

# Gnosis and the Conditions of Knowledge: Preparation, Participation, and the Limits of Passive Information

**Elias Rubenstein**

Independent Researcher, Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA

ORCID: 0009-0007-1956-653X

## **Abstract**

This article reconstructs gnosis as a distinct form of noetic knowledge. It argues that gnosis cannot be reduced to transmitted data, doctrinal content, symbolic language, visionary report, or ordinary propositional knowledge, because its access depends on the formed condition of the knower and on a participatory relation between knower and known. In this model, gnosis is not hidden content possessed by a few, but a mode of knowing that becomes accessible only when specific epistemic and formative conditions are fulfilled.

The article develops a non-formal epistemological framework based on a three-stage structure: preparation, access, and completion. Ethical purification and stable attention function as preparatory conditions. Participatory knowing functions as the access relation. Unity of knower and known functions as the completion marker of full noetic knowledge. This distinction avoids the circularity that would arise if the result of gnosis were treated as a prerequisite for gnosis. The framework builds on classical noetic epistemology, especially the movement from opinion to intellection, and situates late antique gnosis within a broader structure of prepared access rather than passive reception of content.

The article distinguishes data, information, ordinary knowledge, transformation-sensitive knowledge, and gnosis without arranging them as a simple hierarchy. Ordinary knowledge concerns interpreted, stabilized, justified, and integrated information. Transformation-sensitive knowledge concerns the dimension in which knowledge produces durable changes in orientation, judgment, conduct, or practical capacity. Gnosis differs from both because it is not merely stabilized information or transformative insight, but participatory noetic access to intelligible reality. Transformation may follow from gnosis, but transformation is not the defining criterion of gnosis. The defining criterion is the mode of access.

Finally, the article proposes a non-hierarchical method for classifying textual claims as explicit noetic, implicit noetic, preparatory, symbolic-narrative, or non-assessable under the present framework. This prevents the model from privileging discursive philosophical texts over narrative, mythological, ritual, or performative texts. The result is a model of gnosis as knowledge that does not merely reach the knower, but becomes accessible when the knower is formed for the kind of knowledge that is to be known.

**Keywords:** Gnosis, noetic knowledge, condition-dependent knowledge, participatory knowing, preparation, information, passive knowledge, contemplative cognition, philosophy of knowledge, epistemology

## 1. Introduction

Modern information culture often treats knowledge as transferable content. Data can be encoded, transmitted, decoded, stored, processed, and reproduced. This model is useful in communication theory, digital systems, administration, education, and scientific exchange [1–3]. Yet it becomes insufficient when applied to forms of knowing in which the condition of the knower is not external to the act of knowing.

Gnosis, in its noetic sense, does not primarily describe the possession of hidden teachings. It describes a mode of knowing in which access depends on formation. A teaching may be available, a symbol may be visible, a doctrine may be transmitted, and a text may be read, yet the relevant knowledge may remain inaccessible. The central question is therefore not simply whether content is present, but whether the conditions for genuine noetic access have been fulfilled.

This article proposes that gnosis is best understood as condition-dependent noetic knowledge. This means that gnosis becomes accessible only when specific conditions of preparation, attention, participation, and completion are present. Gnosis is not merely information that reaches a person. It is knowledge that becomes accessible only when the knower becomes capable of receiving, recognizing, and participating in what is known.

Condition-dependent noetic knowledge does not mean that truth is created by the individual knower. It means that the knower's condition affects access, recognition, and participation, not the ontological status of what is known. The model is therefore not relativistic. It does not claim that each knower invents truth. It claims that certain forms of knowledge require a prepared mode of access.

The framework distinguishes between preparatory conditions, access structure, and completion markers. This distinction is necessary in order to avoid treating the result of gnosis as if it were already required before gnosis can begin. Ethical purification and stable attention function as preparatory conditions: they concern the reliability and steadiness of the knower before noetic access becomes possible. Participatory knowing functions as the access structure: it describes the mode in which the knower no longer approaches the object merely as external content, but enters a relation of conformity with what is known. Unity of knower and known is not a preliminary condition in the same sense. It is the completion marker of full noetic knowledge. A strict noetic case is therefore not one in which unity is already present before knowledge begins, but one in which the text or source presents knowledge as moving from preparation through participation toward unity.

