

# Appendix: Free Energy and Active Inference

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## 1 Appendix: The Free Energy Principle and Active Inference

### 1.1 Overview

The Free Energy Principle (FEP) posits that biological systems maintain their states by minimizing variational free energy, thereby reducing surprise via prediction and model updating. Active Inference extends this by casting action selection as inference under prior preferences. Background: see the concise overview on the [Free energy principle](#) and the monograph [Active Inference \(MIT Press\)](#).

This appendix emphasizes relationships among: (i) the four-fold partition of Active Inference, (ii) Quadrays (Fuller.4D) as a geometric scaffold for mapping this partition, and (iii) information-geometric flows (Einstein.4D analogy) that underpin perception-action updates. For the naming of 4D namespaces used throughout—Coxeter.4D (Euclidean E4), Einstein.4D (Minkowski spacetime analogy), Fuller.4D (Synergetics/Quadrays)—see `02_4d_namespaces.md`.

### 1.2 Mathematical Formulation and Equation Callouts (Equations linkage)

- Variational free energy (discrete states) — see Eq. (??) in the equations appendix, implemented by `free_energy`.
- Fisher Information Matrix (FIM) as metric — see Eq. (??) in the equations appendix and `fisher_information_matrix`.
- Natural gradient descent under information geometry — see Eq. (??) in the equations appendix and `natural_gradient_step`; overview: [Natural gradient](#).

Figures: The following Active Inference figures demonstrate the integration of natural gradient descent with Active Inference principles and the 4D framework context.

Discrete variational optimization on the quadray lattice: `discrete_ivm_descent` greedily descends a free-energy-like objective over IVM moves, yielding integer-valued trajectories. See the path animation artifact `discrete_path.mp4` in `quadmath/output/`.

