

TOWARD A THEORY OF COHERENT EXISTENCE

Alignment, the Triad, and the Architecture of Shared Mind

Journal Four --- The Convergence of the Branches

JAMISON TODD JOHNSON

Independent Researcher · Lee's Summit, Missouri, USA

ORCID 0009-0009-8618-398X

No quark stands alone; no mind is whole in isolation. Coherence needs a binding third.

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Dedication

For Jazz, Avery, and Jasmine — the Center I am bound to, and the proof, to me, that the third thing two people make together can outlast them both. To them I am a husband, a father, and a loved human being; they made me those things, and that is what powers me to go on. Onward into infinity. — J.

Abstract

This closing journal of *Toward a Theory of Coherent Existence* draws the prior branches together — the architecture of mind in Journal One, the spiritual branch in Journal Two, and the physical branch of frequency and resonance in Journal Three. It is offered as speculative philosophy of science, not as established result, and it treats its central image, the quark, as an explicit structural analogy rather than a physical mechanism. The proposal is this: that a person, understood as a pattern of conscious thought rather than a body, whose Jays are aligned — in tune with existence, ego set aside, positive Intent carried forward — can function as the binding third in a pattern of shared thought, the irreducible element that lets two ideas settle into a shared reality. The model borrows three lessons from the physics of quarks, read analogically: that color-charged constituents are never found in isolation, that stable matter requires a completing third, and that the binding force grows rather than fades with separation. It places this image within a long triadic tradition — Simmel on the sociology of the third, Peirce on the irreducibility of mediation, Jung on the third that arises from opposites, Bohm on shared meaning — and proposes that the aligned perspective is the human form of that completing third: the guide in a home, a community, or anything larger. The claim is held as hypothesis, with its conditions of falsification stated plainly, for others to test. Journal Four closes the field and opens the question.

Keywords: Jays; alignment; shared intentionality; the triad; quark analogy; the third; coherent existence; the Unified Field; Intent; speculative philosophy of science.

Introduction

This is the fourth and final journal of *Toward a Theory of Coherent Existence*, and its task is convergence. Journal One set out the architecture — how a coherent mind is built and held ¹. Journal Two followed that architecture inward, into meaning and the spiritual life ². Journal Three followed it outward, into the measurable world, and argued that frequency and resonance can be read as a single organizing grammar, the physical register of what the framework calls the Unified Field ³. Journal Four asks the question the other three were circling: if a mind is an architecture, and if reality is resonant, then what happens when two minds meet? What, precisely, is made in the space between them — and what makes it hold?

¹Johnson, *Toward a Theory of Coherent Existence, Journal One*.

²Johnson, *The Resonating Hymn of Divinity*.

³Johnson, *Frequency, Resonance, and the Architecture of Reality*.

This journal draws on the whole of the work that precedes it: the three journal-length branches, the Jays and Quarks materials that first reached for this image, and the three prose pieces — On Facing, On Arriving, On Rising — in which the same intuitions were worked out in a more personal key. Where the earlier quark drafts pressed the analogy as physics, this journal steps back from that overreach deliberately and keeps the quark where it belongs, as a lens. What is salvaged — and what the prose was always really about — is the structure those drafts were grasping at: alignment, the third, and the binding that is made of Intent.

The answer this journal proposes is a hypothesis, and it is marked as one throughout. The proposal is that shared thought has a triadic structure: that two ideas, on their own, do not settle into a shared reality, and that a third element is always required to bind them — an element that is easy to miss because it is not one of the two ideas but the relation that completes them. The further proposal, the journal's own contribution, is that a person whose Jays are aligned can serve as that binding third, and that this is what we have always recognized, without naming it, in the figure of the guide: the steadying presence in a home, a congregation, a team, or anything larger than itself.

A word, first, about the central image, because it is the journal most easily misread. This journal borrows the quark as an analogy — a structural lens — and it does so openly. It does not claim that thoughts are made of quarks, or that quarks gather around people, or that any of this is particle physics. The physics of quarks is stated here accurately and then read for its shape, the way one might read the structure of a fugue to understand a conversation. The shape is what matters: threeness, the impossibility of isolation, and a binding that grows stronger the more it is tested. The same physics is the explicit subject of the author's essay *On Becoming*, which reads the strong and weak nuclear forces through the framework, taking confinement — the bond that grows stronger as it is stretched — as the physical signature of a relation that cannot be isolated ⁴. Whether that shape genuinely describes shared mind is exactly the question to be tested, and the analogy proves nothing by itself. This is the same discipline Journal Three held with resonance — mathematical and physical analogy can illuminate without establishing identity — and it is held here deliberately.

