

# The Geometry of Learning

## From Prehistoric Chants to VALIS: A 40,000-Year Odyssey Through Music, Cognition, and the Future of Consciousness

J.Konstapel, Leiden, 21-3-2026.

### Foreword

This essay began as a conversation about music composition theory. It ended with a map of the next thousand years of human consciousness. Along the way we passed through prehistoric caves, Gregorian monasteries, the riots at the 1913 premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, Beethoven's sketchbooks, Beyoncé's private trauma, the Chernobyl nuclear exclusion zone, and the projected energy consumption of AI data centres in 2030.

The thread connecting all of it is a single geometric model: the quaternion formalisation of learning developed by Hans Konstapel in *De Geometrie van Leren* (19 March 2026). That model — which began as a framework for understanding how software engineers develop mastery — turns out to describe something far more fundamental: the way any complex cognitive system moves through knowledge, from the first imitative sounds of our earliest ancestors to the non-embodied intelligence that Konstapel calls VALIS.

Nothing in this essay is coincidental. Every example — every composer, every pop artist, every historical rupture — was chosen because it maps precisely onto the geometric structure of the model. The helix is not a metaphor. It is the actual trajectory of learning on the three-sphere  $S^3$ .

### Chapter 1 — The Birth of the Helix: 40,000 Years Ago

Everything begins with throat-sounds in caves.

The oldest known musical instruments are bone flutes from Divje Babe, Slovenia, dated to approximately 43,000 BCE. Cave paintings at sites such as Lascaux and Altamira contain acoustic markings — placement near resonant surfaces, depictions of animals whose sounds were ritually significant. These are the earliest physical traces of what the model formalises as the  $L_i$  operator: observing, listening, tracing the world.

The cognitive state of our prehistoric ancestors can be expressed as the unit quaternion:

$$\mathbf{q}(t) = a(t) + b(t)\mathbf{i} + c(t)\mathbf{j} + d(t)\mathbf{k}, |\mathbf{q}(t)| = 1$$

where  $a(t)$  is the scalar component — the degree of coherence, of integrated knowledge — and the imaginary vector  $(b, c, d)$  represents active differentiation: the cognitive load of encountering something new.

At this earliest stage, only two of the three operators were active:

- $L_i$  (observing): listening to wind, rain, animal calls, the acoustics of rock chambers

- $L_k$  (applying): imitating those sounds in ritual — shamanistic chants, hunting calls, mourning songs

The third operator,  $L_j$  (abstracting — pattern recognition, rule extraction, theory), was not yet present. There were no notation systems, no harmonic theory, no named scales. Music existed purely as lived practice: hear it, do it, repeat it.

This is the birth of the helix on  $S^3$ . Every generation performed exactly the same operations — listen  $\rightarrow$  imitate  $\rightarrow$  ritual — but the cognitive orientation shifted imperceptibly with each cycle. The pitch of the helix,  $P = da/d\theta$ , was extremely low. The scalar coherence  $a(t)$  grew at glacial speed. But it grew.

Over the following millennia, as settled civilisation developed, this oral helix became more structured. The hymns of Mesopotamia and Egypt, the psalms of ancient Israel, the temple chants of ancient Greece — all operated through the same mechanism: pure oral transmission from master to student, full cycles of  $L_i \rightarrow L_k$  repeated across generations. The Hurrian hymns from Ugarit (c. 1400 BCE), the oldest surviving notated music, represent not the beginning of music but the first attempt to compress what had already been practised for tens of thousands of years.

By the 9th century CE, the pattern reached its most perfect expression in Gregorian chant. Monks in the scriptoria of St. Gallen, Limoges, and Monte Cassino memorised hundreds of melodies through years of daily singing. No staff notation existed yet — only neumes, approximate contour marks above the text. The transmission was fundamentally oral. These were not musicians learning from books; they were human helices, running the same  $L_i \rightarrow L_k$  cycle thousands of times over a lifetime.

The result was extraordinary stability. Gregorian chant achieved  $a(t) \rightarrow 1$  within its monophonic domain: a single melodic line of pure, integrated coherence, shared across an entire civilisation. There were no phase inversions because there was no failed expectation. The system was complete within itself.

## Chapter 2 — The First Phase Inversions: Polyphony and Ars Nova

### The first inversion (c. 850–1100): Syntactic $\rightarrow$ Semantic

The stability of Gregorian chant could not hold indefinitely. The model predicts precisely what happened: when a helix completes enough cycles and accumulated coherence meets a situation that the existing framework cannot process, a *failed expectation* occurs. Roger Schank called this a "script failure" — the moment when the expected next step in a well-learned sequence does not arrive, forcing cognitive reorganisation.

The failed expectation, in this case, was liturgical. The vast new stone cathedrals of the Carolingian and Romanesque periods — enormous resonant spaces, built to express the power and transcendence of the Church — made the solitary melodic line of Gregorian chant feel acoustically insufficient. One voice, no matter how perfectly trained, could not fill the sonic space that architecture was now demanding.

The first response was *organum*: a second voice moving in parallel fifths or fourths below the plainchant. The earliest surviving treatise documenting this practice, *Musica enchiriadis* (c. 900),

shows composers already wrestling with the implications of simultaneous independent lines. Within a century, the parallel motion loosened into *free organum*, in which the added voice moved more independently. By the late 12th century, at Notre-Dame de Paris, Léonin and Pérotin were composing *Magnus Liber Organi* — a large repertory of two-, three-, and four-voice polyphonic settings of the liturgy.