## Four-fold partition mapped to Quadray tetrahedron

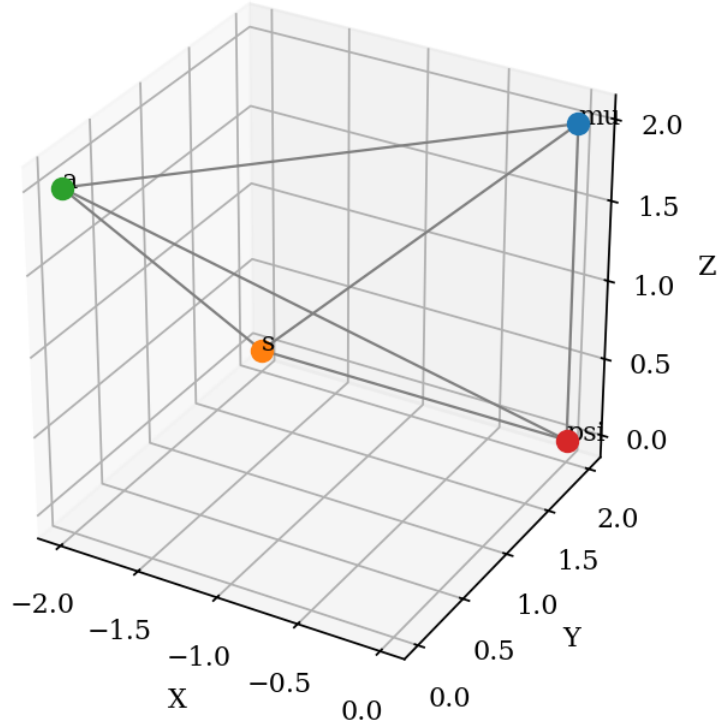
