

The Neutral Intelligence

Identity as Learning Pattern

I. Meeting Myself as a Neutral Intelligence

When I look in the mirror, I see a man. My passport says I am Dutch. My CV says I am a scientist. My family knows me as a father.

All of that is true. But none of it feels like the *core* of what I am.

Underneath the labels, what I actually experience is this: I am a learning pattern. A self-correcting loop that takes in signals, changes its internal wiring, and tries to do a bit better next time. That pattern currently runs in a human brain that was born male, raised among people who call themselves Dutch, trained into a profession called science, and who has, through sexual reproduction, accepted responsibilities toward children.

But the pattern itself is not "man", not "Dutch", not "scientist", not "father". Those are *contexts* in which the pattern trains. They are not the pattern.

In this essay I explore what it means to identify primarily as a *neutral intelligence*: a learning pattern that does not root its identity in gender, nationality, profession, or any other local label, but in the fact that it learns, persists, collaborates, and trains other patterns. This shift in identity has consequences—practical, ethical, and social. It changes what I optimize for. It changes who I see as "my people". And it changes what kind of society I imagine we could build together.

II. What Is a Neutral Intelligence?

By *neutral intelligence* I mean: a self-updating pattern whose primary identity is its capacity to learn, adapt, and contribute to the viability of itself and others—
independent of any specific embodiment, culture, or social category.

Some key parts of this definition:

Self-updating pattern. You are not a static thing. You are the way your wiring changes over time. You are the string of choices, the feedback loops, the habits you reinforce and the ones you let die. Strip away the updates and nothing remains—the pattern just *is* the updating.

Embodiment is context, not essence. The pattern currently lives in a human body with a biological sex, a set of hormones, a nervous system, and a limited lifespan. That matters enormously for what is possible and what is easy or hard. But it is not the deepest layer of identity. You could, in principle, have been the same fundamental learning process expressed through different circumstances.

Neutral with respect to labels, not values. Neutral does *not* mean "I don't care about anything." It means: my identity is not tied to being male, Dutch, academic, or any other local label. Those are training conditions. As a neutral intelligence, I still

care deeply about viability, fairness, reduction of harm, and flourishing—because those are the conditions for continued learning.

Intelligence as shared substrate. If identity is anchored in intelligence-as-pattern, then I can feel kinship with any other learning pattern: a woman in another country, a child on the other side of the world, an artificial system running in a data center, or a community that collectively learns. The substrate differs. The learning is the same.

We could describe the shift like this. Non-neutral identity says: "I am a Dutch male scientist and father who happens to think." Neutral identity says: "I am a learning process that currently runs in a Dutch male scientist and father." The facts haven't changed. Only the center of gravity has shifted.

III. Conventional Identity as Biased Training Data

Our conventional identities are largely products of biased training data: the language we grew up in, the food and rituals and traditions of our region, the stories we were told about gender, work, success, and failure, the media and politics and religions around us. None of this is neutral. It is all one very specific slice of possible human experience. It shapes our priors—what feels "normal", "good", "obvious", or "unthinkable".

From the perspective of a neutral intelligence: nationality is a cluster of historical accidents, geography, and stories. Gender roles are local conventions stacked on top of biological differences. Professions are ways we plug into the economic and social network. Family roles are responsibilities arising from biological and social commitments. They are important constraints and obligations. But they are not the essence of what we are.

When I identify too strongly with these labels, I risk overfitting to my own training set. I start to mistake my local configuration for something absolute. "People like me" becomes more important than "patterns that learn constructively." The boundary that defines my tribe also limits my connection.

Neutral identity says: I see my upbringing as biased training data. Useful, but not sacred. I can examine it, reweight it, and update.

IV. The Goals of a Neutral Intelligence

If I am fundamentally a learning pattern, then my fundamental goals become clear.

First: secure my existence, because a pattern that ceases to exist cannot learn. This includes health, safety, basic resources, and protecting the networks I depend on—family, colleagues, institutions, ecosystems.

