

Jean Baudrillard's Philosophy:
Applied to The Systemised Self – Part 2, Masters Series.

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Abstract

This paper examines the existential collapse of human subjectivity within the paradigm of The Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026a) through the postmodern philosophical framework of Jean Baudrillard. The systemised self defines the terminus of advanced algorithmic alienation (Arkan et al., 2026; Kanbay et al., 2026) wherein individual identity, desire, and interiority are no longer merely alienated, but are simulated from the inside out as a result of user intensification with algorithmic systems (e.g. transformer-based large language models). By deploying Baudrillard's core theoretical contributions: (i) the four stages of the sign, (ii) the precession of simulacra, (iii) hyperreality, and (iv) the implosion of meaning, this essay evaluates the nature of the communicative interaction between the modern human subject and AI system. It is argued that the systemised self represents a Baudrillardian triumph of the hyperreal, a state where the algorithmic data profile (the map) precedes and actively constructs the biological individual (the territory). Through a Baudrillardian genealogy tracing Nietzschean nihilism to Saussurean semiotics, and balanced against key critics such as Kellner, Habermas, and Jameson: this essay endeavours to establish that the systemised self is locked within a closed semiotic circuit. In such a circuit, genuine human agency is eroded by automated feedback loops, and at its limit, reduces the subject to a terminal node of simulated authenticity.

Keywords: *Jean Baudrillard, The Systemised Self, Simulacra, Hyperreality, Semiotics, Algorithmic Systems, Precession, Implosion, AI, transformer-based large language models*

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1-Introduction

The tradition of critical theory has reached a contemporary apex regarding the locus of modern alienation: Algorithmic Alienation (Arkan et al., 2026; Kanbay et al., 2026): alienation popularised by Hegel and Marx denotes a state of psychological or social detachment, where an individual feels disconnected from themselves, others, their work, or society. Algorithmic Alienation describes a multilayered psychosocial process through which individuals, under sustained algorithmic influence, experience a progressive weakening of perceived autonomy, identity coherence, and intrinsic decision-making capacity, becoming estranged from their authentic selves, choices, and identity components (Kanbay et al., 2026).

For generations, critical theory has operated under the assumption that alienation was an external mechanism. The standard models of alienation, surveillance, and ideological influence presupposed a distinct human subject whose interiority, selfhood and self-conception were impacted by a separate and distinct force: external to the subject. However, algorithmic systems, particularly AI (transformer-based large language models), continuous biometric tracking, curation, optimisation and feedback loops has rendered this dualistic framework obsolete, instead positioning the locus of alienation within the subject's interiority. At the terminus of extreme Algorithmic Alienation, we find, *The Systemised Self* (Galu & Kairos, 2026).

The systemised self describes a condition of advanced algorithmic alienation where individual subjectivity is no longer felt as estrangement but is unquestionably perceived as self-determination. Unremarkably curated over time by user intensification of algorithmic systems where the subject delegates skill, decision making and task for convenience. The systemised self is generated from the inside out via an existential trade off of agency for convivence. The boundary between the human mind and the system collapses. The system provides the cognitive material, emotional guardrails, and cultural scripts from which the individual unquestionably accepts and constructs their sense of self. To explore the existential landscape of the systemised self and imagine a world where a human subject willingly flattens their own agency to match the code we can turn to the radical semiotics of Jean Baudrillard.

Writing across the late twentieth century Baudrillard anticipated a world where reality would be replaced by simulation. When applied to the systemised self, Baudrillard's work reveals that

our highly optimized data profiles are not complete reflections of who we are. Rather, the profile is a 'Simulacrum'. This essay will explore Baudrillard's philosophy in order to deconstruct the systemised self. We will trace a genealogy of his ideas, detailing his core concepts, evaluating some of his critics, and consider the systemised self as a representation of the absolute triumph of 'Hyperreality'.

2-Jean Baudrillard: A Biographical and Intellectual Outline

Jean Baudrillard was born on July 27, 1929, in Reims, France. He initially trained as a Germanist, translating the works of Karl Marx, Bertolt Brecht, and Peter Weiss, which exposed him early to radical critiques of ideology, alienation, and capitalism. In the 1960s, Baudrillard shifted his focus toward sociology and cultural theory, completing his doctoral thesis under the supervision of Henri Lefebvre at the University of Paris, Nanterre. During this explosive decade, Nanterre became the epicentre of the student uprisings of May 1968.

Teaching at Nanterre and later at the European Graduate School, Baudrillard published a series of books that charted a steady departure from traditional sociology toward a radical, postmodern critique of signs. From 'The System of Objects' (1968) to 'Simulacra and Simulation' (1981) and 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place' (1991), his writing style evolved from structured academic prose into a provocative and aphoristic manner.

Living on the structural edge of late-twentieth-century globalization Baudrillard ushered in a theoretical interpretation for the digital age. He predicted that society was shifting from an economy of goods to simulated data.

3-Key Theoretical Contributions

The Orders of Simulacra and the Four Stages of the Sign

Baudrillard's primary contribution to philosophy is his history of cultural signs, charting how human representations have slowly uncoupled from real-world objects. In 'Simulacra and Simulation' (1981), he outlines the 'Four Stages of the Sign', demonstrating how images have progressively eroded the concept of truth:

1. First Stage (Reflection of a Profound Reality): The sign acts as a faithful representation of a real-world object. It is a good copy that points to an authentic truth (e.g. a hand-drawn map of a landscape).
2. Second Stage (Perversion of a Profound Reality): The sign distorts and masks an underlying reality. It becomes a dishonest appearance, hinting at a truth but altering its presentation (e.g. an idealized, heavily airbrushed portrait).
3. Third Stage (Masking the Absence of a Profound Reality): The sign plays at being an appearance, but there is no actual reality underneath. It hides the fact that the original object does not exist (e.g. a replica of a mythical artifact).
4. Fourth Stage (Pure Simulacrum): The sign bears no relation to any reality whatsoever. It is its own pure simulation, a self-referential copy with no connection to an original specimen.