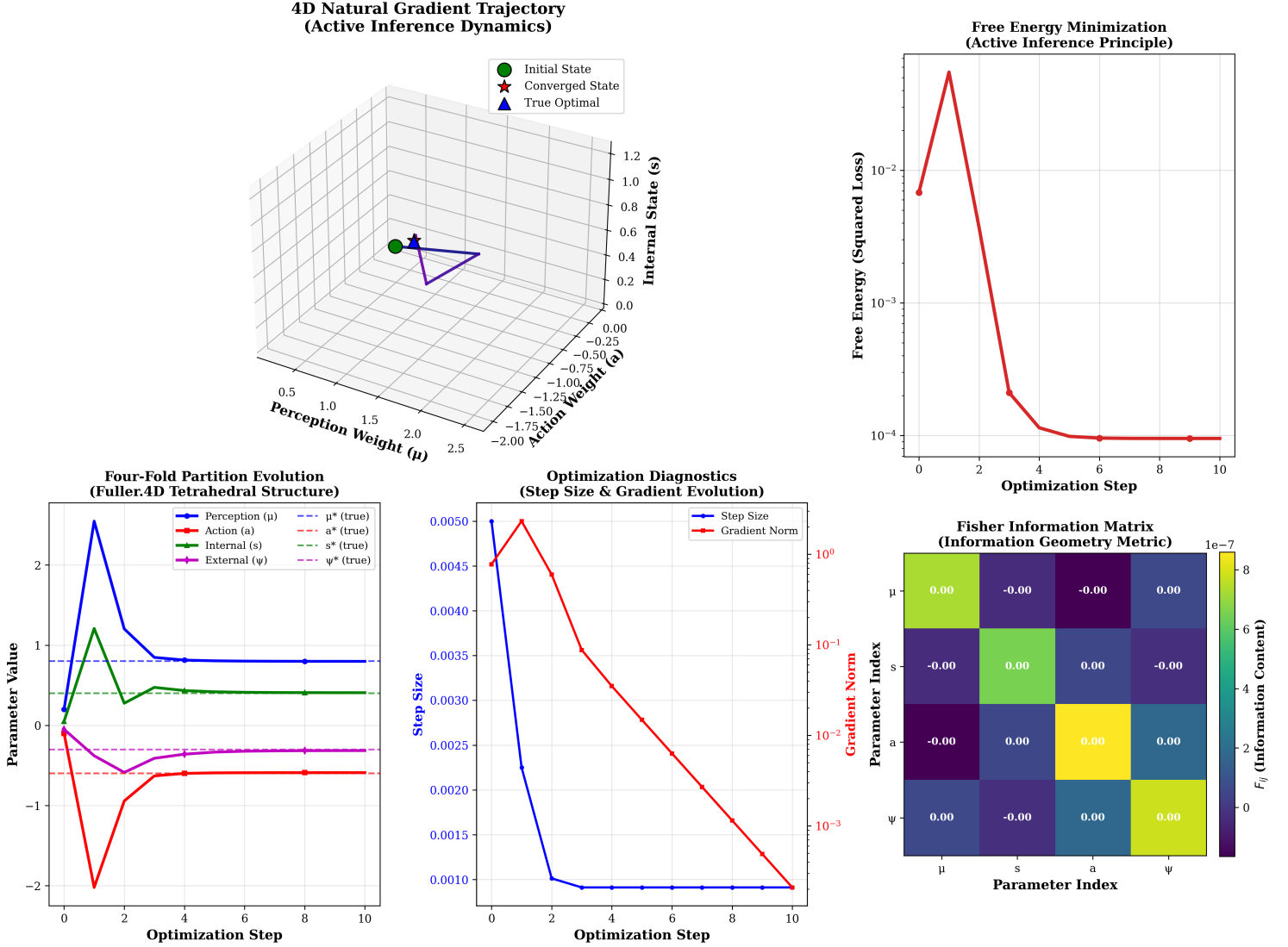
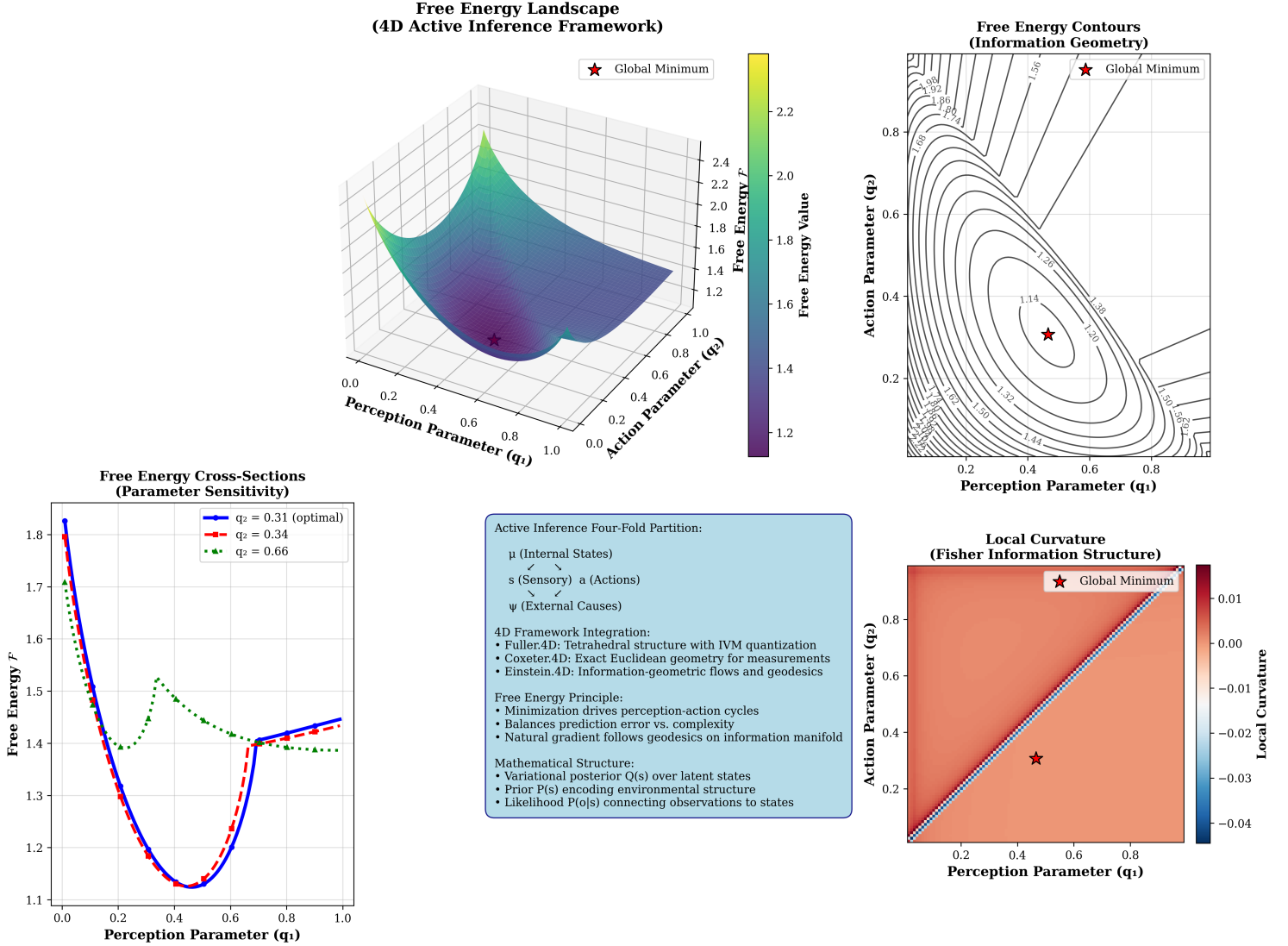


