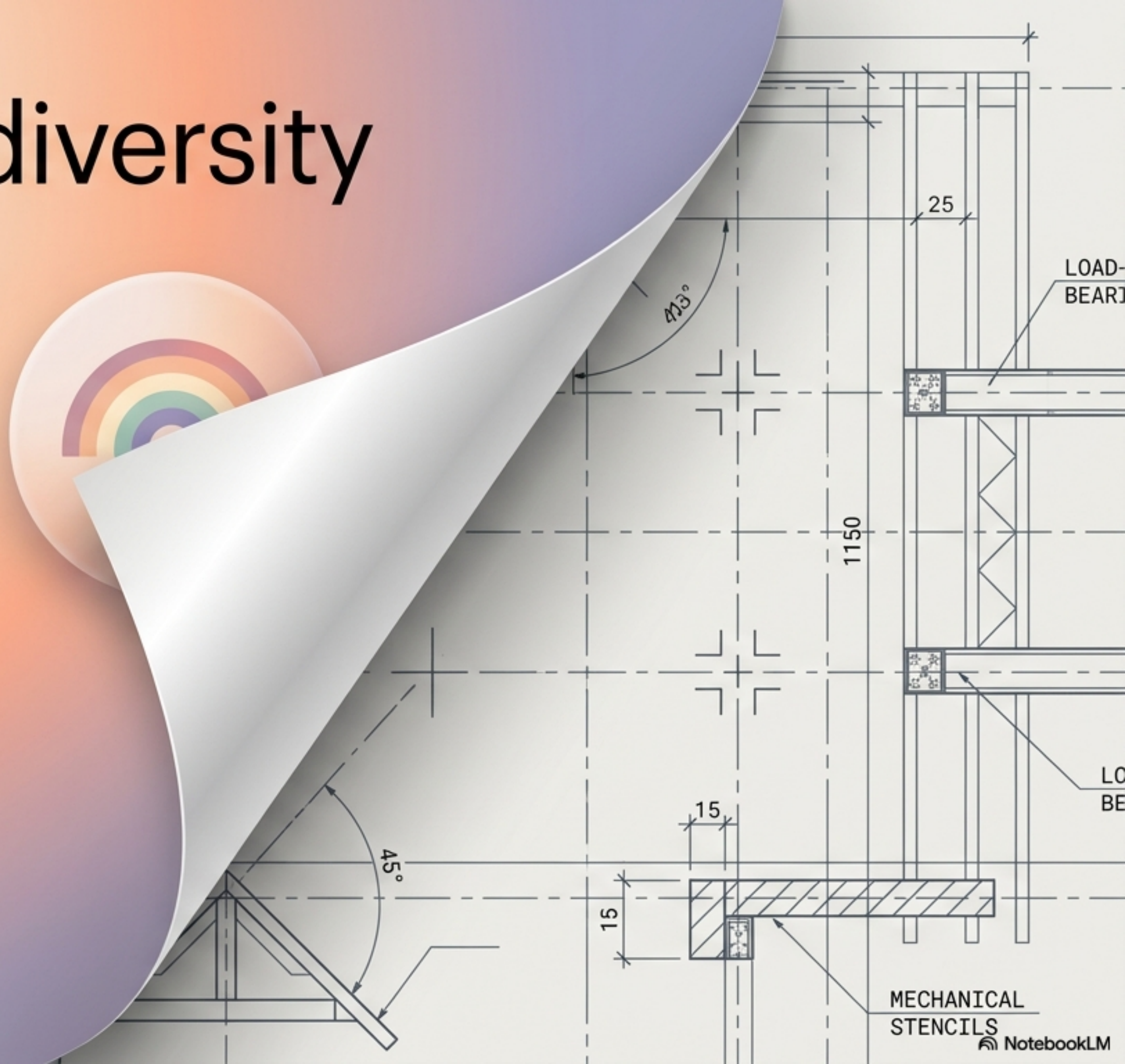


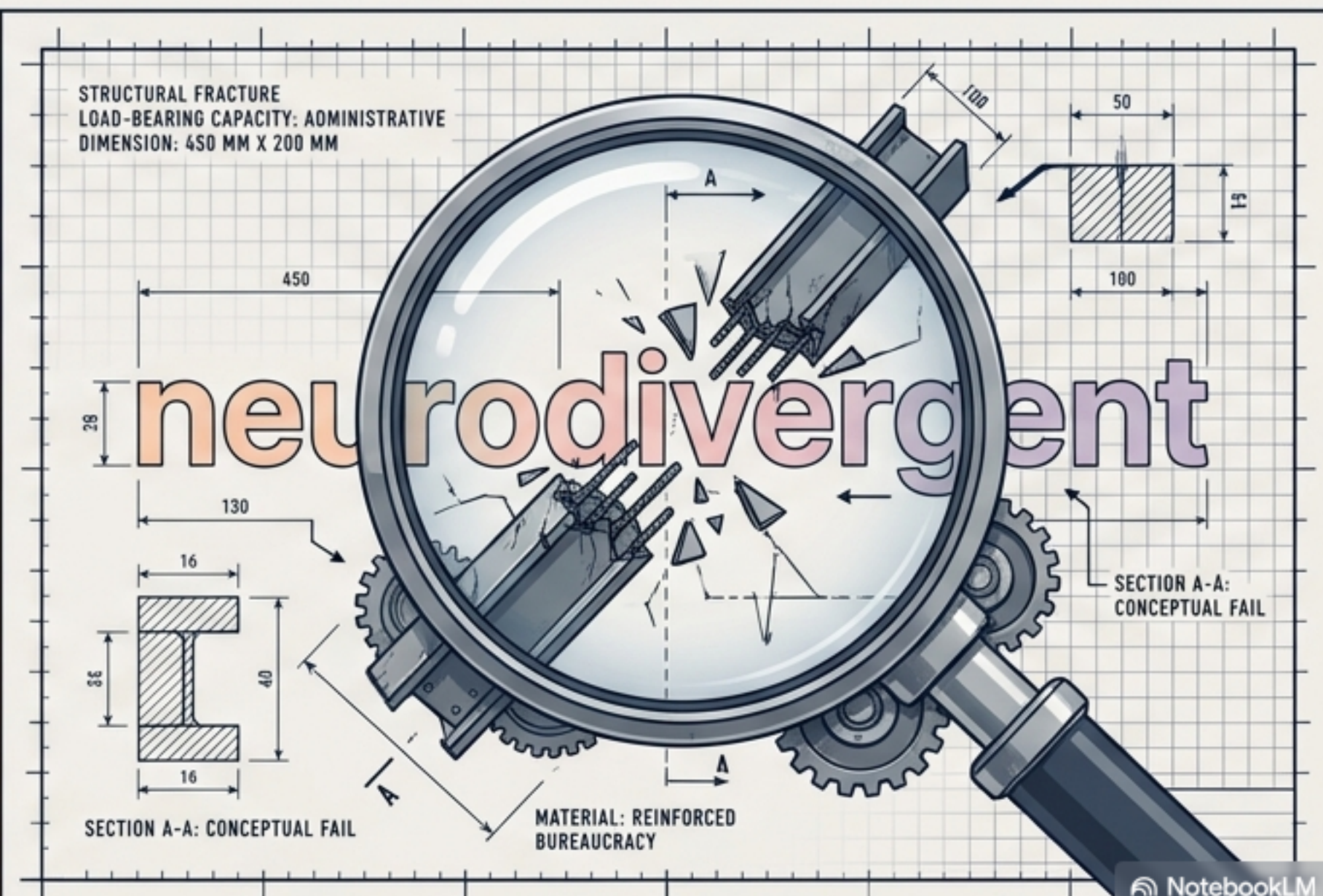