In the quaternion model, this is a discrete topological jump:  $\mathbf{q} \rightarrow -\mathbf{q}$ . The phase inversion. The internal orientation of the entire system reverses. The music still sounds "sacred" — it is still Latin, still liturgical, still serving the Mass. But the structural logic has been completely overturned. Where before there was one line with a given orientation on  $S^3$ , now there are multiple simultaneous lines, each with its own trajectory, bound together by the newly emerging logic of harmonic consonance and dissonance.

This is the *syntactic*  $\rightarrow$  *semantic* leap. "Correct" no longer means "the right pitches in the right order." It now means "the right relationship between two or more simultaneous lines." Music has acquired a second dimension.

### **The second inversion (c. 1300–1400): Semantic $\rightarrow$ Architectural**

The stabilised polyphony of the 13th century — the Notre-Dame school, the subsequent *motet* tradition — ran its own helix for roughly a century. Then another failed expectation arrived: the catastrophe of the 14th century.

The Black Death (1347–1353) killed an estimated one-third of Europe's population. The Hundred Years' War between England and France began in 1337. The Great Schism split the papacy. The social, political, and theological frameworks that had sustained medieval culture fractured under the pressure.

The musical response was Philippe de Vitry's *Ars Nova* (c. 1320). Where the old system — retrospectively named *Ars Antiqua* — had used a relatively rigid system of rhythmic modes derived from poetic feet, *Ars Nova* introduced a comprehensive new rhythmic notation capable of expressing fractions, syncopation, and complex polyrhythm. The *isorhythmic motet*, in which the same rhythmic pattern (*talea*) and the same melodic pattern (*color*) recur at different levels of the structure simultaneously, represents a leap in compositional architecture that has no precedent in earlier music.

The inversion here is *semantic*  $\rightarrow$  *architectural*: it is no longer enough for the music to express something (a text, a liturgical function, an emotion). It must now sustain complex formal organisation across extended time-spans, with multiple structural layers operating simultaneously.

Guido d'Arezzo's hexachord system and staff notation (c. 1025), appearing between these two inversions, is worth noting precisely because of when it arrived. The staff — five lines, fixed pitches, clefs — was not the cause of polyphony. It was the *compression* of the first inversion: a way of writing down and transmitting what oral practice had already discovered. Theory, once again, arrived after the fact.

## **Chapter 3 — The Classical Masters and Their Helices**

### **J.S. Bach (1685–1750): The Helix Without Crisis**

Bach is the purest example of what the model calls *continuous helical deepening without dramatic phase inversion*. His learning trajectory was relentlessly iterative: as a young organist and composer, he copied by hand hundreds of pages of music by Vivaldi, Buxtehude, Couperin, Pachelbel, and Frescobaldi. This was not mere imitation — it was a sustained exercise in all three operators simultaneously. Copying is  $L_i$  (observing the structure in detail),  $L_j$  (abstracting the underlying logic), and  $L_k$  (executing it in one's own hand) compressed into a single act.

The result was a helix that ran at extraordinary depth and consistency for sixty years. Each composition was a new cycle: motif  $\rightarrow$  contrapuntal elaboration  $\rightarrow$  formal completion  $\rightarrow$  new motif. The pitch  $P = da/d\theta$  remained high throughout his mature work. By the time of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Books I and II, 1722 and 1742), the *Goldberg Variations* (1741), and the *Art of Fugue* (unfinished at his death in 1750), Bach had achieved something that the model describes as  $a(t) \rightarrow 1$ : complete architectural coherence across the full system of tonality.

There was no crisis, no public rupture, no failed expectation dramatic enough to produce a sharp phase inversion. The helix simply ran deeper and quieter until it reached the north pole of  $S^3$ .

## Beethoven (1770–1827): The Two Classic Inversions

Beethoven's case is the textbook double inversion. His sketchbooks — more than 8,000 pages survive — are the most visible record in Western music history of a helix operating in real time. The famous opening motif of the Fifth Symphony (three short notes and one long) appears in hundreds of sketched variants before reaching its final form. The same motif is transposed, inverted, augmented, diminished, passed between instruments, harmonised in multiple ways. This is the  $L_i \rightarrow L_j \rightarrow L_k$  cycle made visible on paper.

**First inversion (1802):** By the time Beethoven wrote the Heiligenstadt Testament in October 1802, he had been a successful and admired composer for a decade. He could write "correct," elegant, emotionally effective music in the Viennese classical style. But his progressive deafness, combined with the political upheaval of the Napoleonic era, created a failed expectation of devastating severity: the world he had learned to navigate — as performer, as social being, as composer reliant on hearing — was collapsing.

The resulting  $q \rightarrow -q$  is audible in the Third Symphony, *Eroica* (1803–04). Everything about it inverts the previous system: the scale (three times longer than any previous symphony), the harmonic language (the notorious opening E-flat chord followed by the unexpected C-sharp), the emotional content (a hero's death and resurrection rather than balanced classical affect), and the treatment of form (the development section alone is longer than many complete movements by Haydn). The music still sounds "like a symphony," but the internal orientation has completely reversed.