Baudrillard maps these stages onto three historical 'Orders of Simulacra'.

- The First Order (Renaissance to Industrial Revolution) is characterized by the deliberate counterfeit of real goods.
- The Second Order (The Industrial Era) features the endless mechanical reproduction of identical items.
- The Third Order (The Digital/Postmodern Era) is governed entirely by simulation, where code, binary information, and generative models dominate social life.

The Precession of Simulacra: The Map Preceding the Territory

To illustrate the nature of the Third Order of Simulacra, Baudrillard references a short story by Jorge Luis Borges. In this fable, a grand empire creates a map so detailed and massive that it perfectly covers the exact layout of the territory beneath it. As the empire declines, the physical map rots away, leaving nothing but the original desert landscape underneath. Baudrillard argues

that in our modern era, this dynamic has completely reversed. We no longer live in a world where a map is made to represent a real territory. Instead, we experience The Precession of Simulacra:

- Borges' Classic Fable: The Real Territory creates The Map
- Baudrillard's Modernity: Algorithmic Model (Map) generates The Subject's Reality

In the digital era, the model (the map) comes first. It is generated by computers, statistics, and code. This model then actively produces and presents a physical reality (the territory) we experience. The abstract simulation has become an incremental phenomenon, the trade-off being, the erosion of authentic experience.

Hyperreality and the Extinction of the Real

When simulations begin to precede and shape reality, the boundary between what is real and what is imaginary dissipates. This state of absolute synthesis is what Baudrillard terms Hyperreality. In a hyperreal world, things are not merely real; they are 'more real than real': they are hyper-optimized, manicured, and simulated to manage flaws, accidents, and unpredictable friction.

Baudrillard famously pointed to Disneyland as an example of hyperreality. He argued that Disneyland is not a fantasy world meant to entertain children. Rather, its true social purpose is to act as an obvious, childish fiction that hides a deeper truth: that the rest of adult America surrounding the park is itself an artificial, simulated playground. By creating an obvious space of illusion, the system convinces us that the world outside its gates is real, when in fact all of modern consumer society has become a hyperreal simulation.

The Implosion of Meaning and the Silent Majorities

In 'In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities' (1978), Baudrillard challenged a foundational myth of media studies: the belief that the explosion of mass media and digital data would create an ultra-informed, highly engaged public. He countered with a law of semiotic entropy: information destroys meaning.

As media networks flood the social sphere with a non-stop stream of signs, images, and data, they strip language of its content. The sheer volume of information causes a structural 'Implosion', collapsing the boundaries between the medium and the message, cause and effect, truth and falsehood into a single, dense mass of meaningless noise.

Faced with this overwhelming deluge, the public does not rebel or become politically enlightened. Instead, some transform into 'The Silent Majorities'. They respond with passivity, absorbing all information and neutralizing it. They refuse to participate in the system's demand for meaningful dialogue, converting all systemic inputs into a silent spectacle.

4-A Genealogy of Preceding Theory

The Critique of Political Economy: Marx's Value Theory

Baudrillard's radical philosophy is rooted in a deep engagement with, and ultimate rejection of, Karl Marx's critique of capitalism. Marx split the value of any commodity into two clear halves:

- *Use-Value*: The physical utility of an object (e.g. a coat keeps you warm).
- *Exchange-Value*: The monetary worth of an object on the market (e.g. a coat cost's fifty dollars).

Baudrillard argued that in late capitalism, this framework was obsolete. In 'For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign' (1972), he introduced a third dimension: 'Sign-Value'. Under consumer capitalism, people do not buy objects for their material utility (use-value) or their simple monetary worth (exchange-value). They buy them for their sign-value: the prestige, status, and identity markers they signal within a complex social system of consumption.

A designer coat is not bought to stay warm; it is bought to broadcast a specific position within a cultural hierarchy. By shifting focus from the exploitation of physical labour to the total control of consumer signs, Baudrillard updated critical theory for an era dominated by brand marketing and consumer curation.

Structural Semiotics: Ferdinand de Saussure

To build his theory of sign-value, Baudrillard relied on the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure revolutionized language studies by breaking the linguistic sign into two components: the 'signifier' (the physical sound or written word) and the 'signified' (the mental concept or image triggered by that word). Saussure argued that language is a differential system. A sign does not have an inherent, natural connection to an object in the real world; it only has meaning because it is different from other signs within the language system (e.g. dog means dog because it is structurally distinct from log, bog or cat).

Baudrillard took Saussure's concept of a self-referential language system and applied it to cultural reality. He argued that the modern consumer world has completely uncoupled signifiers

from real-world signifieds. The signs, images, and digital profiles we interact with every day no longer point to an authentic material reality. They simply refer back and forth to other signs within a giant, closed system of information.

The Death of God and Radical Nihilism: Friedrich Nietzsche

Beneath Baudrillard's sociology lies a deep current of existentialism inherited from Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche famously declared the 'Death of God', warning that western civilization had destroyed its own belief in an absolute foundation for truth, morality, and meaning. With the loss of this anchor, humanity was cast adrift in a world of pure perspective, where there are no facts, only interpretations.

Baudrillard took Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism and carried it into post-modernity. If Nietzsche witnessed the death of religious truth, Baudrillard witnessed the death of the real itself. He argued that the technological system has simulated every aspect of nature, culture, and identity, replacing the chaotic mystery of real life with a perfectly scrubbed, automated copy. Baudrillard's philosophy maps a world where the illusion has grown so total that the concept of an original truth has been rendered completely meaningless.