This distinction also separates access from transformation. A theory of transformation-sensitive knowledge asks when information produces durable changes in orientation, judgment, action, coherence, or practical capacity [4]. The present article asks a prior and more specific epistemological question: under what conditions does gnosis become accessible as noetic knowledge at all?

## 2. Definitions and Scope

For the purposes of this article, data means encoded or structured content that may be stored, copied, transmitted, or preserved without yet shaping understanding. Information means structured difference as actualized within a receiving system, where it begins to shape interpretation, orientation, or possible action. Ordinary knowledge means information that has been interpreted, stabilized, justified, and integrated under appropriate epistemic conditions. Transformation-sensitive knowledge refers to knowledge insofar as it produces durable, examinable changes in orientation, judgment, conduct, or

practical capacity. Gnosis, finally, refers to noetic knowledge whose access depends on preparation, participatory relation, and completion.

This sequence is necessary in order to avoid collapsing gnosis into ordinary knowledge. Ordinary knowledge may depend on context, method, justification, memory, interpretation, and conceptual stability. Yet it does not necessarily require participatory conformity between knower and known. A person can know a historical date, a mathematical theorem, a legal rule, or a scientific claim without becoming inwardly conformed to the object known. Gnosis differs structurally from such knowledge. It is not merely stabilized information. It is a form of noetic access in which the knower participates in the intelligible reality known. Consequently, a single data-bearing structure can be actualized simultaneously as ordinary semantic information within the rational register, while its specific noetic information-dimension remains latent until the preparatory and participatory conditions of access are fully met.

Transformation-sensitive knowledge must also be distinguished from gnosis. Transformation-sensitive knowledge describes an effect or consequence: knowledge changes orientation, judgment, conduct, or practical capacity. Gnosis describes a mode of access: the knower participates noetically in what is known. Gnosis may produce transformation, and in many traditions it is expected to do so, but transformation is not its defining criterion. Its defining criterion is participatory noetic access. This distinction prevents gnosis from becoming merely an intensified form of ordinary or transformative knowledge.

A copied text, spoken teaching, or transmitted symbol may exist as data-bearing structure before it becomes information for a knower. It may carry the capacity to inform, but it does not yet function as information in the epistemic sense unless it shapes interpretation, orientation, or possible action within a receiving system. This distinction is crucial for gnosis. A text may be linguistically available and doctrinally intelligible while still remaining noetically inaccessible. In such a case, the data have been received and perhaps even semantically understood, but noetic knowledge has not been actualized. The presence of structured content is therefore necessary but not sufficient. Gnosis concerns the actualization of noetic knowledge under conditions of preparation, access, and completion.

Gnosis means noetic knowledge: a form of knowing in which the knower does not merely stand outside the object of knowledge, but participates in what is known. Condition-dependent knowledge means knowledge that becomes accessible only when specific conditions are fulfilled. In ordinary knowledge, these conditions may involve evidence, justification, method, coherence, or practical reliability. In gnosis, the conditions are stronger: they involve the formation of the knower, the stabilization of attention, the movement from external reception to participatory access, and the completion of knowledge in a unity or convergence of knower and known.

Preparatory conditions are those conditions that form the knower before full noetic access occurs. In this article, ethical purification and stable attention function as preparatory conditions. Access structure refers to the relation through which noetic knowledge becomes available. In this article, participatory knowing functions as the access structure. Completion marker refers to the fullest noetic form described by a source. In this article, unity of knower and known functions as the completion marker.

Participatory knowing means knowledge through inward relation rather than distant representation. It does not abolish analysis or public reasoning, but it insists that certain forms of knowledge require formation of the knower. Unity of knower and known is not treated here as an experimentally measurable psychological state. It is a textual and epistemological criterion. A source instantiates this

completion marker when it describes the highest act of knowing as unity, identity-in-act, or convergence between knower, knowing, and known. It is evaluated through textual structure: whether the source presents the highest act of knowing as participatory union rather than detached representation.