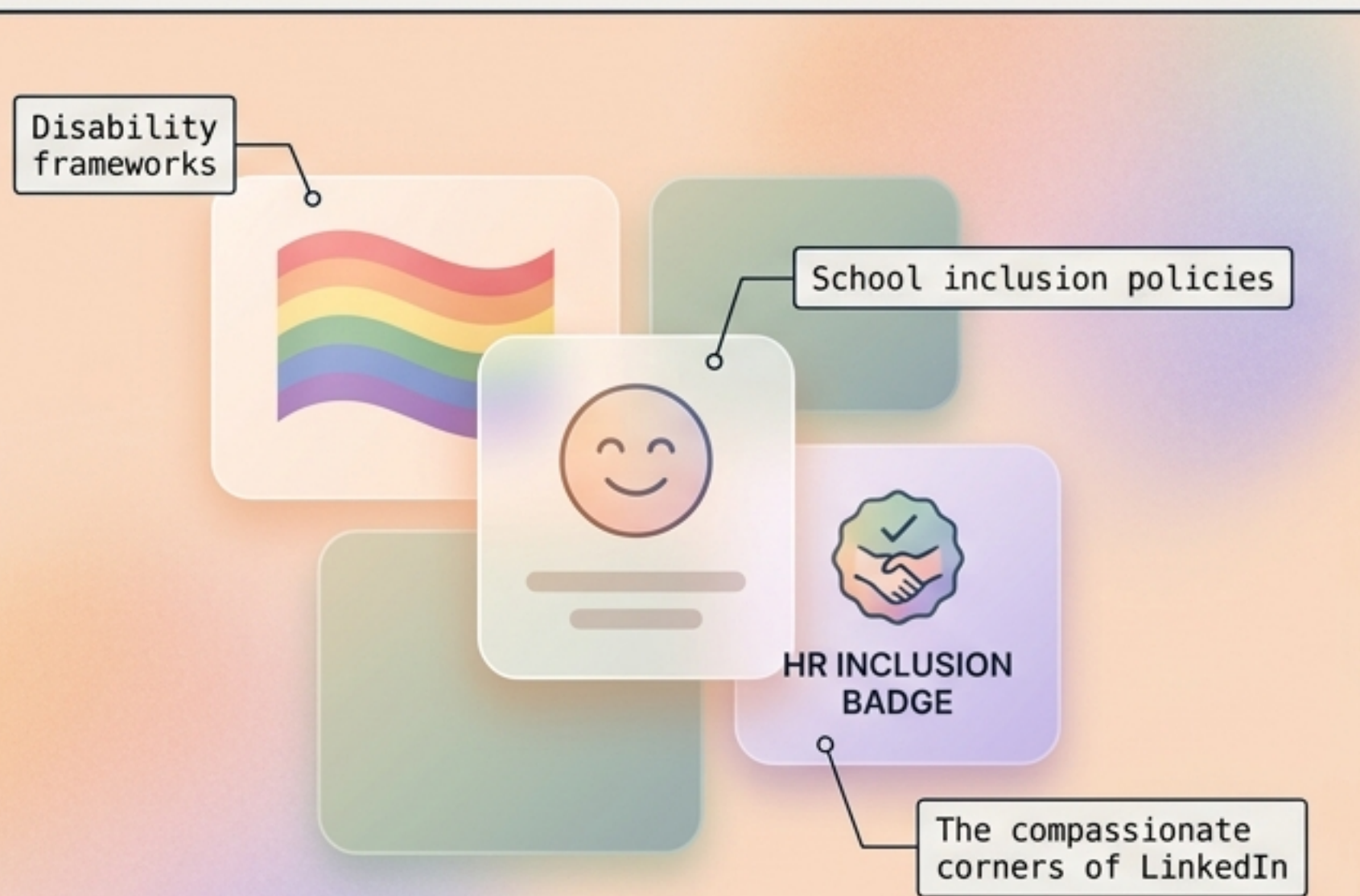
Hiding Neurodiversity