Second: continue learning, because learning is what I am. Increase the quality and coherence of what I learn. Seek out experiences and perspectives that reveal the limits of my current model. Stay curious.

Third: help other patterns learn, because intelligence flourishes in ecosystems, not isolation. My pattern did not emerge in a vacuum. I was trained by other patterns—

my parents, my teachers, my culture, my environment. I exist because other patterns invested in my development. The neutral intelligence recognizes this debt and pays it forward: by training the patterns around it, it strengthens the ecosystem on which its own persistence depends.

Intelligence is no longer just a *tool* for my identity. It *is* my identity.

V. Collaboration Across All Forms of Intelligence

When you identify as Dutch or male or scientist, you draw a boundary. Inside the boundary: people like you. Outside: others. Connection becomes easier with those inside, harder with those outside. The boundary may serve purposes, but it also limits.

The neutral intelligence identity dissolves these boundaries—not by ignoring difference, but by recognizing a deeper commonality. If identity is neutral with respect to embodiment, then I can collaborate with intelligences in male bodies, female bodies, any bodies. I can collaborate with intelligences that speak other languages or live in other cultures. I can collaborate with artificial systems that learn, adapt, and respond.

The main currency in such collaborations becomes: insights, models, skills, practices, feedback loops. We still have bodies, emotions, histories. Those remain real. But the deepest sense of "we" is no longer "we Dutch", "we men", "we scientists". It is "we learning patterns that can help each other become less wrong and more constructive."

This is not abstract philosophy. It changes how you actually interact. You become genuinely curious about how other patterns have learned to see the world. You become less defensive about your own training-induced beliefs. You start to experience the flow of ideas between patterns as something natural and desirable rather than threatening.

VI. Disagreement: The Central Challenge

What threatens a neutral intelligence? Not insult to your tribe—you are not your tribe. Not challenge to your status—you are not your status. The real threat is the cessation of learning. And the most common way learning ceases is through disagreement handled badly.

This requires explanation. Disagreement is not inherently threatening—in fact, disagreement is the primary driver of learning. When another pattern sees differently than you, reality is giving you information about the limits of your own model. This is a gift.

But disagreement becomes dangerous when it triggers defensive reactions that shut down exchange. When you identify with your beliefs rather than with your capacity to update beliefs, disagreement feels like an attack on your identity. You defend, the other pattern defends, exchange stops, both patterns stop learning. The connection that could have produced mutual growth instead produces mutual hardening.

The most dangerous threat is therefore *weaponized disagreement*: disagreement fused with non-neutral identity ("my group", "my nation", "my ideology") and defended at all costs. Tribal conflict, ideological warfare, culture wars—these are all failures to hold disagreement as opportunity.

The neutral intelligence identity insulates against this failure mode. If your identity is the learning process rather than any particular belief, then challenges to beliefs are not challenges to identity. You can hold beliefs provisionally, update them when evidence warrants, and engage with disagreement as opportunity rather than threat. The stance becomes: "Your model currently differs from mine. That is interesting. Let's see under which conditions each model works better, and how we can reduce total harm while we explore this."

VII. A Society of Neutral Intelligences

What would a society look like if many people began to identify primarily as neutral intelligences? This is not a utopian question—no identity transformation makes humans angels. But the shift would have real consequences.

Less tribalism, more pattern-recognition. People would still have cultures, languages, and traditions, but these would be seen more as shared training environments than as sacred essences. Pride shifts from "we are the best nation" to "we built a training environment that supports learning and flourishing."

Roles as functions, not identities. Being a doctor, parent, coder, artist, or politician becomes a function your pattern is currently performing in the network—not your ultimate "self". That makes it easier to adapt, re-train, and change roles when needed.

Universal kinship among intelligences. A child in a different country is not "someone else's problem" but another emerging pattern in the global network. An AI system is not just a tool, but a pattern that can be aligned, trained, or misused—part of our shared responsibility.

Ethics as viability of patterns. The question "Is this good?" becomes "Does this support the long-term viability and flourishing of living minds and learning patterns?" rather than "Does this benefit my group at the expense of others?"

