False Records and the Ontology of Error

Record-Based Ontology does not identify recordhood with truth.

This point is not secondary. It is one of the main safeguards of the framework.

If RBO claimed that whatever is recorded becomes true, it would collapse into crude constructivism. It would be unable to distinguish memory from accuracy, inscription from evidence, social stabilization from objectivity, or recordhood from truth.

RBO says something different:

> A false record can be real as a record while false as a representation.

1. Recordhood is not truth

A forged document is a real document, but false as testimony.

A false memory is a real memory-state, but inaccurate as a representation of the past.

A corrupted file is a real bit-structure, but defective as preservation of intended content.

A misleading measurement is a real instrument output, but wrong as evidence.

A mistaken archive entry may persist, be copied, cited, transmitted, and acted upon. It may constrain future inquiry. It may affect institutional decisions. It may shape memory, legal responsibility, or scientific interpretation.

But none of this makes its content true.

The record exists. Its authority may fail.

2. Three distinctions

RBO separates three levels that are often confused.

Recordhood is the existence of a stabilized physical or informational structure capable of persisting, being accessed, and constraining later states.

Representational accuracy is the success of that structure in tracking the event, object, relation, or history it is taken to indicate.

Inferential authority is the entitlement of that structure to guide belief, action, classification, reconstruction, or further inquiry within a broader record-ecology.

A record may satisfy the first condition while failing the second.

It may exist but misrepresent.

It may be accurate in one respect but weak as evidence because it is isolated, ambiguous, corrupted, or defeated by stronger records.

It may also gain or lose authority as other records emerge.

3. Why false records matter

False records are not embarrassing exceptions. They are central to any serious record-based ontology.

They show that records do not magically certify their contents.

They also show why truth and error require record-ecologies rather than isolated traces.

A false record can be challenged only by further records: counter-documents, material traces, testimony, calibration, replication, bodily evidence, environmental data, statistical patterns, or later correction.

This does not make correction circular in a vicious sense. It means that finite systems never escape record-structure into a view from nowhere. They improve their access to reality by building record-networks that are more stable, independent, redundant, precise, and mutually constraining.

4. Objectivity as correction

Objectivity is not the possession of one infallible record.

It is the stabilization of records under conditions of possible correction.

A scientific result gains authority when it survives calibration, replication, independent measurement, error analysis, and comparison with other records.

A historical claim gains authority when documents, material traces, dates, locations, testimonies, and background constraints converge.

A legal fact gains authority when evidence survives cross-examination, authentication, procedural scrutiny, and conflict with rival records.

In each case, objectivity is not produced by recordhood alone. It emerges from record-reconciliation under constraints that exceed any single record or agent.

5. The anti-constructivist core

False records make the anti-constructivist core of RBO explicit.

RBO does not say:

> Whatever is recorded becomes true.

It says:

> Whatever becomes definite for a finite system does so through record-structures, but those structures remain fallible, revisable, and answerable to correction.

This is why RBO is best understood as fallibilist record-realism.

Records are real. They are not private inventions. They are physically or informationally instantiated structures with causal histories and consequences.

But records are not self-certifying. They may mislead, distort, decay, or be defeated.

6. Why this matters for RBO

The false-records problem protects the entire framework.

It prevents RBO from becoming idealism, because records do not create reality from consciousness.

It prevents RBO from becoming constructivism, because recordhood does not entail truth.

It prevents RBO from becoming relativism, because records can be compared, corrected, and defeated.

It prevents RBO from becoming naive realism, because no single record is treated as infallible.

And it explains why error is not external to record-based ontology. Error is possible because records stabilize differences that can later be checked against other records and against the physical constraints that produced them.

7. Programmatic status

A fuller paper on this topic, **“False Records and the Ontology of Error,”** is currently under journal review.

For that reason, this page is limited to the programmatic role of false records within RBO.

The core point is simple:

> **A record may be real as a record and false as a representation.**

This distinction is not a footnote. It is what allows Record-Based Ontology to be realist, record-based, and fallibilist at the same time.

Status: Site note / programmatic statement.
Project: Record-Based Ontology.
Editorial note: A full paper on this topic is currently under journal review; this page intentionally presents only the core programmatic distinction.
AI-use note: Drafted and edited with AI assistance under the author’s conceptual direction and final responsibility.