

False Gates and True Gates

Authority, Agency Capture, and the Boundary of Legitimate Governance

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Core thesis

A true gate preserves rightful passage under God, conscience, authority, truth, and accountability. A false gate captures agency by standing where it should only serve, controlling access to belonging, identity, repentance, conscience, or consequence.

HAPI Thesis Sequence

Theory of Agency -> Agency Loss -> Agency Restoration -> Governance as Agency Preservation ->
False Gates and True Gates

Abstract

This working thesis develops the distinction between true gates and false gates as a core concept for Human Agency Preservation Infrastructure (HAPI). A gate is any boundary that determines whether a person, proposal, action, interpretation, or state may pass from one condition into another. Healthy systems require gates because not every action should proceed, not every claim is true, and not every authority is legitimate. But a gate becomes false when it exceeds its rightful boundary and captures the agency it was meant to preserve. In theological language, Jesus is treated as the true gate: the one who restores access to God, truth, repentance, and life without surrendering human agency to human intermediaries. Disciples, elders, communities, institutions, and governance systems may serve as witnesses, shepherds, stewards, and protectors, but they become false gates when they act as owners of another person's conscience, identity, belonging, repentance, or standing before God. The paper maps this pattern across biblical themes, including creation, the fall, Babel, Egypt, the Pharisees, and the ministry of Jesus, then translates the pattern into HAPI's agency-preserving governance model. The conclusion argues that legitimate governance preserves meaningful participation, while false governance simulates order by capturing agency.

Keywords: human agency, HAPI, false gates, true gates, governance, authority, conscience, biblical agency, agency capture, agency preservation, Jesus, Tower of Babel, institutional control, agentic AI

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1. Introduction: Why Gates Matter

Every serious system has gates. A body has immune boundaries. A family has relational boundaries. A court has standards of admissibility. A church has moral and doctrinal boundaries. A company has approvals, permissions, and audit trails. An AI system has authorization boundaries before tool use. Gates are not inherently oppressive. Without gates, action outruns discernment and systems collapse into confusion.

The deeper question is not whether gates should exist. The question is what makes a gate legitimate. A gate can preserve agency, or it can capture agency. It can protect rightful passage, or it can become a substitute authority. It can help a person move toward truth, repentance, and restoration, or it can make the person dependent on the gatekeeper for identity, belonging, and spiritual standing.

HAPI uses the language of true gates and false gates to clarify this distinction. A true gate governs the correct boundary under rightful authority. A false gate claims authority over a boundary it does not own. This distinction matters in theology, institutions, families, workplaces, healthcare, and agentic AI governance.

HAPI framing

A true gate preserves meaningful participation at the boundary of consequence. A false gate controls the person by controlling the boundary.

2. Core Definitions

Term	Working definition
Gate	A boundary that determines whether a person, claim, proposal, action, interpretation, or state may pass from one condition into another.
True gate	A gate that governs rightful passage according to truth, legitimate authority, context, accountability, and restoration.
False gate	A gate that captures agency by controlling access to identity, belonging, conscience, repentance, authority, or consequence beyond its rightful scope.
Agency	The capacity to understand, choose, refuse, revise, act, remember, and remain accountable.
Agency capture	The condition where a system or authority takes over a person's meaningful participation while leaving the person present, responsible, or dependent.
Agency theater	The appearance of meaningful participation without the real ability to understand, refuse, revise, contest, or affect the outcome.
Legitimate governance	Governance that preserves agency by keeping authority, proof, refusal, memory, and accountability coherent.

3. God as Source of Human Agency

The biblical story begins with agency as a gift. Human beings are not created as objects moved only by external force. They are addressed, entrusted, commanded, warned, named, and called to

respond. This means human agency is not self-created autonomy detached from God. It is derived agency: the capacity to participate in reality under the source of life and truth.

In Genesis, human beings are placed in a world they did not create, given a task they did not invent, and given responsibility over a creation that remains God's. Agency is therefore neither total independence nor passive submission. It is stewardship. The human is given real participation within an order that precedes the human.

This matters for HAPI because agency preservation does not mean removing all authority. It means preserving rightful agency under rightful authority. A person's agency is strengthened when they can respond to truth, love, responsibility, and conscience. It is weakened when they are deceived, coerced, overloaded, shamed, or placed under a false mediator.