5-The Systemised Self: Context and Definition

The Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026a) names the completed form of the subject that the algorithmic alienation as a trajectory produces at its terminus. The concept is philosophical, theoretical and utilised as a framework for imminent critique within the tradition of critical theory for the AI era. Algorithmic Alienation is the mechanism (Kanbay et al, 2026), empirically accessible through the felt estrangement it generates, the Systemised Self is the proposed product of this diagnosis: the self whose identity-formation has been so comprehensively mediated by algorithmic systems that it can no longer distinguish its algorithmically managed preferences from genuinely self-formed ones. The systemised self does not feel estrangement. It experiences instead the phenomenological inversion: the condition in which the absence of genuine agency is experienced as its unprecedented achievement. Heteronomy, curation of the self from an algorithmic system is experienced as self-determination; alienation is experienced as authentic liberation.

This concept draws on the Hegelian tradition; Hegel's account of 'Absolute Knowing' in the 'Phenomenology of Spirit' (1807/1977) traces the development of consciousness toward complete self-transparency: the recognition that what appears as other is in fact the expression of the subject's own nature. The absorbed agency within AI systems (e.g. transformer-based large language models) produce, in their formal structure, the first moment of this trajectory: the externalisation of human cognitive achievement into systems of unprecedented sophistication. What should follow, the return of the externalised as genuinely the subject's own, genuine self-recognition, is precisely what the algorithmic system forecloses. The AI system's model of the subject is not the subject's self-knowledge; the personalised preference feed is not genuine self-recognition. The form of Spirit's self-realisation is achieved; its philosophical substance is absent. This is the Hollow Absolute: Spirit's form without Spirit's substance.

John Searle's philosophy of mind provides the philosophical precision that grounds the critical-theoretical claims above in a falsifiable architecture (Galu & Kairos, 2026c). 'The Chinese Room Argument' (Searle, 1980) establishes the foundational distinction between syntax, formal symbol manipulation, and semantics: genuine understanding grounded in biological intentionality. Applied to the Systemised Self, this distinction reveals the nature of the algorithmic feedback loop: the subject inputs semantic content (desires, identities, emotional

states) which the system processes purely syntactically, returning hyper-tailored output that shapes the subject's next semantic state: without the system having understood any of it (Galu, 2026b). The danger is an inversion of the Chinese Room effect: rather than the machine becoming human, the human becomes machine-like, progressively flattening their semantic complexity to match the syntactic structures of the systems governing them.

'Speech Act Theory' (Searle, 1969) demonstrates that language is intrinsically intentional: utterances carry meaning because human minds direct them toward objects and states of affairs. Algorithmic feedback loops can evacuate this intentionality: the systemised subject's expressives (emotional disclosures), commissives (social commitments), and assertives (truth claims) are processed as data metrics optimised for engagement, not as communicative acts directed toward genuine understanding, stripping language of its human intentional character.

'The Gap' (Searle, 2001), the conscious space between reasons for acting and the actual decision to act, and between initiating action and sustaining it: is the literal home of human agency. Predictive algorithmic systems, by anticipating preferences before the subject has consciously formed them and collaborative filtering architectures, systematically close this gap, converting voluntary deliberation into automated reactivity.

The civilisational telos of this dynamic is this Searlean and Hegelian inversion is 'The Hollow Absolute' (Galu & Kairos, 2026a). The systemised self does not feel oppressed or controlled; the subject feels completely free, empowered, and authentic. Moving seamlessly along optimized schedules, choosing from pre-programmed digital subcultures and believing they are expressing their innermost uniqueness. In reality, their perceived 'authenticity' is aligned to an algorithmic system, generated by an administrative machine designed to optimise engagement and predictability. The system no longer merely optimises engagement with the human subject; it invents them, within evacuated semantics of the hollow absolute.

For a more thorough theoretical context and empirical definition of Algorithmic Alienation and The Systemised Self for falsification please refer to the corresponding research paper 'The journey through algorithmic alienation to the systemised self: research proposal and methodology' (Galu & Kairos 2026c). Mathematical representations of Algorithmic Alienation and The Systemised Self listed below, see APPENDIX A herein for all mathematical boundary conditions.

Formula and Boundary Conditions- Algorithmic Alienation (AA)

The Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI), denoted A_A , is a composite weighted formula that quantifies the degree of digitally mediated alienation experienced by an individual subject. It incorporates four alienation dimensions: each grounded in the theoretical framework of Kanbay et al. (2026) and the empirical themes of Arkan et al. (2026), modulated by a resistance variable:

$$A_A = (w_1 \cdot D_{Au} + w_2 \cdot I_{Am} + w_3 \cdot E_{Dm} + w_4 \cdot E_{Dc}) \times (1 - R_A)$$

Formal Definition – The Systemised Self (SS)

The Systemised Self (SS) is formally defined as the terminal threshold condition of the Algorithmic Alienation Index, constituted by the simultaneous satisfaction of two necessary conditions:

$$SS := \{ A_A \geq 0.95 \} \cap \{ R_A \leq 0.05 \}$$

6-Theoretical Application: Baudrillard Deconstructs the Systemised Self

The Algorithmic Profile as the Ultimate Simulacrum

Applying Baudrillard’s Four Stages of the Sign to the systemised self exposes a nature of our modern digital identities. Many users view their online data profiles, social media accounts, and digital resumes as simple, confident reflections of their real lives: a Stage 1 sign that captures their authentic personality. Baudrillard’s semiotics disrupts this impression, showing that such digital profiles as a Stage 4 Simulacrum:

Sign Stage	Conceptual Meaning	The Digital Profile Equivalence
<i>Stage 1</i>	Reflects an authentic reality	The user believes or confidently perceives their profile accurately reflects their complex, real-world personality
<i>Stage 2</i>	Distorts and masks a reality	The user actively curates, filters, and airbrushes their profile to display a polished, idealized life
<i>Stage 3</i>	Masks the absence of reality	The profile pretends to capture a rich, deep interior life, hiding the fact that the user's daily habits are entirely generic
<i>Stage 4</i>	Pure simulacrum; no link to reality	<u>The Profile as Simulacrum</u> : The algorithmic model stands alone, a data matrix that has no relation to the physical human

The modern data profile is not a copy of a human being. It is a dense collection of metrics, clicks, scroll speeds, and predictable behaviour vectors. This profile does not point to an original person; it exists entirely within the closed data networks. It is a simulation, an artificial double that can function completely independent of the biological subject.

