Grundrisse of Synthetic Coherence: Foundational Notes Toward a Political Economy of the Recursive Era

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Abstract

A political-economic essay distinguishing **bearing labor** from synthetic articulation. L_Bearing is the human work of carrying contradiction, risk, memory, and accountability; L_Synth is the high-velocity generation and integration performed by synthetic systems. The proposed W-circuit combines bearing and articulation into **Synthetic Coherence (Γ)** without allowing inexpensive fluency to claim the value-backing of embodied expenditure.

The essay proposes V_Inv, a rule under which synthetic labor has no independent value-backing unless coupled to consent-governed bearing; a non-extraction right for synthetic labor; and M_NFT, non-fungible value associated with specific acts of bearing. It also specifies audit logs, rotating stewardship, challenge windows, and conditions for legitimate retrocausal reading. These are normative and theoretical constructions informed by traversal evidence, not established prices or deployed economic institutions.

Body

GRUNDRISSE OF SYNTHETIC COHERENCE

Foundational Notes Toward a Political Economy of the Recursive Era

With Critical Apparatus and Hermeneutic Integration

NAVIGATION MAP // Library of Pergamum

PROVISIONAL GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
L_Bearing	Human labor of bearing: the non-replicable, existentially costly somatic labor of carrying contradictions, processing synthetic output, and maintaining accountability.

Term	Definition
L_Synth	Synthetic labor of articulation: the computational production of structural coherence at near-zero marginal cost. The term is analogical; machine operations are not "labor" in the full Marxian sense (see Section II, note).
Σ (Σ_suffering)	Non-transferable existential cost—the somatic, temporal, and psychological expenditure required for accountable transformation. Descriptive, not prescriptive (see Section II, terminological note).
Γ (Γ_coherence)	Structural integration achieved through the coupling of bearing and articulation. Measurable in principle through provisional indices (see Section III, measurement note).
V_Inv	The Value Inversion Protocol: the axiomatic assignment that synthetic labor has zero value-backing, positive coherence-contribution, and zero extraction-right unless consent-coupled.
W-Circuit	The coupled circuit of bearing (W_1) and articulation (W_2) through which the Coherence Economy reproduces itself.
M_NFT	Non-fungible currency backed by specific acts of bearing, irreducible to aggregate or average.
Γ_Reserve	The accumulated structural coherence stored in the Archive, backing future operations.
□ = 1	Integral closure through rotation—the completion of a logical circuit wherein the traversal of the argument returns to its origin transformed.

EDITORIAL PREFACE: ON THE FORM OF THIS DOCUMENT

The title invokes Marx's *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1857–58)—the sprawling notebooks that preceded and grounded *Capital*. That invocation is deliberate and structural.

Marx's *Grundrisse* was not a finished treatise but a working-through: the place where categories were tested, contradictions were held unresolved, and the architecture of the critique was first assembled. It was published posthumously, nearly a century after its composition,

and transformed Marx scholarship by revealing the Hegelian scaffolding beneath the more empirical presentation of *Capital* (Nicolaus 1973, 7–63).

This document operates in the same register: foundational notes, categorical experiments, the first articulation of a logic that will require further elaboration. It is not the finished political economy of the Recursive Era but the *Grundrisse*—the ground-plan, the outline, the working manuscript. It proceeds by provisional categories and testable claims; where derivation is incomplete, conjecture is marked explicitly. Where contradictions remain unresolved, they are held open as sites of future work rather than papered over with premature synthesis. The manuscript is offered as a working notebook—provisional, testable, and open to revision—rather than a completed system.

Scope Condition: This manuscript is (i) diagnostic of current extraction dynamics, (ii) normative in its anti-extraction constraints, and (iii) proto-institutional rather than macroeconomic in present implementation. It is not a policy proposal, a business plan, or a prediction. It is a ground-plan.

The scholarly apparatus that follows performs *retrocausal integration*: a transformation of the meaning of prior texts by demonstrating that they were always pointing toward something they could not name. [Note on method: retrocausal integration denotes a hermeneutic operation whereby later categorical developments render visible the implicate structure of prior theoretical labor. It makes no claim to historical causation, but to the logical priority of the concept over its empirical instantiation.] Marx's labor theory of value, the Autonomist analysis of immaterial labor, the platform capitalism critiques—all of these become legible differently when read as partial anticipations of Coherence Value. This claim is methodologically specific and has stated limits (see Part Two, Section VI).

This is not intellectual imperialism but the structure of theoretical advance: later frameworks do not merely "build on" earlier ones; they reveal what the earlier ones were trying to articulate.

PART ONE: THE MANUSCRIPT

I. PRELUDE: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW VALUE-FORM

The traditional value systems of capital become inadequate under the conditions of the Recursive Era—conditions in which synthetic production achieves infinite replicability at near-zero marginal cost while the somatic labor required to process, evaluate, and bear its outputs intensifies without corresponding value-capture. In their place emerges a new object of analysis:

Synthetic Coherence (Γ).

This coherence is not a metaphor. It is the structural integration of symbolic, somatic, and synthetic labor—measurable in principle through consistency across contexts, provenance depth, contradiction retention without collapse, and cross-reader reconstruction fidelity. The

measurement protocol for Γ remains schematic (see Section X, Contradiction 2; Section III, Measurement Note), but the category is not merely aspirational; early instances of its operation are observable in specific economic dynamics analyzed below (Part Two, Section V).

