARD, 1980) later interpreted identity as a task, not a given: the self is something one must become through ethical and existential commitment.

**Contemporary theories:** Modern theories include psychological continuity models, where identity is tied to the preservation of mental traits (beliefs, memories, intentions), and narrative theories, which see identity as a story we tell ourselves and others — a dynamic and often fictive unity. Other approaches appeal to the brain as the seat of continuity, while some (especially in post-structuralist or feminist theory) reject the very notion of a unified self as a cultural or ideological construct.

**TNK:** For the Theory of Non-Knowledge, all attempts to define personal identity rely on unjustified assumptions: either of a metaphysical substrate, an epistemically

unverifiable continuity, or a constructed narrative that loops into self-reference. TNK annuls the question of “what remains the same” by showing that identity itself is not an object to be discovered, but a symbolic placeholder used to maintain coherence in systems like law, psychology, and biography. Identity (NS) is thus the nullified form of “personal identity”: it is not an essence, nor a metaphysical continuity, but a symbolic stabilizer — a functional unit used to preserve referential consistency without claiming ontological permanence.

### **Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Identity (NS)

**Imagine a legal case involving a data breach:** A hacker is accused of cybercrimes committed over several years under various aliases. When arrested, they claim to have changed: “That was a different me. I’m not that person anymore.” The court must determine: Is this person the same as the one who committed the crimes?

In classical philosophy, this spirals into the problem of personal identity:

**Locke:** Identity is psychological continuity — if they remember the acts, they are responsible (LOCKE, 1997).

**Hume:** The “self” is a bundle of perceptions — there's no persistent identity to blame (HUME, 2000).

**Kierkegaard:** The self is a task — maybe they became someone else through existential transformation (KIERKEGAARD, 1980).

**Contemporary views:** Neuroscience might link identity to brain patterns; narrativists tie it to the story we tell about ourselves.

**Result:** uncertainty about how to define “the same person,” especially across time, change, and conflicting evidence. Legal, psychological, and moral definitions often contradict.

**How TNK responds:** TNK annuls the metaphysical requirement to “define” personal identity as an essence or continuity. Instead, it reframes: Identity (NS) as a symbolic stabilizer used to maintain reference across systems (legal, bureaucratic, social), without presuming ontological permanence. In this case:

The legal system defines Identity (NS) as “the entity tied to a specific digital and biometric history.”

The therapist defines it as “a cluster of self-narrative and behavior patterns.”

The accused offers their own Identity (NS) to represent a symbolic break from their past.

No party needs to prove a real, enduring self. Each invokes Identity (NS) as a tool for attribution, regulation, or transformation — valid so long as the symbolic coherence holds.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Identity (NS) is not “who you are”. It is a symbolic anchor — used to preserve operational continuity in systems that require consistent reference points.

*TNK shifts the debate from “What is the self?” to “What structure allows us to act as if continuity exists, without contradiction?”*

## 2.9. External Reality → Reality (NS)

**Historical approaches:** The question of whether an external world exists independently of our minds has long preoccupied philosophers. Descartes famously doubted the reliability of the senses and introduced the “evil demon” hypothesis — a radical skepticism intended to strip knowledge to its core (DESCARTES, 1985). Berkeley (BERKELEY, 1998) pushed this further into idealism, claiming that reality consists only of ideas perceived by minds — either human or divine. Kant sought a middle path, arguing that we cannot know the “thing-in-itself” (noumenon), only the phenomena structured by our own faculties (KANT, 1998). These foundational positions each attempt to preserve knowledge while acknowledging the impossibility of proving the external world's independence.

**Contemporary theories:** Contemporary discussions revisit these dilemmas in new guises. Simulation theory, made popular by thinkers like Bostrom, revives Descartes through technological means: if we live in a simulation, what can we know about reality? Phenomenology, particularly in the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty,

repositions experience as the source of objectivity, while direct realists argue that we perceive the world as it is, not through representations. Yet none of these views can escape their own dependence on unverifiable presuppositions about the subject-object divide.

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge annuls the question of whether the external world exists “in itself.” All attempts to prove or disprove external reality involve circularity: they presuppose what they seek to establish. TNK instead reframes the issue by treating Reality (NS) as a symbolic construct — a pragmatic reference point used to stabilize discourse and perception. It is not something we know or do not know; it is a tool we use. In this nullified form, reality loses its metaphysical charge and becomes a coherent placeholder within symbolic systems — operable, necessary, but epistemically unburdened.

#### **Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Reality (NS)

**Imagine a courtroom scenario:** A defendant claims insanity, saying they acted under hallucinations caused by a psychotic episode. The prosecution argues the act was intentional and grounded in reality. A psychiatrist testifies: “The patient could not distinguish reality from delusion.” The judge asks: “But what do we mean by ‘reality’ in this context?”

This invokes the age-old problem of external reality:

**Descartes:** How do we know we are not dreaming or deceived by an evil demon? (DESCARTES, 1985)

**Berkeley:** Reality is perception — to be is to be perceived (BERKELEY, 1998).

**Kant:** We only know phenomena, not the *noumenal* world as it is in itself (KANT, 1998).

Contemporary concerns: Simulation theory (Bostrom), phenomenology (Husserl), and anti-realist positions in philosophy of science question whether an “external” world can be meaningfully spoken of at all.

**Result:** no objective criteria for what “counts” as reality without entering circular justification or metaphysical speculation.

**How TNK responds:** TNK nullifies the idea that “reality” must refer to something metaphysically independent or epistemically verifiable. Instead, it defines: Reality (NS) as a symbolic construct — a term used within a system to establish coherence between claims, actions, and perceptions. In this case:

The judge might define Reality (NS) legally as “a shared frame of reference against which intent is measured.”