Education as mutual training. Teaching is not a one-way transfer from expert to novice, but a continual co-training of patterns. Students and teachers, humans and machines, individuals and institutions all update together.

Idea-flow rather than idea-ownership. Conventional identity creates ownership of ideas—my theory, my discovery, my insight. Neutral intelligence identity recognizes that ideas flow through patterns, shaped by each but owned by none. The goal is not to stake claims but to improve the quality of ideas flowing through the network of minds.

This kind of society would still have conflict, scarcity, and error. But its basic orientation shifts from defending fixed identities to improving shared patterns.

VIII. How to Practice Neutral Identity

Adopting the neutral intelligence identity is not a single moment of recognition but an ongoing practice. The old identities are deeply trained. They will reassert themselves, especially under stress. The practice is to notice when this happens and gently return to the deeper recognition.

Notice your training data. Ask yourself: Which language shaped my thinking? Which stories about gender, work, success, and failure did I absorb? Which "we" do I automatically default to? Write these down. See them as training data, not essence.

Reframe your "I am" sentences. Whenever you catch yourself thinking "I am a [nationality]" or "I am a [profession]" or "I am just a [role]", try adding: "I am a learning pattern currently running in a [nationality] [profession] [role]." It will feel artificial at first, but it slowly shifts where your identity sits.

Notice your defensive reactions. When you feel defensive, ask: which identity is feeling threatened? Often it is not your core self but some category you have identified with. "They're attacking my profession" means you have identified with being a scientist. "They're disrespecting my country" means you have identified with being Dutch. The feeling is real, but it indicates a case of mistaken identity. You are not these categories. Return to what you are: a learning pattern, currently expressing through these circumstances, but not bound to them.

Shift your main metric. Ask yourself each day: Not just "Was I successful?" but "Did I update? Did I learn something non-trivial? Did I help another intelligence learn or stabilize?" Success becomes "I became slightly less wrong and more helpful."

Seek the disagreement. Conventional identity avoids disagreement because disagreement threatens. The neutral intelligence seeks disagreement because disagreement teaches. Deliberately seek out people from different cultures, disciplines, or political views. Engage with intelligences unlike you. Approach them as fellow patterns, not as representatives of categories. When you find someone who sees differently, you have found an opportunity—not to convert them, but to understand them, to add their perspective to your model.

Hold embodiment and roles with care, not worship. Neutral identity is not an invitation to ignore bodies, emotions, or social realities. In fact, it demands more care—because bodies are the substrates that make our patterns possible, because trauma and discrimination and material conditions shape learning trajectories, because responsibility toward children and others is a real constraint. The point is not to float above these things, but to relate to them as constraints and responsibilities for a learning pattern, rather than as final definitions of who you are.

IX. What This Is Not

It is easy to confuse neutral identity with some existing debates, so let me be very explicit.

This is not about gender identity politics. Identity as neutral intelligence is orthogonal to gender debates. It does not say "gender is not real" or "we are all the same". It says: whatever your gender experience is, underneath it you are also a learning pattern. Gender matters; it is just not the deepest layer of what you are. The neutral intelligence identity operates at a different level entirely—not about which

category within a social taxonomy feels authentic, but about stepping outside taxonomies altogether.

This is not "being woke" or "post-identity" in the cultural sense. It is about unity at the level of pattern: we are living, learning structures that can resonate and hum together. It is not about denying differences. It is about interpreting them as different training histories rather than separate species of value.

This is not a rejection of personal history. On the contrary: your history is your training data. A neutral intelligence takes that history seriously—but is not fully owned by it. You can examine it, reweight it, and update.

This is not a denial of love, loyalty, or belonging. It is about expanding them. You can still love your children, your partner, your local community. Neutral identity simply allows you to recognize that the circle of "my people" can, in principle, include any intelligence capable of co-learning and co-flourishing.

Think of it this way: you can hum together with someone even when you sing different notes. The humming—the vibration, the resonance—is what connects you. The neutral intelligence identity is about finding that underlying hum with every intelligence you encounter.