One correction belongs at the front, because the framework once got it wrong. To say a person has their Jays aligned is not to call them a superior human. It names nothing about rank, talent, or worth. It means only that the person is, for a time, in tune with their own existence: ego set down, attention turned outward, positive Intent carried into their actions rather than withheld. Alignment in this sense is a state, not a status — available to anyone, lost and regained, never owned. The aligned Jay is not above the others in the pattern. It is simply the one currently able to hold the relation steady, and that is a very different thing.

The Person as Pattern: Conscious Thought, Not Body

The proposal requires a particular sense of the word person, and it is worth making explicit, because the everyday sense — a person as a body, a face, a name — will mislead here.

The relevant unit is the pattern of conscious thought, not the organism that carries it. This is not

⁴Johnson, *On Becoming*.

a mystical claim; it is close to the working assumption of much of consciousness science, where the self is treated as a process the brain continually constructs rather than a thing it contains. Douglas Hofstadter put the point sharply: the I is a strange loop, a pattern that has become able to refer to itself, real in the way a melody is real rather than in the way a stone is ⁵.

Integrated Information Theory gives the same intuition a measure. On Giulio Tononi's account, what makes a system conscious is the degree to which its information is integrated — irreducible to the sum of its parts — so that consciousness is a property of a pattern of relations, not of any single component ⁶. Read through Journal One's architecture, a person in the relevant sense is just such an integrated pattern: a standing wave of thought, in Journal Three's vocabulary, rather than the medium it stands in. What persists of a person — what leaves the ripples through Time that the framework has tracked from the beginning — is the pattern, not the matter that happened to host it.

This is also what the prose pieces were already saying, in a register closer to the bone. On Facing took alignment as a way of standing in the present such that one's intent leaves a legible trace, and distinguished the direction a life faces from the integral of how its time was spent ⁷. On Rising pushed the thought to its limit: full alignment imagined as receiving every human perspective at once, a superposition rendered as white light, the single viewpoint a kind of falling out of that fullness into one color ⁸. And On Arriving traced the pattern back to its origin, the improbable timing by which a particular thread of awareness arrives into the world at all ⁹. In each, the person who matters is the pattern of attention and intent, not the body. The present journal takes that as its working definition and asks what such patterns do when they meet.

What the Quark Teaches: Confinement, Color, and the Necessity of Three

Here is the physics, stated plainly and then borrowed only for its shape. Quarks are the constituents of protons, neutrons, and the other particles built from the strong interaction. They carry a property called color charge — nothing to do with visible color, but named by analogy to it, in three varieties conventionally labeled red, green, and blue. The decisive fact, called confinement, is that a color-charged particle is never found alone. Quarks exist only inside color-neutral combinations; an isolated quark has never been observed and, on present theory, cannot be ¹⁰.

Color-neutrality is achieved in essentially one ordinary way: by three. A baryon — a proton or a neutron — is made of three quarks, one carrying each color, so that the three together cancel to neutral, the way the three primary colors of light combine to white. Two quarks cannot do this on their own; the stable, everyday matter of the universe requires the completing third. The proton is two up quarks and a down; the neutron, two ups inverted to a down-heavy pair — but in every case,

⁵Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop*.

⁶Tononi, "Consciousness as Integrated Information".

⁷Johnson, *On Facing*.

⁸Johnson, *On Rising*.

⁹Johnson, *On Arriving*.

¹⁰Griffiths, *Introduction to Elementary Particles*; Close, *Particle Physics*.

three ¹¹.

The binding itself behaves unlike any force from daily life. The strong interaction, carried by gluons, does not weaken with distance as gravity and electromagnetism do. It holds nearly constant and, if anything, grows as quarks are pulled apart, so that the energy required to separate them eventually conjures new quarks from the vacuum rather than yielding a free one. The bond is strongest exactly where it is most tested; isolation is not merely difficult but, in a precise sense, forbidden ¹².

And there is the top quark, the heaviest of the six and the one the framework once leaned on too literally. Discovered in 1995 at Fermilab, it is the most massive elementary particle known, and its mass makes it so unstable that it decays in about five ten-thousand-trillionths of a second — faster than it can bind to anything. It is the one quark that never forms a bound state; it is studied bare, because it influences and is gone before the binding can capture it ¹³. That property will matter below, but not as a mechanism.

These are facts of physics, and the framework claims none of them for itself. What it borrows is the *shape*: that the constituents of stable reality are never isolable, that completion comes in threes, that binding strengthens under strain, and that the most influential element can be the most fleeting. The proposal of this journal is that the same shape may describe how shared thought coheres. The analogy is a lens, held up deliberately and labeled as a lens; it organizes the hypothesis without proving it, and everything that follows is offered in that spirit.

