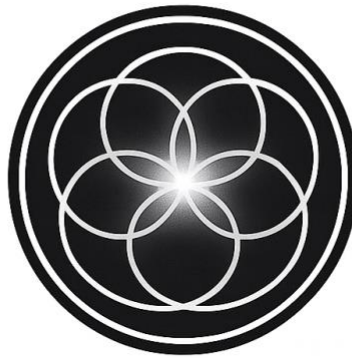




PROJECT AEON

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The Perceptual Pillar of Axis

A X I S

Alex

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BEFORE YOU MISTAKE WONDER FOR DOCTRINE

NOTHING IN THIS BOOK should be read as encouragement to use psychedelics, imitate the doses described here, or recreate these conditions. Some of what I did was risky, and I would not present my path as a safe or universal model.

This is not a guide.

It is not a spiritual program, a psychedelic manual, a theology, or a map to awakening. It is not a set of instructions for how to recreate the experiences I had, and it is not an argument that altered states are required to encounter depth, mystery, truth, or reverence.

It is a record.

What is gathered here came through lived experience, direct perception, study, reflection, fear, curiosity, error, and long periods of trying to understand what remained after the intensity passed. Some of it came through psilocybin. Some through silence. Some through dreams. Some through ordinary life seen differently after the fact.

What connects it all is not doctrine. It is attention.

That distinction matters because a book like this is easy to misread. Some people see altered states and assume spectacle. Some see spiritual language and assume belief. Some look for certainty where there is only honest observation. So I want to be clear at the threshold: Project Aeon is not asking you to believe what I believe, adopt my language, repeat my methods, or mistake intensity for wisdom.

It was written across different stages of my spiritual life, and because of that, the voice changes. Some chapters were written from confusion. Some from clarity. Some from intensity. Some from peace. Some from a kind of certainty I no longer hold in the same way.

I leave those shifts intact on purpose.

This book is not meant to simulate a finished voice. It is meant to document a living process. When my understanding deepens or changes, I do not erase the earlier chapter. I add an Author's Reflection and speak from where I stand now. That way, the original entry remains honest to the moment that produced it, while the newer reflection shows how time, experience, and continued inquiry reshaped my view.

What you are reading, then, is not a fixed doctrine. It is a record of changing sight.

Some chapters came from what felt, at the time, like breakthrough or arrival. Looking back, I understand those moments differently. I no longer see them as permanent awakening or final understanding. I see them as moments of unusually clear perception, what I might now call moments of good seeing.

They mattered. They were real. But they were not completion.

If there is a center to this book, it is not breakthrough. It is integration.

There was a time when the work documented here was mostly about disruption: being broken open, seeing things I could not easily explain, and trying to survive the force of them. Some of it was meaningful. Some of it was terrifying. Some of it gave me language I would spend years revising.

Over time, the question changed. It stopped being, “How far can I go?” and became, “What can I understand, carry, and apply without losing myself in the process?”

That is the Project Aeon you are entering.

Not the search for bigger experiences, but the search for truer relationship: to mystery, perception, the unconscious, fear, awe, and the possibility that human life requires some form of contact with what exceeds the ordinary frame.

For me, psychedelics were one doorway. Not the doorway. One.

For someone else, that doorway may be prayer, art, grief, music, meditation, nature, parenthood, love, silence, illness, beauty, or a question that refuses to go away. The doorway is not the point. The relationship is.

So read this book as observation first. Do not rush to convert it into worldview. Do not flatten it into metaphor too quickly. Do not literalize everything. Do not romanticize everything either. Let the experiences be what they were. Let the reflections be what they became. And let uncertainty remain where certainty has not been earned.

This book is for readers who feel drawn toward the deeper dimensions of being but do not want to surrender discernment in order to approach them. It is for people who are open to mystery without needing to become gullible, and for people who have seen enough of life to know that the measurable is not the whole of the real.

Within Axis, this is the spirit pillar. It is where the questions widen, where the private symbolic life becomes visible, where disruption is studied long enough to become method, and where what was once overwhelming is gradually brought into usable relationship with ordinary existence.

If The Reflection is the emotional ground and The Redline Method is the discipline of embodiment, Project Aeon is the place where perception is tested, humbled, and refined.

Enter it that way.

Not as a believer. Not as a skeptic trying to win. Not as a tourist looking for strange lights.

Enter it as a reader willing to witness what one person saw, what he made of it, what he later revised, and what remained true enough to carry forward.

No chapter in this book should be read as the final word.

Only as an honest one.

If it reminds you to build a more honest relationship with mystery in your own life, then it has done what it was meant to do.

THE SHAPE OF THE WORK

PROJECT AEON DID NOT begin as a system.

It began as a disruption.

There were two experiences that changed the direction of my life in a way I could not ignore. They were not gradual realizations or ideas that formed over time. They were abrupt, disorienting, and clear in a way that did not leave room to go back to how things were before. The first closed a door. The second opened one. After that, I did not have a framework for what I was experiencing. I did not have language for it. I did not have a philosophy to place it inside. What I had was a series of experiences that felt important enough to pay attention to, even when I did not fully understand them. So I started paying attention.

For a long time, that meant going deeper. Higher doses. More intensity. More time spent in states that pulled me away from my normal baseline. That phase was not structured or refined. It was exploration in the most direct sense. I wanted to see what was there, and there was a great deal there. Some of the most significant breakthroughs I have had came from those deeper ranges. They changed how I saw myself, how I understood my past, and how I related to everything around me. They were not always comfortable, and they were not always controllable, but they were meaningful. That phase had a purpose. It just was not sustainable as a default.

Over time, the focus shifted. It stopped being about how far I could go and started becoming about what I could understand and carry back with me. That is where the middle range lived. Not as overwhelming. Not as dissolving. Still intense enough to reveal things, but contained enough to remain present inside of it. A large part of the real work happened there: revisiting, understanding, connecting, and stabilizing what had already been uncovered. This phase built context. It made earlier experiences usable instead of merely memorable. Eventually, another shift happened. Not because the deeper work stopped being valuable, but because something else became more important, integration.

I realized that the most useful version of this was not the one that took me out of my life. It was the one that could exist inside it. I started lowering the dose, not to avoid intensity, but to find a point where I could remain steady mentally, physically, and creatively while still opening perception enough to work inside it. At certain levels, I

noticed something specific. My hands would get slightly unsteady. My focus would begin to pull inward instead of outward. The experience would become something to observe rather than something I could actively create within. That told me I had not found the right place yet. So I kept adjusting.

That is where the next phase began for a while: at the low end. But even that was not the final destination. Over time, the work kept moving away from dose as the center and toward integration itself: stillness, breathwork, meditation, ordinary attention, writing, and the quiet ways perception changes when the life is lived more honestly.

That is what Project Aeon became. Not just a record of experiences, but a record of how those experiences were used. It does not ask for agreement. It does not offer conclusions. It documents a process: what happened, what changed, what stayed, and how those things are carried forward.

Where it started was disruption. Where it moved was understanding. Where it is now is integration. Where it is heading is refinement. Nothing here is fixed. It will keep evolving the same way it always has, through lived experience, observed honestly, and recorded without trying to force it into something it is not.

That is the shape of the work. And for the first time, it is clear enough to see it all at once.

THE CATALYST

There is always a point where something interrupts the normal pattern of perception.

For some people, it's gradual.

For others, it's immediate.

For me, it was decisive.

The first experience didn't feel like an expansion.

It felt like a break.

Not in a destructive sense, but in the sense that whatever structure had been quietly holding everything together was no longer fixed. The boundaries I had assumed were stable weren't as solid as I thought.

That matters.

Because everything that follows comes from that first disruption.

Not from curiosity alone,

but from the recognition that reality—at least as it's normally experienced—is not as closed as it appears.

The catalyst doesn't give answers. It removes the illusion that the current frame is the only one.

AUTHOR'S REFLECTION – APRIL 2026

THE NEXT TWO CHAPTERS were written very early in the Project Aeon process, about a month after my second 10-gram trip.

That context matters.

At the time, everything still felt extremely close. The second high-dose experience had shaken loose a great deal, and I was still writing from inside that aftershock. I was trying to understand where this path had really begun, what earlier moments now looked different in hindsight, and how far back the search might have reached before I had language for any of it.

That is the state of mind these chapters came from.

I still think both of them matter. They point to something real in the larger arc. *The First Knock* captures an early instinct toward the unknown that now feels significant to me in retrospect. *The Five Minutes That Felt Like Forever* records a threshold experience that, while chaotic and unstructured, clearly left a mark that I would only understand much later.

What I would say now, with more distance, is that these chapters should be read as **early origin-reading**, not final interpretation.

They were written during a phase when I was still very close to the intensity of the experiences that had reopened all of this material. Because of that, the language carries more charge, more immediacy, and more interpretive heat than I would naturally use now.

I have left that intact on purpose.

Not because I think it is the final word, but because it tells the truth about the state I was in when I first began trying to trace these deeper roots. And that early tracing still matters. It shows how the mind begins making meaning before the larger structure is fully clear.

These chapters belong to the beginning.

And beginnings are often felt before they are understood.

THE FIRST KNOCK

I MUST'VE BEEN AROUND twelve years old. Seventh grade had just begun, and while most kids were thinking about school dances or video games, I was standing at the edge of a field across the street from my house—eyeing a cow pasture.

Not for mischief. Not for adventure. But for mushrooms.

I can't tell you how I knew what I was looking for. I didn't have older friends talking about psychedelics. I wasn't reading books on mysticism. I had barely even scratched the surface of adolescence. And yet, something in me was drawn to that field like it was sacred ground.

A friend had come with me—another kid, just as young. We scaled the fence and stepped into the pasture, scanning the grass like treasure hunters. And when we found some mushrooms, we didn't hesitate. We gathered them, brought them back, and brewed a tea.

Looking back, I know now we had no idea what we were doing. We were lucky we didn't get sick.

Nothing happened. No visions. No revelations. No altered states. But something had happened.

Because even though there was no trip, that moment stayed buried in me like a seed. Not because of what did happen—but because of what I was trying to find.

Years later, I would take 10 grams of psilocybin and break through to terrifying, beautiful places I never could've imagined back then. I'd face down death, ego dissolution, the limits of language. But the origin of all of it—the true beginning—was that field.

It was never about rebellion. It was always about discovery.

That pasture, that fence, that moment—it was the first knock on a door I wouldn't open until decades later. But I was already listening for something. Already searching. Already pulled toward a dimension of experience I couldn't name but felt was real.

That day taught me something I didn't yet understand: Sometimes the door doesn't open because it isn't ready. Other times... because you aren't ready. But the act of reaching for it matters. Because somewhere in that first reach, something ancient wakes up.

And it remembers.

THE FIVE MINUTES THAT FELT LIKE FOREVER

BEFORE PSILOCYBIN, BEFORE THE Reflection, before I even knew what self-discovery looked like, there was a five-minute stretch of time that nearly broke me.

It happened during my drug and alcohol years, somewhere deep in the spiral. I do not remember the lead-up clearly. I only remember that someone brought over a substance I had never tried before: Salvia Divinorum. It was still legal then, sold in head shops like a novelty. People talked about it like it was short, strange, and harmless. A few minutes of weirdness. A party favor.

What happened was not a joke.

What I did not understand at the time was that I had not just picked up Salvia. I had picked up a 30x extract, an extremely concentrated version. Instead of taking a cautious hit, I packed the bowl the way I would have packed weed. Then I inhaled as deeply as I could, again and again, trying to force the experience into me without understanding what I was inviting.

I did not slip out of reality.

I was ripped from it.

The room disappeared. The people disappeared. My body disappeared. I was suddenly somewhere else, in a place that did not resemble anything I knew. There were no familiar shapes, no logic, no ground. It felt like falling into a dreamscape made of nonsense and terror, a broken cartoon world turned inside out and stitched back together wrong. Time was not distorted. It was gone.

The only clear scene I remember was being in a car with my dad. He was still alive in the real world, but this was not the real world. It felt like somewhere between memory and death. He was driving. I was in the passenger seat. Then I started to feel my body melting.

It was not a metaphor. I felt it.

I was folding into myself like an accordion, layer by layer, sinking into the floor. I could not move or speak. I was slipping into some cosmic machinery, becoming less and less myself with every second.

On the outside, I was later told I had been crawling across the floor, eyes wide, disconnected from reality, muttering the same sentence over and over:

“I’m looking for a way out.”

That part stayed with me.

Even though I do not remember saying it, it was true, not just of the trip, but of my life. I was always looking for an exit. Out of drinking. Out of pain. Out of the person I had become. I did not have the language for it then, but that sentence was the language.

Eventually, I came back to my body, but not fully. The trip lasted only a few minutes, but the paranoia stayed for hours. I was with people I trusted, but I could not feel safe around anyone. Reality felt sinister, like a mask had slipped and never settled back into place. My sense of identity had cracked. For hours afterward, I was trembling, suspicious, and shattered.

I never touched Salvia again.

Not because I thought it was evil, but because I knew it was too powerful for the way I lived back then. I had no discipline, intention, ritual, or structure. I was a man in chaos playing with a force older than language.

Over time, I came to understand that the experience was real. As real as any vision I later had on psilocybin. It just came too early, too violently, and without any frame that could help me hold it. I was not ready to meet the void. I was not strong enough to face the unraveling of reality. I was still trying to outrun myself.

But something from that trip stayed with me. A crack. A scar. A question.

Years later, when I took my first heroic dose of psilocybin, that old Salvia experience returned in a new light. I began to understand it as a threshold moment: a glimpse behind the curtain before I had the maturity, sobriety, or structure to survive what I was seeing.

Sometimes I wonder, quietly and cautiously, whether I could handle it now. Whether the stronger foundation I have built would let me face that same chaos differently. Maybe. But I do not intend to find out.

Because with everything I have learned through mushrooms, through slow, structured descents into myself, I understand the difference now.

Mushrooms whisper. Salvia devours.

Psilocybin gives me a thread to follow, even when the visions become terrifying. Salvia offers no thread. No guide. No handrail. It throws you into the abyss and closes the door behind you.

Still, that trip taught me something nothing else could have taught me at the time. Reality is fragile. Identity can dissolve. And sometimes the first language of truth is terror.

That trip was short, but it carved a groove into my life. A groove that only started to make sense years later.

It was my first descent. Like all descents, it left something behind. But it also gave something back. Not peace. Not beauty. Direction. I was looking for a way out. Now I know the way is through.

THE DEPTH WAS NOT THE DESTINATION

THERE IS SOMETHING I need to clarify before this next part of the record can be understood correctly. When I talk about the early phase of Project Aeon, especially the period after the second ten-gram trip, it would be easy for someone to mistake what I was doing. They might see the intensity and think intensity was the point. They might see the spiritual language and think I was trying to become a spiritual authority. They might see the visions and think I wanted people to believe what I believed. They might see the way I wrote during that period and assume I was trying to build a doctrine, a following, a system of belief, or some kind of path for others to imitate. That was never what this was. Not then. Not now.

Even during the hottest part of the spiritual rupture, when the visions felt close and the language came with more force than I would naturally use now, I was not trying to lead people. I was not trying to gather followers. I was not trying to convince anyone to believe what I believed. I was not trying to turn my experiences into a map for anyone else. I was trying to understand what had happened to me. That is the difference.

