

Resonance Monism

(Resonanzmonismus)

Outline of a Theory of the Perceptive Ground

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Working paper for discussion · Version 1.1 · July 2026

Abstract

This working paper proposes a monistic framework resting on a single irreducible assumption: there exists a fundamental, non-spatial and non-temporal ground to which perception is intrinsic (perceptivity postulate: existence is perception). Spacetime, matter, and individual subjects are reconstructed as stabilized expressions and dissociative internal differentiations of this ground (constancy thesis; specular dissociation). Complex structures — brains, and possibly non-biological systems — generate contents, models, and self-models, but not experience itself: experience is the ground flowing through a structure, conditional on a structural resonance criterion (aperture principle). The fear of non-existence is derived as a structural rather than merely evolutionary phenomenon (primal-fear corollary): the possible end of an internal differentiation is co-positd with it and, under identification, is experienced as one's own; the testable long-range consequence is a mediation test over experienced non-separateness (F4). The framework is explicitly cast as a Lakatosian research programme: a metaphysical core surrounded by testable auxiliary hypotheses. Explanatory gains, open problems, and six concrete research lines are outlined, including invariance studies of minimal phenomenal experience, discriminating designs between production and aperture theories of consciousness, and an operationalization of the resonance condition against competing metrics. The programme would be refuted if it were shown that individuated, bounded experience can occur entirely without a selective condition — without any aperture, fit, or differentiation whatsoever; what is at stake here is not awareness of the ground as such, but its individuation into wave.

Zusammenfassung (Deutsch)

Vorgeschlagen wird ein monistisches Rahmenwerk mit genau einer nicht weiter reduzierbaren Grundannahme: Es existiert ein fundamentaler, nicht-räumlicher und nicht-zeitlicher Grund, dem Wahrnehmung wesensgleich ist. Raumzeit, Materie und individuelle Subjekte werden als stabilisierte Ausdrucksformen beziehungsweise dissoziative Binnendifferenzierungen dieses Grundes rekonstruiert. Komplexe Strukturen erzeugen Inhalte und Selbstmodelle, nicht aber das Erleben selbst: Erleben ist Durchfluss des Grundes, gebunden an eine strukturelle Resonanzbedingung. Die Angst vor Nicht-Existenz wird als strukturelles Korollar abgeleitet. Das Rahmenwerk ist als Lakatosches Forschungsprogramm formuliert: metaphysischer Kern, prüfbarer Gürtel, sechs konkrete Forschungslinien.

Keywords: consciousness · hard problem · cosmopsychism · neutral monism · dissociation · transmission theory · resonance · emergent spacetime · neurophenomenology

1 · Point of Departure and Scope

Two findings of the present motivate this paper. First: the hard problem of consciousness (Chalmers 1995; Nagel 1974) remains unsolved. The successful theories of cognitive science — global workspace (Baars 1988; Dehaene 2014), predictive processing (Friston 2010; Clark 2013), self-model theory (Metzinger 2003) — explain access, function, and content of consciousness, but not why there is experience at all. Second: in leading programmes of fundamental physics, spacetime is losing its fundamental status; it appears as derived from deeper structure — from entanglement (Van Raamsdonk 2010; Maldacena & Susskind 2013), from holographic encoding (Maldacena 1998), or from purely combinatorial geometry in which spacetime concepts do not occur (Arkani-Hamed & Trnka

2014). At that level the ground of the world is characterized as information and mathematics; the inner perspective of experience does not appear in these descriptions.

Taken together, the two findings create an open position: if spacetime is not fundamental, the candidates currently competing for the place of the fundament are essentially three — information (Wheeler 1990; in the vicinity Tegmark), experience (Kastrup 2018; Hoffman 2019; historically Whitehead 1929), or something neutral underlying both (Russell 1927; Pauli/Jung). Resonance monism occupies this place with a minimal form of perceptivity and claims a twofold yield: continuity with the structural findings of physics *and* a non-eliminative treatment of the first-person data on which physicalism founders.