The psychiatrist defines it diagnostically as “that which the patient cannot correctively track across experience.”

The defendant operates under an altered Reality (NS) — symbolically distinct, but not metaphysically disprovable.

Each system uses “reality” differently, but what matters in TNK is not what reality is, but how the term functions symbolically within that system without contradiction.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Reality (NS) is not an ontological realm. It is a symbolic framework — one that ensures systemic continuity and interaction between agents.

*TNK allows us to operate with “reality” without requiring metaphysical foundations — only symbolic coherence.*

## 2.10. Logic and Mathematics → Logic-Math (NS)

**Historical approaches:** The nature of logic and mathematics has long been a battleground between realism and formalism. Pythagoras initiated the view that mathematics reflects eternal truths underlying the cosmos. Plato affirmed a similar stance, treating numbers and forms as ontologically real. In the modern era, Frege and Russell (FREGE, 1980; RUSSELL; WHITEHEAD, 1910) developed logicism, attempting to reduce all of mathematics to pure logic. Hilbert introduced formalism — a project to ground mathematics on self-contained axiomatic systems, independent of meaning (HILBERT, 1967). Meanwhile, Brouwer (BROUWER,

1998) advanced intuitionism, claiming that mathematics arises from the mental activity of constructing quantities, and that no mathematical object exists unless it can be constructed by the mind.

**Contemporary theories:** Contemporary debates continue along these lines. Structuralists argue that mathematics describes the relations between objects, not the objects themselves. Model theory and metamathematics analyze how formal systems relate to possible interpretations. Gödel's incompleteness theorems destabilized Hilbert's formalist dream, showing that no system can be both complete and consistent if it is sufficiently expressive. These results underscore the limits of logical self-justification, yet many continue to treat mathematics as a domain of objective discovery rather than symbolic invention.

**TNK:** The Theory of Non-Knowledge views both logic and mathematics not as systems that reveal truth, but as symbolic engines whose strength lies in their internal consistency. Any attempt to justify their universality collapses into paradox or circularity. TNK annuls the metaphysical status of logic and mathematics, removing their claim to ontological necessity. Logic-Math (NS) is the result: a nullified conceptual pair that retains full functional power precisely because it relinquishes metaphysical pretension. These systems are tools of symbolic engineering, not discoveries of transcendent structure. They operate — and that is sufficient.

**Practical Example** – How TNK Operates with Logic-Math (NS)

**Consider a programming bug:** A software engineer receives an error in a system that “should be logically impossible.” They trace the cause to an unexpected floating-point approximation. Frustrated, they exclaim: “But the math is perfect — logic doesn't lie!” A colleague replies: “It's not about logic. It's how we represent it that breaks.”

This opens a door to the philosophical problem of logical and mathematical foundations:

**Frege & Russell:** Mathematics is reducible to logic — but Gödel later shows that any system powerful enough to do arithmetic is incomplete (FREGE, 1980; RUSSELL & WHITEHEAD, 1910).

**Hilbert:** Formal systems must guarantee consistency — but Hilbert’s program collapsed after Gödel’s theorems (HILBERT, 1967).

**Brouwer:** Mathematical truths exist only as mental constructions (intuitionism).

**Contemporary theories:** Structuralism, model theory, and type theory still debate whether math is discovered, invented, or simulated.

**Result:** the more we try to ground mathematics and logic, the more we encounter paradoxes, circular definitions, or meta-logical collapse.

**How TNK responds:** TNK nullifies the demand to justify logic and mathematics ontologically or absolutely. It does not ask, “Is logic true?” or “Are numbers real?” — because such questions collapse into circularity or regress. Instead, it frames: Logic-Math (NS) as symbolic engines — systems we construct and operate within because they work, not because they reveal metaphysical truth. In this case:

The engineer uses Logic-Math (NS) as a practical system for operational predictability.

The philosopher of math uses it as a field of internally coherent symbolic systems.

The programmer revises their assumptions when symbolic behavior diverges from expectation — not because “logic failed”, but because the representation didn’t cohere.

Each usage of logic or math is valid only within its operational domain — not as metaphysical reality, but as a construct used to prevent contradiction and enable continuity.

**Conclusion of the Example:** Logic-Math (NS) is not the discovery of eternal truths. It is the construction of symbolic systems whose value lies in operational coherence — not justification, not certainty.

*TNK allows us to think, build, and act with precision, not because we stand on solid foundations, but because we move without falling into contradiction.*

### **3. Conclusion**

TNK does not solve the traditional problems of philosophy; it dissolves them. Each canonical problem is a construct that demands metaphysical justification it cannot support. TNK proposes nullification: the transformation of each concept into an X (NS), a symbolic structure coherent within itself and valid through use, not through truth.

This marks a categorical shift from epistemology to symbolic engineering. The New Science (NS), grounded in TNK, provides not answers, but actions: how to use concepts that cannot be known. Intelligence becomes the capacity to operate meaningfully without foundational belief.

In the end, what the TNK reveals is that humans have always acted arbitrarily, but under the illusion that such actions were grounded — or at least aligned with the “right path” toward a definitive theory of truth. Today, however, we understand, not only that such a foundation is impossible, but that none of the decisions humanity has made thus far — arbitrary as they all were — has led us to a final solution to our fundamental problems (which are, themselves, arbitrary constructions). From this perspective, the most dignified act must be to embrace the first thought, without seeking recursive justification. Not because it is “correct,” but because any second or third thought, built upon language and reflection, is destined to contradict itself. In that light, the only coherent action is the one that accepts its arbitrariness consciously — without illusion. This is the core of the New Science and the final answer to the biggest philosophical questions of all time.

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