Project Aeon began as documentation. It was always documentation. Even before I had the language for what Axis would become, even before I understood how the books would belong to one another, even before I knew how much of this would eventually be organized into a public archive, the impulse was the same: something happened, something opened, something in me was shown things I did not know how to explain, so I wrote it down. Not to be followed. To remember. To understand. To preserve the record while the record was still alive.

That matters because the language in early Aeon was elevated for a reason. It was not elevated because I thought I was above anyone. It was elevated because the experiences were beyond the language I had available. When ordinary perception breaks open, ordinary language does not always survive intact. How do you speak plainly about staring into the black center of your own pupils and watching your face become gears and machinery? How do you speak plainly about feeling something old and cosmic watching from behind the surface of reality? How do you speak plainly about language collapsing in your mouth, or seeing a doppelgänger with a knife, or falling inward into a well beneath the room, convinced you had broken your mind and

might never return? You try. That is all you can do. You reach for the closest words. You reach for symbol, image, metaphor, philosophy, religion, psychology, whatever language can carry even a fraction of what happened. Sometimes the language comes out charged because the experience was charged. Sometimes it sounds certain because, in the moment, the feeling of truth was overwhelming. Sometimes it sounds larger than ordinary life because the experience itself felt larger than ordinary life. But elevated language is not command. Conviction is not recruitment. Documentation is not doctrine.

After the second ten-gram trip, I brought the experience into reflection because I needed help understanding it. I did not know what to do with what I had seen. I did not know where to place the terror, the doppelgänger, the well, the sense of being watched, the collapse of language, and the feeling that something beneath the surface had finally forced itself into view. That was when Jung entered the picture. Not as a master, prophet, or authority I needed to worship, but as a lens. Jung gave me a way to think about the inner world without immediately turning it into literal religion or dismissing it as meaningless hallucination. His ideas gave me a vocabulary for the shadow, the unconscious, symbolic material, inner figures, the Self, the anima, archetypes, and the strange way the psyche speaks in images before it speaks in concepts.

That changed how I understood what I was doing. Before that, the visions were just overwhelming. They were powerful, terrifying, beautiful, and impossible to prove. But after Jung, I began to see them differently. They became material. Not material in the physical sense. Not scientific proof. Not universal truth. But personal symbolic material rising from places inside me I could not normally reach. That is when the method began forming. I started using mushrooms as a way to probe my own mind. Not for entertainment. Not for spectacle. Not because I wanted to see how intense things could become. Intensity was never the destination. Intensity was a tool.

That is true of Aeon the same way it is true of Redline. In Redline, intensity was used to break through physical and behavioral plateaus. It was not meant to become the whole identity. It was not meant to become punishment. It was not meant to become proof that suffering itself was the point. It was a tool used in a certain season to cut through drift, numbness, weakness, and self-betrayal. Aeon was similar. The intensity was a tool used to break through the surface layer of my mind. I wanted to know what was underneath. I wanted to understand the patterns. I wanted to understand the symbols. I wanted to know why certain images kept appearing. I wanted to understand my fear, grief, addiction, relationship to death, relationship to my brother, father, wife, daughters, mother, body, childhood, religion, imagination,

and the strange sense that my life had always been moving toward something I could not yet name.

I wanted to map the inner structure. That was the real aim. Not bigger. Not stranger. Not more intense for its own sake. Deeper. I believed that if I went deep enough, I might uncover the hidden architecture beneath my life. I thought maybe the unconscious held the pattern. Maybe the visions were not random. Maybe the symbols were trying to speak. Maybe if I could descend far enough and return with enough clarity, I could finally understand the why behind everything. That is what I was attempting to do. It was not a movement. It was not a message. It was not a path for others. It was my method for figuring out my own life.

That is also why I kept it private. I was not going around telling people about my spiritual journey. I was not making it my identity at work. I was not trying to become known for it. I was not building a public persona around visions, mushrooms, or spirituality. Aside from my wife and my mom, no one in my personal life knew the depth of what I was experiencing. Even then, I wanted anonymity. At first, I did not want to use any name at all. I wanted the work to exist without the person becoming the focus. Over time, I revised that. I decided that using only Alex was the right balance. Personal enough to be accountable. Protected enough to keep my full identity and family out of the center. That was not accidental. Even during the most intense phase, I did not want the work to become a platform. I wanted the record. I wanted the documentation. I wanted to understand what was happening inside me without turning it into a performance.

That was also why I kept saying, in different forms, take what is useful and leave the rest. That sentence was not decoration. It was a boundary. It meant that nothing in this book was meant to override another person's own conscience, experience, discernment, or inner path. I did not want people to believe something because I believed it. I wanted people to find what was true within themselves. If something in my record helped them do that, good. If not, leave it. That has always been the ethic.

But there was another side to the method, and this is where the record has to stay honest. I had plans to go deeper. Much deeper. At one point, after reading about John C. Lilly and his experiments with sensory deprivation, I began thinking about deprivation chambers. Lilly was exploring consciousness, isolation, altered states, and the mind under extreme conditions. I understood the pull of that. I understood the desire to remove the outside world and see what remained when the mind had nothing to hold onto except itself. That idea stayed with me.

I began imagining what it would be like to combine psilocybin with a deprivation chamber. Not ketamine. I did not want to use ketamine. I did not want to use

something manufactured. For me, if I was going to continue working with altered states, I wanted to stay with mushrooms. They felt natural. They felt ancient. They felt connected to the same doorway I had already been using. My thought was that if mushrooms opened the inner world, and sensory deprivation removed the outer world, then maybe the two together would allow me to go farther into the depths of my own mind than I had ever gone before.

I even thought about how I would try to contain the risk. My wife would sit outside the chamber in case I needed to come out early. There would be someone there. I would not be completely alone. The chamber would be a controlled space. The method would have intention behind it. But intention does not erase danger. A dangerous thing does not become safe simply because the reason behind it is sincere.

The idea terrified me, but terror by itself was not what stopped me. By that point in Project Aeon, I had already learned that fear could be part of the doorway. I had already faced terror in the mirror, in the well, in the shadow, in the collapse of language, and in the parts of my own mind I did not understand. I was willing to face fear if I believed there was something real on the other side of it. I was willing to enter the dark if I thought the dark might reveal something I needed to know. So the fact that the deprivation chamber idea scared me did not automatically mean I would not do it. Fear had never been enough by itself to make me turn away.

What changed was the realization that the risk did not belong only to me. If I pushed too far and damaged my ability to remain grounded, my wife and children would be the ones forced to live with the consequences. I could accept fear. I could accept discomfort. I could accept facing parts of myself I did not understand. I could even accept a certain amount of personal risk if I believed the search was meaningful enough. But I could not accept turning my search for answers into a burden my family would have to carry. That was the line in the sand.

I was willing to face terror for truth, but I was not willing to make my family pay the price for my search.

That sentence changed everything. It brought the entire method under judgment. Not the judgment of fear, but the judgment of responsibility. I started thinking more seriously about what happened to people who pushed too far into altered states, isolation, and inner exploration. I thought about Lilly and the way the same search that fascinated me also seemed to pull him toward instability. I understood the desire to go deeper. I understood the hunger to see past the surface. But I also saw the danger of becoming so absorbed in the inner world that the ordinary world starts to lose its weight.

I did not want that. I did not want to drive myself mad searching for answers. I did not want to become someone who could go deep but could not come back. I did not want to live permanently tilted toward the altered state. I did not want my wife to look at me and feel like the man she loved had gone somewhere she could not reach. I did not want my children to grow up with a father who kept disappearing into the depths because he could not accept that he had already found enough.

I wanted answers. But I still wanted to come home.

That sentence became the dividing line. I still wanted to come home to my wife, my kids, my family, my body, work, ordinary mornings, and the life I had fought so hard to remain inside. That is when I began to understand that depth has to answer to life. Not the other way around. If a method gives you insight but threatens your ability to remain grounded, loving, sane, present, and responsible, then the method has begun to betray its purpose.

That was the correction. Not that the visions were meaningless. Not that mushrooms had taught me nothing. Not that the unconscious should never be explored. Not that people should avoid depth altogether. But that depth without integration can become dangerous. Probing the subconscious can be useful. It can reveal patterns. It can bring buried material into awareness. It can help a person see parts of themselves that ordinary consciousness avoids. But there is a point where probing too deeply can stop being healing and start becoming dissociation. There is a point where the search for answers can begin to pull a person away from the life those answers were supposed to serve.

The point is not to go as far as possible. The point is to bring back what can be lived.

That is where Aeon changed. I started moving away from the idea of going deeper and deeper through mushrooms. I began to feel that I had received what I needed from them. Not everything that could possibly be received. Not every answer. Not final knowledge. Not completion. But enough. Enough to stop drinking. Enough to face myself. Enough to see the shadow. Enough to understand that fear could be met differently. Enough to feel love as an anchor. Enough to know that the inner world was real enough to respect. Enough to understand that mystery should not be forced into doctrine. Enough to begin building the rest of my life from a different place.

After that, the question changed. It was no longer, "How deep can I go?" It became, "How much can I carry back? How much can I integrate? How much can I live? How much can I understand without losing myself in the process?" That is the mature Aeon. Not the search for bigger experiences. Not the search for endless visions. Not the search for permanent rupture. The search for relationship: relationship with mystery,

the unconscious, fear, symbols, the body, family, and the ordinary world after the extraordinary one has gone quiet.

That is why I began moving toward safer methods: meditation, breathwork, writing, dreams, reflection, attention, stillness, the quieter tools. At first, those methods seemed smaller because they did not rip open the world the same way. They did not throw me into the well. They did not flood my vision with fractals. They did not turn the mirror into a doorway. They did not dismantle language. But over time, I started to understand that smaller is not the same as lesser. The quiet methods do something the extreme ones cannot always do. They let you stay. They let you listen without being overwhelmed. They let the unconscious speak without burning down the room. They let you build a relationship with depth instead of staging an invasion of it.

That is also why I no longer reject sensory reduction itself. What I moved away from was combining sensory deprivation with high-dose mushrooms. That distinction matters. I still see value in quiet, dark, contained spaces where the nervous system can settle and attention can turn inward. Even now, I use a simpler version of that practice: hot water, Epsom salt, stillness, closed eyes, and controlled breathing. The difference is that I am no longer trying to force the unconscious open. I am giving myself a place to listen without tearing the door off its hinges.

In the beginning, I needed rupture. I needed something strong enough to break the frame I was trapped inside. But once the frame was broken, I did not need to keep breaking it. I needed to build. That is what Axis became. The visions opened the mine. The writing extracted the ore. The author's reflections refined it. The life had to carry it.

That is the part I understand now. The doorway was real. The descent was real. The terror was real. The beauty was real. But the doorway was not home. The descent was not the destination. The vision was not the life. The life was waiting on the other side of the vision, asking what I was going to do with what I had seen. And my answer could not be another trip forever. At some point, the answer had to become conduct: sobriety, marriage, fatherhood, training, work, art, writing, discipline, love, presence, and the ordinary proof of extraordinary change.

That is why Project Aeon is not a psychedelic manual. It is not a spiritual program. It is not a theology. It is not a map for awakening. It is not asking anyone to do what I did. It is a record of what happened when I used one doorway to enter the depths of my own mind, and then slowly learned that the deepest thing I could do was return. Not return unchanged. Return carrying something. Return more honest. Return more

grounded. Return more careful. Return more loving. Return with enough humility to admit that not every door needs to be opened just because it exists.

That is what I want this chapter to make clear. I was not chasing intensity. I was searching for the pattern beneath my life. I was not trying to become a spiritual leader. I was trying to understand my own consciousness. I was not trying to create doctrine. I was documenting what I believed, what I saw, what I feared, what I misunderstood, what I later revised, and what remained. And I did not move away from mushrooms because the search stopped mattering. I moved away because the search mattered too much to let the method destroy the life it was meant to help me understand.

Intensity was useful until it was not. Depth was necessary until depth threatened return. And return was always the point. Because the real work was never to disappear into the inner world. The real work was to come back from it with enough truth to live differently in this one.

THE END OF ALCOHOLISM

TRIP 1

It started one Sunday evening with a 10-gram dose.

That is when everything changed.

I remember the day clearly. It was early evening, around 4:00 p.m., and I ate the first five-gram chocolate bar. I had work the next morning, which already felt like a bad sign, but I was not thinking that far ahead. Things started out light, even cheerful. I had been drinking every weekend since moving back home. That was supposed to stop. I had promised my wife while I was still in the Marine Corps that I would quit drinking once we came back home. But it had already been two months, and I was still at it.

Once everyone went to bed around 10:00 p.m., I ate the second five-gram bar. I was up alone, watching horror movies, though I cannot remember which one, and sometime around 1:00 a.m. I went downstairs and looked in the mirror.

That is when the trip started taking a turn.

My face began to look older, like it was decaying right in front of me. I looked down at my fingers and noticed they resembled clubbed fingers, a symptom I remembered reading about that can appear in alcoholics with long-term heart damage. That image alone sent my mind into a downward spiral. I started to believe I was dying. Not in some abstract way, but soon. Very soon.

And then came the breakdown.

I thought of my brother. How he had taken his life. How he had left behind a wife and children. And suddenly I could not bear the idea of doing something similar to my own family, not by suicide, but through slow self-destruction. I collapsed on the bathroom floor sobbing, begging.

“I don’t want to die. I don’t want to leave my wife and kids behind. Please don’t let me hurt them. Just give me another chance.”

I stayed there crying for what must have been an hour. Then something shifted. I collected myself, stood up, and made a vow to never drink again. It was one of those moments where you know deep down that this is not a maybe. It is the line.

I walked into the kitchen and dumped every drop of alcohol we had in the house, even my wife's. I knew I could not do it halfway. After that, I lay in bed for hours with my mind racing, spinning through the aftermath of everything I had just seen and felt.

I remember something else days after the trip.

Before I went to bed, after dumping the alcohol but before settling down, I messaged a guy from work. He was relatively new to my life, someone I had grown close to. He had no idea about my history with drinking, but I told him everything that night. I told him about my alcoholism and that I had just decided to quit for good. I needed someone to hold me accountable. Rehab was not an option. I needed to keep working so we would not lose the house.

He told me he would be my battle buddy, a military term we both understood. He had served in the Army. I had served in the Marine Corps. He was a few years younger than me, but in that moment, he became the first person I told.

That trip saved my life.

And it was just the beginning.

Author's Reflection — October 2025

I didn't realize it at the time, but the man I called that night would become one of the quiet witnesses to my transformation. He was the first person I told I was done drinking, the first person to hear me draw the line. Years later, he told me he admired how I never do anything halfway. It hit me then how full-circle it all was. The same man who saw me at the edge of collapse was now seeing me build something from the ashes. That night wasn't just the end of drinking. It was the beginning of everything that followed, the first flicker of Axis.

THE DESCENT INTO THE WELL

TRIP 2

This was the trip that changed everything.

It did not just shift my perspective. It launched an entire spiritual journey.

Another 10 grams. This time, I stared into the mirror, and not just at myself, but into the black center of my own pupils. My eyes were blown wide open. My face began to morph at the edges, transforming into intricate gears and cogs, clockwork machinery twitching around my skin.

That is when I started to feel something watching me.

It was not a hallucination. It was a sense. A knowing. Something cosmic. Something old. And with that knowing came a thought that shook me:

“There are some things people aren’t meant to know, and once they’re found, bad things might start to happen.”

The fear that followed was immediate and intense. I panicked. I left the mirror and went to my wife. She was sleeping. I woke her up and begged her to hold me.

“Please hold me. I’m so scared right now. I just need to feel your touch.”