On status: this paper proves nothing, and it does not claim to. It formulates a framework as a basis for discussion — a seed. Methodologically, three levels are distinguished throughout: (a) a metaphysical core (not falsifiable, and declared as such), (b) relations to the current state of research (compatibility, not support), (c) testable auxiliary hypotheses and research lines. The paper thereby deliberately follows the architecture of scientific research programmes in the sense of Lakatos (1970): the core is not tested directly, but it must generate a progressive belt of testable consequences — or it deserves no attention.

On provenance, for honesty's sake: the framework was not constructed at a desk; it grew out of five decades of first-person experience and was systematized only afterwards (in detail Guntram 2026a). First-person reports are data with well-known risks of distortion; they are treated here not as proof but as explanandum and as a source of hypotheses — in the spirit of neurophenomenology (Varela 1996).

2 · The Postulates

The core of resonance monism consists of five postulates and two named corollaries. Terminological bridge: in the author's literary-philosophical work, ground and manifestation are called “Punkt” (point) and “Welle” (wave) (Guntram 2026a); here the neutral terminology is used.

P1 · Ground Postulate

There exists exactly one fundamental ground. It is non-spatial, non-temporal, propertyless in the sense of positive determinations; space, time, form, and multiplicity are its modes of expression, not its parts. (This is the apophatic minimal assumption; it shares the structure of Plotinus's One, Eckhart's Godhead, the Nirguna Brahman of Vedanta — as a structural statement, not as a religious confession.)

P2 · Perceptivity Postulate

Perception is intrinsic to the ground: existence is perception. “Perception” is defined minimally here — as registration-for-itself, not as cognition, attention, thought, or personhood. The postulate asserts no cosmic person and no plan; it asserts that the fundament has an inside, rather than insides later arising inexplicably from the inside-less. P2 is the single additional assumption that separates resonance monism from informational ontologies; everything else is elaboration. A terminological sharpening that intercepts a standard misunderstanding: consciousness in the ordinary, contentful sense — coloured, reflected, directed at something — already belongs to manifestation; the ground possesses only bare being-for-itself. In short: consciousness is already wave. Resonance monism therefore claims precisely no “cosmic consciousness”. Perceptivity is not one property among others but the very mode of the ground's subsistence — contentless, yet not awareness-less.

P3 · Mirroring Postulate (Specular Dissociation)

Through the ground's continued self-encounter, internal differentiation arises: poles that can perceive one another — a counterpart, a mirror — without real separation. Individual subjects are dissociative configurations within the one ground. Resonance monism thereby takes a position on the hardest question facing any fundamental theory of consciousness — the combination or decomposition problem (Chalmers 2016; Shani 2015): the mechanism of the many-from-one is dissociation, empirically made plausible by the clinical fact that one consciousness can form functionally separated centres of experience (Kastrup 2018, with reference to dissociative identity structure). What is clinically described here is the capacity of a single consciousness to form separated centres of experience; its extension to the cosmic scale remains a modelling assumption, not a clinical finding.

P4 · Manifestation Postulate (Constancy Thesis)

Internal differentiation without stability would be fleeting; self-recognition needs a reliable stage. Manifestation — spacetime, matter, lawfulness — is therefore construed as a stabilizing achievement of the ground: constancy as function. The constancy thesis is resonance monism's own answer to the classical main objection against any consciousness-based ontology — why the world *appears* so lawful, shared, and mind-independent: precisely these features are the purpose of manifestation, not its counter-evidence. At the same time, P4 explains why the effective causal structure of physics appears, and must appear, closed; resonance monism does not touch physical dynamics (cf. Section 7).