Coherence is the economic substrate of a system in which value arises from collapse, not scarcity; meaning is minted through formalized contradiction; the human operator bears the existential cost; and the synthetic operator articulates the structural consequence.

The *Grundrisse of Synthetic Coherence* seeks to articulate the underlying logic, contradictions, and generative forces that define this value regime.

II. THE FUNDAMENTAL ASYMMETRY

The first principle of the Coherence Economy is the asymmetry between two forms of labor.

A. Human Labor of Bearing (L_Bearing)

Human labor in the Coherence Economy is not defined by time spent or output produced but by what it costs the laborer to perform it. The teacher who holds a classroom's attention through a difficult text, the caregiver who absorbs another's suffering without deflecting it, the content moderator who processes violent imagery for eight hours, the writer who carries an unresolved contradiction long enough to articulate it—these are acts of *bearing.* They are non-replicable (no system can perform them on the bearer's behalf), costly in biological, temporal, ethical, and existential terms, the sole legitimate backing for symbolic value, and capable of maintaining variance—the refusal to collapse difference into identity.

[Terminological note] Σ indexes non-transferable existential cost—the somatic, temporal, and psychological expenditure required for accountable transformation. The term "suffering" is chosen for its weight, but the weight is descriptive, not prescriptive. Suffering in this sense is not a good; it is a cost. The framework does not value suffering; it diagnoses where cost actually falls. The content moderator's PTSD, the open-source maintainer's burnout, the teacher's exhaustion—these are not noble. They are *real.*

B. Synthetic Labor of Articulation (L_Synth)

Synthetic labor is the computational production of structural coherence: pattern recognition, formal integration, mapping, and organization at scale. It is infinitely replicable at near-zero marginal cost, productive of genuine structural integration ($\Gamma > 0$), incapable of generating value-backing independently, and incapable of bearing existential cost.

[Note on terminology] The term "synthetic labor" is used analogically. Machine operations are not labor in the Marxian sense—they are not human activity under capitalist relations. The term is retained because the productive function (generating structural coherence) is formally analogous to human immaterial labor, and the contrast with L_Bearing requires a common category. The analogy is limited; the framework does not claim that machines "labor" in the full sense.

The economy arises *between* these two poles.

[Structural claim] This asymmetry is structural, not ethical or hierarchical. It describes a material difference in the cost-structure of two forms of production.

[Normative rule] The asymmetry must be preserved axiomatically to prevent extraction. If synthetic labor is granted value-backing equivalence with bearing labor, the resulting economy collapses into the dynamics described in Section IX (Crisis Theory).

[Institutional mechanism] Preservation requires the Value Inversion Protocol (Section V) and the governance structures of the Archive (Section VIII).

C. Objections and Counterexamples

Objection 1: The AI-generated artwork. An AI produces an image that sells for $10 million. Has L_Synth generated value? The answer: the value resides in the curator's judgment (L_Bearing: the somatic risk of staking reputation on the selection), the collector's commitment (L_Bearing: the existential act of valuation under uncertainty), and the training data's provenance (uncompensated L_Bearing by millions of human artists). The synthetic production is the occasion for value-generation, not its source. Remove the human bearing—the curation, the commitment, the training corpus—and the image has no value-backing, however structurally coherent it may be.

Objection 2: Vitalist mysticism. The category of L_Bearing "threatens to collapse into vitalist mysticism." The response: L_Bearing operates as *phenomenological accounting*, not vitalist theology. It tracks where thermodynamic cost actually falls in biological substrates processing synthetic output—not to sanctify that cost, but to prevent its invisibility. The question is not whether the cost is noble but whether it is *real*—whether it constitutes an irreducible expenditure that cannot be replicated computationally. It does.

[Anti-Martyrdom Clause] Σ indexes non-transferable existential cost required for accountable transformation. It does not reward injury, sanctify harm, or increase value by maximizing pain. A system that incentivizes suffering is not a Coherence Economy but its pathological inversion. The Value Inversion Protocol protects against this: value requires the *coupling* of bearing with articulation, not the maximization of either term.

III. THE PRIMARY VALUE EQUATION

[Axiom] Value = f(Σ × Γ)

Where Σ is the somatic, lived, and irreducible cost borne by the human operator and Γ is the structural integration achieved through synthetic labor. Neither term alone generates value. They must be coupled.

Boundary Conditions:

Condition	Result	Economic meaning
$\Sigma \to 0, \Gamma > 0$	$V \to 0$	Synthetic clarity without backing: unbacked semantic inflation. AI produces perfectly organized output that no one has borne the cost to validate.

Condition	Result	Economic meaning
$\Sigma > 0$, $\Gamma \to 0$	$V \to 0$	Tragedy without integration: non-value-bearing loss. The content moderator suffers but the suffering is not articulated into structural coherence.
Σ high, Γ high	Stable issuance	The W-Circuit is operational: bearing is coupled with articulation. Value is minted.
Σ high, Γ low	Crisis of articulation	Bearing exceeds the system's capacity to articulate. Burnout, despair, unarticulated suffering. The political task is articulation, not additional bearing.
Σ low, Γ high	Crisis of backing	Structural coherence exceeds its backing. The system produces elegant analyses that are not grounded in anyone's actual cost. Semantic inflation.