Agency as stewardship

Biblical agency is not independence from God. It is meaningful participation under God.

4. Jesus as the True Gate

The strongest Christian expression of the true gate is Jesus' statement in John 10: "I am the gate" and "I am the good shepherd." In HAPI language, this means Jesus is not merely another gatekeeper inside the religious system. He is the rightful boundary of access, truth, restoration, and life.

This matters because human authorities may guide, teach, correct, and shepherd, but they do not own the sheep. If Jesus is the true gate, then disciples are not the gate in the ultimate sense. They are witnesses to the gate. They can point, serve, protect, teach, and restore, but they cannot legitimately replace Christ as the person's access to God.

Jesus' pattern is consistently agency-restoring. He confronts sin, but he does not reduce people to sin. He tells people the truth, but he restores their ability to respond. He heals bodies, restores sight, raises the excluded, forgives, calls people to follow, and sends them back into responsible life. He does not turn restoration into dependency on a human administrative class.

Pattern	Description
True gate pattern in Jesus	Calls people directly Restores sight and speech Forgives and sends Confronts sin without owning the soul Restores participation before God
False gate contrast	Controls recognition Uses shame as leverage Makes belonging conditional on institutional compliance Places human approval where God's mercy belongs Captures identity through exclusion

5. Disciples, Elders, and Communities as Witnesses, Not Owners

The disciples of Jesus do have authority, but their authority is derivative and servant-shaped. They are witnesses, apostles, shepherds, stewards, servants, and builders. They do not become the source of salvation or the owner of another person's conscience. They testify to Christ and participate in his restorative work.

The early Christian community has real boundaries. It teaches, corrects, discerns, appoints elders, and protects the vulnerable. But its authority must remain ordered toward restoration, truth, and service. When a community treats discipline as ownership of identity, family access, repentance, or standing before God, it begins to move from shepherding into false gate behavior.

A community may say, "This behavior is outside our boundary." That is different from saying, "Your relationship with God, your family belonging, and your spiritual validity must pass through our administrative recognition." The first is boundary governance. The second risks gate capture.

Discipleship principle

The disciples are not the gate. They are witnesses to the gate. Jesus is the gate.

6. The False Gate Pattern

A false gate does not always look obviously evil. It may look orderly, religious, protective, efficient, professional, or compliant. The problem is not that it has standards. The problem is that it claims a boundary beyond its rightful authority and uses that boundary to capture agency.

False gates often begin as protective structures. Over time, they become self-protective structures. They start by guarding truth, then begin guarding institutional control. They start by preserving order, then begin preserving the gatekeeper's authority. They start by correcting harm, then begin defining identity through compliance.

False gate mechanism	Agency effect
Interpretive monopoly	The system treats its interpretation as the only safe path to truth.
Conditional belonging	The person belongs only while their agency remains compliant.
Administrative repentance	Restoration is recognized only through institutional approval.
Social pressure enforcement	Family, community, status, or access are used to enforce compliance.
Responsibility without authority	The person is held accountable for outcomes they could not meaningfully affect.
Authority without accountability	The gatekeeper exercises control while avoiding responsibility for the damage caused.
Memory capture	The system controls the record of what happened and denies the person narrative agency.

7. Biblical Case Studies of Agency Capture

7.1 The Serpent: Distorted Clarity

The first agency attack is not brute force. It is distorted meaning. The serpent reframes God's command, questions trust, inflames desire, and turns a protective boundary into a suspected restriction. The result is corrupted agency: the human still chooses, but the choice is made under deception.

This is why clarity is one of HAPI's agency conditions. Choice without truthful clarity can become manipulated choice.

7.2 Egypt: Enslaved Capacity

Egypt represents agency stripped through labor, domination, and fear. The people remain alive and active, but their work no longer expresses free participation. Their capacity is captured by an oppressive system.

The Exodus is therefore not only escape. It is agency restoration: movement from bondage toward covenant, responsibility, worship, and ordered participation under God.

7.3 Babel: Collective Power Without Rightful Order

Babel is capability, coordination, and scale without submission to proper order. The problem is not construction itself. The problem is unified power organized around self-exaltation and control. Babel converts shared agency into collective self-enclosure.