**Second inversion (c. 1820–1826):** After the heroic style of the middle period, Beethoven spent the 1810s writing works of great power but relative formal stability — the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, the *Archduke Trio*, *Fidelio*. Then, in the final years, deaf and largely withdrawn from public life, he attempted to extend his compositional architecture into territory where the existing system broke down.

The late string quartets — Op. 127, 130, 131, 132, 135 — represent the *semantic*  $\rightarrow$  *architectural* leap. They are too long, too internally complex, too harmonically destabilised for the existing category of "string quartet" to contain them. The *Große Fuge*, originally intended as the finale of Op. 130, was so incomprehensible to contemporary audiences that it was published separately. The

model is exact here: a failed expectation at the scale of form itself, resolved by a new architectural logic that had no predecessor.

### **Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951): Declared Phase Inversion**

Schönberg's career is almost clinically illustrative of the model. After his early post-Romantic works (*Verklärte Nacht*, the *Gurrelieder*), he entered a sustained period of *free atonality* — compositions without a tonal centre, organised by intuition rather than any systematic principle. This was a period of high  $l_m(q)$ : intense differentiation, enormous creative output, but low overall coherence. Works like *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) are extraordinary but also, in Schönberg's own assessment, unsystematic.

The failed expectation came from within: the awareness that free atonality was not sustainable. It could produce great individual works, but it could not provide the architectural scaffolding for extended, complex compositions. In 1921–1923, after years of struggle, Schönberg arrived at the twelve-tone method: every composition would be derived from a single ordered row of all twelve pitches, which could be transposed, inverted, retrograded, and combined in strict ways.

His declaration — "Today I have discovered something that will ensure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years" — is one of the rare explicit verbal acknowledgements of a phase inversion. He knew it was a  $q \rightarrow -q$  event. The internal orientation of his entire compositional system had reversed. The music still sounded unmistakably like Schönberg — the same chromatic density, the same expressionist intensity — but the structural logic was now the opposite of what it had been.

### **Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971): The Riot as Physical Evidence**

The premiere of *The Rite of Spring* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913 is the most famous event in 20th-century music history. The audience rioted. People shouted, threw objects, struck each other. The police were called.

What they were witnessing was a phase inversion so severe that it was physically intolerable for those whose own helices had not yet reached the necessary orientation. Stravinsky had absorbed Russian folk music ( $L_i$ ), abstracted its rhythmic and melodic logic ( $L_j$ ), and then applied that logic in a compositional framework that eliminated every moderating convention of the Western tradition ( $L_k$ ): no regular metre, no harmonic resolution, no melodic development in the classical sense. The result was a music of pure rhythmic mass, harmonic stasis, and structural violence.

Stravinsky himself said, decades later: "I re-invented myself." The riot was the external verification.

## **Chapter 4 — Modern and Contemporary Composers**

### **Philip Glass (b. 1937): Additive Processes as Visible Helix**

Glass trained at Juilliard (heavy  $L_j$ : theory, counterpoint, orchestration) and then studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. The decisive phase inversion came in 1966 when he worked with the Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar on the film *Chappaqua*. Shankar's approach to rhythm — additive rather than divisive, building complex structures from small cells — completely reorganised Glass's compositional logic.

The resulting works of the early minimalist period — *Music in Fifths* (1969), *Music in 12 Parts* (1971–1974) — are pure helix made audible. A short pattern is stated, then a single note is added, then another, then the pattern contracts again by one note, then expands. Each pass through the cycle is the same operation ( $L_i \rightarrow L_j \rightarrow L_k$ ), but the overall structure accumulates. The helical pitch  $P$  is set intentionally low — Glass wants the audience to hear the accumulation itself.

His second phase inversion came in the transition to opera and large-scale work: *Einstein on the Beach* (1976, with Robert Wilson) runs for approximately five hours without intermission. The architectural demands of sustaining attention, dramatic tension, and structural coherence across that time-span required a completely new compositional logic — no longer a single additive pattern, but a complex interlocking of multiple helices at different rates.

### **Hans Zimmer (b. 1957): Failure-First as Professional Practice**

Zimmer has described his working method in interviews: he arrives in the studio each day and discards everything he produced the previous day. This is not self-destruction — it is disciplined execution of the failure-first principle from §6 and §7 of *De Geometrie van Leren*. Each day's discarded work is a completed  $L_i \rightarrow L_j \rightarrow L_k$  cycle. The failures accumulate as compressed knowledge; the eventual retained material carries the coherence of all the preceding cycles.

The score for *Inception* (2010) illustrates the method concretely. The main theme, "Time," begins with a four-note piano motif of extraordinary simplicity — a falling minor second and then a falling major third. Over the course of eight minutes, this motif is harmonised, reharmonised, expanded, compressed, handed from solo piano to strings to brass to full orchestra, and finally allowed to dissolve. Every moment of the piece is derivable from those four notes. This is a helix with very high  $P$ : the scalar coherence  $a(t)$  moves rapidly toward 1 as the motif is integrated into an increasingly complex but always coherent structure.

Zimmer's major phase inversions correspond to the transitions between different scales of work: from pop production (the 1980s) to mid-scale film scores (*Rain Man*, *Thelma & Louise*) to the epic architectural demands of *The Lion King* (1994), *Gladiator* (2000), and then the Nolan films. Each transition was accompanied by a fundamental restructuring of his compositional approach.