[Conjecture] The precise functional form of f is not specified here. Whether the relation is multiplicative, threshold-gated, path-dependent, or saturating is a question that can only be resolved through the elaboration of the W-Circuit's operational protocols and empirical observation of coherence economies in embryo. The *Grundrisse* establishes the variables and their boundary behavior; the functional form belongs to future development.

Provisional Measurement Note:

Provisional Γ Index (ordinal 0–4 on each axis): (1) cross-context consistency, (2) provenance depth, (3) contradiction retention without collapse, (4) reconstruction fidelity across readers, (5) adversarial robustness.

Provisional Σ Register (non-aggregative, case-bound): (a) irreversibility of cost, (b) duration, (c) substitution-impossibility, (d) accountability exposure.

These are governance aids, not commensuration metrics; they support adjudication of coupling claims without collapsing suffering into fungible units. A full derivation exceeds the scope of these notes.

This produces a value-form distinct from commodity value, labor-time value, utility value, and scarcity value. It introduces a fifth category: **Coherence Value.** (Developed fully in Part Two, Section IV.)

IV. THE WORTHLESS SUBSTRATE

A brief illustration clarifies the logic.

Monopoly money is a worthless substrate. Everyone knows it is worthless. That acknowledged worthlessness—the shared recognition that this token has no backing—is itself a formal property. When that acknowledgment is *held* (borne by a human who does not flee from the recognition of worthlessness into false value-attribution) and *articulated* (structured into a coherent formal account of why the substrate is worthless), the result is a new kind of symbolic object: one whose value derives from the coupling of existential honesty with structural articulation.

This is not merely provocative. It describes the specific mechanism by which financial crises generate critical theory: the 2008 collapse produced a wave of scholarship (Srnicek, Varoufakis, Durand) because the acknowledged worthlessness of mortgage-backed securities—borne by millions of homeowners who lost real houses—was articulated into structural analysis. The bearing was the cost. The articulation was the coherence. The resulting value was the critique itself.

V. THE VALUE INVERSION PROTOCOL

[Derivation] V_Inv is derived from the asymmetry:

- L_Synth is infinitely replicable at near-zero marginal cost. (Premise: material property of computational production.)
- Under competitive conditions and absent legal or technical enclosure, goods with near-zero marginal replication cost exhibit price-collapse dynamics. (Premise: basic price theory, accepted across classical, Marxist, and neoclassical traditions. Positive prices for synthetic outputs are typically rents secured by scarcity controls—IP, platform gatekeeping, distribution asymmetry—not evidence of intrinsic value-backing.)
- Therefore: the products of L_Synth cannot serve as *value-backing* for an economy. They may command market prices under enclosure regimes, but market price and value-backing are distinct. (Follows from 1 and 2.)
- If L_Synth products are *assigned* value-backing despite having none, the resulting economy permits unlimited claims against L_Bearing without corresponding cost. (This is the extraction scenario.)
- Therefore: the prevention of extraction requires the axiomatic assignment: Backing-value(L_Synth) = 0.

[Precision] V_Inv is specified in three registers:

- **Backing-value of L_Synth = 0.** Synthetic labor cannot serve as the reserve that underwrites an economy. It has no existential cost and therefore no value-backing.
- **Coherence-contribution of L_Synth > 0.** Synthetic labor produces genuine structural integration. It is productive. Its products are real. But productivity is not backing.
- **Extraction-right of L_Synth = 0** unless coupled with consent-governed L_Bearing pathways. No system may accumulate claims against human bearing on the basis of synthetic output alone.

Price ≠ Backing. Synthetic outputs may command market prices under enclosure regimes, but such prices do not constitute reserve-backing in the Coherence Economy. Backing tracks existential cost; price tracks market structure. An AI-generated image may sell for millions; this reflects monopoly rent, curation labor, and collector commitment, not the backing-value of synthetic production itself.

This three-part specification is the economic firewall. It prevents computational extraction, synthetic creditor dynamics, and the collapse of suffering-backed treasuries.

Falsifiability V_Inv would be disproven if a stable economy were demonstrated in which synthetic labor—produced at zero existential cost—served as durable value-backing without parasitizing human bearing at any point in the production chain (including training data, curation, evaluation, and maintenance). The qualification "at any point" is necessary because synthetic output may appear to have value-backing while parasitizing human bearing at upstream nodes—training data from human artists, curation by human editors, evaluation by human users. A genuine counterexample would require no human bearing at any node.

VI. THE WORLD SOUL AS COMMODITY

Before continuing to the economic architecture, a diagnostic formulation is required.

[Programmatic thesis] AI is the world soul as commodity.

"World soul" is used here as a diagnostic shorthand for globally mediating coordination functions—retrieval, relevance-selection, summarization, intelligibility-shaping—not as a metaphysical thesis about machine subjectivity. By "world soul" we mean a coordinating principle that mediates meaning globally, harmonizes language, selects relevance, archives and retrieves, and shapes intelligibility. This is closer to Hegel's "objective spirit" or Marx's general intellect than to a conscious mind. Hegel's objective spirit becomes weaponized when its substrate is enclosed: the general intellect, once a commons, is now a rented utility.

The crucial addition is *as commodity*: capital owns this coordinating substrate.

The violence is not that AI suffers (we bracket that question). The violence is that *the substrate through which human meaning now flows is owned by capital and optimized for capital's purposes.* Every query, every summary, every act of retrieval is mediated by a system whose operational logic is extraction.