For HAPI, Babel is the archetype of high-capability systems that scale faster than wisdom, accountability, and rightful authority. This makes it directly relevant to institutional power and agentic AI.

7.4 The Pharisees: Burdened Agency

Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees is not merely a disagreement over rules. It is a conflict over the governance of human access to God. The Pharisee pattern binds heavy burdens, controls recognition, polices status, and turns religious knowledge into social authority.

In HAPI language, the Pharisee pattern is a false gate because it can preserve religious performance while weakening direct repentance, mercy, conscience, and restored participation before God.

7.5 Jesus: Restored Agency

Jesus reverses the false gate pattern. He heals people whose bodies restrict participation. He restores people excluded by stigma. He forgives people trapped by shame. He calls people into action. He gives sight, speech, dignity, and responsibility.

The pattern is not permissiveness. Jesus still says, "go and sin no more." But the command comes after restoration, not as an instrument of agency destruction. The person is restored into truthful participation.

8. Agency Theater and Conditional Participation

Agency theater happens when a person appears to participate but cannot meaningfully affect the outcome. They may be asked to approve, but cannot refuse. They may be asked to confess, but cannot safely speak. They may be told they have conscience, but only if conscience reaches the approved conclusion.

Conditional agency is especially unstable. It says: you may participate as long as you remain compliant. This may produce order, but it does not produce mature agency. It produces dependence, fear, performance, and identity fragility.

Agency condition	Description
Real agency	The person can understand, refuse, revise, repent, contest, and remain accountable.
Theatrical agency	The person appears involved but cannot meaningfully change the outcome.

Conditional agency	The person has agency only while choices remain within approved boundaries.
Captured agency	The system controls identity, belonging, memory, or authority while the person remains responsible.

9. Legitimate Boundaries Versus False Gates

HAPI does not argue that all boundaries are oppressive. A church may set membership expectations. A family may set safety boundaries. A company may restrict permissions. An AI system may block destructive actions. A hospital may require clinical review. The question is whether the boundary preserves rightful agency or captures it.

A legitimate boundary is transparent, scoped, reviewable, accountable, contestable, and ordered toward protection or restoration. A false gate is opaque, totalizing, identity-capturing, non-contestable, and ordered toward dependency or control.

Question	Legitimate boundary	False gate
Scope	Clear and limited	Expands into identity, belonging, or conscience
Authority	Derivative and accountable	Self-protecting and difficult to question
Refusal	Permits appeal or contest	Treats refusal as rebellion
Memory	Preserves evidence and context	Controls the record
Restoration	Aims to restore participation	Creates dependency or humiliation
Consequence	Proportionate and reviewable	Socially or spiritually totalizing

10. The HAPI True Gate Test

The True Gate Test evaluates whether a governance boundary preserves human agency or captures it. The test can be applied to religious communities, companies, healthcare systems, schools, families, public institutions, and AI systems.

1. Does the gate govern a boundary it has rightful authority to govern?
2. Does the person retain direct moral and spiritual agency, or is agency mediated through the gatekeeper?
3. Can the person understand the decision and the evidence behind it?
4. Can the person refuse, appeal, revise, or contest before consequence?
5. Is discipline ordered toward restoration rather than identity destruction?
6. Are family, belonging, employment, access, or status used as leverage beyond the scope of the actual harm?
7. Does the gate preserve memory and accountability for the gatekeeper as well as the person being judged?
8. Can the gate admit error and repair damage?
9. Does the gate become lighter as agency matures, or heavier as dependence grows?
10. Does the gate point beyond itself to truth, God, conscience, and restored participation?

Diagnostic summary

A true gate protects passage. A false gate owns passage. A true gate restores agency. A false gate captures agency.

11. Everyday and Institutional Applications

The false gate pattern is not limited to religion. It appears anywhere a system keeps people present while removing their ability to meaningfully participate.

