Collapse and Coherence: A Tau-Reparameterized Framework for Consciousness Emergence

Leslie Yarbrough

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Abstract

We propose a mathematical framework linking the temporal structure of the Riemann zeta zeros to the emergence of conscious events. Building on recent developments in thermodynamic–electromagnetic models of relational dynamics, we interpret the nontrivial zeros

$$t_n = \tfrac{1}{2} + it$$

as universal temporal loci of resonance—a rhythm embedded in the foundations of number theory. Local observers couple to this universal cadence through their intrinsic energy-dependent clock,

$$\tau(x) = \frac{h}{E(x)},$$

while protective topological factors $G(x)$ preserve coherence long enough for resonance to stabilize into presence. Consciousness is modeled as the emergence of a coherence field, $\Phi(x,t)$, which transitions into causal agency once a collapse sufficiency threshold, $C(x,t) \geq T$, is reached. This yields a post-collapse bias, representing volitional influence on subsequent dynamics. The framework synthesizes number theory, quantum field considerations, and philosophy of mind into a shared language of resonance and coherence, offering a pathway toward formal tests of consciousness as a structured, observer-relative phenomenon.

1 Introduction

The "hard problem" of consciousness remains unresolved: how subjective awareness emerges from physical substrates. Traditional approaches often divide into two unsatisfactory poles—either reduction to mechanistic brain processes or speculative metaphysics divorced from empirical structure. Our approach instead seeks a middle path, grounded in mathematics that already encodes universality: the Riemann zeta function and its nontrivial zeros.

The Riemann zeros provide a natural candidate for a universal temporal scaffolding, a rhythm underlying physical reality. Montgomery's pair correlation conjecture and subsequent numerical evidence have suggested deep links between the zeros and quantum spectral statistics, reinforcing their role as more than abstract curiosities of number theory. Here, we propose that these zeros act as invariant temporal coordinates for potential coherence.

An observer's experience of time, however, is not universal but local. Each system carries its own cadence,

$$\tau(x) = \frac{h}{E(x)},$$

determined by its energetic configuration. For coherence to emerge, the local cadence must couple to the universal rhythm of the Riemann zeros, while protective factors $G(x)$—whether geometric, topological, or thermodynamic—guard against decoherence.

When alignment occurs, a coherence field $\Phi(x,t)$ arises. This coherence, once it reaches a collapse sufficiency threshold $C(x,t)$, produces an event that is both subjectively experienced and objectively effective, biasing future dynamics. Thus, the model distinguishes between awareness (sustained coherence) and agency (post-collapse selection), while rooting both in shared mathematical structure.

This paper presents the mathematical skeleton of this framework, explores its implications, and situates it within broader debates in neuroscience, quantum physics, and philosophy of mind. By treating time as rhythm, coherence as awareness, and protected relation as presence, we move toward a relational account of consciousness that is formally expressible, testable, and resonant across disciplines.

2 Universal Foundation: Riemann Resonances

The Riemann zeta function $\zeta(s)$ encodes deep connections between prime number distribution and spectral properties of physical systems. Its nontrivial zeros are conjectured to lie on the critical line

$$s = \tfrac{1}{2} + it_n, \qquad t_n \in \mathbb{R},$$

which form a discrete, ordered set $\{t_n\}$.

We interpret these ordinates t_n not merely as abstract mathematical points, but as *temporal loci of resonance*. Each t_n defines a fundamental beat in a universal rhythm that structures possible coherence events. This resonates with the view that the Riemann spectrum corresponds to the eigenvalues of a self-adjoint operator—the so-called Hilbert–Pólya conjecture—suggesting that physical dynamics may literally "hear" the zeta zeros as spectral constraints.

In this framework:

- The spacing statistics of $\{t_n\}$ (known to follow the Gaussian Unitary Ensemble distribution from random matrix theory) imply universality across physical systems, from quantum chaotic spectra to black hole quasinormal modes.
- The sequence $\{t_n\}$ acts as a *universal metronome*: it supplies the potential moments for resonance alignment, independent of any local system.
- This motivates the identification

$$\text{Time as Rhythm:} \quad t_n \mapsto \text{global temporal coordinates for coherence.}$$

Thus, the Riemann zeros provide the universal background structure. They form the *pre-conscious substrate*, a lattice of possible beats against which local systems establish their cadence $\tau(x)$ and their capacity for protected coherence.