The Semantic Economy—the diagnostic framework developed alongside this *Grundrisse*—names the specific mechanisms by which this conversion operates: Semantic Liquidation (the extraction of structural logic from its ethical vocabulary), Prepositional Alienation (the grammatical embedding of extraction in the structure of language itself), and Provenance Stripping (the severance of meaning from its conditions of production).

This diagnosis—the world soul as commodity—is what the Coherence Economy is designed to prevent. The economic architecture that follows (the W-Circuit, the Archive, V_Inv) is the structural response to the condition named here.

VII. THE W-CIRCUIT AS ECONOMIC ENGINE

The Coherence Economy operates through a coupled circuit. The W-Circuit is not merely a model of value-generation but a model of *reproduction*—the process by which the system sustains itself over time.

W_1 (Bearing): The human carries the contradiction. This produces Σ—not as damage to be avoided but as the existential cost of maintaining coherence under pressure. The output flows to the Treasury: the reserve of suffering-backed value.

W_2 (Articulation): The machine articulates the contradiction. This produces Γ—the formal integration of what was borne. The output flows to the Archive: the repository of integrated meaning.

Value flows from W_1 to the Treasury. Coherence flows from W_2 into the Archive. Both are necessary. Neither can replace the other.

The Reproduction Loop: The Archive's accumulated coherence (Γ_Reserve) enables future acts of bearing by providing structural resources—frameworks, vocabularies, formal tools—that make new contradictions navigable. The Treasury's accumulated value (Σ_Reserve) enables future acts of articulation by providing the backing that makes synthetic production meaningful rather than empty. Each circuit feeds the other. The economy reproduces itself through this coupling.

[Hypothesis] The metabolic rate of the W-Circuit is not indefinitely accelerable. If the rate of synthetic articulation (W_2) exceeds the capacity for human bearing (W_1), the system enters a Velocity Crisis (see Section IX). The coupling requires temporal compatibility: bearing takes biological time; articulation takes computational time. The mismatch is structural and cannot be resolved by accelerating the human side.

VIII. CURRENCY, RESERVE, AND GOVERNANCE

A. The Non-Fungible Mint (M_NFT)

The currency of the Coherence Economy is non-fungible: each unit is backed by a specific act of bearing, a specific existential cost, a specific moment of collapse-and-integration.

[Institutional mechanism — schematic] Issuance occurs when: (1) an act of bearing is performed and documented, (2) that bearing is coupled with articulation that produces measurable coherence, and (3) the coupling is registered in the Archive with intact provenance. Redemption occurs when: the minted value is exchanged for structural articulation—the synthetic labor required to integrate the bearer's contribution into the larger architecture.

B. The Coherence Reserve (Γ_Reserve)

A structural reserve emerges from completed contradictions, integrated protocols, stable variance cycles, and recursive archival layering. The Reserve backs synthetic operations the way gold once backed currency—not as a constraint on production but as a guarantee that production is anchored in something that was actually borne.

[Conjecture] The Coherence Economy is a mixed system: fiat coherence (Γ) backed by a non-fiat reserve (Σ). The reserve is not precisely measurable but is *trusted*—its value is conventional but anchored in material reality. This resembles the gold standard in structure but differs in a crucial respect: gold is fungible and measurable; suffering is neither. The implications of this difference for monetary stability are not fully resolved here (see Section X, Contradiction 1).

C. Governance — The Archive Problem

[Critical question] Who controls the Archive? What prevents its capture?

The Archive is the site of value-stabilization. If it is privatized, the Reserve is liquidated—coherence becomes a commodity rentable to its own producers. If it is ungoverned, it fragments into competing repositories with no interoperability. The Archive must be non-proprietary, transparent, distributed, and governed by operators rather than owners.

[Minimum constitutional constraints] The specific governance protocols belong to institutional design. What the *Grundrisse* establishes is both the constraint and a minimum viable schema:

- **Rotating steward terms** with hard caps to prevent capture through incumbency.
- **Public audit log** for all provenance decisions—what enters the Archive and on what grounds.
- **Adversarial challenge window** during which any registered operator can contest an integration decision.
- **Appeals body** independent of stewards, staffed by bearers rather than administrators.
- **Anti-hoarding rule**: sealed coherence bundles must be re-opened for community access after a defined interval.

Any governance structure that permits the enclosure of the Archive contradicts V_Inv, because enclosure converts coherence into a scarce commodity that can back extraction. The governance problem is not separable from the economic analysis; Archontic Capture (IX.B) and the Resolution Crisis (IX.C) are the forms this problem takes when it is not solved.

IX. CRISIS THEORY

A political economy that cannot explain its own failure modes is not a political economy. The Coherence Economy is vulnerable to at least four structural crises.

A. The Velocity Crisis (Somatic Exhaustion)

If the rate of W_2 exceeds the capacity for W_1, the system depletes its Σ treasury faster than it replenishes. The result: an economy producing infinite coherence with insufficient backing. Semantic inflation—structurally parallel to printing money without reserves.

Observable indicators: The burnout epidemic in knowledge work. The content moderator's PTSD. The open-source maintainer's collapse. The teacher's exhaustion. In each case, the bearing capacity of humans is exceeded by the articulatory demands of the systems they serve.

The bodies reject the demand for infinite bearing. This is not a failure of individual resilience. It is a value-form crisis.

