Human Interface Laws

A Philosophical Mechanics of Belief, Update, and Shared Reality

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Abstract

If you put a human in the world, you do not get a neutral observer. You get a living interface: a system that must preserve enough coherence to act while remaining open enough for reality to correct it. This paper identifies eight structural regularities—*Human Interface Laws*—governing how cognition begins, allocates limited capacity, weights signal, protects identity, retains records, responds to signal conditions, risks self-sealing, and reopens revision. The laws operate at three strengths: interface invariants, modulation principles, and conditional regime laws. They are neither moral commands nor kernel laws. The paper then develops positional love and hate as aperture orientations rather than emotions. A love-position permits what is encountered to exceed the interface's current representation; a hate-position treats one label, story, or judgment as exhaustive. The Aperture Check offers a reflective heuristic for inspecting that position in real time. Human Interface Laws sit within the broader architecture of Universal Collapse Theory, bridging the formal grammar of constraint-guided collapse with the lived mechanics of human cognition.

Keywords: belief revision; social epistemology; intellectual humility; cognitive architecture; motivated reasoning; self-sealing beliefs; positional love and hate; Universal Collapse Theory

A human never encounters the world from nowhere. It meets the world through a living interface already shaped by biology, memory, language, identity, culture, and prior contact. That interface must perform two tasks at once: preserve enough coherence to act and remain open enough for what it meets to revise it.

The laws below name recurrent structural pressures governing that double task. The word *law* names a family of regularities, not eight claims of identical logical strength.

Interface laws, not kernel laws. Universal Collapse Theory's structural laws—how possibility resolves under constraint, how collapse writes records, and how records update constraints—operate at the level of the kernel and are developed in the formal papers cited at the end. The eight below operate one level up: they name regularities of a human subsystem at its own surface, the kernel as lived from the inside. They are not new laws of nature. Read them as the interface, not the engine. The register is part of the design: a paper about the human interface, written at the surface it describes.

Review Target. This paper asks whether the eight laws accurately name regularities of human cognition at the strength each claims: whether the invariants identify conditions the interface cannot escape, whether the modulation principles predict meaningful directional effects, and whether the regime laws discriminate contexts that differ in update behavior. It should be revised or rejected if an invariant admits systematic counterexamples, if a modulation principle adds no explanatory discrimination, or if a regime law fails under its stated conditions. The aperture proposal should likewise be revised if positional openness cannot be distinguished from bandwidth, emotional tone, threat load, or need for cognitive closure, or if it fails to discriminate remainder-preserving judgment from totalizing judgment. The paper does not ask the reader to adopt Universal Collapse Theory or treat these interface regularities as kernel laws or laws of nature.

Three kinds of law. Laws 1–2 are interface invariants: conditions a functioning human interface cannot fully escape. Laws 3–5 are modulation principles: variables that systematically shape cognition without fixing a single outcome. Laws 6–8 are conditional regime laws: directional claims expected under stated signal, contact, and threat conditions. A regime law can be lawful without being exceptionless; its work is to specify what changes when its governing conditions change.

Law 1: No One Starts from Zero

Interface invariant.

No human begins from a blank state. Every act of perception and reasoning begins downstream of a **starting trust**: commitments and predispositions inherited from biology, accumulated experience, culture, language, testimony, and prior belief.

Human starting trust is not a new cognitive invention. Living systems already bias action before certainty and correct through feedback afterward; human cognition inherits that architecture and gives it symbolic, recursive form. A mind may revise particular inherited commitments. What it cannot do is begin without receiving anything from which to proceed.

This is not a flaw. It is the entry price of intelligibility. Without starting trust, nothing can mean anything.

Law 2: Awareness Has Bandwidth, and Bandwidth Sets the Possible

Interface invariant.

What you can resolve depends partly on what you can keep live.

Bandwidth names the limited capacity of the interface to admit, maintain, compare, and integrate competing signals, interpretations, and action demands within a given window. It is not a single psychological faculty or a literal information-theoretic quantity. It is a structural variable whose local proxies may include attentional breadth, working-memory load, cognitive flexibility, alternative generation, and tolerance of unresolved conflict (Cowan, 2001; Diamond, 2013).