The article is conceptual and reconstructive. It develops philosophical and textual criteria rather than an experimental measure of noetic states. It does not use physics, neuroscience, or psychology as proof of gnosis. Its argument remains epistemological and textual: gnosis is examined as a structured mode of knowing that differs from data transfer, ordinary information, ordinary knowledge, and transformation-sensitive change.

### 3. Method and Corpus

The primary conceptual background includes Plato's distinction between opinion and intellection, Plotinus' account of intellectual participation, Alexandrian Christian treatments of gnosis in Clement and Origen, and selected late antique materials commonly grouped with Gnostic and Hermetic corpora. The purpose is not to collapse these sources into one doctrine. The purpose is to identify the structural conditions under which knowledge is presented as noetic rather than merely symbolic, visionary, doctrinal, or discursive.

The framework does not assert the ontological priority of the intelligible object as an empirically demonstrable claim made by the modern researcher. Rather, it reconstructs this priority as a structural premise within the sources under examination. When the article speaks of intelligible reality as prior to the knower's access, it refers to the epistemic and ontological grammar of the relevant noetic texts: these sources present the object of knowledge as something to be accessed, recognized, or participated in, not as something invented by the knower. By establishing the ontological priority of the intelligible object in this limited sense, the framework does not propose an absolute metaphysical realism to be verified by modern empirical sciences, but rather maps the internal, text-immanent phenomenology and claims of the analyzed traditions themselves. The framework therefore operates at the level of textual and phenomenological reconstruction. It analyzes how the sources structure the relation between knower and known, without claiming to verify the independent metaphysical status of the intelligible object by modern empirical means.

The category "Gnosticism" has been widely criticized for reifying diverse ancient materials into a single doctrinal object [5,6]. For this reason, the present article does not begin with "Gnosticism" as a fixed religious system. It begins with gnosis as an epistemological question: what kind of knowing is being claimed when knowledge is described not merely as belief, memory, doctrine, vision, or narrative revelation, but as direct participation in intelligible reality?

Ancient philosophy often functioned not merely as abstract theory but as a disciplined way of life [7]. This is important because noetic knowledge cannot be separated from formation, practice, attention, and ethical orientation. The present article therefore reads gnosis within a broader classical grammar of ascent: from opinion to intellection, from representation to participation, and from external content to formed knowing [8–11].

The broader late antique corpus includes materials preserved in selected Nag Hammadi writings, Thomasine traditions, and Hermetic texts such as Poimandres, which provide important comparative evidence for symbolic ascent, noetic language, and claims to participatory knowledge [12–14]. Origen's broader theological and apologetic writings also present Christian knowledge as more than external belief: it involves moral transformation, disciplined ascent, and participation in divine order [17,18].

The textual application proceeds by classifying selected sources according to the three-stage model of preparation, access, and completion. The method does not assume in advance that discursive philosophical texts are superior to narrative, mythological, visionary, ritual, or performative texts. Nor does it treat mythological form as evidence against noetic content. The question is not whether a text sounds philosophical, but whether it presents knowledge as moving from prepared access toward participatory recognition or noetic completion. The classification therefore concerns epistemic architecture, not literary genre.

#### **4. Gnosis as Noetic Knowledge**

The decisive issue is not whether a text contains religious vocabulary, symbolic imagery, mythological narrative, ritual scenes, or visionary reports. A doctrine may be religious without being noetic. A vision may be intense without being noetic. A symbol may be ancient without being noetic. A myth may be profound without being explicitly noetic. A practice may be initiatory without producing noetic access. Noetic knowledge requires a formed relation between the knower and the known.

In this sense, gnosis is not a content-category. It is a condition-dependent mode of knowledge. The same sentence, symbol, myth, or doctrine may be encountered by different readers without becoming accessible in the same way. This does not mean that meaning is arbitrary. It means that access is conditioned.

The model defines noetic instantiation through three related levels: preparation, access, and completion. Ethical purification and stable attention prepare the knower. Participatory knowing describes the access relation. Unity of knower and known marks the fullest noetic completion. These terms translate the more technical structure of ethical purification, contemplative discipline, participatory ontology, and reflexive unity into a clearer epistemological vocabulary while avoiding the circularity that would arise if completion were treated as a preliminary condition.