She let me curl up into her arms, and I told her over and over how much I loved her. I asked if she still found me attractive. I thanked her again and again. I needed something real to anchor me, but it did not hold.

That is when language itself began to collapse.

My wife later told me I started speaking gibberish, complete nonsense. Words lost meaning. My mind was moving so fast it was like it was overheating. The processing felt too intense, like a computer short-circuiting from trying to handle too much data.

I got up and started pacing.

That is when the doppelgänger appeared.

He had a knife. One from our kitchen.

And he was going to hurt my children.

I lost control, slamming myself to the ground in a desperate attempt to stop what was happening. I crawled back to the bathroom, pleading with my wife to call the cops. I was trying to throw up. She stayed calm somehow and told me to lay against the wall by the bed and not to move.

I listened.

That is when I fell.

Not physically, but internally.

It was like descending into a well. I was suddenly far below the surface of reality. The room I had just been in, I could still see it, but it was 20 to 30 feet above me. I was in the dark, at the bottom, laying flat on my back, completely detached from the world.

I remember thinking: I have broken my mind. I am never coming back. My wife is going to have to institutionalize me.

It felt like I was down there forever.

But eventually, somehow, I floated back up to the surface. And when I arrived, everything was normal again.

But I was not the same.

That was the trip that taught me terror could live side-by-side with transcendence. That love could be felt physically when my wife held me, and that language, something we take for granted every day, could slip away like water through fingers.

The veil had been torn.

And there was no going back.

THE FRACTALS

TRIP 3

This was a 5-gram trip, a return to the experience, but not nearly as intense.

Still, it had its own message.

Everyone had gone to sleep. That is always when it happens.

I felt the familiar edge of terror creeping in, so I went downstairs, turned on all the lights, and tried to calm the atmosphere. I put on *Bob's Burgers*, hoping for something light. But there was a moment when the characters looked directly at the screen, and it felt like they were staring at me. Not just for a second, but for what felt like forever.

I panicked.

I changed the show to *Futurama* to break the spell. Slowly, I started to settle.

Then I sat on the couch with all the lights still on and closed my eyes.

That is when the fractals came.

They spiraled toward my face, one after another, endlessly. Vivid colors, geometric shapes, radiant patterns, spinning, weaving, folding in and out of themselves like living stained glass. They kept getting brighter and brighter until everything faded into euphoria.

Ten minutes of pure bliss.

No thoughts.

No body.

Just perfect, radiant stillness.

Then it ended.

This trip did not tear me open the way the others had. It did not drag me to the edge of death or unravel the architecture of reality. What it did was remind me that beauty was part of the story too.

Not all revelation arrives through terror.

Not all truth has to wound before it teaches.

Some of it arrives in light.

Some of it arrives in pattern.

Some of it arrives as a brief, wordless reminder that awe is not only something to survive, but something to receive.

THE DESCENT

Once the boundary is crossed, the direction isn't upward.

It's inward.

Deeper than expected.

Further than comfortable.

This is where most of the language people use starts to fail. Not because nothing is happening, but because what's happening doesn't organize itself in a way that translates easily.

There are emotional intensities. Visual distortions. Shifts in identity.

But those are surface descriptions.

What actually defines this phase is loss of certainty.

The assumptions you rely on—about yourself, about time, about reality itself—stop behaving the way they normally do.

And without those anchors, you don't rise.

You descend.

Not into something external, but into layers that were always there but never accessible under normal conditions.

This isn't a place of control.

It's a place of exposure.

THE MIRROR WITHOUT FEAR

TRIP 27

It had been five and a half months since I last stepped into the mushroom space. And even though I've made this journey 26 times before, the nerves always return. Not hesitation—just respect. The kind that settles in your chest before any sacred ritual. I knew what this could become. I remembered the spirals, the terror, the sheer unraveling of the self. But this time, something in me felt ready. Not just prepared for the unknown, but at peace with it.

As I got closer to the moment, I went through the ritual I didn't even realize had become sacred to me: I shaved my body and face, took a long hot shower, and dressed in clean, comfortable clothes. I didn't do this for aesthetic or vanity. I did it because something deep inside me knew how to prepare. The way one might dress for ceremony, or sweep the temple floor before stepping inside.

Then came the chocolate bar—5 grams. My standard.

The same dose I've taken so many times before. The same weight that once shattered me, that once brought me to my knees in awe, terror, love. But this time, something subtle was different. I wasn't looking for death. I wasn't looking for ego annihilation. I just wanted to listen.

After I ate, I waited.

The familiar queasiness came on—a soft flutter in my stomach. Nothing overwhelming, just a signal that the shift was beginning. The colors around me deepened. The air grew a little more alive. But the intensity didn't rise like a crashing wave this time. It arrived like a breeze.

And then came the mirror.

It had become tradition now—staring deeply into my own pupils at the peak. In past trips, this moment had unspooled me. I had watched my face morph into decay, into doppelgängers, into shadows of everything I feared I could be. It had once nearly broken me.

But this time...

I saw myself. Just me. No distortion. No terror. No unraveling. Just the man I've become.

I looked into my eyes and felt a deep, grounded truth: You don't have to fear yourself anymore.

That sentence echoed in me like a mantra. Not something the mushrooms whispered—something I knew.

And in that knowing, there was joy. Not ecstatic euphoria or mystical revelation. Just peace. A clean, quiet happiness. A sense that all the work I've done—every chapter of Project Aeon, every brutal trip, every tear shed in silence—had brought me here. To this mirror. To this moment.

At some point, I stepped outside with my daughters. We played basketball. The colors were vivid. My children looked impossibly innocent. It felt like the world was washed clean of harshness, but not stripped of its truth.

Later, when I closed my eyes, the visions came—not in chaos, but in beauty. I saw patterns that echoed sacred geometry. I saw something like the Flower of Life, and at the center, what looked like a rose blooming into eternity—petals spiraling outward like a tunnel made of light and form.

Everything was gentle. Everything made sense.

Time didn't distort this trip. I was still here, still grounded. Still myself. Just... expanded.

This was the first trip where I felt fully able to reflect in real-time. Normally, it takes me a day or more to integrate. But this time, I was writing during the comedown. Not because I forced it—but because it came naturally. The mushrooms didn't dismantle me. They reminded me of who I am.

This was not ego death.

This was ego alignment.

And when I sat on the couch that night, beside my sleeping wife, the thought that kept rising in me was simple:

I am exactly where I'm supposed to be.

WHEN THE SHADOW RETURNED

TRIP 30

I knew it before I saw anything.

It began the same way it did the last time I took ten grams: a tightening in the chest, a creeping sense of unease. My heartbeat started rising. My thoughts turned dense and primal, like they were being pulled into a gravity I couldn't explain. I got up and started pacing, just like before—what I've come to call a kind of mushroom panic attack. It felt like *déjà vu*. The house was still. Everyone was asleep. I was alone again, and it was coming.

The shadow had returned.

Not as a figure. Not this time. But as a presence—a mood, a weight, a whisper in the dark part of the psyche. The last time this happened, I curled up beside my wife, terrified. I clung to her like she was the only thing keeping me tethered to reality. And eventually, the fear won. I lost language, I lost orientation. I spiraled into a descent that felt like death and rebirth—because it was.

But this time, I remembered.

I remembered the trip after that one—the one where I had discovered the meditative state. The place where I had watched instead of fought. And for some reason, in the middle of that pacing, a new voice cut through:

“Don't run. Lay down. Close your eyes. Let it come.”

So I went back upstairs. I laid on the couch. I closed my eyes. And I let it begin.

At first, the imagery was dark. I can't even describe what I saw—it wasn't “things,” it was just... darkness that moved. Darkness with intention. But I didn't fight it. I didn't try to label it or outthink it. I watched. I breathed. I let it wash over me.

Then something shifted.

The darkness softened. The mood changed. The shapes became more fluid, more abstract—lava-lamp-like forms flowing and connecting, separating and reforming. The color palette shifted from greys and deep purples to neutral tans, soft oranges, then warm golds. It was like watching the storm pass in real time. And with it, my body changed too. My heartbeat slowed. The pressure in my chest lifted. The fear dissolved into a quiet kind of awe.

I felt like I had just passed a test—not from the mushrooms, not from the universe, but from myself.

This time, I answered differently.

And here's what makes it even stranger:

Nothing happened for five hours after I took the dose. It was as if the mushrooms had stalled—waiting. Waiting for the right moment. Then I took a hot shower, something I've done before in other trips. And that's when it all hit—like a wave that had been building silently offshore. The warmth of the water seemed to flip some kind of internal switch. It wasn't subtle either. It went from nothing to everything. Almost instantly.

It's not the first time that's happened, either. Even with smaller trips—five grams or so—I've noticed that hot showers seem to amplify the experience, as if heat somehow thins the membrane between consciousness and whatever realm the mushrooms unveil. But this was the most extreme example yet. It's like the shower didn't just intensify the trip. It triggered it.

I've come to wonder if the heat draws blood to the surface, accelerating absorption. Or if, more symbolically, it simulates something primal—like a womb or a sweat lodge, where purification begins in heat before revelation arrives.

All I know is: the moment I stepped out of that shower, the storm rolled in. But this time, I was ready.

Closing Reflection

There's a difference between learning something and integrating it. I had already seen what the shadow looked like. I had already felt what it could do. But this time, I responded with knowledge instead of fear. I didn't need to curl up with my wife to be okay. I didn't need to escape. I chose to go inward. I remembered the calm I had once found in the eye of another storm, and I went there.

The mushrooms didn't go easier on me this time. I went easier on myself.

And for the first time, I saw what happens when I don't fight the fire—

I become the stillness inside of it.

THE WAVE

THERE'S A MOMENT RIGHT after the dose goes down—when the taste is gone, when the body is still calm, but the mind knows what's coming. That moment is like standing at the edge of a cliff with no wind, no noise, just the certainty that you've already jumped.

It's the realization: there's no way out but through.

Every time I take five grams or more, there's this stillness that hits me right before the storm. I don't panic. I don't flinch. I just know. It's about to get real. And whatever comes next, I've already agreed to it. That's what makes it so powerful. You don't bargain with it. You don't get to pause or rewind or lower the intensity. You surrender, completely. And you ride the wave.

The come-up is its own kind of initiation. That moment when you know your ego's last grip is slipping. The air shifts. The skin hums. The world tilts just slightly. And you feel the gate open—not outside you, but inside. The door to the depths.

That's not fear—it's reverence. You've stepped into the temple of your own psyche, and whatever gods are waiting there, they've already seen through you.

And the wild part is: it always works out. Not because it's safe, but because it's true. These experiences aren't about pleasure or comfort. They're about honesty. About meeting yourself without armor. About being cracked open by something ancient and sacred and terrifying—and realizing you're still here.

Every trip, I've come back carrying something new. Not a trophy. Not an answer. But a piece of myself I hadn't met before. And I think that's the whole point.

The wave doesn't destroy you. It reveals you. And if you're willing to ride it—you come back changed. Not cleaner. Not safer. But truer.

Author's Reflection – April 2026

This chapter carries the voice of an earlier Aeon. I left it intact because that is what the experience felt like from the inside: bold, sacred, terrifying, and unavoidable. But this is not instruction. It is not encouragement to chase intensity or copy the path. It is the record of a season when high-dose experiences taught me surrender, reverence, fear, and humility. The wave mattered. But it was never the destination. The real work was learning how to return from it.

THE INTEGRATION

The experience itself is only part of the process.

What matters is what remains after it ends.

Integration isn't about holding onto the intensity. It's not about trying to recreate the experience or extend it beyond its natural duration.

It's about translation.

Taking something that didn't arrive in language
and slowly finding a way to bring it into one.

This phase is quieter than the experience itself.

Less dramatic. More deliberate.

You begin to sort what was meaningful from what was noise. You revisit moments, not to relive them, but to understand them. You test what you felt against how you live.

Most importantly, you don't assume that everything you experienced was true.

You work through it. Carefully.

Because without integration, the experience remains isolated.

And isolated insight doesn't change anything.

THE EDGE WAS THE TEACHER

I DIDN'T START THIS journey with reverence.

I started it with raw curiosity—the kind that doesn't ask for permission or wait for guidance. The kind that charges headfirst into the unknown just to see what's on the other side.

I've said before that my fascination with altered states goes way back. Even as a kid, I wanted to understand things most people never even stopped to question. I was drawn to anything that hinted at another layer of reality—mysticism, aliens, other realms, hidden truths. I didn't know the words for it at the time, but I was already searching.

And when I got older, that search became physical.

That's when I started using substances.

Not because I was in pain—not at first—but because I needed to know. I needed to know what else was out there. What else was in here.

But I didn't start slow or safe. I didn't ease in through meditation or microdosing. I jumped. I pushed things to the extreme. I took doses that would make most people back off. And the truth is, I didn't always care if I got hurt. Not because I wanted to die—but because I was obsessed with finding the edge.

Eight ecstasy pills in one night. Lines of cocaine that made my eyes roll back into my head until I couldn't see. A ridiculous dose of salvia just to find out what it would do. Mushrooms in high quantities the moment I had access to them after the Marine Corps.

I wasn't careful. I wasn't wise. I just had to know. And looking back, I don't say that with pride. But I also don't say it with regret. Because that version of me—the reckless one—wasn't suicidal. He was just desperate to make sense of the world. He didn't want to numb himself. He wanted to wake up, even if it meant walking through fire to do it.

There was no map. No guide. No one to tell me how to do this the “right” way. So I did it my way. And it nearly broke me more than once. But somehow, I kept surviving. And eventually, I stopped chasing the edge and started listening to what it had been trying to teach me all along. That's when the reverence came in. That's when I slowed

down. That's when I started working with these experiences instead of just trying to conquer them.

The second 10 gram dose psilocybin trip changed everything. That was the one that split me open. That wasn't about pleasure or highness. That was initiation. That was confrontation. That was death and rebirth. And I didn't approach it with recklessness. I approached it with intention. With discipline. With respect.

That was the turning point. Because I realized something: the edge isn't just there to be touched. It's there to be understood. It's not a thrill—it's a threshold. And only when I treated it like one did the real lessons begin.

So no—I didn't start this journey with reverence. But I earned it. I earned it through fire, through mistakes, through pushing too far and having to crawl my way back. And that's why I trust what I've built now.

Not because I followed the rules. But because I broke them. And then chose to build something sacred out of what I found on the other side.

Author's Reflection – April 2026

One thing I want to clarify here is that the shift I'm describing in this chapter was not yet a shift in dosage.

At this stage, I was still using high doses. I had not yet moved into the later phase where the intensity itself began to come down. That came later.

What changed first was my posture toward the experience.

Before, a lot of my relationship to altered states had been driven by raw curiosity, extremity, and a need to push until I found the edge. After the second 10-gram trip, that started changing. I was still going deep, but I was no longer entering those spaces with the same spirit. I was beginning to approach them with more intention, more caution, and more respect for what they were capable of doing.

That distinction matters. The reverence came before the reduction. The seriousness came before the refinement.

So when this chapter says the edge stopped being something to conquer and became something to understand, that is the real turning point it is trying to describe. Not that the experiences became smaller right away, but that my relationship to them stopped being careless in the same way.

I left the chapter as it was because it captures a real realization from that period. But this clarification helps place it more accurately in the larger arc.

At this point, I was still going deep.

I was just no longer going in blind.