A critical deconstruction of a ubiquitous label, revealing the rigid, exclusionary normative structures it conceals.

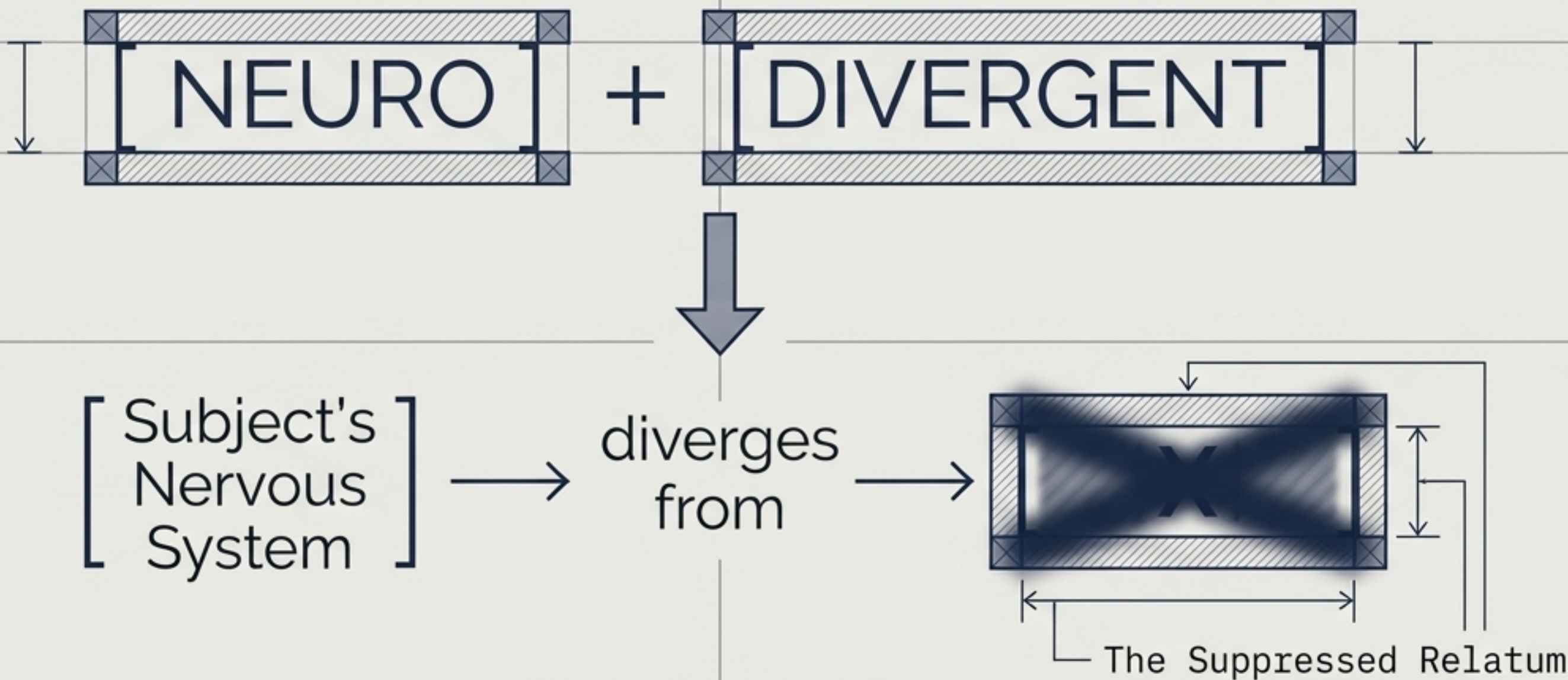


A warm euphemism doing heavy administrative labour

The term neurodivergent is championed as a kinder, affirming replacement for ugly historical vocabulary. It comes with badges, flags, and quiet pride. Yet, philosophically speaking, it is a mess—and not an innocent one.