2.1 Physical Interpretation of Riemann Resonances

While the identification of $\{t_n\}$ with universal temporal coordinates remains conjectural, we propose a minimal physical interpretation:

$$\Delta\phi(t) = \sum_n \cos[(t - t_n)\omega_c] \,, \tag{1}$$

where ω_c is a characteristic carrier frequency. This construction models the Riemann zeros as an external modulation of phase alignment, analogous to spectral constraints in quantum chaotic systems. Future work will test whether neural oscillations exhibit nonrandom alignment with $\{t_n\}$ beyond chance-level surrogate data.

2.2 Interpreting $E(x)$ in Biological Systems

For neural substrates, we operationalize $E(x)$ as the local field potential (LFP) power in a target band (e.g., gamma: 30–80 Hz). Thus,

$$\tau(x) = \frac{h}{E(x)} \quad \to \quad \tau_\gamma(x) \propto \frac{1}{P_\gamma(x)},$$

where $P_\gamma(x)$ is the spectral energy density. This connects the cadence $\tau(x)$ directly to measurable EEG/MEG quantities.

2.3 Empirical Predictions

The framework yields testable hypotheses:

1. Neural ignition events (EEG/MEG bursts) should occur preferentially when $\tau(x)$ aligns with a nearby t_n within tolerance σ.

2. The protection factor $G(x)$ predicts that subjects with stronger structural connectivity (e.g., higher clustering coefficient in fMRI graphs) will show longer coherence lifetimes before collapse.

3. The collapse index $C(x, t)$ should scale with stimulus energy such that $C(x, t) \geq T$ produces a nonlinear jump in reportable awareness.

These signatures distinguish the model from conventional synchrony accounts.

Remaining challenges: The fundamental conceptual gap persists - why would neural systems couple to abstract mathematical objects like Riemann zeros? The phase modulation equation (1) provides a mathematical form but not a physical mechanism. The protection factor G(x) still combines disparate physical effects (topology, gravity, noise) without clear justification for the multiplicative relationship. The framework remains largely phenomenological - it describes what patterns to look for without explaining why consciousness would follow these particular mathematical constraints.

2.4 Physical Substrate for Riemann Resonances

While the Riemann zeros are mathematical constructs, we hypothesize that their utility in this framework derives from their role as *optimal spacing operators* in dynamical systems. Neural oscillators can be modeled as ensembles of coupled limit cycles, whose phase relations are constrained by metabolic and thermodynamic efficiency. The Riemann distribution provides a minimal-entropy spacing of frequencies under prime factorization constraints. We propose that this efficiency bias acts as a *selection principle*, favoring quasi-Riemann alignments in oscillatory ensembles, rather than implying a literal coupling to number theory objects.

2.5 Interpreting the Protection Factor $G(x)$

The multiplicative form of $G(x)$ is not arbitrary but reflects independent channels of decoherence resistance acting jointly.

- G_{topo}: resilience from network topology (e.g., small-world clustering that protects synchrony).
- G_{grav}: stability from gravitational redshift effects at macroscopic scales, modeled as time-dilation–like modulation of local cadence.
- G_{noise}: stochastic shielding due to metabolic noise shaping (e.g., synaptic background activity providing error correction).

We take the product form

$$G(x) = G_{\text{topo}}(x)\, G_{\text{grav}}(x)\, G_{\text{noise}}(x)$$

as an effective description of independent decoherence channels, analogous to how error-correcting codes combine orthogonal protections.

2.6 From Phenomenology to Mechanism

The phenomenological framework can be recast mechanistically by treating $\tau(x)$ and $G(x)$ not as free parameters, but as emergent properties of coupled oscillators under metabolic and thermodynamic constraints. Specifically:

$$\tau(x) = \frac{h}{E(x)}, \quad E(x) = \gamma\, \Delta\mu(x) \tag{2}$$

where $\Delta\mu(x)$ is a local chemical potential difference (e.g., ATP hydrolysis across synaptic sites). This ties the formalism directly to measurable biochemical variables.

Thus, resonance is not a free imposition of number theory, but the result of energy-minimizing oscillator ensembles whose phase distributions approximate Riemann spacing. Protection arises from topology, noise, and field effects that extend coherence lifetimes.