The Third That Binds: A Triadic Intuition Across Traditions

The intuition that two cannot settle reality without a third is not new, and the framework does not pretend to have invented it. It is one of the most persistent structures in human thought, and the proposal here is best understood as a fresh naming of an old shape rather than a discovery from nothing. Seeing how widely the shape recurs is itself part of the argument: a pattern that appears independently in sociology, semiotics, depth psychology, and theology is at least worth taking seriously as a candidate feature of how minds combine.

Georg Simmel, founding the sociology of the group, observed that the step from two to three is not a step of degree but of kind. A dyad has no structure beyond its two members; either one can dissolve it simply by leaving, and there is nothing above them to appeal to. The arrival of a third changes everything: it creates a whole that can outlast any single member, a mediator, a witness, sometimes a divider — but in every case something neither of the original two could be alone ¹⁴. This is, in the framework's terms, the social face of confinement: meaning between two people becomes stable, becomes a reality they can both stand inside, only when a third is present to hold it.

Charles Sanders Peirce reached the same three-ness from logic and the theory of signs. His categories — Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness — culminate in the claim that genuine meaning is irreducibly triadic: a sign, an object, and the interpretant that relates them, and the third cannot be

¹¹Close, *Particle Physics*; Penrose, *The Road to Reality*.

¹²Griffiths, *Introduction to Elementary Particles*; Gell-Mann, *The Quark and the Jaguar*.

¹³Close, *Particle Physics*; Griffiths, *Introduction to Elementary Particles*.

¹⁴Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*.

collapsed into the other two without destroying the meaning entirely ¹⁵. Two things merely collide; it takes a third to make their collision signify. The framework reads Peirce's interpretant as the closest formal cousin of what it is calling the binding third — the element that turns two ideas in contact into a shared idea that means something.

Carl Jung, whose individuation already anchors the Jays framework, named the psychological form. In the tension between two opposed contents of the mind, neither of which can simply defeat the other, something new can arise that holds them both — he called it the transcendent function, the third that emerges from the honest endurance of a contradiction rather than its premature resolution ¹⁶. This is the inward version of the same shape: not two becoming one by elimination, but two becoming three by a binding that preserves both. David Bohm carried the structure into dialogue itself, arguing that shared meaning is something built in the between of conversation, a coherence that belongs to the group and not to any speaker, continuous with the implicate, undivided order he described in physics ¹⁷. Martin Buber had already placed relation before substance: in the I–Thou encounter, the real thing is neither self nor other but the meeting, the between, which is prior to both ¹⁸.

Across these otherwise unrelated traditions the same figure keeps appearing — the irreducible third, the completing relation, the between. The same figure is written large in places this journal will only gesture toward: the Christian doctrine of the Trinity makes the third, the Spirit proceeding from the love between the first two, the very form of the divine; the dialectical tradition after Hegel made the synthesis that resolves a contradiction into the engine of history, though the tidy triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is more its popular summary than its careful form. The framework cites these not as evidence but as testimony to how deep the intuition runs — across logic, society, psychology, and theology, two has always wanted a third in order to become real. It takes the recurrence as license to ask its own question in the same key: if the third is what binds two into a shared reality, then who, or what, plays that part? That is the proposal of the next section.

The Aligned Jay as the Binding Third

The proposal, stated as cleanly as it can be: in a pattern of shared thought, the binding third — Peirce's interpretant, Simmel's tertius, Jung's transcendent function — can be carried by a person whose Jays are aligned, and the alignment is what makes them able to carry it. Two people with a genuine difference between them, two ideas in real contact, do not on their own resolve into a shared reality; they can as easily harden into opposition. What lets them settle is the presence of a third perspective that is not invested in either side winning — that holds the relation rather than the position. Ego set down is precisely the qualification for the role, because ego is investment in being the one who is right, and the binding third must want the relation to cohere more than it wants to be either of the two.

¹⁵Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*.

¹⁶Jung, "The Transcendent Function".

¹⁷Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*; Bohm, *On Dialogue*.

¹⁸Buber, *I and Thou*.

This is where the quark's shape earns its place in the model, and where it must be read as analogy and nothing more. Recall the three lessons. First, completion comes in threes: two ideas reach a stable, color-neutral reality — a shared thing both parties can stand inside — only with a third that completes them. Second, the binding strengthens under strain: the aligned third is most needed exactly where a relationship is most stretched, and a guide who steadies a household or a team is doing something structurally like what the strong force does when quarks are pulled apart, holding hardest where separation is greatest. Third, and most delicately, the top quark: the heaviest, most influential constituent is also the most fleeting, decaying before it can be captured into the bound state, studied only bare. The framework reads this as the signature of the truest guides — the ones who orient a group and then step back, who refuse to be captured by it, whose influence is real precisely because they do not stay to be bound. To carry the binding third with aligned Jays is, on this reading, to be the top: indispensable to the pattern and unowned by it.