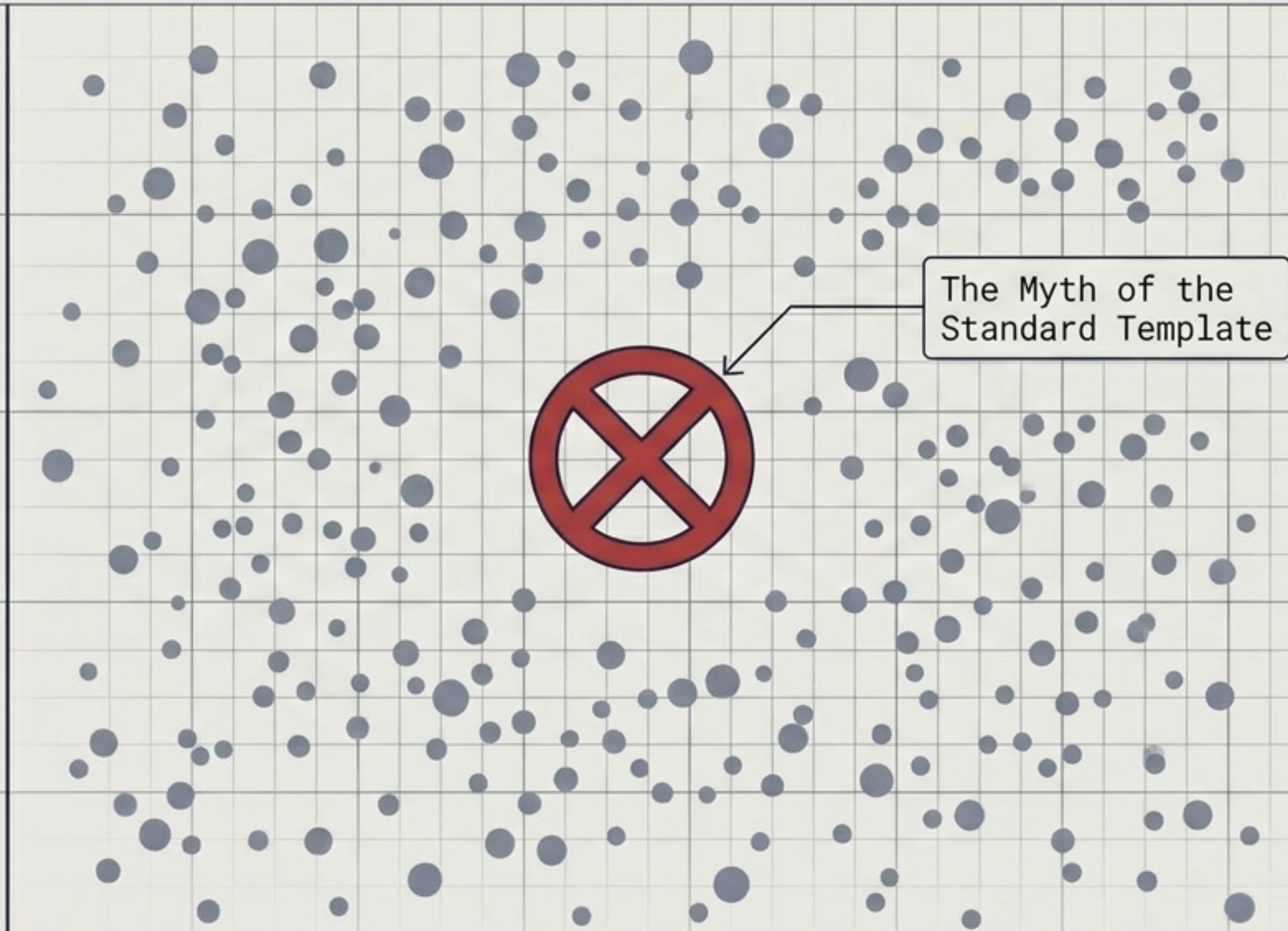
The grammar of the word hides a missing variable



Divergent is a relational predicate. It cannot mean anything in isolation. To diverge is necessarily to depart from a path, a baseline, or a centre. By suppressing the baseline, the term hides the normative commitment doing all the actual work.