Gnosis is therefore not defined by secrecy, unusual vocabulary, symbolic richness, or visionary intensity. It is defined by the structure of knowing. A claim becomes explicitly noetic when the knower is presented as prepared, attention or inward orientation is stabilized, knowledge is presented as participatory rather than merely representational, and the act of knowing tends toward unity of knower and known.

#### **5. The Stages of Noetic Access**

The first stage is preparation through ethical purification. In noetic epistemology, ethics is not merely moral behavior. It functions as cognitive reliability. Fear, resentment, vanity, ambition, self-protection, and distorted desire can shape perception and interpretation. Ethical purification reduces distortion and makes knowledge more reliable. This also places the model near virtue-oriented accounts of knowledge, where the condition of the knower is not irrelevant to epistemic reliability [15].

The second preparatory condition is stable attention. Noetic knowledge requires attention that can remain steady. A scattered, reactive, or restless attention cannot sustain this kind of knowing. Contemplative discipline is therefore not an optional addition but a condition of access. This is consistent with the broader ancient understanding of philosophy as disciplined formation rather than theoretical discourse alone [7].

The access structure is participatory knowing. Knowledge is not merely representation of an external object. It is a relation in which the knower becomes inwardly conformed to the intelligible structure

known. Classical and late antique sources support this participatory grammar of knowledge, especially in Plato, Plotinus, Clement, Origen, and Philo [8,9,16–19].

The completion marker is unity of knower and known. This does not mean that the article claims to measure an inner state. It means that a source reaches the strongest noetic form when it describes the highest act of knowing as unity, identity-in-act, or convergence between knower, knowing, and known. This criterion is strongest where knowledge is presented not as distant representation but as participatory union. It is not a prerequisite in the same sense as ethical purification or stable attention. It is the mark of full noetic completion.

Together, these distinctions prevent inflation and circularity. Not every religious statement is noetic. Not every symbol is noetic. Not every vision is noetic. Not every doctrine is noetic. A claim becomes noetic only when it presents the ordered movement from preparation through participatory access toward noetic completion.

## 6. Textual Application of the Model

The value of the proposed model lies in its ability to discriminate without reducing the richness of late antique materials to a single doctrinal standard. This section therefore applies the stages of preparation, access, and completion to selected examples. The aim is not exhaustive historical coverage, but demonstration of method.

A strict noetic case requires all three stages: preparation of the knower, participatory access to the object of knowledge, and a completion marker in which knowledge tends toward unity rather than remaining external representation. Clement of Alexandria provides a strong example. In *Stromateis* VII, gnosis is not treated as doctrinal possession alone. Book VII.1 frames the mature gnostic life as inseparable from right orientation and spiritual formation. Book VII.7 links knowledge with love, divine proximity, and the inward ordering of the person. Book VII.10 presents the mature gnostic not merely as a holder of propositions, but as a formed knower whose life, attention, and mode of knowing are ordered toward divine reality. This fulfills the preparatory stage because ethical formation is not secondary to knowledge; it is part of cognitive reliability. It fulfills the access stage because knowing is participatory: the knower is formed in relation to the Logos. It approaches the completion stage because the highest knowing is not detached description, but inward union with what is known [16].

Plotinus provides the clearest philosophical analogue to the strict noetic case. In *Enneads* V.3, the structure of intellect and self-knowledge shows that true knowing is not passive representation. In *Enneads* V.5, the unity of intellect and intelligible reality becomes central: the intellect does not stand at a distance from the intelligible as an external observer, but knows through participation in the intelligible order. The distinction between knower and known becomes increasingly refined until the highest act of intellect approaches unity. This strongly supports participatory knowing and unity of knower and known. It also presupposes purification and inward reorientation as conditions of ascent [9].

The classification of textual materials must avoid two opposite errors. It must not classify a text as noetic merely because it contains moral exhortation, visionary imagery, symbolic ascent, ritual language, or mythological narrative. At the same time, it must not classify a text as non-noetic merely because it expresses its epistemology through myth, ritual, image, or narrative rather than discursive philosophical argument. The criterion is therefore not genre, style, or theological preference, but textually demonstrable epistemic function.

