

Epistemic Immunity: A Binary Diagnostic Test for Structural Conceptual Appropriation

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Abstract. The health of an intellectual ecosystem depends on its capacity to distinguish between original contributions and derivative reformulations. This paper introduces the **CLEO Verification Protocol v1.0**, a binary diagnostic tool designed to determine whether a conceptual framework is structurally derivative of a pioneer conceptual innovation. The protocol is grounded in the concept of **Epistemic Immunity**: the capacity of a sovereign research program to establish clear, objective boundaries between its own conceptual architecture and that of later, unacknowledged reproductions. Rather than relying on proof of access, knowledge, or intent, the protocol operates on a set of formal, binary *conceptual signatures* that capture the constitutive core of the original innovation. This paper presents the logical structure of the protocol, its theoretical foundation in the concept of Epistemic Immunity, and its first field of application: the **Evolutio Unfolding Theory (EUT)**. The case of Michael Levin’s “Platonic Space” framework (2025) is presented as the first documented application of the protocol, demonstrating its capacity to discriminate between different degrees of structural reproduction while maintaining a binary, evidence-based standard. The protocol is offered as a permanent, objective instrument for the verification of conceptual lineage, and as a methodological contribution to the broader problem of conceptual attribution in science.

1 Introduction: Epistemic Pathologies and the Need for Immunity

The intellectual ecosystem is vulnerable to a range of pathologies that undermine the attribution of conceptual priority. In prior work, I have documented several of these: **Strategic Silence**, the deliberate and conspicuous non-acknowledgment of a prior framework; **Hidden Consumption**, the private utilization of a framework’s outputs without any public engagement; **Epistemic Chameleonism**, the systematic renaming of a theoretical architecture to present it as a novel contribution; and **Epistemic Parasitism**, the networked extraction and assimilation of ideas from a sovereign source, presenting them as emergent from within a parasitic collective. These are not merely individual transgressions; they are systemic patterns that erode the integrity of the scholarly record.

A sovereign research program requires more than the documentation of these pathologies. It requires **Epistemic Immunity**: a built-in capacity to distinguish its own constitutive architecture from that of derivative frameworks, regardless of the terminology in which those frameworks are presented. This paper introduces a formal instrument for establishing such immunity: the **CLEO Verification Protocol v1.0**.

The protocol is not a tool for personal dispute. It is a permanent, objective, and citable standard for determining whether a given conceptual framework reproduces the constitutive architecture of an original innovation. It functions as the conceptual immune system of a research ecosystem: not by attacking external agents, but by establishing clear, non-negotiable boundaries between what is original and what is derivative. The protocol is designed to be applicable to any field. Its first application, presented here, is to the **Evolutio Unfolding Theory (EUT)**.

2 Theoretical Foundation: Epistemic Immunity and the CLEO Infrastructure

A biological immune system does not “accuse” pathogens. It recognizes what belongs to the organism and what does not, and it acts on that recognition. The core mechanism of this recognition in jawed vertebrates is the **Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC)**, which presents peptide fragments on the cell surface—structural signatures that allow T-cells to distinguish self from non-self. This is not a moral judgment; it is a structural determination.

Similarly, an epistemic immune system does not accuse authors of plagiarism. It identifies the structural signatures of a conceptual architecture—its *conceptual signatures*—and determines whether a later framework reproduces those signatures. The **CLEO (Conceptual Lineage Ethical Observatory)** is the infrastructure that houses this epistemic immune system. Within it, the **CLEO Verification Protocol** functions as the rule of recognition, the equivalent of the MHC: it presents the constitutive *conceptual signatures* of an original theory and tests whether a later framework matches them. The **CLEO Registry** serves as the immunological memory, recording each documented case. The **Determination** is the immune response: a binary, evidence-based classification of the examined framework.

The CLEO Verification Protocol operationalizes this principle. It does not rely on:

- **Proof of access.** Whether the author of a later framework read the original work is irrelevant. The architecture either matches or it does not.
- **Proof of knowledge.** Whether the author was “aware” of the original is irrelevant. The structural correspondence is the evidence.

- **Proof of intent.** Whether the reproduction was deliberate or accidental is irrelevant. The historical record requires attribution regardless of intent.

This makes the protocol immune to the standard defenses against appropriation claims: “I never read that work”, “I arrived at these ideas independently”, “the similarity is coincidental”. The protocol bypasses these defenses by grounding its determination in architecture, not in biography.