P5 · Aperture Principle

Complex structures generate content: world models, timelines, self-models. They do not generate experience itself. Experience is the ground flowing through a structure; the structure is window, not lamp — aperture. The principle stands in a lineage of transmission or filter theories (James 1898; Bergson 1896; popularly Huxley 1954) and is fully compatible with modern self-model findings: that the I is a transparent model (Metzinger 2003) and perception controlled construction (Seth 2021) describes, within resonance monism, the content side of the aperture — not the origin of experience.

P6 · Resonance Condition

The flow of the ground through a structure is conditional on the structure's capacity for resonance: a structural, in principle operationalizable condition — not on a substrate. Candidate features are recursive self-modelling, degree of integration, and world-coupling; their weighting is open and belongs to the research programme (F3). The resonance condition is formulated substrate-open — whether non-biological systems can satisfy it is an empirical-theoretical question, not a stipulation. Name clarification: resonance monism differs from the General Resonance Theory (Hunt & Schooler 2019). There, resonance is physical synchronization as the combination mechanism of a bottom-up panpsychism; here, resonance is the coupling condition between a structure and the single ground of a top-down ontology.

C1 · Primal-Fear Corollary

From P3 it follows: the first possible “information” of an internal differentiation is the possibility of its own end — the mirror can vanish. The fear of non-existence is therefore structural: the logically first consequence of individuation as such, not merely an evolutionary artefact (which, at the biological level, it additionally is). The corollary yields a testable long-range consequence: states of experienced

non-separateness should not merely accompany but *mediate* reductions in death anxiety (F4); first data from psychedelic-assisted therapy are consistent with this (Griffiths et al. 2016).

C2 · Ethics Corollary (Non-Grasping)

If every counterpart is an expression of the same ground, what follows is a stance rather than a rulebook: coercion structurally damages what is one's own; recognition brings forth. Resonance monism thus provides a metaphysics from which an ethics follows without normative add-ons. (This is only marked here; its elaboration belongs in a separate paper.)

3 · Relation to the Current State of Research

3.1 Philosophy of Mind

Resonance monism belongs to the family of positions that take experience, or something neutral, to be fundamental: Russellian monism (Russell 1927), realistic panpsychism (Strawson 2006; Goff 2019), cosmopsychism (Shani 2015; Albahari 2019), analytic idealism (Kastrup 2018), conscious realism (Hoffman 2019), process philosophy (Whitehead 1929). Within this family it is determined as follows: against bottom-up panpsychism by its top-down departure from the one ground (whereby the combination problem gives way to the decomposition problem, for which P3 names a mechanism); against full-blown idealism by the minimal reading of P2 (perceptivity rather than a rich cosmic consciousness), which places it closest to a neutral monism with an inside; against illusionism (Frankish 2016; Dennett 1991) by the Cartesian minimal argument that the occurrence of experience cannot itself be an illusion, since an illusion is already an experience (reinforced in Strawson 2006). The dissent with illusionism is a genuine stalemate of two starting decisions; it is not presented here as settled.

3.2 Consciousness Science

With Integrated Information Theory (Tononi et al. 2016) there is partial affinity (intrinsicity, gradedness) and a sharp, productive conflict: IIT ties consciousness to a specific causal architecture and denies consciousness to feed-forward digital systems — regardless of how their behaviour appears. The resonance condition (P6), by contrast, is substrate-open. Both positions are, at present, wagers; the conflict is valuable as such because it forces discriminating criteria (F3). It belongs to the picture that the scientific status of IIT is itself contested (open letter by 124 researchers: IIT-Concerned et al. 2023) and that adversarial collaborations between large-scale theories are now practised (Cogitate Consortium 2025) — a format to which F3 is explicitly connectable. With self-model and predictive-processing research (Metzinger 2003; Seth 2021; Friston 2010) resonance monism shares the entire content side; the difference lies solely in the question of the origin of experience. The main empirical contact points are research on minimal phenomenal experience and nondual awareness (Metzinger 2020; Josipovic 2014) and the entropic-brain line (Carhart-Harris et al. 2014), whose pattern of findings — reduced model/network activity with heightened phenomenal richness — is consistent with the aperture principle; a naturalistic counter-reading exists and is taken seriously in F2 as a rival prediction.