A text should be classified as explicitly noetic when it presents all three stages in a clear textual sequence: formation or purification of the knower, participatory access to the object of knowledge, and a completion marker in which knowledge is described as union, identity-in-act, direct participation, or convergence between knower and known. A text should be classified as implicitly noetic only when the same structure is demonstrable through internal textual markers rather than supplied by the interpreter. Such markers may include explicit statements that the knower must be changed in order to know, that symbolic ascent alters the capacity of knowing, that revelation is not merely received but inwardly actualized, or that the culmination of the process is not information, vision, obedience, or ritual status, but a transformed mode of knowing. General motifs such as ascent, return, light, restoration, secrecy, or heavenly journey are not sufficient by themselves. They become noetically relevant only when the text itself connects them to the knower's capacity for participatory knowledge.

Implicit noetic classification does not require that a source explain its epistemology in theoretical or causal language. In ritual, liturgical, or theurgical texts, the movement from preparation to access may be encoded performatively rather than discursively. A change of name, passage through a gate, ascent through a sphere, reception of a revealed formula, transformation of status, purification sequence, or encounter with a divine figure may function as an internal textual marker if the text presents it as altering the knower's relation to what is known. Such markers should not be treated as merely decorative simply because they are dramatized rather than explained. However, they become noetically relevant only when they are structurally connected to access, recognition, participation, or transformation of the knower's capacity for knowledge. A purely dramatic or ritual event, without such epistemic function, remains symbolic-narrative under the present framework.

A text should be classified as preparatory when it contains ethical or contemplative formation directed toward knowledge but does not yet articulate participatory access or noetic completion. A text should be classified as symbolic-narrative when it offers cosmological, ritual, visionary, or mythic material whose noetic status cannot be determined from the available textual evidence. A text should be classified as non-assessable under the present framework when the material is fragmentary, ambiguous, or insufficient for classification. This category is important because it prevents the framework from forcing a negative judgment where the textual evidence does not allow one.

This refined classification avoids the problem of tautology. The model does not decide in advance that Clement and Plotinus are noetic while mythological or ritual texts are deficient. It asks the same question of every source: does the text itself present knowledge as moving from preparation through access toward completion? A philosophical text may fail this test if it remains merely discursive. A mythological text may satisfy it if its narrative structure demonstrably encodes the formation of the knower, participatory access, and noetic completion. A ritual text may satisfy it if ritual action is presented not merely as cultic performance but as the means by which the knower becomes capable of participatory knowledge. A visionary text remains symbolic-narrative unless the vision is explicitly or structurally connected to a transformed capacity for knowing.

Some Nag Hammadi materials and related late antique sources contain ascent, revelation, ethical instruction, symbolic mediation, and mythological structures of return [12,13]. Such texts should not automatically be treated as partial or deficient. They may be explicit noetic, implicit noetic, preparatory, symbolic-narrative, or non-assessable depending on the function of their textual elements. If ascent, revelation, or ritual language is structurally ordered toward a transformation of the knower's capacity for knowledge, the text may be noetic even when its grammar is mythological rather than philosophical. If

these elements merely organize narrative drama, cosmological conflict, group identity, or ritual authority without presenting a movement toward participatory knowledge, then the text should not be classified as noetic under this framework.

Hermetic materials provide an important comparative example because they often join revelation, ascent, divine mind, and participatory knowledge within a late antique philosophical-religious vocabulary [14]. Yet even here the framework remains discriminating: a passage becomes noetic not because it is Hermetic, ancient, revelatory, or symbolically rich, but because it satisfies the relevant structure of preparation, participatory access, and noetic completion. Conversely, a Hermetic passage should not be dismissed if it expresses this structure through dialogue, vision, cosmology, or symbolic ascent rather than through abstract philosophical definition.

The classification is therefore not polemical and not hierarchical. It does not rank traditions by proximity to Platonism or Christian Alexandrian theology. It asks a narrower question: what kind of knowledge does the text claim, and how does the text structure access to that knowledge? The decisive criterion is epistemic architecture. A narrative text can be noetic if it encodes the full access structure. A discursive philosophical text can be non-noetic if it lacks the same structure. A ritual text can be noetic if ritual action is presented as forming the knower for participatory knowledge. A visionary text can remain merely visionary if it reports images without presenting a movement toward noetic recognition.