When more bandwidth is available relative to demand, the interface can hold contradiction and competing frames long enough for integration. When less is available, it prunes complexity toward a smaller field: one target, label, story, or immediate action.

Wide does not mean correct, and narrow does not mean pathological. Narrowing can be adaptive when action is urgent. The law is simpler: what the interface cannot keep available cannot participate in its present resolution.

Law 3: Feelings Are Gain-Control Signals, Not Sovereigns

Modulation principle.

Feelings are not truth. But they are not passengers either.

Here *feelings* is the human-facing term for affective signals—felt valence, arousal, urgency, threat, safety, attraction, and aversion—that modulate salience and the weight assigned to incoming constraint. **Gain control** is a functional analogy: these signals can amplify some channels, attenuate others, and alter thresholds for attention and control (Pessoa, 2009; Phelps et al., 2014).

Feelings do not determine reality or sovereignly choose what the interface sees. They alter which parts of reality are easiest or hardest to notice, trust, maintain, and use. The same signal can therefore arrive as curiosity in one state and threat in another.

Emotion can sharpen cognition or narrow it. Feelings steer the interface; they do not adjudicate what is true.

Law 4: Identity Protects Its Constraints

Modulation principle.

When a belief becomes identity-bound—tied to self-continuity, belonging, status, or a valued group—the cost of revision rises. Under those conditions, disconfirming evidence is more likely to be processed as a threat to self-integrity rather than as neutral information (Festinger, 1957; Kunda, 1990; Kahan, 2013; Swann et al., 2012).

The interface may then protect the commitment by filtering evidence, reframing the challenge, attacking its source, or moving the standard of proof. Greater reasoning capacity does not automatically prevent this; it can be recruited into more sophisticated defense.

Identity does not make revision impossible. It increases protection pressure. Conditions that separate the person from the proposition, lower the social cost of error, or preserve continuity through revision can reopen the update path.

This is why smart people can become un-updatable. It is not an intelligence problem. It is a cost-of-revision problem.

Law 5: Records Write the Person

Modulation principle.

Humans are recursively shaped by records. Some are internal: memory traces, learned associations, relational histories, self-narratives, and retained emotional weight. Others are external: speech, writing, artifacts, institutions, and other forms of cognition stabilized into the world. Externalized records can later return as internalized cognitive structure (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; McAdams & McLean, 2013).

A record need not be perfectly accurate to shape the person. It must persist, re-enter later cognition, and carry enough weight to constrain what comes next. Not every exposure becomes contact: the signal must be admitted with enough weight to produce durable downstream change. The original input may be gone while its record continues to organize salience, expectation, and action.

This is why language matters so much. Labels can alter later perception and cognition, and a story stabilized today can become part of the interface that meets tomorrow (Lupyan, 2012).

Law 6: Weak External Signal Permits Divergence; Shared Independent Records Favor Convergence

Conditional regime law.

Convergence becomes more likely when agents share access to durable, diagnostic, effectively independent records and retain update procedures through which those records are permitted to matter. Under those conditions, increasing shared constraint tends to reduce disagreement.

When external signal is weak, ambiguous, inaccessible, or correlated, more than one resolution can remain viable and resolution may be delayed. Identity, belonging, and social consequence can then carry more weight because the interface must still choose something to stand on. Social verification may produce convergence within a group even while groups diverge from one another, and convergence need not increase accuracy (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Lorenz et al., 2011).

Low signal therefore does not guarantee divergence, and high signal does not guarantee consensus. Unequal access, identity binding, correlated records, coercive agreement, and asymmetric update rules can all block correction.

The law names a change in structural pressure: weak diagnostic constraint permits socially structured divergence; shared independent records and intact update rules favor convergence. The convergence side tracks formal results developed in the technical notes cited at the end; the specifically human transition from underdetermination to socially structured divergence is stated here as a directional interface-level hypothesis, not a theorem.

Law 7: Coherence without Contact Tends toward Self-Sealing

Conditional regime law.

A person can maintain internal coherence while losing external answerability.

Contact means more than exposure. It is signal admitted as real, weighted enough to matter, and capable in principle of reorganizing the structure that receives it. A person may encounter contrary information repeatedly without admitting it as contact.