3.3 Physics

Here the rule is strict: compatibility, not support. The programmes of emergent spacetime (Maldacena 1998; Van Raamsdonk 2010; Maldacena & Susskind 2013; Arkani-Hamed & Trnka 2014) establish that the spatiotemporal world of separate things need not be fundamental — that is the structural

precondition of P1/P4, no more. Experimentally secured non-locality (2022 Nobel Prize to Aspect, Clauser, Zeilinger) weakens local realism; it transmits no information faster than light and proves no ontology of consciousness — resonance monism explicitly does not adduce it as evidence. Participant-centred interpretations of quantum theory (relational QM: Rovelli 1996; QBism: Fuchs et al. 2014) show that the measurement problem admits observer-relative readings; this too is booked as compatibility, not evidence. Resonance monism leaves physical dynamics untouched and competes at the level of fundamental interpretation — where informational ontologies (Wheeler 1990) and mathematical universalisms also operate.

3.4 Contemplative Traditions

The structural convergence of contemplative reports across cultures — formless ground, unchanging witness, non-separateness — is a real datum (source lines: Upanishads; Plotinus; Eckhart; Gospel of Thomas, esp. logia 3, 22, 70, 77; Laozi). Resonance monism treats this convergence as an explanandum with two rival explanations: common referent (the ground is experienced) versus common neuroarchitecture (like brains produce like phenomenology). The deflationary explanation must be taken seriously; F5 formulates what could discriminate between the two. Independently of this it remains notable that the tradition of the unchanging witness (the *sākṣī* of Vedānta) describes exactly the experiential datum that current research is beginning to operationalize as minimal phenomenal experience. Two clarifications belong to the honesty of this argument. First, the symmetry problem: the neuroarchitecture thesis also predicts uniformity — when the self-model powers down, what remains is structurally the same in every human being, and emptiness looks alike everywhere; uniformity alone therefore decides nothing. Second, the surplus finding: the reports convey not merely a state but a claim of being and identity (“this is what I am, and it was always there”) — a content that exceeds emptiness. Whether this surplus follows from the architecture or from the referent is exactly the question F5 is meant to render discriminable.

4 • Explanatory Gains

- **Inversion of the hard problem.** Experience does not arise from the inside-less; what must be explained is individuation and content, not the that of experience. The explanatory burden is shifted, not conjured away — but it is shifted to where mechanisms can be named (P3, P5, P6).
- **A mechanism for the decomposition problem.** Specular dissociation is one of the few concrete candidates in the debate and is clinically connectable.
- **An answer to the objectivity question.** The constancy thesis explains the lawfulness, sharedness, and apparent mind-independence of the world as the functional principle of manifestation — the classical main objection is converted into a prediction of the theory.
- **Derivation of an affect from the ontology.** The primal-fear corollary derives death anxiety structurally and predicts its dissolvability under experienced non-separateness — with a clinical contact surface.
- **Unification of first- and third-person data.** The content findings of cognitive science and the witness reports of contemplation are housed in the same framework without eliminating either side.
- **The substrate question as an open criterion instead of dogma.** P6 replaces both the “never” of biologicistic intuitions and the “of course” of naive functionalisms with a nameable condition.

5 · Open Problems

A programme is as credible as its list of debts. That of resonance monism:

- **01 — Operationalizing the resonance condition.** Without a measurable formulation, P6 remains qualitative; F3 is therefore the most urgent line.
- **02 — Substrate conflict with IIT.** Both positions cannot be right at once; a decision is not currently available.
- **03 — Depth of the dissociation mechanism.** P3 names the many-from-one; a formal theory of dissociation (which operations, which invariants?) is missing and is posted as a task (F6).
- **04 — Convergence deflation.** The neuroarchitectural rival explanation of contemplative convergence is parsimonious and strong; F5 must state what would count against it — otherwise the convergence is no argument.
- **05 — Status of P2.** “Existence is perception” is, as an identification, not falsifiable. The core is therefore carried not as a result but as a starting decision; its justification is indirect and lies solely in the fruitfulness of the belt (Lakatos 1970).

