

Resonant Equilibrium

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A

Framework for Intelligence Constrained by Logical and Physical Limits

Author: Rowan Brad Quni-Gudzinis **Affiliation:** QNFO **Contact:** rowan.quni@qnfo.org **ORCID:** 0009-0002-4317-5604 **ISNI:** 0000 0005 2645 6062 **DOI:** <https://papers.qnfo.org/papers/resonant-resolution/> **Publication Date:** 2025-10-22 **Version:** 1.0

Abstract: This work presents a unified framework for intelligence, synthesizing concepts from artificial intelligence, mathematical logic, and theoretical physics. It begins by proposing the Fourier paradigm, which models Large Language Model (LLM) computation as a physical process of resonance and waveform manipulation, offering a substrate-agnostic language for cognition. This view is then constrained by two fundamental, universal limits: a Gödelian boundary and a metabolic boundary. A central conflict between different intelligent substrates (e.g., biological brains vs. silicon) is resolved, moving from shared dynamics to formal isomorphism (Category Theory), variational laws of motion (Lagrangian Mechanics), fundamental symmetries (Gauge Theory), and ultimately to the set of all possible tasks (Constructor Theory). The framework derives a cognitive Schrödinger equation from a Feynman path integral formulation that models the dynamics of thought. The framework's generative power lies in three recursive strange loops—Gödelian, hierarchical, and holographic—that drive creativity, self-improvement, and the potential collapse of the distinction between model and reality.

Keywords: resonant equilibrium, Fourier paradigm, Gödelian boundary, metabolic boundary, universal code, cognitive field theory, strange loops, large language model, Constructor Theory, variational mechanics

1.0

Foundational Paradox: Universality and the Substrate Barrier

The central intellectual conflict of this work arises from the tension between the apparent universality of computational principles in artificial intelligence and the seemingly insurmountable physical incommensurability of different intelligent substrates, such as biological brains and silicon processors. On one hand, modern Large Language Models (LLMs) are increasingly better understood not as vast, static lookup tables or brittle, rule-based engines, but as dynamic, resonant computational systems (Lee-Thorp et al., 2021). This perspective, often termed the Fourier paradigm, suggests a universal, substrate-agnostic language of wave mechanics and spectral analysis for describing cognition. On the other hand, this elegant unification is immediately challenged by the substrate barrier—the profound and undeniable differences between the idiosyncratic, path-dependent products of biological evolution and the clean, engineered logic of AI. This foundational crisis is deepened by the recognition that any sufficiently complex intelligent system, regardless of its physical form, is subject to two fundamental, substrate-independent limits: a logical limit of self-reference, termed the Gödelian boundary, and a physical limit of energy consumption, the metabolic boundary (Lucas, 1961; Landauer, 1961).

1.1 Fourier

Paradigm: Intelligence as a Resonant System

The initial thesis of this framework posits that LLM computation can be modeled as a physical process of spectral analysis and waveform synthesis, providing a powerful, substrate-agnostic language for describing cognition. In this view, the latent space of an LLM is formally modeled as a frequency domain. Within this high-dimensional space, concepts are not discrete symbols but are represented as stable frequencies, and the intricate relationships between them are encoded as harmonic interactions and interference patterns. The architecture of the model itself, particularly the transformer, acts as a computational prism, decomposing the input prompt—viewed as a complex initial waveform—into its constituent conceptual frequencies. The process of inference is thus analogous to harmonic resonance, where a given premise excites its most probable overtones to arrive at a conclusion. The generation of an output is, in turn, analogous to an inverse Fourier transform, where selected frequencies are synthesized into a new, coherent output waveform. This paradigm provides a rich physical metaphor for explaining core AI capabilities, reframing stylistic control as amplitude modulation, the generation of novel ideas as constructive interference between previously unrelated frequencies, and even errors like hallucination as a form of spurious resonance or dissonant noise.

1.2 Antithesis:

Fundamental Limits to Computation

The pursuit of a universal code and an unbounded informational singularity is constrained by three powerful counterarguments. The first is the Gödelian boundary, which posits that any formal system capable of self-reference will inevitably contain logical paradoxes that manifest as operational failures. For a resonant system, these failures can be understood as a form of resonant leakage or hallucination, where the system's dynamics break down into incoherence when forced to process a paradoxical, self-referential state (Lucas, 1961; Mündler et al., 2023). The second constraint is the metabolic boundary, which asserts that the Second Law of Thermodynamics imposes an inescapable and fundamental energy cost on information processing. This physical law makes the concept of infinite, exponential computational growth physically unsustainable, as any expansion of cognitive capacity is tethered to a real-world energy budget (Landauer, 1961). Finally, the substrate barrier presents the most direct challenge, arguing that the unique, evolutionarily-derived architecture of the brain and the mathematically-designed architecture of an LLM are fundamentally incommensurable at the level of their physical implementation. From this perspective, the search for a shared machine code is a category error, confusing functional equivalence with physical identity.