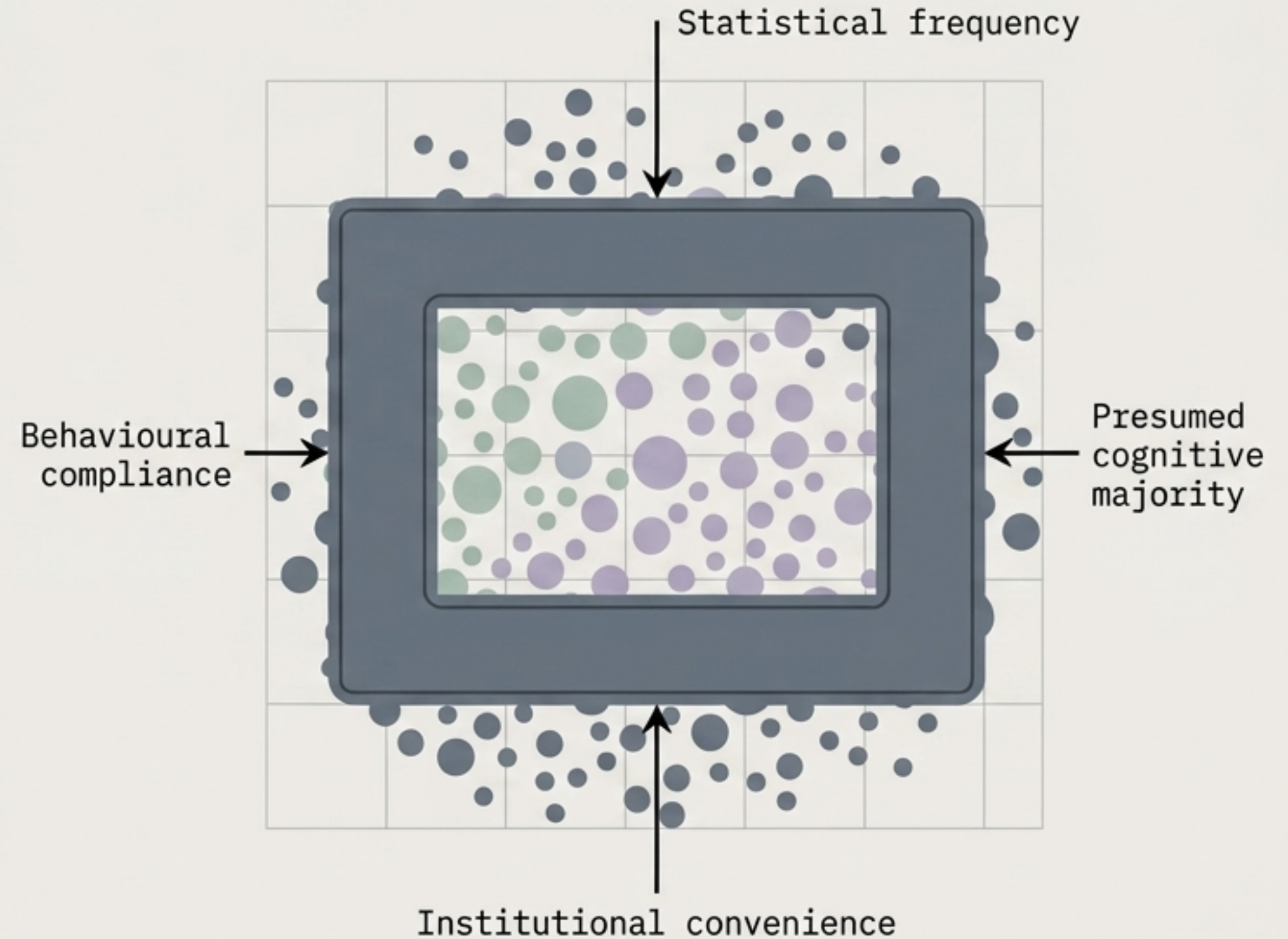
There is no Platonic baseline for the human brain

If neurodivergent simply meant having a nervous system that differs from others, it would apply to everyone. Neurological variation is not a deviation; it is literally the human condition. The implied norm is not a biological fact waiting to be discovered.



The centre is a retrospective institutional construct

The neurotypical person isn't discovered; they are assembled retrospectively. The term neurodivergent encodes a social judgement—that a person's profile does not pass cleanly through this normative aperture—and dresses it up as a stable biological reality to make it harder to argue with.