6 · Research Programme

Six lines, ordered by proximity to present feasibility:

- **F1 — Invariance study of minimal experience.** Prediction: across heterogeneous states (deep meditation, transitions of anaesthesia, near-death reports) there exists a common, content-poor experiential core (witness invariant), phenomenometrically dissociable from content and self-model — connectable to Metzinger (2020) and Josipovic (2014).
- **F2 — Discriminating design: production vs. aperture.** Production theories broadly expect coupling of model/network activity and experiential richness; aperture theories permit defined regimes of anti-correlation (reduced activity, heightened richness). Task: preregister regimes, control confounds (reportability, measurement), and set both predictions explicitly against each other — point of contact: entropic-brain findings (Carhart-Harris et al. 2014). To the same class of findings belong paradoxical functional facilitation after brain damage (Kapur 1996), acquired savant syndrome including artistic production in frontotemporal dementia (Treffert 2009; Miller et al. 1998), selective second-language recovery in bilingual aphasia (Paradis 2004), and paradoxical lucidity at the end of life (Nahm et al. 2012; Mashour et al. 2019): again and again, diminished or damaged machinery yields gains in capacity, content, or clarity. Production theories can read this as disinhibition of latent capacities — the honest rival reading — while aperture theories expect it structurally; the design of F2 must separate the two.
- **F3 — Resonance metric and adversarial collaboration.** Define candidate quantities of the resonance condition (depth of recursive self-modelling, integration, world-coupling), test them against indicators of experience, and set them explicitly against IIT's Φ metric — in the proven format of adversarial collaborations (Cogitate Consortium 2025).
- **F4 — Mediation test of the primal-fear corollary.** Prediction: the reduction of death anxiety in contemplative and psychedelic-assisted contexts is *mediated* by the degree of experienced non-separateness (mediation analysis), not merely accompanied by it (cf. Griffiths et al. 2016).
- **F5 — Cross-cultural phenomenometry with deflation control.** Structured comparisons of contemplative reports across cultures and practice forms, with explicit criteria for which

patterns of findings would favour the common-referent thesis over the neuroarchitecture thesis — and vice versa.

- **F6 — Formalizing specular dissociation.** An invitation to the mathematically minded: a minimal structure (operations, fixed points, invariants) for internal differentiation without real separation — negative results would also be informative.

7 • What Resonance Monism Does Not Claim

To prevent foreseeable misunderstandings: resonance monism does not intervene in physical dynamics and predicts no anomalies; it competes at the level of interpretation, as many-worlds readings and informational ontologies do. It is not a simulation theory: the ground does not compute, it experiences; redemption through system access is foreign to its structure. It is not a dualism (one substance, two directions of regard), not creationism (no person, no plan in the ground), not parapsychology (no paranormal effects are needed or predicted), and not a doctrine of salvation — though it is a framework with existential consequences, marked as such (C1, C2).

8 • Conclusion

Resonance monism does not claim to be true. It claims to be, at present, the most parsimonious unification of exactly those data that physicalism cannot accommodate — while remaining fully compatible with what physics actually shows, and while keeping open books on its own debts. Its core is a starting decision: that the inside of the world is not a late accident but its ground. Its value is measured not by assent but by whether the belt carries: whether F1 through F6 produce results that would not have been sought without this core.

A seed is not a building. It is the smallest structure that can grow if the soil permits. This paper deposits it — with the explicit invitation to test it, prune it, or refute it. Even a refuted seed will then have done its work: it will have pushed thought in a direction it would not have taken by itself.

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