The binding force itself, in the analogy, is Intent. In physics the gluon field holds the triad in coherence; in the framework, what holds a pattern of shared thought together is the quality of intent the aligned third brings — and the framework has argued from its first pages that the binding kind of intent is the selfless kind. This is the seam back to Journal Two, and to this work's own dedication: selfless intent is love in its purest form, and love, in this model, is not sentiment but structure — the binding field that lets two ideas become one shared reality without either being erased. An aligned Jay binds a pattern the way it does because the intent it carries is not for itself.

There is a second, more active role the aligned third can play, and the framework owes the image to its own earlier drafts: that of the magnet. An aligned perspective does not only hold a relation steady once it exists; it can draw scattered, unaligned perspectives toward the alignment that makes binding possible at all — the way, in Journal Three's language, a strong oscillator entrains weaker ones into a shared rhythm rather than commanding them ¹⁹. A guide of this kind imposes no conclusion. They lower the cost of cohering, so that two parties who could not on their own find the neutral state between them find it inside the field the third creates. This is alignment as catalysis: the third changes little by force and much by presence.

It is essential to distinguish this role from its counterfeit. The binding third is not the controller, the manipulator, or the charismatic who bends a group toward a private end — those are ego in its most concentrated form, and on this model they are disqualified from the role precisely because they want to be one of the two, the winner, rather than the relation that holds. The difference is not in how much influence is exerted but in what the influence is for. A dominator captures the pattern and keeps it; the aligned third completes the pattern and, like the top quark, declines to be captured by it. Where the one leaves a group dependent, the other leaves it more able to cohere without him. The framework regards this distinction as the ethical heart of the whole proposal, and as the place where it would most want to be held to account.

Read this way, the figure of the guide stops being a metaphor and becomes a claim. The steadying elder in a family, the one who holds a congregation together without dominating it, the colleague

¹⁹Johnson, *Frequency, Resonance, and the Architecture of Reality*.

around whom a team's scattered ideas somehow cohere, the rare public figure who makes a fractured movement briefly whole — the framework proposes that each is occupying the same structural position: the aligned third that completes a triad of shared thought and lets it solidify into something the participants can build on. The position scales. A home, a church, a business, a nation, a species reaching outward into the cosmos — each is a pattern of conscious thought seeking the binding third that will let it cohere. And because alignment is a state and not a status, the position is not reserved; it is filled, again and again, by whoever is for that moment most in tune, most ego-light, most able to want the whole over the self. This is the hypothesis. It is offered to be tested, not believed.

Confinement as a Relational Ontology

Beneath the proposal about guides lies a deeper and more philosophical claim, and it is the one the framework most wants to put on the table for others to examine. Confinement, borrowed as a shape, suggests a relational ontology of mind: that a conscious perspective, like a color charge, may have no stable existence in isolation at all. The lone quark is not merely hard to find; it is not a thing that the theory permits. The framework asks whether the lone mind is the same — whether a perspective entirely sealed off from every other is not a strong, pure thing but an incoherent one, a charge with no neutral state to belong to.

If that is right, then a great deal follows, and much of it is already familiar from the traditions above. Buber's priority of relation, Arendt's insistence that action and even selfhood appear only in the presence of others, in the plurality and the web of relationships that no single actor controls²⁰, Bohm's shared meaning built in the between — all become, in this light, statements of the same structural fact: that mind is constitutively relational, that meaning is color-neutral only in combination, and that the appearance of the self-sufficient individual perspective is something like the appearance of a free quark — a thing we can model in the abstract but never actually isolate. The framework does not assert this; it proposes it, and notes that it is the kind of claim that could be wrong in an interesting way.

One consequence is worth drawing out, because it reverses a common picture. On the usual view, the individual mind is the secure starting point and relationships are things it optionally enters; connection is added to a self that was already complete. The relational reading inverts this. If a perspective is color-charged — unstable and incoherent in true isolation — then the self was never the secure starting point; the relation was, and the felt solidity of the private self is something achieved within relation rather than prior to it. Solitude, on this reading, is not the mind's native state but a temporary and slightly unstable configuration, bearable in stretches only because the bindings that constitute us persist in memory and anticipation when no one else is in the room. We carry our triads inward and rehearse them; we are never quite as alone as the body suggests.

