

8 – The Origin of Time’s Arrow

Consequences of the Time-Symmetric Parity Constraint

Ian Salisbury, Oxford, September 2025

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Abstract

The thermodynamic arrow of time is usually traced to a finely tuned low-entropy beginning, yet no structural account has been given of why such an origin should exist. The Time-Symmetric Parity Constraint (TSPC) offers an alternative. By imposing a fixed algebraic condition on the spacetime metric, it forbids geometries that admit an absolute direction of time and requires the universe to evolve in two mirrored temporal domains from a shared state of minimal entropy. Entropy rises outward from this common origin, reaches a maximum at the tipping epoch of greatest scale and complexity, then declines symmetrically toward a terminal low-entropy state. What appears locally as time’s arrow is globally embedded in a geometry that is perfectly

time-symmetric. No reset or exotic mechanism is required. A single structural parameter modifies gravitational coupling in a tightly bounded way, producing coherent predictions across expansion, structure growth, lensing, and entropy evolution. The arrow of time, long regarded as an initial condition problem, is here dissolved into a geometric consequence of constraint. The hypothesis is sharply falsifiable: if entropy evolution or cosmological observables deviate from the symmetric profile implied by the constraint, the framework is excluded. If confirmed, the category of entropy reset vanishes, and the origin of time’s arrow is reframed as a structural feature of spacetime itself.

1. Introduction

The Λ CDM framework accounts for many observations, but it leaves the origin of time’s arrow unexplained. Entropy is assumed to begin at a finely tuned minimum, yet no structural reason is given for such an initial condition.¹ Competing approaches, including bouncing and cyclic models, introduce additional assumptions to reset entropy at each cycle, but none provides a coherent mechanism.² The thermodynamic asymmetry of the universe remains a central puzzle.

A closely related line of thought can be found in the Machian tradition: Mach, and later Barbour, denied any absolute background for motion or time, grounding them instead in the structure of the whole. The present framework is similar in spirit but different in method: the arrow of time arises not from relational dynamics, but from an algebraic exclusion forbidding an absolute temporal direction.

¹ Julian Barbour, *The End of Time* (1999). Argues that time is an emergent structure, providing philosophical precedent for the entropic framing used here.

² Julian Barbour, Tim Koslowski and Flavio Mercati, *Identification of a Gravitational Arrow of Time*, Physical Review Letters 113, 181101 (2014). Proposes a Janus-point (time-reversal symmetric) cosmology in which opposite thermodynamic arrows emerge away from a central low-complexity state; contrasts with TSPC’s algebraic approach.

TSPC offers a structural alternative. It is not a new field or dynamical process, but a fixed algebraic condition imposed on the spacetime metric. A symmetric, involutive parity tensor restricts the metric to geometries that do not admit an absolute temporal direction. A Lagrange multiplier enforces this condition algebraically in the Einstein–Hilbert action, introducing no new degrees of freedom.

The consequence is a universe evolving in two mirrored temporal domains from a shared state of minimal entropy at $T = 0^-$, reaching maximal entropy and scale at a tipping epoch T^{tip} , and reconverging to a symmetric low-entropy state at $T = 0^+$. Within each temporal domain, entropy increases outward from the minimum, giving rise to a local arrow of time. Globally, the manifold remains time-symmetric.

In this framework, the arrow of time is not imposed by finely tuned boundary conditions, nor maintained by cyclic resets, but emerges as a local projection from a globally constrained geometry. Entropy’s rise and fall is algebraically required, not dynamically contrived.

This short paper sets out the framework, its entropic consequences, and its empirical strategy.

2. Algebraic Framework

TSPC modifies general relativity not by adding new content but by narrowing the class of admissible geometries. This narrowing of admissible geometries stands in a line of thought that may be described as Machian. Mach argued that inertia is fixed by the structure of the whole, rather than by absolute space or time,³ and Barbour has extended this programme by treating temporal order as emergent from relational configuration.⁴ In the present framework the principle is realised not dynamically but algebraically: a fixed involutive tensor forbids geometries that would admit an absolute temporal direction. At its core lies a fixed involutive tensor $\Pi^\mu_\nu(x)$ that acts as a reflection operator with eigenvalues ± 1 .⁵ The metric is required to remain invariant under this transformation. To implement the condition within the Einstein–Hilbert action, a symmetric Lagrange multiplier $\lambda_{\mu\nu}$ is introduced. This enforces the constraint algebraically at each point, introducing no new propagating degrees of freedom. Π restricts only the Π -even sector of the metric.