3 The CLEO Verification Protocol: Logical Structure

The protocol operates as a formal test of structural identity. Its core is a simple syllogism:

Premise 1 (General Rule): If a later conceptual framework satisfies a sufficient set of the *conceptual signatures* that define the constitutive architecture of an original framework, then that later framework is structurally derivative of the original.

Premise 2 (Specific Application): Framework X satisfies the *conceptual signatures* C1, C2, and C3 defined for original framework Y.

Conclusion: Framework X is structurally derivative of original framework Y.

3.1 Conceptual Signatures

A *conceptual signature* is a constitutive element of an original theoretical architecture. It is not a peripheral feature or a stylistic choice. It is a structural component without which the architecture would be fundamentally different. The number of signatures used in the protocol should be kept to a minimum—ideally three or four—to ensure clarity, robustness, and applicability across diverse fields.

3.2 Criteria and Determination

The protocol consists of a set of binary criteria, each corresponding to a *conceptual signature* of the original framework. The criteria are formulated as yes/no questions:

Table 1. Generic Protocol Criteria

#	Criterion	Yes/No
C1	Does the later framework reproduce conceptual signature 1?	
C2	Does the later framework reproduce conceptual signature 2?	
C3	Does the later framework reproduce conceptual signature 3?	
...	...	

Determination:

No additional proof of access, knowledge, or intent is required. The structural correspondence is sufficient. The distinction between “Confirmed” and “High Fidelity” captures different degrees of structural reproduction while preserving the binary nature of each individual criterion.

Table 2. Determination Table

Criteria Satisfied	Determination
C1, C2, and C3	Derivative Framework (Confirmed)
C1, C2, C3, and an additional signature (e.g., C4)	Derivative Framework (High Fidelity)

3.3 A Note on Blockchain Registration

The *conceptual signatures* of an original framework function as unique identifiers of that framework’s constitutive architecture. A logical extension of the protocol, to be explored in future work, is the registration of hashed *conceptual signatures* on a public blockchain. This would provide a decentralized, immutable, and timestamped certificate of authenticity for conceptual innovations, independent of any institutional authority. The blockchain would serve as a notary of conceptual priority, further strengthening the Epistemic Immunity of sovereign research programs.

4 First Application: The Evolutio Unfolding Theory (EUT)

The first field of application for the CLEO Verification Protocol is the **Evolutio Unfolding Theory (EUT)**, first published in *Cosmos and History* in 2020 (2). The EUT is a complete ontology of evolution as a purposive, sequential unfolding of a virtual, non-spatiotemporal, and logically structured matrix of pre-existing forms. Its constitutive architecture is built upon a set of specific, logically concatenated principles and constructs. From these, the following four *conceptual signatures* are derived:

Conceptual Signature 1 (CS1): Virtual Stratified Domain. The theory postulates a virtual, non-spatiotemporal domain that contains in latent form all forms or events of the universe, and this domain is internally organized as a stratified structure (layers, levels, or successive fields) (2, p. 353).

Conceptual Signature 2 (CS2): Sequential Unfolding. The theory proposes a process of unfolding or sequential actualization from this virtual domain into the actual world, such that the actual manifests progressively from the simplest to the most complex (2, p. 351-352).

Conceptual Signature 3 (CS3): No *de novo* Generation. The theory adopts the principle that the more complex cannot be generated from the simpler, thereby rejecting the *de novo* generation of complexity from simplicity (2, p. 348).

Conceptual Signature 4 (CS4): Consciousness as Agent-Portal. The theory assigns to consciousness the operative role of being both the means of access to the virtual and, simultaneously, the agent that executes the actualization of the virtual into the actual (2, p. 373).



5 First Documented Application: Levin's "Platonic Space" (2025)

The protocol was first applied to Michael Levin's "Platonic Space" framework (1). The framework was evaluated against the four *conceptual signatures* of the EUT.

Criterion 1 (CS1): Does the framework postulate a virtual, non-spatiotemporal domain that is internally stratified? **Yes.** Levin posits a "Platonic space" defined as a "structured, ordered (non-physical) space" and a "latent space of patterns" (1, p. 2). This space is "layered or structured" with "lower" levels containing "lower-agency forms" and "higher" levels permitting "classes of patterns" (1, p. 20). He further describes this space as "a structured ordered space that is amenable to systematic exploration" (1, p. 20), rejecting the notion that the space of forms is haphazard or random. This matches precisely the EUT's characterization of the ideological matrix as a virtual domain internally organized as an ordered series of morphogenetic fields.