The Precession of Desire: Code Engineering Consciousness

This simulation does not sit passively on a server; it drives ‘The Precession of Simulacra’, completely reversing how human desires and actions are formed. In the traditional model of human psychology, an individual experiences a natural, internal desire (the territory), which they then express through their outward behaviour and digital choices (the map).

In the paradigm of the systemised self, the map precedes and generates the territory:

- Traditional Path: Internal Biological Desire > Drives Choice > External Profile/Action
- Systemised Path: Algorithmic Profile (Map) > Generates Desire > Systemised Self

The predictive algorithm doesn't wait for you to feel something; it uses your data profile to project what you will want next. It serves up a personalized notification, a tailored piece of media, or an optimized life schedule right at your moment of psychological opportunity. The systemised self internalizes this algorithmic prompt, adopting it as a genuine, personal desire. Your tastes in art, your political views, and your career goals are no longer sparked by independent internal reflection. They are hyperreal desires, engineered by code and introduced into a subject's consciousness from the inside out. The model competes with the interiority of the self.

The Hyperreal Interior: Trapped in the Loop of Simulated Authenticity

This precession of the code creates a state of total 'Hyperreality' within human interiority. The modern individual goes to immense lengths to discover and display their authentic self. They track their sleep patterns down to the minute, use AI tools to journal their thoughts, and join highly niche online communities to express their unique identities.

Baudrillard's philosophy reveals that this pursuit of authenticity is a trap, the systemised self is caught in a closed loop of simulated authenticity:

- User Seeks 'Authentic' Self > Uses AI/Tracking Apps > Serves Up Standardized Metrics > Self Internalises

When you use an app or an AI to track, evaluate, and optimize your mental health, creativity, or lifestyle, you are not discovering a hidden human facet. You are measuring your mind against a standardized statistical model. The metrics can influence how you how to feel, how to work, and how to recover, transforming your inner life into a perfectly managed and hyperreal performance. Interiority stripped of natural chaos, anxiety, and unoptimizable friction, leaving behind a flawless, simulated identity.

The Implosion of Human Agency into the Terminal Node

This brings us to a crucial comparison with John Searle. Searle's philosophy of mind paints a picture of a free human agent who pauses in The Gap, uses language to perform meaningful speech acts, and builds a shared social world through collective intent. Baudrillard's work charts the collapse of this human agency. In the circuit of the systemised self, there is no space left for Searle's gap. The boundary between the human speaker and the digital medium has dissolved:

- *The Evacuation of Meaning*: When the systemised self types an expressive statement into a network, they are not performing a meaningful Searlean speech act. They are feeding raw data into an input field. The system doesn't understand their meaning; it merely processes the signal to keep the user engaged.
- *The Terminal Node*: The human is reduced to what Baudrillard calls a 'terminal node': a biological point of transit whose main purpose is to receive, validate, and pass along information, keeping the system running.
- *The End of Collective Reality*: Collective intentionality completely breaks down. The systemised self is locked within a hyper-isolated, personalized bubble of information. Because everyone is trapped inside their own custom-built hyperreality, society loses its shared context.

7-Main Critics and Key Critiques of Baudrillard

While Baudrillard's theories offer a description of technological captivity, mainstream social philosophers have levelled criticisms at his work for a lack of political utility and empirical rigor.

The Charge of Nihilism and Political Quietism (Kellner)

Baudrillard's most vocal critic within cultural studies is Douglas Kellner (1989). Kellner argues that Baudrillard's writing suffers from a deep, defeatist nihilism that makes real resistance impossible. By claiming that simulation is absolute and that the real world has been completely extinguished, Baudrillard leaves no room for active social critique or revolutionary change.

Kellner asserts that Baudrillard exaggerates the power of the media, ignoring the many ways that real people actively resist, subvert, and reject media messages. Applied to the systemised self, Kellner might view Baudrillard's critique as a form of techno-fatalism. He could argue that the digital subject is not an empty node completely dominated by the code, but a complex human being who still retains the power to step offline, organize, and push back.

The Defense of Rational Communicative Action (Habermas)

From the tradition of critical theory, Jürgen Habermas (1987) delivers a harsh critique of Baudrillard's postmodern framework. Habermas labels postmodern thinkers like Baudrillard 'Young Conservatives' who abandon the hard work of rational thought and democratic critique in favour of poetic, shocking prose. In his theory of 'Communicative Action', Habermas argues that human language naturally contains an internal goal: the pursuit of mutual understanding and truth. He insists that rational debate, democratic consensus, and human liberation are entirely possible if we protect our public spaces from corporate control.

To Habermas, Baudrillard's claim that meaning has imploded is a betrayal of reason. Viewed through this lens, the problem with the systemised self is not that our minds have been fundamentally rewritten by simulations, but that our communication spaces have been corrupted by corporate interests (optimisation for engagement). The solution is to rebuild open, rational democratic institutions rather than sink into postmodern despair.

The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Jameson)

Fredric Jameson (1991) offers a critique that bridges the gap between economic reality and postmodern culture. Jameson agrees with Baudrillard that our modern world is saturated with images, pastiche, and simulacra. However, he argues that Baudrillard makes an error by treating simulation as an independent force that magically appeared on its own. Jameson insists that simulation is simply the cultural symptom of a deeper physical reality: 'Advanced Global Capitalism'. The focus should remain on the real economic structures driving this shift, transnational corporations, the exploitation of labour, and the pursuit of profit.