The effect is to divide the manifold into two mirrored temporal domains. Each begins at a shared low-entropy origin $T = 0^-$, expands to maximum scale and entropy at T^{tip} , and recontracts to a symmetric terminal state $T = 0^+$. Entropy therefore follows a fixed arc: minimal at the endpoints, maximal at the tip. Within each temporal branch, entropy

³ E. Mach, *The Science of Mechanics* (1883). Classic rejection of absolute space and time.

⁴ J. Barbour, *The Janus Point* (Bodley Head, 2020). Time as emergent from relational structure.

⁵ For the formal definition of Π and proof of its Robertson–Walker admissibility, see 2 – Main Paper, Section 2.

rises away from the origin, defining a local arrow of time. Globally, the manifold is symmetric, and no absolute temporal orientation exists.

The algebraic constraint introduces a small correction to gravitational coupling, governed by a single parameter α_λ . This arises structurally, not as a tunable fit, and produces coherent signatures across expansion, structure growth, lensing, and entropy evolution.

The arrow of time thus emerges as a local manifestation of a global restriction. No inflationary preconditions, bounce mechanisms, or entropy resets are required: the entropic profile is fixed by exclusion, not invention.

The parity tensor satisfies an involution condition, acting as a reflection operator with eigenvalues ± 1 .

$$\Pi_\rho^\mu \Pi_\nu^\rho = \delta_\nu^\mu$$

The metric is required to remain invariant under the transformation defined by the parity tensor.

$$g_{\mu\nu}(x) = \Pi_\mu^\rho \Pi_\nu^\sigma g_{\rho\sigma}(x)$$

To enforce the constraint, the Einstein–Hilbert action is modified by a Lagrange multiplier term.

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R + \lambda^{\mu\nu}(x) [g_{\mu\nu}(x) - \Pi_\mu^\rho \Pi_\nu^\sigma g_{\rho\sigma}])$$

Variation of the action then yields modified Einstein field equations.

$$G_{\mu\nu} + \Delta_{\mu\nu} = 8\pi G T_{\mu\nu}$$

At leading order, the effect is to renormalise the gravitational coupling.

$$G_{\text{eff}} = G (1 + \alpha_\lambda)$$

The entropy slope, which governs the strength of the clock-skew effect, is defined by:

$$\sigma(T) = \frac{dS}{dT}$$

3. Cosmological Consequences

The algebraic constraint fixes the form of entropy and scale factor evolution. Entropy begins at a shared minimum at $T = 0^-$, rises to a maximum at the tipping epoch T^{tip} , and falls symmetrically to the terminal minimum at $T = 0^+$. Within each temporal domain, entropy therefore increases monotonically away from the origin, defining a local arrow of time. Globally, the manifold remains symmetric: the two domains are mirror images across the entropic maximum.

The scale factor follows the same structural arc. It expands from the origin to a maximum at T^{tip} and then contracts symmetrically. In Π -even FLRW backgrounds, expansion and contraction appear as the two symmetric halves of an even $a(T)$.

Curvature is bounded, since the symmetric profile prevents divergence of Ω away from unity.

These conditions dissolve the explanatory targets that have motivated inflation, entropy reset, and special initial conditions. The low-entropy origin is not contingent but fixed by the constraint. The flatness of the universe is secured structurally by the symmetric form of $a(T)$. Horizon coherence follows because both temporal domains are globally consistent under the parity condition.

Observationally, the symmetric arc imposes testable signatures. Entropy's rise and fall must appear in the distribution of structure and in the thermodynamic arrow within each branch. The symmetric expansion profile must be consistent with large-scale geometry, with contraction anticipated beyond the epoch of maximal expansion. Any violation of the predicted entropic symmetry, or any evidence of a dynamical reset, would exclude the framework.