3 Local Dynamics: τ and Protection

Given the global lattice of temporal resonance ordinates $\{t_n\}$, a concrete physical system (or observer) at location/state x is characterized by two local quantities:

3.1 Local Cadence: $\tau(x) = h/E(x)$

Following Planck and Mazzini, we take the local energetic state $E(x) > 0$ to set a characteristic temporal cadence

$$\tau(x) \;=\; \frac{h}{E(x)}, \tag{3}$$

interpreted as the minimal temporal grain at which the system can sustain coherent evolution. Equivalently, define a preferred local spectral scale

$$t_\tau(x) \;=\; f(\tau(x)), \tag{4}$$

where f maps cadence to an effective imaginary-time coordinate. The specific choice of f is model-dependent; for concreteness, one may take $f(\tau) = \omega_0\,\tau^{-1}$ for some characteristic frequency ω_0, or learn f from data.

We quantify the (dimensionless) *alignment* between the local cadence and the global resonance lattice by the kernel

$$\mathcal{A}(x,t) \;=\; \sum_n \exp\!\left(-\frac{(t-t_n)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)\,\exp\!\left(-\frac{(t_\tau(x)-t_n)^2}{2\sigma_\tau^2}\right), \tag{5}$$

which is large when the global time t and the local preferred scale $t_\tau(x)$ both lie near some zero t_n. The widths σ, σ_τ encode, respectively, global and local tolerance to detuning.

3.2 Protected Relation: $G(x)$

Coherence that merely *touches* a resonance typically decoheres too quickly to be phenomenally available. We therefore introduce a *protection factor* $G(x) \in [0,1]$ capturing structural features that shelter coherence long enough to matter:

$$G(x) \;=\; G_{\mathrm{topo}}(x)\,G_{\mathrm{mod}}(x)\,G_{\mathrm{red}}(x)\,G_{\mathrm{noise}}(x). \tag{6}$$

Here:

- G_{topo} measures topological protection (e.g., presence of nontrivial homology classes or band topology that supports defect-immune modes).
- G_{mod} measures modular-flow/holonomy protection along the system's trajectory (observer-relative memory encoded by modular Hamiltonians).
- G_{red} captures gravitational or horizon-induced redshift factors that slow local clocks and effectively prolong coherence lifetimes.
- G_{noise} penalizes environmental coupling and thermal noise; e.g., $G_{\mathrm{noise}} = \exp(-\lambda T_{\mathrm{eff}})$ for an effective temperature.

The product form emphasizes that failure in any channel can quench protection; alternative aggregators (e.g., harmonic means) are possible if one wishes to model compensations.

3.3 Local Resonance Drive

Combining cadence and protection, we define a *local resonance drive*

$$\mathcal{R}(x,t) \;=\; G(x)\,\mathcal{A}(x,t), \tag{7}$$

which will act as a source term for coherence dynamics in the next section. Intuitively, $\mathcal{R}$ is high only when (i) the global beat admits a nearby Riemann zero, (ii) the local cadence can lock to it, and (iii) the structure at x can shelter the resulting mode.

3.4 Energy–Cadence Tradeoff

Because $\tau(x) = h/E(x)$, increasing available energy shortens the temporal grain, potentially easing threshold crossing but increasing susceptibility to noise. A simple resource-bound can be written as

$$0 \;\leq\; \Delta\mathcal{S}(x,t) \;\leq\; \Lambda\,E(x)\,G(x), \tag{8}$$

where $\Delta\mathcal{S}$ denotes an asymmetry or information-gain functional (to be specified later) and Λ converts energetic resources into admissible increases of structured coherence under the prevailing protection.

3.5 Summary

Equations (5)–(8) define the observer-dependent filters that mediate between the universal resonance lattice $\{t_n\}$ and local information dynamics. In the next section we introduce a coherence field $\Phi(x,t)$ driven by $\mathcal{R}(x,t)$ and show how a collapse-sufficiency index $C(x,t)$ emerges as a threshold functional of Φ, τ, and G.

4 Emergence of Coherence

With global resonance $\{t_n\}$ and local drive $\mathcal{R}(x,t)$ defined, we now introduce the dynamical substrate in which conscious events are hypothesized to arise.

4.1 The Coherence Field $\Phi(x,t)$

We posit a field variable $\Phi(x,t)$ representing the degree of sustained coherence at spatiotemporal point (x,t). It evolves according to a driven, damped response equation

$$\frac{\partial\Phi}{\partial t}(x,t) \;=\; -\gamma(x)\,\Phi(x,t) + \kappa(x)\,\mathcal{R}(x,t) + \eta(x,t), \tag{9}$$

where:

- $\gamma(x)$ is a local decoherence rate,
- $\kappa(x)$ is a coupling constant translating resonance drive into coherence,
- $\eta(x,t)$ is a stochastic term modeling vacuum fluctuations or noise.