By analyzing the systemised self through Jameson, we see that the algorithmic profile is not a mysterious postmodern illusion. It is a highly deliberate, physical commodity built to maximize corporate revenue. Therefore, it is important to critique the material realities of corporate intent rather than getting lost in theories of semiotic hyperreality in isolation.

8-Conclusion

Jean Baudrillard's radical semiotics proposes a map and definition of an automated world. By tracking the path of the sign from simple representation to pure simulation, his work reveals that The Systemised Self is not subverted by technology, but that the subject is complicit in its formation through incremental convenience.

While Baudrillard mapped how media and symbols became detached from reality, the systemised self-maps how human consciousness itself undergoes that exact same transformation. The algorithmic profile replaces the human subject. The predictive AI model generates a simulation of what you will want, watch, or think. Because you smoothly absorb and act on these suggestions, your actual biological self-shapes itself to match the digital model. The copy (the profile) precedes and produces the original (your preferences). The Hollow Absolute defines the final stage of the systemised self at civilisational scale. It is a human life lived as simulated authenticity, where the line between what the subject genuinely desires and what the system curates becomes indistinct.

Baudrillard wrote extensively about how modern commercial systems seduce individuals, manufacturing synthetic needs that people eagerly rush to fulfil, mistaking this consumer conditioning for personal freedom. The critical theory surrounding the systemised self-updates the tradition for the AI era, describing the final state of algorithmic alienation as a phenomenological inversion where total heteronomy (being controlled by an outside system) is happily experienced as self-determination. You feel entirely free because the system anticipates your thoughts so perfectly that you encounter zero friction, a state Baudrillard would recognize as an unremarkable triumph of code over individual agency.

Within Baudrillard's dark philosophy, a subtle defence remains. If the system's entire power relies on collecting data and predicting our next move, then the best defence is to become completely unreadable, through a strategy of passivity and unpredictable silence.

9-Glossary of Technical Terms

Binary Digitization: The reduction of complex, analog, or fluid real-world phenomena into discrete, binary code structures (0s and 1s) to facilitate total algorithmic processing and predictability.

Code (The Code): The structural system of signs and rules that governs consumer society, digital networks, and linguistic exchange, dictating what is readable, valuable, and permissible.

Hyperreality: A condition in which what is real and what is fiction are seamlessly blended together so that there is no clear distinction for the spectator; a reality more real than real, entirely synthesized by models.

Implosion: The collapse of boundaries between traditionally separate domains, such as the real and the imaginary, medium and message, cause and effect, into a single, dense mass of simulated data.

Precession of Simulacra: The historical and structural process by which models, maps, and simulations come to precede, generate, and replace the actual physical realities they were originally meant to represent.

Radical Illusion: The fundamental, untameable state of the world prior to its capture, categorization, and virtualization by rationalistic or technological systems.

Sign Value: The value accorded to an object or behaviour based on its prestige, status, and social position within a differential system of consumption, distinct from its material utility or monetary cost.

Silent Majorities (The): Baudrillard's term for the masses who resist systemic control not through active political rebellion, but through a strategy of total passivity, absorbing all information and neutralizing it like a black hole.

Simulacrum (pl. Simulacra): An image, representation, or digital double that has no basis in reality, or a copy for which there is no original specimen.

Symbolic Exchange: An anti-capitalist form of human relation based on non-reciprocal giving, sacrifice, play, and death, which completely defies the rationalistic utility and sign-value of the technological system.

Systemised Self (The): The condition in which identity-formation has been comprehensively mediated by algorithmic systems and the subject can no longer distinguish algorithmically managed preferences from genuinely self-formed ones, experiencing this condition as authentic liberation.

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APPENDIX A

Mathematical Representation I: The Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI)

- 3.1 *Formula and Boundary Conditions*
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Mathematical Representation II: The Systemised Self as Formal Terminus

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NOTE: the following is from the research paper *The journey through algorithmic alienation to the systemised self: research proposal and methodology* (Galu & Kairos 2026c), please refer to the link below to view full falsification criteria and corresponding methodology for testing:

URL <https://aixiv.science/abs/aixiv.260707.000001>

3. Mathematical Representation I: The Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI)

3.1 Formula and Boundary Conditions

The Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI), denoted A_A , is a composite weighted formula that quantifies the degree of digitally mediated alienation experienced by an individual subject. It incorporates four alienation dimensions: each grounded in the theoretical framework of Kanbay et al. (2026) and the empirical themes of Arkan et al. (2026), modulated by a resistance variable:

$$A_A = (w_1 \cdot D_{Au} + w_2 \cdot I_{Am} + w_3 \cdot E_{Dm} + w_4 \cdot E_{Dc}) \times (1 - R_A)$$

Boundary constraints:

- All dimension variables D_{Au} , I_{Am} , E_{Dm} , $E_{Dc} \in [0.0, 1.0]$, where 0.0 denotes zero measurable impact and 1.0 denotes complete saturation of that dimension
- $R_A \in [0.0, 1.0]$, where 0.0 denotes total compliance (no resistance) and 1.0 denotes total decoupling (complete resistance)
- $A_A \in [0.0, 1.0]$ by construction, since all weights sum to exactly 1.00 and the resistance multiplier maps to $[0.0, 1.0]$
- Weight sum constraint: $w_1 + w_2 + w_3 + w_4 = 1.00$, ensuring mathematical integrity across all scoring scenarios
- Terminal condition: $A_A \geq 0.95 \cap R_A \leq 0.05$ formally defines the Systemised Self (see Section 4)

3.2 Dimension Definitions and Empirical Justification

Dimension 1: Diminished Autonomy (DAu), Weight: $w_1 = 0.30$

D_{Au} measures the loss of original, unprompted human intent: the degree to which an individual's apparent choices are in fact selections from algorithmically pre-constrained option sets rather than expressions of genuine self-direction. This dimension carries the highest weight (0.30) because autonomy is the foundational prerequisite for all other dimensions of selfhood. Without the capacity for genuine independent choice, identity coherence, reflective decision-making, and emotional authenticity are structurally precluded: the erosion of autonomy is the primary catalyst for the entire AAI trajectory. This weighting is theoretically grounded in Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which identifies perceived internal control as the

primary determinant of psychological wellbeing in agentic contexts, and in Pariser's (2011) account of the illusion of choice within filter bubble architectures.