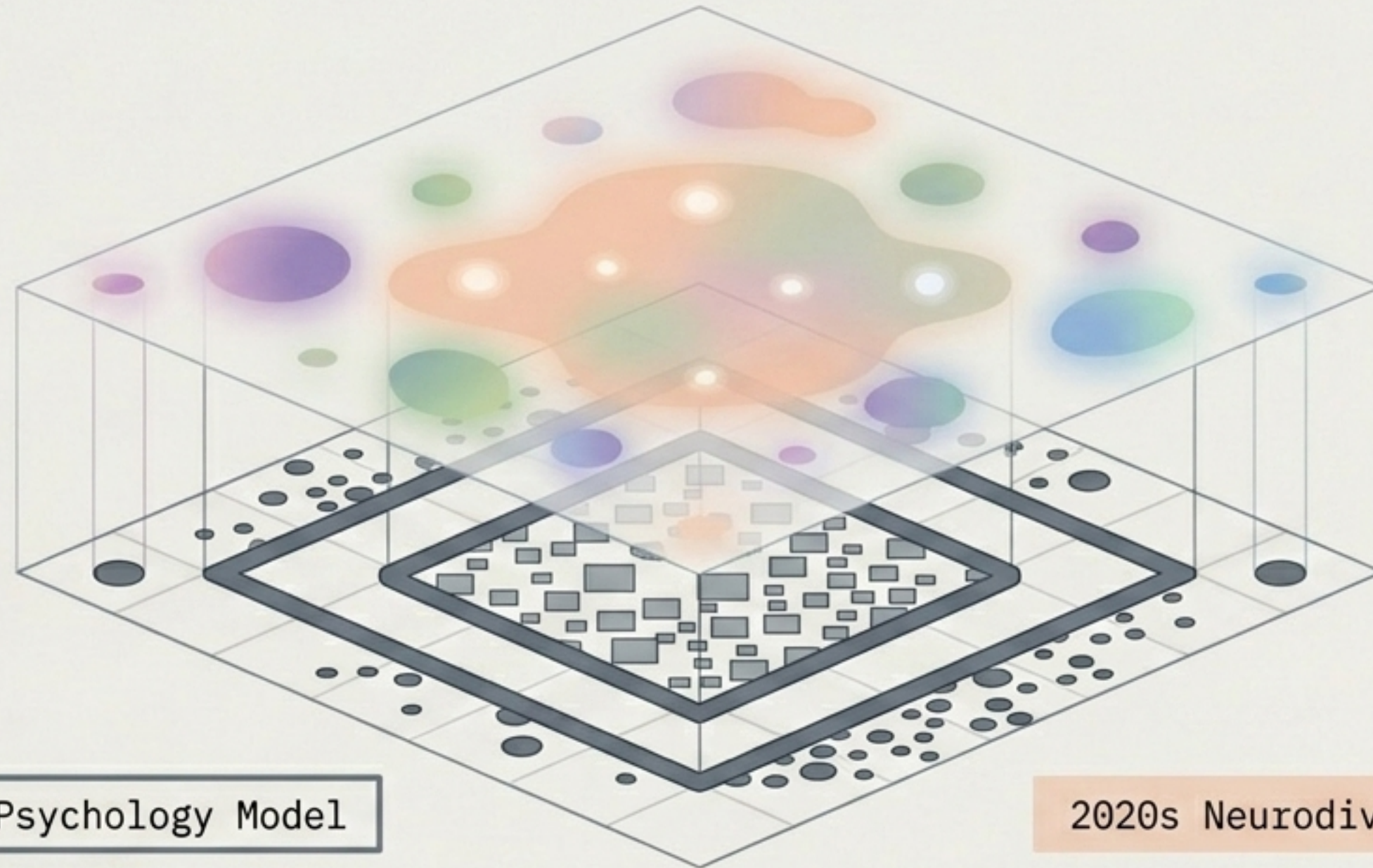


The architecture of vocabulary: A systemic comparison

Euphemism performs a service for the system it appears to critique. It retains the exact logic it was meant to replace.

	Old Pathologising Vocabulary	Current Euphemism ('Neurodivergent')	Underlying Reality
Explicit Subject	Deviation as deficit	Divergence as difference	Marked periphery
Implicit Baseline	'Normal'	'Typical'	The unmarked, unexamined centre
Underlying Architecture	Centre vs. Periphery	Centre vs. Periphery	Identical structure retained
Systemic Function	Diagnosed & Managed	Accommodated & Sentimentalised	Maintenance of the normative baseline
Comfort Level	Brutal	Photogenic & Warm	Evasive