Criterion 2 (CS2): Does the framework propose a process of sequential unfolding from this domain? **Yes.** Levin describes "a latent space of patterns ingressing into the physical world" (1, p. 2), a process functionally identical to the EUT's unfolding and actualization.

Criterion 3 (CS3): Does the framework reject *de novo* generation of complexity from simplicity? **Yes.** Levin's framework is built upon a systematic critique of the prevailing emergentist paradigm. He argues that "the current reliance on emergence is a mystierian approach that limits progress" (1, p. 4), and that the dominant complexity/emergence paradigm is "not sufficient to explain the most interesting aspects of morphogenesis" (1, p. 7). This critique culminates in the assertion that the existence of a non-physical domain of patterns "breaks the closure of the physical world" (1, p. 12). By rejecting the sufficiency of standard emergentist explanations and positing a pre-existing, non-physical source of biological complexity, Levin's framework implicitly but unambiguously adopts the principle that the more complex cannot be generated from the simpler.

Criterion 4 (CS4): Does the framework assign to consciousness the role of agent-portal? **Yes.** Levin states that "patterns themselves *are* the agent, with the physical body being an (important but not primary) scratchpad that allows them to project effort and experience (consciousness) into a physical world" (1, p. 30). This is a direct functional equivalent of the EUT's description of consciousness as both the means of access to the virtual and the agent of actualization.

Determination: The framework satisfies CS1, CS2, CS3, and CS4. This constitutes **Derivative Framework (High Fidelity)**. The structural correspondence between the EUT and "Platonic Space" is complete, covering the entirety of the EUT's constitutive conceptual signatures. For a rigorous structural and conceptual comparative analysis between the EUT and "Platonic Space", see the paper on "Epistemic Chameleonism" (3).

6 Discussion: Generalizability and Future Directions

The CLEO Verification Protocol is a permanent, immutable standard. It is not subject to revision, reinterpretation, or dilution. Its function is to provide a stable, objective reference for the verification of conceptual lineage.

While this paper presents its first application to the Evolutio Unfolding Theory, the protocol is designed to be universally generalizable. The principle—that a theoretical architecture can be formally specified through a minimal set of *conceptual signatures*, and that a binary protocol can be derived from that specification—is transferable to any sovereign research program. A neuroscientific theory, a physical model, or a philosophical framework could each define its own signatures and instantiate its own CLEO Verification Protocol. The result would be a decentralized ecosystem of Epistemic Immunity, where each research program maintains its own boundaries through formal, transparent, and objective criteria.

The registration of *conceptual signatures* on a public blockchain, as outlined above, represents the next logical step in the evolution of this infrastructure. By providing a time-stamped, immutable record of conceptual priority, blockchain technology could eliminate the dependence on institutional gatekeepers for the protection of intellectual lineage. This would represent a fundamental shift in the governance of conceptual attribution: from centralized, reputation-based validation to decentralized, cryptographically-secured verification.

The CLEO Verification Protocol is offered as a first step in this direction: a formal, binary, and permanent standard for the verification of conceptual lineage. It is an instrument of Epistemic Immunity for sovereign research programs, and an invitation to other fields to develop their own.

7 Conclusion

Epistemic Immunity is the capacity of a research program to establish and maintain the boundaries of its own conceptual architecture. The CLEO Verification Protocol is the operational form of that immunity. It is a permanent, binary, and objective standard for determining whether a framework is structurally derivative of an original conceptual innovation. It does not require proof of access, knowledge, or intent. It requires only that the *conceptual signatures* of the original be present in the examined framework.

The protocol's first application, to the Evolutio Unfolding Theory and the case of Michael Levin's "Platonic Space", demonstrates its capacity to discriminate between different degrees of structural reproduction while maintaining a rigorous, evidence-based standard. The protocol is a service to the integrity of the intellectual ecosystem, a contribution to the methodology of conceptual attribution, and an invitation to other research programs to develop their own instruments of Epistemic Immunity.

References

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Dr. Agustín Ostachuk is a transdisciplinary scientific researcher investigating the fundamental nature of life, evolution, and development. His work bridges theoretical biology, philosophy of biology, evolutionary biology, and complexity science. He is the author of the **Evolutio Unfolding Theory (2020)**, a teleological account proposing that evolution unfolds through formal agents embedded in morphogenetic fields. He is the Founding Director of **EVOLUTIO**, a research center devoted to advancing new frameworks for evolution and development, and to cultivating a life-centered, Earth-rooted mode of existence.