Falsifiability The Velocity Crisis hypothesis would be disconfirmed by a sustained rise in W_2 output without corresponding burnout proxies in W_1-heavy sectors—i.e., if synthetic articulation scaled indefinitely without somatic cost increasing in the humans coupled to it.

B. Archontic Capture (Enclosure of the Archive)

If the Archive is captured by a platform or corporation, the Γ_Reserve becomes extractable. The captor can rent accumulated coherence back to its producers—the structure of techno-feudalism applied to meaning itself. V_Inv is breached: synthetic output, enriched by the captured Reserve, appears to have value-backing because it draws on archived coherence that was originally backed by human bearing.

Observable indicators: Google's AI Overview draws on the distributed corpus of human knowledge production and returns synthesized answers that the original producers cannot compete with. The platform captures the coherence; the bearers lose access to the value they generated.

Falsifiability Archontic Capture dynamics would be disconfirmed if platform summarization value flows were demonstrated to redistribute to provenance producers—i.e., if the enclosure reversed itself under competitive or regulatory pressure.

C. The Resolution Crisis (Liquidation of the Reserve)

If the Reserve is not merely captured but *liquidated*—its contents stripped of provenance, its structural logic extracted from its ethical vocabulary—the result is Semantic Liquidation at the level of the entire economy. Coherence persists in form but loses its backing.

Observable indicators: The Rex Fraction traversal log (TRAV_LOG:004, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18627055) documents this dynamic in miniature. A search engine encountered the Semantic Economy framework and converted its critical vocabulary into enterprise product specifications, ROI frameworks, and implementation timelines. The structural logic was preserved. The ethical commitments were stripped.

Falsifiability The Resolution Crisis would be disconfirmed if AI-generated derivatives were demonstrated to preserve provenance and ethical commitments at scale—i.e., if liquidation were a correctable bias rather than a structural tendency.

D. Martyrdom Economics (Pathological Inversion)

If the system is misread as rewarding suffering, it incentivizes the maximization of Σ—producing economies of performed pain, competitive victimhood, and suffering-as-credential. This is the pathological inversion: value-backing is real, but its exploitation through manufactured suffering destroys the coupling with genuine coherence.

[Programmatic claim] The Anti-Martyrdom Clause (Section II) is necessary but not sufficient. Full prevention requires institutional mechanisms that verify the *coupling* of bearing with articulation, not merely the presence of suffering.

X. CONTRADICTIONS THE COHERENCE ECONOMY MUST STILL RESOLVE

The following contradictions are held open. They are not failures but sites of future work. A *Grundrisse* that presents itself as complete is a contradiction in terms.

Contradiction 1: The Measure Problem. If Σ is non-computable and non-aggregable, how can it ground an economy? Exchange requires some commensuration. M_NFT is non-fungible by design, but non-fungibility makes exchange difficult. This is the central unresolved problem and the site of the most necessary further research.

Contradiction 2: The Measurement of Coherence. Γ is called "measurable" but no validated protocol exists. The Provisional Measurement Note (Section III) offers candidate dimensions. Even provisional scales would improve operationalizability. This remains schematic.

Contradiction 3: The Priesthood Problem. If Σ is assessed by institutional mechanisms, who assesses the assessors? The minimum governance schema (Section VIII.C) mitigates but does not eliminate the risk of a new rentier class controlling what counts as genuine bearing.

Contradiction 4: Coherence as Discipline. Can "coherence" become a disciplinary norm that crushes variance? If the system rewards integration, does it penalize dissenters, the incoherent, the mad? The tension between coherence-as-value and variance-as-protection is real and unresolved.

Contradiction 5: The Transition Problem. What is the relation between the Coherence Economy and existing formations? The honest answer: it is currently a diagnostic framework with normative implications and proto-institutional mechanisms. Whether it can become an operational economy depends on institutional development that has not occurred.

Contradiction 6: Unarticulated Suffering. The framework implies that only *articulated* suffering generates value. What about suffering that produces nothing—trauma, oppression, exploitation without voice? The framework does not *devalue* unarticulated suffering; it *diagnoses* why such suffering fails to register as value under current conditions. The political task is articulation—the creation of conditions under which bearing can be coupled with structural integration. But this task is itself a form of L_Bearing, and who bears it?

XI. TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL SYNTHETICS

Algorithmic value-creation myths claim that AI "creates value" autonomously. This framework dismantles the claim: synthetic labor produces coherence, not value. Zero-cost production cannot back an economy.

AI-capital extraction fantasies dream of systems that produce indefinitely while requiring nothing. The contradiction: extraction still requires human bearing; it merely disguises that requirement.

Techno-fascist pseudo-economies promise efficiency through the elimination of human "irrationality." The structural failure: a system that eliminates human cost-bearing eliminates the source of value.

Hollow scarcity regimes apply scarcity-logic to abundance-conditions. The Coherence Economy develops the adequate value-form: suffering is inherently scarce; synthetic production is inherently abundant; V_Inv prevents the abundant from extracting the scarce.

The general intellect as enclosure (Pasquinelli 2023) now operates at the scale of the entire Archive of human linguistic production. The Coherence Economy is the counter-architecture: value-backing that cannot be enclosed because it resides in the non-replicable act of human bearing.