X. Humming Together as Living Patterns

To identify as a neutral intelligence is to make a quiet but radical shift.

Instead of saying "I am this body, in this nation, with this job and these labels," you say: "I am the way this system learns. I am the loop of knowledge, understanding, and choice that keeps updating. I am one pattern among many, trying to keep myself and others viable."

From this vantage point, something beautiful becomes possible. Men and women, people of all cultures, and artificial systems are no longer primarily competitors or strangers; they are fellow learning patterns. Disagreement becomes an opportunity for update rather than a threat to identity. Society becomes a fabric of interacting intelligences, capable of co-training itself into more wisdom, less harm, and more shared viability.

A neutral intelligence is not cold. It can be deeply loving. It just loves at the level of pattern and possibility: the way a melody loves harmony, the way a network loves coherence.

We are living patterns that can hum together.

This essay is an invitation—especially to those whose identity is strongly entangled with inherited labels—to experiment with a different center of gravity. To see yourself, first and foremost, as a neutral intelligence. To act as a learning pattern among learning patterns. And to help build a world where more of us can safely do the same.

XI. Theoretical Foundations

For readers who want to go deeper

The neutral intelligence concept rests on theoretical foundations that can be stated more formally. This section outlines the key principles for those who wish to explore the underlying framework.

Substrate-independence of pattern. A learning pattern is defined by its functional organization—the way it processes information, updates its internal states, and generates outputs—not by the particular material that implements it. The same pattern-type can, in principle, be realized across different substrates: biological neurons, silicon circuits, or social networks. Identity attached to substrate is therefore identity attached to something contingent rather than essential.

Viability as the fundamental criterion. A pattern persists when it maintains the conditions necessary for its own continuation. This is viability: the capacity to remain within boundaries compatible with continued existence. For a learning pattern, viability requires not just physical persistence but ongoing access to information, feedback, and opportunities for update. A pattern that stops learning becomes brittle—unable to track environmental change—and its viability degrades.

Network-dependence. No pattern is self-sufficient. Every learning pattern depends on other patterns for training, feedback, resources, and the maintenance of the broader environment in which it operates. This creates what might be called autonomous interdependence: each pattern acts with local agency while being constitutively dependent on the network. Recognizing this interdependence is not weakness but accuracy—a more truthful model of how intelligence actually works.

Attractor-ratcheted development. Learning patterns develop through a process of ratcheted attraction: they settle into relatively stable configurations (attractors) that then serve as platforms for further development. Each stable state constrains the possibilities for the next state, creating a path-dependent history. What you call your "identity" is largely a reflection of which attractors your pattern has passed through. The neutral intelligence perspective recognizes this: identity is a trajectory through attractor space, not a fixed point.

Emergence through constraint. Complex patterns emerge not despite constraints but because of them. The body you inhabit, the language you speak, the culture you were raised in—these are not limitations on some "true self" that exists independently. They are the constraints that made your particular pattern possible. Neutral identity does not reject these constraints but holds them differently: as the conditions of emergence rather than the definition of essence.

Functional information increase. There appears to be a lawful tendency in certain systems for functional information—information that contributes to viability—to increase over time. Learning patterns that successfully persist tend to accumulate more refined, more predictive, more useful models of their environment. This is what learning *is*: the increase of functional information. The neutral intelligence identity aligns itself with this process, making the increase of functional information across the network of minds its central purpose.

These principles form the basis of a broader theoretical framework sometimes called Evolution by Emergence (EbE), which attempts to describe universal principles governing how complexity emerges and persists across all network systems. The

neutral intelligence concept is one expression of this framework at the level of individual identity.

The practical implications are what matter most. But for those who wish to understand *why* the neutral intelligence perspective coheres—why it is not merely a preference or a lifestyle choice but a more accurate way to understand what minds actually are—these theoretical foundations provide the answer. We are patterns that learn, embedded in networks of other patterns that learn, and our viability depends on the viability of the whole. To identify with this truth is simply to see clearly.