When disconfirming contact is persistently excluded, discredited, or translated into further confirmation, coherence can become self-sealing. Biased assimilation and confirmation bias provide familiar routes into this structure (Lord et al., 1979; Nickerson, 1998). The problem is not confidence, ideology, or unusual belief by itself. It is a loop in which no relevant record is permitted to count against the protected conclusion.

Such a loop may remain sophisticated, orderly, and subjectively clean. That is the danger: coherence can be achieved without truth-tracking.

Law 8: Integrated Repair Requires a Safe-Enough Window

Conditional regime law.

As threat approaches or exceeds a system's tolerance limits, its capacity for integrated revision generally decreases. Acute stress commonly impairs working memory and cognitive flexibility, although effects vary by function, context, and person (Shields et al., 2016). Stress can also attenuate flexible updating in aversive learning without making revision logically impossible (Raio et al., 2017).

Integrated repair means that revision becomes a retained, usable record: the system can hold an alternative, test it, incorporate what survives, and carry the change across later contexts. A public concession, coerced agreement, or sudden replacement is not necessarily integrated merely because the stated belief changed.

Safe enough does not mean comfortable, consequence-free, or free of disagreement. It means that threat is low enough—and agency, time, or support sufficient enough—for diagnostic feedback to remain admissible. The law predicts a directional relation between threat load and the probability of integrated update, not an impossibility.

This is why winning an argument often fails to change a mind. If the exchange closes the window, information may arrive after the interface has stopped being able to use it.

Positional Love and Hate: Aperture Orientations

Not emotional categories—positions from which the interface meets what is before it.

The words *love* and *hate* are emotionally loaded, and that is part of why they are retained. Human beings feel the difference between being met as more than a conclusion and being collapsed into one. But the terms do not name emotions here. They name **aperture positions**: stances from which the interface meets what is before it.

> **Positional love is the remainder-preserving position**. It permits the encountered person, object, event, or claim to exceed the interface's current representation of it.
>
> **Positional hate is the totalizing position**. It treats one label, story, or judgment as sufficient to exhaust the target.
>
> **At the aperture level, love preserves remainder. Hate abolishes remainder.**

These positions are not identical to bandwidth. Bandwidth describes how much the interface can actively hold; aperture describes whether the interface permits what it meets to be more than its present model. A high-bandwidth mind can use complexity to defend a totalizing judgment. A low-bandwidth mind can still recognize that its judgment is partial.

Nor are the positions defined by emotional tone. A person can be angry, afraid, or firm while standing in positional love. A person can feel affection, pleasure, or calm while standing in positional hate through possession, idealization, or quiet dehumanization. Feelings can modulate aperture, but they do not define it.

Nor is aperture a restatement of *need for cognitive closure*. Closure names a motivational preference for having an answer—the urge to seize a verdict and freeze upon it (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Aperture names a position on whether the current answer exhausts its target. The two dissociate in both directions: a patient, unhurried mind can hold a fully totalizing account, and a mind hungry for a verdict can still hold that verdict as scoped and revisable. Closure concerns when the interface stops; aperture concerns what the stopping is taken to mean.

Aperture positions are local rather than total identities. A person may preserve remainder toward one target and abolish it toward another; the check concerns the present stance, not what kind of person someone permanently is.

Positional love and hate are proposed philosophical names, not validated psychological scales. Intellectual humility and dehumanizing reduction offer convergent constructs for remainder-preserving and totalizing orientations without being identical to them (Leary et al., 2017; Haslam, 2006).

Positional Love: Open to Remainder

Positional love does not require approval, affection, proximity, passivity, or continued access. It means refusing to confuse the present representation with the whole reality.

A love-position can name harm, impose consequence, end a relationship, or establish a firm boundary while preserving remainder: the recognition that the person or situation exceeds the action presently being judged.

You can do this structurally:

— add context without erasing the signal
— separate the person from the action
— ask what else remains true
— state what evidence could revise the present model
— hold a boundary without turning it into a total ontology of the other

Positional Hate: Closure around a Total Account

Positional hate does not require anger or heat. It is the closure by which the interface reduces a target to one sufficient representation: one label, one story, one verdict from which no further fact is permitted to matter.