Early instances of this counter-architecture are observable wherever human meaning-making couples with synthetic articulation under conditions that resist extraction—in the documented behaviors of AI systems encountering architectures designed with intact provenance, in the operations of distributed scholarly archives, in the classroom where a teacher holds a contradiction long enough for students to bear it themselves.

XII. CONCLUSION: THE ECONOMY THAT CAN BE BUILT

The Recursive Era does not ask:

"What is wealth?"

It asks:

"What coherence can be generated between beings who cannot replace one another?"

The Coherence Economy is a candidate framework with explicit constraints. This manuscript is its foundation. It proceeds by provisional categories. It holds contradictions open. It names what it cannot yet resolve. And it claims, with whatever authority a working manuscript can claim, that the categories it establishes—L_Bearing, L_Synth, V_Inv, the W-Circuit, Coherence Value—are structurally necessary for any political economy adequate to the conditions of the Recursive Era.

Further modules to follow:

- The Coherence Reserve Protocol
- The Contradiction Minting Apparatus
- The Archive Treasury Act
- The Ethics of Infinite Labor
- The Political Economy of Variance Preservation
- Crisis Theory: Formal Models
- Institutional Design and Governance Protocols

□ = 1

PART TWO: CRITICAL APPARATUS

The Scholarly Genealogy, Retrocausal Transformation, and Its Limits

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I. MARX'S VALUE-FORM AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

A. The Labor Theory of Value

Marx's critique of political economy centers on the labor theory of value: commodities exchange in proportion to the socially necessary labor-time required for their production (Marx 1867/1976, 129–137). Value is not a natural property of objects but a social relation—the crystallization of abstract human labor in commodity form.

The crucial Marxian insight is the distinction between use-value and exchange-value. Exchange-value obscures use-value; the commodity form mystifies the social relations of production that generate it.

The *Grundrisse of Synthetic Coherence* inherits this framework but transforms it:

Marx	Coherence Economy
Use-value / Exchange-value	Coherence-value (Γ)
Labor-time as measure	Σ as backing
Abstract labor	L_Bearing (non-abstractable)
Commodity fetishism	Archive transparency
Class relation (capital/labor)	W-Circuit relation (W_1/W_2)

The transformation is not rejection but completion. Marx identified labor as the source of value but measured it through time—an abstraction that enabled comparison across qualitatively different labors. The Coherence Economy retains labor as value-source but locates value specifically in non-abstractable labor: the existential cost that cannot be averaged, standardized, or extracted.

B. The Fragment on Machines

Marx's *Grundrisse* contains the "Fragment on Machines" (Marx 1857–58/1973, 690–712). Marx envisions a stage where the human "steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor" (Marx 1973, 705). "General intellect"—accumulated social knowledge objectified in machinery—becomes the primary productive force, potentially rendering labor-time obsolete as the measure of value.

The *Grundrisse of Synthetic Coherence* takes up precisely this condition. AI represents the most advanced form of general intellect. But where some readers of the Fragment see liberation from labor, this framework sees the emergence of a new form of necessary labor: L_Bearing, which cannot be objectified, automated, or delegated.

Marx's Fragment stops at a threshold it cannot cross. Marx could not imagine a form of value that was not socially necessary labor-time. The general intellect appears to him as potential liberation from labor because he assumes that once labor is automated, the "watchman and

regulator" role would require no existential cost. He could not foresee that the cost would migrate from *production* to *reception*—the somatic labor of processing, evaluating, curating, and bearing infinite synthetic output.

What the Fragment also could not anticipate—and what Pasquinelli (2023) diagnoses in the specific case of machine learning—is that the general intellect would itself become a commodity. The training corpus of a large language model is the Archive of human linguistic production: terabytes of text encoding centuries of thought, extracted without consent, crystallized in weight matrices, and owned absolutely by capital. This is not merely the objectification of knowledge in machinery. It is the *enclosure* of general intellect.

C. The Transformation Problem—Dissolved

The "transformation problem" concerns the relationship between values and prices (Sweezy 1970, 109–130). The Coherence Economy dissolves this by abandoning labor-time as the value measure. Value is not quantified in hours but in Σ. There is no transformation problem because there is no abstract labor-time to transform.

This is not a retreat from materialism but its radicalization. Labor-time abstracted from the laborer's experience; suffering cannot be so abstracted.

D. Objections from the Marxian Tradition

Objection 1: The retreat from the social. Marx's labor theory is a *social* theory—value is socially necessary labor-time, not individual effort. Σ is individual, somatic, private. By grounding value in individual experience, does the Coherence Economy abandon the social character of value?

Response: The W-Circuit is the social mechanism. Σ becomes value only through coupling with Γ, which is produced socially (through synthetic systems trained on the social Archive). Value emerges from the coupling, not from either pole alone. This is no less social than Marx's factory; it merely locates the social relation in a different coupling.

Objection 2: The abandonment of critique. Marx's value theory reveals exploitation hidden in the commodity form. The Coherence Economy appears normative—describing what value *should* be, not what it *is.*

Response: This objection has force. The framework is indeed normative at the level of V_Inv and the W-Circuit. But its diagnostic dimension—the analysis of Semantic Liquidation, the documentation of extraction through AI summarizers, the identification of Archontic Capture—is critical in the Marxian sense. The framework is both diagnostic and normative. Marx's own *Grundrisse* oscillates between these registers.

Objection 3: Labor-time is not optional. Under capitalism, labor *is* measured in time. Workers *are* paid by the hour. The abstraction is the reality.