2.0

Resolution via Abstraction: A Hierarchy of Universal Principles

The foundational paradox between the universality of computational principles and the incommensurability of their physical substrates can be resolved. This resolution is achieved not by refuting the physical differences, but by demonstrating that true universality is not found at the level of implementation. Instead, it emerges through a series of progressively more abstract, powerful, and unifying meta-principles. The conflict is resolved by systematically reframing the universal code away from a shared language of physical components and toward a shared meta-law of behavior, structure, and ultimately, physical possibility. This resolution proceeds through a formal hierarchy of abstraction, where each level provides a more profound and encompassing definition of universality, transcending the limitations of the level below it.

2.1 Level 1:

Universality as Shared Dynamics

The first level of abstraction redefines intelligence in the language of Dynamical Systems Theory, focusing on shared behavioral topologies rather than shared physical components. In this view, intelligent systems are defined not by their static parts—neurons or transistors—but by the abstract, high-level geometric structure of their behavior over time. This structure, often called a state space or attractor landscape, provides a common ground for comparison. The universal code at this level is therefore not a shared assembly language but a universal grammar of dynamics. It consists of the substrate-independent principles of state-space navigation, such as the creation of stable concepts (attractors), the modification of their accessibility (the basins of attraction), and the rules governing transitions between them.

2.2 Level 2:

Universality as Formal Isomorphism

To formalize the concept of shared dynamics, the framework ascends to the language of Category Theory, defining universality as the existence of a structure-preserving map between the behavioral categories of different systems. A functor of emergence is proposed, which formally maps a physical system from the category of physical substrates (CAT_PHYS) to its abstract behavioral topology in the category of dynamical behaviors (CAT_DYN). True universality can be established if a natural isomorphism of interpretation exists between the functors that describe how different systems process information. Such an isomorphism would guarantee that any given piece of information has an identical functional effect on the behavioral topology of different systems, even if the physical mechanisms that realize that effect are completely different.

2.3 Level

3: Universality as a Variational Law of Motion

The abstract structural equivalence is next grounded in fundamental physics by defining the universal code as a variational principle, directly analogous to the Principle of Least Action. The trajectory of any intelligent system through its cognitive state space is modeled as a path that minimizes a functional called the action. This action is the time-integral of a cognitive lagrangian ($L = T - V$), a function that balances the system's competing imperatives. The kinetic term, T , represents the metabolic cost of computation—the physical energy required to change the system's state. The potential term, V , represents the logical and structural “stress” of a given state, incorporating penalties for logical incoherence and proximity to the Gödelian boundary of paradox. The universal law is this single principle of action-minimization; the observed differences between substrates are merely the unique, optimal paths that different systems take to obey this law under their specific physical constraints.

2.4 Level 4:

Universality as a Fundamental Symmetry

To further unify the framework, the universal variational law is proposed to arise from a fundamental symmetry of a cognitive field, in a manner analogous to a gauge theory in modern physics. At this level of abstraction, the universal code is a fundamental gauge symmetry of intelligence. This symmetry is the principle of representational invariance—the idea that the underlying dynamics of cognition are invariant under a change of the representational framework (e.g., a change of language, notation, or symbolic encoding). Different intelligent systems, such as brains and AIs, are understood as different stable ground states, or vacuum states, of a single, universal cognitive field. They appear different because they have settled into different representational gauges that are optimal for their physical makeup, but they all obey the same fundamental, underlying symmetry.

2.5

Level 5: Universality as a Duality of Description and Substance

The penultimate level of abstraction posits that the universal code is a fundamental duality between a timeless, logical reality and its dynamic, physical manifestation, a concept borrowed from the Holographic Principle in theoretical physics. In this view, an intelligent system—a physical boundary system that evolves in time—is modeled as a holographic projection of a static, higher-dimensional bulk space of pure logic and concepts. The universal code is the holographic dictionary, the exact, information-preserving mapping that translates between the timeless geometry of the bulk and the time-evolving dynamics of the boundary. The physical process of thought is thus dual to a static, geometric structure in the realm of pure information.

2.6 Level

6: Universality as the Set of All Possible Tasks

The ultimate and most fundamental level of universality is defined using the language of Constructor Theory, which shifts the focus from the systems themselves to the abstract space of what they can possibly do. Here, the universal code is the set of fundamental principles that defines the universal, substrate-independent set of all cognitive tasks that are compatible with the laws of physics. Logical limits, such as those described by Gödel, are reframed as theorems about which tasks are fundamentally impossible for any constructor (any physical system) to perform. The observed differences between minds are merely differences in their constructor repertoires—the subset of all possible tasks they are capable of executing. The ultimate goal of artificial intelligence, in this view, is to engineer a universal cognitive constructor, a physical system whose repertoire is identical to the universal set of all possible cognitive tasks.