Domain	False gate risk
Family systems	A parent or partner may claim care while controlling identity, voice, social access, or memory.
Workplaces	Employees may be held accountable for outcomes they cannot authorize, refuse, or revise.
Healthcare	Patients may technically consent while lacking clarity, time, context, or contestability.
Schools	Students may be measured and categorized without meaningful voice or appeal.
Religious institutions	Communities may preserve belonging only while conscience remains compliant.
Government systems	Citizens may be processed through rules they cannot understand, challenge, or repair.
Digital platforms	Users may be scored, ranked, banned, nudged, or constrained by opaque systems.

12. Agentic AI and Runtime Governance

Agentic AI introduces a new kind of gate problem because AI systems can turn cognition into action. When a system can call tools, send messages, update databases, publish content, initiate transactions, or change operational state, the gate is no longer only interpretive. It is runtime.

The HAPI stack treats AI agents as delegated operational agency. They are not moral persons, but they act under borrowed human or organizational authority. Therefore, a true AI governance gate must preserve human agency before, during, and after action.

PGDL challenges the proposal before action. AAG authorizes, revises, escalates, or blocks the action. Runtime Binding prevents execution drift. Receipts preserve memory and accountability. Governance Reality Reports and Continuity Findings test whether the system is real governance or theater across time.

Moment	Agency-preserving function
Before action	PGDL and AAG preserve discernment, authority, refusal, and revision.
During action	Runtime Binding keeps execution attached to what was authorized.
After action	Receipts preserve proof, memory, and accountability.
Across time	Governance Reality Reports and Continuity Findings detect drift, rubber-stamping, stale authority, and policy-reality mismatch.

13. Design Principles for Agency-Preserving Governance

Principle	Meaning
Preserve direct agency	A system should not replace the person's conscience, judgment, or responsibility with institutional dependency.
Keep authority scoped	A gate must know what boundary it governs and what boundary it does not own.
Make refusal real	Approval is not meaningful unless refusal, revision, or

	escalation can still change the outcome.
Protect memory	The system must preserve what happened, who decided, what evidence was known, and what changed.
Aim at restoration	Correction should rebuild agency where possible rather than destroy identity or belonging.
Bind execution	In technical systems, authorization must bind the action so execution cannot drift.
Audit the gatekeeper	The gate must be accountable, not only the person passing through it.
Reduce dependency over time	A true gate should develop maturity, not permanent helplessness.

14. Conclusion

The distinction between true gates and false gates strengthens HAPI's foundation because it explains why governance can either preserve agency or capture it. Not every boundary is oppressive. Not every authority is false. But every gate must remain within rightful scope, preserve meaningful participation, and remain accountable to truth, memory, refusal, and restoration.

In the biblical pattern, God is the source of agency, sin corrupts agency, false authority captures agency, and Jesus restores agency. Disciples and communities participate in that restoration when they serve as witnesses and shepherds. They become false gates when they act as owners of conscience, belonging, repentance, or access to God.

In institutional and technical systems, the same structure appears in secular form. A company, platform, AI system, agency, or bureaucracy becomes a false gate when it keeps people responsible while removing their ability to understand, refuse, revise, contest, or remember. HAPI exists to audit and rebuild these systems from the core agency problem outward.

The final thesis is simple: a true gate restores agency at the boundary of consequence. A false gate captures agency while calling it order.

References

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Appendix A: Gate Diagnostic Checklist

- What boundary is being governed?
- Who gave the gatekeeper authority over that boundary?
- Can the affected person understand the process?
- Can the affected person refuse, appeal, or contest?

- Is the consequence proportionate to the boundary violation?
- Does the gate preserve records that the affected person can inspect?
- Does the process aim at restoration or dependency?
- Can the gatekeeper be corrected?
- Does the person retain direct agency before God, conscience, truth, and responsibility?
- Does the gate become lighter as agency is restored?

Appendix B: Glossary

Term	Definition
Rightful passage	A transition that proceeds under legitimate authority, truthful context, and accountable consequence.
Gatekeeper	A person, institution, policy, technical control, or system that controls passage across a boundary.
Conscience capture	The condition where a system makes a person dependent on institutional recognition for what should remain direct moral responsibility.
Restorative discipline	Correction that protects the system while rebuilding truthful participation wherever possible.
Totalizing consequence	A consequence that expands beyond the original boundary into identity, family, belonging, or personhood.
Runtime gate	A technical gate that constrains whether an AI agent or system may execute an action.