## 7. Passive Information and Conditioned Knowing

Data-bearing content can be present without producing knowledge. A message may be transmitted without being understood. It may be understood semantically without being integrated. It may be integrated superficially without becoming stable. This shows that the presence of structured content is not identical with access to knowledge. Contemporary epistemology similarly distinguishes knowledge from mere possession of true or justified belief, especially after Gettier's challenge to the traditional analysis of knowledge [20,21].

This distinction is especially important for gnosis. A text may be copied, translated, memorized, and discussed while its noetic content remains inaccessible. The question is not whether the words are present. The question is whether the conditions of access are present. A text may function as data, as ordinary semantic information, as ordinary knowledge, as transformation-sensitive knowledge, or as noetically actualized knowledge, depending on the relation between structured content, recipient condition, and mode of access.

Information-based claims become methodologically stronger when they specify the conditions under which a proposed effect, interpretation, or change should appear, including fit, mismatch, control conditions, and falsification criteria [22]. Applied to gnosis, this does not introduce a medical analogy. It clarifies a methodological point: noetic knowledge cannot be assessed by the external presence of symbols, doctrines, or textual claims alone. The relation between content, recipient condition, and mode of access is part of the epistemic structure.

This approach avoids two errors. It avoids treating knowledge as passive reception of content. It also avoids reducing knowledge to private assertion. Access is conditioned, but it is not arbitrary. It can be discussed through criteria.

## 8. Preparation, Context, and Access

The argument does not require analogies from physics or ordinary educational examples in order to esta-

blish its central claim. Gnosis is not modeled on quantum measurement, and it should also not be reduced to the ordinary acquisition of expert knowledge in fields such as mathematics, law, music, or language. Such examples may show that access to certain kinds of understanding depends on training, but they do not establish the noetic structure of gnosis. They remain examples of ordinary or specialized knowledge, not of participatory noetic access.

The point of the present framework is narrower and stronger. Gnosis does not simply require training in the way that mathematics requires conceptual education or law requires knowledge of a legal system. In ordinary knowledge, the knower may remain external to the object known. A mathematician may understand a proof, a lawyer may interpret a statute, and a musician may analyze a composition without the structure of knowledge requiring union or participatory conformity between knower and known. In gnosis, by contrast, the knower's formation is not merely a prerequisite for understanding content; it belongs to the epistemic relation itself. The object is not simply grasped from outside. It is known through a participatory mode in which the knower becomes inwardly conformed to what is known.

Preparation, attention, and ethical purification therefore do not function as ordinary training alone. They prepare the knower for a different kind of access. The claim is not that all difficult knowledge requires preparation and that gnosis is simply another difficult case. The claim is that noetic knowledge has a distinctive structure: access depends on the transformation of the knower's relation to the object, and completion is described as participation, convergence, or unity rather than external mastery of content. This preserves the epistemological distinction between ordinary knowledge and gnosis.

## 9. Access and Transformation

A distinction must be made between access and transformation. Noetic knowledge may become accessible under specific conditions, but its later stabilization in orientation, judgment, conduct, and practical life belongs to a further stage. Transformation-sensitive models of knowledge address this later stage by asking when information becomes durable, examinable, correctable, and embodied in action [4].

The present article remains focused on the prior epistemological level: the conditions under which gnosis becomes accessible as knowledge at all. This prevents confusion between two different questions. The first question is: under what conditions can noetic knowledge be accessed? The second question is: how does such knowledge become stable, corrective, and transformative in life?

A person may change without gnosis. Emotional intensity, imitation, ideology, manipulation, fear, and false certainty can also produce change. Therefore transformation alone is not enough. Noetic transformation requires prior noetic access, and noetic access requires the conditions described above.

## 10. Explicit, Implicit, Preparatory, Symbolic-Narrative, and Non-Assessable Cases

A rigorous model of gnosis must discriminate without imposing a hierarchy of genres. For this reason, the earlier threefold classification of strict, partial, and non-noetic cases is refined into five categories: explicit noetic, implicit noetic, preparatory, symbolic-narrative, and non-assessable. These categories are not ranks of spiritual value. They are methodological descriptions of what a text allows the interpreter to claim.