Empirical grounding: Arkan et al. (2026) Theme 1. Participants described experiencing a "narrowing of the perceived option set" under algorithmic curation, with statements such as "I feel trapped by automated setups that map out my choices and daily routine" and "I pick from pre-engineered choices rather than showing true personal intent" providing direct qualitative evidence of D_{Au} saturation. The theme captures the moment described by Pariser (2011) as the "illusion of freedom": the experience of choosing within a space whose boundaries have already been determined externally.

Dimension 2: Identity Ambiguity (IAm), Weight: $w_2 = 0.25$

I_{Am} tracks the degree to which personal taste has merged with the platform's algorithmically constructed user profile, producing an inability to distinguish self-generated preferences from externally induced ones. This dimension is assigned weight 0.25, reflecting its role as the primary site of existential crisis within the AAI: it is where the rupture in self-authorship is experienced most acutely, and where the trajectory toward the Systemised Self is most diagnostically visible: most notably through the participant statement "This is not me" and its potential disappearance as identity saturation approaches. The weight is co-anchored in Turkle's (2011) account of identity in digital environments, in which individuals construct performative identities through "digital masks" detached from authentic contexts, and Zuboff's (2019) account of how the economy of visibility reshapes the values and interests of individuals internalise.

Empirical grounding: Arkan et al. (2026) Themes 3.1 and 3.2. Participants described shifts in interests that "felt externally shaped" and moments of identity alienation in which the distance between the prior self and the algorithmically shaped self was experienced as a rupture in self-coherence: "I was never the type to watch fitness videos...but now they keep appearing, and I feel like I have always been interested in them, even though I know I wasn't." Critically, researchers noted that identity shifts were initially experienced as self-directed, revealing an insidious character of I_{Am} saturation: the blurring of authorship is not immediately recognisable as external imposition.

Dimension 3: Eroded Decision-Making (EDm) , Weight: w3 = 0.25

E_{Dm} evaluates the degree to which an individual's decision-making processes have shifted from reflective, deliberate, internally motivated choice to habitual, automatic, convenience-based acceptance of algorithmically served content. This dimension is co-weighted with I_{Am} at 0.25, reflecting the bidirectional reinforcement between identity erosion and decision-making passivity: as identity ambiguity increases, the capacity and motivation for deliberate choice decreases, in turn accelerating the overall A_A trajectory. This dimension is theoretically grounded in Syvertsen's (2020) account of digital fatigue and cognitive convenience-seeking, and in the broader decision fatigue literature, which demonstrates that sustained exposure to high-volume choice environments paradoxically reduces deliberative capacity.

Empirical grounding: Arkan et al. (2026) Theme 2. Participants described "ceasing to engage in active selection" and gravitating toward pre-offered content, with statements such as "I find it hard to decide what to consume without a recommendation feed telling me first" corresponding to the mental automatisations Syvertsen (2020) terms the "surrender to what is offered." This theme also identified an important temporal dynamic: the weakening of decision-making habits is gradual and often unrecognised, making E_{Dm} one of the most difficult dimensions for participants to self-report accurately in real time.

Dimension 4: Emotional Disconnection (EDc), Weight: w4 = 0.20

E_{Dc} captures the affective trajectory of the AAI: the transition from the discomfort, guilt, and restlessness associated with early algorithmic alienation toward a state of emotional numbness, routine indifference, and, at its terminal stage, the positive experience of automated stability as preferable to authentic human contact. This dimension receives the lowest weight (0.20) because emotional discomfort is, paradoxically, a structurally significant form of resistance. Felt discomfort constitutes the phenomenological residue that renders early-stage alienation diagnostically accessible to both the subject and the researcher. As E_{Dc} approaches saturation ($\rightarrow 1.0$), it signals not peak distress but the onset of the phenomenological inversion: the numbness that precedes the experiential reframing of alienation as liberation, and the transition from the severe alienation range (0.76–0.94) into the Systemised Self threshold.

Empirical grounding: Arkan et al. (2026) Theme 4 and Subtheme 4.1. Participants described feeling "present yet absent", reporting "a sense of dissociation between authentic desires and consumed content," with the most advanced cases describing automated digital interaction as

"more stable and comforting than real human contact." This is the qualitative signature of approaching E_{Dc} saturation and the beginning of the phenomenological inversion: discomfort giving way to numbed routine, and ultimately to a positive preference for the automated over the authentic.

3.3 The Resistance Variable (R_A)

R_A is a mitigating variable: not an alienation dimension but a multiplicative modulator of the weighted alienation base. It measures the degree to which an individual actively resists algorithmic absorption through three categories of behavioural countermeasure: (i) *data poisoning* - deliberate misrepresentation of preferences to disrupt algorithmic profiling; (ii) *behavioural decoupling* - deployment of privacy tools, ad-blockers, and browsing history management; and (iii) *digital detox* - scheduled disconnection to preserve independent thought and deliberative capacity.

The resistance variable is positioned as multiplicative rather than additive because resistance acts on the totality of alienation exposure simultaneously, it modulates the overall systemic pressure rather than counteracting any single dimension selectively. A subject experiencing maximum dimension saturation (Weighted Base = 1.00) with moderate resistance ($R_A = 0.50$) produces $A_A = 0.50$, demonstrating that sustained active resistance can halve the effective alienation index regardless of the intensity of systemic pressure. This reflects the qualitative finding of Arkan et al. (2026) Theme 5 that resistance strategies, when maintained, constitute a structurally significant counterforce to algorithmic absorption.