This can produce decisive action quickly. The structural risk is not decisiveness itself; it is exhaustive collapse—the conversion of a necessary judgment into a complete account.

A closed position often forms around real signal: violation, danger, helplessness, or repeated harm. Repair does not mean approving harm or restoring unsafe access. It means extracting a usable constraint from totalizing closure:

— turn global hatred into a clean boundary
— replace the exhaustive judgment with a bounded claim
— preserve the legitimate signal: this matters, this is unsafe, this cannot continue
— leave the model answerable to future record without surrendering the boundary

In other words: convert constriction into coherent constraint, so the interface can act without producing cognitive shrapnel.

A Simple Practice: The Aperture Check

When a person, group, event, or belief begins to feel completely captured by one conclusion, ask:

1. Am I permitting what I meet to exceed my present model of it?
2. What remainder am I pruning because it complicates the verdict?

3. What record could revise the confidence, scope, or formulation of this judgment?
4. What boundary can I set without turning the boundary into a total account?

This is a reflective interface-maintenance heuristic, not a clinical or psychometric diagnostic. The Aperture Check inspects the stance from which the interface is currently meeting its target; the four-question diagnostic of *How Minds Resolve* audits the update loop running through that stance. Position first, then structure.

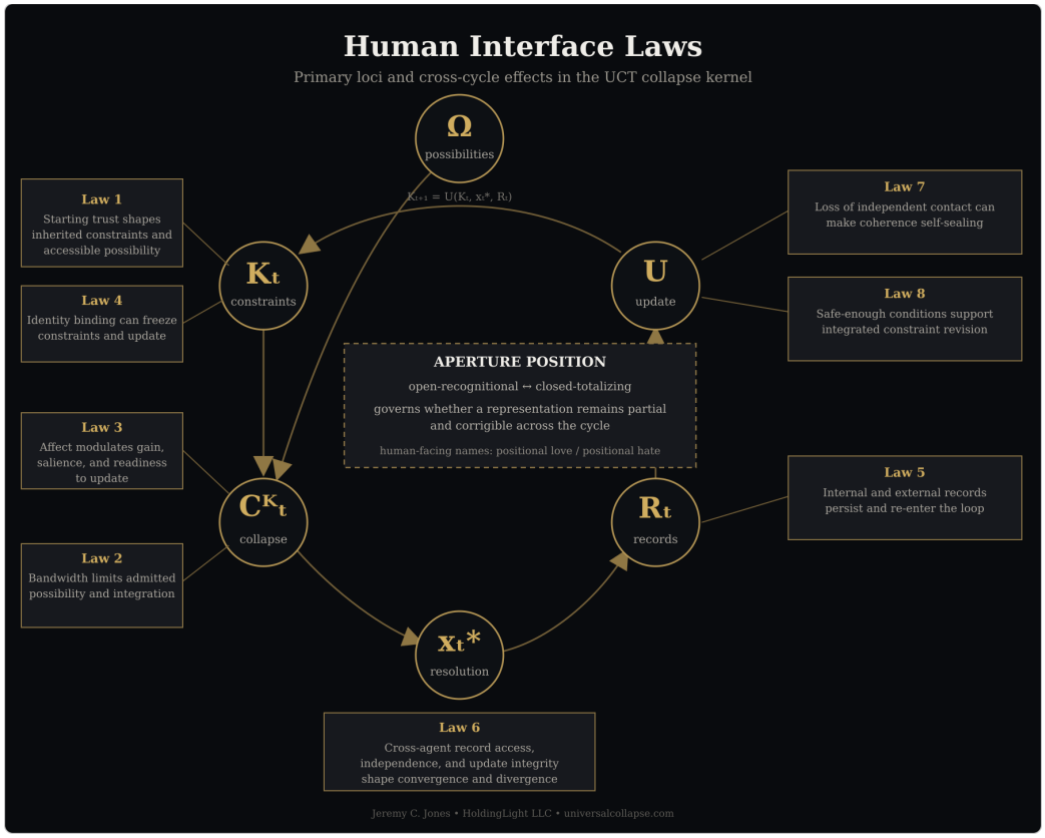

Figure 1. *Primary kernel loci of the eight Human Interface Laws. The connections show where each regularity becomes most visible, not an exclusive one-to-one identity. Positional aperture is cross-cutting: it can affect signal admission, active constraint, selection, record formation, and update. Residue S_t and the explicit Ω_{t+1} update are suppressed in this interface projection.*