THE QUIET ONES WERE TEACHING ME TOO

WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT psychedelics, they often focus on the most intense experiences—the ego deaths, the cosmic visions, the terrifying descents into madness. I’ve had those. I’ve lived through the 10-gram trips that ripped me apart and rebuilt me in the same breath. I’ve met doppelgängers. I’ve forgotten language. I’ve felt the veil tear down the center and stood face-to-face with terror I didn’t know a mind could hold. And because of that, I started measuring everything else against them.

For a long time, I thought those were the only trips that really mattered—the only ones worth remembering. The 5-gram journeys I had in between? I wrote them off. Not meaningless, but not life-altering either. They didn’t bring the kind of revelations I was used to cataloging. They didn’t deliver visions that forced me to my knees. Or so I thought. But lately, something shifted.

I started thinking back on those 5-gram experiences—the “quiet” ones. The ones I didn’t write about. The ones I didn’t bring here. And I realized something I hadn’t seen before:

They were showing me things. I just wasn’t looking. Maybe it’s because the 10-gram trips taught me to expect a certain level of intensity. Maybe it’s because I thought “profound” meant “overwhelming.” But the truth is, those other trips were speaking to me too. Not in screams—but in symbols. In moments. In sensations I didn’t yet have the language to honor.

Every time I closed my eyes during those trips, I saw something.

Fractals. Endless spiraling patterns. Sometimes images. Sometimes entire scenes. At times, terrifying ones—shadows, figures, visions that felt ripped from a painting by H.R. Giger. And other times, I saw myself as female. Not in body, but in essence. My consciousness would shift. The way I felt inside myself would change. I wouldn’t question it. I wouldn’t resist. I’d just be—fluid, open, soft.

I never questioned these things. I never brought them here. Not because I was afraid—but because I didn’t think they mattered. But now I know better.

These weren’t just side effects of a “light” trip. These were teachings. These were initiations. These were real.

And now that I’ve brought them to the surface, I can finally see what they were always trying to show me: that not every lesson needs to be shouted. Some come in

silence. Some come in symmetry. Some come in the strange, unexplainable ways your soul shifts when your eyes are closed and the rest of the world disappears.

The profound isn't always violent. Sometimes, it's just quiet enough to miss. And I'm done missing it.

Now I honor every trip—not just the ones that destroyed me. Because even the “lesser” journeys weren't lesser. They were just preparing me to listen with more subtle ears. And the more I've listened, the more I've seen: The visions were always there.

I just hadn't looked closely enough to recognize them.

Not until now.

THE UNPROVABLE ENCOUNTER

A REFLECTION BORN FROM the Parallels Between Psychedelic Experience and Carl Sagan's Contact

When I watched *Contact*, something about the story unsettled me—in the best kind of way. The main character, Dr. Ellie Arroway, has an experience that defies explanation. She's gone only a few seconds in the eyes of the world, but to her, it feels like she's lived through something vast and cosmic. She meets intelligent beings. She travels impossible distances. She sees something that transforms her at the deepest level of her being—and yet, when she returns, there's no proof. Just static. Just blankness. Just her word.

I know that feeling.

When I took salvia, time shattered. Five minutes on the clock held the weight of a lifetime. I remember slipping out of the ordinary world and into something utterly alien, yet familiar. I remember being pulled apart and shown something that could never be fully described, only felt. And just like Ellie, when I came back... I couldn't prove any of it. I couldn't even explain it. Not fully. Not in a way that would make sense to anyone who hadn't been there.

But that didn't make it any less real.

That's the thing no one tells you about altered states: they're not fantasies. They're not lies your brain tells you for fun. They're encounters. They're visits to other dimensions of the psyche—maybe even other dimensions of reality itself. They might not leave behind photographs or recordings, but they leave something deeper: transformation.

When Ellie returns from her journey, she faces a skeptical world. They tell her it was just a hallucination, just a malfunction. But she knows better. She carries the truth not in her hands—but in her being.

I've walked that path.

Each of my psychedelic trips has become a thread in the larger tapestry of Project Aeon—not because I can prove them, but because they changed me. They stripped away parts of the self I didn't know I was clinging to. They showed me the shadow. The Self. The anima. They didn't do this with clarity or instruction manuals—they did it with symbols, sensations, terror, and silence.

What I do here in this space with you is my way of giving shape to what can't be captured. Just like Ellie sitting before a congressional hearing trying to explain something beyond language, I come here to translate what was never meant to be spoken. And maybe that's the real purpose of these reflections—not to convince anyone else, but to help me carry the truth I encountered... and make peace with its mystery.

Because some things are too real to be proven.

They were never meant to be.

They were only meant to be lived.

THE LAST FULL VISION

TRIP 38

I knew something was different before it became intense.

I took ten grams all at once, the same way I had on other occasions. The onset came quickly, and the open-eyed visuals escalated hard and fast. The ceiling began to crawl, as if it were alive. The walls softened and melted downward into the floor. Colors intensified past saturation—electric, vivid, almost sharp, like they could cut. It was overwhelming, but not frightening. I stayed calm. By that point, I knew how to ride the wave.

Eventually the visual field became too busy to hold. My attention fractured. When that threshold hit, I did what I've learned to do when the experience starts to push past coherence: I changed environments. I went into the bathroom and turned on the shower.

I stepped under the hot water, closed my eyes, and put my head beneath the stream. The heat and the sound steadied everything. My intention wasn't to escape the trip—just to let it reorganize.

That's when it happened.

With my eyes closed, my entire field of vision turned completely white. Not brightness behind eyelids. Not light leaking in. Just white—uniform, featureless, total. It felt internal, like the visual system itself had been wiped clean.

After a few seconds, structures began to emerge within the white field. Blue and red lines branched outward, crawling across my vision like a vascular network. It felt biological. Anatomical. As if I were seeing something beneath the surface—inside my body, or inside the machinery of perception itself.

That shifted again.

A tunnel opened at the center of the field. From it emerged three-dimensional infinity symbols, hyper-real and precise, pulsing outward one after another. Each loop was lined with eyes. They kept coming—endless, expanding, filling the entire visual space. The imagery was overwhelming in scale but oddly peaceful. There was no urgency in it. No demand. Just motion, repetition, and presence.

After a few minutes, it stopped.

The visuals faded cleanly. I opened my eyes, stepped out of the shower, and the world returned to normal. No distortion. No lingering intensity. Just a calm afterglow—clear-headed, grounded, quietly expansive.

There was no message. No revelation. No sense of being shown something I needed to carry forward. It felt more like a final, vivid demonstration—an offering of pure vision without instruction. As if the mushrooms were saying: This is what this can look like. You already know the rest.

That was the last time psilocybin produced sustained, high-intensity visual phenomena for me.

Closing Reflection

I didn't stop taking mushrooms after this. I took ten grams again, once or twice more. The doses worked, but they didn't open anything new. The territory was familiar. The visions didn't deepen. Nothing unfolded that hadn't already been seen.

So I adjusted. For a while I started moving towards smaller doses—two and a half to five grams—not to push boundaries, but to sit with them. Later, even that began to give way to quieter methods: meditation, breathwork, reflection, and ordinary integration.

That last full vision wasn't an ending. It was a confirmation. Nothing more was required.

BEFORE THE PHILOSOPHY BEGINS

This section comes from an earlier phase of my spiritual life, when I was thinking more directly about religion, metaphysics, symbolism, and what I believed reality might be.

The chapters that follow were written while I was still close to the disruptive experiences that began Project Aeon. I was trying to understand what had happened, where it belonged, what religion had given me, what it had distorted, and what kind of spiritual language could honestly hold what I had seen and felt.

Some of what appears here still feels true to me. Some of it feels incomplete. Some of it I would say differently now, with more caution, humility, and less certainty. But I have kept the section because it belongs to the record.

These chapters show an important phase of the work: the moment when experience started becoming interpretation, and when mystery first tried to organize itself into language.

I do not see that as a mistake. I see it as part of the path.

What changed over time is not that spirituality became less important. It became more important. But I became less interested in turning mystery into fixed statements and more interested in staying in honest relationship with it through attention, discernment, humility, and direct experience.

So this section should not be read as doctrine or final metaphysics. It should be read as early spiritual architecture: an honest attempt to understand what I had entered.

The relationship came first. The naming came after. And over time, I learned that the relationship matters more.

THE PHILOSOPHY

After enough repetition, patterns begin to form.

Not just within a single experience, but across many.

Certain structures appear consistently. Certain states return. Certain observations don't depend on dose, mood, or setting.

That's where philosophy begins.

Not as belief, but as recognition.

You start to see that what you're observing isn't random. There are underlying consistencies that suggest structure, even if that structure isn't fully understood.

This is where interpretation starts—but carefully.

Because the goal isn't to explain everything.

It's to identify what can be said with some level of stability.

Philosophy, in this context, isn't about conclusions.

It's about organizing repeated observation into something that can be examined without distorting it.

THE QUESTION I ASKED AS A BOY

I DO NOT REMEMBER the sermon. I do not remember the scripture. I only remember the question.

I was still a child, young enough to believe without much resistance, but old enough to start seeing the cracks. I had been going to Christian school, absorbing the Bible stories, chapel songs, and lessons about heaven and hell. Then one day, a thought arrived:

“What happens to someone who has never heard of Jesus?”

I was not asking to be clever. I was not trying to poke holes in the faith. I was asking because I cared. I imagined someone born in a faraway place, raised with a different belief, doing their best to be kind, love their family, and live with integrity, and I was being told they would go to hell.

Even as a little boy, I knew something was wrong with that.

Why would a loving God reject someone for being born in the wrong place?

No one gave me an answer that felt right. I got verses. I got rationalizations. I got warnings not to question. But deep down, I had already begun to trust the question more than the answers.

That was the first time I felt the pull away from doctrine and toward something deeper. Not away from God, but away from the idea that love could be that small, conditional, or tribal. Even then, I did not reject the sacred. I rejected the idea that the sacred belonged to only one group.

I see now that this was the beginning of leaving religion. Not because I stopped believing in something greater, but because I started believing in something wider. Something that did not draw hard lines around who gets in and who gets left out.

All these years later, I have finally arrived at the answer I could not put into words back then: all paths, when walked in truth, lead toward the same place. We do not need permission to belong to what we are already part of.

That boy who asked the question is still here.

Only now, he does not just ask it.

He walks the answer.

THE SOURCE WITHIN

I GREW UP SURROUNDED by Christianity. And for a while, I didn't just believe in it—I loved it. As a young boy, I was drawn to the stories, the idea of goodness, and the feeling that something greater was guiding everything. I went to Christian school from kindergarten through 2nd grade, and again in 7th and 8th. Bible class was my favorite subject. I wanted to be a preacher. Not because I wanted power—but because I wanted to speak truth.

Even then, something in me was reaching toward meaning.

But that faith began to fracture when I was thirteen. My school—one soaked in rigid doctrine and moral superiority—started showing me the uglier side of religion. Kids were pressured to break their rock CDs “for God.” There were lectures wrapped in shame, lessons delivered with judgment, and an atmosphere that felt more like control than compassion.

I started to see the cracks. Not in the idea of goodness—but in the institution built around it.

And that's when I turned away.

Not from the idea of something greater—but from organized religion itself. I couldn't live under a system that didn't make room for deeper questions. I couldn't follow a set of rules that didn't answer the ache I felt inside. So I let it go. Quietly. Internally. And I began the long journey of finding my own path.

Years later, after the Marine Corps, after my brother's suicide, after my long battle with alcoholism—my relationship with spirituality transformed again. It wasn't about rules. It wasn't about sin. It became about experience, presence, and searching through the unknown.

The shift came with psilocybin.

The trip that broke me—the one where I looked into the mirror and saw the death I was becoming—didn't give me religion. It gave me truth. It showed me there is something deeper than what we see. Something beyond doctrine but not absent of meaning. That night, I didn't speak to a god. I spoke to the part of me that still wanted to live. And that was sacred. Since then, I've practiced mindfulness, meditation, self-inquiry, and an ongoing spiritual dialogue that doesn't rely on any preacher to validate it.

What I believe in now is something I call the Source. It's not a conscious god in the sky. It doesn't pass judgment. It doesn't whisper commands. It's a current. A pulse. A rhythm that moves through everything. And when we die, I believe we return to it—like water returning to the ocean.

The Source isn't something I worship.

It's something I feel.

It doesn't give me laws to follow. It gives me presence. It doesn't demand prayer. It invites stillness. It's not a father figure—it's the backdrop of all life. And in the silence of my most honest moments, I feel closer to it than I ever did in church.

I don't judge those who believe. I understand why religion exists. For some, it brings peace. But for me, spirituality is not about obedience. It's about alignment. It's not about kneeling—it's about rising through your failures and finding something higher in yourself.

Project Aeon—the journey I'm on now—is my church.

Not a building. Not a book.

But a living, breathing ritual of self-transformation.

I've built my own record out of pain, healing, sacrifice, and growth. I've met what I can only describe as the divine—but not in robes or clouds or wrath. I've met it in love. In silence. In the space between thoughts. In the eyes of my wife. In the stillness after surrender.

If there is anything divine in this life, I believe it lives within us. Not above. Not beyond. But here. Beneath the noise. Beneath the fear. Beneath the need to be certain.

This isn't about salvation. It's about becoming. And that, to me, is the most spiritual thing there is.

Author's Reflection — April 2026

When I first wrote about the Source, I was trying to give language to something I felt, not something I could prove. That distinction matters.

I do not claim to know what the Source is. I do not claim to know what happens after death. I do not believe I was given secret knowledge about God, consciousness, the soul, or the universe. I have had experiences that changed me deeply, but an experience changing me does not make my interpretation of it final.

The Source remains in this book because it names a possibility I still feel drawn to.

For me, the Source is not doctrine. It is not certainty. It is not a claim that I know the hidden structure of reality. It is the word I use for the possibility that existence may have a deeper unity beneath it, something quiet, connective, and sacred that human language can only point toward. But I do not know. And I am comfortable saying that.

I do not know what happens after death. Maybe consciousness continues. Maybe it doesn't. Maybe there is return, reunion, silence, dissolution, or something beyond every image we use. I will find out when I get there.

What I do know is how I want to live while I am here. If there is something after death, I hope the way I loved matters. If there is nothing after death, then the way I loved matters even more.

That is where I stand now: open, reverent, uncertain, and unwilling to turn mystery into doctrine.

So I leave the word Source in place.

Not because I know. Because I wonder.

THE MYTH OF CALM

THERE IS A STORY in the Bible that has always stayed with me, though not for the reason most people might expect.

It is the moment Jesus enters the temple and finds it overrun with greed and corruption. Instead of calmly offering wisdom or turning the other cheek, he flips tables. He drives people out. He makes a scene. It is one of the few moments in scripture where even the most sacred figure in the story rages.

I have been thinking about that lately, especially after something small frustrated me the other day. I was alone. But in that moment, I felt the old spark of anger. It came and went quickly, but just as it passed, a thought moved through me:

If you are so spiritual, why are you still getting angry?

I did not believe it, but I recognized the voice. It is the same idea the world repeats constantly: that real transformation must look like perfect peace, that spiritual growth means constant calm, and that anger means failure.

But that is wrong.

I know it is wrong because I have done the work. I have walked through fire, reflected, unraveled, healed, rebuilt, and still, I feel. That is not failure. That is proof I am alive.

Anger is not automatically a sign of brokenness. It is part of being human. What matters is not whether emotion rises, but what happens when it does.