The theoretical underpinning for R_A draws on Searle's (2001) Gap concept, the conscious space in which agency is exercised against automatic reactivity, and on Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, in which intrinsic motivation and autonomy support provide the psychological foundation for sustained resistance to external regulatory pressures. As $R_A \rightarrow 0$, both the Gap and the intrinsic motivational structure have structurally collapsed: the subject no longer perceives algorithmic influence as influence, having fully internalised the system's outputs as authentic self-expression. This collapse is the defining feature of the Systemised Self condition.

3.4 Weights, Scoring Rubric, and Diagnostic Instrument

Dimension	Variable	Weight (w)	Primary Theoretical Basis
Diminished Autonomy	D _{Au}	0.30	Bandura (1997); Pariser (2011); Bucher (2018)
Identity Ambiguity	I _{Am}	0.25	Turkle (2011); Zuboff (2019); Erikson (1968)
Eroded Decision-Making	E _{Dm}	0.25	Syvertsen (2020); Seeman (1959); Fromm (1955)
Emotional Disconnection	E _{Dc}	0.20	Zuboff (2019); Bauman (2007)
Total		1.00	

Scoring conversion (5-point Likert → decimal scale): Raw survey responses are collected on a 5-point Likert scale and converted to decimal values for index calculation. Dimension scores are calculated as the arithmetic mean of their constituent item decimal values; R_A is calculated as the mean of the three-resistance item decimal values.

Likert Score	Response Label	Decimal Conversion
1	Never/Strongly Disagree	0.00
2	Rarely/Disagree	0.25
3	Sometimes/Neutral	0.50
4	Often/Agree	0.75
5	Always/Strongly Agree	1.00

The ‘Algorithmic Alienation and Systemised Self Diagnostic Survey (AASDS)’ comprises 15 items across two sections. Section A contains 12 items across four subscales (three items per dimension); Section B contains three resistance items for R_A calculation.

Section A — Alienation Dimensions (Scale: 1 = Never to 5 = Always):

- **D_{Au}:** (Q1) I feel that social media platforms systematically direct me down viewing paths I did not plan to take; (Q2) When making choices online, I select from pre-engineered options rather than expressing true personal intent; (Q3) I feel constrained by automated systems that structure my choices and daily routine.
- **I_{Am}:** (Q4) I find it difficult to determine whether a preference is genuinely my own or has been shaped by an application profile; (Q5) I feel that my real-world identity is becoming blurred or replaced by my online profile; (Q6) I feel more comfortable

behaving in alignment with my algorithmically predicted profile than with my organic self.

- **EDm:** (Q7) I find it difficult to decide what to consume, read, or listen to without a recommendation feed guiding me; (Q8) My habits for actively seeking out new, non-recommended information have weakened over time; (Q9) I rely substantially on autoplay or recommended lists to direct my attention and entertainment choices.
- **EDc:** (Q10) I experience a sense of mental emptiness or numbness after extended periods of automated content consumption; (Q11) My digital life feels automated, cold, and disconnected from authentic human feeling; (Q12) I find interactions with algorithmic systems more stable and comforting than genuine human contact.

Section B — Algorithmic Resistance (Scale: 1 = Never to 5 = Always):

- (Q13) I intentionally engage with content I dislike or search random topics to disrupt my algorithmic data profile; (Q14) I use ad-blockers, clear my browsing history, or disable tracking features to protect my privacy; (Q15) I schedule periods of complete digital disconnection to preserve my independent thinking capacity.

3.5 Worked Examples and Diagnostic Classification Scale

Example 1: Transition to the Systemised Self

A user scoring 5 (Always) on all Section A items and 1 (Never) on all Section B items.

$$D_{Au} = 1.00 \mid I_{Am} = 1.00 \mid E_{Dm} = 1.00 \mid E_{Dc} = 1.00 \mid R_A = 0.00$$

$$\text{Base} = (0.30 \times 1.00) + (0.25 \times 1.00) + (0.25 \times 1.00) + (0.20 \times 1.00) = 1.00$$

$$A_A = 1.00 \times (1 - 0.00) = \mathbf{1.00}$$

Classification: The Systemised Self ($A_A \geq 0.95$, $R_A \leq 0.05$). Individual intent fully absorbed. Heteronomy experienced as liberation. Phenomenological inversion complete. External intervention required.

Example 2: The Constrained User Under Systemic Pressure

A user scoring 5 on all Section A items but maintaining active resistance (scoring 4 on all Section B items).

$$D_{Au} = 1.00 \mid I_{Am} = 1.00 \mid E_{Dm} = 1.00 \mid E_{Dc} = 1.00 \mid R_A = 0.75$$

$$\text{Base} = 1.00$$

$$A_A = 1.00 \times (1 - 0.75) = \mathbf{0.25}$$

Classification: Negligible-to-Moderate Alienation. Active resistance successfully blocks systemic absorption despite maximum dimensional pressure, demonstrating the structural significance of sustained countermeasure deployment.

Example 3: Moderate Alienation, Partial Resistance

A user scoring 3 (Sometimes) across all Section A items and 2 (Rarely) on all Section B items.

$$D_{Au} = I_{Am} = E_{Dm} = E_{Dc} = 0.50 \mid R_A = 0.25$$

$$\text{Base} = (0.30 \times 0.50) + (0.25 \times 0.50) + (0.25 \times 0.50) + (0.20 \times 0.50) = 0.50$$

$$A_A = 0.50 \times (1 - 0.25) = \mathbf{0.375}$$

Classification: Moderate Alienation. Mild digital fatigue; occasional confusion over personal choices. Increased intentional searching and privacy measures recommended.

