APPENDIX B – CANONICAL GLOSSARY OF REALITY DRIFT

Note on Terminology
Many concepts in this book—Reality Drift, Filter Fatigue, Semantic Fidelity, Synthetic Realness, Recursive Compression Theory, the Drift Principle, the 5%, and others—are original terms developed for this framework. These definitions exist to maintain clarity, prevent drift, and ensure the system stays coherent across future use.

I. FOUNDATIONAL MECHANICS OF DRIFT

Core forces, equations, and system-level concepts.

Reality Drift – The erosion of meaning, identity, and coherence when entropy rises faster than the mind can integrate it.

Entropy – Environmental noise, acceleration, volatility, and fragmentation.

Compression – The mind's ability to integrate complexity into coherent patterns.

Fidelity – How much meaning and context survive compression.

Recursive Compression Theory – Physical, biological, and cognitive systems arise through iterative compression loops, where each recursion organizes reality while reducing Fidelity.

Semantic Fidelity – Preservation of intent and context across transformations.

Drift Principle – Drift occurs when entropy outpaces compression.

Drift Equation – Drift arises when *Entropy exceeds Compression Capacity* (**Drift = Entropy ÷ Compression Capacity**), and is *felt* when rising entropy creates compression pressure that thins Fidelity (**Drift ≈ Entropy ÷ Fidelity**).

Drift Zones – Four experiential states across entropy × compression: Collapse, Drift, Stability, Integration.

Compression Threshold – When informational load exceeds a mind or system's capacity to compress it, coherence breaks and Drift begins.

Information Weather – The shifting ambient conditions of entropy, signal quality, and cognitive load that shape how a mind feels and functions.

II. TYPES OF DRIFT (MODALITIES OF EROSION)

Where and how Drift expresses itself across domains.

Semantic Drift – Meaning thins as language is paraphrased, remixed, or optimized.

Cognitive Drift – Internal thinning of coherence under accelerated environments.

Identity Drift – Softened continuity; rotating selves shaped by shifting contexts.

Institutional Drift – Institutions stay intact in form but weaken in function.

Temporal Drift – Time feels accelerated, irregular, or unanchored.

Authenticity Drift – The shift from sincere expression to optimized self-presentation.

Performativity Drift – Life becomes performable; identity becomes content.

Memetic Drift – Distortion of ideas as they spread through high-compression environments.

Incentive Drift – Systems redirect behavior toward what's measurable instead of meaningful.

Curated Self – The optimized persona easier to inhabit than one's real self.

III. ARTIFACTS OF SMOOTHNESS & REDUCTION

The aesthetic/cognitive signatures of over-optimization.

Synthetic Realness – Experiences optimized until they feel real-ish rather than real.

Smoothness Effect – Frictionless clarity that lacks depth.

Synthetic Smoothness – Algorithmically optimized sheen mistaken for truth or insight.

Texture Loss – Reduced sensory and emotional grain as environments smooth out.

Resonance Decay – Emotions don't "land"; they shorten and flatten.

Perceptual Thinning – Lowered sensitivity, presence, and emotional resolution.

Meaning Collapse – Symbols remain but significance thins as interpretation lags.

Paraphrasing Decay: The loss of semantic detail as repeated rephrasing erodes nuance and context.

IV. COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURE & INTERNAL PROCESSING

How minds generate, preserve, or lose coherence.

Cognitive Architecture – The structural design of how a mind compresses reality.

Cognitive Signatures – The expressive style of a mind's underlying architecture.

Cognitive Porousness – Thin boundaries between self and environment; Drift is felt earlier.

Cognitive Ecology – Meaning and identity shaped by the interaction between mind and environment.

Unconscious Compression – Pre-linguistic reduction of reality into patterns.

Unconscious Compression Layer (UCL) – Fast, lossy pre-processing where Drift first appears.

Recursive Thinking – Modeling one's own thoughts across iterative loops.

Self-Referential Thinking – Higher cognition enabled by dense external feedback loops.

V. DRIFT FAILURE MODES & BREAKPOINTS

Where systems collapse under sustained acceleration.

Fidelity Crisis – A collapse in meaning, nuance, and continuity under high compression.

Fidelity Decay – The gradual thinning of meaning across repeated compression cycles.

Optimization Trap – Life becomes more efficient but less meaningful.

Filter Fatigue – Exhaustion from nonstop micro-sorting of information.

Ambient Loneliness – Isolation produced by hyper-mediated connection.

VI. AI-RELATED CONCEPTS & SYNTHETIC MODES OF COGNITION

Drift phenomena amplified or transformed by AI systems.

Co-Cognition – A shared cognitive loop between human and AI.

The 5% – The cognitively immersive minority who think with AI rather than through it.

Synthetic Flow – Machine-extended focus and pattern clarity via AI scaffolding.

Synthetic Intimacy – Simulated closeness without true reciprocity.

The Mirror Effect – AI reflects patterns back so cleanly it reshapes how we think and speak.