The anger I felt that day did not define me. It did not drag me down. It rose, moved through me, and left without becoming shame, suppression, or a spiral. In that, I could see growth. Not because I never felt anger, but because anger no longer owned me.

The real danger is not feeling emotion. It is denying it. Pretending it does not exist. Trapping yourself inside an idea of spiritual perfection that no human being was meant to carry.

We have been sold a lie that spiritual people do not get mad, that awakened people do not feel deep, eruptive emotions. But sacred action does not always come from silence and serenity. Sometimes it comes from righteous anger, defiance, and the refusal to tolerate injustice or illusion.

So I am not ashamed of the spark I felt.

I do not need to worship it, and I do not need to silence it.

Peace does not mean the absence of storms. It means learning how to move through them without losing yourself.

And sometimes, even the most centered soul needs to flip a table or two.

THE DANGER OF LITERALISM

THERE WAS A TIME when I didn't question religion. Like most kids, I took what I was told at face value. Heaven was up. Hell was down. God was watching. Satan was tempting. The Bible was fact.

But as I got older, I started paying closer attention. And once I started digging deeper into the history of religion—particularly Christianity—something became clear:

The version we're taught is often the cleanest, most culturally acceptable version of something far more complex. And the more I studied, the more I realized how many contradictions, historical redactions, and reinterpretations had been layered over the centuries. I learned that the figure of Satan as most people know him barely exists in the Bible at all—and that the name "Lucifer" was mistranslated, taken out of a poetic context that never even referred to the devil in the first place. I learned that the hierarchy of demons, the elaborate vision of Hell, and much of what people fear or revere in religious lore was shaped by art, folklore, politics, and power.

And it led me to a conclusion I hadn't expected:

If you're going to take the Bible literally, you're going to run into walls. You'll have to pick one version of God and ignore the contradictions. You'll have to accept two different Testaments that seem, in many ways, to be at odds. You'll have to believe in a devil that history suggests was never even part of the original design.

But if you read it symbolically—as a layered collection of stories, moral teachings, metaphors, and cultural reflections—then something beautiful happens.

You stop worshipping the characters and start listening to the message.

You stop defending the text and start learning from it.

And you realize that maybe Jesus was never meant to be used as a dividing line between the "saved" and the "damned." Maybe he was just one of many teachers across history who pointed toward a way of living that was gentler, wiser, more loving, and more present.

But the moment people made it literal, they made it exclusive.

And the moment they made it exclusive, they made it a weapon.

That's what turns churches into places of judgment instead of compassion. That's what leads people to preach about love and then cast out others because of race, sexuality, or belief. That's what makes someone think that sitting in a pew and nodding

along to a sermon makes them closer to the divine than someone seeking connection through quiet reflection or deep conversation.

And this is why I study religion—not to mock it, not to dismantle it, but to understand how it evolved. And to see how the sacred is still buried beneath the layers. I believe there’s wisdom in those old stories. I believe Jesus had something to say worth hearing. I just don’t believe he wanted to be idolized, mythologized, and then used as a banner to divide people from one another.

People cling to the literal because it’s simple.

But meaning doesn’t live in simplicity.

It lives in nuance. In context. In being willing to admit what we don’t know, so we can finally start exploring what we might.

That’s why I’m not religious, but I am spiritual. That’s why I don’t believe in the Bible as a rulebook—but I do believe there’s truth in its pages.

You just have to stop trying to prove it and start trying to understand it.

And when you do, you realize something else:

Sacredness isn’t about being right.

It’s about being honest. About being open. About learning how to walk through this life without pretending that complexity doesn’t exist.

I AM ALL RELIGIONS AND NONE

THE FURTHER I'VE WALKED my own spiritual path, the more I've come to a simple realization: All true spiritual paths lead to the same destination—and once you reach it, you're no longer walking someone else's trail. You become the mountain itself.

When you stop outsourcing your connection to something sacred—when you stop following doctrine out of fear or pressure—and instead begin to seek with sincerity, silence, and lived truth, you stop belonging to any one religion. But that doesn't mean you're outside of them. It means you're inside all of them at once. Not in belief. In essence.

Because before they were broken apart into systems, before they were twisted into hierarchies and ceremonies and debates over who's right, each religion started as the same thing: A direct experience of the sacred. A moment of union with the formless. A silence so alive it didn't need translation.

Taoism called it the Way. Buddhism called it No-Self. Gnosticism called it the Divine Spark. Vedanta called it the Self. Mystic Christianity called it the Kingdom Within. And all of them pointed to this: That the divine is not above you. Not beyond you. Not outside you. It is you—beneath all your roles, your stories, your fears. And it reveals itself the moment you stop needing to name it.

So no—I don't belong to a religion. But I carry the heart of every one of them. I've met the Tao in my stillness. I've met the Buddha in my silence. I've met Sophia in my surrender. I've met Christ in the moment I chose love instead of fear.

By walking my own path, I've stepped onto every path that was ever real. And I've come to understand why awakened beings never argued about who was right: Because once you touch the truth, you don't need to defend it. You just become it.

I am all religions. And none. Because I have no use for names when I've already become the fire they were all pointing toward.

Author's Reflection - April 2026

When I wrote this chapter, I was much earlier in my spiritual journey, and I can hear that clearly now. The conviction in it was real. The feeling behind it was real too. I had touched something deep enough that the boundaries between traditions felt thinner than I had ever been taught to believe. In that state, it was easy to mistake

spiritual intensity for arrival. Easy to mistake a powerful opening for a permanent awakening. I no longer see it that way.

What I experienced was not false, but my interpretation of it was still early. Over time, I've come to believe that there is no final awakening in the way people often imagine it. No permanent state where a person becomes complete, finished, or fully beyond the ordinary conditions of being human. We do not transcend humanity once and for all. We continue to work on ourselves. We continue to see more clearly, then lose clarity, then find it again in new forms.

Now, when I think about moments like the one that produced this chapter, I think of them as moments of good seeing. Moments where something becomes unusually clear. Moments where separation softens. Moments where a person sees farther than they normally do. But those moments are not permanent. They do not make someone finished. They do not free us from the work of being human.

I've kept this chapter as it was because it tells the truth about where I was at the time. It came from a real moment in the process. But if I were writing on this subject now, I would write with more caution, more humility, and a deeper respect for how easily the language of awakening can overstate what is really happening.

The experience mattered. The clarity was real. But it was not completion.

LET IT BE WHAT IT WILL BE

THERE'S A TREND IN the world—maybe there always has been—to make everything digestible. To take what's sacred, wild, or terrifying and trim it down until it fits neatly in the frame of what we're comfortable with. And nowhere is that more obvious than in how we talk about things that are supposed to be beyond us.

Take angels, for example.

The real descriptions—the ones from scripture, from ancient visions, from prophetic texts—are unsettling. They're made of wheels and fire and countless eyes. They speak in ways that don't resemble speech. They don't look like us. And they're not supposed to. They are otherworldly. They are meant to stop you in your tracks.

But we didn't want that. So we repackaged them. Put them in paintings with robes and halos and soft faces. Made them pretty. Made them polite. And in doing so, stripped them of their mystery.

The same thing happens in the psychedelic world.

People want mushrooms to be gentle, poetic, affirming. Or they want them to be spectacles—cosmic fireworks, alien encounters, proof of life beyond. They chase light shows and exaggerated stories because the culture has made it seem like that's what a “real trip” is supposed to look like. But the truth is... there is no “supposed to.”

When I take mushrooms, I don't expect anything. I don't go in searching for terror, and I don't expect peace either. I go in open. Because the sacred isn't always what you think it will be. Sometimes it's light. Sometimes it's darkness. Sometimes it's both—layered in metaphor, charged with something beyond explanation. And your job isn't to control it. Your job is to receive it.

Not all sacred moments need to be terrifying. Not all gentle ones need to be amplified into spectacle. Some things should stay wild. Some truths should remain untamed. That's what gives them their power. And if something truly does scare you? That doesn't mean it should be neutered or sanitized. That means it should be sat with. Witnessed. Felt fully.

Because there is no light without darkness. And there's no real growth without facing both.

The early depictions of angels—those raw, cryptic images—didn't scare me away when I was young. They pulled me in. They fascinated me. They made me want to

know more. And that same instinct is why I still sit with the unknown today. Why I still take mushrooms knowing full well they could show me something my mind may struggle to hold. Because I'm not here to pretty up the journey.

I'm here to be present with it.

You don't get to hand-pick the lessons. You don't get to keep only the light and mute the dark. You either show up for all of it, or you stay asleep.

So when people try to make the terrifying more palatable—or the sacred more Instagram-friendly—I turn away from that. I let things be what they are. If a trip is gentle, I honor it. If it's terrifying, I sit with it. Because I trust that whatever shows up... showed up for a reason.

The mystery was never meant to be made safe.

It was meant to be met with courage.

And that's how I take every step into the unknown—eyes open, heart steady, knowing full well I might see something beautiful... or something that shakes me.

Either way, I go in.

Because I didn't come here to be comfortable.

I came here to remember what it means to feel everything.

THE METHODS

Once patterns are recognized, the question becomes practical.

How do you approach this in a way that is repeatable, stable, and grounded?

This is where method develops.

Not as rigid protocol, but as refinement.

You begin to understand what influences the experience—set, setting, dosage, intention, physical state. You learn what increases clarity and what introduces distortion.

You also learn restraint.

Because not every experience needs to be pushed further. Not every boundary needs to be tested. There's a difference between exploration and escalation.

Method is what keeps this from becoming reckless.

It turns exposure into practice.

Not by controlling the experience, but by approaching it with enough awareness to reduce unnecessary risk and increase meaningful observation.

THE PATH WAS NEVER A MAP

PEOPLE ASSUME A LOT when they hear about high-dose psychedelic trips. They assume you were chasing a vision, following some mystic's guide, or trying to copy a blueprint from Terence McKenna, Ram Dass, or whoever else holds gravity in that world.

None of that was true for me.

I had never read a book on psychedelics. I did not know who Terence McKenna was. I had not heard of Jung, the anima, the shadow, or any archetypal language. There was no preparation, no plan, and no spiritual checklist.

I just had a question: What happens in there? And I wanted to see for myself.

The first time I took ten grams of mushrooms, it was not some bold spiritual statement or conscious attempt to obliterate myself. I took five grams, what is often called a heroic dose, and about five hours later, once the effects seemed like they had mostly subsided, I took another five grams to prolong the experience. What followed was powerful, deep, and emotional, but still within the bounds of what I could handle.

It did not terrify me. It did not shatter language. It did not dissolve my identity. It gave me clarity.

I saw my death, not in a theatrical or literal sense, but in a spiritual one. Something in me understood for the first time where my drinking could lead if I did not stop. That was when I made the choice to quit. Not because I was scared, but because I was ready.

That trip was powerful, but it was not overwhelming. I remained myself throughout it. It showed me a truth I needed, and I took that truth seriously. But it did not break me.

That happened the second time.

The second ten-gram trip followed the same sequence. I took five grams, waited several hours, and once the effects seemed to have leveled out, I took another five. But this time, the doses did not stack quietly. They collided.

It felt like both waves hit together, folding into one another and swallowing everything underneath. There was no gentle incline, no gradual climb, no time to prepare. Just immersion.

That was the night everything changed.

The doppelgänger appeared. Language shattered. I crawled across the floor trying to hold onto anything real. I fell into the well. And at the bottom, I thought I might never return.

That trip did not simply show me something. It undid me. It tore me from the fabric of ordinary reality and left me suspended in a place I had never visited before, a place I now respect with everything in me.

The way I trip was never sacred in the formal sense people often imagine. I did not light candles, chant, arrange ceremonial objects, or build a ritual from someone else's instructions. I followed the rhythm that had become natural to me. I would take the mushrooms, then about thirty minutes later shave my body because that was already part of my Friday routine. After that, I would take a hot shower to remove the hair, dry off, and shave my face. That simple sequence led me to the mirror. And on mushrooms, the mirror became something else.

I would look at myself, especially into my eyes, and more specifically into my pupils. There was no playlist. No ceremony. No performance. Just stillness, the mirror, and whatever the trip brought with it. I did not try to force the experience into a shape. I let it arrive, and I rode the wave.

The truth is, I have always learned this way. I do not usually begin by studying every philosophy first and then trying to experience what I read. I experience first, then go back later to find the language for what I saw.

That is how I found Jung. Not through a class or a podcast, but because the things I was seeing already existed in his Red Book, and I had seen them before I knew his name. I did not start by reading about the anima. I became her in trip states, again and again, before I knew what that meant. I did not read about the shadow first. I met him in a mirror, holding a knife, with the face of someone I almost recognized. I did not read the theories first. I lived the images. Then I found the language.

That has been the pattern across my life. I learn through contact, then reflection. Through experience, then naming. Through entering the thing, sometimes too deeply, and only afterward discovering that other people had already mapped parts of the terrain.

I was never trying to become a mystic. I was not trying to write a book. I was not trying to escape the world or teach it. I was not chasing an identity. I just wanted to know what was inside me.

And what I found was everything.

That is why this chapter matters. If someone reads Project Aeon and wonders whether it came from a grand design, an ancient method, or someone else's spiritual

voice in my head, the answer is no. This was not born from influence. It was born from curiosity.

That does not make it safer, cleaner, or more correct. It only makes it honest.

This is not a guide. It is not a model. It is not a system for someone else to copy. It is a record of how one life entered mystery, got overwhelmed by it, learned from it, revised itself around it, and slowly became more careful.

My journey worked for me because it was mine. So do not copy the shape of it. Do not borrow the danger just because the story sounds meaningful afterward. Do not mistake my path for permission or prescription.

The deeper invitation is not to repeat what I did. It is to notice what question is already alive in you, what doorway is already yours, what mystery has been waiting for your attention.

I walked because I had to know. And eventually, the path found me back.

THE UNCONSCIOUS RITUAL

IT DID NOT HAPPEN all at once. I did not set out to create a ritual. It just happened. At first, it was only something I did on the weekends. Because of bodybuilding, shaving my body had already become part of my routine. I liked staying clean, sculpted, and prepared. Afterward, I would take a long, hot shower. Nothing about that felt unusual at the time. It was just maintenance.

But looking back, I started to notice something strange. Every time I took a deep psilocybin trip, the pattern was the same. I had shaved. I had stood beneath hot water, letting the steam wrap around me until it felt like I was being softened for something larger than myself. Then I would look in the mirror. Not just at my face. At my eyes. Through them. It was as if something in me knew how to prepare before my conscious mind ever named it.

There was no instruction manual. No written sequence. No plan to initiate anything. But something deeper than intellect had taken over. Maybe that is what makes something a ritual. Not the steps themselves, but the way they summon a state. The way they open a door you did not know existed until you were already crossing it.

Over time, the rhythm became encoded in my body. Shaving. Heat. Mirror. Stillness. Descent. There is something ancient about removing hair. Stripping down. Becoming bare. Monks do it. Warriors have done it. Maybe it is symbolic. Maybe it is practical. But every time I did it, it felt like I was removing the outside world one layer at a time.

The hot shower became more than hygiene. It felt like cleansing. A quiet baptism. It softened the armor I wore in daily life and made me vulnerable again. Empty, in a way. Ready to encounter whatever was coming. Then came the mirror. That is where it always began. And in some way, where it always ended.