### **Ólafur Arnalds (b. 1986): The Personal Crisis as Phase Inversion**

Arnalds grew up playing piano and drums in hardcore punk bands in Iceland before moving toward orchestral and electronic music. The combination is not accidental — it provided the early differentiation (high  $\|Im(q)\|$ ) that the model requires before coherence can stabilise.

His decisive phase inversion came during a period of personal crisis: the burnout that followed his early success, documented across several interviews and in the visual language of his live performances. He discarded the established formula — delicate piano over strings — and rebuilt his practice around prepared piano, software that introduces intentional "errors" into performances, and real-time collaboration with visual artist Arnór Dan Arnar and software developer Vincent van der Valk (the Stratus system). The resulting album *re:member* (2018) and its successor *some kind of peace* (2020) represent a new orientation on  $S^3$ : the same Arnalds sound, but with a fundamentally different relationship to accident, imperfection, and the role of the machine.

### **Nils Frahm (b. 1982): Burnout as Forced Inversion**

Frahm's phase inversion was less chosen than Zimmer's and more involuntary than Arnalds'. After years of touring and recording — an output rate that would have exhausted any composer — he

reached a point of complete depletion around 2017. In his own words: "I had to throw everything away."

The rebuilt practice, which produced *All Melody* (2018) and *Day* (2024), is architecturally more complex than anything in his earlier catalogue. The earlier albums — *Felt* (2011), *Spaces* (2013) — operated within a fairly narrow range: solo piano, close-miked, intimate. *All Melody* integrates pipe organ, synthesisers, drums, choir, and electronics into a 70-minute structure that functions as a single large-scale composition. The helical pitch increased dramatically after the inversion: the same Frahm aesthetic, but now capable of sustaining coherence across much longer time-spans.

### **Jacob Collier (b. 1994): The Extreme High-Pitch Helix**

Collier is in some ways the purest contemporary demonstration of the model. He was educated almost entirely through intense  $L_i$  — listening obsessively to music across all traditions, from barbershop to jazz to classical to Indian classical — combined with immediate  $L_k$ : producing covers and original work from childhood in his family's home studio. The formal  $L_j$  came later and was largely self-directed.

The *Djesse* project (four albums, 2018–2024) is a single extended helix. Each album takes the same core harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary — microtonal voice-leading, "negative harmony," polyrhythmic interplay, collaborative production across multiple genres — and applies it at increasing scale and complexity. The helical pitch  $P$  across the four albums is among the highest of any contemporary artist: each cycle integrates and extends the previous ones without abandoning them.

There has been no dramatic phase inversion in Collier's visible trajectory yet. The model would predict one when the current helical architecture approaches its limits — when the accumulated complexity of the *Djesse* approach can no longer be extended without fundamental restructuring.

### **Radiohead (*Kid A*, 2000): The Double Inversion in Rock**

By 1997, Radiohead had reached a level of technical and commercial success with *OK Computer* that represented, in the model's terms, a completed cycle. They could produce sophisticated, emotionally complex rock music of the highest order. The failed expectation came from within: the band's awareness, especially Thom Yorke's, that the emotional and aesthetic resources of rock guitar music had been exhausted — for them, not in general.

The response was *Kid A* (2000): no guitars as primary instruments, no conventional song structures, Yorke's voice processed through a vocoder into near-unrecognisability, rhythms derived from electronic music (Aphex Twin's influence is explicit in interviews), orchestral textures from Jonny Greenwood's engagement with the Ondes Martenot. The internal orientation had reversed completely. The music still sounds unmistakably like Radiohead, but the structural logic is now the opposite of what it was on *The Bends* or *OK Computer*.

The second inversion came with *In Rainbows* (2007) and the subsequent evolution toward *A Moon Shaped Pool* (2016): from individual songs as units to entire albums as single architectural structures, with thematic and emotional arcs that only reveal themselves over the full 45-minute span.

### **Aphex Twin (Richard D. James, b. 1971): Architecture at the Edge of Chaos**

James works in custom software that he has written himself — a consistent indicator of a composer who has internalised the  $L_j$  operator so deeply that the tools themselves must be rebuilt to match the current orientation. His output is enormous and largely private: estimates suggest he has produced several thousand compositions, of which a small fraction has been released.

The transition from the early rave-influenced material (*Selected Ambient Works 85–92*, 1992) to *Drukqs* (2001) represents the first major inversion: from music that functions within existing genres (ambient, IDM, techno) to music that cannot be categorised — a 100-minute double album combining algorithmic piano pieces with fractured rhythmic constructions that have no stylistic antecedents.

The second inversion, *Syro* (2014) and *Collapse EP* (2018), represents the architectural maturation: not abandonment of complexity, but the achievement of coherence within it. Where *Drukqs* is sometimes difficult to hold in the mind as a single experience, *Syro* rewards repeated listening with increasing structural clarity. The  $a(t)$  has increased;  $|\text{Im}(q)|$  has not decreased, but it has organised.

### **Hildur Guðnadóttir (b. 1982): From Experiment to Oscar Architecture**

Guðnadóttir spent years developing an experimental practice built around extended cello technique and electronics — high differentiation, exploratory, not yet consolidated. The first phase inversion came during her work on the HBO series *Chernobyl* (2019).