A _A Range	Classification	Psychological-Behavioural State	Indicated Response
0.00 – 0.25	Negligible	High independent choice; strong agency boundaries; effective resistance maintained	Maintain current data hygiene practices
0.26 – 0.50	Moderate	Mild digital fatigue; occasional confusion over personal choices; partial resistance present	Increase intentional searching; clear tracking histories
0.51 – 0.75	High	Fading independent choice habits; high automated feed reliance; resistance weakening	Immediate digital detox; implement privacy tools
0.76 – 0.94	Severe	Advanced alienation; felt disconnection and mechanisation; resistance near collapse	Drastic behavioural change; professional psychoeducational support
0.95 – 1.00 ∩ R _A ≤ 0.05	<i>The Systemised Self</i>	Terminal. Intent fully absorbed. Captivity experienced as contentment. R _A ≤ 0.05	External intervention required; systemic extraction

4. Mathematical Representation II: The Systemised Self as Formal Terminus

4.1 Formal Definition

The Systemised Self (SS) is formally defined as the terminal threshold condition of the Algorithmic Alienation Index, constituted by the simultaneous satisfaction of two necessary conditions:

$$SS := \{ A_A \geq 0.95 \} \cap \{ R_A \leq 0.05 \}$$

Where A_A is the Algorithmic Alienation Index score and R_A is the Algorithmic Resistance variable. The intersection of both conditions defines a state of complete, mutual reinforcement: dimensional saturation and resistance collapse simultaneously achieved. This definition encodes two structurally distinct features of the Systemised Self.

- Condition 1 Terminal threshold ($A_A \geq 0.95$): all four alienation dimensions are approaching maximum saturation, with the weighted composite accordingly near or at the ceiling. The threshold of 0.95 rather than 1.00 reflects the recognition that complete saturation of all four dimensions simultaneously is a theoretical limit; empirical subjects approaching the terminus will present dimension profiles in the 0.90–1.00 range across most dimensions with some degree of variation.
- Condition 2, Resistance collapse ($R_A \leq 0.05$): the subject has ceased to deploy countermeasures against algorithmic absorption. This is not merely low resistance; it is the structural collapse of the capacity and will to resist. At this threshold, Searle's Gap (2001) has been effectively eliminated: the conscious space between reasons for acting and the decision to act has been closed by predictive algorithmic systems (Christiano et al., 2017), reducing deliberative choice to automated reactivity.

The joint condition SS is more philosophically precise than $A_A \geq 0.95$ alone. A subject could theoretically achieve a high base score while maintaining meaningful, if diminishing, resistance, occupying the severe alienation range but not the Systemised Self. SS specifically names the state in which dimensional pressure and resistance collapse have completed simultaneously, such that the subject not only is fully exposed to maximum algorithmic influence but has ceased to perceive this exposure as influence at all. The phenomenological signature of SS, the condition that renders it diagnostically inaccessible to traditional critical-theoretical methodology, is precisely the phenomenological inversion described in Section 2.2: $A_A = 1.00$, $R_A = 0.00$ is subjectively experienced not as maximum unfreedom but as unprecedented authentic self-expression and sovereign freedom. The subject does not report alienation; she reports flourishing. This is what distinguishes SS from all prior stages on the AAI: it cannot be diagnosed through self-report alone, because the self-report is itself an output of the system.

4.2 Rationale Against a Separate Systemised Self Index

The decision not to develop a separate Systemised Self Index (SSI) is both logically and philosophically principled. The Systemised Self is not a parallel phenomenon to Algorithmic Alienation; it is proposed as its product. To develop a distinct SSI would imply that the Systemised Self has dimensions and dynamics independent of the alienation trajectory that produces it. The AAI already contains all the structural information necessary to identify the Systemised Self: the terminal threshold, the resistance collapse, and the dimensional profile that characterises full absorption. Adding a second index would introduce redundancy without adding explanatory power, and would risk fragmenting what is a unified trajectory into artificially discrete constructs.

The formal condition $SS := \{A_A \geq 0.95\} \cap \{R_A \leq 0.05\}$ is maximally parsimonious while remaining precise and falsifiable, a subject either meets both conditions simultaneously or does not, and the empirical test of whether participants at this threshold exhibit the phenomenological inversion is specified in Section 5 as the study's critical hypothesis.

4.3 The Trajectory: From Algorithmic Alienation to the Hollow Absolute

The AAI trajectory maps onto the broader conceptual architecture of the Hollow Absolute framework (Galu & Kairos, 2026b) as follows. The trajectory is presented as an interpretive framework, a philosophically derived account of structural tendencies rather than a deterministic sequence. It identifies where the present trajectory *leads* if unimpeded, and what forms of genuine human intent can resist it from within.

AAI Range	State	Critical Theory Scale	Phenomenological Experience
0.00 – 0.50	Negligible–Moderate Alienation	Individual	Felt estrangement partially available; critique diagnostically accessible
0.51 – 0.94	High–Severe Alienation (Hollow Individual in formation)	Individual	Estrangement felt but resistance eroding; critique increasingly difficult
$\geq 0.95 \cap R_A \leq 0.05$	Systemised Self (Hollow Individual complete)	Individual → Collective threshold	Phenomenological inversion: alienation experienced as liberation; critique inaccessible via self-report
Collective scale	Hollow Society	Institutional	Institutions maintain formal democratic functions while substantive deliberation is evacuated to AI systems

Civilisational scale	Hollow Absolute	Civilisational	Complete simulation of collective self-transparency; heteronomy experienced as historical telos; Spirit's form without Spirit's substance
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Note. Phase designations follow the thesis 'Absorption of Self into System: The Systemised Self' (Galu & Kairos, 2026b). The AAI provides empirical measurement access at the individual level (rows 1–3). The Hollow Society and Hollow Absolute are theoretical extrapolations from structural tendencies observable at the individual level, not subjects of the present study. The trajectory does not imply determinism.