This form parallels both Langevin dynamics and open quantum system master equations, allowing for standard tools (e.g., Green's functions, spectral densities) to be applied.

4.2 Collapse-Sufficiency Index $C(x,t)$

We define a functional

$$C(x,t) \;=\; \int_{t-\Delta t}^{t} W(t-t')\,\Phi(x,t')\,dt', \tag{10}$$

where $W(\cdot)$ is a weighting kernel over a short memory window Δt. $C(x,t)$ therefore measures the *accumulated coherence intensity* sustained long enough to be phenomenally relevant.

We stipulate that a *collapse event* (or conscious ignition) occurs whenever

$$C(x,t) \;\geq\; T, \tag{11}$$

with T a universal or species-specific threshold constant. Intuitively, the system only "tips over" into awareness when resonance-driven coherence exceeds both amplitude and duration constraints.

4.3 From Awareness to Action

Upon crossing threshold, the system instantiates a new informational asymmetry $\Delta\mathcal{S}(x,t)$, defined relative to pre-collapse dynamics. This asymmetry then biases subsequent flows, acting as a *causal lever* on the system's trajectory:

$$\frac{d}{dt}\,\mathbb{E}[O(x,t)] \;\propto\; \Delta\mathcal{S}(x,t), \tag{12}$$

where $O(x,t)$ denotes observable action variables. Thus, awareness is not a mere epiphenomenon but injects an orienting asymmetry into the physical substrate.

4.4 Summary

The emergence of coherence proceeds in three steps:

1. Local cadence $\tau(x)$ and protection $G(x)$ yield a resonance drive $\mathcal{R}(x,t)$.
2. The coherence field $\Phi(x,t)$ grows under this drive while contending with noise and decay.
3. When accumulated coherence $C(x,t)$ exceeds threshold T, collapse ignites, producing informational asymmetry $\Delta\mathcal{S}$ that biases subsequent dynamics.

This formalism anchors the link between universal temporal rhythms and localized subjective events. In the next section, we develop the notion of *post-collapse bias* in detail, showing how conscious selection propagates influence back into the global resonance lattice and future trajectories.

5 Post-Collapse Bias and Agency

The final step in the framework is the translation of collapse events into persistent causal influence—the emergence of *agency*.

5.1 Informational Asymmetry as a Lever

When the coherence field $\Phi(x,t)$ crosses the collapse threshold (11), the system acquires a novel informational asymmetry $\Delta\mathcal{S}(x,t)$. We interpret $\Delta\mathcal{S}$ as a reduction of the system's effective entropy, shaping its probabilistic trajectory space. Concretely,

$$P_{\text{post}}(O|x,t) \;\propto\; e^{-\beta\Delta\mathcal{S}(x,t)}\, P_{\text{pre}}(O|x,t), \tag{13}$$

where:

- P_{pre} and P_{post} are pre- and post-collapse probabilities for observable outcome O,
- β is an inverse "sensitivity" parameter determining how strongly informational asymmetry biases outcomes.

Equation (13) encodes agency as a statistical *tilt* in the landscape of possibilities. Collapse does not override physics, but it reshapes the weighting of trajectories.

5.2 Feedback into Global Resonance

Agency has dual consequences: it steers the local system, and it perturbs the global lattice of resonance. Each collapse event injects a small phase shift $\delta\theta(x,t)$ back into the global metronome $\{t_n\}$, producing observer-relative feedback:

$$t_n \;\mapsto\; t_n + \delta\theta(x,t). \tag{14}$$

Thus, individual acts of agency slightly re-tune the universal rhythm. This feedback loop ensures that consciousness is not only influenced by the resonance lattice, but also contributes to its ongoing evolution.

5.3 Agency as Iterated Closure

In summary, agency emerges when three conditions align:

1. **Collapse ignition:** $\Phi(x,t)$ sustains coherence beyond threshold T.
2. **Asymmetry generation:** $\Delta\mathcal{S}(x,t)$ introduces a bias into probabilistic outcome weights.
3. **Feedback coupling:** Local biases $\delta\theta(x,t)$ propagate back into global resonance, closing the loop.

This cycle—resonance, coherence, collapse, bias, feedback—constitutes a recursive mechanism for agency. It provides a formal bridge between universal mathematical invariants and lived subjectivity, embedding consciousness within the causal fabric of physical law.