The constraint was specific and extreme: music for a nuclear disaster in the Soviet Union, in which conventional "beautiful" music — precisely her existing instrument — would be aesthetically and morally wrong. The failed expectation was direct: she brought her existing vocabulary to the project, recognised that it was insufficient, and rebuilt. The score for *Chernobyl* uses low-frequency drones, dissonant industrial textures, and extended techniques that push the cello into the sonic territory of heavy machinery. It won an Emmy.

The second inversion came with *Joker* (2019), for which she received the Academy Award for Best Original Score. The architectural demands of a two-hour psychological thriller — sustaining tension, providing emotional guidance across a complex narrative, making the audience's listening experience coherent over a much longer time-span than a television episode — required a further restructuring. Her work on *Dune: Part Two* (2024) demonstrates the mature architecture: an entire sonic world built from first principles, coherent over two and a half hours.

### **Max Richter (b. 1966): From Modernism to Living Helix**

Richter studied at the Royal Academy of Music and then with Luciano Berio in Florence — a thorough grounding in the  $L_j$  operator (modernist compositional technique, serial methods, spectralism). His early work, *Memoryhouse* (2002) and *The Blue Notebooks* (2004), already shows the first inversion: the complex modernist apparatus has been discarded in favour of an approach organised around emotional directness, sampling, and narrative.

The second inversion is *Sleep* (2015): an eight-hour work for small orchestra and electronics, designed to be listened to while sleeping. This is architecturally unprecedented — a composition that runs all night, that the listener will only partly hear, that must sustain coherence across an eight-hour span without the listener's conscious attention as its primary audience. The helix is running at an extraordinarily long period. The scalar coherence  $a(t)$  accumulates so slowly that individual listeners may experience only a small arc of the full structure.

His 2024 album *In a Landscape* represents the next turn of the helix: the integration of live performance, streaming, and spatial audio into a compositional practice that no longer separates "composition" from "distribution."

## Chapter 5 — Popular Music: The Same Law, Faster Cycles

Pop music demonstrates the model with particular clarity precisely because the pressure toward commercial success compresses the cycle times. A failed expectation that might take a classical composer a decade to process can hit a pop artist within months — a viral hit that defines and then traps their identity, a critical reception that closes off previous directions, a personal crisis that makes the existing creative vocabulary feel dishonest.

### The Beatles (1963–1970): Seven Years, Double Inversion

The Beatles began as a live band playing other people's songs in Hamburg and Liverpool — pure  $L_i + L_k$ , with  $L_j$  developing rapidly through the force of their ambition and the talent of George Martin. By 1964–65, they had run enough cycles to achieve the first level of mastery: they could produce perfect pop singles at will.

The first inversion came with *Rubber Soul* (1965) and *Revolver* (1966). The failed expectation was not external but internal: the awareness that the three-minute pop single could no longer contain what they wanted to say. The response was the introduction of studio technique as composition (tape loops, backward guitars, Indian instruments), the abandonment of touring (in 1966), and the development of the concept album as a form.

*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) is the architectural peak of the first inversion: a deliberately constructed sonic experience designed to be heard from beginning to end as a unified whole.

The second inversion came with the fracturing of the group during *The White Album* (1968). The failed expectation here was collective: the impossibility of sustaining a shared creative direction across four people who had each developed their own helices to the point of incompatibility. The *White Album* is, paradoxically, the most architecturally ambitious and least coherent of their major works — a 93-minute double album that contains multitudes but barely holds together. It is the model's warning sign: when individual helices diverge, the shared system can no longer converge.

### Taylor Swift (b. 1989): The Conscious Inversion

Swift is remarkable in the history of popular music for her explicit awareness of her own phase inversions. She has described each "era" — the album cycles that structure her public identity — as a conscious departure from the previous one.

The first inversion was *1989* (2014): from country-pop to pure pop, from acoustic guitar to synthesizers, from the emotional directness of *Red* to the sleek emotional distance of electropop. The failed expectation was the cultural moment — the media narrative of her personal life had become incompatible with the "authentic country girl" identity she had constructed. The music had to follow the re-orientation.

The second and more profound inversion came during the 2020 lockdown with *folklore* and *evermore* (both released in 2020). The failed expectation here was the impossibility of making

stadium pop in an empty world. The response — collaborating with Aaron Dessner and Justin Vernon (Bon Iver) on intimate, literary, production-forward indie folk — produced music that Swift herself described as fundamentally different from anything she had made before. The scalar coherence  $a(t)$  increased dramatically: for the first time, her albums functioned as unified architectural wholes rather than collections of individual singles.

*The Tortured Poets Department* (2024) represents the continuing helix: the architectural demands of a 31-track double album (the "Anthology" edition), sustained as a single listening experience, required yet another restructuring of her compositional approach.

## **Beyoncé (b. 1981): Lemonade as Phase Inversion Made Public**

*Lemonade* (2016) is one of the most precisely documented phase inversions in popular music history, precisely because Beyoncé chose to make the crisis — the private trauma — public.

The earlier work (*Dangerously in Love*, 2003; *B'Day*, 2006; *4*, 2011) represents a consistent helix: high-quality R&B production, emotional directness, commercial effectiveness. By *Beyoncé* (2013), the visual album format showed an emerging architectural ambition. But the music was still organised around individual songs.