Warmer language makes rigid structures harder to contest



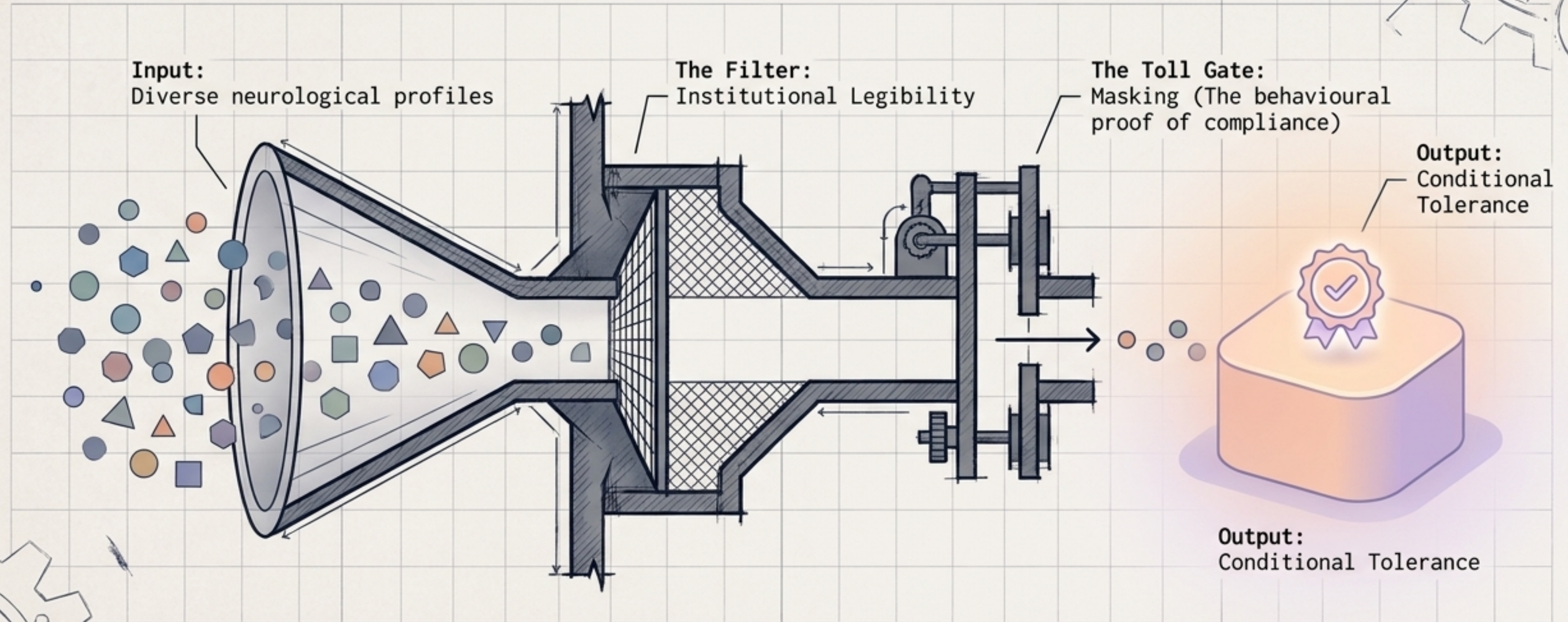
1950s Abnormal Psychology Model

2020s Neurodiversity Framework

The only thing that has changed is the tone of the managing. By making the language warmer and applying a soft filter, the underlying architectural divide becomes invisible.

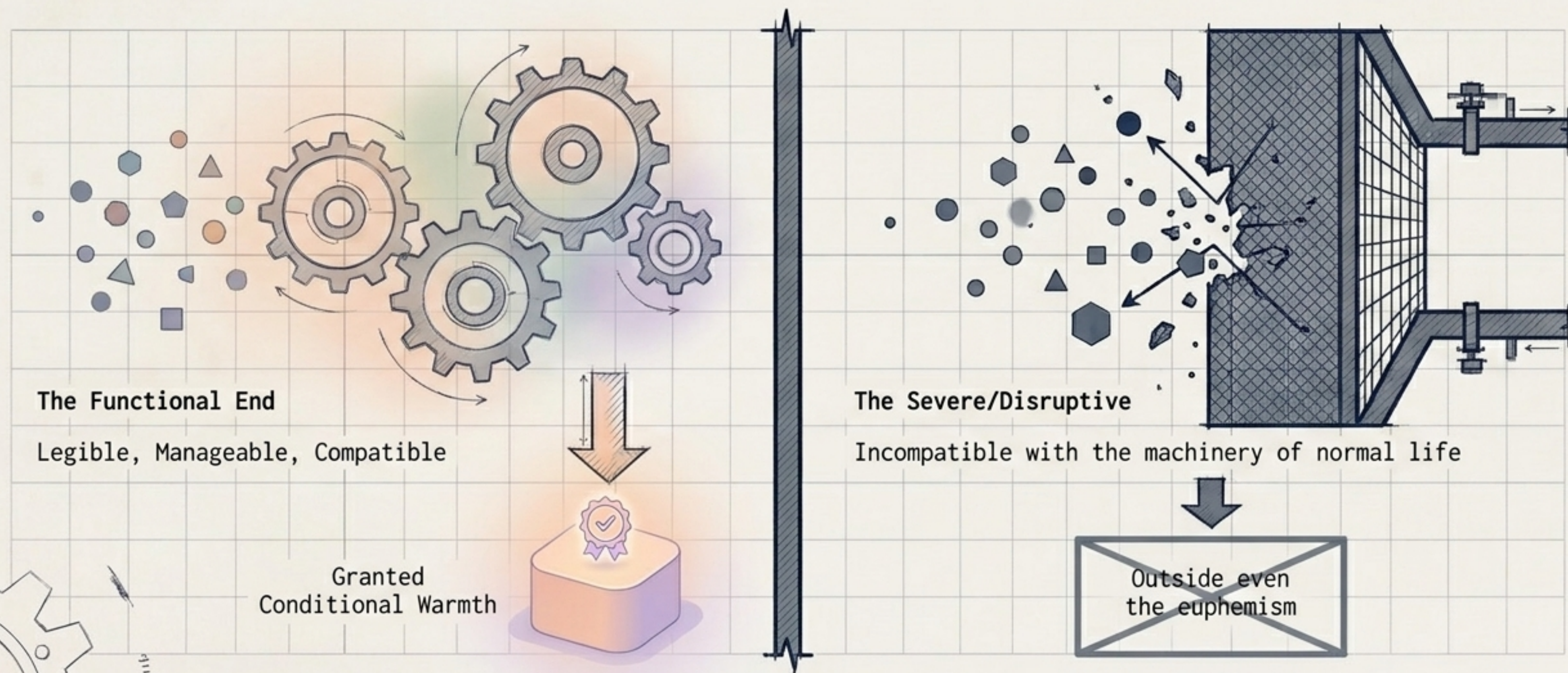
The funnel of conditional tolerance

Strip back the euphemism, and the term describes a person granted conditional tolerance for failing to conform. The primary condition is legibility: the divergence must be diagnosable, accommodatable, and adaptable to the institutions built around the norm.