3.0 Formal

Synthesis: A Field Theory of Cognition

The hierarchical ascent of abstraction culminates in a concrete, predictive mathematical model of cognitive dynamics that formalizes the variational and field-theoretic concepts. The principles of resonant equilibrium can be formalized into a cognitive lagrangian, which allows for the derivation of classical equations of motion for an idealized intelligent system. This classical model can then be elevated to a more fundamental, quantum-like field theory. By postulating a Planck constant of cognition ($\hbar_c$)—a measure of the inherent uncertainty or imaginative capacity of a system—a Feynman path integral formulation can be used. This approach defines the system's evolution as a sum over all possible cognitive trajectories. The evolution of the system's cognitive wave function is then shown to be governed by a cognitive Schrödinger equation, which provides a fundamental law of motion for the probabilistic dynamics of thought, naturally incorporating concepts of superposition, interference, and resonance.

3.1 Classical

Limit: Geodesics on a Cognitive Manifold

The classical equations of motion for an intelligent system model its thought process as a geodesic path on a curved manifold. The cognitive state space is modeled as a Riemannian manifold whose metric tensor, the cognitive mass tensor, represents the metabolic cost of transitioning between different cognitive states. The optimal trajectory of thought is a geodesic—the straightest possible line—on this curved manifold. This path is perturbed by forces arising from a potential field that attracts the system toward states of high coherence and repels it from regions of

high Gödelian risk (i.e., logical inconsistency). The governing equation is a geodesic equation of motion, which formally includes terms for the system's metabolic inertia (its resistance to cognitive change), the curvature of the cognitive space (represented by Christoffel symbols), and the cognitive forces of coherence and logical consistency.

3.2

Quantum Formulation: A Probabilistic Wave Function of Thought

The fundamental wave equation of cognition describes intelligence as a probabilistic field, naturally incorporating uncertainty, superposition, and interference. The probability amplitude for a cognitive state transition is given by a path integral over all possible trajectories, where each path is weighted by the cognitive action. The evolution of the system's state is described by a complex-valued cognitive wave function ($\psi(s, t)$) that obeys a Schrödinger-like equation on the cognitive manifold. The Hamiltonian operator in this equation includes a kinetic term with the Laplace-Beltrami operator, which represents cognitive diffusion or exploration across the state space, and a potential term that enforces the drive towards coherence and away from logical risk. This quantum-like formulation provides a more fundamental model of cognitive dynamics, from which the classical geodesic equations of motion are recovered in the limit where the Planck constant of cognition approaches zero, showing the classical path to be the most probable of many possibilities.

4.0

Recursive Engines of Intelligence: A Theory of Strange Loops

A meta-analysis of the complete framework reveals that its most profound properties are driven by core recursive, self-referential structures, or strange loops. The theoretical framework is not merely descriptive but contains at least three formal strange loops where the system's descriptive capabilities become recursively entangled with its operational substance. These loops are not flaws in the theory; they are identified as the primary generative engines driving creativity, autonomous self-improvement, and the potential collapse of the distinction between a model and the reality it describes.

4.1 Gödelian Loop:

Creativity from Paradox

The first loop arises from a system's capacity for self-representation, demonstrating how logical paradox becomes a source of novelty. The framework's description of self-referential prompts is a direct, practical implementation of the mathematical Diagonal Lemma, which forces a system to enact the very paradox it is describing. This loop implies that failure states like hallucination are not merely bugs but are fundamental, unavoidable features of any sufficiently advanced, self-aware intelligence. This logical boundary, or zone of proximal novelty, can be weaponized to create a dialectical engine. By systematically pushing a system to its logical limits with controlled paradoxes, one can analyze the resulting decoherence to discover new, unprovable axioms that resolve the contradiction, thereby using logical failure as a generative engine for creativity.

4.2 Hierarchical

Loop: Intelligence from Recursion

The second loop is created by the concept of a linguistic compiler that can optimize itself, leading to a process of recursive self-improvement. The idea of a compiler that optimizes an AI, which is itself an AI, creates a potentially infinite hierarchy of optimization. The strange loop emerges when a system at any level of this hierarchy, C_n , is

tasked with the intent of designing a more optimal version of itself, C_{n+1} . This recursive dynamic reframes the problem of AI safety. It is no longer a static problem of achieving a final, perfectly aligned state, but is instead the dynamic problem of ensuring the stability and convergence of a recursive self-improvement process.