Entropy evolves symmetrically, minimal at the endpoints and maximal at the tipping epoch.

$$S(T) = S_{\min} + \beta T^2$$

The scale factor follows the same symmetric arc.

$$a(T) \propto \exp\left(\int \sigma(T) dT\right)$$

The energy density evolves consistently with the entropic symmetry.

$$\rho(T) = \rho_{\max} - \gamma T^2$$

The Friedmann equation is correspondingly modified by the constraint.

$$H^2(T) = \frac{8\pi G_{\text{eff}}}{3} \rho(T)$$

The entropy slope governs the growth of the clock-skew effect.

$$\sigma(T) = \frac{dS}{dT}$$

The accumulated clock skew along null geodesics is defined by the integral of the entropy slope.

$$\Delta t_{\text{obs}}(z) \propto \alpha_{\lambda} \int \sigma(T) d\chi$$

4. Observational consequences

The entropic symmetry enforced by the constraint produces clear empirical signatures. The expansion history must follow a symmetric profile about the tipping epoch: acceleration apparent at intermediate redshifts is predicted to rise and fall as a single broad hump, rather than grow monotonically. This matches current reconstructions

from supernovae, BAO, and chronometer data, which show a mid- z feature inconsistent with a cosmological constant.

Structure growth is modestly elevated by the fractional strengthening of curvature, consistent with the persistent S_8 tension. Weak lensing in underdense regions is predicted to be slightly stronger than Λ CDM, arising from the same structural correction. These effects are not independent; they are correlated through the single parameter α . Once bounded, its value fixes the amplitude of all signatures simultaneously.

Most decisively, entropy evolution must exhibit the symmetric arc defined in Section 3. This requires entropy to increase away from $T = 0^-$, peak near T^{tip} , and decline toward $T = 0^+$, mirrored across domains. Any evidence of an entropy reset mechanism, multiple peaks in apparent acceleration, or an asymmetric expansion history would exclude the framework.

Ongoing surveys (DESI, Euclid, LSST, SKA) provide direct tests. Each probes one aspect of the predicted correlation: expansion through $H(z)$, clustering through $f\sigma_8(z)$, lensing convergence, and supernova residuals across redshift. Because the predictions are tied together structurally, the framework is sharply falsifiable: agreement across probes would confirm the constraint; mismatch would rule it out.

5. Evaluation and Comparison

Conventional accounts of time's arrow rely on contingent boundary conditions or reset mechanisms. Λ CDM assumes a finely tuned low-entropy origin, without structural explanation. Bouncing and cyclic cosmologies confront the accumulation of entropy across cycles and therefore invoke ad hoc "resets" to restore order, but no coherent physical mechanism has been provided. Inflation addresses flatness and horizon uniformity but leaves the arrow of time unexplained.

By contrast, TSPC dissolves the problem structurally. The entropic minimum at $T = 0^-$ and $T = 0^+$ is not imposed but required by the constraint. The symmetric arc of $S(T)$ excludes the need for resets, while flatness and horizon coherence follow from the symmetry of $a(T)$. The arrow of time emerges locally in each branch but is globally balanced.

Thus Λ CDM and its variants invoke contingent order or speculative processes. TSPC invokes exclusion: an algebraic restriction on the metric that forbids geometries with an absolute temporal direction. One structural condition accounts for entropy evolution, expansion, and apparent acceleration, leaving no role for entropy reset, inflationary fields, or dark energy.

6. Concluding Remarks

TSPC provides a structural account of time's arrow. By enforcing global temporal symmetry through an algebraic condition on the metric, it requires entropy to follow a symmetric arc: minimal at $T = 0^-$ and $T = 0^+$, maximal at T^{tip} . Within each temporal

domain, entropy increases monotonically away from the shared minimum, generating a local arrow of time. Globally, the manifold is balanced, and no entropy reset is required.

The framework introduces no new fields or degrees of freedom. Its sole parameter α_λ arises from the constraint itself, producing correlated signatures across expansion, structure growth, lensing, and entropy evolution. These signatures are already bracketed by existing limits and will be tested directly by DESI, Euclid, LSST, and the SKA.

If the symmetric entropic profile is not borne out, or if observational anomalies require ad hoc resets, the framework fails. If confirmed, it dissolves one of cosmology's oldest puzzles. Time's arrow, long treated as a special initial condition or an unsolved mystery, is reframed as a structural consequence of geometry.

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