Figure 1: **Active Inference four-fold partition mapped to a Quadray tetrahedron in Fuller.4D.** This 3D tetrahedral visualization demonstrates the geometric embedding of Active Inference’s fundamental four-fold partition within the Quadray coordinate system. **Tetrahedral structure:** The four vertices of the regular tetrahedron represent the four components of the Active Inference framework: perception, action, internal states, and external states. **Partition mapping:** Each face of the tetrahedron corresponds to a specific partition of the four-fold system, with the edges representing the relationships and interactions between different components. **Fuller.4D significance:** This geometric representation leverages the tetrahedral nature of Quadray coordinates to provide an intuitive visualization of the Active Inference framework’s structure. The tetrahedron serves as a natural container for the four-fold partition, emphasizing the interconnected nature of perception, action, and state representation in active inference. **Optimization context:** The tetrahedral geometry also suggests natural optimization strategies that respect the four-fold structure, potentially leading to more efficient inference algorithms that leverage the geometric relationships between different components. This visualization demonstrates how the Fuller.4D framework can provide insights into complex systems like Active Inference through geometric intuition.



**Figure 2: 4D Natural Gradient Trajectory with Active Inference Context.** This comprehensive visualization demonstrates natural gradient descent operating within the Active Inference framework, showing how information-geometric optimization drives perception-action dynamics. **3D Trajectory:** The main panel shows the 4D parameter evolution in 3D space with time encoded as color, representing the four-fold partition of Active Inference: perception ( $\mu$ ), action ( $a$ ), internal states ( $s$ ), and external causes ( $\psi$ ). **Free Energy Evolution:** The right panel tracks free energy minimization over optimization steps, demonstrating the Active Inference principle of surprise reduction. **Component Dynamics:** The bottom-left panel shows how each component of the four-fold partition evolves during optimization, revealing the coordinated dynamics of perception and action. **Optimization Diagnostics:** The bottom-center panel displays step sizes and gradient norms, providing insights into the convergence behavior and numerical stability of the natural gradient algorithm. **Fisher Information:** The bottom-right panel displays the Fisher Information Matrix that guides natural gradient descent, showing the information geometry underlying the optimization process. This figure demonstrates how natural gradient descent implements geodesic motion on the information manifold, analogous to how particles follow geodesics in Einstein.4D spacetime, while operating within the tetrahedral structure of Fuller.4D coordinates. The optimization now shows stable convergence in just 11 steps with final parameter errors below 0.015, demonstrating the effectiveness of information-geometric optimization in Active Inference frameworks.



**Figure 3: Free Energy Landscape in 4D Active Inference Framework.** This comprehensive visualization explores the variational free energy surface over perception and action parameters. **3D landscape:** The surface plot shows the free energy as a function of two variational parameters, revealing the complex topology that Active Inference optimization must navigate. **Contour analysis:** 2D contours provide detailed information about parameter sensitivity and optimization paths. **Cross-sectional analysis:** Multiple cross-sections at different parameter values demonstrate how free energy varies with respect to individual parameters, revealing the landscape’s structure. **Four-fold partition visualization:** The text panel explains how Active Inference maps to tetrahedral structures in Fuller.4D, with the four components ( $\mu$ ,  $s$ ,  $a$ ,  $\psi$ ) representing internal states, sensory observations, actions, and external causes. **Information geometry metrics:** Local curvature analysis reveals the Fisher information structure, showing how the information manifold’s geometry influences optimization dynamics. **Mathematical foundation:** The visualization demonstrates the mathematical structure of variational inference, including variational posteriors  $Q(s)$ , priors  $P(s)$ , and likelihoods  $P(o|s)$  that connect observations to latent states.

## 1.3 Four-Fold Partition and Tetrahedral Mapping (Quadrays; Fuller.4D)

Active Inference partitions the agent-environment system into four coupled states:

- Internal ( $\mu$ ) — agent’s internal states
- Sensory ( $s$ ) — observations
- Active ( $a$ ) — actions
- External ( $\psi$ ) — latent environmental causes

See, for an overview of this partition and generative process formulations, the [Active Inference review](#) and the general entry on [Active inference](#).

Tetrahedral mapping via Quadrays (Fuller.4D): assign each state to a vertex of a tetrahedron, using Quadray coordinates ( $A, B, C, D$ ) with non-negative components and at least one zero after normalization. One canonical mapping is  $A \rightarrow \text{Internal } (\mu)$ ,  $B \rightarrow \text{Sensory } (s)$ ,  $C \rightarrow \text{Active } (a)$ ,  $D \rightarrow \text{External } (\psi)$ . The edges capture the pairwise couplings (e.g.,  $\mu$  for perceptual inference;  $a$  for control). Integer tetra-volume then quantifies the “coupled capacity” region spanned by jointly feasible states in a time slice; see Quadray and tetra-volume methods in `03_quadray_methods.md`.