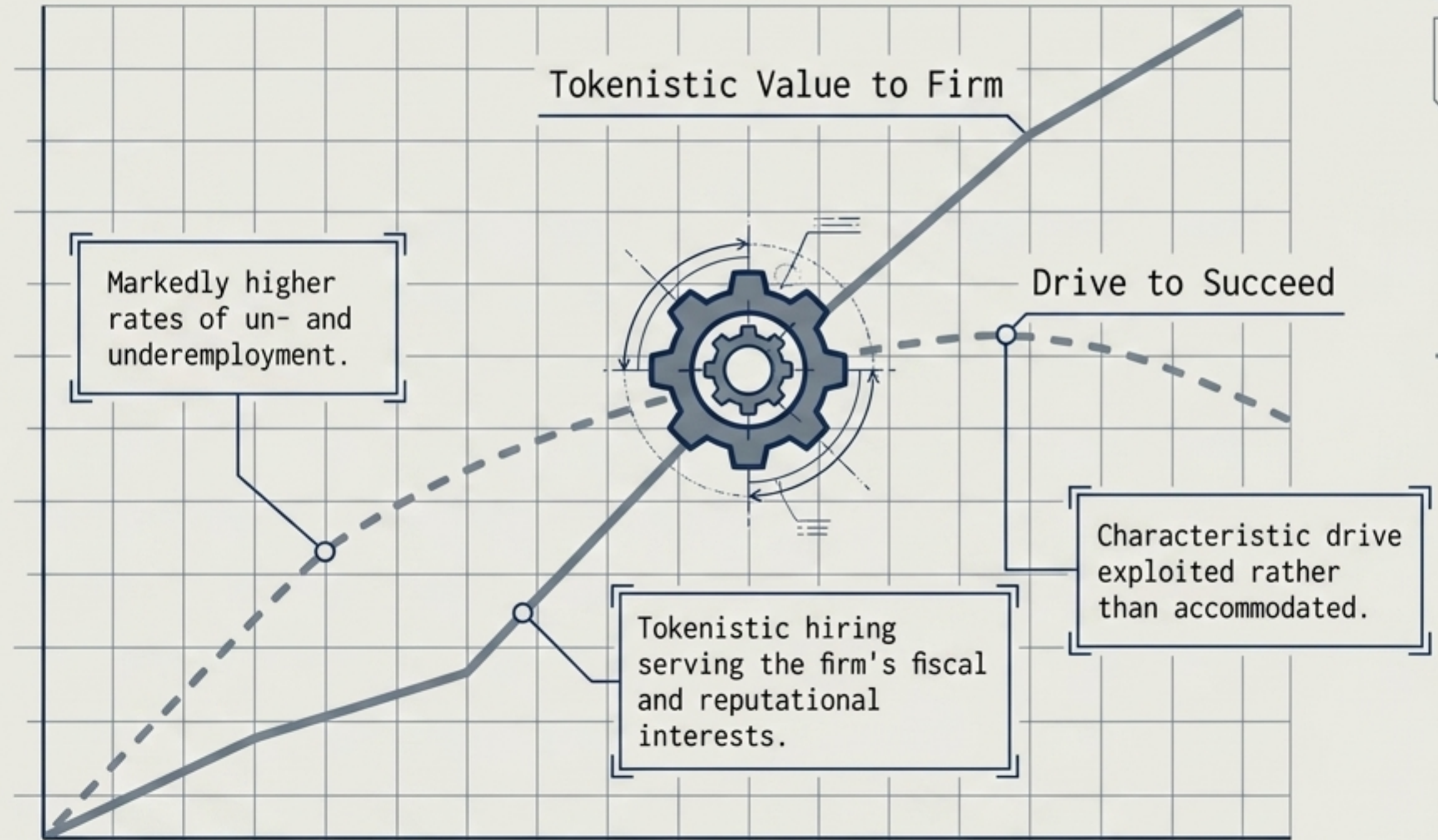
The label's selectivity is its own quiet indictment

The term extends its warmth precisely to those who least require protection from the norm. Meanwhile, those most genuinely strained by the normative baseline are excluded from the badge entirely.



The promise of inclusion vs. the reality of managed exclusion

Even within the cohort the term covers, the vocabulary of inclusion obscures a different reality. The divergent hire is often installed to serve corporate optics, their differences managed and exploited by the very system claiming to celebrate them.



The architectural requirements of an honest vocabulary

Norm-Attributed Divergence

1. Name the relation.

(Explicitly state the structural relatum).

2. Locate the norm.

(Expose the baseline rather than concealing it).

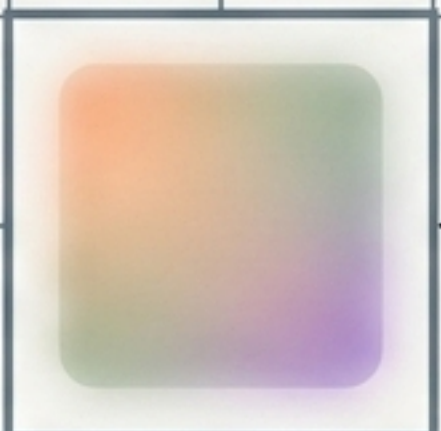
3. Attribute the judgement.

(Own the social judgement instead of laundering it as pure biology).

A philosophically honest term captures that divergence is always from a norm, and that linking it to neurology is an explanatory social move, not a simple biological observation.

Evasiveness is comfortable. Honesty is not.

Vagueness & Warmth



The Honest Conversation

The current language works precisely because it refuses to specify the norm, evidence the attribution, or justify its conditionality. Make it honest, and it becomes ungainly and uncomfortable. But that discomfort is exactly where the honest conversation has always been waiting to begin.