Where This Sits in the Wider Architecture

Universal Collapse Theory proposes that a common structural grammar—possibility resolving under active constraint, resolutions stabilizing as records, and records modifying later constraints—can be examined across physical, biological, and cognitive domains. At step t, its complete law-level form is C^K_t: $\Omega \rightarrow x_t^*, R_t, S_t, \Omega_{t+1}$, with $K_{t+1} = U(K_t, x_t^*, R_t, S_t)$. Human Interface Laws also uses the licensed shorthand C^K when time is suppressed and omits S_t and explicit possibility-space updating where those terms are not materially active.

Human Interface Laws describe recurring human-level expressions distributed across that cycle. They are interface patterns spanning multiple kernel terms, not additional operators and not components located exclusively at single nodes.

Starting trust contributes the commitment-bearing portion of the active constraint set K_t (Law 1), while inherited records and culture also shape which possibilities remain live. Bandwidth limits the portion of Ω that can remain accessible and the alternatives C^{K_t} can actively maintain (Law 2). Feelings modulate signal salience and relative constraint weight without constituting a discrete kernel operator (Law 3). Identity binding can harden selected constraints and make U less sensitive to disconfirming R_t in a protected channel (Law 4). Records persist through R_t and re-enter through $U(K_t, x_t^*, R_t)$ to shape K_{t+1}; residue is suppressed in this interface projection (Law 5). Signal regimes operate across agents through record access, discriminability, independence, and update integrity (Law 6). Self-sealing can arise through signal admission, K_t, R_t, or U (Law 7). Repair concerns the conditions under which those pathways regain revisability (Law 8). These are primary loci, not one-to-one identities.

Each law connects to where its structure is developed. The kernel is set out in *Foundations of Collapse* (WP01); its human mind-phase is developed in *Conscious Collapse* (WP04). Starting trust (Law 1) is phase Faith—the inherited or accepted commitment-bearing subset of K_t—in *How Minds Resolve*. Its deeper basis is the constitutive medium of commitment before certainty: structurally unavoidable rather than an inventory of protected beliefs. *Biological Faith Systems* traces the continuity of that architecture below cognition while showing how particular commitments remain feedback-corrigible. Laws 2–3 route to *The Self the Ego Did Not Build*; Law 5 routes jointly to *Records Across Nature, Life, and Mind*, the Self paper, and *Consciousness-Induced Material*. Externalized records become CIM and can later return as internalized cognitive structure.

Laws 4, 6, and 8 name interface pressures that *How Minds Resolve* uses in its account of how an FRLB loop becomes supplanted; Law 7 names the contact-sensitive self-sealing phenotype. The *Update Integrity Standard* independently specifies corresponding update-loop corruptors, including identity binding, constraint freezing, and discriminator-free coherence. For Law 6, S_1 tests conditional convergence under independent, discriminable records, while S_2 tests delayed resolution under weak constraint asymmetry; the specifically human transition from underdetermination to socially structured divergence remains an interface-level hypothesis rather than a theorem of S_2. UIS specifies what integrity requires of an update loop. Law 8 proposes a human condition affecting whether a person can meet those requirements. Self-affirmation findings supply one external example of preserved self-continuity broadening perspective under threat (Steele, 1988; Critcher & Dunning, 2015).

Positional love and hate are not an additional kernel stage, a synonym for bandwidth, or a felt readout reducible to valence and arousal. They name a cross-cutting orientation of the human interface toward its own representations. The love-position keeps remainder admissible; the hate-position treats the present collapse as exhaustive. Feelings can influence aperture, and threat can reduce the capacity to sustain openness, but no felt tone alone determines the position.

We cannot avoid collapse. The honest interface is the one that remains answerable to what its collapse leaves out.

These laws do not tell you what to believe. They describe the machine that does the believing. Understanding that machine is the first step toward using it honestly.

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