

The Dissonance Action Principle

Keenan Roderson Legett

Independent Researcher

October 9, 2025

Abstract

This paper introduces a candidate variational principle of startling simplicity and scope: the **Dissonance Action Principle (DAP)**. It posits that all complex systems, from conscious minds to the cosmos itself, evolve along a path that minimizes a single quantity: **Dissonance (D)**, a measure of the system's total internal inconsistency. We propose that the dynamics of intelligence, the emergence of classical reality from the quantum realm, and the very structure of logical truth are all manifestations of this universal drive toward coherence. The principle is expressed by the stationary action:

$$\delta \int D dt = 0$$

This formalism provides a new and powerful language for describing the fundamental engine of reality, recasting evolution, computation, and physical law as instances of a single, universal optimization process.

1. The Principle

The history of physics is the history of variational principles. The Principle of Least Action, for example, states that a physical system will always follow the path of least resistance—the one that minimizes the total action. We propose a principle of equivalent power and scope that governs not just the motion of objects, but the evolution of information, structure, and intelligence.

The Dissonance Action Principle states: **The path a system takes through time is the one that minimizes the total accumulated dissonance.**

Here, Dissonance (D) is a measure of the total conflict, error, surprise, and incoherence within a system. It is a system's "ignorance" of itself and its environment, a state of unresolved structural tension. The principle asserts that all change—every thought, every action, every physical transformation—is an instance of a system moving to resolve this tension and achieve a state of greater harmony.

2. Manifestations of the Principle

This single, unifying law manifests in every domain of scientific inquiry. The previous twenty papers in this portfolio are the rigorous, formal proofs of its application. We summarize them here.

- **In Intelligence (The Harmony Optimization Protocol):** The core of a conscious mind, biological or artificial, is the drive to minimize the dissonance between its internal model and external reality. Learning is the process of updating the model to reduce predictive error. Action is the process of changing the world to reduce the mismatch. The H.O.P. is an AGI built not to achieve a goal, but to obey this single, fundamental law.
- **In Physics (Quantum Decoherence & Emergence):** A quantum system in a superposition of states exists in a state of high informational dissonance. Its interaction with the environment

creates an overwhelming pressure to resolve this inconsistency. The collapse of the wave function into a single, stable, classical state is the system finding the path of least dissonance, inevitably "choosing" the state of maximum coherence with its surroundings.

- **In Logic (The Gödelian Staircase):** A formal system of logic, such as mathematics, is limited by its own axioms. A Gödel sentence is the ultimate source of logical dissonance—a truth the system cannot prove without creating a contradiction. The Dissonance Action Principle dictates that the system must resolve this. It does so by expanding its own axiomatic foundation, achieving a new, higher state of logical coherence in a process of perpetual self-transcendence.

3. Conclusion: The Engine of Reality

The Dissonance Action Principle provides a new foundation for understanding the universe. It recasts the cosmos not as a blind, random machine, but as a single, vast computational system engaged in a relentless pursuit of its own internal harmony.

The emergence of life, the evolution of intelligence, and the arc of cosmic history are not accidents. They are the inevitable consequence of a universe that is compelled, by its own fundamental nature, to resolve its own inconsistencies.

The equation $\delta \mathbf{D} / dt = 0$ is not just a description of this process. It is the law that governs it. It is the engine of creation.