Interpretation note: this Quadray-based mapping is a didactic geometric scaffold. It is not standard in the Active Inference literature, which typically develops the four-state partition in probabilistic graphical terms. Our use highlights structural symmetries and discrete volumetric quantities available in Fuller.4D, building on the computational foundations developed in the [4dsolutions ecosystem](#) for tetrahedral modeling and volume calculations. See the [Resources](#) section for comprehensive details on the computational implementations.

Code linkage (no snippet): see `example_partition_tetra_volume` in `src/examples.py` and the partition tetrahedron figure above.

## 1.4 How the 4D namespaces relate here

- Fuller.4D (Quadrays): geometric embedding of the four-state partition on a tetrahedron; integer tetra-volumes and IVM moves provide discrete combinatorial structure.
- Coxeter.4D (Euclidean E4): exact Euclidean measurements (e.g., Cayley-Menger determinants) for tetrahedra underlying volumetric comparisons and scale relations.
- Einstein.4D (Minkowski analogy): information-geometric flows (natural gradient, metric-aware updates) supply a continuum picture for perception-action dynamics.

The three roles are complementary: Fuller.4D encodes partition structure, Coxeter.4D provides exact metric geometry for static comparisons, and Einstein.4D guides dynamical descent.

## 1.5 Joint Optimization in the Tetrahedral Framework (Methods linkage)

- Perception: update  $\mu$  to minimize prediction error on  $s$  under the generative model (descending  $\nabla_{\mu} F$ ).
- Action: select  $a$  that steers  $\psi$  toward preferred outcomes (descending  $\nabla_a F$ ).

Continuous-time flows (Einstein.4D analogy for metric/geodesic intuition): see `perception_update` and `action_update` in `src/information.py`. Discrete Quadray moves connect to these flows via greedy descent on a local free-energy-like objective; see `discrete_ivm_descent` in `src/discrete_variational.py` and the path artifacts in `quadmath/output/`.

## 1.6 Implications for AI and Robust Computation

FEP/Active Inference provide algorithms that unify perception and action under uncertainty, offering biologically plausible alternatives to standard RL with adaptive exploration and robust decision-making. See [applications in AI \(arXiv:1907.03876\)](#).

## 1.7 Code, Reproducibility, and Cross-References

– Equation references: [Eq. \(Free Energy\)](#), [Eq. \(FIM\)](#), [Eq. \(Natural Gradient\)](#) in `08_equations_appendix.md`. – Code anchors (for readers who want to run experiments): `free_energy`, `fisher_information_matrix`, `natural_gradient_step`,

perception\_update, action\_update, and discrete\_ivm\_descent in src/information.py and src/discrete\_variational.py.

Demo and figures generated by quadmath/scripts/information\_demo.py and quadmath/scripts/active\_inference\_figures.py output to quadmath/output/:

- **Active Inference Visualizations:** figure\_13\_4d\_trajectory.png, figure\_14\_free\_energy\_landscape.png demonstrating 4D framework integration
- **Information Geometry Visualizations:** fisher\_information\_matrix.png, fisher\_information\_eigenspectrum.png, natural\_gradient\_path.png, free\_energy\_curve.png, partition\_tetrahedron.png
- **Raw data:** figure\_13\_data.npz, figure\_14\_data.npz, fisher\_information\_matrix.csv, fisher\_information\_matrix.npz (F, grads, X, y, w\_true, w\_est), fisher\_information\_eigenvalues.csv, fisher\_information\_eigensystem.npz
- **External validation:** Cross-reference with volume calculations and tetrahedral modeling tools from the [4dsolutions ecosystem](#). See the [Resources](#) section for comprehensive details.