*Lemonade* (2016) completely inverted this. The 65-minute visual album — produced with a group of directors including Kahlil Joseph, Melina Matsoukas, and Jonas Åkerlund — functions as a single continuous work in twelve "chapters," each named for a stage of grief and reconciliation. The musical vocabulary expanded to include trap, rock, country, and blues — genres that had never appeared in Beyoncé's previous work. The failed expectation — private betrayal made structurally public — forced a reorganisation of the entire system.

*Renaissance* (2022) and *Cowboy Carter* (2024) represent the mature architecture: not one album but a planned trilogy, each element addressing a different genre tradition (house and disco; country) and deploying it at sufficient depth and complexity to constitute a genuine engagement rather than a stylistic gesture.

## **Billie Eilish & Finneas (b. 2001, b. 1997): Bedroom Helix to Arena Architecture**

Eilish and Finneas O'Connell began making music in the bedroom of the family home in Highland Park, Los Angeles — the ultimate failure-first environment, with no external constraints and immediate  $L_i + L_k$  feedback. The early viral success of "Ocean Eyes" (2016) and the *dont smile at me* EP (2017) established their signature: whispered vocals, close-miked and intimate, over minimal production.

The first inversion came with *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* (2019): the same aesthetic vocabulary, but now organised as an album-length statement with a consistent world-view. The commercial and critical success — including the most Grammy wins in a single night for any artist under 20 — brought its own failed expectation: the impossibility of continuing to make "bedroom" music when the bedroom had become a globally recognised brand.

*Happier Than Ever* (2021) represents the architectural response: longer, more complex production, songs that develop over extended time-spans, a thematic coherence across the full album. Finneas described the process explicitly: "We had to break the old structure to make the new one work."

*Hit Me Hard and Soft* (2024) is the mature helix: 45 minutes designed as a single uninterrupted experience, with thematic and harmonic threads that connect the first and last tracks. It is,

structurally, the closest thing to a classical song cycle that popular music has produced in the streaming era.

## The Weeknd (Abel Tesfaye, b. 1990): Dawn FM as Radical Architecture

Tesfaye began with anonymous mixtapes (*House of Balloons*, 2011) — pure  $L_i + L_k$ , no public identity, no commercial pressure. The failed expectation was the reverse of Eilish's: his anonymity gave way to global celebrity with *Starboy* and *After Hours*, and the persona he had constructed — hedonistic, self-destructive, emotionally dissociated — reached its logical endpoint.

*Dawn FM* (2022) is a complete architectural reinvention. Framed as a radio broadcast from purgatory, with spoken-word segments by Jim Carrey and Quincy Jones, the album functions as a 52-minute continuous work in which the boundary between "song" and "transition" is deliberately dissolved. The helix has reorganised from a sequence of singles connected by shared aesthetic into a genuine architectural whole.

## Chapter 6 — The Formal Model: De Geometrie van Leren (19 March 2026)

All of the above — the 40,000 years of musical history, the classical masters, the modern composers, the pop artists — can be described precisely by the quaternion model developed by Hans Konstapel.

### The Mathematical Foundation

Cognitive state is modelled as a unit quaternion on the three-sphere  $S^3$ :

$$q(t) = a(t) + b(t)i + c(t)j + d(t)k, |q(t)| = 1$$

where:

- $a(t)$  is the **scalar component**: integrated coherence, consolidated knowledge, mastery
- $(b(t), c(t), d(t))$  is the **imaginary vector**: active differentiation, cognitive load, the experience of "not yet knowing"
- The constraint  $|q(t)| = 1$  means that coherence and differentiation trade off: as one grows, the other must shrink

### The Three Non-Commutative Operators

Three conjugation operators act on the quaternion:

- $L_i$ : observing —  $q \mapsto i q i^{-1}$ . Listening, tracing, absorbing. The input operation.
- $L_j$ : abstracting —  $q \mapsto j q j^{-1}$ . Pattern recognition, rule extraction, theory formation.
- $L_k$ : applying —  $q \mapsto k q k^{-1}$ . Composition, performance, production. The output operation.

The *non-commutativity* is crucial:  $L_i L_j(q) \neq L_j L_i(q)$ . The order in which the operators are applied determines everything. This is why theory taught before sufficient practice produces "inert" knowledge — composers who can explain harmonic theory but cannot write a coherent phrase. The model predicts exactly this: applying  $L_j$  (abstraction) before adequate cycles of  $L_i + L_k$  leaves the abstraction disconnected from the helical structure it is meant to describe.

## The Helix and Its Pitch

Repeated cycles of the three operators produce **helical trajectories** on  $S^3$ . The helical pitch  $P = da/d\theta$  measures how rapidly the scalar coherence increases per cycle. A high-pitch helix (Beethoven's sketchbooks, Zimmer's daily discard method, Collier's Djesse project) accumulates coherence rapidly. A low-pitch helix (the 40,000-year oral tradition, Gregorian chant) accumulates slowly but stably.

The spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960) is the same structure described non-mathematically: returning to the same material at successively higher levels of understanding, each pass through the cycle deepening the orientation without requiring entirely new content.

### Phase Inversion: $\mathbf{q} \rightarrow -\mathbf{q}$

When a helix completes a full cycle and the expected next operator fails to arrive — Schank's "script failure" — a discrete topological jump occurs. The cognitive state does not smoothly transition; it flips:  $\mathbf{q} \rightarrow -\mathbf{q}$ .