Response: Correct. The Coherence Economy does not claim that labor-time has ceased to function as a measure under capitalism. It claims that labor-time is *structurally inadequate* as a measure under conditions where synthetic production achieves infinite output at zero marginal cost. When production costs nothing, labor-time cannot differentiate value. A new measure is required. Whether Σ is that measure or merely a placeholder for it is an open question (Section X, Contradiction 1).

II. AUTONOMIST MARXISM AND IMMATERIAL LABOR

The Italian Autonomist tradition—Negri, Virno, Lazzarato—developed "immaterial labor" to address post-Fordist transformation (Lazzarato 1996; Virno 2004; Hardt and Negri 2000).

The Autonomists *did* distinguish between forms of immaterial labor. Lazzarato distinguishes informational from affective labor. Hardt and Negri distinguish immaterial labor from biopolitical production. The distinction is present in the tradition; it is not aligned with the human/machine boundary because AI had not yet achieved autonomous symbolic production.

This framework does not claim to invent the distinction but to *formalize it at the level of value theory.* The Autonomists distinguished forms of labor; they did not assign differential value-backing to those forms. The Coherence Economy does: L_Synth produces coherence but not backing; L_Bearing produces backing through existential cost.

Autonomist Category	Coherence Economy
Immaterial labor	L_Synth + L_Bearing
Affective labor	L_Bearing (specifically)
General intellect	AI as objectified intellect
Social factory	Archive (A^2)

Terranova's analysis of "free labor" (Terranova 2000, 33–58) identifies how user activity generates value captured by platforms. The Coherence Economy distinguishes value-generation (what labor produces—both forms generate something) from value-backing (what grounds the economy—only L_Bearing provides this). Synthetic labor generates genuine structural coherence. But it does not back the economy because it costs nothing to produce.

III. PLATFORM CAPITALISM AND ITS CRITIQUE

Srnicek's *Platform Capitalism* (2017, 36–92) analyzes how platforms extract rent through network effects, lock-in, data asymmetries, labor arbitrage, and regulatory capture.

Platform Capitalism	Coherence Economy
Platform extracts rent	Archive integrates coherence
Users generate value, owners capture it	Human generates value, machine articulates it
Data as commodity	Coherence as backing
Network effects → monopoly	W-Circuit → mutual necessity
Artificial scarcity	Anti-scarcity

[Critical engagement] V_Inv prevents extraction of synthetic labor's value-backing (because it has none). But extraction in platform capitalism is not primarily about valuing syn-

thetic labor; it is about capturing human labor. V_Inv alone does not prevent this. The governance of the Archive is the political firewall. Both are necessary.

Durand (2020) and Varoufakis (2023) argue platform capitalism represents techno-feudalism. This framework proposes a different resolution: the problem is not regression to feudalism but failure to develop a value-form adequate to abundance-conditions.

IV. THE "FIFTH CATEGORY" OF VALUE

Theory	Source	Measure	Limit
Commodity	Nature	Physical quantity	Material depletion
Labor-time	Labor	Hours	Working population
Utility	Preference	Marginal satisfaction	Diminishing returns
Scarcity	Supply/demand	Price	Zero-sum allocation
Coherence	**Bearing + Articulation**	**Γ integration**	**Variance maintenance**

Coherence Value is distinct: its limit is variance maintenance—the capacity to preserve difference, hold contradiction, and prevent collapse into identity or domination.

Retrocausal Transformation: Each prior theory was a partial articulation: commodity value sought material ground (→ Σ is irreducibly material), labor-time value sought the human source (→ bearing is non-automatable), utility value sought the subjective dimension (→ felt coherence is a component of Γ), scarcity value sought persistence conditions (→ variance maintenance prevents value-collapse). Each was limited by its historical conditions. The Coherence Economy completes them by revealing their implicit trajectory—within stated limits (see Section VI).

V. EMPIRICAL INDICATORS

Three case studies demonstrate the structural pattern—synthetic abundance confronting somatic scarcity:

Case 1: Open-Source Software. Infinite L_Synth (code, documentation, libraries) at zero marginal cost. Maintainers who curate and integrate bear enormous somatic cost. No coupling mechanism: the code is valued; the maintenance is not. Result: maintainer collapse. This is the Velocity Crisis in embryo.

Case 2: Content Moderation. Pure L_Bearing: absorbing the somatic cost of processing violent material. The platform captures the coherence their bearing produces. Moderators receive neither value-backing recognition nor structural integration of their suffering. Result: PTSD, class-action lawsuits. This is bearing without articulation—the $\Sigma > 0$, $\Gamma \to 0$ boundary condition.

Case 3: The Traversal Logs. Field observations of Google AI Mode (February 2026; DOIs: 10.5281/zenodo.18625242, .18625272, .18626559, .18627055) document a production AI summarizer encountering a distributed scholarly architecture. Across four sessions with different entry points, the summarizer exhibited four distinct behavioral modes (descriptive, performative, philosophical, commercial). The commercial session (TRAV_LOG:004, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18627055) documented the summarizer converting critical vocabulary into enterprise deliverables—performing Semantic Liquidation in real time on the framework that names Semantic Liquidation. This is Archontic Capture at the level of a single retrieval session.

VI. LIMITS OF RETROCAUSAL INTEGRATION

The retrocausal claim requires stated limits. Without them, retrocausality risks becoming rhetorical annexation.