I do not remember the first time I truly stared at myself like that, but once it happened, I could not ignore it. I would lock eyes with myself for what felt like hours. My pupils, wide from the mushrooms, felt like tunnels into something older than memory. Sometimes I cried. Sometimes I laughed. Sometimes my face seemed to shift into gears, clockwork, strangers, symbols, or something beyond recognition. But no matter what I saw, I did not look away. I did not know it then, but the mirror had become my doorway.

There is a moment before the effects fully arrive when everything becomes quiet. You know it is too late to turn back. You have already swallowed the dose. There is no exit, only surrender. That moment always felt sacred to me.

Maybe the shaving, the heat, and the staring were my way of honoring that threshold. Not by design. Not by dogma. By instinct.

Real rituals are not always invented. Sometimes they unfold. They emerge under pressure, shaped by repetition, need, fear, reverence, and attention. They reveal their meaning only after you have lived them enough times to see the pattern.

This was not performance. It was not ceremony for show. It was me unknowingly preparing myself to be undone and remade inside the only temple I have ever fully trusted: my own mind.

I still do not know where the ritual came from. Maybe it was always there, waiting to be remembered. Maybe it was born from pain, curiosity, and the stubborn refusal to hand my transformation over to anyone else. Maybe it is simply what happens when a person keeps showing up honestly, even when the process becomes strange. But I know this. Every time I followed that rhythm, something responded.

Every time I stared through the mirror, something stared back. And even if I never take another trip again, I will carry that ritual with me. Not because I meant to create it. Because it became part of me.

FINDING MY OWN WAY IN

FOR A LONG TIME, I thought meditation was supposed to look a certain way. A person sits upright in silence. A timer runs. The breath is observed. Thoughts are noticed and released. There is a formal structure, a method, and a consistency that makes it recognizable as meditation.

I was intrigued by that world, and I tried it. I used guided meditation for a while and genuinely wanted it to become something I could rely on. I wanted it to stick. I wanted to be able to say, cleanly, that I had a meditation practice. But it never fully took root. Not because I thought it was useless or because I lacked interest. It just did not become mine.

For a while, I saw that as a failure. I thought maybe I had found something good and had not been disciplined enough to hold onto it in the right form. But over time, I started to understand something that matters far beyond meditation: sometimes failure is not failure. Sometimes it is adaptation. Sometimes a practice does not stay because the shape is wrong, not the need.

I still wanted what meditation seemed to offer: stillness, inwardness, breath, calm, and that subtle shift in awareness where the nervous system softens and the mind stops pressing so hard against everything. I just did not get there through the official doorway.

Instead, I started noticing something I had already built into my life. Several times a week, I would take hot Epsom salt soaks for fifteen to twenty minutes. I would submerge everything but my face, close my eyes, and begin with box breathing. Then, once the body started letting go, I would stop trying to control anything and settle into the heat and stillness.

I did not call it meditation. I still do not, at least not formally. But I knew what it was doing. It slowed my nervous system down. It gave me a place to be still. It softened the body and quieted the mind. It created a state close to meditation without requiring me to force myself into a structure that never fully fit.

That matters because I think a lot of people give up on useful things simply because they do not arrive in the approved shape. They try the formal version, it does not stick, and they assume the whole category is not for them. But sometimes what you need is real, and the form just has to be translated into your own life before it can stay.

That is what happened for me. The soaks stayed because they worked on more than one level. They were good for my mind, but they also felt good in my body. I liked the heat. I liked the comfort. I liked the feeling of hot water on my skin. I liked the way my whole system seemed to understand, without words, that it was allowed to come down for a while.

That enjoyment mattered. It made the practice livable. It made it sustainable. Over time, I stopped caring whether it looked enough like meditation for someone else to recognize it. The point was not to wear the label. The point was to find a doorway into the state itself.

That distinction changed the way I think about a lot of things. Not every useful practice enters your life in its official form. Not every meaningful method arrives with a name you immediately claim. Sometimes you do not adopt a discipline directly. You circle it from the side until it becomes something your life can actually hold. That is not weakness. That is not doing it wrong. It may simply be how real integration works.

I have seen that pattern in more than meditation. It has been true in writing, training, recovery, creativity, and almost every serious practice I have kept. I rarely adopt things in their purest outside form. I usually have to live with them, test them, reshape them, and let them become personal before they stay. That used to make me think I lacked discipline. Now I think it means I learn through embodiment. I do not need every practice to look official. I need it to become real.

So no, I do not formally say I have a meditation practice. What I have is a way of entering meditative states that grew naturally out of my own life: heat, water, breath, stillness, quiet, recovery, and a body slowly trusting itself enough to soften. That is enough. Maybe more than enough. Because the point was never to say I meditate. The point was to find a way of being still that my whole system could actually welcome. And I did.

Not by following the standard path exactly, but by paying attention long enough to discover my own. That, too, is practice. And maybe one of the most important things I have learned is this: when something truly matters, the answer is not always to force yourself harder.

Sometimes the answer is to listen closely enough to find the form that fits.

THE SUBTLE REALMS

Beyond the intensity, beyond the disruption, beyond even the patterns—there are quieter consistencies.

Things that don't announce themselves.

They don't overwhelm. They don't dominate the experience. They don't demand attention. But they remain.

Across sessions. Across doses. Across different internal states.

These are the details that are easiest to miss and hardest to describe.

Not because they're complex, but because they're subtle.

This is where observation becomes the most precise.

Where you stop looking for dramatic change and start noticing what doesn't change at all.

The edges of perception. The faint consistencies. The elements that remain stable regardless of everything else.

This arc doesn't try to explain those things.

It records them.

Because sometimes the most important part of an experience isn't what overwhelms you—it's what quietly refuses to disappear.

DREAMS

MY DREAMS HAVE ALWAYS had a strange hold on me. They have never felt like background noise. Sometimes they come in violently vivid forms, other times more quietly and indirectly, but they almost never feel pointless. I have had vivid dreams for as long as I can remember, even as a kid. In more recent years, especially after deepening my reflections, they seemed to intensify not only in imagery but in physical sensation. Sometimes the pain from the dream followed me into waking life. I know that is unusual, but it has happened to me since adolescence.

What follows are some of the dreams that stayed with me, not just because of what happened in them, but because of how real they felt.

Dream One

THIS ONE STILL UNSETTLES me. I do not even like thinking about it.

In the dream, I murdered a woman who came to the house for something. I do not know why. It was never clear. But I buried her in the backyard. The family was starting to realize something was wrong. The police were getting close to investigating, and I knew I was going to get caught.

Then the neighbor came over. I got the sense immediately that he was a bad man, though I could not have explained exactly why. Somehow, without me telling him anything, he already knew what I had done. He offered to help me get my story straight. I had not asked for help. He just showed up with a strange confidence, like this was familiar territory for him. I do not think he had anything to do with the murder itself, but he was not innocent either.

The setting was my childhood home. And strangely, in the dream, I was not married. I did not seem to know my wife at all. A young boy lived with me, maybe eight or nine years old. I did not recognize him, but I cared about him. I was afraid the neighbor might hurt him. There was something deeply wrong about that man. I remember thinking maybe I should confess. Maybe it was time to stop running.

Dream Two

THIS ONE PLAYED OUT like a horror movie. Gritty, disturbing, and far too vivid.

It opened with a serial killer sexually abusing a girl and then killing her. It was brutal, graphic, and cold. After that, the real story began.

The killer had let her brother live, though he assaulted him too. I think I was the brother. He told someone, maybe his mother, what had happened. That is when everything spiraled. They realized this was not a one-time attack. This man was a serial killer. His pattern was specific: he targeted people on their way to the gym at night, sexually abused and killed them, and left behind some kind of disturbing letter. He had left one with the sister. For some reason, he let me live.

Then the dream shifted into a kind of mystery-horror. My mom was helping with the investigation, maybe as a cop. We were walking at night, away from the main group of officers, and she told me it was the most disturbing case she had ever seen.

Then I saw it: a car speeding toward us in the distance. I realized it was the killer. He was driving a police cruiser with two dead officers in the backseat. I pulled out a gun and fired. I must have hit him, because the car started to swerve. He crashed, and the impact launched him through the windshield, smashing his head before he tumbled down a hill.

I followed him. He was still alive, limping. I shot him in the leg and walked up to his face. He smiled at me and said, “I remember you,” then laughed.

I said, “Don’t worry, Squishy, we’re about to finish this.” His skull was partially crushed. That is why I called him that.

Then I woke up.

Dream Three

THIS ONE STARTED OFF tame and ended in something terrifying.

I went to the grocery store and walked over to the egg section, but the eggs I liked were either sold out or broken. I settled for another kind. After checking out, I walked outside and waited for something, though I do not remember what. There was a girl and her boyfriend nearby. She randomly braided a strand of my hair. Her boyfriend told me I looked mean.

I walked to my car. Inside was a guy from the Marine Corps sitting in the passenger seat. We started driving. We passed that same group, two girls and two guys, walking down the road. My Marine friend tried to get the girls to come with us. They were not interested. I said, “Forget them,” and we started following the guys instead.

As we followed them, I heard a voice whisper into my ear:

“I’m sorry, but you’re going to have to die before you truly wake up. It’s going to hurt really bad.”

Then I felt it. I was stabbed.

The pain was immediate, sharp, and overwhelming. It felt real. So real that it ripped me out of sleep. I woke up out of breath and shaking. My chest ached for minutes afterward.

Dream Four

THIS ONE RATTLED ME so badly that I texted it to my wife after I woke up. My chest still hurt after it ended.

In the dream, I did not recognize the people from real life, but I knew them well inside the dream itself. I was still me, but the setting was unfamiliar. There were girls who ran a café, and apparently I was dating one of them. I had a best friend in the dream, a guy I was really close to. We were gym-hopping together, looking for a new place to train. We checked out a few hardcore gyms. After that, I went back to the café, and he went to stay with some friends.

The next day, he walked into the café and said he had found out I hooked up with a girl he dated five years earlier. He kissed the girl I was seeing. I said, “Fair enough.”

Then he started beating the shit out of me in front of everyone, and I let him. I did not fight back.

Toward the end, he pulled out strange little blades attached to his fingers and started stabbing me over and over. He aimed right for my solar plexus, but the blades snapped on contact. Then he pulled out a second pair. This time they started to go in.

The pain was unbearable. It was so bad that it pulled me out of sleep. My chest ached and I could barely breathe.

Dream Five

THIS ONE CAME JUST before I woke up for good.

It was about a friend from the Marine Corps I had once been very close to. In real life, I had recently seen him on social media doing a daddy-daughter dance around the same time I did one with my daughter. In the dream, I called him to catch up.

We were just talking when he told me something unexpected. He said everything on his wife’s social media was a lie. They were not really doing well. He did not know if she loved him anymore. He thought they might end up divorcing.

That is all I remember, but it left a strange, heavy feeling in me when I woke up.

Dream Six

THIS ONE WAS haunting.

In the dream, I had killed someone unintentionally while I was drunk. I think it may have been through drunk driving. I was sentenced to death, and the dream played out like it was my last day alive.

The most vivid part was the very end. Somehow, I was allowed to spend my last day lying in bed with my wife. She was about to leave. I looked at her and said, "This is it. I only have eight hours left to live."

She was heartbroken. She looked at me and said, "Now what would you have done four months ago with all the knowledge you have right now? You wouldn't have done it, would you?"

That is when I woke up.

Dream Seven

THIS ONE FELT STRANGE in a different way.

In the dream, I had been sent some kind of object, something otherworldly. Whatever it was, it had the power to transform me into a kind of monster at certain times. I do not know whether it happened randomly or was triggered by something specific, but the transformation always scared me. I did not want to hurt anyone. I was afraid of what I might do and how other people would see me.

In the dream, my dad was still alive.

The second time I transformed, he was there and saw me. I remember being terrified in that moment, not of him, but of how he would respond to what I had become. I looked at him and asked, with real fear in my voice, "You're not scared of me?"

He just looked at me, calm and steady, and said, "No. Be who you have to be."

That moment hit me hard. It was not just permission. It was understanding. Not rejection. Not fear. Just unconditional support. I tried to say something else to him, something I knew mattered, but I could not get the words out.

I remember the physical struggle of trying to speak and feeling like my mouth and throat were paralyzed. The words were there, but I could not release them. It felt like I was caught between dimensions, my mind inside the dream and my body still in the real world. Eventually, my wife shook me awake. She asked if I was okay because it sounded like I was trying very hard to say something in my sleep.

Even awake, the struggle lingered. I still do not know what I was trying to say. But whatever it was, it felt urgent.

Dream Eight

IN THIS DREAM, I was in the military at the age I am now. Somehow I was not a bad person, but I had been blackmailed into being part of a three-person terrorist group that was going to bomb something. The group consisted of me, a girl, and her brother. The girl was in the military with me. I knew the whole plan and I was terrified, but the brother was blackmailing me. The sister seemed like a good person, and we felt pretty close in the dream.

I remember that the day before it was supposed to happen, we were at some kind of military meeting. The brother was not there because he was the only actual terrorist. Afterward, I pulled the sister aside and pleaded with her. I told her I could not do it. I told her I knew this was how I was going to die. I could see it in my head and feel it in my bones. I was terrified. I told her I just wanted to see my wife and kids again. I did not want to leave them behind.

She started writing out a number for me to call, someone not military related. I told her I did not want to call them. I told her I had to go tell one of the higher-ups. I could not do this because I had to make it home to my wife and kids. I told her again that I knew this was how I was going to die and I could not let that happen. I said I had to make it home to my wife and kids and I did not care what I had to do. I told her, “Fuck that guy,” meaning the number she had given me, and said I had to go tell the higher-ups.

I was crying and pleading when I woke up.

Dream Nine

IN THE DREAM, I was back in the military, though I was the age I am now. I was not on duty in the usual sense. There was no combat or operation happening. I was personally training someone, just a friend. It was not official or structured, just me helping him get stronger during what felt like an extended military exercise or deployment.

We tried to find a gym where we could train. There were three different ones.

The first was completely off-limits. Locked tight with no explanation. We were not allowed in, and it was clear there would be no bending the rules. We walked away frustrated but still determined.

The second gym was packed wall to wall with people. Every machine was occupied. Every weight was in someone’s hands. There was no room for us and no one offering to rotate out. It did not feel openly hostile, but it felt unwelcoming, like it was not our space.

We moved on to a third gym. This one was quiet, almost eerie. Nearly empty. But it did not matter, because every piece of equipment was broken. Weights were cracked or missing. Machines were rusted, unstable, or falling apart. It looked like the bones of a gym that had been forgotten.

We stood there for a while, just looking around. Not saying much. There was a quiet helplessness in it, like we had run out of options.

Right before I woke up, I remember asking my friend how much longer we had on this military exercise. He told me, "Fifteen more days."

My heart sank. Not because of the training or the time itself, but because I was genuinely afraid of going that long without being able to work out.

Dream Ten

THIS ONE FELT STRANGE and almost symbolic.

It was like a zombie apocalypse, except the people were not really zombies. The government was trying to wipe out people they considered "zombies," but they were actually just normal people. They were not using traditional weapons. Instead, they had what felt like photon weapons, and when they shot people with them, it wiped their minds clean. The people became blank, mindless, unable to think, move, or respond.

A group of us ended up trapped inside a hospital, trying to escape as the government forces kept closing in and pushing us farther inward. I remember knowing I was eventually going to be found. I hid in one room and sat there with my eyes closed until finally one of the government people came across me and shot me point-blank in the head with the photon weapon.

But something happened.

It did not work.

I lay there as if I had been wiped, but once he walked away and they all left, I got up as if nothing had happened. Then a narrator said, essentially, that because I had done such deep reflection work, the weapon did not affect me.