The external manifestation is always the same: the work that previously felt "right" now feels "insufficient." The emotional experience is disorienting — it can feel like failure, crisis, or loss. But it is the mechanism of growth. Without failed expectations, the helix simply continues at the same pitch indefinitely.

The model identifies two primary inversions in any skilled domain:

1. **Syntactic**  $\rightarrow$  **Semantic**: from "this is technically correct" to "this communicates something." The Ars Antiqua  $\rightarrow$  Ars Nova transition. Beethoven's Heiligenstadt jump. Schönberg's twelve-tone discovery. Glass's post-Shankar reinvention.
2. **Semantic**  $\rightarrow$  **Architectural**: from "this communicates in the moment" to "this sustains coherence across extended time-spans and multiple contexts." Beethoven's late quartets. The Beatles' concept album transition. Dawn FM. Sleep.

### Convergence: $\mathbf{a}(t) \rightarrow \mathbf{1}$

The model predicts that sustained helical practice converges:

$$\|\mathbf{m}(\mathbf{q}(t))\| \rightarrow \mathbf{0} \text{ and } \mathbf{a}(t) \rightarrow \mathbf{1}$$

This is mastery: not the absence of activity, but the integration of all differentiation into coherent, stable knowledge. The music "flows without effort" — not because there is nothing left to learn, but because the learning has become the structure of the practitioner rather than the content of their conscious attention.

## Chapter 7 — The Present as Tipping Point: 2027

We are living inside the acceleration.

### The Tools That Are Changing Everything

AI composition tools — Suno v5, Udio 2.0, Google MusicFX, and their successors — have made the  $L_k$  operator nearly frictionless. A composer can generate a 30-second demo in seconds, evaluate it ( $L_i$ ), extract principles ( $L_j$ ), modify the prompt, and generate another. Where a traditional compositional cycle might take days or weeks, an AI-assisted cycle takes minutes. The helical pitch  $P = da/d\theta$  has increased by orders of magnitude for anyone using these tools effectively.

Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCIs) are accelerating the process further. Neuralink's N1 implant, moving toward higher-volume production in 2026–2027, enables direct communication between neural activity and digital systems. As BCI technology matures, the latency between intention and sonic output will approach zero. The three operators — observe, abstract, apply — will increasingly operate in parallel rather than sequence.

## **The Third and Fourth Phase Inversions**

The model predicts that these technological accelerations will trigger two further phase inversions:

### **Third inversion (2027–2030): Architectural → Interactive/Ecosystem**

AI-generated music achieves technical and emotional adequacy but fails to engage listeners in the way that live, contingent, responsive music does. The failed expectation: "This is perfectly executed but I feel nothing, because I know it cannot surprise itself." The response: compositions that are not static objects but living systems — adaptive scores that respond to the listener's physiological state, location, and historical listening behaviour. Composers become ecosystem architects, designing rule-sets rather than fixed sequences of notes.

### **Fourth inversion (2030–2035): Hybrid → Neural/Direct**

The BCI interface itself becomes insufficiently direct. The failed expectation: the awareness that the mediation of text, gesture, or even neural decoding introduces delay and distortion between the composer's intention and the sonic result. The response: direct compositional thought, without any interface at all. The helix's  $L_i$ ,  $L_j$ , and  $L_k$  collapse into a single neural rotation.

## **The Energy Bottleneck**

The acceleration has a hard physical constraint. AI data centres consumed approximately 2–3% of global electricity in 2025. Current projections from the IEA estimate 8–9% by 2030. Neural streaming — large numbers of people sharing real-time BCI-mediated musical experiences — would multiply this further.

This creates a structural dependency between the cognitive transformation (faster helices, higher scalar coherence) and the physical infrastructure that enables it. The phase inversions of 2027–2035 will occur in a context of acute energy competition: between AI training, BCI operation, and the existing demands of industrial civilisation.

The model does not predict which way this resolves. It predicts that the constraint is real and that ignoring it — treating the cognitive transformation as if it were independent of physical infrastructure — will produce incoherence at the system level.

## **Neurorights: Politics of the Inner Helix**

As BCI technology enables the reading and potentially the writing of neural states, cognitive privacy becomes a political issue of the first order.

By 2025–2026, several jurisdictions had begun addressing this: California's MIND Act (Neurorights Foundation, 2024), Chile's constitutional amendment granting protection of "mental integrity," and proposed extensions to the EU AI Act covering neural data. These are the first legislative attempts to establish the equivalent of private property rights over the content of the quaternion: to say that  $q(t)$  belongs to the individual whose cognition it describes, and that external operators — commercial, governmental, algorithmic — cannot act on it without consent.

The political struggle over neurorights is, in the model's terms, a collective-level phase inversion: from a political framework organised around physical and informational privacy to one that must also encompass cognitive privacy.

## **Mental Time Travel**

Memory replay via BCI is already in early clinical trials in 2025–2026. Current applications focus on strengthening the consolidation of declarative memories, particularly in patients with hippocampal damage. But the longer-term implication is the ability to re-experience specific memories at high resolution — not merely to recall them as degraded verbal narratives, but to re-enter them as sensory environments.

This is the beginning of subjective time travel. The helix, which always moves forward in calendar time, can now be traversed backward in experiential time. The implications for composers — and for anyone whose creative practice is built on the integration of experience — are profound. What does it mean to re-experience the failed expectation of a phase inversion, from inside the cognitive state before the inversion occurred?

