# Non-Physical Claims Are Fantasy Attractors: Why Unverifiable Realms Cannot Be Empirically Distinguished from Nonexistence

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## Abstract

The attractor framework adopts a physicalist commitment: to be real is to be able to interact, and to interact is to share at least one **interaction channel** (spacetime, energy, momentum, gauge charge, or any measurable coupling). This is a philosophical starting point, not an empirical discovery. The paper argues that any claim about a non-physical realm – defined as having no such interaction channel – cannot be empirically assessed. Such claims are **fantasy attractors**: belief systems structurally sealed against correction by defining their objects as forever beyond any possible test. The paper distinguishes provisional non-detection (e.g., dark matter) from **structural, permanent non-verifiability** (e.g., non-physical gods, transcendent souls). It concludes that while such claims may have personal or social meaning, they cannot be part of a scientific ontology, and their structure makes them vulnerable to fraud and manipulation – though sincere belief is not fraud.

# 1. The Foundational Commitment: Interaction Requires Shared Channels

The attractor framework is a physicalist ontology. It begins with a commitment: **entities can only interact through shared interaction channels**. An *interaction channel* is any measurable coupling — spacetime coordinates, energy, momentum, electric charge, weak isospin, color charge, or any other quantity that can be transferred or correlated between systems. This is not an empirical discovery of the Standard Model; it is the framework's chosen criterion for what counts as real.

The neutrino example illustrates the criterion but does not prove it. Neutrinos interact weakly because they share weak isospin; they do not interact electromagnetically because they lack electric charge. The framework simply says: if an entity shares no interaction channel with physical reality, we have no way to detect it, measure it, or include it in a scientific ontology. That is a philosophical choice, not a falsifiable claim about the world.

**Why interaction?** Interaction is chosen because it provides a public, corrigible basis for knowledge. It avoids ontological commitments that cannot influence observation, and it aligns with the core principle of the attractor framework: *persistence under perturbation*. An entity that never perturbs anything cannot be distinguished from nothing.

**What the framework does not claim:**

- That non-physical entities are logically impossible.
- That all non-physical claims are false.
- That physics has disproven God or the supernatural.

**What it does claim:**

- That non-physical entities cannot be empirically distinguished from nonexistence.
- That claims about them operate as fantasy attractors, resistant to correction.

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## 2. Types of Non-Physical Claims

A non-physical claim is any assertion about an entity, force, or realm defined as having **no interaction channel** with the physical world. However, not all claims that seem non-physical are alike. We distinguish two categories:

**Category A: Truly non-interacting** — Claims that explicitly deny any possible interaction. Examples:

- A deistic creator who wound the universe and then never interacts.
- A transcendent God defined as beyond all categories, including causality.
- An immaterial soul that cannot influence the body after death.
- Abstract objects (Platonism) that exist non-physically and non-causally.

**Category B: Claims that assert interaction but evade testing** — Examples:

- Ghosts that move objects but become undetectable when instruments are present.
- Psychics whose powers fail under controlled conditions (explained as “skeptic’s energy”).
- Homeopathic “water memory” that cannot be detected by any known physical measurement.

Category B is a different epistemic pathology: motivated reasoning, ad-hoc escape clauses, and sealing mechanisms. The attractor framework addresses them as *functionally* non-verifiable in practice, but they are not the primary target of this paper. This paper focuses on **Category A**: claims that structurally preclude any possible interaction channel.

| Domain (Category A) | Example Claim | Interaction Channel? | Empirically Assessable? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Religion (non-interacting God) | A creator with no detectable properties | None | No – any test is ruled out a priori |
| Paranormal (non-interacting ghosts) | Ghosts that cannot affect matter | None | No – no possible evidence |
| Abstract objects (Platonism) | Numbers exist non-physically, non-causally | None | No – no interaction, hence no evidence |
| New Age (non-interacting “vibrations”) | Crystals with undetectable healing vibrations | None | No – absence of effect is blamed on “wrong intent” |

Under the framework’s commitment, such claims are not false; they are **not empirically assessable**. They belong to a different domain: personal belief, fiction, or social identity.

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## 3. Provisional vs. Structural

## Non-Verifiability

A crucial distinction separates:

- **Provisional non-detection** – e.g., dark matter, gravitational waves (before 2015), the neutrino (before 1956). These entities are predicted to share at least one interaction channel (gravity, weak force) and are in principle detectable. **A future discovery could confirm or disconfirm them.** That is the key: we can specify what would count as evidence, even if we don't yet have it.
- **Structural, permanent non-verifiability** – Category A claims. The entity is defined so that **no possible future discovery** could ever count as confirmation or disconfirmation. Any proposed test is ruled out in advance. This is the hallmark of a fantasy attractor.

(This framework does not assert that dark matter could have been called a fantasy attractor before detection; dark matter always had specified interaction channels – gravity – and was therefore never structurally non-verifiable.)