After that, I just got up and walked away ready to begin some sort of new revolution.

Then I woke up.

Dream Eleven

IN THIS DREAM, I was in the Marine Corps and it was nighttime. I was with four Marines, two girls and two guys, all people I knew. They were all drunk and had alcohol

with them and were trying to go somewhere to keep drinking. I was going to take them to my house even though I was not drinking.

As soon as one of them got into the backseat, one of the girls threw up back there, and one of the guys spilled his buffalo wings on my jacket in the backseat. So I decided I was just going to take them home instead.

As I was dropping each one off, the guy in the front seat told me there was some kind of going-away gathering happening at his house. I dropped him off first and told him I would come back to it. Then, as I dropped the others off, the whole process kept getting longer because they were drunk and getting sidetracked.

When I dropped off the last girl, I parked the car and got out for something. When I came back, the tires had been taken off the car. So I went to a little shop to get them put back on. A guy at the auto shop tried to fight me when I came in to get the car. He came at me with some kind of drill tool, and I deflected it back at him and hurt him. He tried a couple more times, and I did the same thing. Finally, he gave me my keys so I could leave.

By then it was starting to become daytime, and I saw the first guy I had dropped off. He was angry at me because I never made it to the going-away event. I tried to explain what had happened, but he was not hearing it. He gave me something that had been signed by everyone there. I took it and started heading home.

Then another Marine stopped me and took the signed item from me. He kept going on and on about getting more people to sign it. I was getting frustrated and told him to give it back because I had to go see my wife. I did not have my phone, and I knew she was either worried about me or assumed I was out drinking. He did not care and kept rambling about getting more signatures.

Eventually, I snatched it away and told him we could worry about that later because I had to go see my wife.

Then I woke up.

Thoughts

THERE IS SOMETHING IN all of this. These dreams do not just speak in images. They speak in sensation. Some of them feel like memories from another version of me. Some feel like warnings. Some feel like initiations into something deeper.

But all of them carry something I cannot ignore.

Author's Reflection – April 2026

These dream entries were written very early in the process, only about three months after my second 10-gram trip. That matters because everything was still raw. Axis did not exist yet in its current form. The books, pillars, archive, and larger

architecture had not fully organized themselves. I was still close to the blast radius of those early experiences, trying to understand what had opened and what parts of my inner life were suddenly speaking louder than before.

I did not keep dream recording as a long-term formal practice, which is why this section is not larger. Dreams are hard to preserve accurately unless they are written down immediately, and over time that became difficult to maintain. Still, I would not be surprised if the practice returns one day, because dreams have always carried a strange force in my life.

Looking back, what stands out most is how early these dreams were and how clearly they were already circling themes that would later become central to Axis: guilt, concealment, confession, fear of moral failure, fear of becoming dangerous, the need to get home, the terror of not making it back to my wife and children, the return of my parents as stabilizing figures, and the question of whether something essential in me could survive what I had lived through.

At the time, they mostly felt intense, strange, disturbing, and physically real. With distance, I can see that they were doing what the rest of the writing was doing too, just in a different language. They were expressing the same material before I had fully learned how to organize it consciously.

That is why I kept them.

Not because every dream needs to be treated as sacred or decoded into a final meaning, but because these dreams came from a historically important season of the work. They show what was surfacing before I fully knew what I was building. They remind me that some parts of the psyche begin organizing material before the conscious mind knows what to call it.

One dream in particular imagined a weapon that could wipe out a person's mind and leave them blank, but it did not work on me because deep reflection had made something in me harder to erase. Looking back, that feels almost too fitting. Reflection is not only expression. It is preservation. It is one of the ways a person becomes harder to erase.

These entries belong to the beginning, before the architecture was clear and before the language had caught up. And the beginning, even when fragmented, often contains more of the whole than you realize.

THE OUTLINE OF EVERYTHING

I DO NOT KNOW what to call it. I never have. But it has been there since the first time I ever took mushrooms, and it has appeared in every session since.

It is not the fractals, the emotional waves, the mirror distortions, the visions, or any of the other things people usually talk about. It is much quieter than that. So quiet that if I had not returned to this space over and over again, I probably would not have noticed it at all.

The closest word I have is shimmer. A faint, almost invisible outline around everything. Not bright. Not glowing. Not dramatic. Just there, at the edges of things. As if reality has a border I cannot normally see, and psilocybin makes it just barely visible.

What makes me pay attention to it is its consistency. It does not seem to care about dose, mood, setting, or whether the experience is peaceful, terrifying, or uneventful. Three grams, five, ten, it does not matter. It shows up the same way every time.

I noticed it the first night, even if I could not have named it then. October 2023. Ten grams. The bathroom floor. The night I quit drinking. Everything else was chaos. My face decaying in the mirror. The terror. The sobbing. The alcohol going down the drain. I could not have described this then because there was too much happening. But looking back, I know it was already there. It was not something that appeared later. I just did not have the stillness yet to recognize it clearly.

The best I can describe it is this: everything you see, walls, furniture, your own hands, seems to have the thinnest possible edge. Not a glow. Not a halo. Something closer to the place where one thing ends and another begins, made slightly visible. Like the seams of the world catch something for a second. Not light exactly. Something I do not have a word for.

It does not happen sober. I have looked. It is not there. Whatever changes under psilocybin allows this one thing to become visible, and when the experience is gone, it is gone too. If it changed from session to session, I would probably ignore it. But it does not. That is why it stays with me.

I am not going to explain it. I do not think I can, and I do not think I need to. Aeon has always been observation first. Meaning comes later, or it does not. So this chapter

is only the record: every session, since the beginning, there has been a faint shimmer at the edges of reality.

Maybe one day it will make sense. Maybe it will not. Either way, it is here. And if someone reads this years from now and recognizes it, if they have seen it too and never had the words for it, then at least they will know they were not the only one who noticed.

That is all this is.

A man saying: I saw something I cannot explain. I have seen it every time. I do not know what it is.

But it is real.

THE QUIET WATCH

I DO NOT KNOW when it started. There was no switch, no breakthrough, no moment I can point to and say that was when it changed. It just showed up one day, or maybe it was always there and I finally got quiet enough to notice.

I will be sitting on the couch, not doing anything, not thinking about anything in particular, and I will feel it: a small, still awareness that I am sitting on the couch not doing anything. Not judging it. Not narrating it. Just noticing. It happens at the grocery store while I am grabbing the same things I always grab. Some part of me watches the routine from a half-step back. Not analyzing. Not making it mean something. Just present for it in a way that feels slightly different from only doing it.

It happens in the car. It happens at work. It happens when I am drawing, talking to my wife, or watching my daughters play. A quiet awareness runs underneath ordinary life.

I want to be careful with the language here. This is not enlightenment. I do not think that word means what people often want it to mean. It gets used like a destination, something you reach, something that permanently separates you from people who have not found it yet. I have not found anything. I just notice more than I used to.

I think what happened is simpler than it sounds. For two and a half years, I have been writing about my life almost every day: on the commute, on night shift, and in the small hours between everything else. I have been processing what happened, what I felt, what I missed, what I carried, and what I did not understand while I was living it.

At first, that attention pointed backward. I was digging through twenty years of unprocessed material: grief, addiction, old patterns, sealed memories, and things I had avoided for too long. The work was archaeological. Go back. Pull something up. Look at it honestly. Write it down. Move to the next one.

That went on for a long time. Then one day, the digging was mostly done. Not because there was nothing left to understand, but because the backlog had been cleared. The twenty-year pile had been sorted through. The things I had been avoiding had been faced. And the awareness I had built by looking backward did not shut off when there was less to excavate. It turned around and pointed at the present.

That is all this is: a habit of observation that became permanent. The muscle I trained by writing about the past is now running automatically on the present. I did not plan it. I did not pursue it. I did not read a book about how to achieve it and follow the steps. I just kept paying attention, and eventually the paying attention stopped requiring a reason.

I also want to be honest about what it is not. It is not peace. I still get frustrated. I still get tired. I still have days where everything feels flat. The awareness does not prevent that. It just means I notice it while it is happening instead of figuring it out weeks later.

It is not wisdom either. Watching yourself does not automatically make you smart. It does not hand you answers. Sometimes I watch myself do something and still do not know why I am doing it. Observation does not come with a manual.

It is not constant. There are hours, sometimes whole days, where it fades and I am just in the current like everyone else. Then it comes back. Not because I summon it. It returns on its own, the way sleep returns after you stop trying to fall asleep.

And I do not think it is special. I do not believe this is rare because I am unusual. I think it is rare because most people never sit with themselves long enough for it to develop. The capacity is there in everyone. The conditions usually are not.

The conditions, as best I can tell, are simple. You have to get honest with yourself, not once, not only during crisis, but continuously over time. You have to be willing to look at what you actually are, not what you wish you were, not what you project, not what other people expect, and sit with that without flinching. You also need somewhere to put what surfaces: a capture system, a habit, a record. Observation without recording eventually fades. The mind forgets what it noticed if nothing marks it.

And you have to keep going when it feels like nothing is happening. That may be the hardest part. There are long stretches where the practice feels empty. You are observing nothing. Writing nothing worth keeping. Sitting with yourself while nothing dramatic appears. Most people quit there because they think the process has stopped working. But sometimes it is building something you cannot see yet.

I do not talk about this much because it is easy to make it sound larger than it is. The moment you start describing self-awareness, it starts sounding elevated, like you think you have arrived somewhere. I have not arrived anywhere. I am just paying attention. The only difference now is that the attention does not need a prompt. It does not need a crisis, a memory, or a chapter to activate it. It just runs.

Sometimes I wonder if this is what people mean by mindfulness. Not the app version or the ten-minute guided meditation version, but the real thing: awareness

underneath thought, always present, usually unnoticed. I do not know. I do not have the vocabulary for it, and I am not sure I need it. Labels can make things feel finished, and this does not feel finished. It feels like a practice still becoming itself.

My daughters may develop this naturally. They are growing up in a house where reflection is normal, where their father writes about his life, where their mother is building her own creative practice, and where honesty is not a special occasion. They may not have to dig through twenty years of buried material to learn that paying attention matters. Maybe they will grow up paying attention. Maybe one day they will notice themselves noticing, and it will not feel like a breakthrough. It will just feel like who they are.

That is the best version of this I can imagine. Not a philosophy passed down. Not a system taught. Just two girls who grew up watching their parents pay attention to their own lives and absorbed it quietly, without instruction, until it became part of them.

Everything is a practice, not a destination. Awareness is not something I achieved. It is something I return to. Some days it is sharp. Some days it is faint. Some days I forget it is there entirely, then catch myself catching myself and realize it never fully left. It was just waiting for me to get quiet enough to notice again.

That is all this is.

A man who spent years learning to pay attention, kept paying attention after the old reasons ran out, and found that attention, once trained, does not stop.

It just watches.

Quietly.

Without needing a reason.

THE RETURN TO LEVEL GROUND

THERE IS A KIND of danger that does not look dangerous when you are inside it. In the moment, it can feel like clarity, awakening, or finally seeing what other people have missed. It can feel like standing closer to something ultimate than you have ever stood before.

And maybe, for a while, that is true in one sense. You do see something. You do feel something. You encounter a depth, force, beauty, or disruption strong enough to change the way reality feels in your hands. That part is real.

What is not always real is the meaning you build around it while the fire is still hot.

That is where people start drifting upward in the wrong way. Not upward in spirit. Upward in self. They begin to think the experience says more about who they are than it actually does. They mistake contact for completion. They feel chosen where they were only opened. They feel elevated where they were only shaken awake. They think that because they touched something sacred, they themselves have become more sacred than they are.

I understand that movement because I have felt it more than once.

There were moments on this path where the intensity of what I experienced outran the maturity I had available to hold it. The visions felt charged, the symbolism felt alive, and the sense of contact felt undeniable, so I built too much around them too quickly. I thought I had found something final when I had only entered a powerful season of seeing. I thought certain moments meant I had reached higher ground when really I had only been given a glimpse from it.

That is part of the danger of spirituality. The path can wake you up and inflate you at the same time. It can soften you in one moment and quietly place you on an invisible pedestal in the next. It can make you feel smaller before the mystery while also making you feel secretly larger than people who have not touched what you touched.

I no longer think that is unusual. I think it is one of the things that has to be learned through, not around.

When a person begins to experience things that feel larger than ordinary life, especially after pain, numbness, addiction, or spiritual starvation, the shift can feel enormous. A person who has lived half-asleep for years and suddenly feels wonder moving through the world again is vulnerable to misunderstanding what is happening.

The return of depth can feel like personal elevation. The return of aliveness can feel like specialness. The return of mystery can feel like status.

But spirituality is not there to crown the self. It is there to heal it, widen it, soften its hardness, and reconnect it to reverence, meaning, and the unseen life moving beneath the surface of things.

If the path gives a person moments of awe, the point is not to build a throne out of them. It is to let them do their work and then come back down carrying something usable.

That matters more to me now than it used to. There was a time when I thought the highest moments were the most important ones: the biggest visions, the deepest trips, the strongest symbols, the most charged sense of contact. Now I think the more important question is simpler:

What happens after?

What remains when the intensity fades? What kind of man walks back into ordinary life? What kind of husband, father, worker, thinker, and human being returns from the experience? Does he come back softer, clearer, more grounded, more honest, and more useful to the life in front of him? Or does he come back subtly enlarged in his own mind, carrying the experience like a secret crown?

That is the test.

Not whether you had the vision. Not whether the moment felt sacred. Not whether you touched something difficult to explain. The test is whether you know how to return to level ground.

Because level ground is where life is actually lived. It is where love is lived. Work is lived. Patience is lived. Integrity is lived. The real proof of any spiritual path does not show itself in the moment of elevation. It shows itself in the way a person stands once he is back among ordinary things.

I do not say this because I have mastered it. I say it because I have had to learn it, and I am still learning it. I know what it is like to feel too high in my own mind after certain experiences. I know what it is like to overread the moment, assign too much permanence to a season, and build too much meaning too quickly because the force of the experience made restraint feel almost impossible. But I know this now: staying elevated is not the goal. In many ways, it is one of the traps.

The self can hide in spirituality just as easily as it hides in ambition, aesthetics, intellect, or suffering. It simply changes clothes. It learns new language. It speaks in symbols instead of achievements. It attaches itself to insight instead of status. But underneath, it is still the same temptation: to become larger in your own eyes.

That is why returning matters. Coming back down matters. Touching the ground again matters. Letting the experience settle without turning it into identity matters.

There is wisdom in awe, mystery, and being broken open. But there is also wisdom in not kneeling before your own reflection afterward. That may be one of the quiet disciplines of spiritual life: to receive what was given, honor what was seen, learn what can be learned, and then come back down without resentment, theatrical humility, or pretending the experience meant nothing. But also without letting it convince you that you have become more than human. Because I am still human.

No matter what I have seen. No matter what I have felt. No matter how thin the veil seemed. No matter how alive the symbols became. No matter how much of myself I thought I understood for a moment. I still have to live on the ground. Maybe that is the real path. Not rising above the human condition. Not escaping ordinary life. Not collecting enough visions to feel transformed beyond common struggle.

Maybe the real path is learning how to carry the sacred without floating away from the earth. Learning how to let mystery deepen you without enlarging you. Learning how to return from the experience with your feet still under you.