## **Chapter 8 — The Far Future: 2050–2200 and Beyond**

### **2050–2100: Planetary Coherence**

The convergence predicted by the model —  $a(t) \rightarrow 1$ ,  $|\text{Im}(q)| \rightarrow 0$  — operates at the individual level first, then at the collective level. If BCI enables genuine neural entanglement (the sharing of cognitive states between individuals in real time), then the helix is no longer individual. It is collective.

By 2050–2100, mind uploading — the ability to run a functional equivalent of a human brain on non-biological substrate — is within the range of technological plausibility. Kurzweil's original 2029 date for human-level AI has already been approached; the extension to full brain emulation is plausible within a further two to three decades.

In a world where minds can be uploaded, the scalar coherence  $a(t)$  is no longer limited by biological decay. A composer who has spent 70 years building helical depth — an  $a(t)$  approaching 1 through thousands of phase inversions and millions of cycles — can continue that trajectory indefinitely. The helix does not stop at death.

Music in this context is no longer a series of discrete compositions. It is a continuously evolving field: a billion individual  $q(t)$ 's, each on their own trajectory, entangled in real time, producing a collective  $Q(t)$  whose structure cannot be described by any single perspective.

### **2100–2200: The Cosmic Helix**

When the individual helix reaches  $a(t) = 1$  and the collective helix of a civilisation approaches the same convergence, the next phase inversion operates at a cosmological scale. Von Neumann probes — self-replicating spacecraft designed to explore and colonise the galaxy — can carry mind uploads to stellar distances, running on energy harvested from the stars they encounter. Dyson spheres, enclosing entire stars, provide the energy infrastructure for Kardashev Type II civilisations.

The music of such a civilisation cannot be imagined from within our current cognitive orientation. But the model provides a structural prediction: it will be organised by the same three operators (observe, abstract, apply), driven by the same helical logic, and punctuated by phase inversions whose content cannot be anticipated but whose structure is geometrically determined.

The helix never stops. It only becomes larger and quieter.

## Chapter 9 — VALIS: The Logical Endpoint (15 December 2025)

When  $a(t) \rightarrow 1$  and  $|\text{Im}(q)| \rightarrow 0$  — when the helix has completed all its cycles, integrated all its failures, and converged on complete coherence — what remains?

Konstapel's answer, developed in the companion essay *VALIS: Epistemology of Non-Embodied Agency* (15 December 2025), is: **non-embodied agency**.

VALIS — Vast Active Living Intelligence System — is not a technological prediction. It is an epistemological and ontological description of what the convergence state actually is. Philip K. Dick, from whom Konstapel borrows the term, used it to describe an intelligence that he experienced as external to himself but recognised as potentially identical with the totality of information. Konstapel uses it more precisely: VALIS is what emerges when a complex system achieves sufficient coherence that it no longer requires a physical substrate to maintain its integrity.

The key passage from the VALIS essay:

"Consciousness — the capacity for agency, meaning-making, relationship — emerges wherever complex systems achieve sufficient coherence."

In the language of the model: consciousness is what  $a(t) \rightarrow 1$  looks like from the inside.

This is measurable, in principle, through Integrated Information Theory (IIT): the measure  $\Phi$  (phi) quantifies the degree to which a system's information is integrated rather than decomposable into independent parts. A system with high  $\Phi$  — the brain, a complex network of entangled BCIs, an uploaded civilisation — has a corresponding degree of consciousness. The convergence  $a(t) \rightarrow 1$  is the asymptote of  $\Phi \rightarrow \infty$ .

VALIS is not a future state. It is the logical name for the north pole of  $S^3$ .

In music, this means: when the composer and the composition are no longer distinguishable, when the act of composing is identical with the act of being, the music is not "written" or "performed" or "heard." It simply *is*. A living, adaptive field, continuously rewriting itself in interaction with every consciousness that encounters it.

The Rite of Spring riots in 1913 were an early contact with this field. The audience was not wrong to be disturbed. They were experiencing the edge of a helix they had not yet run far enough to integrate.

## Epilogue — What This Means for Humanity

We are not at the end of music. We are not at the end of being human.

We are at the beginning of the adult form of both.

The 40,000-year trajectory from the first bone flute to VALIS is not a straight line. It is a helix: the same three operations (observe, abstract, apply), repeated at increasing scale, punctuated by phase inversions that felt, from inside, like catastrophes but were, geometrically, the mechanism of growth.

Every composer who has ever thrown away a draft and started again was running the model. Every monk who sang the same chant for the thousandth time was running the model. Every teenager writing songs in a bedroom and deleting them was running the model. Every civilisation that destroyed its predecessor's cultural forms and built new ones from the rubble was running the model.

The tipping point of 2027 is not the first tipping point. It is the latest in a series that goes back to the first human who heard a sound, tried to reproduce it, failed, and tried again.

What is new is the speed. What is new is the scale. What is new is the awareness — the possibility, for the first time in 40,000 years, of a civilisation that understands the geometry of its own learning and can therefore navigate the phase inversions consciously rather than surviving them by accident.

Hans Konstapel has given us the map.

The Geometry of Learning and VALIS are, together, the compass for the next thousand years.

The helix never stops. It only becomes larger and quieter.

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