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# 4. Fantasy Attractor: Formal Definition

A belief system qualifies as a **fantasy attractor** if it meets the following conditions:

1. **No specified interaction channel** – The central claim lacks any measurable coupling to physical reality (Category A), or defines it in a way that systematically evades testing (Category B).
2. **Sealing mechanisms** – The belief incorporates rhetorical or cognitive strategies that neutralize disconfirming evidence (e.g., "God works in mysterious ways," "The

ghost left when the EMF meter arrived”).
3. **Low corrective permeability (κ → 0)** — The belief does not update in response to counterevidence; the return time τ to baseline is effectively infinite.
4. **Identity fusion** — The belief is tied to self-worth or group membership, making abandonment costly.

Under this definition, both Category A and some Category B claims can be fantasy attractors, but Category A are the paradigmatic case because they are structurally immune to evidence.

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## 5. Fiction Is Real but Not True: A Crucial Distinction

The main argument might provoke an objection: *What about fiction? Sherlock Holmes is not physical, yet we say he exists as a character. Isn’t that a counterexample to the claim that non-physical entities cannot be empirically distinguished from nonexistence?*

The objection fails because it conflates two different senses of “exists.” We must distinguish:

- **Fiction exists as physical information.** The character Sherlock Holmes is realized as patterns of ink on a page, as sounds in a performance, as neural firing patterns in readers’ brains, or as bits on a computer screen. Information is a physical arrangement of matter. It shares interaction channels (energy, spacetime, causality) with the physical world. You can buy a book, discuss the plot, or be emotionally affected by a story. Fiction is **real** in this sense: it has a physical substrate and causal effects.

- **Fiction is not true.** The proposition “Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street” does not correspond to any actual state of affairs in the world. It is false. Fiction is not required to be verifiable; it is understood as imagined.

Thus, the attractor framework happily accommodates fiction. It is real as information, but not claimed as true.

**The bad faith of non-physical claims:** Non-physical claims that demand to be treated as real – gods, ghosts, souls, hidden cabals – are *fiction pretending to be true*. They borrow the ontological status of real information (they exist as patterns in books, sermons, or brains) but also demand the epistemic authority of factual truth. Yet they refuse any possible test. They define themselves as beyond verification. This is bad faith: it is not metaphysics, but fiction that insists on being taken as fact while rejecting the rules of fact-checking.

| Category | Exists as physical information? | Claims to be true? | Verifiable? | Framework classification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fiction (Hamlet) | Yes | No (acknowledged as imagined) | Not applicable | Real information, not true |
| Scientific claim (neutrino) | Yes (theory, data) | Yes | In principle | Real, true (provisionally) |
| Non-physical claim (God) | Yes (as cultural artifact) | Yes | No – structurally excluded | Fantasy attractor |

Therefore, the framework does not deny the reality of stories; it denies the epistemic legitimacy of treating unverifiable stories as facts. The fantasy attractor is not the story. It is the insistence that the story is true combined with the structural refusal to let the story be tested.

## 6. Vulnerability to Fraud and Manipulation

The structure of non-physical claims makes them **vulnerable** to fraud and manipulation — not that all such claims are fraudulent. Because there are no checks, a bad actor can assert divine commands, psychic readings, or secret knowledge without fear of disconfirmation. Sincere believers are not fraudsters, but the attractor basin can be exploited by those who understand its dynamics.

The framework diagnoses the **structure**, not the intent of every believer. It distinguishes **error, self-deception, motivated reasoning, and fraud** — all possible outcomes, but not all present in every case.

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## 7. What This Argument Does Not Prove

To avoid overreach, the paper explicitly states what it does **not** claim:

- It does not prove that non-physical entities are logically impossible.
- It does not refute philosophical positions like Platonism (abstract objects) or classical theism that defines God as existence itself rather than an interacting object — though it notes that such positions are not empirically assessable.
- It does not claim that all believers are fraudsters or that all non-physical claims are meaningless in a philosophical sense.
- It does not assert a timeless criterion for what will be discovered in the future.

The claim is narrower: **within the attractor framework's physicalist commitment, non-physical claims are not empirically assessable, and they exhibit the dynamics of fantasy attractors.**

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## 8. Conclusion

The attractor framework adopts a physicalist commitment: entities can only interact through shared interaction channels. Non-physical claims — defined as having no such channels — are not empirically assessable. They are fantasy attractors: belief systems structurally sealed against correction by permanent non-verifiability. This does not make them meaningless or false; it places them outside the domain of scientific ontology. Their structure makes them vulnerable to exploitation, but sincere belief is not fraud. The framework provides a diagnostic tool for recognising when a claim has been immunised against evidence, regardless of its content.

The argument supports the following conclusion:

> ***Claims that are permanently insulated from any possible empirical correction occupy a distinct epistemic category and exhibit attractor dynamics that make them resistant to updating. Within the attractor framework's physicalist ontology, such claims cannot be empirically distinguished from nonexistence.***

That is a substantial claim. It does not require asserting that non-physical realms cannot exist — only that they cannot be part of a scientific ontology, and that the beliefs which cling to them operate as fantasy attractors.

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