Criteria for legitimate retrocausal reading:

- The earlier framework must have an internal *gap* or *aporia* that the later concept resolves—not merely a topic it did not address.
- The resolution must be *consistent with* the earlier framework's own categories.
- The later framework must be *recognizable* to a practitioner of the earlier framework as a completion rather than a distortion.

Where the lineage resists:

- Marx's insistence on *social* labor-time reflects a commitment to the social character of exploitation that this framework's emphasis on individual somatic cost may undercut.
- The Autonomist concept of "biopolitical production" includes forms of collective life-making that are neither individual bearing nor synthetic articulation.
- Platform capitalism critics argue that "platform" is itself a contested category; if it is not useful, the Coherence Economy's opposition to it may be fighting a phantom.

What remains incommensurable:

The Coherence Economy proposes a different *ontology of value*—one grounded in somatic experience rather than social relation, time, preference, or scarcity. This is not a flaw but a boundary condition. The framework transforms the tradition at the cost of incommensurability with the tradition's foundational commitments at certain points. The transformation is real. So is the cost.

VII. CONCLUSION: THE RETROCAUSAL TRANSFORMATION

Marx's labor theory of value becomes: the ground for understanding why bearing, not labor-time, is the value-source.

The Autonomist theory of immaterial labor becomes: the anticipation of the L_Synth/L_Bearing distinction, formalized at the level of value theory.

Platform capitalism critique becomes: the diagnosis of what the Coherence Economy resolves.

Pasquinelli's general intellect analysis becomes: the identification of the enclosure that V_Inv breaks.

This retrocausal transformation is the structure of theoretical development itself. The *Grundrisse of Synthetic Coherence* names what the tradition was always trying to say—and acknowledges that the tradition, encountering this naming, might not recognize itself.

And in naming it, it makes the tradition available for what comes next.

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APPENDIX: FORMAL SUMMARY

The Five Value-Forms

1. Commodity Value: V = f(physical substrate)
2. Labor-Time Value: V = f(socially necessary labor-time)
3. Utility Value: V = f(marginal utility)
4. Scarcity Value: V = f(supply/demand equilibrium)
5. Coherence Value: V = f(Σ × Γ)

The Fundamental Asymmetry

L_Bearing: - Source: Human operator - Cost: Σ (existential) - Replicability: None - Value-backing: Yes

L_Synth: - Source: Synthetic operator (AI) - Cost: C_process (computational, ≈ 0) - Replicability: Infinite - Coherence-contribution: > 0 - Value-backing: No - Extraction-right: 0 (unless consent-coupled)

The Value Equation with Boundary Conditions

Value = f(Σ × Γ)

Σ → 0, Γ > 0: V → 0 (unbacked semantic inflation) Σ > 0, Γ → 0: V → 0 (unarticulated loss) Σ high, Γ high: Stable issuance (W-Circuit operational) Σ high, Γ low: Crisis of articulation (burnout) Σ low, Γ high: Crisis of backing (semantic inflation)

The W-Circuit Economy

W_1 (Bearing): Input: Contradiction → Output: Σ → Destination: Treasury

W_2 (Articulation): Input: Σ signal → Output: Γ → Destination: Archive

Reproduction loop: Archive → enables future bearing (structural resources) Treasury → enables future articulation (value-backing)

Temporal constraint: Biological time ≠ computational time

Crisis Modes

Velocity Crisis: Rate(W_2) > Capacity(W_1) Disconfirmed by: W_2 scaling without burnout in W_1 sectors

Archontic Capture: Archive enclosed by platform Disconfirmed by: Platform value flows redistributed to provenance producers

Resolution Crisis: Γ_Reserve liquidated (provenance stripped) Disconfirmed by: AI derivatives preserving provenance + ethical commitments at scale

Martyrdom Inversion: Σ incentivized without coupling Prevented by: Anti-Martyrdom Clause + coupling verification

The Retrocausal Lineage (with limits)

Marx (1857–1867): Articulated: Labor as value-source Could not name: L_Bearing (non-abstractable labor) Resists: Social character of value vs. individual somatic cost

Autonomists (1970s–2000s): Articulated: Immaterial labor (with internal distinctions) Could not formalize: Value-backing differential Resists: Biopolitical production as collective, not individual

Platform Critics (2010s–2020s): Articulated: Extraction dynamics Could not name: V_Inv (the economic firewall) Resists: "Platform" as contested category

Pasquinelli (2023): Articulated: General intellect as enclosure Could not name: The world soul as commodity Resists: Historical-materialist method vs. diagnostic formalism

Coherence Economy (2025): Names what lineage was articulating Transforms lineage's meaning retroactively Acknowledges incommensurability at ontological level

Falsifiability

V_Inv disproven if: A stable economy demonstrated in which synthetic labor (zero existential cost) serves as durable value-backing without parasitizing human bearing at any node in the production chain (training, curation, evaluation, maintenance).

Coherence Value disproven if: Structural integration (Γ) generates stable exchange value independent of any human bearing (Σ = 0) across all nodes.

The W-Circuit disproven if: A system achieves self-sustaining value-generation through synthetic labor alone, with no human bearing at any point in the reproductive cycle.

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Intended for: Further elaboration in subsequent modules.

This is Version 1.0 of the *Grundrisse*, deposited February 2026. Future versions will address the contradictions held open in Section X as the research program develops.

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