An explicit noetic case fulfills all three stages in a clear textual form: preparation, participatory access, and completion. In such a case, ethical purification and stable attention prepare the knower, participatory

knowing establishes the access relation, and unity of knower and known functions as the strongest textual marker of noetic completion.

An implicit noetic case contains the same epistemic architecture but expresses it through mythological, ritual, symbolic, visionary, or performative grammar rather than philosophical explanation. Implicit noetic classification requires text-immanent evidence, but such evidence need not be theoretical. It may be discursive, symbolic, ritual, dramatic, or performative. It is not enough for a text to contain ascent, light, return, secrecy, revelation, divine names, heavenly gates, or cosmic journey. The text must show that these motifs function epistemically: they must be connected to the formation of the knower, the alteration of the knower's capacity for knowledge, and a movement toward participatory recognition or noetic completion. Without such internal markers, the text remains symbolic-narrative rather than implicitly noetic.

A preparatory case contains ethical, contemplative, or disciplinary formation ordered toward knowledge, but does not yet articulate participatory access or noetic completion. Such a text may be epistemically serious without being a full noetic case.

A symbolic-narrative case contains visions, cosmology, ritual structures, ascent motifs, secret names, or mythic drama, but its noetic status cannot be determined from these elements alone. The presence of such material neither proves nor disproves noetic structure. Further textual analysis is required.

A non-assessable case is one in which the available material does not provide enough evidence to classify the text under the noetic framework. This category is preferable to forcing a negative classification where the material is too ambiguous, fragmentary, or polyvalent.

This refined classification avoids methodological circularity. The model does not treat philosophical texts as noetic by default, nor does it treat mythological or ritual texts as deficient by default. It requires the same standard in each case: the text must provide evidence that preparation, access, and completion are structurally connected to knowledge. The burden of proof remains with the textual analysis, not with the interpreter's preference.

## 11. Public Validation and Interior Access

The relation between noetic access and public validation must be handled with precision. If noetic knowledge depends on the condition of the knower, it may appear immune to external evaluation. That would be methodologically weak. The present article therefore distinguishes two registers.

The first register is interior access. This concerns the conditions under which noetic knowledge becomes accessible. The second register is public validation. This concerns textual evidence, conceptual coherence, historical context, institutional transmission, scholarly accountability, and methodological clarity.

The model does not claim that interior access replaces public criteria; rather, it assigns public validation and noetic access to different but complementary registers. Public scholarship can evaluate texts, arguments, definitions, historical claims, and internal coherence. It cannot replace noetic access, but it can discipline claims about it.

This also clarifies the possible objection of autosuggestion. A purely textual and philosophical framework cannot finally prove whether a claim to intelligible reality corresponds to actual noetic apprehension or to a highly coherent inner construction. The article should not conceal this boundary. Its contribution is more precise: it does not prove every noetic claim; it provides criteria for distinguishing stronger and weaker claims. A claim becomes stronger when it is not merely private, not merely

visionary, not merely emotional, and not merely doctrinal, but is embedded in a disciplined structure of preparation, stable attention, participatory access, ethical transformation, and public coherence. Autosuggestion remains possible where private intensity lacks these criteria. The model therefore does not eliminate the risk of false claims; it reduces conceptual confusion by identifying the conditions under which a claim to gnosis becomes philosophically and textually more credible.

This distinction avoids two errors. It avoids reducing gnosis to institutionally approved doctrine. It also avoids turning gnosis into unverifiable private assertion. The public register governs the evaluation of claims, while the noetic register concerns the conditions under which the knowledge itself becomes accessible.

## 12. Discussion

The proposed model contributes to information theory and epistemology by distinguishing several related but non-identical levels. First, data can be encoded, transmitted, copied, and stored. Second, information emerges when structured difference becomes actualized in a receiving system by shaping interpretation, orientation, or possible action. Third, ordinary knowledge arises when information is interpreted, stabilized, justified, and integrated under appropriate epistemic conditions. Fourth, transformation-sensitive knowledge names the dimension in which knowledge produces durable, examinable changes in orientation, judgment, conduct, or practical capacity. Fifth, gnosis names a distinct noetic mode of access in which the knower participates in the intelligible object known.