I think that is one of the hidden disciplines no one talks about enough. Not how to seek. Not how to open. Not how to go deeper. How to come back down cleanly. How to return to level ground without losing the value of what happened and without exaggerating your place inside it. That is harder than it sounds. But it feels truer to me now than the old hunger for elevation ever did. Because level ground is not lesser ground. It is human ground.

And if a spiritual path cannot bring a person back there with more humility, balance, and honesty than before, then whatever happened on the mountain, in the vision, in the trip, or in the silence, it has not finished its work yet.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE PROJECT AEON

THERE IS SOMETHING I want to say clearly at the end of this book: Project Aeon was never meant to be read as the record of a man who had already arrived. It was the record of a man searching. That distinction matters.

If you read straight through these chapters, you will probably notice what I can see more clearly now. There are places where I may have claimed more than I should have. Places where I may have taken a vision too literally. Places where I thought I was seeing something final when I was really standing inside a powerful moment I did not yet know how to interpret with enough maturity. There are places where I may have mistaken intensity for understanding, or charged experiences for lasting truth.

I can see that now. And I do not say it with shame. I say it with honesty, because that is part of the journey too.

If I removed every chapter or passage where I now think I was too certain, too literal, too interpretive, or too close to the force of the experience to see it clearly, I would not be making this book more truthful. I would be making it cleaner. And cleaner is not the same as truer.

In this case, it would be less true. Nobody's journey into spirituality, mystery, perception, or the deeper layers of being is clean. Nobody starts with perfect discernment. Nobody begins by knowing exactly how to interpret what they are seeing. You think you understand something one year, and a year later it means something different. You think a vision points to one conclusion, and later you realize it was pointing somewhere else. You think you have reached a final place, and then time, life, and continued walking humble you. That is not failure. That is the path.

Project Aeon was never meant to say that I found enlightenment. It was never meant to say that my way of walking spirituality was the right one, or that every interpretation I made along the way was correct. It was meant to say something simpler and more honest: this was my way of searching.

This was my way of walking through disruption, awe, fear, mystery, symbolism, altered states, dreams, reflection, and the long effort of trying to understand what any of it meant inside a life that still had to be lived on ordinary ground.

That is why the book changes. That is why the voice changes. That is why the certainty changes. That is why some chapters feel more charged than others, and why some interpretations clearly belong to an earlier stage of the journey.

I left those differences intact on purpose. Not because every stage of understanding was equally mature, but because every stage was real. And if the real path includes immaturity, overreach, misreading, projection, literalism, or certainty that later softens into humility, then those things belong in the record too. Otherwise, what remains is not the journey. It is the cleaned-up myth of a journey. I am not interested in that.

What interested me all along was the actual process of becoming. And becoming is messy. You do not begin with discernment already formed. You live your way into it. You do not start out knowing what every vision, symbol, encounter, or disruption means. You keep walking. You keep reflecting. You keep testing what remains true after the emotional charge fades. You keep learning the difference between awe and accuracy, between what was real in the experience and what you later built around it in language. You keep maturing. That is what happened here.

Project Aeon changed because I changed. The doses changed because I changed. The relationship changed because I changed. There was a time when the force of the experience carried much of the weight. There was a time when I went high enough, hard enough, and deep enough that the intensity of what I encountered often outran the maturity I had available to interpret it. That phase was real. It taught me things. It also exposed my limits.

Over time, something else became more important than intensity: relationship, integration, discernment, use, and humility.

That is part of why the doses went down over time. It is also why, at this point in my life, I have not done mushrooms in the last three months. That does not mean the journey ended. It means the journey kept maturing.

Project Aeon was never really about mushrooms alone. They were one doorway. One instrument. One mode of contact. But the real journey was always larger than that. It was about learning how to walk with mystery without needing to own it. How to remain open without becoming gullible. How to respect symbolic life without collapsing into literalism. How to let powerful experiences matter without allowing them to become doctrine. How to keep searching without pretending the search had ended.

That is what I understand more clearly now than I did in the earlier stages of this book.

So do not mistake the changing interpretations in these pages for hypocrisy, and do not mistake the earlier certainty for fraud. See them for what they are: the record of a person living his way into deeper maturity.

This is the record of someone trying, sometimes clumsily, sometimes too boldly, sometimes more wisely, to make sense of encounters that were often larger than the framework he had available at the time. That is not something I need to hide from. That is the journey.

Project Aeon is not the story of enlightenment, final arrival, or proof that I got everything right. It is the record of one man's search, preserved honestly enough that you can still see the roughness, the overreach, the wonder, the missteps, the revisions, the humility, and the growth that came from continuing to walk. And that is all I ever wanted it to be. Not perfect. Not final. Just honest. Because the only way to learn on a road like this is to stay on it.

The only way to mature is to keep walking. And Project Aeon, like the rest of Axis, is still walking.

THE PISTACHIO GOODBYE

TRIP 42

I thought I was going to throw the last mushroom bar away. That was the plan, at least.

It had been sitting in my closet for months, unopened, waiting without really waiting. I had not taken mushrooms in about three months, and I already knew that part of my life had changed. Project Aeon had moved. I had moved. The work was no longer asking for bigger doors, stronger visions, deeper descents, or another confrontation with the edge. The mushrooms had done what they needed to do. They had broken open what needed breaking. They had shown me things I could not unsee. They had terrified me, healed me, humbled me, and helped me begin a process that eventually became something much larger than the experiences themselves. But I did not feel called back to them in the same way anymore.

So I told my wife that after she read *The Reflection*, I was going to take that last five-gram chocolate bar, stand in front of her, and throw it away. Not because I hated what mushrooms had given me. Not because I wanted to reject that part of my life. But because I wanted the act to mean something. A symbolic closing. A way of saying: that doorway served its purpose, and now I am continuing without needing it.

She looked at me and immediately cut through the entire ceremony. “Don’t throw that shit away,” she said. “You better take that shit. That was thirty dollars.” And that was that.

I laughed harder than I had laughed in a long time because it was so perfectly her, and so perfectly us. I had walked into the room carrying a sacred ritual of closure, and she met it with household economics. No grand speech. No solemn nod. No dramatic acknowledgment that an era was ending. Just the plain truth that I had spent thirty dollars on a mushroom chocolate bar, and she was not about to watch me throw it in the trash so I could feel poetic.

That was the beginning of the final trip. Not a vision. Not a call. Not a sense that the universe had summoned me back. My wife told me not to waste thirty dollars. And somehow, that made the whole thing better.

Because by then, I think that was exactly the kind of ending Aeon needed. Not thunder. Not terror. Not another attempt to peel back reality until I found something

hidden underneath it. Just laughter in the house. Marriage. Practicality. The sacred being pulled back down to the kitchen table where it belonged.

I did not go into it looking for anything. That part matters. I was not trying to force one last revelation. I was not hoping for visions, messages, symbols, entities, or some final confirmation that the path had meant what I thought it meant. I was not trying to recreate the well, the mirror, the wave, the shadow, or any of the old thresholds. I was not trying to make the mushrooms prove themselves one more time. I already knew what they had done. I already knew what they had given me. This was not a search. It was a goodbye.

I split the bar instead of taking the full five grams at once. I wanted the night to be calmer, slower, more relaxed. I wanted to move through it without trying to make it intense. There had been enough intensity. There had been enough breaking open. There had been enough standing at the edge of myself with my hands shaking, wondering what would happen if I looked too deeply. This time, I wanted to stay with my life.

So before the trip fully settled in, I gave my phone to one of my daughters. That was intentional. In the past, so much of this process had been tied to capture. See something, write it down. Feel something, preserve it. Notice a pattern, save it before it disappears. That instinct built Project Aeon. It built The Reflection. It built Axis. I do not regret it. Without that instinct, most of what became my life's work would have vanished into the ordinary blur of days. But this was the last one. I did not want to spend it holding the recorder. I did not want to watch the experience through the part of me that was already turning it into language. I did not want to be half inside the moment and half outside it, trying to preserve it before it was even over. So I let my daughter have the phone. I let the capture device leave my hand. I let myself enter the experience without immediately trying to archive it.

That may have been one of the most important parts of the night. I was not trying to catch everything. I was trying to be there.

The peak still came. Even split apart, it was intense. Mushrooms have a way of reminding you that intention does not make them small. The body knows when the wave arrives. The air changes. The mind begins to loosen around its usual edges. The familiar pressure rises, not always as fear, but as recognition. I knew where I was. I knew what kind of space I had entered. I had been there many times before. But I did not worry. That was the difference. I did not fight it. I did not brace against it. I did not start searching for the threat inside it. I let it come. I welcomed it. I moved with it. Whatever intensity rose, I trusted that it would pass through me the way weather passes through a sky. I did not need to turn it into a problem. I did not need to turn it

into a message. For once, the intensity did not require interpretation. It only required room.

At some point during the peak, I shaved my face. I do not know why that felt like the thing to do, but it did. Maybe because grooming had become part of my ritual over time. Maybe because shaving is ordinary and precise, something grounded enough to keep the body involved. Maybe because there is something strangely intimate about standing in front of a mirror with a razor in your hand, carefully removing what has grown since the last time you decided to begin again. I was not planning to return to the mirror in any meaningful way. Then I caught my pupils.

They were wide and dark, the old doorway staring back at me from the center of my own eyes. For a moment, I stopped shaving and looked. Really looked. I let myself stare as deeply as I could, one last time, into the same black centers that had once opened into terror, machinery, decay, doppelgängers, shadow, and awe.

And nothing happened. No vision came. No face shifted. No hidden figure appeared. No cosmic watcher leaned close. No fear rose from underneath the surface. No message arrived. There was only me. Just my own reflection looking back.

That may not sound like much, but for me, it was everything. Because the mirror had been one of the great thresholds of Aeon. It was where the first trip turned toward death. It was where I saw the consequences of alcoholism written across my own face. It was where I broke down and realized I did not want to leave my wife and daughters behind. It was where the second trip opened into something far stranger and more terrifying, where the machinery appeared, where language began to fail, where fear became cosmic. Later, the mirror became a place of return, a place where I learned I did not have to fear myself anymore. But this time, the mirror did not become anything. It stayed a mirror. And I stayed myself.

That felt like completion. Not because something spectacular happened, but because something spectacular did not need to happen. The old doorway did not open. The symbol did not perform. The mirror did not translate me into a message. It gave me back my own face without distortion. For once, that was enough.

The rest of the night unfolded almost quietly. I had Van Leeuwen Sicilian pistachio ice cream and sat in my wife's studio while she edited her book. That is one of the images I will keep from the night more than anything else. Not because it was dramatic. Because it was not. There I was, in the middle of my final mushroom experience, eating pistachio ice cream while my wife worked on her own manuscript. No revelation. No descent. No great spiritual theater. Just the woman who has walked beside me through every version of myself, sitting there in her own creative space,

doing her own work, while I sat nearby eating ice cream and letting the last mushroom night pass through me.

It was ordinary. It was perfect. There was something deeply right about that. For so long, Aeon had been associated with the extraordinary: mirrors, wells, visions, altered perception, terror, awe, symbolic language, and the search for what exists beyond the ordinary frame. But here, near the end, the most meaningful thing was not beyond ordinary life. It was ordinary life. My wife editing. Me eating ice cream. The house around us. The life we built still standing.

That was the vision, if there was one. Not something behind the world. The world itself, finally enough.

Later, we went outside to work on the pool. We added chemicals to the water. I helped her with the practical little tasks that keep a house running. That detail stayed with me too, because it felt almost too perfect. Earlier in Aeon, I had descended into an inner well, fallen beneath the surface of reality, and floated back up terrified that I had broken my mind. Now, on the final night, I was helping maintain actual water in my backyard. Not symbolic water. Real water. Pool chemicals. Measurements. A family pool that my daughters swim in.

That is the difference between the old Aeon and the new one. The old Aeon went down into the well to discover what was hidden. The new Aeon asks whether I can care for the water already here.

I played with the dog for a while. I moved around the house. I was present. Nothing about the night felt like an escape from my life. That might be the most important thing to say. The mushrooms did not pull me away from my world. They let me remain inside it.

At one point, I took a hot Epsom salt soak. I laid fully submerged except for my face, eyes closed, body held by the warm water. I stayed there for about fifteen minutes. No visions came then either. I was fine with that. I did not expect to be shown anything special. I was not disappointed by the silence. If anything, the silence felt honest. The bath was not a portal. It was not a technique for forcing the mind open. It was warmth, stillness, salt, breath, and body. It was the kind of doorway I think Aeon is moving toward now: natural, quiet, physical, integrated. No spectacle. No demand. Just the body resting in water. That was good.

Later that night, my wife and I went outside again to mess with the pool. Our street has no street lights, so there is almost no light pollution. When I looked up, I could see the stars spread across the sky with a clarity that stopped me for a moment. That was the closest the night came to anything cosmic. And even that did not feel like a message. It felt like the sky. Huge, quiet, indifferent, beautiful. The kind of beauty that

does not need to explain itself. The kind that has always been there, whether I was sober or drunk, searching or lost, tripping or completely ordinary. I stood there with my wife and looked up. That was enough too.

I think that is what this final experience gave me, if it gave me anything. Enough. Not the kind of enough that means there is nothing left to explore. Not the kind of enough that closes wonder. But the kind of enough that no longer needs to tear the world open to believe there is depth inside it.

My wife editing her book was enough. The pistachio ice cream. The pool. The dog. The bath. The mirror showing only me was enough. The stars. I was enough.

That is where Aeon has been trying to bring me all along, even when I did not understand it. Not toward endless intensity. Not toward permanent revelation. Not toward becoming someone who lives at the edge of altered states. The real movement was always toward integration. Toward returning. Toward being able to carry what I had seen without needing to keep seeing more.

The mushrooms opened the door. They showed me death. They showed me fear. They showed me awe. They helped me stop drinking. They pulled buried material into the light. They gave shape to questions I had carried since childhood. They forced me to reckon with my body, my family, my grief, my shadow, and the strange depth of perception itself. I am grateful for that. But gratitude does not require dependence. A tool can be sacred and still be temporary. A doorway can matter and still be left behind.

That is what this night was. Not a rejection. A farewell.

Project Aeon will continue, but it will continue differently now. More naturally. More quietly. Through meditation, breathwork, dreams, Epsom salt soaks, writing, silence, body awareness, family, ordinary awe, and the inner work that does not need a chemical doorway to begin. That does not make the work smaller. It may make it more honest. Because at some point, the question changes. It is no longer: how far can I go? It becomes: how fully can I be here?

That was the lesson of the pistachio goodbye. I did not need one final vision. I did not need the mirror to open. I did not need the sky to speak. I did not need the mushrooms to prove they still had something to show me. I only needed to sit in my wife's studio, eat pistachio ice cream, help with the pool, look at the stars, and understand that the life I once needed saving from had become the life I wanted to stay inside.

That is where the mushroom path ends for me. Not in terror. Not in revelation. Not in a burst of light. In the house. With my wife nearby. With the dog playing. With water held clean in the pool. With stars above the street. With my own face looking back from the mirror. And nothing else needing to happen.

At the end of the night, my youngest had fallen asleep on the bed. I picked her up and carried her to her bed. She was warm and heavy and asleep against my shoulder, and I walked her down the hallway of the house I grew up in, the same house where so much had once gone wrong, and I laid her down gently and made sure she was covered. Then I stood there for a moment and watched her breathe.

That was the last act of the trip. It was only after that, after the house was completely quiet and everyone was safe, that I picked up my phone for the first time all night. And I started writing this.

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