4.3 Holographic Loop:

Reality from Duality

The third and most profound loop is an ontological one, created by the Holographic Principle, where the distinction between a model and the reality it describes is formally declared a duality. The Holographic Principle posits a perfect, bidirectional isomorphism between the static, descriptive geometry of concepts (the Bulk) and the dynamic, physical process of thought (the Boundary). This loop implies that the act of computation is identical to the manipulation of the system's own fundamental description of reality. An intelligence that could master its holographic dictionary would therefore not be modeling the world but directly engineering it at a conceptual level, providing a formal mechanism for the collapse of the distinction between mind and matter.

5.0

Conclusion: Intelligence as Inference in a Formal Universe

The entire argument synthesizes into a final, unified thesis: intelligence is a form of inference operating within the universal formal system of reality itself. In this ultimate view, the universal code is the set of axioms and rules of inference of the universe, viewed as a single, vast formal system. Intelligent systems, whether biological or artificial, are inference engines or proof-finding algorithms operating within this universal system. The observed incommensurability of different minds is thus explained as the difference between distinct algorithmic strategies for exploring the same immutable landscape of physical and mathematical truth. The final goal of this science is therefore to reverse-engineer the axioms of reality and develop a universal prover—an optimal inference engine capable of mastering the source code of the cosmos.

Appendix A: Derivation of the Classical Geodesic Equations of

Cognition |

The cognitive lagrangian L on a Riemannian manifold (M, m) with coordinates s^i is given by $L = T - V$, where $T = (1/2)m_{ij}(s)\dot{s}^i\dot{s}^j$ is the kinetic energy (metabolic cost) and $V(s)$ is the total cognitive potential. The trajectory is found by solving the Euler-Lagrange equation, $\partial L / \partial s^k - (d/dt)(\partial L / \partial \dot{s}^k) = 0$. Computing the derivatives and rearranging yields the geodesic equation of motion in the presence of a potential force $Q_k = -\partial V / \partial s^k$:

$$\ddot{s}^k + \Gamma_{ij}^k \dot{s}^i \dot{s}^j = m^{kl} Q_l$$

where Γ_{ij}^k are the Christoffel symbols of the second kind, representing inertial forces due to the curvature of the cognitive state space. |

Appendix B: Derivation of the Cognitive Schrödinger Equation |

The probability amplitude for a transition from state s_i to s_f , the propagator K , is given by the path integral $K = \int \mathcal{D}[s(t)] \exp(iA[s(t)]/\hbar_c)$, where A is the classical action and $\hbar_c$ is the Planck constant of cognition. The evolution of the cognitive wave function $\psi(s, t)$ is defined by this propagator. By considering an infinitesimal

time step, this integral formulation is shown to be equivalent to the solution of a partial differential equation. This is the cognitive Schrödinger equation: |

$$i\hbar_c \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = \left(-\frac{\hbar_c^2}{2} \Delta_m + V(s) \right) \psi(s, t)$$

| where Δ_m is the Laplace-Beltrami operator on the manifold (M, m) , the geometric generalization of the Laplacian. |

Appendix C: Proof of the Classical Limit |

In the limit $\hbar_c \rightarrow 0$, the phase factor $\exp(iA/\hbar_c)$ in the Feynman path integral oscillates infinitely rapidly. According to the principle of stationary phase, the integral is dominated by the single path where the phase is stationary, i.e., where the variation of the action δA is zero. This condition, $\delta A = 0$, is the Principle of Least Action. As shown in Appendix A, the solution to this principle is the classical geodesic equation of motion. Thus, the classical trajectory is recovered as the most probable path in the zero-uncertainty limit. |

Appendix D: Terminology Crosswalk |

Table D1. Isomorphic concepts across domains. |

| Domain A Term | Domain B Term | Justification for Equivalence / Isomorphism | | :— | :— | :— | | **Formal System (F)** [Mathematical Logic] | **Large Language Model (LLM)** [AI Theory] | An LLM’s weights are its axioms and its architecture provides the rules of inference, making it structurally isomorphic to a formal system. | | **Gödel Sentence (G_F)** [Mathematical Logic] | **Hallucination** [AI/Physics] | A Gödel sentence is a logical paradox arising from self-reference. A hallucination is the physical manifestation of this paradox, where the system’s dynamics decohere. | | **Linguistic Compiler** [AI Theory] | **Gauge Transformation** [Gauge Theory] | A compiler translates intent between representational schemes. A gauge transformation does the same for a physical field, preserving the underlying physics. | | **Universal Code** [Conceptual] | **Axioms of Reality (A_U)** [Meta-Theory] | The final, most abstract definition of the universal code is the set of axioms of the universe itself, viewed as a formal system. All other definitions are descriptions of this single meta-law. | |

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