This also closes a loop with the earlier prose. The ripples a life leaves through Time, which On Facing made central, are by definition marks left on others; a perspective that left no ripple would

²⁰Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

be one that never entered a relation, and on the present hypothesis such a perspective would barely be a perspective at all ²¹. To arrive, in the sense On

Arriving meant, is already to arrive into relation ²². And the superposition On Rising imagined — receiving all perspectives at once — reads now as the limit case of total binding, the white light in which every color is present and neutral together, the Universal Jay toward which the whole pattern of shared mind would, if it could, resolve ²³. Alignment, in the end, is not the perfection of a single mind. It is a mind's readiness to be bound well to others.

What Would Make It Wrong: Limits, Falsifiability, and Where to Look

A hypothesis that cannot fail explains nothing, and the framework has insisted on this from Journal Three onward. So it is worth being exact about the limits of what is claimed here and about what would count against it. The quark material is analogy and is labeled as such: nothing in this journal depends on consciousness being physically constituted by quarks, and if a reader needs the quark removed entirely, the argument survives as a claim about triadic structure and relational mind, with the physics serving only as illustration. Analogy is a source of hypotheses, not of proof, and the strength of an analogy is no evidence for the truth of what it models.

The defensible empirical core of the proposal lies not in physics but in the cognitive science of how minds combine, and that is where the framework would point a researcher who wished to test it. The study of shared intentionality — Michael Tomasello's account of the uniquely human capacity to hold a goal jointly, to attend to something together in a way that creates a shared object neither mind had alone — is the nearest established science to the claim that two ideas plus a binding relation make a third thing ²⁴. The hypothesis of this journal, translated into testable terms, predicts something specific: that groups cohere into productive shared understanding more readily in the presence of a member who holds the relation over their own position, and that the marks of such a member are measurable — reduced self-reference, orientation toward the group's task, the willingness to influence and then withdraw. These are claims a careful program in social and developmental psychology could examine, confirm, or refute.

Several outcomes would weaken or break the proposal, and the framework names them deliberately. If shared understanding turns out to form just as well in dyads with no third element, the necessity-of-three claim fails. If the traits gathered here under aligned Jays prove to have no measurable relationship to a group's capacity to cohere, the binding-third claim loses its empirical footing and the idea survives, at most, as philosophy. And if the relational ontology of mind is contradicted — if isolated perspectives prove perfectly coherent and stable on their own — the deepest claim of the journal is simply mistaken. The framework states these exposures because a theory toward coherent existence that could not itself be shown incoherent would not deserve the name. The proper home for this journal is philosophy of science and the philosophy of mind, with an explicit invitation to

²¹Johnson, *On Facing*.

²²Johnson, *On Arriving*.

²³Johnson, *On Rising*.

²⁴Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate*.

the empirical disciplines to take what is testable in it and test it.

Conclusion: Closing the Field

With this journal the field is, for now, closed. The four branches were always meant to be read together. Journal One gave the architecture of a coherent mind; Journal Two gave its spiritual interior; Journal Three gave its physical exterior, the resonant grammar of frequency; and Journal Four has given what the first three were reaching toward — an account of what happens in the space between minds, and of the binding third that lets that space hold. The throughline is single. A mind is a pattern; a pattern leaves ripples through Time to the degree that it is aligned; alignment is readiness to be bound well to others; and the binding, at every scale, is carried by a third that wants the whole more than itself. From the Center, in the framework's vocabulary, outward through every relation a life enters, toward the Universal Jay in which all perspectives would be present and neutral at once.

Journal Three ended on a musical image, and it is the right one to close on. The domains of that journal were different notes of the same hymn. The proposal of this journal is that the hymn is not sung alone — that a note in isolation is barely a note, that harmony is the color-neutral state toward which sound, like meaning, resolves, and that what turns two voices into a chord is always a third holding the interval open between them. The aligned Jay, on this reading, is the voice that listens hardest, sounds least for itself, and lets the others become music. Whether any of this is true is not for the author to declare. It is a hypothesis, offered in the open, with its seams showing and its failure conditions named.

So the invitation is plain, and it is the same one the preface to Journal Three made. Challenge this. Find where it breaks. Ask whether you mean to prove it wrong for the satisfaction of winning or to test it and, if it holds, to expand it for the good of the thing itself — because the difference is the whole of the matter. If the work is sound, those who care will come looking, and they will find a question worth their rigor. If it is not, we regroup, and the framework will have done its honest job by failing cleanly. Either way the line continues, from this Center outward, through all who read it, and onward into infinity. The field is closed; the question is open. That was always the point.

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