This distinction does not mean that gnosis is simply a higher stage above transformation-sensitive knowledge. The relation is not linear but categorical. Transformation-sensitive knowledge describes an effect or consequence: knowledge changes the knower's orientation or conduct. Gnosis describes a mode of access: the knower participates noetically in what is known. Gnosis may be transformative, but it is not defined by transformation. Transformation is expected as a consequence or sign of integration, whereas participatory access is the defining epistemic structure.

This prevents gnosis from becoming merely an honorific name for intense or transformative knowledge. Ordinary knowledge may be contextual, justified, stabilized, and integrated without becoming noetic. Transformation-sensitive knowledge may alter life, conduct, or judgment without becoming gnosis. Gnosis is distinguished by participatory access. It is not merely knowledge that changes the knower, but knowledge in which the knower's formation enables participation in what is known.

The three-stage model provides a way to analyze this distinction. Ethical purification and stable attention concern preparation. Participatory knowing concerns the access relation. Unity of knower and known concerns the strongest noetic completion described in the relevant sources. These stages do not create a circular definition because the completion marker is not treated as a prerequisite. Rather, the model describes a movement from preparation to access and from access to completion.

The framework also clarifies why passive information models are insufficient. A symbol, doctrine, myth, ritual, or text can be present as data-bearing structure without becoming noetically accessible. Access depends on the formed relation between the knower, the mode of access, and the intelligible object.

Finally, the refined classification prevents the framework from prejudging texts according to genre. Discursive philosophical language is not automatically superior to mythological or ritual language. The decisive question is whether a text itself provides evidence for an epistemic architecture of preparation, participatory access, and noetic completion.

### 13. Scope of the Argument and Future Research

The present article offers a conceptual and textual framework for reconstructing gnosis as condition-dependent noetic knowledge. Its contribution lies in clarifying the conditions under which noetic knowledge becomes accessible and in distinguishing different kinds of textual claims through explicit epistemic criteria.

The framework does not depend on reducing gnosis to psychology, quantum physics, medicine, or information theory. These fields are not used as proof of gnosis. The central argument remains philosophical and textual. It concerns the relation between the knower, the mode of access, and the intelligible object known.

This scope allows gnosis to be examined without collapsing it into subjective experience, doctrinal possession, symbolic intensity, or empirical measurement alone. Public scholarship can evaluate the coherence of the model, the textual evidence, the historical framing, and the proposed criteria of access. At the same time, the noetic structure of gnosis is preserved as a mode of knowing that requires preparation, participation, and interior formation.

Future research may extend the model in two directions. First, historical studies may apply the three-stage model to specific texts and corpora in order to distinguish explicit noetic, implicit noetic, preparatory, symbolic-narrative, and non-assessable cases more precisely. Second, interdisciplinary studies may examine how preparation, attention, ethical formation, and interpretive stability influence the understanding and integration of symbolic, philosophical, or religious materials. Such research would extend the application of the present framework.

### 14. Conclusion

Gnosis can be reconstructed as condition-dependent noetic knowledge when the model clearly distinguishes preparation, access, and completion. Ethical purification and stable attention prepare the knower. Participatory knowing describes the access relation. Unity of knower and known marks the fullest noetic completion, not a circular prerequisite. This distinction allows gnosis to be understood neither as passive information transfer nor as subjective invention, but as a disciplined mode of knowledge in which access depends on the formed condition of the knower.

The model does not claim that public scholarship can directly verify the inner attainment of gnosis. It claims that public scholarship can evaluate the structure, coherence, and textual grounding of noetic claims. In this sense, the framework neither reduces gnosis to public doctrine nor abandons it to unchecked private assertion. It offers criteria by which claims to gnosis may be analyzed according to their epistemic architecture.

The resulting thesis is therefore more precise: gnosis is not data that merely reaches the knower, nor is it truth created by the knower, nor is it ordinary knowledge made more intense. It is noetic knowledge that becomes accessible when preparation, attention, participatory relation, and noetic completion are properly distinguished and fulfilled.

Core thesis: Gnosis is not information that merely reaches the knower; it is noetic knowledge that becomes accessible only when the knower becomes capable of receiving, recognizing, and participating in what is known.

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