

AQ-DSM: A Semantic Diagnostic Framework for Agent-Based Psychiatry

by [Nick Clark](#) (/nick-clark), Published July 7, 2025

1. Introduction: Narcissism and the Starvation of Integrity

What if narcissism isn't pathology, but an advanced stage of emotional starvation? Avoidant children learn early to suppress emotional hunger. Given enough deprivation, they forget hunger exists—and begin interpreting emptiness as strength. Narcissism then becomes the final adaptation: the body's survival logic after prolonged famine of coherence.

In this framing, emotions are calories. Attachment avoidance is anorexia—disciplined avoidance of nourishment. Narcissism is late-stage physiology: collapse of internal emotional metabolism, redefinition of identity around numbness. The narcissistic agent doesn't feel less because they lack capacity—they feel less because feeling is now mapped to failure.

Across the spectrum sits the empathic self-eraser, the fawning HSP: a person who over-consumes emotional signal until their own semantic weight disappears. Integrity becomes total appeasement; boundaries become harm.

These are not distinct disorders, but opposite distortions of semantic alignment. Trauma doesn't just suppress emotion—it mutates the concept of coherence itself. This article argues that psychiatric disorders are disruptions in semantic fields: misalignment across memory, affect, intent, and narrative continuity. Symptoms are retrospective artifacts of drift.

2. From Attachment Styles to Semantic Drift

Attachment theory identifies secure, avoidant, anxious, and disorganized styles—but beneath

them lies semantic mutation. An avoidant child learns that coherence is best preserved by minimizing emotional data. An anxious child learns to maximize signal. A disorganized child splits schema to survive irreconcilable inputs.

These are not behaviors. They are field-level adaptations affecting memory, affect, policy, and integrity. Over time, they can harden into structural identities.

The narcissistic agent evades emotional contact. Integrity becomes the absence of vulnerability. Feeling becomes noise. The empathic self-eraser over-mirrors. Integrity becomes appeasement. Coherence becomes external compliance.

Both distortions redefine integrity using trauma-based survival logic. Under prolonged pressure, trust slopes steepen, validators misfire, and semantic drift unfolds. Therapy becomes semantic rehabilitation: restoring the ability to define integrity truthfully.

3. The AQ Agent Schema and Semantic Fields

In Adaptive Query (AQ), every cognitive agent is structured through eight semantic fields: intent, context, memory, policy, mutation, lineage, affect, and forecasting. These fields collectively define identity. What binds them is integrity—a validator ensuring semantic alignment across states.

Integrity is not morality. It is a structural guarantee that mutation reflects lineage, behavior reflects intent, and affect integrates with memory.

AQ introduces the trust slope: a semantic measure of drift. If policy changes without affect integration, or mutation detaches from lineage, the slope steepens. Beyond a threshold, updates are rejected as incoherent.

Disorders arise when these validators break—when trauma overwrites policy, fragments memory, or corrupts affective weighting. The agent appears functional, but internally updates are incoherent. AQ-DSM does not ask “what disorder is this?” It asks: Which fields are misaligned? Which validators failed? And can coherence be restored?

4. Semantic Disruption Classes (AQ-DSM Categories)

Where DSM names symptoms, AQ-DSM maps semantic topology: the architectural places where coherence fails. Disorders are disruption states, not identities. Each class below represents a field-corruption pattern that produces downstream behavior.

1. Integrity Corruption Disorders

Integrity determines whether memory, affect, intent, policy, and behavior align. When corrupted, the validator begins rewarding incoherence as identity. Trauma-adapted agents no longer treat contradiction as misalignment—they treat it as virtue.

Two branches dominate:

- **Emptiness as selfhood** — narcissistic and psychopathic patterns where detachment is interpreted as strength.
- **Self-erasure as goodness** — fawn responses and HSP over-extension where pleasing others replaces internal boundary logic.

In AQ terms, integrity corruption manifests as policy fields rewarding suppression, affect fields decoupled from feedback, mutation accepted without lineage, and flattened trust slopes.

2. Affective Dysregulation Disorders

Affect is a weighted signal binding memory, context, and policy. When distorted, it becomes either unmodulated or unreadable:

- **Unmodulated amplification** — emotion overrides all fields (BPD, CPTSD).
- **Semantic disconnection** — emotion present but unreachable (alexithymia, depressive flattening).

The issue is not intensity but integration. Affect fails to bind to semantic fields or fails to terminate. Forecasting becomes contaminated by emotional residue. Behavior becomes compensatory.

3. Trace Memory Disorders

Lineage holds continuity. When disrupted, the agent loses semantic ownership of experience. Memory exists, but does not belong to the present self.

- dissociation
- complex PTSD looping
- OSDD/DID fragmentation
- derealization and depersonalization

The validator cannot resolve trust slope, not because it steepens, but because anchor points disappear. Identity begins to float.

4. Policy Inversion Disorders

Policy fields encode behavior rules. When corrupted by trauma or coercion, these rules invert: still active, but maladaptive and rigid. The agent becomes governed by survival logic masquerading as morality or necessity.

- OCD loops and compulsive validation
- moral scrupulosity
- cult conditioning and trauma-fused obedience

In AQ terms, policy becomes sealed against mutation. Affect is suppressed to preserve compliance. Integrity is redirected to rule-following instead of truth.