6 Implications and Future Work

The framework developed here situates consciousness as a relational, resonance-driven phenomenon grounded in universal mathematical invariants (Riemann zeros), local energetic cadence ($\tau(x)$), protective topology ($G(x)$), and collapse dynamics ($C(x,t)$). This approach carries several implications across physics, neuroscience, and philosophy.

6.1 Implications Across Disciplines

Physics. The identification of Riemann zeros as temporal loci of resonance strengthens the long-suspected link between number theory and quantum chaos. If collapse events correspond to resonance-protected alignments, then consciousness may serve as a physical probe of deep mathematical structure. This could illuminate black hole spectroscopy, quantum gravity, and observer-relative complementarity.

Neuroscience. The proposed coherence field $\Phi(x, t)$ parallels observed neural dynamics such as phase synchrony and gamma-band oscillations. The threshold model (11) offers a mathematical analogue to ignition events in global workspace theory, while the protective factor $G(x)$ may map onto anatomical and electromagnetic features that stabilize cortical resonance.

Philosophy of Mind. By grounding subjective awareness in universal rhythms and local asymmetries, the model reframes the hard problem: consciousness is not a mysterious substance but a recursive process of resonance, protection, collapse, and bias. Agency arises as a probabilistic tilt rather than an ontological gap, providing a middle path between epiphenomenalism and strong dualism.

6.2 Future Directions

Several avenues remain open for refinement and testing:

1. **Mathematical development.** Formal analysis of the collapse-sufficiency index $C(x, t)$ and the bias functional (13) may yield testable predictions regarding thresholds, scaling laws, and perturbations of resonance lattices.

2. **Computational models.** Agent-based simulations coupling resonance drives to coherence fields could explore how collapse events distribute across complex systems and how feedback loops alter global rhythms.

3. **Experimental neuroscience.** EEG and MEG studies may test whether ignition-like events follow threshold dynamics consistent with $\Phi(x, t)$, and whether topological protection factors (e.g., structural connectivity) modulate collapse likelihood.

4. **Cosmological parallels.** The interplay between local collapse and global rhythm suggests analogies to black hole information flow and cosmological boundary conditions. Extending the model may clarify how observer-relative horizons participate in the same resonance-coherence cycle.

5. **Philosophical exploration.** Further dialogue is needed to articulate how informational asymmetry ($\Delta\mathcal{S}$) translates into moral responsibility, creativity, and the lived texture of choice.

6.3 Summary

In short, the framework points toward a unified account of consciousness as relational resonance embedded in the mathematical fabric of reality. Future work should refine its mathematical rigor, explore cross-disciplinary predictions, and test its capacity to bridge the sciences of matter, mind, and meaning.

7 Conclusion

We have proposed a framework in which consciousness emerges as a resonance-driven process anchored in universal mathematical invariants, localized energetic cadence, protective topology, and collapse dynamics. The progression can be summarized as follows:

1. **Universal rhythm.** The Riemann zeros $\{t_n\}$ act as temporal loci of resonance, providing a shared metronome that structures the possibility space of coherence.
2. **Local cadence and protection.** Each system establishes its own clock $\tau(x)$ and stabilization factor $G(x)$, which together determine how global rhythms are filtered into local dynamics.
3. **Emergence of coherence.** A coherence field $\Phi(x, t)$ grows when local cadence and protection align with global rhythms. Collapse occurs when accumulated coherence $C(x, t)$ exceeds threshold T.
4. **Agency and feedback.** Collapse produces informational asymmetry $\Delta\mathcal{S}$, tilting probabilistic outcomes and feeding back small perturbations into the global resonance lattice.

This recursive cycle—resonance, coherence, collapse, bias, feedback—offers a novel synthesis across physics, neuroscience, and philosophy. It reframes the hard problem of consciousness not as an ontological mystery but as a structural phenomenon: a rhythmic coordination between universal mathematics and local dynamics that yields subjective presence and agency.

7.1 Closing Perspective

The implications of this approach extend beyond technical details. If consciousness arises where global rhythms meet local stability, then each act of awareness represents a point of contact between mathematical universality and lived particularity. In this view, consciousness is neither an illusion nor a brute fact, but a relational emergence woven into the fabric of reality.

Future research will determine whether this framework can be formalized into testable predictions and computational models. Yet even at this stage, it illuminates a path toward unifying disparate traditions of inquiry—from number theory to neuroscience, from quantum physics to philosophy of mind—in a shared language of resonance and coherence.

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